

## OSU survey team reports:

# *Reading skill development is strength of Phila elementary schools*

**(EDITOR'S NOTE: This is the third 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.)**

Development of reading skills was cited by the survey team as the strength of New Philadelphia school district's ele-

mentary program.

"A federally funded remedial reading program provides assistance for those students needing extra help in the development of reading skills," the team noted.

"A summer school reading program is conducted for students in grades 1, 2, and 3 who have failed reading or English or who have experienced difficulties in these subjects."

The team noted that a child study center provides a team approach which coordinates the efforts of specialists such as speech and hearing therapists, guidance counselors, a remedial reading specialist, a health nurse and other professionals who may help in diagnosing and treating students who have exhibited learning disabilities.

"The district has a long his-

tory of providing individualized instruction through special education classes for those students who have difficulty functioning in the traditional classroom setting," it was pointed out by the team.

Also on the plus side of the ledger were a visual perceptual guidance program designed to help students who are experience perceptual handicaps;

emphasis of the VPG program also emphasizes improvement of the child's general attitude toward school and the learning situation, and a summer VPG program reinforces the experiences the student has had throughout the year.

Ninety per cent of the teachers, according to the questionnaire, have indicated a willingness to innovate.

Chief among the weaknesses found by the survey team was the small size of some elementary schools, which makes it difficult to provide a comprehensive educational program.

It further noted that the educational program is not systematically evaluated to discover areas of strength and weakness.

"Teachers and administrators of the district have not set goals and objectives of the educational program," the team observed.

"Almost 70 per cent of the teachers indicated that school objectives are seldom or never discussed."

The self-contained classroom is the basic organization in See **READING, Page A-2**

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grades 1 through 6; no use is made of multi-sized groups.

Other weaknesses reported were: insufficient effort is directed toward providing experiences that respect individual differences in children; instruction in the classroom tends to be teacher-centered rather than student-centered; the community is rarely used as a learning laboratory; methods of pupil evaluation and progress reporting need to be studied and upgraded wherever possible; audio-visual equipment and teaching material is limited in the elementary schools;

The survey team stressed that special subjects such as music, art and physical education have not been evaluated in light of the needs of the educational program.

"If the use of specialists to teach these subjects is considered to be worthwhile they should be given adequate resources," the team pointed out.

"Teachers in the special subject areas are not involved in planning and implementing other parts of the educational program where their special talents could well be utilized.

"Benefits from special subject areas are constrained due to the limited opportunity the special teacher has for working with the children. For instance, the physical education teacher meets with elementary pupils once a week."

According to the survey team the absence of instructional materials centers containing multimedia materials is a handicap when trying to move away from the textbook-centered curriculum.

Team members observed that opportunities for students to gain experience in outdoor education is limited; the health education curricula should include materials that point out the dangers of narcotics, smoking and alcohol, and teachers could benefit from further training in the use of diagnostic tests.

More than 60 per cent of the teachers in the district feel more elementary education is needed.

A school psychologist also is needed in the Child Study Center.

It was additionally noted by the survey team that assigning elementary principals to more than one building and providing insufficient secretarial aid for them makes it difficult for them to be effective leaders in improving the educational program. (Editor's Note: This situation was remedied to a great extent with the assigning of 2 intern principals, providing each school a principal.)

(NEXT: A look at the strengths and weaknesses of New Philadelphia's secondary education program.)