

Adult Education in Pennsylvania

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PENNSYLVANIA has recently taken a distinct step forward in the development of Adult Education.

For many years the larger and more progressive cities and boroughs of the state have been maintaining efficient systems of night schools. Great credit is due to the men responsible for this development of adult education, for heretofore they have had little encouragement and no help from the state. From 1920 to 1924 a Bureau of Americanization existed within the State Department of Public Instruction, which spread effective propaganda in the interest of English and citizenship classes for immigrants. Beyond this effort, and a section of the State School Code providing for the education of foreign born by means of county supervisors subject to the approval and support of county commissioners, there had been no constructive effort in the field of adult education.

In February, 1924, there was created a Division of Extension Education within the State Department of Public Instruction. To this division was assigned the responsibility of developing adult education within the State, including night, high and elementary public schools, English and citizenship classes for immigrants and native illiterates, and university extension courses, with the additional responsibility of co-ordinating public and school libraries and other existing agencies in the interest of adult education.

On September 22 and 23, 1924, delegates from over fifty leading educational, industrial, religious, patriotic and welfare organizations of the state met at Harrisburg, in response to a call from the Department of Public Instruction, to discuss adult education in Pennsylvania. As a result of this conference, definite recommendations were formulated which received the serious consideration and general approval of the State Department.

Out of these recommendations and the established policies of the Department of Public Instruction grew a definite state program of adult education, including the following major provisions.

1. State certification of extension teachers based upon special training in the teaching of English and citizenship, in addition to the requirements for teaching in the public schools of the state.
2. A state-wide program of teacher training to enable teachers to meet the certification requirements within the two years allowed for this purpose.
3. Approval of twelve bulletins on the various phases of extension education, including courses of study and methods of teaching, was secured and these bulletins are in process of preparation.
4. A legislative program was formulated including the following provisions.
 - A. Recognition of adult education as an integral part of the program of public instruction within the state.

- B. The organization of extension education classes at any time during the day or night not in conflict with day-school activities was made mandatory upon the school districts of the state upon written application of twenty or more residents above sixteen years of age, such classes to include any course of study taught in the day schools of such districts, English and citizenship classes for immigrants and native illiterates, citizenship for adults, and any other course of study which such boards of school directors might see fit to establish and maintain.
- C. Extension classes so organized shall not be closed, except as the attendance in such classes for one month falls below ten.
- D. Whenever a day-school course of study is successfully completed by any person, full school credit toward graduation shall be given, and when the requirements for graduation are fulfilled by any person by attending either night classes or night classes and day classes, such person shall be awarded the regular school certificate or diploma.
- E. Provision was made for reimbursement of school districts for maintaining extension schools and classes on the same percentage basis as districts within the State of Pennsylvania are now reimbursed for day-school costs, ranging according to the class of district from twenty-five percent to seventy-five percent of the minimum salary prescribed, with further provision that the minimum salary of extension teachers shall be one dollar per hour, with a minimum annual increment of twenty-five cents per hour, and a minimum number of two such annual increments.
- F. Provision was further made for a biennial enumeration of illiterates and aliens to be made by school districts in conjunction with the regular school enumeration.

With the exception of the bill providing for a biennial enumeration of illiterates and aliens, all of the extension education measures were passed by the 1925 Assembly and signed by Governor Pinchot.

While much remains to be done in Pennsylvania, this represents at least a beginning. Increased interest in adult education is evident throughout the state. During the past year the number of cities and boroughs maintaining adult education classes has increased about fifty percent. Cities and boroughs which have previously maintained such classes are increasing their budget appropriations for this work, and class enrollment is steadily growing.

The State Department of Public Instruction of Pennsylvania while fostering the move for a comprehensive program of adult education.

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