PRAISES NEW 12-GRAD E L A. SCHOOL PLAN

Dr. Ewerz Lists Program to Aid Schools During Transition Period

Baton Rouge, Sept. 22 (Special).—The 12-grade system inaugurated in Louisiana schools last year marked a "kind of renaissance in public education" and "by its many new challenges brought conspicuously into play the creative genius of school officials and teachers," according to Dr. R. R. Ewerz, state department of education director of elementary and secondary education, whose supervisory program for 1944-46 has just been released by State Superintendent of Education John E. Cox.

To aid schools during this second year of third-year transition period (1944-45 to 1949-50) which is necessary to complete the changeover to 12 years of schooling, this year's state supervisory program is concentrated exclusively upon the 12-grade program.

Dr. Ewerz points out that the "underlying spirit" of the 12-grade program is to provide greater educational opportunity for all children to enable them to know more of music and art, to develop vocational interests and skills, to learn more about the elements of good citizenship, and to spend more time in the development of these skills. However, he warns of four dangers to guard against.

One danger is that some schools may continue to offer the same old narrow program as in the 11-grade system, the state department educator believes. He says that "over and above the core curriculum," every school should offer students "at least two" of the "enrichment" subjects such as home economics, industrial arts, vocational guidance, agriculture, general business, home economics, art music, and foreign languages.

No First-Year High

Another danger of the transition period is the matter of failures by last year's high school freshmen. The student cannot be demoted to the eighth grade, since that is now an elementary grade. Nor can he be re-scheduled this year for subjects failed, since there will be no first-year high school grade this year, at least in the average high school of the state, Ewerz declares that principals should exercise extreme care in handling such cases to avoid "lasting academic and emotional handicaps to pupils," and in a separate circular letter devoted exclusively to this problem, six ways of meeting the situation are suggested.

A third danger lies in the possibility of unqualified teachers, and "great care" is urged in selecting teachers for the seventh and eighth grades, since "it will be the unusual teachers who can handle all the subjects to be scheduled in these areas." Degrees of departmentalization is one answer, but not for all schools, it is cautioned, and the warning is added that "complete specialization in these grades may prevent desirable flexibility."

Charges Publicity Failure

Ewerz also sees a danger in failure to keep the community informed as to the benefits that the new program is bringing to their children. Through failure to publicize the actual changes that have taken place in the curriculum, many parents may get the false impression that the program isn't living up to expectation.

Ewerz points out that the 12-grade program will affect such persistent educational problems as illiteracy, school attendance, and health. While the public schools can do little now for the bulk of Louisiana's present illiterates, who are over 25 years of age, it is believed that the schools can do much through the 12-grade program to reduce potential adult illiteracy by strengthening the reading program in every grade.

Operate Attendance Law

Because of the operation of the school attendance law, it is pointed out that many children will be brought into the schools who will be overage in any group in which they are placed. It is the school's job to help such children to adapt themselves to new and difficult situations. For these extremely overage children, the new program makes possible many handwork classes and tool activities. Dr. Ewerz recommends that average pupils get emphasis on fundamentals, such as reading and arithmetic, scheduling them in lower grades if necessary.

While the health program of Louisiana schools has greatly improved during recent years, it has not been completely adequate, according to the state department of education official. The additional year, while it will not suddenly change all this, will provide more health instruction and more health activities. Taking this fact in conjunction with long-range plans of the state department of health and education for school-community health programs, and improvements in diet afforded by the school lunch program, Dr. Ewerz sees the health outlook for Louisiana children as much brighter.

SHreveport Times Sept. 23, 1945 P.32 Col. 1