

Establishing

Minimum State Curriculum Requirements

SOME time ago the writers became interested in investigating state-level curriculum policies and practices, particularly those associated with the establishment of minimum curriculum requirements. Questionnaires were submitted to chief state school officers in the late summer of 1960, and all 50 states responded.

Following is a brief account of the agencies responsible for establishing minimum state standards and the procedures employed in their determination as reported by the chief state school officers or their representatives.

Responsible Agencies

Forty-six of the 50 states identified responsible authorities; single agencies in 40 states, and two to four agencies in six states. Four states reported no agency or agencies responsible for establishing minimum requirements.

State boards of education established standards more often than any other agency; state curriculum committees least often. Twenty-five of the 50 states identified state boards, while only one

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state cited the state curriculum committees as the agency of major authority.

Nine states indicated that the state department of education represented the single authority responsible for establishing minimum curriculum requirements. State legislatures were the single authorities in five states.

Six states reported a combination of two or more responsible agencies, two involving state legislatures and state boards, one the state department and state board. One state listed three agencies: the state legislature, the state board of education, and the state department of education. Two states listed four agencies including state legislatures, state boards of education, state departments of education, and local authorities.

Gaining Approval for New Requirements

Basic procedures utilized by 50 states to alter existing minimum curriculum standards are summarized here under the major authority responsible for final acceptance or rejection.

State boards of education. Plans were developed with state departments of education in nine states for official processing and recommendation to the state boards. In four states curriculum commit-

tees, advisory committees, or other groups working with state departments of education considered suggestions from various levels and made recommendations to their state boards.

One state channeled proposals for new requirements through a secondary principals' group to the director of secondary education for presentation before the state department for *possible* recommendation to the state board of education. Plans for changes in minimum requirements in one state were developed by the department of education and submitted to principals' groups and an advisory council of superintendents. Proposals as modified were then submitted to the state board of education.

Recommendations for additions to existing minimum requirements in three states came from such sources as local teachers' groups, local curriculum committees, colleges and universities, and the professional staffs of state boards or state superintendents. Recommendations from these groups were made directly to the state boards. In one state recommendations to the state board were made by the state department of education through the state superintendent. The recommendations presented through the state superintendent were based upon a cooperative study with the representatives of 24 local school districts.

The state superintendent of public instruction in one state was responsible for preparing courses of study subject to the final approval of the state board of education. In another state, plans of local groups were reviewed before a state professional association for possible presentation to the state superintendent for analysis. Official recommendations to the state board were then made up by the state superintendent.

A state-wide advisory committee in

one state made recommendations for changes directly to the state board of education. In another state a director and 11 assistant directors worked out proposals for minimum state requirements and presented them directly to the state board.

Initiation of plans for new requirements in one state came as the result of field study and recommendations by subject specialists. In this instance, the official recommendations to the state board were transmitted through a state accreditation committee.

State departments of education. Following a study of proposed new requirements by state curriculum committees or advisory groups, four states authorized special conferences to consider the proposals before final decision was made by the state departments.

Recommendations in one state were passed on to the staff of the state superintendent by a committee on courses of study and the staff of the state department of education. The superintendent then submitted plans to the state board for approval of the state department of education.

In one state plans for new requirements were directed to the assistant commissioner of education, who conferred with the staff of the instructional division. A written proposal was then submitted to the state board of education. The assistant commissioner or a designated state department official was then required to hold an open hearing. Following the hearing, the state board acted on the proposal for the state department.

A special committee was responsible for recommendations for new requirements in one state. Recommendations of the committee were directed to the state

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The possibility of a joint national conference in the future should not be ruled out. However, major efforts should be directed toward sharing resources at every operational level to solve common problems. The Joint ASCD-DAVI Committee feels that the ultimate goal is to improve the working relationships in local school systems.

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commissioner and the state board who were authorized by the state department to make the final decision. Recommendations for new requirements in one state were required to pass through a superintendents' advisory commission and a state association of school boards before reaching the state department of education.

One state indicated that the state department of education was the final authority in the approval of new requirements, but did not describe procedures.

State legislatures. In five states the staffs of state departments, steering committees, and local school districts, along with other groups, made recommendations concerning changes in minimum requirements which were then made official through legislation.

State committees or commissions. A state accreditation commission, which was a standing committee of the state education association, worked closely with state and local groups in one state. Final passage of a recommendation by this commission was subject to the approval of a house of delegates of the state education association.

Miscellaneous authorities. Two states listed four authorities jointly responsible for establishing minimum curriculum requirements, including state boards of education, state departments of education, state legislatures, and state curriculum committees. In one of the states, proposals for new requirements originated with a secondary education council or a state examinations board through the state commissioner. In the other state, proposals were reviewed by a state council on education after approval was reached in the state commissioner's office.

In two states some requirements were mandated by law, while others were approved by the state board of education after being processed through a steering committee and the state department staff. In another state some requirements were mandated by law, others being jointly approved by the state department and the state board. Recommendations to the state department and state board passed through a state committee on accreditation standards.

The state board and state department of education were described as jointly responsible for minimum requirements in one state. Recommendations to these authorities originated with selected state committees.

In summary, 40 of the 50 states indicated a single responsible agency; 25, the state board of education; nine, the state department; five, the state legislature; and one, the state curriculum committee. Combined authorities were reported by six states, with four states reporting no agency.

No clear pattern of procedures for establishing minimum requirements was common to a majority of states. Most of the procedures, even though described in broad terms, were common only to a small number of states.

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