

June 11, 1965

MEMORANDUM FOR COMMISSIONER KEPPEL

SUBJECT: ORGANIZATION OF OFFICE OF EDUCATION FIELD OFFICES

Since OE representation in the field was first established in 1950, the number of programs requiring field staff has steadily increased. At present, there are representatives of five divisions from two bureaus. However, the assignment of division staff has been approached on a case basis without a comprehensive and approved formulation of the role of the OE field staff.

1. Need for improvement

Although representation for the Commissioner's Office was established in 1959, inadequate means were developed to make it possible for the Regional Representative, OC, to function effectively. Under our proposed reorganization of the Office of Education, three bureaus will immediately have representatives in the field. With the tremendous growth of OE programs, reaching into 25,000 school districts in fifty states, there is a strong consensus that far greater decentralization is not only desirable but inevitable. It remains only to determine at what rate this decentralization will occur, what specific authorities and responsibilities will be assigned, and what relationships will be established within the field office and between it and headquarters.

We are convinced that the staff offices of OE, and those operating elements without field representation, can be effectively served by personnel in the field - even if not in such measure as to justify their own full time representation. Therefore, it seems necessary to provide for an OE man who will be in charge of the field staff who can deploy resources to meet the needs of such units or, indeed, to help meet extraordinary requirements of bureaus which do have their own field representatives.

Certain functions previously assigned to the Regional Representative, OC, cannot be performed effectively without strengthening that official. For example, he cannot be expected to serve an "eyes and ears" function unless he is provided with some responsibilities and authorities which will give him access to and standing with the clients and the public.

2. Recommendations

We could not develop a specific blueprint for functions to be performed in the field within the time available, and final decisions will require fuller development of plans under P.L. 89-10. However, we have been able to develop a concept which has worked effectively in other agencies and which, we are sure, will prove to be viable in OE. We are attaching a paper which describes this concept and a second one outlining a plan of action for working out the details.

Our proposal contemplates a substantial enlargement of the recommendations made to the Commissioner in 1962 by the Field Services Study Committee. We believe that their suggestions were too modest and, accordingly, did not offer significant promise for improvement. In addition, there has been substantial program growth since then.

Our specific suggestions include the following elements:

- a. Each regional office to be under the direction of an OE Regional Director who reports directly to the Commissioner.
- b. The Regional Director to have full responsibility for execution of all OE functions assigned to the field and to have full line authority over all staff.
- c. The Commissioner to be assisted in regard to his responsibilities for field activities by a Special Assistant who would not be in the line.
- d. Bureau and office directors to be authorized, on behalf of the Commissioner, to give guidance and direction to OE Regional Directors within the scope of their authority and functions.
- e. Headquarters staff to be authorized to communicate directly with field staff on details of program operations.
- f. Substantial expansion of those OE functions which are assigned to the field with emphasis on the delegation of authority to make decisions.
- g. Annual plans to be developed for bureau- and office-wide activities to be performed in the field, which plans, when approved, are to be followed by the Regional Directors unless deviations are authorized.

- h. In cases of directives from headquarters which create inter-program conflicts or difficulties, the Regional Directors to inform the appropriate bureau or office directors, or the Commissioner, to assure that the conflict will be resolved at headquarters.
- i. Implementation of the concept to proceed on an evolutionary basis depending on the need for such an approach in a given region and on the availability of a Regional Director who is capable of performing in the manner proposed.

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