

Curriculum Research

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It is most encouraging to discover a variety of curriculum research activities under way in the various states. There is some evidence of a growing trend in state ASCD groups toward creating state committees to encourage and assist teachers and school systems in the development of cooperative action research. State groups are discovering interesting projects with varied research designs.

This column will describe research activities now in progress in Indiana, Michigan and Ohio. Other state groups are urged to keep us informed as to research activities which may be developing in their areas.

ROBERT S. FLEMING

Action Research in Indiana

THE Action Research Committee of the Indiana Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development was appointed in the fall of 1952. Subsequent meetings were held to clarify the committee's functions. The Chicago Research Conference proved to be helpful as to ideas and stimulation. At the spring meeting of the state unit of ASCD it was agreed that the Action Research Committee should take positive steps to pull together as much information as possible concerning the research in progress in the State of Indiana and concerning research that had recently been completed in that state.

During the summer of 1953 a subcommittee started positive action to collect the desired information. A simple questionnaire was developed as a first step toward this objective. A mailing list of thirty-one persons was compiled, and, as a beginning, this questionnaire was distributed only among active members of ASCD. One person was to be responsible for reporting the research of one school or a school system. Replies were tabulated in an attempt to

secure a current picture of action research in the State of Indiana.

In October 1953 a brief résumé of the findings of the committee was reported to the State ASCD meeting. This report revealed the fact that considerable action research is being carried on in the schools of Indiana. It stated that by far the largest amount of research in the past few years had been done in the field of "reporting to parents." It listed a number of problem areas indicating a need for a study of the total curriculum, and for over-all curriculum planning in various subject areas. A broad range of topics was suggested, including a study of drop outs, public relations and building planning. Three reports of projects recently completed were given. One of these reports traced the history and gave the outcomes, to date, of a county-wide study of the problem of reporting to parents. Another told of the writing and publication of a history for elementary school children of one county in the State of Indiana. The third report concerned the research that had been done in a

reading program in one school in a large metropolitan area. These reports were all well received by the membership of the association, and some of these will very likely be published. We hope that steps will be taken to

perpetuate an extension of research activities within the State of Indiana.

—LLOYD N. SMITH, Indiana State Teachers College, Terre Haute; chairman, Indiana ASCD Committee on Action Research.

Cooperative Curriculum Research Activities in Ohio

CONCERN for action curriculum research in Ohio has grown considerably since December 1952 when the Ohio group returned from the ASCD Research Conference in Chicago. At a meeting in Cleveland during the national conference plans were made for a two-day planning meeting of a larger group to be held in May. A summer work conference was projected as a beginning step in a long-range program. Announcements were sent to the ASCD state membership and other leaders in the state and a planning committee was formed. They canvassed interests, analyzed needs, proposed some problem areas, and made preliminary arrangements for a summer conference.

The three-day work conference during July 1953 at Ohio Wesleyan University, Delaware, Ohio, was conducted under the leadership of Professor Laura Zirbes, of Ohio State University. Present were 85 participants representing many sections of the state. Discussion of problems of living and learning was organized under the problem areas: resources, adjustments, cooperative planning, evaluation, and child development and human relations. An attempt was made to make activities flow from one to another. As an outcome, participants felt they had broadened their concept of processes involved in cooperative action research. Some explored the application of these processes to cooperative work on specific problems in their local communities, and a few felt they might be ready to apply these

processes and undertake some initial steps. In the evaluation of the conference the chief finding was that the conference group wanted continued help as it progressed.

In keeping with the conference recommendation, the fall meeting of Ohio ASCD was devoted to the on-going process of cooperative action research. On the evening of October 23, former workshop participants and other interested persons met informally to share experiences in getting their projects started and to discuss their problems. These concerns related to ways of securing group cooperation and motivation for action, defining problems, planning ways of collecting appropriate bodies of data, and considering techniques for studying data. Such problems received further consideration in the Saturday conferences both in general sessions and in small group discussions.

An account of activities initiated since the summer workshop showed that a variety of research projects is under way in the state. Illustrative of the activities reported are:

- Study of production of suitable film strips and recordings in Licking County;
- Study of grouping in the seventh grade in Ohio State University School;
- Study of the kind of education needed by students who attend Ohio Wesleyan;
- Study of the problems of homework

in three Cincinnati, Ohio, schools. Study of a pattern of teachers meetings in the Delaware, Ohio, schools; and Study of fatigue of the first grade child in relation to the length of the school day in Berkey.

A permanent Action Research Committee has been organized to assist in planning future conferences for action research in the state so that participants

can give and receive help as they continue their activities.

Another informal sharing conference is now being planned for the Spring meeting of ASCD, and a four-day workshop on cooperative research is also being organized.

—CECILIA E. UNZICKER, supervisor of intermediate grades, Public Schools, Cincinnati, Ohio.

Organization and Planning for Curriculum Research in Michigan

IN JULY 1953 the Superintendent of Public Instruction authorized the organization of a state Committee on Curriculum Research. The appointed membership on this committee at the present time includes representatives of public schools, colleges, the state Association of School Board Members, the state Parent-Teacher Association, the Metropolitan Detroit Bureau of Cooperative School Studies, and the Department of Public Instruction.

This committee will operate within the group of committees that gives direction to the Michigan Curriculum Program. It will work in cooperation with existing state committees and will also be expected to initiate and carry on projects appropriate to its scope of work. Two general functions are to be stressed: (a) the maintenance of a continuing survey of needs and efforts in curriculum research in the state, and (b) the giving of leadership and direction to curriculum research activity in Michigan.

The recommended scope of the committee's work includes: (a) promotion of application of research findings and research procedures through conferences, clinics, publications, radio, television, etc.; (b) stimulation of system-wide, individual school or classroom projects in curriculum research; and

(c) cooperative planning for state-wide research efforts.

A study of secondary school holding power is one state-wide project now being conducted by a special committee organized to do this job. A second state-wide project being conducted currently is an inventory and descriptive study of a wide range of research activities under way throughout the state. The inventory includes examples of research conducted by individual teachers and teacher teams, by local schools and school systems, and by other educational agencies. The forthcoming published report on this study will be a valuable resource for promoting the use of research procedures in the solution of curriculum problems.

A most difficult problem in providing wise leadership in cooperative planning for research has to do with deciding on priority of effort. The recently established state Committee on Curriculum Research is expected to give attention to this problem and, through its recommendations regarding priority of needs in research, to contribute to the direction of various efforts aimed at improvement of Michigan education.

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