

## OUR NATIONAL ASSOCIATION

*The Service of Research*

LILLIAN JONES got a raise in salary. She was working in a school where teachers were elected for one year at a time. While she had felt reasonably secure, she had been afflicted with some doubt as to what might happen. Relief came, therefore, with re-election and the larger salary. Perhaps Miss Jones did not know why she got the larger salary. Perhaps not even the board that elected her really knew. An important factor in the decision was research. Someone had gathered the facts to show that there was a shortage of teachers, that salaries were lower than in other types of work requiring similar preparation, and that strong men and women were leaving the profession. Editors of newspapers and magazines, following the lead of the National Education Association, had taken up the cry for better-prepared and better-paid teachers and for securer tenure and improved working conditions.

All of this had reached the school board that employed Miss Jones. They had seen charts dividing the teachers into groups according to preparation and pay. Pride in their children had caused them to provide a salary better than the average that they might be surer of getting a superior teacher. But back of it all was research, bringing to the school board information as to what other schools were doing and a vision born of broad knowledge of conditions throughout the country.

What should a city pay for the services of an inferior teacher? an average teacher? a superior teacher? Does education pay? Can we afford increased expenditure for education? What has been the experience of schools elsewhere in these matters? The welfare of millions of children depends upon the answers that schools make to such simple questions as these.

Every teacher has a vital interest in seeing that school boards have the basic facts with which to answer such questions. If the school board is to have these facts, it must either collect them itself or rely on some central agency to collect and interpret them. If some central agency does not do this work, many school boards decide important matters of policy without having the essential facts needed for a clear understanding of them.

Let us assume, however, that a hundred school boards recognize the need of getting evidence and that each writes to the others and obtains an answer to some one question. Each board sends out one hundred letters and receives one hundred. The transaction requires twenty thousand letters. Let us assume that some central agency writes to each of the boards for the essential facts compiles them, and sends the tabulated and interpreted data back to the boards. Only three hundred letters are required. Measure the three hundred against the twenty thousand and you have a suggestion of the economy of common action by professional organizations.

Add to this consideration the advantage that instead of one hundred schools using the facts that have been carefully prepared, they will probably be used by a thousand boards, thus multiplying many fold the intelligence that is brought to bear on the solution of our educational problems.

It was recognition of this need for common service, particularly in the financial crisis which was then facing American education, that led the Association in March, 1922, to establish its Division of Research at Association headquarters with Mr. John K. Norton as director. Mr. Norton's training was under Drs. Cubberley and Terman at Stanford University. His experience includes service in various kinds of public school work. Immediately before coming to the Association he was director of the Bureau of Research and extension of the State Teachers College at San Jose, California.

From the first this division has had many more tasks than it could possibly accomplish with the limited funds available from the Association's treasury. But with its limited funds and staff the Division has made studies and prepared information that has been of inestimable value to education and to the individual teacher.

Hardly had the service begun when a steady stream of letters of appreciation began to tell of its great value to all parts of the country. Every educational worker has an interest at stake whether he be a member of the Association or not. The teacher gains when the Research Division gathers the facts on teachers' salaries from every section of the country and presents the argument which must appeal to any reasonable board of education

as to why the salaries of teachers should be increased.

The individual teacher profits when the Research Division gathers material for American Education Week. Out of this week grows a widening appreciation of the real meaning of education and the community's great obligation to its teachers. The Research Division serves the individual teacher in another way. Instead of making at great expense graphs and charts which they can use in a salary campaign, superintendents now arrange to have these made for a small fee by the Research Division of the National Education Association where all materials are on file.

The division has prepared much valuable material for the Association's *Journal* and for other magazines. Every division of the Association's headquarters which requires information looks to the Research Division to supply that information on short notice. In other words it is the business of this division to put facts to work, to discover from a study of facts what the wisest practices are so that educational workers everywhere may have the best material. That the figures gathered by the Division are used by thousands of speakers, and hundreds of magazines, both lay and professional, is ample testimony to the usefulness of the work. Its findings have also been given to a large radio audience through Station WRC at Washington, D. C.

The impact on the educational advance; the encouragement which this division has given to greater and wiser expenditure for public education reaches to the remotest classroom. Its work touches the life of every child in a score of ways—helping to determine the kind of teacher that shall guide him, the kind of building that shall house him, the kind of books he shall study, the timetable that shall regulate his day, and the curriculum that shall chart the mighty seas of knowledge to be learned. These are pressing problems as education expands to larger usefulness. Research throws its life-giving beams upon them all.

Just as thousands of individual school boards working alone cannot well gather the facts they need, so State and local agencies need a clearing house. Assuming that there

are fifty State and local research agencies interested in gathering facts on a particular subject, if each of these agencies should write to each of the others, 2,500 letters would be exchanged.

Assume again that they agree upon a common center, that gathers facts from each of them and compiles and distributes the results. Only one hundred and fifty letters are then required. Many more facts can be collected for the money available. Every teacher again benefits. That is another reason for the existence of the Research Division and for the Research Advisory Committee.

This committee representing all phases of education insures that the Division is well advised in its work of coördinating its efforts of the Nation's educational research agencies.

Here then is one other service that is made possible by the small fee that we all pay into our common professional treasury. Like many other of the Association's services, in itself it is worth the entire membership fee to each individual teacher whether a member or not. It is an added reason why every practicing teacher should join the Association and share the deeper sense of professional well-being that is enjoyed by its members. The individual teacher standing alone can do little in research, in obtaining better working conditions, or in securing just public recognition of the importance of the teacher's work. One hundred thousand teachers banded together are a mighty force. Seven hundred thousand would be more than seven times as mighty. They would be irresistible when supporting any program of recognized advantage to childhood and the Nation. It is appreciation of this fact that is leading many schools to maintain one hundred per cent enrollment year after year and many teachers to make special effort to interest others in sharing the work of our remarkable Association.—*Journal of the National Education Association.*

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“Culture means intellectual background. It means accumulated force behind your stroke. It means that you are not only capable yourself, but that you know how to absorb and use the capability of wiser persons.”  
—Dr Frank Crane, in *The Mentor.*