



New Jersey Council of Education

THE COUNCIL EMERGES: A LONG, FRUITFUL LIFE

The New Jersey Council of Education can look back upon its lengthy past with pride, upon its present with satisfaction, and upon its future with justified anticipation. In large measure because of its existence, the State of New Jersey has long been recognized as a national leader in educational thought and action.

Over a span of over one hundred plus years, only a little over two thousand have been admitted to membership in the Council. The members have been dedicated in purpose, valiant in action, and wise in counsel.

In 1978, at the behest of Marshall W. Errickson, then president of the Council, the Constitution was amended permitting the Executive Committee to give special recognition to the long-time members who have retired from the education profession after at least thirty years of service and who have made "large and notable contributions to the field of New Jersey education."

The first awards were made in March 1979 and were divided into two categories; posthumous and living. Awardees living at the time of their achievements are recognized and invited to attend the meeting at which the awards (suitable inscribed plaques) are presented.

The Council, throughout its total history, has pursued effectively its stated objectives: the investigation and discussion of topics relating to education and the dissemination of information bearing on these topics, and the consideration and recommendation of the best means by which the educational policy of the State might be modified in view of the progress of educational thought.

The Council's history, however, shows that it has also performed the following functions:

1. It has brought together different people with different degrees and kinds of experience to share diverse views, reflecting all sides and dimensions of burning educational issues.
2. It has provided a means by which a collective finger could continuously test the pulse of education in the State and the Nation -- an increasingly valuable attribute because of the emergence of so many "splinter groups" in the profession which are organized along "job lines" and tend to use "heavy" pressure strength.
3. It has given articulate individuals an effective "sounding board," such as could be found nowhere else, to air their educational views to a highly-selected sampling of New Jersey's educational leaders.
4. It has provided a meeting place where members from all parts of the State could socialize, become friends, exchange experiences and concerns, obtain valued advice, and seek assistance in personal and mutual projects.

Many of the Council's contributions have inestimably accelerated the quality and quantity of public education in New Jersey. One can provide witness for this statement in the "Township Law," which, almost alone among states, enabled New Jersey to reduce drastically, before the turn of the century, the number of its school boards and districts through consolidation. The free text-book law heavily pressed by the Council, brought the cost of education within reach of the "masses," and was a necessary complement of the compulsory attendance law, which made at least an elementary school education mandatory for all the children of all the people.

One can extend this list indefinitely. It can include, for example, constant surveillance to encourage the most equitable distribution of school funds, better preparation of teachers, more adequate teacher salaries, the establishment of Normal Schools within reach of high school graduates in different areas of the State, their later conversion to State Teachers Colleges, manual and vocational training programs, the junior high school, the continuation school, special education facilities, and community colleges.

It has always been true, however, that every problem resolved opens doors to new problems, new issues, and new opportunities. The Council of Education, with its perspicacious influential members, must certainly expect a future in which its contributions can be just as essential and fruitful as have been its efforts in the past.

Many issues have already appeared on the horizon, demanding understanding, decision, and action. "Futurists," upon request, have placed these topics on their list -- topics, which they say will long cry for complete resolution -- but they admit that every Council member can extend their list almost infinitely:

1. The definition of "a thorough and efficient" system of education and its financing.
2. Tax reform.
3. State educational assessment programs.
4. Greater decentralization of schools within a system to permit attention to neighborhood differences.
5. The withholding of adequate school services from pupils guaranteed a "thorough and efficient" system of education by the State Constitution.
6. Degrees of local -- state control of education.
7. Problems related to teacher and administrator evaluation . . . and certification.
8. Negotiations processes.
9. Support of non-public schools.
10. Degrees of autonomy for state colleges, county colleges, and the state university.
11. Coordination of public schools and public colleges.
12. Kinds of defensible post-secondary education.
13. Population and fiscal factors and their effects on education.
14. The factors involved in the degree of public confidence in public education.
15. Student "rights" and "wrongs".
16. Alternate types of education.
17. Urban education.
18. Voucher plans and effects upon public education.
19. Performance objectives for licensure.
20. Integration: enrollment, curriculum, faculty.
21. Appropriate objectives for public education.
22. Value structures and the responsibility of schools.
23. In-service improvement of education: Whose responsibility?
24. The changing roles of boards and administrators.

25. The courts and their impact: Helpful or hurtful?

The Council, as an organization, has never sought acclaim, or credit, for its catalyzing and galvanizing effects upon desirable educational movements. Its individual members, however, have been frequently memorialized in communities everywhere in the state. Many have had their names perpetuated on elementary and secondary schools, on college libraries and classroom buildings, and in written and oral statements which are constantly used in guiding discussion.

The Council is over one hundred years old and it faces its future confidently. It takes pride in New Jersey's school system and the national recognition, which is, accorded its quality. It believes that it has played a prominent role in its careful development.

But, undoubtedly, its greatest pride lies in its conviction that it has affected greatly and desirably the lives of myriad thousands of citizens who, through the schools of New Jersey, have made of the Garden State a good place in which to live and work. And so, with the confidence which its past has merited, the New Jersey Council of Education moves toward a new century in a new millennium of service and guidance to the public schools of New Jersey -- schools for all the children and youth of all the people!