

A HISTORY OF THE CALIFORNIA STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION, 1900--1967

The California State Department of Education is the agency through which the public school system, except that part composed of the state university and the state colleges, is regulated and controlled at the state level as required by law. The Department is governed by the State Board of Education, a body of ten members who are appointed by the Governor to serve four-year terms, and it is administered by the Superintendent of Public Instruction, who is elected for a four-year term and who acts in his ex officio capacity as Director of Education. The Department is located in Sacramento, but in Los Angeles it maintains an office which provides many of the state-level educational services required by the public schools in the southern part of the state. (A brief description of the present organization and functions of the Department of Education appears as Appendix A.)

The Superintendent of Public Instruction has the assistance of a cabinet that is composed of two deputy superintendents, three associate superintendents, one assistant superintendent, and one director, whose position is equivalent to that of associate superintendent. Each member of his cabinet also serves as the chief administrative officer of a division or office of the Department. And each of these divisions or offices provides certain of the services required for the Department (1) to carry out the provisions of legislation pertaining to the public schools; (2) to further educational policies and regulations of the State Board of Education; and (3) to provide the educational guidance and leadership needed to keep the public school education program abreast of the times, functioning as necessary to meet existing needs, and geared to meet new needs promptly and effectively.

The State Department of Education was established by law in 1921. However, the public school system and a state officer to supervise the schools were provided for in the state's first Constitution of 1849. No very large or complex system of state administration for public schools was needed until the period following World War I. Until that time, California was neither heavily populated nor largely industrialized. But since 1921, growth and change have been rapid and often overwhelming. Over the past half century, this has brought increasingly heavy and diverse responsibilities upon the Department.

As in all states, the administration of education at the state level has been under pressures other than those caused by population growth and the changing urban-rural pattern. The Depression, the two world wars, and the expanding role of the United States in international affairs have brought about substantial changes. The influence of educational leaders with vision and purpose have

beneficially affected policies and programs. Likewise, professional staff members within the State Department of Education have fostered progress within their particular fields of interest. Federal planning and assistance have also materially influenced state educational agencies.

In response to these many pressures and influences on education, numerous commissions have been appointed over the years by the Legislature, by the Department of Education, and by educational organizations to assess the operation of the public school system and the State Department of Education. Certain of the studies made by these groups brought about significant changes in the organization of the state's educational administration. It is convenient to use these studies as dividing lines in chronicling the development of the administration. The history is thus broken into the following segments:

- The "Department of Public Instruction" Before 1921. From 1852 until 1921, the Superintendent of Public Instruction and a State Board of Education were referred to as a "Department of Public Instruction," though in fact no such department of state government existed.
- The Jones Report and the Department of Education, 1921--1927. As a result of a legislative study and its report, known as the Jones Report, the Department of Education was established in 1921.
- Departmental Growth and Change Through the Years of Depression and War, 1927--1945. In 1927, largely as the result of suggestions made by Superintendent of Public Instruction Will C. Wood, the Board of Education and the Department of Education were reorganized.
- The Strayer Report and the Reorganization of the Department, 1945--1963. In 1945 the State Reconstruction and Reemployment Commission made a report known as the Strayer Report, which resulted in new educational legislation and a change in the structure of the Department of Education.
- The Little Reports and Reappraisal, 1963--1967. The most recent surveys of education in California were made by Arthur D. Little, Inc. between 1963 and 1967. Some of the changes recommended during the time these studies were made have already taken place, and others are projected.