

Dover elementary principals' strong leadership cited in report

(EDITOR'S NOTE: This is the first in a series of articles detailing the findings of an Ohio State University survey team which led it to the conclusion that the Dover and New Philadelphia school districts should merge.)

Program, the survey team was quick to note, is the element of a school system that is most vital to the learning process.

"In this study," they said, "program is broadly conceived to include not only the things to be learned but also the services to be rendered and the policy tools and techniques necessary to provide the things to be learned."

"The educational program is the foundation upon which the system is built. Other elements exist to serve or support the program."

This article will deal with the strengths and weaknesses of the Dover school system's elementary program. Those of the secondary program, as well as the strengths and weaknesses of New Philadelphia's elementary and secondary programs, will be outlined in subsequent articles.

Among the Dover elementary strengths was the fact that a

non-graded, continuous progress curriculum has been instituted at most levels.

Success in curriculum revision was attributed to strong leadership from building principals, willingness of the staff to innovate and support from the central office personnel, such as the reading consultant, the curriculum director and the school psychologist.

Pilot programs were used to test the Initial Teaching Alphabet (ITA) reading program in the district. Success of the program has led to expanded use of the ITA approach.

A federally-funded reading program is available for students with special reading problems; each elementary school has a well-equipped library; two librarians are available for the four elementary schools, and the librarians work closely with the reading specialist, with teachers, with principals and with students.

A concerted effort has been made to improve techniques used for evaluation of pupil progress and for reporting pupil progress to parents. Effort also has been made at some ele-

mentary schools to provide time for team meetings during the school day.

The need for a systematic program evaluation was stressed as the prime weakness in the elementary grades.

"Since programs vary somewhat from one school to another in the district, evaluation of the various programs should help determine direction for the educational program of the future," the survey team explained.

"Evaluation of both innovative programs and traditional programs should indicate if goals of the school system, at the school building level, of the teacher and of the students are being met."

The evaluators noted there is a need for long-range planning of program for optimum use of resources.

Little use is made of multi-sized groups. Large-group and small group techniques may result in better utilization of staff and time.

The result of the teacher questionnaire indicate that 70 per cent of the staff in Dover feel that more elementary guidance is needed.

Use of lay people to help with the educational program is a resource that has not been fully developed.

Additionally, the survey team found that there is a need for development of a link between kindergarten and first grade to serve those children who are not ready to begin first grade after completing the kindergarten program.

Other weaknesses reported were: 75 per cent of the teaching staff feels that class size is too large; most teachers could benefit from further training in the use of diagnostic tests; health education should emphasize good health practices as well as point out the dangers to health brought about by the use of drugs, alcohol or tobacco.

Finally, the survey team stated, instructional methods should be pupil-centered rather than teacher centered. Emphasis should be placed on the student learning rather than on the teacher teaching.

(NEXT: Strengths and weaknesses of Dover's secondary education program.)