

# Uniting Forces To Improve Education

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## Schools Can Start Using TV Now

TELEVISION may well prove to be the power tool of education. Even if it brought no new learning experiences into the schools, television could certainly increase the effectiveness of the teaching, and it might well expand the size of the classroom to include vast numbers of people to whom the lessons are not now available. Such is the speculation in which we are now indulging as we make ready what may be the greatest of all experiments in educational method.

But in the school-and-community area, it is already certain that no better public relations medium than television could be devised. Whether or not there is an educational broadcasting station in the vicinity, TV has become an answer to the age-old complaint that "parents don't visit the school." Through television, the school has gone out to visit the parents; and it reaches not simply the mothers who happen to have leisure, but all the working parents as well, and almost all those great numbers of people who think they have no direct interest in the schools, but whose votes control the destiny of public education.

By television, perhaps better than by any other means, the work of the various departments of the schools can be reported to the homes; not merely sporadically, on the eve of voting on a bond issue, but regularly, on an announced schedule. Such programs can be intensely interesting. They can involve teachers, pupils, administrators, parents, "old grads" and members of

the board of education. But they probably succeed best when, each month or each week, they turn a spotlight, so to speak, upon some one important development within the schools: a new curriculum venture, a new teaching device, or some thoroughly successful unit of classroom work.

Television broadcasting stations have shown themselves to be highly receptive to such programs, and usually cooperate eagerly when responsible school people are willing to do the planning and the work. Top-level arrangements are necessary between studio and school; and top-level responsibility can be shown if the superintendent or the chairman of the board will become either sponsor or producer. No type of activity on the part of the school staff could better serve to prepare the school system and the community for later benefits from straight educational broadcasting.

Both daytime hours (easily made available) and evening hours should be used for this purpose. Use of both these times will tend to put before the whole public a knowledge of the schools and thus to create a sympathetic understanding of their aims.

One such broadcast during the school year could make quite a difference in the support a community gives to its schools. Two or three could make the schools an all-community enterprise. When the broadcasts become regular—once a month or oftener—a new era may very well be inaugurated.

Nothing should be offered on such a program that is not true or typical

of the school system at its best. Let each department try to reach a level of professional achievement that is worthy of being reported to the homes of the community!

In the New York area, the Metropolitan School Study Council, an organization made up of educators on all levels, has produced such programs

in various communities with very telling effects. The benefits of similar television broadcasts could be spread far and wide across the land.

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### Local Action for School Improvement

THE Bergen County Education Association has for four years sought ways to improve school-community relationships. This four year search culminated in the 1952-53 Workshop in Public Relations. The over-all objective of the workshop was to find better ways of involving the public in working on school problems related to improving educational programs. Seven sessions, each lasting from 4 to 9:30 p.m., were held. Topics for the sessions were suggested by the participants. These included: Public Opinion Polling, The Teacher and Public Relations, Community Resources and the School, Identifying Unmet Needs, The School's Publics, Budgeting Procedures, and A Modern Educational Program.

As a result of the 1952-53 workshop, advisory groups have been established in a number of communities and a second year workshop is now in progress. Twenty-four communities participated in the 1952-53 workshop, in comparison with twenty-eight participating in two workshops in 1953-54. Of this year's two workshops, one is for first year participants while the other is for those now in the second year of work. The increase in the number of participants and the extending work of the committees indicate a willingness on

the part of people to give their time and energy to constructive work in the interest of improving public education. Because of the number of inquiries received from other parts of the country a publications committee has been established to provide detailed information on the workshops. Chairman of this committee is Miss Lena M. Porecca, principal, Jackson Avenue School, Hackensack, New Jersey.

While this is a Bergen County project, Teachers College, Columbia University, assists in providing resource persons who have had firsthand experience in working with community groups. The greater part of each session is devoted to group discussion of the techniques and local action programs which will meet local needs.

Local action has been stimulated to unify efforts for educational improvements through the work of the Bergen County Education Association in cooperation with the Bergen County Council of Parent-Teacher Associations, and the Bergen County Federated Boards of Education. The Bergen County Education Association may well say to other educational organizations, "Attack your problems."

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