

Establishing Curriculum Requirements

Trends in state-level policies and practices

THE following is a report of responsible agencies and procedures used by these agencies in establishing minimum curriculum standards. The report is based on a study designed to provide data necessary for the identification of long-term trends in state-level curriculum policy and practice.

Questionnaires were submitted to the fifty chief state education officers. All fifty state officers returned completed questionnaires.

Responsible Agencies

Forty-three states identified some state-level authority or authorities. Single agencies represented the major authority in thirty-five states, while seven states reported two authorities and one state, three authorities. State boards of education established requirements more often than any other agency, state legislatures least often. State departments were identified as responsible agencies in four states.

As the following data show, there has

been a trend away from state legislatures as authorities and more recently away from state departments. At the same time there appears to have been a trend toward state boards as responsible agencies.

Authority	1962-68	1959-60 ¹	1954-55 ²
State Board	29	25	15
State Department	4	9	8
State Legislature	2	5	9
State Curriculum Committee	--	1	--

Eight states reported authority vested in a combination of two or more agencies, three involving state boards and state legislatures, three involving state boards and state departments, one the State Department and State Curriculum Committee and one the State Legislature, State Board and the State Department.

Changes in the number of states listing two or more agencies as authorities for the approval of new course require-

¹ Roy L. Cox and Earl M. Ramer. "Establishing Minimum State Curriculum Requirements." *Educational Leadership* 19: 24-25, 77; October 1961. p. 24.

² Howard H. Cummings and Helen K. Mackintosh. *Curriculum Responsibilities of State Departments of Education*. Washington, D.C.: Superintendent of Documents, United States Government Printing Office, 1958. p. 11-12.

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ments were small in most instances as is shown by the following:

Authority	1962-63	1959-60 ³	1954-55 ⁴
State Board—State Legislature	3	2	7
State Board—State Department	3	1	—
State Department— State Curriculum Committee	1	—	—
State Legislature— State Board— State Department	1	3	1

Gaining Approval for Required Courses

Procedures followed in adding new course requirements are summarized briefly under the major authority responsible for final acceptance or rejection. Responses were more distinct than in 1959-60; however, procedures were so informal in some states that the line separating these states from the states reporting no recognized procedure was sometimes thinly drawn.

State Boards of Education. Recommendations to state boards by or through state departments were basic to the procedure followed in fourteen of the twenty-nine states recognizing state boards as single authorities. Recommendations in eleven of these states either originated at the state department level or were suggested to the state departments by public school officials or college and university specialists. One of the eleven states provided opportunities for public hearings following preliminary approval of new courses. The staff of one State Department submitted recommendations directly to the State Board. In another state, recommendations from various levels were screened by the State Department and submitted to the State Board together with recommendations

³ Cox and Ramer, *op. cit.*

⁴ Cummings and Mackintosh, *op. cit.*

from the State Superintendent of Education. One state indicated that even though final approval was by the State Board, great influence was exerted by a regional accrediting committee.

Recommendations by state superintendents with the advice and suggestions of state department personnel were found to be accepted procedures in six states. Four of these states allowed recommendations to be made directly to the state boards. The Superintendent of Education of one of these states submitted recommendations to the State Board through a State Council. In the remaining state the Superintendent of Education was responsible for submitting proposals to the State Board. These plans had been worked out at various levels and submitted to his office by the State Accreditation Committee.

State committees proposed changes in minimum requirements to the boards of education in four states. In one of these states the committee developed materials for presentation to the State Board. The State Department in another of these states appointed committees to study the need for changes in curriculum requirements. After an intensive study of existing requirements, a special committee appointed by one state recommended changes directly to the State Board. Advisory committees in the fourth state were charged with the task of developing plans for new requirements. Following a field trial, these plans were submitted to the State Board for approval.

In one state the Director of Secondary Education recommended changes in state-level requirements directly to the State Board. Four states listing state boards as responsible agencies identified no specific procedures for proposing new required courses.

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on the side which they value highly, such as the ability to speak out in groups of their peers and the ability to challenge a status authority figure (the instructor). Former students report that group experiences stand out in their memories above experiences in regular classes and that they treasure highly the friendships established in joint activities with fellow students.

Techniques used in such classes will include various combinations and proportions of small group discussion, large group discussion, committees, panels, symposia, opposing panels, group observers, and the like. It seems to matter little which procedures are used, except as the instructor and the class find themselves better able to handle some than others. What does matter greatly is that the instructor have faith in student ability, knowledge of group processes, and the knowledge that good learning must be the responsibility of the student.

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State Departments of Education. Advisory councils or committees made recommendations directly to the state departments of two states. In two other states, regional and state accrediting commissions were described as cooperating agencies with the state departments.

State Legislature. The State Board and State Department of one state and the State Superintendent's Association of another state were described as important influences leading to legislative action in curriculum matters.

Combined Authority. State-wide committees recommended changes in requirements to the state boards and state departments of two states. In the other state reporting state boards and state

departments as joint authorities, various groups were reported as recommending, advising or in other ways influencing their action.

Several groups recommended changes to the state boards and state legislatures of three states. One of these states reported extensive use of advisory committees. Another reported that in some instances pressures from special interest groups were exerted. In the third state the State Committee on Accreditation Standards proposed changes in curriculum requirements through the State Department and the School Board. Additional requirements could be established in this state through legislation.

Teachers, supervisors, administrators and college specialists in one state were asked for comments on curriculum guides worked out by state curriculum committees. These committees were appointed by and worked with the State Department in establishing new requirements.

In only one state were three state-level agencies identified as responsible for the approval of new required courses. Although several states involved a variety of agencies, in each case one or two were assigned the major responsibility. The State Legislature of this state could establish either general or specific requirements. In the case of the former, the State Board established the necessary specific requirements with the assistance of the State Department. The State Board could establish requirements on its own initiative.

Seven states reported no major state-level authority. In each of these states, requirements were established locally. The services of state department consultants, standards committees, accreditation officials or state department staff were usually available to these schools or school districts upon request.

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