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PREVIEW

**SUMMER EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS  
FOR THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS OF NEBRASKA**

by  
**Elwood W. Strong**

**A THESIS**

**Presented to the Faculty of  
The Graduate College in the University of Nebraska  
In Partial Fulfillment of Requirements  
For the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy  
Department of School Administration**

**Under the Supervision of Dr. Knute O. Broady**

**Lincoln, Nebraska**

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

The nature and scope of a problem is sometimes seen more clearly if the historical background of the problem is first examined.

#### The Historical Development

##### The Early History

The awareness of the need for educational services during the summer vacation is primarily a development of the last one hundred years. Before this time, the conditions which created this need were not present to the degree that they are today. The United States was largely rural then and the school system of the rural area was adapted to rural conditions. The school systems of the few large cities were already operating for the greater part of the year, perhaps in recognition of the need for occupying what would have otherwise been the idle hours of the children not employed in gainful work.

The following quotation illustrates this point:<sup>1</sup>

"In the early years of American public education there were in reality two types of school systems—one rural, the other urban. The rural seems to have played a very important part

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<sup>1</sup> W. H. Reals, A Study of the Summer High School, Teachers College, Columbia University, Contributions to Education, No. 337, pp. 4-5, Bureau of Publications, Teachers College, Columbia University, New York, 1928.

in determining the length of the school year. . . . The farmer had very crude implements and possessed little scientific information regarding the cultivation of soil and the raising of crops. These two factors made it necessary for him to employ more labor than he could afford to hire. The most convenient and cheapest form of labor was that of his own children. Only by a school year so arranged as to release them from their school duties at the time of crop production was the farmer able to secure the needed assistance. Poor transportation facilities, bad weather conditions, and bad roads also influenced the length of the school year . . . . For the convenience of the farmer, and because of the demands of conditions peculiar to rural communities, the rural school calendar was divided into two terms--a spring term and a fall term. "While our rural schools were maintaining their short terms, our city school systems were conducting schools for the greater part of the year."

The nature of the school term in the larger cities and the way in which this term was shortened is explained in the following paragraph found in a United States Bureau of Education Bulletin:<sup>2</sup>

"In the early day city school systems their sessions continued practically the year round. Vacations were short and holidays were few. The prevailing custom was to divide the school year into four terms of twelve weeks each with a vacation of one week at the end of each term. In some cities, all the vacation came in the summer with the exception of about a week at Christmas. That plan found favor and extended within a few years to all of the cities. The summer vacation was extended gradually, usually about a week at a time."

<sup>2</sup>W. S. Deffenbaugh, Summer Sessions of City Schools, Department of Interior, Bureau of Education, Bulletin, 1917, No. 45, p. 7, United States Government Printing Office, 1918.

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Table I, adapted from this same publication, shows the way the length of the school year was shortened from a length of approximately 48 weeks to an average of 190 plus days in several of the larger cities of the United States.<sup>3</sup>

TABLE I  
REDUCTION IN LENGTH OF CITY SCHOOL TERMS  
BETWEEN 1841 AND 1915

Cities	Length of Term 1841-1842 (or thereabouts)	Length of Term 1915-1916
New York City	49 weeks	193 days
Chicago	48 weeks	193 days
Philadelphia	25½ days	195 days
Brooklyn	11 months	193 days
Boston	224 days	183 days
Baltimore	11 months	190½ days
Cincinnati	11 months	192 days
Cleveland	43 weeks	192 days
Buffalo	12 months	190 days
Washington, D. C.	238 days	178 days
Detroit	259 days	191 days

"Note. Exact number of days was not stated in all cases, because of the uncertainty as to the length of the week or month mentioned in original documents."

The shortening of the length of the school term in the larger cities created the conditions under which the vacation summer schools were started.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 8.

<sup>4</sup> Reals, Op. cit., p. 7.



"The summer vacation school arose primarily to keep children occupied during their summer vacations, and a little later served as the first step in leading to the establishment of the summer elementary school, the summer high school, and the all-year school. While the cities were slowly shortening their periods of required attendance, their population was increasing rapidly. Social workers felt that some remedy should be provided to counteract the bad social environment of the congested areas of the cities in which elementary school pupils were living during the long vacations. As a result vacation schools sprang up all over the United States."

The early vacation schools were established through the efforts of private organizations and philanthropic societies. There is some disagreement as to who was first in this field. Reals<sup>5</sup> gives the credit to the First Church in Boston in the year 1866. Deffenbaugh<sup>6</sup> gives the credit to a voluntary committee in the city of Providence, Rhode Island in 1871. It is reasonable to assume that Deffenbaugh was not aware of the vacation school which was organized in Boston in 1866.

Although the early vacation schools were organized and sponsored by religious and philanthropic organizations primarily "to take the children off from the streets", they were later taken over by the public school organizations and some changes were made.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 8.

<sup>6</sup> Deffenbaugh, Op. cit., p. 9.

<sup>7</sup> Reals, Op. cit., p. 8-9.

"Before 1899 twenty cities had established these schools. Nearly all of them were first established by private enterprise, but were later taken over by the public school authorities, and incorporated as a part of their school systems . . . . When the public school authorities took over the work of the vacation schools, they stressed more and more the academic phase of instruction. The schools were then called summer schools and their work was very similar to the work of the elementary schools during the regular school year . . . . The purpose now became in addition to keeping pupils off the city streets, to enable backward pupils to make up deficiencies, to help normal pupils to advance a grade, and to keep others busy at worthwhile employment."

The expansion of this movement was quite rapid. In a survey by the United States Bureau of Education reported by Deffenbaugh in 1917, summer schools were reported in 109 cities at the high school level and 211 cities at the elementary level.<sup>8</sup>

In this same report, the following reasons for the maintenance of summer schools were most commonly given:<sup>9</sup>

"Saves time and expense of repeaters; reduces retardation; saves time and money (money saved refers to the cost of instruction of repeaters); shortens school time of pupils and they get to work earlier; permits children to finish work one or two years sooner; keeps children out of trouble."

The next step in the development of summer vacation schools was the year-round school or the all-year school. This was advocated by Deffenbaugh as follows:<sup>10</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Deffenbaugh, Op. cit., p. 11.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., p. 17-20.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., p. 17-20.

"A summer session of six weeks is, judging from all reports, an efficient auxiliary to the regular session, enabling many children to advance without loss of time and others to gain time; but if the session of school should be extended to 12 weeks and made an organic part of the regular school session, better results would be obtained.

"In the all-year school the aim is for the pupil to gain time to do 8 years work in 6 years, while the aim of the summer term is chiefly for the pupil to get through 8 years on time."

### The All-Year School

In practice two plans were commonly followed in the all-year schools in the period between 1900 and 1930. In the one plan the pupils were allowed to attend only nine months and were assigned the periods they were to attend. This plan was followed in communities where an economy of building was the goal. In the other plan, the pupils could attend either nine months or twelve months. The goal here was to make acceleration possible.

A detailed discussion of these plans was reported in the Review of Educational Research.<sup>11</sup>

"The plan of all-year schools in most general use provides for four terms of three months each, with vacations of one week at Christmas, one week at Easter, and two weeks in summer. Pupils may elect to attend the entire year, or they may fulfill requirements by attending any three of the four terms during a given year. Only in school systems where the all-year school has been adopted as an expedient to economize on

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<sup>11</sup> "The All Year School", Review of Educational Research, Volume 1: 193-199, p. 195, June, 1931.

buildings have pupils been assigned to certain terms. Teachers for the summer term are members of the regular staff who desire to serve for the whole year, although they, too, are frequently permitted to serve any of the three of the four terms, which they may select."

Three examples of all-year schools established between 1900 and 1930 are those in the following cities--the date of organization is given in parenthesis: Bluffton, Indiana (1904); Newark, New Jersey (1912); and Nashville, Tennessee (1924). These three are referred to frequently in the literature of the field. They will serve to illustrate the two plans previously mentioned.

Mr. Wirt was superintendent of the Bluffton, Indiana schools at the time the all-year school was organized in that city. According to all evidence available to the writer, Bluffton was the first city to try this plan during the period being considered. Bluffton was faced with a building shortage and the schools were organized on an all-year basis, in part at least, to meet this problem. Other advantages of the all-year plan, according to Mr. Wirt, were: To enable pupils to make up unavoidable regular term absences during the summer quarter, to permit older students to accept employment during the fall or spring quarter and to take their vacation when such employment was available, and to secure better teachers through increased salaries for year-round service. Several quotations from an article

by Mr. Wirt will illustrate the reasoning back of the reorganization.<sup>12</sup>

"During the past three years the Bluffton, Indiana common schools have had a school year of four terms approximately three months each. Pupils are not permitted to attend school longer than nine months during the school year. All of the schools are closed for four weeks during the month of August, and every child must select one of the four school terms for an additional vacation of three months.

"The principle on which the new organization is defended is not that of running the schools more economically, but rather that of directing the administration of the schools so that they may be of the greatest possible service to the children for whom they exist.

"Many children are unavoidably absent during the regular term. With the schools in session twelve months, the absence of these children can be counted as vacations, and many of them receive the full nine months of school.

"Older pupils can secure profitable employment during the fall and spring terms and they can take their vacation when they can secure such employment.

"Many schools are crowded and new buildings are needed. If one-fourth of all pupils should take a vacation each term, one-third more pupils can be accommodated under present conditions. The efficiency of the school plant is increased one-third by the simple plan of using it one-third longer each year.

"Without any increased expenditure on the part of the school corporation the yearly salaries of teachers will be increased one-third, the services of less competent teachers can be dispensed with, and the influence of the best teachers in the corps extended by employing them for a longer period of time."

<sup>12</sup>

W. A. Wirt, "A School Year of Twelve Months", Education, 27: 619-22, June 1907.

The principle motive for the experimentation with the all-year school plan in Newark was acceleration. An article discussing the Newark experiment states it as follows:<sup>13</sup>

"It shortens the elementary course by two years. If applied to the high school, it will shorten the total course of twelve years by three years."

Another article written by a teacher in the senior high school which was using the all-year plan explains it in greater detail:<sup>14</sup>

"The scheme of organization in the all-year school is somewhat different from that in the traditional school in that the element of time-saving is very vital. Out of the fifty-two weeks of the calendar year, forty-eight are devoted to class room activity. The remaining four are given for vacation periods, one at Christmas time, one at Easter, and two late in August ending with Labor Day. The forty-eight weeks are divided into four terms of twelve weeks."

"The courses of study are so arranged that three of these four terms are equivalent to one year in the traditional school. It is, therefore, obvious that if parents choose to keep Johnny out of school during the summer, his progress is still the same as that of his neighbor who does not attend the all-year system. It may also be plainly seen, that if Johnny attends the fourth term he has gained one-third of a year over his neighbor. A little simple arithmetic shows that this yearly gain of one-third time will allow Johnny to finish the usual eight years of the elementary grades in six and the usual four of the high school in three."

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<sup>13</sup> John Cotton Dana, "All Year Schools", The Independent, 74:137-9, January 16, 1913.

<sup>14</sup> Louise Emerson Lovell, "All-Year School", Educational Review, 73: 196-202, April, 1927.

A summation of the arguments in favor of the all-year school was given by Mr. Weber, who was superintendent of schools at Nashville at the time of the inauguration of the program in that city, before the convention of the National Education Association at its national convention in 1925.<sup>15</sup>

"There is every argument that a school plant costing millions should not be idle three months each year. The continuous system would dignify the work of the teacher by giving constant employment and continuous pay to all who wished it. It would require ultimately fewer buildings and fewer seatings. If all took advantage of it, it would require only three fourths of the accommodations. True, it would require twelve months pay for teachers instead of ten, a 20 per cent increase in yearly salaries. But this 20 per cent increase in operating expense would produce 25 per cent increase in product, besides the inestimable value of time saved by those who attended continuously. There is a certain amount of work to be done and it cannot cost more, but very probably less, to do it regularly than spasmodically. Would any sensible man hesitate in choosing this method to produce a machine that was to become at completion a profit-making device?

"This plan grants each individual student his God-given right to advance as rapidly as he can and not be bound down with the dull or the lazy. If the weak or the dull or the lazy or anyone otherwise unfortunately situated does not want to, or cannot take advantage of this liberal system, he surely has no just complaint at an arrangement which provides for every one to use his talents to the utmost. Here the strong and capable could become productive in the world one, two or three years sooner than under the old arrangement."

<sup>15</sup> H. C. Weber, "Defense Through the Educated Quota", Proceedings of the National Education Association, p. 751-759, Vol. 63, 1925.

During the period of 1925 to 1935, the academic all-year school was the subject of considerable investigation and debate. Many articles were written in its defense and a few were written attacking the principles upon which it was based.

The Newark schools were the subject of at least two rather complete studies. One of these studies was performed by Wilson Farrand and M. V. O'Shea with the collaboration of Professor William A. McCall of Teachers College, Columbia University at the request of the Board of Education. Part of the findings of this study were as follows:<sup>16</sup>

"We find that while they do not do what was originally claimed for them, that is, carry any considerable number of the pupils through eight years in six years, they do advance their pupils more rapidly and give them greater educational attainment than pupils of similar ability, heredity and social background in the traditional schools." (Only part of the Newark schools were reorganized on the all-year plan.)

"We find that these schools in the face of great difficulties, are doing extremely valuable work and are rendering great service particularly to children of foreign parentage and unfavorable home conditions.

"We recommend in view of all the evidence that the all-year schools in Newark be continued.

"We recommend that a careful study be made of their possibilities with a view to adapting the curriculum more closely to the needs of their pupils."

<sup>16</sup>

Wilson Farrand and M. V. O'Shea, "The All Year Schools in Newark", School and Society, 23: 462-469, April 10, 1926.