

lum that fills their individual needs, the curriculum itself has become more meaningful to them.

At present, Norfolk County, under the direction of a forward-looking superintendent, is nearing the completion of a twenty-five-million-dollar building program. All six high schools are now or soon will be entering new multi-million-dollar plants. Several large, modern elementary school buildings have been constructed, while many of the old buildings have been renovated and modernized. As evidence of progress accomplished, it is noteworthy that effective with the 1954-55 school

session, all pupils will have been relieved of shift classes with the exception of the first and second graders in the densely populated areas adjacent to Norfolk City.

The County has been fortunate in having capable and aggressive educational leadership. The immediate past president of the National Education Association and the president-elect of the AASA are listed among its past superintendents of schools. Excellent leadership, combined with a sympathetic and alert school board, has enabled the school division to progress despite a multiplicity of handicaps.



ROBERT H. ANDERSON

Each Community Must Face Its Own Problems

Always, in the final analysis, the local community must meet and solve as best it can the problems which result from such a condition as school overcrowding. This author suggests several ways in which local communities are meeting their urgent needs for more adequate housing.

ALTHOUGH the use of "temporary" school housing facilities has been necessary at one time or other in virtually every school community, it is probably safe to state that proportionately more children found themselves in temporary classrooms in September 1954 than at any other time in our history. By and large, these arrangements are distinctly unsatisfactory, and the children who will suffer through the often-mislabeled "emergency" period are being cruelly cheated of their

rightful educational opportunity. As a result, the time has long since arrived for a thoughtful examination of the various expedients which have been tried.

The use of temporary or emergency school facilities becomes necessary whenever typical or permanent facilities either cease to exist or become overtaxed by the number of students to be served. Unfortunately, the definition of "overcrowded" varies greatly from community to community, from

public to private school, from school board to school board, and even from staff to staff. Although expert opinion and sentiment rallies staunchly around the concept that 25 to 30 children are enough for an elementary classroom, we have as yet no indisputable evidence as to the maximum number which can be justified educationally. Even more nebulous are the arguments in support of special and auxiliary classrooms, such as crafts centers and library rooms, when a community is attempting to decide between an appropriation for classroom space and the construction of additional regular classrooms. Therefore each community faces a difficult problem of *defining* the extent of its space shortage, first, before it can consider either temporary or permanent space solutions.

Unless the community leaders themselves believe that 35, 40 or more children per classroom represents a bad and undesirable situation, therefore, and unless auxiliary rooms are considered so important to the educational program that they should not be converted to homeroom space, "overcrowding" has no real local meaning. While this is an engagingly simple fact, it is one often overlooked by the zealous school administrator who pushes for passage of construction bond issues before pushing an adequate definition of need.

Once need has been defined to the satisfaction of the people in a community, so that overcrowding is recognized as a menace to that community's welfare, the next step is a projection of enrollments and other factors so that short-term needs can be separated from long-term requirements.

Robert H. Anderson is director of elementary School apprentice teaching, Graduate School of Education, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts. Dr. Anderson is also chairman of the ASCD Committee on Crowding in Our Schools.

Where neighborhoods are shifting, birth rates are slowing down, and/or other such factors are present, a short-term "bulge" of pupils might justifiably be handled by temporary arrangements. Dollars-and-sense logic militates against the construction of future "ghost schools." However, present population trends suggest that very few places have a truly temporary bulge to cope with, so this argument is of interest to relatively few at the moment.

Meeting Space Needs

Where the need for additional space is demonstrably long-range, and assuming again that the community can be persuaded to agree that such need exists, there tend to be three possible situations: (A) we *have* the power *now* to finance what is needed; (B) we *will have* the power to finance what is needed, within *x* years as land values grow and as other debts are retired; (C) we are essentially helpless to finance necessary building, either now or in the foreseeable future.

Dismissing the simplest problem first, Case "A" communities should by all means go ahead with permanent plans and avoid temporary arrangements like the plague. Too many of us have seen temporary barracks become permanent schools through sheer inertia and complacency. Sometimes

communities simply lose the driving urge to replace such facilities unless they are constantly reminded of the need. Even where the community conscientiously goes ahead with subsequent removal of temporary quarters, in virtually all cases the greater cost of financing both temporary and permanent quarters eventually penalizes everyone. Greater insurance costs, inconvenience in site locations, greater operating and maintenance costs, removal expenses and rapid depreciation are among the "extra costs" which accompany the use of temporary quarters.

And in the meantime, of course, the real losers are the children whose lot it was to attend the temporary school while something better was in the offing. No one has yet discovered any way to restore to a child any school year that he wastes or loses along the way!

Case "B" communities are abundant in America today, many of them in the fast-developing suburbs. Here existing, established schools have been flooded with swarms of newcomers, each new wave creating the need for additions, new buildings and temporary arrangements while the tax base "catches up." In most such cases, the parents of these children represent a willing taxpayers' group who cheerfully support the costs of construction to the extent that circumstances permit. Sometimes the community make-up includes industrial and commercial properties which, along with the residential neighborhoods, provide an adequate tax base for needed financing. Temporary "gap" periods are faced, perhaps, but increased home values

and the retirement of old debts offer the assurance of eventual ability to pay. Here the problem is in the making of difficult choices, since the silver lining just ahead provides a great temptation to invest as little as possible in temporary arrangements. As a general rule, it seems better in such cases to resort to rental arrangements and/or tighter space scheduling. Neither of these would be tolerated by most communities beyond the date when the financing base becomes adequate.

Case "C" communities, those which simply cannot afford the schools and other facilities they need, are collectively one of the greatest problems our democracy faces. By and large, they are by their nature not only already overcrowded, but they are the places which are spawning a disproportionate number of future pupils. Usually, these less fortunate communities are without the means of supporting adequate school financing even though there may be sufficient willingness and desire to do so. The substandard facilities and programs which are therefore found in such places are indeed troublesome and embarrassing for their neighbors and for the country as a whole.

By and large, the only available solutions to Case "C" problems are generally unpopular approaches. One is re-districting, in such a way that neighboring communities with adequate tax bases can share their financial resources with the underprivileged areas. Obviously, this is feasible only where the wealthier areas display an uncommon sense of civic responsibility and where cooperation between communities is unusually good. An-

other approach is state or federal intervention, through grants or aids which offset inequalities in per-pupil financing power. Our system of local control resists these types of aids, generally, and usually the underprivileged communities simply fail to acquire adequate buildings.

The willing and able, the willing and partially able, and the willing but unable communities, then, are three types which at one time or other face the prospect of temporary facilities for their children.

Schools for a New Community

One possible solution to housing needs in a new community is the erection, or purchase, of dwelling units in overcrowded neighborhoods, for temporary use as classrooms and eventual resale as housing units. This has been used in recent years by several school systems. One notable recent example is the experience of Park Forest, Illinois. Within the past year or so, El Paso, Texas, also attracted nation-wide interest with announcements of its "home-style" classroom units. Many other places, especially where entire neighborhoods or developments are controlled by a single construction firm or syndicate, have also found this to be a useful temporary solution.

Let us take the experience of Park Forest, which has in just seven years grown from farm land into a community now approaching 30,000 residents. In 1948-49, a mere handful of elementary pupils were living in Park Forest; and neighboring Chicago Heights (which itself had school jurisdiction over a small portion of the new village) accepted the children on a tui-



ROBERT H. ANDERSON

The "Forest Boulevard School," an eight-family housing apartment which was converted into a temporary sixteen-classroom school in Park Forest, Illinois.

tion basis. In this instance, admittedly not typical, the developer paid the tuition costs since no tax base as yet existed. In 1949-50, following the organization of a new district and the election in April, 1949, of the first Board of Education, the developer made available an 8-family apartment building (see photograph) for a temporary school. In this building, the bathrooms and kitchen sinks were installed in the usual manner, but the walls and closets were omitted wherever possible within each apartment in order to provide suitable classroom space. The upstairs classrooms, comprising the space usually found in two bedrooms, had about 425 square feet of usable space and had a typical family-type bathroom conveniently at hand (in fact, it was boasted that here was the only public school in the world with 8 real bathtubs!). The downstairs area, where certain load-bearing walls could not be omitted, had nearly 500 square feet of space less well arranged, and an extra toilet was in-

stalled in the basement for the use of the downstairs class. Although in the five years that followed this space was frequently overcrowded (18-20 was a realistic class capacity, but enrollments over 30 were sometimes inescapable), and although acoustical and lighting difficulties were severe, this proved to be a reasonably good temporary solution with some unique and unexpected advantages, especially in providing home-like surroundings for the younger children.

In the second year, with permanent schools on the way but not yet available, a second 8-family apartment building was loaned by the developer to the school district. This time, however, it was a building already completed and therefore all walls and closets were already included. Especially upstairs, where the bedroom walls necessitated isolated sub-groups, teaching was very difficult, indeed.

A new approach was tried in the third and fourth years when, again with the generous help of the developer, individual ranch-type houses were put temporarily into use as extra schoolhouses. Again, the existence of walls interfered with seating the entire class in one space; but because a larger total space (well over 600 square feet) was available and because of the privacy each house enjoyed, the arrangement was quite satisfactory using one class to a house as long as class sizes were kept below 25.

In a new section of Park Forest, which happened to be in another county and hence in a neighboring school district, the developer proposed to construct a number of similar buildings and rent them to the school

district for as long a time as they were needed. It was proposed that these be built along the perimeter of a large site reserved for an eventual permanent school. Their design was such that they would provide rectangular classroom space of reasonable size; and they could eventually be re-converted to home dwellings which would then be sold to private owners.

Feelings within the community ran very high, both for and against this interesting proposal. Its proponents recognized an economical and defensible temporary arrangement; its opponents objected to their location (because it would cut down the size of the eventual permanent school site) and because they feared they were getting into not a temporary but a permanent arrangement. Finally the neighboring school board, after hearing numerous arguments on the case, agreed to accept the company's proposal. In the 1954-55 school year, this history-making arrangement goes into effect.

Another interesting aspect of the Park Forest story is the method which was used to finance the permanent elementary schools, of which there are presently five with a gross value of over \$2,300,000. Since Illinois assessment and tax procedure ordinarily gives a new home owner a year or two of "tax lag" advantage, the assessed evaluation is constantly behind schedule and children report for classes a year or more before their homes are capable of producing operating and construction revenues. A serious problem anywhere where growth is rapid, it is spectacularly serious in a place like Park Forest where no established tax base existed previously.



ROBERT H. ANDERSON

Pupils and recreation director in the living room-dining room downstairs area. Note furniture and equipment arrangements.

The solution was unique in American school financing history. The developer (American Community Builders, Inc.) encouraged the Illinois Legislature to adopt permissive legislation, then used that law to form a not-for-profit corporation with the power to build public schools and rent these schools to the community under a lease requiring eventual purchase. Four of the five existing schools were built in this manner, and by early 1955 it is hoped that all but one will be owned by the school district through application of the proceeds of bond issues and credited rental payments.

In addition to sending pupils in the early years to Chicago Heights on a tuition basis, by the way, the elementary district also rented three rooms from the township high school during one year. These but illustrate the various ways separate school districts can help each other in periods of overcrowding.

Obviously, Park Forest's experience is somewhat unusual and few commercial developers are interested in giving direct or indirect help to public schools

to that extent. Furthermore, much can be said about the unwholesome and frustrating factors which can enter the picture when a public body is dependent upon a private individual or corporation for help, however generous and well-meaning may be the persons involved. Nevertheless, the record shows that the rental or ownership of dwelling units (or equivalent spaces) can be a reasonably good temporary solution to overcrowding.

The record seems also to show that the success of any such arrangement depends, by and large, upon the intelligence and sincerity of the local community as expressed through its leadership people. Cooperation was the only possible method of solving Park Forest's problem: cooperation with other school districts, cooperation with state officials, cooperation with the developer. The success of the schools depended upon keeping a nice balance between the cheerful acceptance of limited facilities and the energetic pursuit of permanent replacements therefor.

Mention should also be made, as we speak of temporary facilities, of the growing tendency of school districts to acquire large homes and estates which can be used for either administrative space or instructional purposes. Because of their roominess, many of these older homes are quite suitable for public use. Moline, Illinois, has such a building for its administrative headquarters, thus freeing administrative space in school buildings for other purposes. Recently, the Willoughby-Eastlake school district in Ohio purchased the Tucker estate for \$150,000 from Western Reserve University, thus

acquiring 150 acres, four barns, and a 20-room mansion with six fireplaces and a valuable pipe organ. Although renovation and maintenance costs must be carefully figured, it is evident that such "bargain properties" are frequently an excellent investment.

In summary, the ever-increasing overcrowding in today's schools is an alarming threat to public education which must be met by defensible measures. Although adequate standards and definitions are needed about overcrowding and its effects, it is clear that communities must become genuinely concerned about it before solutions will be possible. Communities whose resources are adequate can and should avoid unnecessary temporary arrangements, whereas communities with short-term financial handicaps are the ones more likely to seek for-the-time-being solutions. Less fortunate

communities, alas, have little hope for either temporary or permanent solutions in many, many cases.

Although research is badly needed to provide help in choosing between alternatives, empirical evidence from the experience of many communities suggests that under certain circumstances various arrangements are feasible and even satisfactory. The alternatives include more intensive use of existing facilities, renting space from other institutions, renting space locally, sending tuition pupils outside the district, erecting barracks or equivalent temporary buildings, and operating converted dwelling units as schoolhouses. The success of any of these arrangements is a direct outgrowth of the extent to which the local community faces its problems with understanding, intelligence and energy.

Announcing



A PART OF THE
RAND McNALLY
SOCIAL STUDIES SERIES

Beyond Our Borders

Nystrom • Jones • Harter

FOR THE FIRST TIME . . .

an effective "blending" of the geography and history of our American neighbors—Canada and Latin America.

- a simple and clear "correlation" of the conditioning influences of geography and the growth of social patterns that is history.
- Rand McNally's "new-dimensional" maps.

R A N D M c N A L L Y & C O M P A N Y

P.O. Box 7600

Chicago, Illinois

Copyright © 1954 by the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. All rights reserved.