

THE STRAYER REPORT AND THE REORGANIZATION OF THE DEPARTMENT, 1945--1963

When presented, the Strayer Report was a masterly summing up of the status of the California public school system, with specific recommendations for solving many of its problems.²⁴ After pointing out the need for expansion in all areas of education -- elementary schools, secondary schools, junior colleges, adult education, teacher training, and veterans' education -- the report touched on the leadership of the Department of Education:

Even a rough sketch of the problems confronting education in California in the postwar period indicates the desirability of taking action now to provide for the best possible organization, administration, and financing of the program of education. The highest type of leadership on the State level will demand the professionalization of the office of the State Superintendent of Public Instruction. This means the need for a constitutional amendment that will provide for the selection of this official by a lay board rather than by popular vote.

There will most certainly be required an expansion of the staff of the State Department of Education in order that significant leadership and general supervision of the expanded program may be furnished. The State office must be in a position to guarantee that whatever program of education is mandated by the State is actually carried out in all local school districts.²⁵

Recommendations of the Strayer Report

The first recommendation of the Strayer Report was that a ten-member lay board of education should be appointed by the Governor, the members to serve overlapping terms of ten years each, and that the board should select an outstanding educator as Superintendent of Public Instruction. A proposed constitutional amendment to effect this change was included as an appendix to the report.

The following quotations from the report document the need for expansion and reorganization of the Department of Education:

²⁴The Administration, Organization and Financial Support of the Public School System, State of California. A Report of the Study Required by Chapter 36, Statutes of 1944. Sacramento: State Reconstruction and Reemployment Commission, February, 1945.

²⁵Ibid., pp. 7-8.

The State Superintendent of Public Instruction should be supported by a staff of very competent specialists. The service of the State will be measured by the degree of competence enjoyed by those who head up the several divisions of the State office. The State Superintendent, in the first instance, should be supported by an able Deputy Superintendent who can act for him in his absence and who can, as well, accept any responsibility that the State Superintendent may delegate to him. The Deputy Superintendent should, as well, have large responsibility for coordinating the activities of the several divisions of the department.

The central purpose for which a State Department of Education is organized is the improvement of the curricula offered and of the instruction given in all divisions of the public school system. For the coordination of these many activities, an Associate Commissioner of Education should be appointed. Working under his general supervision, there should be Assistant Superintendents made responsible in the fields of elementary education, secondary education, and vocational education.

The responsibility of the State office for the administration and control of the State colleges should be placed in the hands of a director or administrator working in cooperation with the Associate Superintendent responsible for the instructional program. Each of the Assistant Superintendents must be supported by specialists dealing with the various aspects of the programs for which he is made responsible.

No one person could possibly furnish the leadership and general supervision required in the field of elementary education. This Assistant Superintendent would need to be supported by as many as four or five specialists. In like manner in the field of secondary education, the Assistant Superintendent for secondary education would have to be supported by persons of high competence in the field of the junior high school, the senior high school, the junior college, and continuation and adult education.

There would be needed as well in the division of secondary education as many as four to six specialists in the various subject-matter fields such as English, mathematics, social studies, natural science, and the fine arts.

In the field of vocational education, it is essential that specialists dealing with homemaking, agriculture, business, trades and industry, veterans' education, and vocational rehabilitation be provided.

A curriculum library adequately housed and staffed is essential for the efficient working of the instructional divisions. Its resources should be shared by all of them.

There should be organized under the supervision of the Associate Superintendent responsible for the instructional program strong divisions dealing with audio-visual education, including radio education, physical and health education, special education for the handicapped.

Other functions of the State department have to do with the provision of a number of services that might roughly be classified as business or administrative. Still another group of services must be provided in support of the total educational program. There should be an Associate Superintendent of Schools responsible for each of these two major divisions of the work of the State office.

In the business or administrative division, among the important business functions are those having to do with the necessary work of the State department in distributing State funds; the development of a general plan for the keeping of accounts, for budgetary procedure, and for purchasing, made available especially in areas throughout the State which do not employ competent business officials.

Another large responsibility of the business division has to do with the review of plans and specifications for school buildings. The business division should, as well, service other divisions by means of the making and keeping of records, particularly as they are adapted to the use of modern machine equipment.

The other division of Special Services mentioned above would include the service of research which can very well be one of the most important divisions organized in the State department. Progress throughout the State will depend upon the adequacy of the research undertaken and upon the dissemination of information growing out of such studies. Other Special Services have to do with the interpretation of the law, with textbooks, with publications, with personnel administration including the issuance of credentials and the administration of the retirement system, with accrediting of institutions, and with census and attendance.

The State Office of Education is at present deplorably understaffed. The proposals made above for the development of the State office contemplate the placing of this office in California on a level comparable to that found in the more progressive States. The able men and women currently serving in the State office should be supported by other men and women who are outstanding in their competence in the areas to which they are assigned. They should be looked upon by their professional colleagues throughout the State as persons from whom the highest type of professional service can be secured.

There is no prospect that every local area within the State can employ persons of the highest competence to deal with all aspects of their educational program. It is the function of State Government to provide the services of research and general supervision to all local areas. There is no more certain way of upgrading the schools of a State than that which provides a maximum of competent service in the State Department of Education.²⁶

²⁶Ibid., pp. 11-14.

The report then listed 28 additional appointments that should be made to the professional staff and recommended employment of at least 25 additional stenographic, clerical, and statistical workers.

Aside from the reorganization of the State Department of Education, Strayer proposed the following:

1. The State Board of Education should determine qualifications for the office of county superintendent of schools.
2. A state commission on local school districts should be created.
3. A bureau to forecast teacher supply and demand should be set up.
4. A committee on coordinated teacher training should be created.
5. Kindergartens should be included in the state aid program.
6. State support should be distributed to schools on an equalization basis.
7. State aid should be made available to impoverished districts for capital outlay.

The Education Building and Strayer's Recommendations

Finally, the Strayer Report suggested that the State Department of Education have its own building. In 1945 the Department was scattered about the capital city in some six or seven buildings in addition to the main headquarters in the Library and Courts Building.²⁷

At the turn of the century, the office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction was in the Capitol, but in 1916 the office was moved to the Forum Building. After the Department of Education was established in 1921, its first home was the Mull Building, which was completed in 1922. In 1928, a new Library and Courts Building was completed, and the Department of Education was housed there until 1953. However, the Department grew so much between 1929 and 1953 that it needed more facilities than were available in the Library and Courts Building. In 1953 the Department of Education moved into its present home, the State Education Building at 721 Capitol Mall in Sacramento.

The Mills Report

The departmental study, a subdivision of the study required by the Legislature in 1944, was made by a firm of management engineers,

²⁷"California's New Education Building," California Schools, XXIV (August, 1953), 365.

J. N. Mills & Company.²⁸ Its findings were, briefly, that the Department was greatly understaffed, underpaid, and overworked. "There is a general looseness of the management structure within the Department." It found many ambiguities in the various sections of the Education Code defining the duties and responsibilities of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, the Director of Education, and the State Board of Education.

It would appear appropriate . . . that the problem be called to the attention of the legislature so that it may, if it deems it proper, clarify the Code sections relative to the respective powers, duties, and functions of the State Board of Education, the State Director of Education, the Superintendent of Public Instruction and the State Department of Education. . . .

If it be the intent of the Legislature to establish a Board of Education as the governing and policy making body of the State Department of Education, the functioning of the Board should be confined strictly to such purpose and the execution of such policies as may be laid down by the Board should be left to the Director of Education, without further participation or interference by the Board.²⁹

Recommendations as to the organization of the Department, salaries of divisional heads, and duties of the various sections are given in some detail in the Mills Report.

Legislative Changes

Drafts of three proposed constitutional amendments and three bills were included in the Strayer Report as appendixes. One of the amendments pertained to the appointment of the Superintendent of Public Instruction and of the members of the State Board of Education; the second dealt with the qualifications of county superintendents; and the third concerned the appointment of a deputy superintendent of public instruction and three associate superintendents, all of whom would be exempt from civil service. One of the bills set forth a comprehensive system of equalization of state aid for the support of elementary schools. The second related to the supervision of instruction in elementary schools. The third provided for optional unification of school districts by vote of electors.

All of these measures were introduced in the Assembly in January, 1945, and the three bills were passed and signed by the Governor. The first amendment, calling for the appointment of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, was defeated, but the other two passed. Other education bills that were passed

²⁸"The Internal Organization of the Department of Education, State of California." Report prepared by J. N. Mills & Co. Sacramento: State Reconstruction and Reemployment Commission, December, 1944.

²⁹Ibid., pp. 11-13

by this Legislature established a minimum salary of \$1,800 per year for full-time teachers in California public schools; set a salary of \$10,000 for the Superintendent of Public Instruction; permitted school districts to levy a tax to maintain child care centers; provided for the establishment of schools and training centers for spastic children; and permitted admission of children with speech disorders and blind children to special schools established for handicapped children. The Legislature also made an appropriation of \$388,680 to augment the support of the Department of Education.

Department Reorganization

Subsequent to the initiation of the studies conducted by Dr. Strayer and Mr. Mills, the Superintendent of Public Instruction also appointed a committee to study the organization of the State Department of Education. The committee's report was presented to the State Board of Education on October 5, 1945, and the plan for reorganization drawn up in the report was approved in toto.

After Superintendent Walter Dexter died on October 21, 1945, it was left to his successor, Roy E. Simpson, to continue the work of reorganization. In November, 1946, the voters approved the constitutional amendment allowing for the appointment of a deputy and three associate superintendents, and the way was thus cleared for the new organization to be completed.

The Department was reorganized into six divisions: departmental administration, instruction, public school administration, special schools and services, state colleges and teacher education, and libraries. In addition to these six divisions were seven groups not considered part of the administrative structure of the department but closely concerned with the state educational system: the Board of Examiners for Vocational Teachers; the Board of Governors of the State Nautical School; the Commission for Vocational Education; the Commission of Credentials; the Retirement Investment Board; the State Curriculum Commission; and the Teachers' Retirement Board. With but a few changes, this departmental organization is essentially the same today.

From time to time in the ensuing years, proposals were made for changing the relationship between the State Board of Education and the Superintendent of Public Instruction. In 1955 the Hardesty Report of the California Committee on Public School Administration advocated that the Superintendent be appointed by the Board, which would be composed of nine members, one member per year to be nominated by the California School Boards Association and elected by the school districts, each district casting one vote. In 1958 Proposition 13, to amend the State Constitution to provide an appointive Superintendent, was put on the ballot and was soundly defeated. In spite of the fact that the Department of Education had vigorously upheld the "grassroots" philosophy of selection of the Superintendent, Roy E. Simpson, Superintendent of Public Instruction from 1945 to 1962, himself proposed in 1959 that the Superintendent be appointed by the Board, who should have the power to determine the term of office and the salary for the Superintendent. He

suggested an 11-member Board, appointed by the Governor with Senate approval, but his suggestions were not acted upon.

School District Organization Changes

The Strayer Report made the statement that "California has good schools, but some improvements are needed." In some communities, the survey team found schools that might well have been taken as models for the nation as a whole; in others, schools whose provisions for education were unacceptable. The chief reasons for this wide variance among schools -- that there were too many school districts and too many of them were small and had a low tax base -- had long been apparent to the Department of Education. Efforts toward consolidation of school districts, however, had met much local resistance. With the passage, in 1945, of the school district bill drafted by the State Reconstruction and Reemployment Commission, a great step was taken toward remedying the situation.

A Commission on School Districts was created, and it was empowered to make surveys throughout the state to determine the need of and make recommendations for school district reorganization. A procedure was provided whereby the people might, by democratic process of a majority vote, accept or reject the commission's recommendations. The studies made by the Commission on School Districts and its regional and local committees focused the attention of many people of the state on the problems of district organization and brought about a remarkable degree of public understanding regarding the problems of school administration. The law stipulated that the commission should be discontinued in 1949 and its responsibilities turned over to the State Board of Education. Provision was made at that time for county committees to carry on the work of school district organization. A Bureau of School District Organization was established in the Department of Education as an advisory group within the Division of Public School Administration. When the commission began its work, 2,568 school districts were maintaining schools in the state. By 1950 they were reduced to 2,111, and since that time they have steadily decreased.

Financial Support for Districts

In addition to unification of school districts, the equalization of support by the state had often been suggested as a means of solving the problems of the rural districts and the less wealthy urban school districts. Proponents of equalization aid quoted Horace Mann: "Tax property where the property exists, and spend the money where the children are to be educated." However, as of 1944, financial support was given to school districts almost wholly in terms of the number of pupils in average daily attendance, with no regard to the need of the school. A variation affecting a relatively small number of school districts was made in providing a teacher or classroom quota for very small schools. According to the Strayer Report, the system of state aid:

... represents a piece-meal accumulation of changes, based upon conditions and needs which have arisen during the past fifty years. The process has been one of accretion, and a consideration of separate parts of the total program, rather than a complete and overall review of the basic problem concerning the State's policy in the support of schools.³⁰

Constitutional amendments were adopted in 1944, 1946, and 1952, increasing the state's support of the schools and equalizing the support. In 1952 the people of the state mandated that the contributions to the State School Fund from the General Fund of the state, together with annual income from the permanent school fund (consisting of lands granted to the state, bonds bought with proceeds of land sold, and oil and mineral royalties) should be not less than \$180 per unit of average daily attendance in the public schools for the preceding year. Subsequent legislation increased this figure to \$201.³⁶

Apportionments are made from the State School Fund for basic aid (at \$125 per unit of average daily attendance (a. d. a.) or \$2,400, whichever is greater), plus equalization aid, predicated on the concept of a foundation program. This guarantees that each district will have a specified amount available, provided a specified rate of tax is levied in the district. If the amount of district aid computed by the tax rate, when added to the basic aid, is less than the foundation program, the state provides an additional amount equal to the difference.

Apportionments for special aid programs were added from time to time by the Legislature until by 1963 they included the following: (1) excess costs of educating physically handicapped, mentally handicapped, and mentally gifted minors, and the excess costs of transportation of such minors; (2) reimbursement of the costs of home-to-school transportation of pupils; (3) a growth allowance which supplements the initial apportionment due to increase of the current a. d. a. over that of the previous year; (4) excess costs of providing behind-the-wheel driving instruction; and (5) certain costs of operation of offices of county superintendents of schools.

In addition to local and state financial support for schools, the federal government made funds available for certain programs, such as vocational education, vocational rehabilitation, the education of veterans, school food service, and child care centers. Beginning with the passage of Public Law 874 in 1950-51, support was given to local educational agencies for the operation and maintenance of schools in areas where federal activities have created serious school problems. Public Law 815, passed in 1950, provided for the construction of school buildings in such areas.

³⁰The Administration, Organization and Financial Support of the Public School System, State of California, op. cit., p. 33.

Role of the Department in Schoolhouse Planning

School districts had a legally limited ability (5 percent of assessed valuation) to finance needed school facilities. A survey of schoolhousing adequacy made by the Division of Schoolhouse Planning after the 1933 earthquake showed over 400 small districts, many with very old buildings, that had a legal bonding capacity of less than would be required to replace the old buildings. Several later surveys convinced the division that a large number of districts were unable, however willing, to finance the cost of adequate facilities for all of the children enrolled in their schools. Efforts to bring about state aid for school construction were successful in 1947 when the Legislature appropriated \$20 million for outright grants to impoverished school districts for capital outlay. The well-documented requests by school districts to participate in the program provided decisive evidence of the magnitude of the problem, and the voters have approved bond issues ever since to implement a state-controlled loan and grant program for school construction in financially distressed school districts.

The Bureau of School Planning had some control over the plans for buildings to qualify for state apportionments, and it was thus able to influence the type of facilities being built. It was instrumental in changing the design of schoolhouses in line with changes in educational programs.

NDEA in California

In 1957, when the Russians succeeded in orbiting the first satellite, critics of schools complained that children were not being taught enough mathematics and science, and a demand arose for stressing these subjects. As one response to the "emergency," Congress passed the National Defense Education Act (NDEA). The federal government authorized aid of over \$1 billion to education over a four-year period beginning in the 1958-59 school year. The provisions were extended by later legislation. The California State Department of Education administered three parts of the act that directly affected the schools: (1) Title III, for strengthening science, mathematics, and modern foreign language instruction; (2) Title V, for guidance, counseling, and testing in secondary schools; and (3) Title VIII, for vocational education. The funds were administered, for the most part, through a new bureau called the Bureau of NDEA Administration in the Department of Education.

In the first three years of the operation of the program under Title III, project approvals were given to 887 California school districts, which had 81.1 percent of the total average daily attendance of the state. More than half of the approved projects were in science; 24 percent, in modern foreign languages; and 14 percent, in mathematics.³¹ In addition to funds for

³¹The Dynamics of Educational Change, Bulletin of the California State Department of Education, XXXII, No. 3. Sacramento: California State Department of Education, 1963, p. 22.

instruction, schools received funds for the purchase of equipment, minor remodeling, and the improvement of supervisory and related services. Over 65 percent of the expenditures were for specialized equipment and materials of instruction, much of it for audio-visual equipment. The greatest change was seen in the field of science. Increased emphasis was placed on having students master basic scientific relationships and learn laboratory methods. Less change was seen in mathematics, the school districts adopting a "wait and see" attitude in reference to adoption of the "new math." Improvement in teaching skills and in pupil achievement was directly attributable to the new programs.

An assessment of the value of Title V was made in 1967 after the program had been in operation for seven years. The difficulty of evaluating programs, particularly in the field of guidance and counseling, made the study rather inconclusive:

Although we lack reliable information regarding educational changes and their causes, we know there have been considerable changes in California school programs during the last ten years. And, we must acknowledge that the National Defense Education Act has had considerable influence upon education in California.³²

Title VIII of the NDEA amended the George-Barden Act of 1946 relating to the training of skilled technicians in California. During the 1962-63 school year, California school districts participated in 94 projects under Title VIII at a cost of \$1,329,937. A survey showed that a high degree of success was realized in meeting local industrial needs through the technical education programs.

Vocational Education

In addition to Title VIII of the National Defense Education Act and its predecessor, the George-Barden Act, federal aid was given to California's already strong vocational education programs by the passage in 1962 of Public Law 87-415, the Manpower Development and Training Act (MDTA). This provided for the training of unemployed persons so that they could take their place in the nation's economy. The law directed that whenever appropriate, the programs should be conducted in the public schools. The State Department of Employment selects and places trainees under the Act, and the Department of Education supervises the training through the regional offices of the Vocational Education Section. Many persons have been trained under this program for occupations ranging from clerk-typist to licensed practical nurse. By October 31, 1963, in the first year of operation of the program, California had 8,255 trainees.

³²The Impact in California of NDEA, Titles III, V, VIII. Sacramento: California State Department of Education, 1967, p. x.

Vocational Rehabilitation

California began its work with the rehabilitation of the disabled in 1919 when the Legislature set aside funds for the Industrial Accident Commission to use for the reeducation of persons crippled in industry. In 1921 the program was placed under the administration of the State Board of Education in order to qualify for federal funds that had been appropriated to train disabled men and women to perform useful work. Federal support was expanded by later laws and amendments, and by 1954 it included assistance for the establishment of rehabilitation facilities, workshops, and business enterprise programs. The scope of the program was widened and state funds contributed to include persons who needed retraining because of changes in occupational demands. On October 1, 1963, the Vocational Rehabilitation Section "graduated" from the Division of Special Schools and Services to become the new State Department of Rehabilitation. Included in the change were other units providing educational and rehabilitation services for blind adults.

Special Education

In 1947 a great deal of legislation relating to handicapped children was passed. One bill made it mandatory for school districts and county superintendents of schools to maintain classes for mentally retarded minors, and it provided an appropriation to reimburse counties and districts for excess costs in educating the retarded. In 1951 permissive programs for trainable mentally retarded children were established by the Legislature, and in 1964 these programs were made mandatory. In 1961 special programs for intellectually gifted children were established. In that year the Bureau of Special Education was transferred from the Division of Instruction to the Division of Special Schools and Services in the Department. In 1963 special programs for the educationally handicapped (children with neurological handicaps and behavioral disorders) were established.

The education of exceptional children has been one of the most rapidly growing programs of the State Department of Education during the past 15 years. The estimated amount of the state's share in educating handicapped and exceptional children in the public schools and the five residential schools administered by the Department in 1967-68 is between \$65 and \$70 million.

Higher Education

Since July 1, 1961, the state colleges have been administered by the Trustees of the State College System of California. The Superintendent of Public Instruction is an ex officio member of the Trustees. The legislation that brought about this change resulted from a study of higher education made by the Liaison Committee of the State Board of Education and the Regents of the University of California. The basic issues studied were the roles of the junior colleges, state colleges, and the University of California in the state's

tripartite system and how the three segments should be governed and coordinated so that unnecessary duplication would be avoided.

As one result of the study, A Master Plan for Higher Education was published in 1960, and in that same year some of the recommendations in the plan were adopted by the Legislature.³³ The Donahoe Higher Education Act, in addition to placing the state colleges under a board of trustees, defined the California system of higher education as consisting of (1) all public junior colleges; (2) all state colleges; and (3) the several branches of the University of California. The junior colleges remained under the State Board of Education. The University, under the Board of Regents, was defined as the primary state-supported academic agency for research and given sole authority in public education to grant doctoral degrees. The Coordinating Council for Higher Education was created; it was to include three representatives each from the University of California, the State College System, the public junior colleges, the private colleges and universities of the state, and the general public. The primary responsibility of the council was to advise governing boards and appropriate state officials in the review of annual budgets and capital outlay requests of the University of California and state colleges. It was also charged with the responsibility of developing plans for the orderly growth of higher education and for making recommendations regarding the need for and location of new facilities and programs.

Credentialing of Teachers

An important change in teacher training and credentialing became operative in 1964. The "Licensing of Certificated Personnel Law of 1961," popularly known as the Fisher Bill, made it mandatory for teachers to have an academic major or minor, and administrators an academic major, before they could be granted a teaching credential. This change resulted from many studies and revisions of studies of the basic credentialing structure in the state. By 1950, while the teacher shortage had been lessening to a marked degree, the number of types of credentials authorizing public school service had been proliferating until it had reached a total of 60, each type with different requirements and with a different authorization. Credentials could be granted by the state on any one of three bases: direct application, formal recommendation by a teacher training institution, or informal institutional recommendation. Various proposals and recommendations were made for remedying this confused system, and these, combined with criticisms of courses offered in professional education, culminated in the drafting and passage of the Fisher Bill.

³³A Master Plan for Higher Education in California, 1960-1975. Prepared for the Liaison Committee of the State Board of Education and The Regents of the University of California. Sacramento: California State Department of Education, 1960.

The granting of a teaching certificate on examination by county boards of education was discontinued in 1945. Emergency credentials, first granted during the war, were discontinued in 1954. But "provisional credentials," which have somewhat higher requirements than the wartime emergency credential, have been issued since 1947 on the basis of a statement of need by the employing district. Since 1942 the demand for teachers in California has been greater than the supply, and no solution for the problem of ensuring an adequate number of well-qualified teachers is in sight.

Time for a Change

In 1962, for the first time in 43 years, an incumbent Superintendent of Public Instruction was not standing for reelection,³⁴ and a vigorous contest developed. In the general election, the two candidates carried on a series of public debates, with candidate Max Rafferty finally winning the election. One of the outcomes of Dr. Rafferty's first term in office was a public airing of the powers and functions of both the State Board of Education and the Superintendent of Public Instruction. Two bills introduced in the 1963 Legislature to do away with the popular election of the Superintendent of Public Instruction suffered the fate of all previous measures to this effect.

Shortly after he took office, Dr. Rafferty requested that a survey be made of the State Department of Education to determine how it should be reorganized to provide the required services with maximum efficiency. The Board of Education also wished to have a survey made of the Department, and in 1963 it appointed a Committee on Department Survey. The committee recommended the employment of a management firm, Arthur D. Little, Inc., to conduct the survey.

In authorizing the survey, the State Board of Education proposed the following questions:

Although the Department has a long history of effectively providing educational services to the State, the question arises: Are the present purposes, goals, and functions most appropriate to provide and render adequate, imaginative, stimulating, and optimum educational services to the State in the 1960s and the decades to follow? Also, is the Department best organized and equipped, or following the best practices, to provide these educational services?³⁵

³⁴William Cooper was appointed to fill an unexpired term in 1927; he resigned in 1929 and Vierling Kersey was appointed. Kersey was elected in 1930, reelected in 1934, resigned in 1937. Walter Dexter was appointed to complete the term, was elected in 1938, reelected in 1942, and died in 1945. Roy Simpson was appointed to complete the term, elected in 1947, and did not run for reelection in 1962.

³⁵The Emerging Requirements for Effective Leadership for California Education. Submitted by Arthur D. Little, Inc. Sacramento: California State Department of Education, November, 1964, p. 5.