THE CROSSROADS

A report to the Board of Education of
Orono Consolidated School Dist. No. 11

Our school district is, and our high school will be, judged and compared each and every day with the schools of the suburban area, not the outstate schools. We as a Board and as the Superintendent have stressed this type of comparison. People are familiar with Mound, Wayzata, Excelsior, Hopkins, St. Louis Park, Robbinsdale, etc. They know little of Ada, Appleton, Bagley, Benson, Blackduck, Wells, etc. Comparisons are made on known qualities.

In all of our pre-bond discussions we presented our picture as to possible enrollment, finances, pupil load, per pupil cost, etc. with our neighboring suburban schools regardless of their size. Never in our discussions were we making comparisons with outstate schools of comparable enrollment to that which we contemplated.

In our published brochure, which we endorsed and circulated to our people, we set up the following curriculum:

THE CURRICULUM

a. Strong college preparatory—complete college preparatory program will be offered, English, social studies, sciences, languages, mathematics, specials, etc.
b. Industrial arts and farm shop — Basic course open to all junior high students. Advanced courses offered to senior high students.
c. Home economics — Basic course open to all junior high students. Advanced courses offered to senior high students.
d. Commercial — Courses in typing, bookkeeping, shorthand, business machines.
e. Physical education and recreation — Extensive intra-mural recreational program for all boys and girls. A complete athletic program for boys.

Community Center for adults — available spaces for meetings of civic groups.

Strong central library.

Evening extension classes for adults in all departments.

Opportunities for recreational, athletic, and social programs for adults.

Continuing with our brochure we asked the question, "What Alternatives Do We Have?" This question we answered in the following manner:

"APPROVE THE BOND ISSUE AND BUILD YOUR OWN SCHOOL — Education — good education — costs money. Everyone around us is building better educational facilities and systems. They have demonstrated that they are ready to pay for better education for their children. Our District No. 11 has one of the highest valuations per pupil unit in Hennepin County. We, more than most, should be in a position to afford good education for our children."

Again we have pledged ourselves to a school system that would more than compare with our neighbors. What we really did was to take the best each had to offer and set that down as our objective.

It is necessary for us to compete, if you please, with our neighbors, the suburban schools. We are obligated to have the best educational plant with the greatest opportunities for our youngsters that it is possible to develop and provide.

In certain areas we must lead the way by giving a stronger program than that offered by our neighbors. Just because our neighbors do not offer clay work in art or a strong art program that criterion in itself should not decide whether we should offer a strong art program. Just because our neighbors do not offer strong adult education opportunities should not be the deciding factor in our planning. We have obligated ourselves, you as a Board, and I as the Superintendent, to develop and give as good a program as possible.

Our differences in this matter seem to stem very largely from a comparison of salaries of staff members located in schools out state. Two or three basic premises must be agreed upon and accepted before this topic is even discussed:

1. There are some excellent teachers and many excellent school systems out state in Minnesota.

2. Large salaries in themselves do not insure excellent teaching.

3. State averages cannot be used as a base as averages in the main do not reflect the type of individuals that we are interested in obtaining. State averages are low, any average is low, we desire much above the average.

In making possible selections for members of the teaching staff for our school we have been working on one premise and one premise only, "We desire to secure the services of the best people possible for the various positions that we have, within the limits of available funds."

Early in our planning, about April 1950, precipitated by the necessity of giving the people a dollar and cents picture of the cost of operating the proposed Junior Senior High School, a study was made to determine the structure or balance of the instructional staff. It was our decision and, all plans have progressed along the lines of this decision, to employ approximately one fourth of the staff with top notch experienced people, one half of the staff with people with three to five years experience, and approximately one fourth of the staff with the very best non experienced people as it was possible to employ. So, again, we have been working on the premise of "We desire to secure the services of the best people possible for the various positions that we have, within the limits of available funds."

We are attempting to accomplish this objective in the following manner:

1. All agencies, placement bureaus, etc. were furnished with a copy of our proposed teacher needs.

2. All applications received are screened and rescreened by both Mr. Berning and myself.

3. Letters are written to people that have papers that particularly interest us.

4. Personal interviews are then held, and the people concerned are rated.

5. Finally, recommendations will be made to the Board of Education.

From this report you can easily see that we are only interested in the key people or most promising people of any given school system or any given graduating class. These promising people will be picked up sooner or later and advanced by some prospective employer. These promising people have not been discovered by us, but are known throughout the profession. They know they are successful and they know that they are in demand. They also know that each move on their part is an important one to their continued success. They are interested before accepting a new appointment to know the professional attitudes of the Board and the administration, the salary offered, and the schedule in effect, and the courses to be handled, the nature and composition of the community, the cost of moving, the housing situation, and the cost of housing.

These and other questions are being asked in our office everyday, and rightfully so.

We must realize that good people in the profession are well satisfied in their present employment and will accept advancement only if it is genuine advancement.

We have by vote of the people on three separate occasions pledged ourselves to the task of building a school system. We must have comparable standards, programs, schedules, courses, and facilities with our suburban neighbors regardless of their size. It is then folly to talk of patterning ourselves with schools of our size in the out state areas.

We have progressed down the road toward a sound educational program, following an accepted educational philosophy. Today we have reached a very important cross-road, mediocracy or advanced achievement. We can no longer sit at this crossroad engaged in conversation. We have by ourevery act convinced the people of our school district that they are going to have the type of a school so often referred to in our written and oral words. A school that can be compared with Mound, Wayzata, Excelsior, Hopkins, St. Louis Park, Robbinsdale, etc. Schools that they know. Not Ada, Bagley, Appleton, Benson, Blackduck, Wells, etc. — schools that they don't know. We must decide now which road we are going to take and continue on our way.

Carlton W. Lytle
Superintendent

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