

EDUCATION: PIERRE, SOUTH DAKOTA

In 1880 people began to settle an area in Dakota Territory that was to become the city of Pierre and later the capitol of South Dakota. One of the first concerns of these people who settled there was to erect a school house in 1881. It was a one room structure that remained a part of Pierre until a few years ago when it was torn down. In 1883 Pierre became an official city of the Dakota Territory. In 1888 two young people were the only members of the first graduating class of Pierre. The next year South Dakota became a state, and Pierre was elected the capitol of the new state.

Pierre continued to grow, and as a result two new grade schools had to be built in the early 1890's. The total construction cost was not more than \$10,000 for each building. In 1908 Pierre was ready to build its first high school. By 1915 there was an average of twenty members in each graduating class. During 1926 the high school burned down and was replaced by a new and larger building. Throughout the depression of the '30's, people and children started going to school because of lack of jobs and anything else to do. Graduation classes suddenly increased to seventy and eighty members. With the help of the W.P.A. (Works Progress Administration), three grade schools were built, McKinley, Lincoln, and Washington. With federal aid, dormitories were set up to house and feed the children who came in from the farms to attend school. Not until after World War II was there any change in the Pierre school systems. While graduating classes of the late 1940's

and early 1950's were small, due to low birth rate in the depression, the grade school enrollment increased because of the so-called "war babies." New additions were added to all the grade schools. Since that time the steady growth of Pierre has resulted in the building of a new high-school completed in 1958. The old high school building was turned into a junior high school. 1962 again saw a sudden increase in building activities with the addition of an auditorium to the Riggs High School building, additions to two of the grade schools and construction of the fourth public grade school in Pierre. The graduating class of 1961 was one hundred and forty-eight, and it is expected that by 1965 there will be over two hundred graduates from the Pierre public high school. Not only have classes and number of school rooms increased through the years, but so has the cost of the buildings. In 1890 it cost \$10,000 to build one school building, but today the new high school, as it stands completed, cost over \$1,400,000. With the history of rising enrollment and new buildings, goes the teachers needed in these schools, The first school in 1881 had one teacher. As schools and enrollment increased so did the number of teachers. By 1945 there were thirty-two teachers in the Pierre system. Today there are one hundred and twenty-two.

As far back as records go, the Pierre public schools have always been headed by an elected school board. The membership of the board has varied from three to five members. Presently there are five members. Annually the school board elects its own officers, the president, clerk, and treasurer. It meets the first Monday of each month except for special or emergency cases. Besides the five regular members, the superintendent,

principals, and an elected representative of the teachers attend these meetings. The public is allowed to sit in on the meetings but have no active part in the proceedings. The school board's main duties include the setting up of the budgets for each school year, approval of purchases made for the schools, and hiring of the superintendent, and the principals. Teachers are selected by both the superintendent and board members. The school board establishes the principles concerning general school policy.

Second in importance in the administration aspect of the Pierre schools is the superintendent. Directly under his supervision are the principals, business manager, and program directors. The superintendent takes over the direct application of school policies as set up by the school board. He has charge of the general curriculum, supervision of teachers and employees, public relations, pupil accounting, organization staff and general program planning.

The business manager of the Pierre schools is the supervisor of building construction, manager of buildings and grounds, and head of school engineers and custodians. He is in charge of ordering and distributing equipment and supplies and audio-visual aids. In addition to these duties, he must, also, take charge of all the Pierre Independent School District's financial records and inventory of equipment and supplies. It can be seen that he is a very busy and vital part of the public school system in Pierre.

The program directors mentioned previously fall into the four following categories: 1) physical education and athletics,

2) instrumental music, 3) grade school music and 4) guidance. One person holds the title of director in each instance. The athletic and physical education director correlates the P.E. programs between the junior high and high school. He likewise is mediary between the high school and the State Interscholastic Activities Association where athletics are concerned. The new auditorium is under joint control of the director and the principal. All events to take place there, athletic or social must be okayed by them. The director of instrumental music takes charge of the bands in grade, junior high, and senior high schools. Because of the four separate grade school buildings, the job of grade school music director has evolved. This person correlates the vocal music activities between these schools. One of the newest and fastest expanding departments in Pierre schools is that of guidance. The director of guidance is head of all counselors in grade, junior high, and high schools. At the present time there are only part-time counselors in the grade schools. In junior high there are two full time counselors. Two counselors are on duty at all times in the high school. The director of guidance, also, has charge of the extensive testing programs in the Pierre schools and surrounding area.

Each school is headed by a principal. The high school and junior high have their own individual principals, but the two grade schools in east Pierre have the same principal, and the two grade schools in west Pierre are headed by the same principal. The principal has direct control of all teachers

and students in his building. He is responsible for all records, finances, activities, and discipline in his building. He is the chairman of all meetings that the teachers within his building have.

Underneath all this overhead of supervision and administration comes the most important part of the Pierre schools--- its one hundred and twenty-two teachers. These people have been hired by the school under recommendations from the principal and superintendent. All high school teachers must have North Central Accreditation for their four year teaching degree. Junior high school teachers must meet state four year teaching degree requirements. As of the coming fall of 1963, all grade school teachers must, also, have their state four year teaching degrees. The school year of 1962-63 boasts twenty-four teachers with M.A.'s, sixty-four with B.A.'s, and thirty-four with less than four year degrees. All teachers in the system are required to earn six semester hours credit by summer school attendance on the following basis: a) (non-degree teachers every third year, b) B.A. degree teachers every fourth year, c) degree teachers every fifth year. The salary and increments received by the teacher depends on the degree and fulfillment of continued training requirements.

When a person signs a contract to teach in the Pierre System, he encounters a world of organizations open for his membership. The Pierre Education Association is the local division of state education group South Dakota Education Association and the national organization National Education Association. Membership in SDEA is compulsory, but membership in PEA or

NEA is up to the individual's choice. PEA can boast one hundred per-cent membership on the part of its teachers. The Pierre Education Association performs such duties as selection of thier NEA, SDEA, and school board representatives, and selection of welfare boards for teachers. A new organization for Pierre teachers is the Pierre Teachers' Credit Union. This enables teachers to invest money and receive dividends from the investments and to borrow money put into this fund. Thus active and constructive membership in professional activities is encouraged for all Pierre teachers.

The scope of a regular teaching position in the Pierre public schools entails more than classroom instruction. The elementary school teachers must be in the school from 8:15 A.M. to 4:15 P.M. during school days. In past years the elementary grades (kindergarten through sixth grade) have been organized so that one teacher taught her particular classroom every subject. This requires correlation of the textbooks used from room to room. There has been a trend, however, to divide the grade teachers so that they teach a specific subject to all students. Thus creating departmental teaching assignments. This new system has not been in effect long enough to tell whether it will or will not succeed.

In junior high and high school departmental teaching is used full scale. All teachers in the junior and senior high schools are subject to assignment between 7:50 A.M. and 4:00 P.M. on school days. Each teacher has five class hours of teaching in the seven hour class day. Besides classroom instructions

the teachers on the junior and senior high school level must have sponsorship of at least one co-curricular activity such as a club, class advisorship, and sponsorship of other class related student activities. Each Thursday a special half-hour homeroom is held and the instructors are assigned to one of these. In homeroom teachers lead discussions on current problems and student affairs. Another duty of the teachers includes participation in ticket selling, chaperonage, hall duty, and other sponsorship positions at school functions. Teachers are asked to attend PTA meetings in order to maintain relationships with the parents of students.

With the trend to try to departmentalize grade school teaching, goes the new program of accelerated courses in junior high and high school. This is being done with the ever present aim of better college preparation for high school students. For example, languages are now offered in the eighth grade along with algebra. In the ninth grade geometry is offered as well as a new music appreciation course. Thus when a better than average student enters high school in the tenth grade, he is already prepared for advanced math and language courses. Plans have been established to follow an accelerated pattern in the sciences. In high school, college directed students are able to take college preparatory English courses as seniors. As a side line to the college-prep English, special advanced writing and speech courses are offered in addition to the required speech and writing in regular English classes. Two years of shorthand and typing

are offered to students interested in business courses. Advanced courses in shop and home economics are available to students interested in these fields. Thus the programs in Pierre high school are set up to give all students a good background in whatever they choose to do after graduation. Required units for graduation are the same as state requirements: four units of English, two of social studies, one of math and general science plus biology. In addition P.E. is required of ninth and tenth graders and any other elective courses to make a total of sixteen units for graduation.

The planning of the courses in junior and high school is taken care of by department meetings. Here the teachers select the textbooks they will use and correlate the various class room material to be covered. Where there is no relationship of courses, the teacher is free to teach by his own method and from whatever textbook he desires. The textbooks are required to be changed every five years.

In addition to course planning, an extensive guidance program is employed in the high school to help students. This guidance is not only for career or college assistance but, also, personal and emotional problems of the individual students. One particular feature of this program is a special room with material on colleges, careers, jobs, scholarships, and tests. This is open to seniors. Two students are on duty in the room at all times to help those who use these facilities. Six students are allowed in the room for thirty minute sessions. Many clubs and activities have been developed to inform students and, also, to give students a chance to work with others with

the same interests. This aspect can be found in clubs like Future Teachers, Science Club, and Quill and Scroll.

It can be seen then that within the administration and teachers there is great organization. A deeper look reveals that there is a well organized student body, too. In the junior high each class is headed by four officers elected by the class. However, the elected student body president and student council presides over the three classes. The student council is composed of the president, class officers, and an elected representative from each homeroom. This same organization is found in the high school. What purpose does this serve? To begin with, it instills a knowledge of our democratic way of life into the future ruling citizens of our country. Second, it introduces a sense of belonging into the pupils, for they become active members of a group. Third, it provides a stepping-off point for social activities by class or all-school dances and parties.

One might wonder where the money comes from and just what the costs are for running and maintaining a program such as is found in the Pierre schools. Money for the schools come from four major sources: 1) ten percent from the state (compared to twenty-one percent in 1930), 2) twenty percent from the federal government through the Corps of Engineers (due to the increase of school population caused by construction of the Oahe Dam near Pierre), 3) tuition of outside students, and 4) local taxes. All in all during the 1961-62 fiscal school year, \$1,800,000 represented the total income, and a little over \$1,600,00 was paid out for expenses.

The question of financial income brings about the question of outside relationships the school system has. For instance, what control and contact does the state have with the Pierre Independent School District. The answer is that the Pierre schools meet all state requirements (such as graduation credits and length of school year.) The local board is required to make an annual report to the state school board concerning the activities of the Pierre district. The only contact that Pierre schools have with education in the county is that the annual report sent to the state is, also, sent into the county superintendent. Perhaps the greatest outside influence on the school system is that of the North Central Accrediting Association. All standards required of that body are met by Pierre schools and teachers. The Pierre system has been accredited with North Central since 1907. Pierre is, also, closely affiliated with such regulatory agencies as South Dakota High School Interscholastic Activities Association which coordinates speech, music, and athletic competition throughout the state.

New buildings, new equipment, a larger student enrollment, and steps to improve education seem to characterize the Pierre school system. The past show a record of little teacher turnover. Superintendents have remained in Pierre for as long as fourteen years, principals for ten years, and teachers up to thirty-two years. With a solid record of satisfaction and a bright outlook for future years, Pierre schools are on the threshold of new adventures in education. Napoleon

Bonaparte I once said, "Public instruction should be the first object of government." From the first school in 1881 until today, 1963, public education and instruction has certainly been an important part of the functioning of Pierre, South Dakota.