

FEDERAL SECURITY AGENCY

Office of Education

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Mrs. Hazel O. Daniels
Administrative Assistant
Division of Public Institutions
4th Floor, Globe Building
St. Paul 1, Minnesota

Dear Mrs. Daniels:

May I thank you again for the many courtesies extended to me during ~~say~~ recent visit to the Minnesota institutions at Faribault and Owatonna. The kindness of yourself, the superintendents and the staffs of the schools was almost overwhelming. You certainly have a sincere and devoted group of supervisory personnel,

In view of the brevity of ~~say~~ visits to the various schools and the very apparent progressive attitudes of their superintendents and teachers, it would be rather presumptuous of me to be very critical of what I saw. On the complimentary side, I can safely remark that the general atmosphere in the schools was good and the children seemed happy and well adjusted. Considerable thought has gone into the provision of pleasant and home-like surroundings, particularly at the Braille and sight-saving school, the school for the deaf at Faribault, and the State School at Owatonna. I did not visit the dormitories at the school for the feebleminded at Faribault with the exception of the new and unoccupied units, and, of course, it would be impossible for me to comment upon the adequacy of living conditions at that institution.

I was aware that much planning goes on in your State department when children are returned to their home communities. However, I was under the impression that in both the school for the blind and the school for the deaf general emphasis is upon pupils completing their secondary school programs within the institutions. This is undoubtedly necessary in the large percentage of cases. Has any consideration been given to the possibility of some of these children returning to their home communities where they might receive supplementary assistance through the special education program of the public schools? In the case of the deaf and hard of hearing child, it has been shown that a number of these children can master lip-reading and speech to the extent that they can go back into a normal community and make adequate adjustments, particularly if continued lip-reading instruction is available in the public school programs. Similarly,

partially seeing and even blind children, once they have obtained a good background of basic and fundamental skills, can often be absorbed in the regular schools. The provision of readers would be desirable for blind children, but many school texts are now published in large print for children with partial vision. Such a program would necessarily involve a cooperative plan between the Department of Institutions and the Director of Special Education of the State Department of Education, and it is quite possible that you have developed such plans. Certainly the objective of the State schools should be to return children to normal community life if it is at all possible, and I raise this question partially for my own information and partially as a problem which might be considered,

You will remember at the school for the deaf I raised a question relative to opportunities that the teachers might have for obtaining in-service training in general curriculum problems. The few teachers that we were able to observe in the academic program seemed to have interesting classrooms and gave every evidence of maintaining a simulating school program. In general, however, I believe that the teachers of the deaf do tend to become very language-development conscious and sometimes neglect the more stimulating aspects of general education in their eagerness to establish good language patterns. I recently talked with one of the leaders in the field of instruction of the deaf who operates a large private school. He informed me that he was looking for a person who was well-grounded in general education who could be given some orientation in the teaching of the deaf. This person would function in his school as a resource person in general curriculum practices for his teachers* I feel that this type of service for the deaf is a very essential one, and if it is at all possible the teachers should have the benefit of leadership from an expert in general education who can assist them in developing a better all-round curriculum, whether such a person should be a member of the staff of the institutional school or whether he might serve as a part-time in-service training leader and come from the staff of a good teacher education institution might be considered, If the latter arrangement could be made so that the teachers could receive college credit for their curriculum work, it might be easier to attract qualified teachers of the deaf for the institutional program.

Occasionally I become somewhat concerned about the tendency to employ deaf persons as teachers of the deaf. Certainly deaf children need every possible contact with the speaking world. I noticed at least one of the teachers that we saw at Faribault did have considerable speech, but in her dealings with pupils and staff personnel she depended upon manual language. I realize that it has been the policy in many places to employ deaf persons in certain types of school activities with deaf children. I still feel, however, that the ability of

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the deaf person to fit into a normal environment must depend to a great extent upon the frequency with which he has contact with the speaking world during his early training period.

In regard to the provisions for the feebleminded, I was very much impressed by the care with which clinical evaluations are made and also the provisions for follow-up and social service activities. You will remember that in our meeting with the staff at Faribault a question was raised relative to the interpretation of children's needs to teaching personnel. It seems too had that teachers and house mothers cannot share in the knowledges of the clinical staff and also contribute to the cumulative records of the pupils. It was indicated that this was being considered by the staff. It would seem to me that any efforts that could be made to work out a cooperative system of bookkeeping and the frequent interpretation of observations by the psychological staff should be very beneficial.

Any suggestions relative to the school program at Faribault would seem somewhat out of place at this time since the new principal, Mr. Rower, has some definite plans for the improvement of the program. I was impressed by the fact that Mr. Hover and the younger staff members have been given pretty much of a free hand in effecting improvements* It is probably best that they be allowed to work with the teachers, recreational and occupational specialists to achieve a better school program. Perhaps a year from now some evaluation should be made of the results that have been obtained.

At Owatonna there was evidence of some very intelligent planning at both the State and school levels. The assignment of higher grade pupils who have positive prospects for rehabilitation to a separate school would certainly seem to be a move in the right direction. The school facilities at Owatonna are comparable to those found in the more progressive school systems. Mr* Henderson, the school superintendent, seems to be well aware of educational procedures, and the fact that his teachers are working on improved curriculum development is an excellent sign of a general aliveness to the needs of pupils. The staff seems quite aware of the need of developing a good basic curriculum with a social studies core. From the appearance of the few classrooms that we visited, I would judge that the teachers have the ability to maintain interesting classrooms and to teach the fundamental skills. Perhaps some consideration might be given to bringing in a curriculum expert on an in-service training program in order that the teachers may be given assistance in their curriculum development programs, I am not thinking in terms of a lecture program but rather one in which an educator would meet with teachers to discuss their various classroom projects and deal with specific problems as they are

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presented by the classroom teachers. If Such a program could be established in connection with a college or university in order that the teachers might receive college credit for their work, it would seem most desirable to do so.

All in all, my visit of three days gave me the impression that I was visiting an institutional program that had been developed through intelligent planning and a great regard for the personal development of boys and girls. I am sure that those of yon in the Department of Institutions must be greatly responsible for the many fine aspects of this program.

It was a great pleasure to meet with you and to have the privilege of seeing many of the fine things you are doing.

Very sincerely yours,

/a/ Artbar S, Hill

Arthur S, Hill, Chief
Exceptional Children and Youth