

# Uniting Forces to Improve Education

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*This column is concerned with uniting forces to improve education. The forces discussed here are those we would put at the head of any list. But we do not always find these forces working together and with a common point of view. For this reason, if for no other, it is worth while for educators to know something about the San Diego County Curriculum Planning Committee.*

## We Plan Together

MISS THOMPSON kicked off her shoes with a groan. "Brother, what a day! And now to a CPC meeting down in San Diego." She looked at her toes sadly. Miss Edwards, drawing a new mouth before the mirror in the teachers' lounge, muttered through unmoving lips, "Wh' ki' 'eeting?" Satisfied with her art work, she turned. "CPC? What's that? Remember, I'm new here."

Miss Thompson massaged her instep. "The San Diego County Curriculum Planning Committee. Remember? At preschool workshop?"

"Not much, I'm afraid," confessed Miss Edwards, mourning a chipped nail. "Something about curriculum work done by administrators, teachers, trustees and parents. I don't know. In my last school we stayed as far away from trustees as possible, and hated to see parents coming to school."

"Yes, I know schools like that. Well, CPC includes representatives from all school districts and rural teachers' clubs in the county, and from the county teachers, administrators, trustees and PTA organizations, and the county of-

fice. It's a group that works cooperatively—which is probably the most important thing to remember about it."

Miss Edwards was frowning. "What do they do—just talk?"

"We talk a lot, but that's not all we do." Miss Thompson struggled into her shoes and stood up. "How about riding down to the meeting with me? You'll enjoy it. But I warn you—we meet from four to eight in the evening, and have dinner together. Like most of us, you'll have to pay your own way."

"Four to eight's a long time." Miss Edwards hesitated.

"Sometimes, though, it's not long enough," said Miss Thompson. "We meet once a month for four hours. But twice a year we go to a camp up in the mountains, and work from Friday afternoon through Saturday afternoon. Come along. You'll enjoy it."

Miss Edwards agreed. "Okay. I love the ride down the coast."

As they rode along the coast highway, Miss Thompson continued. "CPC was started about—let's see, in May 1949. We had talked about needing a

curriculum planning and coordinating group for a long time. It came to a head that spring. The county office and the county teachers, administrators, trustees and parent organizations had worked closely together for quite a while, so it was natural for them to get together and to plan for CPC. I remember the first announcement: 'CPC--Building a Strong Educational Structure in San Diego County Through Cooperative Curriculum Planning.'

"That's a big mouthful." Miss Edwards was looking dreamily over the ocean. "What did they think it meant?"

"It is a mouthful." Miss Thompson nodded vigorously. "But I can tell you what it means. It means that a lot of us throughout the county are stewing over the same curriculum problems, and that some of us have pretty good answers that others can use. It means that a better curriculum can be planned in terms of the kind of world we live in, the needs of boys and girls we teach, and the democratic values we believe in. This can be done more effectively by teachers working at a professional level in their own communities than it can by experts handing down the 'word from on high.' It means that what happens during music period is important during science period, and that what happens at home is important at school. It means that parents, trustees, administrators, teachers and county staff members all are working toward the same goals, and that we can get there faster if we work together." Miss Thompson glanced at her companion. "Sorry—I didn't mean to make a speech." Miss Edwards had

turned towards her and was listening intently. "Look," she said, "this is all well and good. But it sounds like just a lot of good theory."

### Theory at Work

Miss Thompson shrugged. "Yes, but this is theory at work. And it's a hard job to put it to work. We don't always go as fast as we'd like. Some of us get impatient. But when we do act, we act together. It's a truly democratic organization fulfilling truly democratic purposes."

"But what kinds of things does this CPC do?" Miss Edwards had forgotten the beauties of the Pacific.

"Wish I could remember them all. In the first place, CPC serves as a means of exchanging information on curriculum development activities throughout the county. So one of its biggest accomplishments is to make 'sharing' easier. Time is given to this at almost every meeting. Members also have helped build a file of curriculum materials and reports of curriculum activities. Then, too, with the approval and financial assistance of the County Board of Education, the *Curriculum Journal* was established to report on CPC activities, to give recognition to teachers who are doing a good job, to report on work in curriculum development being done at the local, county, state and national levels, and to review educational literature. CPC works very closely with the County Board of Education, the policy-making body for the county. For example, CPC recommended to the County Board that the San Diego County schools should participate in the Child Study Project, under the direction of Daniel Prescott,

of the University of Maryland. Do you know about the project? How teachers, through the study of one child by each teacher, work to improve their understanding and their ability better to meet the needs of all children? We've had a Child Study Program for several years now, and this year CPC is interested in evaluating the results of our participation.

"I can't begin to tell you all the things we've done, the ideas we've shared, the consultants who have talked with us, the district projects begun through interest developed by CPC. There are some county-wide developments, though, that I can tell you about. For one thing, we've started CAPC's."

Miss Edwards blinked. "What are Capsics?" Miss Thompson laughed. "It's C.A.P.C.—the initials of Curriculum Area Planning Committee. CPC, with over sixty members, is just too big to do detailed planning. So CAPC's have been organized. Each represents one curriculum area. We have ten now. Each has, as members, at least one administrator, one CPC member, one county staff member, and several teachers. These people are the idea men."

"I don't see how these people can work—can plan for the entire county."

"Well, let me give you some examples. The Library CAPC, after a lot of study, recommended some policy changes for the county schools library. The recommendations were referred to CPC where they were discussed and accepted, and then were forwarded through the Superintendent of County Schools to the County Board of Education. The Board approved them and put them into operation. The County

Board is legally responsible for course of study materials. The Language Arts CAPC studied the problem of course of study materials in language arts, and made recommendations to CPC as to the kinds of materials which would be most valuable for teachers. The CAPC finished its work when its recommendations were approved and put into action by CPC and by the County Board. The CAPC then turned its attention to other problems in teaching the language arts. Does any of this make sense to you?"

"I'm beginning to see some sense in it. But where do the trustees and parents fit in?"

"PTA and trustee representatives may be members of any of the CPC committees, or any of the CAPC's. They also, as members of CPC, take part in discussion of recommendations, and in voting on ways to put the approved recommendations into operation. Through the reports that representatives take back to their groups, the parents and trustees know how administrators and teachers are thinking, and administrators and teachers know how parents and trustees are thinking. They all have a part in the initial planning of any curriculum improvement program. It's a shared responsibility."

Miss Thompson skilfully dodged a carload of sailors, and turned into the parking lot of the County Schools Service Center. "We're early; there are still some parking places. Well, four hours from now you'll know a lot more about CPC. And I guarantee you'll think it's time well spent."

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