10-31-1962

Educational Research in Virginia - A New Opportunity in Virginia

Lewis F. Powell Jr.

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EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH - A NEW OPPORTUNITY IN VIRGINIA

It is not too much to say that we are entering a new and hopeful phase in public education in Virginia. There has been a general renaissance of interest in, and indeed concern for, the quality of our schools. The preoccupation with the difficult integration problem which diverted much of our attention and effort has appreciably subsided. This problem remains acute in certain areas, and at best there will be a long and difficult period of readjustment. But, for the most part, the emphasis of our concern has shifted to the more conventional problems of how best to improve the end product of our public school system.

Among the hopeful signs on the educational scene in Virginia are the following:

(i) The intelligent and deep interest of Governor Harrison; (ii) the responsiveness in the General Assembly; (iii) the wholesome effect of the
splendid study and report of the Spong Commission; and
(iv) most important of all, an intensification of
interest by the public generally, and parents in
particular, in our schools and our teachers, and in
what can be done to assure the finest possible public
school system.

It is tempting to discuss several of these
encouraging signs, but in the limited time available
this evening, I will concentrate on one specific develop­
ment, which, in my opinion, holds great promise for
good. This is the establishment, within the State
Department of Education, of a new Division of Research
and Pilot Studies.

At the request of the State Board of Educa­
tion, the General Assembly appropriated $75,000 for
educational research during the current fiscal year,
and $100,000 for the fiscal year 1963-64. Although
there has been research work down through the years,
this is the first appropriation as such for this
specific purpose.
To assure the emphasis which this project deserves, the Board has established a separate division - which will rank on a parity with the other major divisions in the Department. Although difficulty in obtaining a highly qualified person to head this division has delayed implementation of our plans, both the Board and Superintendent Wilkerson attach the greatest importance to this new division.

There will, broadly speaking, be two areas of major emphasis. The first will be "pilot studies", which will be essentially an operational function. Special studies, as requested by the Board and the State Superintendent, will be conducted directly. Local school divisions will also be assisted in the planning and carrying forward of approved pilot studies of various kinds. These may include, for example, experimentation with and critical analysis of the effectiveness of team teaching, programmed instruction, language laboratories, and the teaching of foreign languages in the elementary grades.
The other major function of the new division will be engaged essentially in staff work, rather than conducted through field experimentation. This will be, a statistical services section, organized to meet the needs of the State Department for the collection, analysis and evaluation of pertinent data. Much of this will be directed intelligently and vigorously, and may hope to identify the areas of weakness in our present program, and particularly to suggest imaginative areas and means for improvement of the quality of public school education.

But so much for generalities, I would now like, entirely on my own responsibility, to suggest a few subject of possible inquiry by this new division.

1. Size of Our High Schools.

In his challenging book, The American High School Today, Dr. James Conant, concluded that the single greatest weakness in the American public school system was the fractionization of our high schools. There are some 21,000 high schools in America, and Dr. Conant thinks that at least 7,000 of these are too
small to function satisfactorily. He considers that a senior high school must have a graduating class of at least 100 students to be reasonably effective.

It is obvious, especially to an audience of professionals such as yourselves, that the smaller high schools cannot offer either the variety or depth of courses available in the larger schools. This is especially applicable to the sciences, advanced mathematics, and foreign languages. There are other obvious limitations to the small high school.

The inevitable watering-down of the academic program in such a school is bad for the entire student body. But it may be catastrophic for the boys and girls who have the capacity to do the advanced work which is usually obtainable only in the elective courses of the major high schools. The end result is squandering of one of our most precious assets — namely the potential talent of the ablest students who are denied these opportunities.
In Virginia, there are a total of 393 high schools with graduating classes. Of these, it is estimated that approximately 290 have graduating classes of less than 100 students. Thus, if Dr. Conant's minimum standard is sound — and I suspect that he is right — we have a serious problem here in Virginia. Although the General Assembly has sought to encourage consolidation of schools, I am not at all sure that the trend has been in the right direction.

In my brief period of service on the State Board, I have noted with concern the number of applications which come to us for the creation of separate school divisions. This happens most frequently when a town becomes classified as a city, and decides to divorce itself from the school system of the county.

I appreciate that this may be more of a political than an educational problem. We have 98 counties in Virginia, and our laws permitting incorporation of cities are liberal. The element of local pride is also a major factor.
The end result is a complex and difficult problem, and there are no easy or pat solutions. But this problem is costing our state substantial money, as each new school division adds to operating cost and administrative overhead in various ways. More important, as noted above, the fragmentation of high schools in Virginia is diluting the educational content of our schools.

In short, here is one specific area where both the quality of education can be improved and the cost of education reduced if intelligent solutions are found and applied. It is to be hoped that this will become a major area of critical inquiry by the new Division of Research.


The State Department of Education in New York - which perhaps has the leading division of educational research in the country - has recently announced plans for state-wide minimum competency tests in reading, writing, and other basic subjects. These tests would be a prerequisite for high school
graduation in all high schools, both large and small. The purpose of such tests, prescribed as minimum standards by the State Board, would be to raise the levels of performance on a state-wide basis.

It seems to me that this is an idea of considerable merit, and one which should be explored promptly by our new Division of Research.

3. Length of School Year.

I hesitate to mention this subject for fear of being run out of my own home. When I recommended, several years ago, that we must face up to the need for a longer high school year, my children were embarrassed - by the adverse reaction of their playmates - to the point of looking around for a foster father. But at the risk of incurring the displeasure of my own young, I suggest that this is one of our more serious problems. I also suggest that we have been more interested in finding excuses for preserving an antiquated system (with all of its vested interests),
than we have been in seeking solutions comparable with the demands of our time.

There has been no significant change in the school year since the turn of the century. And yet the requirements of knowledge have expanded beyond man’s wildest imagination of only a few years ago.

Moreover, the reason for the long summer vacation of three months no longer exists. The boys and girls are not needed on the farms, and they are not permitted to work in the factories. Even if there were no pressing educational demands for more time in school, there are relevant sociological considerations. Is it wholesome for teenage boys and girls to idle away three months in each year? To what extent does this contribute to the serious problem of juvenile delinquency?

But whatever the answers to these questions may be, certainly at the high school level, we must find a better solution than the horse and buggy concept of 180 school days. There are, of course,
all sorts of difficulties and problems involved in changing the present system. But the first step is careful analysis and study, together with a will and determination to do something about this anachronism of the past. A good place to start is in the new Division of Research.

* * * * * *

I have mentioned these specific areas of possible inquiry and study by the new Division of Research. We could all suggest many more, as the range of possibilities is almost unlimited.

My real purpose this evening is not to provide a blueprint for the new division, but merely to acquaint you with its existence, and let you know that we on the Board think this is a development of far-reaching importance.

And now a final word. When I was chairman of the Richmond School Board, my boss Mr. Willett, permitted me to speak to the teachers at their annual
convocation in September of each year. Only a very
bold superintendent will permit a school board member
to talk on education directly to the teachers. Perhaps
this is why I was especially pleased by the opportunity
to be with you tonight.

Serving on the State Board is not as much fun
as being a local school board member.

But I can report to you, in good conscience, that
I have been reassured and stimulated by what I have
found in my brief service on the State Board.

We have a first-rate Department of Educa-
tion. It is led and staffed by men and women of
dedication and devotion. I can also say to you that
the teachers in Virginia have the full confidence,
admiration, and affectionate support of the Board and
the Department of Education.

While there is never any room for complacency
in education, we think the public school system in
Virginia is one of the finest in the country. And it
hardly need be said that our greatest source of strength
is the great body of teachers whom you represent here	onight.
Educational Research

A New Opportunity

In Virginia

by LEWIS F. POWELL, JR.

Greetings from the State Board of Education were brought by Lewis F. Powell, Jr. In his presentation, he discussed possibilities for the new Division of Educational Research, a division of which he is now in charge. Mr. Powell was appointed to this position by the Board of Education in 1960, having previously served on the Richmond City School Board for a decade during which he held the chairmanship for the last two years. Mr. Powell received the distinguished service award in 1958 as Virginia's Outstanding School Board Member.

A native of Suffolk, he is a lawyer by profession.

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Among the hopeful signs on the educational scene in Virginia are the following:

1. The intelligent and deep interest of Governor Harrington; (2) the responsiveness in the General Assembly; (3) the wholesome effect of the splendid study and report of the Spong Commission; and (4) most important of all, an intensification of interest by the public generally, and parents in particular, in our schools and our teachers, and in what can be done to assure the finest possible public school system.

I will concentrate on one specific development, which, in my opinion, holds great promise for good. This is the establishment, within the State Department of Education, of a new Division of Research and Pilot Studies. At the request of the State Board of Education, the General Assembly appropriated $75,000 for educational research during the current fiscal year, and $100,000 for the fiscal year 1963-64. Although research work has been done through the years, this is the first appropriation as such for this specific purpose.

To assure the emphasis which this project deserves, the Board has established a separate division—which will rank on a parity with the other major divisions in the Department.

Broadly speaking, there will be two areas of major emphasis. The first will be "pilot studies," essentially an operational function. Special studies as requested by the Board and the State Superintendent, will be conducted directly. Local school divisions will also be assisted in the planning and carrying forward of approved pilot studies of various kinds. These may include, for example, experimentation with and critical analysis of the effectiveness of team teaching, programmed instruction, language laboratories, educational TV, and the teaching of foreign languages in the elementary grades.

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It is obvious that the smaller high schools cannot offer either the variety or depth of courses available in the larger schools. The inevitable watering-down of the academic program in the small high school is bad for the entire student body. But it may be catastrophic for the boys and girls who have the capacity to do the advanced work which is usually obtainable only in the elective courses of the major high schools. The end result may be the squandering of one of our most precious assets—namely the potential talent of the ablest students who are denied these opportunities.

VIRGINIA JOURNAL OF EDUCATION
is one of the whole state of Okla­
ahoma. In Oklahoma 93.7% of all
their teachers have finished college.
And we rank right at the bottom of
the Southern States in the number
of members of the elementary and
high school grades who have their
M.A. degree.

Cloud number 2 is this, and I
quote the Industrial Development
Consultant to Governor Harrison,
Richard C. Holmquist, who said:
"Virginia has some of the finest
schools in the country at all levels.
They are excellent and I will rank
them against those anywhere else,
but there are certain areas in the
State that need to be brought up to
a higher standard. This hurts us not
only because it is unfair to the youth
who are growing up in these com-

Clouds

As far as "cloud one" is concerned
with training teachers I saw the
definition of Virginia is that unclen
in the last night when Dr. Woodrow
Williams said that
important education courses initiated
by division superin-
tendents with the cooperation of Vir-
ginia colleges and universities had
increased enrollment from 1907 numb-
ers in 1960-61 to an estimated 2280
this year. I think that is a fine tribute
to the superintendent's who have
helped to establish these courses and
to the teachers who have assumed
in them.

Cloud number 2 which results
from wide variances in public edu-
cation in Virginia, referred to by Mr.
Holmquist, will be removed as we
improve our method of distributing
State funds, and the localities con-
tribute their fair share to the support
of public education.

This cloud which will overshadow
us tomorrow can only be lifted if when
the vote is taken we will behave in
a truly professional way, being tol-

The final cloud that I want to
discuss is the cloud that will over-

The Virginia Education As-
sociation has been pushing along now
since 1863. We have had our ups
and downs. We have gone through
several metamorphoses. We have had
since 1954 some vigorous, intense
and emotionally charged battles here
on the floor of the Delegate As-
munity but from all of these battles,
al of these conditions, and all of these
disagreements, we have emerged
united. Sometimes it has taken a
little time to mend the broken
places. But I have every confidence
that the 28,000 members of our great
VEA will be able to vote differently
but at the same time wind up not
in a state of dissatisfaction but resolved
to go forward together.

Lifting of Clouds

As far as "cloud one" is concerned
the teachers who have enrolled in
the superintendents who have
in local and regional education
courses initiated by division superin-
tendents with the cooperation of Vir-
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Local Option Study
Committee Report

The VEA Local Option Committee
appointed by President Woodrow W.
Robinson in 1961 as authorized by the
1962 VEA Delegate Assembly upon
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Directors essentially submits this re-
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stantial money, as each new school division adds to

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ways. More important, as noted above, the fragmentation

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It is to be hoped that this will become a major area of

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country—has recently announced plans for state-wide

minimum competency tests in reading, writing and other

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merit, and one which should be explored by our new

Division of Research.

3. Length of School Year. At the risk of incurring

the displeasure of my own young, I suggest that this

is one of our more serious problems.

There has been no significant change in the school

year since the turn of the century. And yet the require-

ments of knowledge have expanded beyond man’s wildest

imagination of only a few years ago.

Moreover, the reason for the long summer vacation

of three months no longer exists. The boys and girls

are not needed on the farms, and below certain ages

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to idle away three months in each year? To what extent

does this contribute to the serious problem of juvenile
delinquency?

But whatever the answers to these questions may be,
certainly at the high school level we must find a better
solution than the horse and buggy concept of 180 school

days. There are, of course, all sorts of difficulties and

problems involved in changing the present system. But

the first step is careful analysis and study, together

with a will and determination to do something about this

mischance of the past. A good place to start is in the

new Division of Research.

* * * * *

My real purpose this evening is not to provide a blue-
guide for the new division, but merely to acquaint you

with its existence and let you know that we on the

Board think this is a development of far-reaching

importance.
I. Proposed State-wide Salary Schedule*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No. Years Taught</th>
<th>Normal Teacher's</th>
<th>Bachelor's</th>
<th>Master's</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>$3400</td>
<td>$4200</td>
<td>$4700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>3500</td>
<td>4400</td>
<td>4900</td>
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<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>7000</td>
<td>8200</td>
<td>8700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>7200</td>
<td>8400</td>
<td>9000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

II. Retirement

We recommend:

1. That benefits under the Virginia Supplemental Retirement System for retirement be calculated by taking 11.8% of average compensation for the highest five consecutive years of creditable service for each year of service with no limit on salary or service and that contributions be paid on the first $1200 of salary. (At the present time, contributions and benefits are based on salary in excess of $1200.)

2. That a member retiring under the early service retirement provision, effective upon attaining age 60 and credited with 30 or more years of service to the Retirement System shall receive a retirement allowance from the Virginia Supplemental Retirement System without the allowance being actuarially reduced. (At present, the normal retirement age is 65, and one who retires before age 65 is paid an actuarially reduced amount.)

3. That a member who withdrew accumulated contributions in 1952 may redeposit the amount withdrawn with interest thereon and receive credit for service prior to March 1, 1952.

4. That the amount of Group Life Insurance under the Virginia Supplemental Retirement System for each member continue to be based on the total salary and that the member be allowed the option to purchase at his own expense an equivalent amount.

5. That a member who leaves State service after five years of creditable service may leave his contributions in the retirement fund and be eligible for a deferred allowance. (At present, 15 years of service are required as qualification for a deferred allowance.)

6. That disability after 10 years service be provided all new teachers without requiring them to file the Health Status Declaration, Form VSRS-12.

* To be provided out of both State and local funds.

VIRGINIA JOURNAL OF EDUCATION
The Year-Round School Is Here

Editorials by Dr. Robert F. Williams

Summer is not what it used to be for many children in Virginia. The picture of the closed school door and youngsters engaged in aimless, if agreeable, play for three long months is changing. The nine-month or 180-day school year, a remnant of the Agrarian Age in which children were needed for the planting, cultivation, and harvesting of farm crops, is on the way out. A lengthened school year makes possible a more necessary harvest for these hard days. Thousands of Virginia's teachers and youngsters are finding increasingly that the regular school year isn't long enough for what the school would like to do and should do.

Not only are many high school doors open during the summer months but elementary doors as well. Thousands of boys and girls are attending voluntarily— not only by those who need to make up failed work (as used to be the case), but by youngsters who are eager to advance more rapidly and enrich their lives through new learning experiences. The development of a strong summer school program should also tend to decrease the number of school dropouts.

The elimination of wasteful, do-nothing vacations for Virginia's children also results in utilizing more effectively Virginia's billion dollar school plant which formerly was shut down for almost one-fourth of the year.

High School Summer Schools

The characteristics of the summer high school of the future (already the summer school of today for many youngsters and teachers in Virginia) emerge from a study which the VEA has just completed. Here they are:

1. The length of the summer school will be 8 weeks, making a school year for teacher and pupil of approximately 11 months or 220 days.
2. Summer school doors will be open 4 hours a day, 5 days per week.
3. As many as 3 credits may be earned.
4. Teachers will be employed on a 12-month basis.
5. Available subjects will run the entire gamut of the regular school term.
6. Summer school costs will be increasingly borne from public funds.

Our new VEA study reveals that 27,879 Virginia high school students enrolled in 1962 summer school or one out of ten of the total high school enrollment.

Of the 115 school divisions, 64, or more than half, held summer school for high school students.

DECEMBER, 1962
Altogether 4,000, or 20 per cent, more students attended school in the summer of 1962 than in 1961.

Unbelievably, in the cities during the summer of 1962, one out of seven regular term high school students attended summer school.

In nine localities as many as one out of five regular term students attended summer school.

The majority of the summer schools ran for 8 weeks, making an eleven-month school year.

The length of the school day in the majority of the summer schools was four hours, five days a week, practically the same as in the regular session.

Courses offered included academic, vocational, fine arts, physical education, driver education, and remedial work.

The following table indicates the increase in summer school attendance in 1962 as compared with 1961.

**TABLE I**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total Enrollment</th>
<th>Per Cent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>617,899</td>
<td>.78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1962</td>
<td>2,787,960</td>
<td>14.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As an indication of the fact that the pupil in summer school is moving away from make-up or remedial work to acceleration and enrichment, of the 27,879 attending summer school in 1962, 10,939 were taking all new subjects and 5,724 were taking both old and new.

Public funds completely financed the summer school program in only three of the 64 localities holding summer school; in 43 tuition was charged; and in 18 both public funds and tuition payments were used.

The cost per pupil varied from $10 to $60.

All together 1,400 high school teachers were engaged in 1962 summer school programs; 912 in 1961. In six of the 64 localities, the teachers were paid on a 12-month basis.

Elementary Summer Schools

Twenty counties and cities had elementary summer school programs, in which 4,651 pupils were enrolled, with only three offering work below the third grade.

The majority of the summer schools were in session for six or more weeks.

As was true in the high school summer school program, the purpose was for making up failed work, acceleration, and enrichment.

Two hundred eighteen teachers were employed in the 1962 elementary summer school program as compared with 195 in 1961.

**TABLE II**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total Enrollment Elementary School</th>
<th>Summer School</th>
<th>Per Cent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>605,760</td>
<td>3,908</td>
<td>.65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1962</td>
<td>817,800</td>
<td>4,401</td>
<td>.70%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Only three of the 20 counties and cities financed elementary summer school programs entirely from local funds; 13 charged tuition; and 4 used a combination of tuition and public funds.

As the world's knowledge increases and as it becomes more and more imperative that we utilize the time and talents of both children and teachers, not to mention making the fullest possible use of an enormously expensive educational plant, we will move forward to a longer school year.

As a result, our citizens will be able to live more abundantly and productive lives and a higher return on our immense school investment will be realized.

The new summer harvest will increase a thousand fold as the State and the localities provide fuller support for the operation of summer schools.

Public funds now provide a system of free public education in Virginia for nine months out of the year.

Inevitably we believe public funds will be provided to finance the year-round school in Virginia.

Other than funds to strengthen and improve the regular nine-month school program, could there be a better investment of the people's money?

A Deceptive Average

Virginia's 1961-62 average salary of $4,640 for the classroom teacher is quite deceptive.

Of the 96 counties, 91 were below this average and of the 32 cities, 14 were below this average.

Only the following counties and cities had average salaries equal to or above the State average of $4,640 for 1961-62:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County or City</th>
<th>Average Salary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arlington</td>
<td>6,380</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fairfax</td>
<td>5,689</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hanover</td>
<td>4,799</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prince William</td>
<td>5,114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>York</td>
<td>4,821</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alexandria</td>
<td>6,230</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charlotteville</td>
<td>5,907</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Falls Church</td>
<td>6,756</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fredericksburg</td>
<td>5,165</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hopewell</td>
<td>4,797</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lynchburg</td>
<td>5,093</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Martinsburg</td>
<td>6,055</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newport News</td>
<td>4,779</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norfolk</td>
<td>4,995</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Petersburg</td>
<td>4,917</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portsmouth</td>
<td>5,247</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richmond</td>
<td>4,401</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roanoke</td>
<td>4,821</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Norfolk</td>
<td>4,700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Virginia Beach</td>
<td>4,670</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waynesboro</td>
<td>4,651</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Williamsburg</td>
<td>4,651</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The average salary for the classroom teacher for 1960-