

## The State Department of Education

*... helps curriculum planning*

PROGRAM-WISE, curriculum planning at state level can be carried on in one of three ways—formally, informally, or a combination of these two. In informal types of programs, local school systems plan their own curricula. By means of informal contacts they maintain a widespread interchange of ideas and help throughout the state. Consultant help in this work is upon request from the State Department of Education, from institutions of higher learning and other sources, both regional and national. School systems in various sections of the state pool their efforts to conduct workshops and institutes dealing with curriculum problems.

In contrast to informal programs, with no curriculum coordinators and no committees, some states have developed formal programs for curriculum planning. A definitely organized program can serve as an important factor in helping local school systems become involved in a significant and worthy enterprise. It is also more effective to prepare and distribute useful materials through some

kind of formal organization. Curriculum leadership working on a state level also serves as a clearinghouse for ideas and acts as a central agency to which suggestions may be directed for some kind of action.

In actual practice, curriculum planning is usually the result of a combination of formal and informal types of programs. State staff members visit schools and school districts periodically. They often serve as consultants. They participate in school surveys and self-studies. They review reports and carry on evaluation for accreditation. These activities are aimed at encouraging local schools to meet required standards. Other activities under the supervision of state departments of education are directed toward encouraging local leadership to provide better services through consultants, conferences, workshops, and production of curriculum materials and other in-service aids.

Although curriculum planning programs exist at state level, it is generally recognized that major responsibility for developing curricula rests with local school authorities. This article summarizes some of the ways in which the State Department of Education in Florida has assisted local school authorities in carrying out this responsibility, gives illustra-

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*John P. McIntyre has recently become Director of Curriculum, Joint Council on Economic Education, New York, N. Y.; previously he had been Curriculum Specialist, Division of Instructional Services, State Department of Education, Tallahassee, Florida.*

tions of some ways in which state curriculum committees have worked, and concludes with a description of conditions favorable to curriculum planning at the state level in Florida.

### State Department at Work

The preparation of curriculum guides and handbooks has been one of the major activities designed and continually worked at in order to foster professional growth of educational personnel in Florida. Work on curriculum publications has been one vehicle through which the problems of curriculum planning have been attacked. This work has had three main purposes: (a) to provide in the completed publications a broad, general framework within which locally produced guides and handbooks of more specific nature could be developed; (b) to afford opportunities for exchange of information and experience in curriculum improvement programs; and (c) to develop leadership in curriculum planning among local personnel working on state-level committees so that curriculum planning may in turn take place at the "grass roots."

Early in the state's curriculum program, materials were usually developed through a series of curriculum workshops held during the summer at state universities. Teachers, principals, supervisors, superintendents, State Department of Education personnel, college and university staff members, and sometimes lay citizens participated in the workshops. To some extent, workshops are still used for this purpose.

Other procedures, however, have been used by the Department in recent years in order to secure a wider degree of participation from educational personnel in the state. Some national curriculum

programs have been coordinated through curriculum committees. Supervisors and teachers have cooperated in developing materials for the committees. Members of professional associations in various subject areas have cooperated in projects. Accreditation standards have been revised, and criteria for textbook adoptions have been developed by curriculum committees. These committees have also designated county contact persons to work with them. Specialists in various disciplines in which curriculum materials are being developed have been invited to work with committees and have reviewed materials developed by them for accuracy and up-to-date information.

Examples of ways in which curriculum planning has been done in the State of Florida follow:

#### Example 1. Coordination with National Programs

It was through the initial efforts of the State Secondary Science Curriculum Guide Committee that the attention of physics teachers in Florida was directed to the work of the Physical Science Study Committee. As a result of this initial contact and follow-up activities of state universities, more than 80 percent of physics students in Florida are now using PSSC materials, and more than 85 percent of the state's physics teachers have received in-service education in teaching the PSSC course.

Secondary Mathematics Curriculum Guide Committee members are following closely the work of national mathematics study groups, and some are actively involved in testing or supervising the evaluation of materials prepared by these groups. In resource-use education, the state committee was helped in its work by the leadership, suggestions and materials provided by the Conservation

and Resource-Use Education Project of the Joint Council on Economic Education. Much of the follow-up work in an on-going program of resource-use education has been the result of contact with the CRUE Project. This same state committee has also provided leadership in the regional conservation resource-use education project of the Southern States Work Conference. A state guide produced by a university workshop, *Athletic Coaching in Florida Schools*, has been adapted and published as a nation-wide guide by the American Association for Health, Physical Education and Recreation. Some state committees have coordinated their work in curriculum planning with that going on in the nation.

#### Example 2. Cooperation with State Professional Associations

Curriculum committees have also helped strengthen and emphasize the importance of state professional associations. Through cooperation with such groups as the Florida Education Association, the Florida Council for the Social Studies, the Florida Art Education Association, and others, state committees have been involving members and officers of these associations in state curriculum planning programs. Officers of these groups are often selected as members of curriculum committees.

State-wide association meetings are occasionally centered on the evaluation of curriculum materials whenever they are published in work draft form. Thus, the materials can be more thoroughly discussed and critically evaluated before they are printed and distributed throughout the state. This year, work drafts of the state art guide and the language arts guide are to be evaluated in state-wide conferences of the state art and the language arts associations.

#### Example 3. Individual Teacher, Supervisor—State Committee Interaction

An example of individual teacher and supervisor cooperation with a state committee is the manner in which the total scope and sequence for the Secondary Art Guide have been developed. Individual art supervisors and teachers were asked to develop scope and sequence in different art areas such as drawing and painting, forming and constructing, observing and appreciating. More than 50 art teachers and supervisors have participated in this work, following a general outline or pattern of suggestions set up by the state committee.

The results have been beneficial to the state committee in developing an over-all scope and sequence for secondary art. Teachers and supervisors have also become experienced in the skills and understanding necessary for this task and can proceed with similar work of more specific nature at the local level.

In order to facilitate communication between state committees and supervisors, principals and teachers in the counties, state committees have requested county superintendents to designate leadership persons to provide liaison between them and teachers in schools. Both the elementary social studies and the resource-use education committees have cooperated with contact persons in counties throughout the state in conducting surveys, promoting effective use of materials, and evaluating committee materials by having them used in classroom situations. District conferences of these contact persons in different areas of the state have provided effective two-way communication between state committees and persons at the local level.

#### Example 4. Consultative Services to Other State Committees

Curriculum committees have also acted as consultants to other state committees. A state committee is now in the process of revising state accreditation standards. Some curriculum committees have suggested revisions of the standards to bring them in line with recommendations contained in state curriculum materials. They have also suggested to the State Courses of Study Committee criteria for textbook adoptions in those areas for which the committees are responsible. As a result, textbooks have been adopted and accreditation standards have been revised in agreement with state curriculum materials being developed.

#### Example 5. Specialist—Committee Interaction

Before curriculum material is published in work draft form, specialists in the subject areas covered by the material are asked to review the material for accuracy and recency. Certain material in the elementary science curriculum guide, for example, has been checked by a meteorologist, geologists, agricultural specialists, a forester, and biologists. Faculty members of departments in state universities other than education have also participated in this work. In addition, an arts and sciences faculty member from a state university is serving on the state Secondary Mathematics Curriculum Guide Committee and one on the Language Arts Curriculum Guide Committee. Through review of materials and participation as committee members, avenues of communication are opened between specialists in the various subject matter areas and teachers and supervisors in the schools.

These examples serve to indicate that state-wide curriculum planning through state curriculum guide committees has

stimulated considerable study and curriculum planning at the local level. At the same time, concerns about curriculum originating in individual schools have affected state-wide committee planning and work. The process then works both ways, from the local level to the state level as well as in reverse.

Certain conditions in Florida have facilitated curriculum planning. The fact that there are only 67 county school districts in the entire state—each with a superintendent and a school board—makes two-way communication between state and local districts more effective and direct. In each county, there are one or more supervisors through whom the state committees can work. State funds are available to pay for some of the expenses for state-wide curriculum committee meetings and conferences. Staff members of the state's colleges and universities and members of the state's professional education organizations work closely with the Department and cooperate with state curriculum committees. Many of the state's teachers who have formerly taught in other states are able to share their knowledge and experience with others through participation in the state committee's work.

These and other favorable conditions make it possible to do significant curriculum planning in spite of such problems as rapid growth in pupil and teacher personnel; limited time, staff and finances; considerable distances involved in traveling to a central location in the state. Staff members in the Department actively participate in the work of curriculum planning with the state committees and are encouraged by the varied programs and products developed by the different committees. Such planning at the state level, it is believed, serves to assist local leadership.

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