School Survey Raps System Of Electing Superintendent

BATON ROUGE (AP) - A comprehensive survey of Louisiana's public school system has said it is bad practice to let an elected state superintendent have power over department personnel, salaries and duties without approval of the Education Board.

The report was made public at the same time the Louisiana Legislative Council met here to receive it.

Prof. E.L. Lindman and a staff of consultants from George Peabody College for Teachers, Nashville, Tenn., made the survey at the council's request. The council is the official research group for state lawmakers.

In Louisiana, the state superintendent of education is elected to his post. Bills which sought to make his job appointive have failed in previous legislative sessions.

The survey said the state Board of Education is responsible for the educational program of the state, yet the superintendent has the power to set up subdivisions in the state Department of Education, employ staff members, fix their salaries and define their duties without approval of the state board.

"Since the office of the state superintendent is elective—and therefore political—this practice is bad."

The survey suggested legislation requiring the state superintendent to appoint department personnel, subject to the board's approval.

A 1946 law required the board's approval in such cases, but the act later was repealed.

The Peabody staff survey praised the people of Louisiana for "making a greater effort in proportion to their ability to support public education than the nation as a whole."

The state also was commended for having the second highest number of public secondary schools holding membership in the Southern Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools.

"The school lunch program is outstanding in the nation, about 75 per cent of the children participate," the report added, "and 90 per cent of lunches served are type "A.""

The report criticized the state for paying heavily for the educational program while "local support is inadequate."

"The state should not be expected to provide more than minimum essentials."

State Supt. Shelby M. Jackson, in presenting a record $186 million dollar public school budget to the Joint Fiscal Committee this week, said Louisiana's school system is unique because the state, in footing most of the bill, assumes poorer parishes of the same educational facilities and opportunities as the rich parishes.

"The budget represents an increase of about 15 per cent."

The survey made this point about educational costs:

"Louisiana has many small high schools, with 53 of them having fewer than 50 pupils and 207 having fewer than 100 pupils."

"One high school had 19 pupils and four teachers; another had 21 pupils and four teachers—the cost of maintaining such schools is excessive."

The report commented only 11 of the 67 school systems in the state meet or exceed standards for a minimum staff.

As for the state board, the survey remarked it spends "an undetermined amount of its time" in management colleges, trade schools and special schools.

The report also praised observation by the board of phases of education, saying it is because it promotes the state's educational program.