

Uniting Forces to Improve Education

Column Editor: Francis L. Drag

Contributor: H. Arnold Perry

WE HOLD no grand illusions as to the power of this column "to unite forces to improve education." Eight issues of 900 to 1,500 words each can, however, bring to the readers of *Educational Leadership* accounts of a number of outstanding efforts by educators and other citizens at this crucial period in the development of American education who are making positive contributions which should be shared with others. This is the purpose for which the column was created by the Editorial Board at the request of the ASCD Executive Committee.

Following issuance of the 1953 ASCD Yearbook, *Forces Affecting American Education*, the Executive Committee hoped to capitalize upon the sound background materials in this volume by publishing current examples of good practices to demonstrate that what educators know about education can be effectively communicated to other educators as well as to lay citizens. To the extent that this column can report salient practices in the American educational scene, it

will become a "force" in uniting all of us in our effort to improve practices and especially to convey to others the efficacy of American education.

This is your column. What it reports—the good it will ultimately do—will depend upon the extent and the quality of materials it uses. What it reports will come from the "grass roots" of the American school system. Are you and your associates engaged in an educational venture—or do you know of others who are—which is "uniting forces to improve education" in your community? If so, won't you assume the responsibility for bringing an account of your program to an even wider audience by preparing a brief description of it—say 300 to 400 words—for our consideration and possible publication in this column? Please mail materials to the undersigned, giving full details as to authorship, school system, and the names and titles of others to be included in credit lines.

—FRANCIS L. DRAG, *assistant superintendent, San Diego County Schools, San Diego, California.*

School Evaluations Use Audio-Visual Aids

A FORCEFUL presentation of findings following school evaluations is difficult to make. Frequently those who participate in the evaluations have a keen interest in the final report; yet others tend to become bored when a large amount of factual data and statis-

tics is presented. Members of the staff of the Cooperative Project in Educational Administration (Kellogg) at the University of North Carolina have been experimenting with new ways to present findings of committees of lay and professional groups that have been

evaluating county school systems and individual schools within county school systems.

With the help of consultants from the university, superintendents of public schools in the seven counties included in the North Carolina Project have each appointed a lay and professional advisory committee. These committees have initiated activities designed to answer, particularly for lay citizens, the question "How good are our schools?" To facilitate appraisals, the groups use *Evaluating the Elementary Schools*, published by the Southern Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools, Atlanta, Georgia, and *Evaluation Criteria*, published by the Cooperative Study of Secondary School Standards, Washington, D. C.

Although these instruments were applied to individual schools, the reports by the evaluation committees pointed out many common problems which needed to be attacked on a county-wide basis. These problems were analyzed and carefully studied first by local groups and then by the county lay and professional committee. Both local and county groups were concerned with the total public school program from grades 1 through 12, and with all aspects of school administration and supervision which are handled through the office of the county superintendent of schools.

Problems studied were listed under 20 headings such as buildings, equipment, transportation, child feeding, health and sanitation, the curriculum, materials for teaching, the instructional staff, pupil personnel and guidance, special school services, and professional leadership. After all the

evaluation reports were in and the data for the county had been assembled, the county lay and professional committee was called together to study the combined report and to make suggestions regarding presentation of the material to the lay and professional groups throughout the county which had not had the advantage of participating in the evaluation.

A theater owner suggested that we try to show the public current conditions in the county school system by means of motion pictures and projected slides. The group readily accepted this idea. A first attempt was made with black and white motion pictures. This medium was found to be costly and, through lack of color, it failed to give a realistic picture of actual conditions. Following this attempt, the group decided that it would be cheaper and perhaps better to use 2" by 2" color slides. These slides would not only give good color, but would permit "pacing" in their classroom use. As much time as needed could be spent on any one topic or on any one scene or combination of scenes. These slides also greatly simplified editing of the final sequence.

After much study and discussion of the report, the county groups suggested some of the things that should be photographed—scenes showing the seriousness of such problems as school-leaving, daily absences, teacher demand and supply, financing necessary to meet inflated building costs and increasing enrollments. Much information that had been presented in colored graphs and pictographs, made by professionals and by high school students, was photographed, and these slides were

inserted at proper places along with scenes of actual school conditions.

Film Strips Are Helpful

Consultants at the meeting jotted down suggestions made by committee members. They then planned a rough shooting script for the photographer to use as he visited various schools in the county. In preparing the first presentation of the photographs of evaluation, more than 300 individual color slides were examined. These were mostly inside scenes made by flashlight; the total cost of materials was about \$60.00. Finally 110 slides were chosen, arranged in logical sequence and described in a script which took about 45 minutes to present. This script was put on magnetic tape by the chairman of the county lay and professional committee and was synchronized with the showing of the color slides. The reaction in Duplin County, the first administrative unit in which this was attempted, was most favorable. Requests came from Parent-Teacher Associations, civic clubs, churches, high schools and other groups for use of the slides. So great was the number of requests, it was decided to have film strips made. This was arranged through a Chicago firm at a cost of \$264 for five film strips in color. This speeded up the showing of the series. These film strips were found to be helpful in interesting people in a state \$50,000,000 school bond issue which was voted upon a few weeks later. Duplin County, a distinctly rural county ranking ninth from the bottom in income per family among the state's 100 counties, carried this bond issue by a majority of

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31 to 1. In addition, the percentage of the population going to the polls was the highest of any distinctly rural county in the state. The superintendent, the chairman of the county board of education, and other leaders of the county attributed this fine showing to the use that had been made of the color slides which had portrayed the educational needs of the county.

As this project developed, lay citizens took more and more interest and showed signs of developing leadership. Public opinion was found to be strongly behind school program changes suggested in the slide series and in the commentary spoken by the chairman of the lay and professional committee.

—H. ARNOLD PERRY, dean, School of Education, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.

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