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THE BULLETIN

Moorhead State Teachers College
Moorhead, Minnesota



RURAL EDUCATION IN MINNESOTA



June, 1942

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MOORHEAD



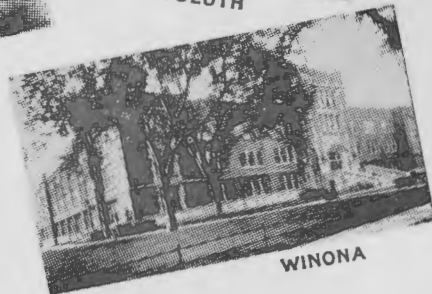
BEMIDJI



ST CLOUD



DULUTH



WINONA



MANKATO

Rural Education in Minnesota

FOREWORD

State teachers colleges were established in Minnesota for the express purpose of preparing teachers for the common schools of the state. To this end, curriculums for the preparation of teachers for both the elementary and the secondary schools are offered in the six Minnesota State Teachers Colleges.

Preparation of teachers for the elementary schools demands consideration of two distinct types of schools, the ungraded and the graded. With few exceptions in the state, each has a characteristic type of organization and administration. The differences therein are reflected in the establishment of standards, in administrative procedures, and even in legislative enactment.

The graded elementary school is characteristically found in the village, town, and city. The ungraded elementary school is the type of school most frequently found in the open country. Because of this, the terms *rural and ungraded*, when used with reference to Minnesota schools, have a similar meaning. There is a fairly common tendency to consider the graded school the town school, and the ungraded, the country or rural school. Actually, many graded schools are rural in the sense that they are located in small towns in the farming areas.

The sections appearing in this bulletin treat the problem of rural education predominantly from the standpoint of the ungraded school. Thus, *rural education and rural schools* are frequently given the somewhat narrow interpretation described in the preceding paragraph. This has been done deliberately for the purpose of emphasizing the significance of the ungraded elementary school of Minnesota as an instrument of rural education in the state.

Representatives of the six Minnesota State Teachers Colleges have collaborated in preparing this bulletin. Among the group are directors, supervisors, and classroom instructors in the field of rural education.

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Duluth.....	Wm. H. MacKenzie, Dora J. Reese, Dorothy D. Smith
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I. THE IMPORTANCE OF RURAL EDUCATION IN MINNESOTA

Never before in the history of the human race has there been a period when greater significance has been attached to the power of education as a means of conditioning the thinking and determining the conduct of whole peoples than during the last two decades. Speaking to the people of the United States recently, President Roosevelt said, "What the schools do may prove in the long run to be more decisive than any other factor in preserving the form of government we cherish."

The paramount problem facing education today is that of preparing

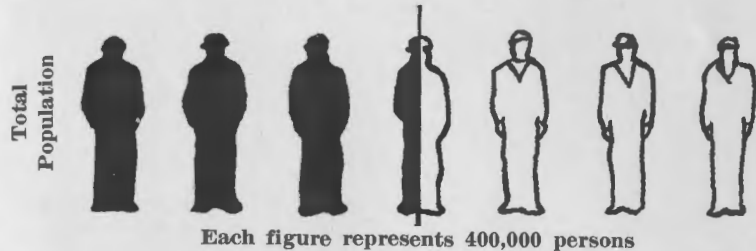
boys and girls, young men and young women, to make their contribution—large or small—to the solving of the problems which the war will bequeath to the world. This is a problem of the entire educational system, from the university to the one-room rural school. In Minnesota, where fifty out of every one hundred persons live in a rural community, where forty-three out of every one hundred children attend the rural ungraded elementary school, a large part of the responsibility for this preparation rests with the rural schools, and rural education becomes one of the many educational problems.

Some of the more specific reasons rural education is of such vital importance in Minnesota follow.

Minnesota has an extensive rural population.

The following graph shows the distribution of population in Minnesota in 1941. Out of every 100 persons of the total population, 50 lived in rural areas, 50 lived in urban centers of 2500 population or larger. These figures indicate the size of the group directly affected by rural education.

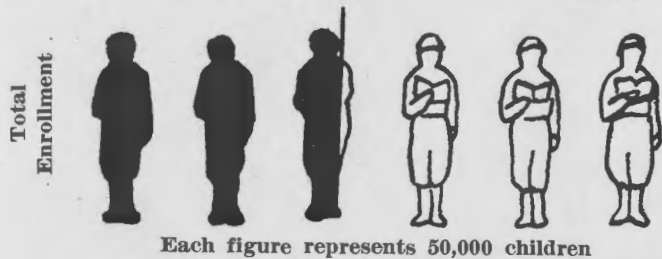
Distribution of Population in Minnesota, 1941.¹
Urban Rural



Nearly one-half of all the elementary school children in Minnesota are in the ungraded schools.

The following graph represents the number of rural children who are attending the ungraded elementary rural schools. Out of every 100 children enrolled in grades one through eight, in 1940-1941, 43 attended ungraded elementary schools. The large number of boys and girls thus educated indicates another reason rural education in Minnesota is so important.

Enrollments in Elementary Grades—1940-1941.²
Ungraded Elementary Schools Graded Elementary Schools



¹Britannica Book of the Year, 1941.

Over half of the elementary teachers of Minnesota teach in rural schools.

In 1940-41, 55 per cent of all the elementary teachers in the state taught in ungraded rural schools.² This fact suggests the need for a sufficient number of teachers who are specifically prepared for rural positions.

Each year thousands of boys and girls are graduated from the rural schools of Minnesota.

In 1939, 13,730 boys and girls completed the eighth grade in ungraded rural schools.³ The accomplishments of this large group as a result of their work in the ungraded schools, and the provision made by rural areas for their further education should be matters of vital interest to the people of Minnesota.

Pupils from ungraded rural schools attend high schools in practically all of the villages and cities in the state.

Sixty-six per cent of the eighth grade graduates from ungraded rural schools attended village or city high schools in 1939-40.⁴ The preparation given these boys and girls for a successful high school career should be a matter of importance to both rural and urban citizens. The number of rural children attending high schools is on the increase. This situation, therefore, makes it imperative for rural schools to prepare their pupils efficiently for high school attendance.

Pupils who do not enter high school have a particular need for thorough elementary education.

About 33 per cent of the pupils who completed the eighth grade in 1939-40 did not enroll in high schools.⁴ Most of this number of boys and girls will probably receive no formal education beyond the eighth grade. Hence, the education they received in the ungraded rural school is of great importance. These young persons have need also of an environment that supplies them with wholesome interests, and an opportunity for continued growth. Surely the educational offerings of their rural school are very significant to this group, and also to the other members of the community.

Many rural pupils educated in the ungraded rural schools do not remain on the farms.

It is estimated that today only about 40 per cent of the boys and girls educated in the ungraded schools remain on the farm. It is therefore highly important that the rural school provide a broad and rich curriculum for the children of today who may become the citizens of

² State of Minnesota Department of Education, *Minnesota Educational Directory*, 1941-42.

³ State of Minnesota Department of Education, Statistical Division, "Eighth Grade Graduates Enrolled in the Ninth Grades of a Public High School During the School Year 1938-39."

tomorrow in some other locality. The ungraded rural school must assume the responsibility of so educating children that they can readily adjust to either a rural or a city environment.

Every boy and girl in Minnesota is entitled to equality of educational opportunity. The people of Minnesota should be aware of the importance of all education, both urban and rural. The question as to whether or not rural education has been given adequate recognition will be raised in the next section. The present discussion will have served its purpose if it has clearly pointed out the importance of rural education in Minnesota.

II. CURRENT PRACTICE AND RURAL EDUCATION

Has the prevailing educational practice in Minnesota tended to slight rural education? In a democracy, each child has the right to expect equality of opportunity for education. Does Minnesota grant such equality to rural children? There are a number of current practices which point to the conclusion that educational policy has not been wholly fair to rural education. A few of these are cited as illustrations.

Professional qualifications required for superintendents of rural and urban schools are not comparable.

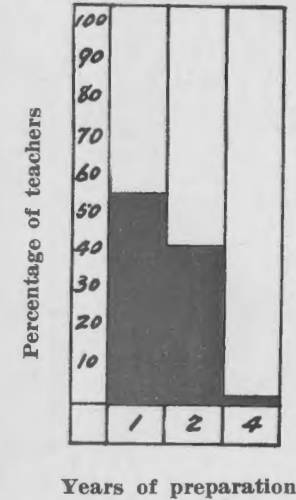
The law sets up certain minimum educational qualifications for superintendents of graded schools. It fails, however, to require comparable qualifications for county superintendents, who have jurisdiction over the ungraded schools. County superintendents have detailed administrative and supervisory responsibilities for several schools scattered over a relatively large area. The progress of rural education in Minnesota depends to a marked degree upon their vision and leadership. It is only because educated individuals deeply interested in rural education have been willing to undergo the hazards of a political campaign that Minnesota has today so large a group of outstanding superintendents. They deserve, and would welcome, the establishment of educational qualifications comparable to those required of superintendents of urban schools.

Minimum qualifications for teachers of ungraded schools are less than those for teachers of graded schools.

It is generally conceded that one of the most difficult teaching positions is that of teaching in a one-room school. Yet requirements for the certification of rural teachers are lower than those of teachers in graded schools. Minnesota is one of only thirteen states which today certificate teachers for the rural schools on the basis of one year of work beyond high school. Six states require four years; nine states require more than two years but less than four. In Minnesota, teachers with the minimum amount of preparation may teach in ungraded schools only.

⁴ Ibid.

Preparation of Ungraded Elementary School Teachers, 1941-42.¹



From the preceding graph, it is evident that over 55 per cent of the rural teachers of the state in 1941-42 are not qualified to teach in graded schools.

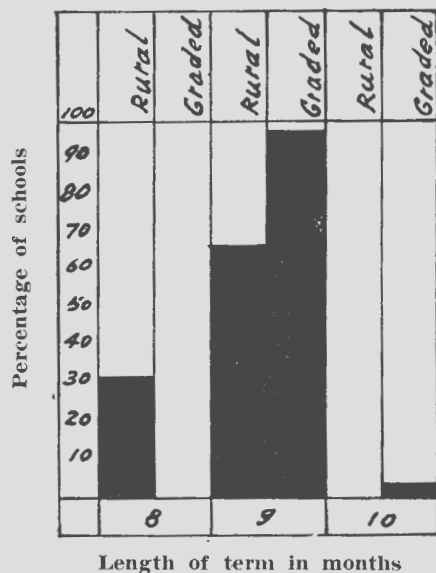
Two years of preparation constitutes the minimum requirement for elementary teachers in graded schools. However, in present practice, a large percentage of elementary teachers who go into graded schools have had four years of preparation. During the year 1940-41, in one teachers college in the state, over 95 per cent of the four-year elementary graduates went into graded positions, and over 90 per cent of the two-year inexperienced graduates secured positions in rural schools. These percentages are fairly representative of placement records for all the teachers colleges of Minnesota. The point is that the degree graduates of the teachers colleges are raising the level of teacher preparation in the graded schools. While the two-year graduates tend to do the same thing for the ungraded schools, the gap between the two types of schools still persists.

The length of the school term in rural schools is often shorter than in urban schools.

The following graph indicates that children in over 30 per cent of the ungraded schools had, in 1940-41, a term of school one month shorter than did the children in graded schools.

¹ State of Minnesota Department of Education, Statistical Division, "Training of Ungraded Elementary (Rural) School Teachers, 1941-42."

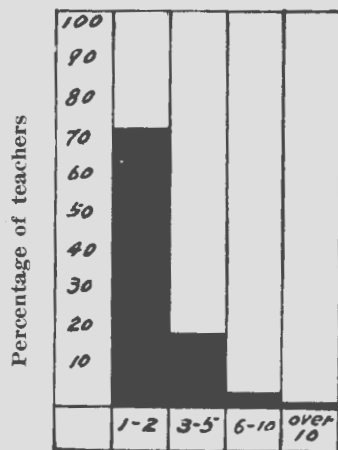
Length of School Term, 1940-41.²



Short average tenure of rural teachers militates against the development of an understanding of community problems.

In order to do effective teaching, a teacher should know the community, its resources, its economic and occupational conditions, and its history. Teachers who stay in a position only one or two years have little opportunity to gain this understanding. The following graph shows the brief tenure of most rural teachers.

Tenure of Rural Teachers, 1941-42.³



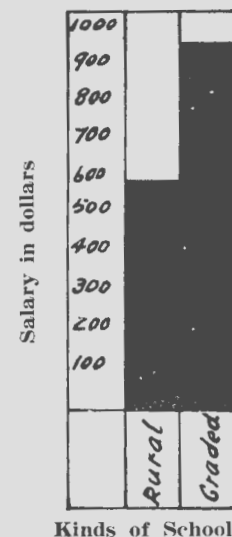
Number of years in same position

Data tabulated in 1941-42 show that the median number of years of experience in present teaching positions is but one; the median number of years of experience in a county is four; and the median total number of years of experience is six.

Low salaries increase desire of rural teachers to move from one position to another.

Low salaries, limited choice of living conditions, and lack of opportunity for advancement are partly responsible for the desire of the rural teacher to change positions or leave the rural field. The average annual salary paid rural teachers does not compare favorably with that paid teachers in graded schools. The following graph shows a comparison of the yearly salary of teachers in the rural schools with that of teachers in graded schools outside of Minneapolis, St. Paul, and Duluth, for the year 1937-38. While the difference fluctuates from year to year, it usually favors the urban teachers.

Average Yearly Salary of Minnesota Teachers, 1937-38.⁴



Rural school traditions are in conflict with new educational concepts.

The rural school should help to prepare the pupil to meet the complexities of life. The years spent there should mean more than the mastery of the three R's. The practices that have been previously described, and others that are comparable, when operating together, tend to minimize

² State of Minnesota Department of Education, Statistical Division, "Length of School Term of Elementary Schools, 1940-41."

³ State of Minnesota Department of Education, Statistical Division, "Years of Experience of Minnesota Ungraded Elementary (Rural) School Teachers, 1941-42."

⁴ State of Minnesota Department of Education, Statistical Division.

the importance of providing the rural school with an educational program that includes the child's cultural and social background, his interests in farm life, in radio, in community affairs, and in handicrafts. Narrow concepts of the function of the school encourage perpetuation of a stereotyped form of instruction. That is, the old conflict between tradition and the new educational concepts persists along with lagging practices of the kind that have been described.

Attention could be called to other conditions that are unfavorable to the rural child, such as lack of rural school supervision; inadequate health, welfare, and guidance service; limited library facilities; and the use of outmoded buildings. The practices and conditions that have been treated more fully indicate the answer to the question raised at the beginning of this section. The prevailing educational practices in Minnesota have tended to slight rural education.

III. A POLICY FOR RURAL EDUCATION IN MINNESOTA

It should be the policy of the State of Minnesota to maintain its rural schools on as high a plane of efficiency and prestige as that required for its urban schools, and to promote the continued and parallel progress of both.

It has been pointed out that the progress of rural education in Minnesota, particularly as it relates to the ungraded elementary school, has been hampered by an unwritten but practiced policy of demanding less for the ungraded rural school than for the graded and high schools of the state. Until rural school patrons, educators, and other clear-sighted citizens make greater demands for rural education, the traditional and insidious policy will continue to operate.

The question may well be raised as to what kind of policy should be adopted to insure the future of rural education in Minnesota. Certainly the rural schools are an integral part of the whole educational plan. Furthermore, this plan is, or should be, a developing one. In keeping with both of these assumptions, the statement of policy which begins this section is offered as a practical point of departure.

This policy is a starting point which indicates the general direction. A valid next step is the visualization of immediate and direct goals. There is opportunity in this brief discussion to present but a few of major significance.

Since the minimum requirement for teaching in the graded schools of Minnesota is two years of preparation beyond high school, this minimum should be established for teaching in rural schools. Further gradual increase in requirements for teachers of ungraded schools should parallel increase in requirements for teachers of graded schools.

Rural schools can be no stronger than their teaching and administrative personnel. At present in Minnesota, less professional preparation is required of teachers and administrators of the ungraded rural schools than of those of graded and secondary schools, a practice incompatible with the proposed policy.

One way to improve the professional preparation of teachers of rural schools is to raise the present minimum requirement for teaching in the ungraded schools from one year to two years of preparation beyond high school. Thus, the minimum amount required would be the same for all elementary teachers, since two years of preparation is now the minimum requirement for teaching in the graded schools of the state. Then as soon as practicable, this minimum requirement of two years should be raised for all elementary teachers, rural as well as graded.

Selective admission to the field of teacher preparation is urged for all prospective teachers.

While extension of the period of preparation is an important factor in the improvement of the professional preparation of rural teachers, since it encourages richer background of experience and added personal maturity, it is not in itself enough. The ability of the student to make the most of the opportunities offered is another significant factor. This suggests the advisability of more careful selection of students permitted to prepare for rural teaching.

Because courses preparing rural teachers have tended to be relatively brief and intensive, selection of high-ranking secondary school graduates for such courses seems a logical procedure. Equally logical, and more fundamental, is the contention that, since all teachers have a vital task to perform, the teaching profession as a unit needs individuals of superior intelligence, ability, and character. The establishment of valid standards for selecting all students who are to prepare for the teaching profession seems a sound procedure.

Selective retention is also urged for all prospective teachers.

Admission to the field should not guarantee continuance therein unless evidence of the student's fitness for the teaching profession continues to accumulate. Selective retention is as important as selective admission.

Selective retention for preparation for rural teaching becomes an important aspect of the total guidance problem.

Selective retention for rural teaching is one aspect of the total problem. The student's retention for preparation for rural teaching should be based on evidence of his particular fitness for this work. Interest in and enthusiasm for rural life as well as promise of ability to transmit these qualities are vital factors in retention for rural teaching.

While the preparation of all teachers in Minnesota should include rural emphases, the preparation of the rural teacher should stress, in addition, the distinctive characteristics of the rural school.

Given an extended period of preparation for rural teaching and an alert, motivated student personnel, what should be the nature of the preparation? The statement was made earlier that the rural school is an integral part of the whole educational plan. This plan, if sound, builds toward an integrated society. Fundamentally, the preparation of the rural teacher differs from the preparation of the urban teacher only

in so far as the rural school of Minnesota legitimately differs from the urban school. Before these differences are discussed, a basic but often overlooked principle should be stressed—namely, that all aspects of rural life and influence as well as of urban should receive full treatment in the preparation of all teachers.

The rural teacher, as well as the urban, needs a broad, rich, general education.

What are the distinctive characteristics of the ungraded rural school in Minnesota? First of all, it customarily includes children ranking from the first through the eighth grade, housed in a single room, and under the guidance of one teacher. Second, it is most frequently located in the open country. Significant differences between the rural and the urban school, of importance in teacher education, are found in classroom organization and in the type of environment.

Certain specific needs are implied by these differences. Since the rural teacher must be counselor, guide, and instructor of all pupils in all phases of rural school life, he must have breadth and depth of preparation. The need for this type of preparation has gained recognition in Minnesota institutions offering four-year curriculums for elementary and secondary teachers. But once again the rural teacher's needs have been overlooked.

Particular attention should be given in the preparation of the rural teacher to those aspects of science and social studies that are peculiar to the rural environment, to rural sociology and economics, in order that understanding and appreciation of the cultural, social, and economic phases of rural life may be developed.

The interpretation of the environment to the pupil is a responsibility of all teachers. The rural environment carries in it certain emphases that the rural teacher needs to understand. These emphases should receive special attention in her preparation.

Courses in child development, management, and methods must prepare the rural teacher for the distinctive type of organization the rural school makes necessary.

The ungraded schools of Minnesota customarily have but one teacher for all eight grades. This teacher needs to understand pupil development from early school age through adolescence. Also, organizing the school in such a way as to insure adequate attention to all pupils requires skillful management.

The prospective rural teacher should have, as a part of his student teaching experience, guided experience in teaching in a typical rural school situation.

To insure the application of theory to practice the prospective teacher should have experience in teaching under the guidance of competent supervisors. This experience should be sufficiently extensive to provide the student opportunity to widen his teaching contacts, secure a fair sampling of all phases of teaching, and prove his readiness to assume the responsibility of a position. The rural teacher should have, as a part of his student teaching, experience in a rural school.

The rural teacher's education should continue beyond his initial preparation, not as a matter of chance but by planned, systematic guidance. This implies the need of supervision.

Preparation for rural teaching is only the beginning. How can the continued professional and personal advancement of the teacher be insured? This question is important for all teachers, but particularly so for the rural teacher who works in a field calling for a wide range of abilities and talents, but providing limited opportunities for professional growth. In-service education may not only help the teacher with his immediate problems but may advance his formal education. Institutions preparing teachers might well be of assistance in helping the teacher continue his formal education while being assisted with everyday problems.

Educational qualifications of county superintendents should be comparable to those of superintendents of urban schools.

An earlier section stressed the discrepancy between the educational qualifications required of administrators of urban and rural schools. This is another instance of lesser demands for the rural school, and another violation of the policy suggested.

Unanimity of thought and effort in advancing the cause of rural education in Minnesota should be sought and secured by the various educational groups in the state.

A policy for rural education has been proposed. One very significant goal implied in this policy has been stated, that of securing for the rural school a teaching and administrative personnel on an educational level with that of the urban school. While there are many other goals to be recognized and sought, the problem of how to organize for action forces itself to the foreground.

There are in Minnesota various school groups concerned directly or indirectly with rural education. The State of Minnesota Department of Education, The Minnesota Education Association, and the various institutions preparing teachers are agencies which, by unifying their program so far as it relates to the rural schools, could wield effective influence in driving toward definite, clear-cut goals.

Facts concerning the importance of rural education in Minnesota, its present status, with proposed objectives and methods of reaching them, should be immediately brought to the attention of every citizen of the state.

That rural education in Minnesota is of great importance was clearly shown in the first section of this bulletin. That it has been neglected has also been pointed out. These two facts, together with the significant and interesting data that can be assembled as proof, should be brought to the attention of the entire citizenry of the state. This recommendation follows logically the suggestion that the various educational agencies unite for concerted action. Here is a task for the unified group.

No attempt has been made to enumerate all of the achievements nec-

essary to the fulfillment of the policy suggested for rural education. Of those cited, the preparation of teachers for rural schools was given special emphasis. Suggestion was also made of a method of bringing the proposed policy to the attention of the public. It is the task of that public to understand the implications of the policy and interpret them in terms of an expanding and developing program of rural education.

IV. THE TEACHERS COLLEGES AND RURAL EDUCATION

The importance of rural education in Minnesota was pointed out in the first section of this bulletin. The second section illustrated the tendency to neglect rural education in spite of its importance. A policy for rural education in Minnesota was then proposed. A logical question follows, "Has Minnesota the necessary educational resources to make the policy function?"

Minnesota has excellent and adequate facilities for assisting this policy for rural education to function.

There are six teachers colleges in Minnesota, so distributed throughout the state that each citizen is within easy access of at least one of them. Each of these colleges is surrounded by agricultural lands where a high percentage of the state's youth receive their education in the rural schools. Many of the students obtaining their education in these colleges have grown up on farms or in small villages; consequently, they have a background for understanding rural problems. Each college maintains facilities for the preparation of teachers for rural schools.

In addition to the teachers colleges, Minnesota also has thirty-four high school teacher training departments. These prepare young people to teach in the unaccredited rural schools of the state.

The efforts of the teachers colleges and the high school departments are supplemented by the work of the state university, state department of education, and the county superintendents. Together, these groups—by cooperating with educational agencies such as the Farm Bureau, 4-H workers, church organizations, and the like—are in a position to provide for rural people superior educational opportunities which are comparable to those furnished our urban population.

In the preceding section much stress was given to the need of a teaching personnel of high quality. Because the teachers colleges were organized for the precise purpose of preparing teachers, and because the preparation of teachers for the rural schools becomes a crucial aspect of the functioning of the proposed policy, the question as to whether the teachers colleges have adequate resources for the education of rural teachers is pertinent.

Minnesota State Teachers Colleges have adequate resources for the education of rural teachers.

The education of rural teachers has for many years been one of the chief concerns of the teachers colleges. The improvement of the curriculum for the preparation of rural teachers, the building up of an adequate staff, and the extension of facilities have been constant objectives in the program of each college.

Each college offers specialized instruction in rural education.

Two-year curriculums have been organized in each of the six colleges to give students improved background in subject matter fields, professional education to equip them for rural teaching, and rural life orientation. While there are differences in details, the colleges have fundamentally the same general practices. Courses in the social studies, science, literature, and the arts have been selected and planned with care in order that students may acquire a broad view of the major fields of knowledge as a basis for teaching the subject matter content of the elementary school curriculum. Competent instructors, specialists in their respective fields, teach these courses.

In addition to the common curriculum core, students are given specialized instruction in professional education. This includes courses in psychology, special methods, and student teaching. Psychology courses stress child development and the learning process. Special methods courses develop understandings of how to proceed in developing the various phases of the curriculum. Adaptation to the organization of the rural school is an essential phase of the professional courses.

Two situations for student teaching are provided in all colleges, one graded and the other ungraded. In the graded situation, either in a campus school or in an affiliated public school, students are guided in developing those principles and habits fundamental to all good teaching. In the ungraded situation, students learn, in addition, how to meet the peculiar problems and conditions of the rural school. The ungraded schools are typical rural schools taught by rural teachers under the supervision of the college. The students live in the rural community and obtain first-hand experience in teaching in the rural school and in participating in the organization and management of an ungraded school.

As further help to students in acquiring understanding and appreciation of rural life, courses in rural sociology are emphasized. Training in rural leadership is obtained by participation in a Country Life Club, which is organized by and for students interested in rural life and education.

The staff of each teachers college includes specialists in rural education.

In each of the teachers colleges are staff members who have had specialized graduate work in rural education and supervision, with experience in rural teaching, administration, or supervision. These staff members serve as directors, supervisors, and classroom instructors of rural education.

Each teachers college makes available important service to the field of rural education.

All six of the teachers colleges make available certain services which are of value not only to the public schools but to the colleges themselves since thereby they are enabled to keep in touch with the changing conditions and problems of the rural field. One of the services is follow-up work. While, again, procedures vary in detail, the following practices are representative:

1. Visitation of beginning teachers who are alumni of the college.
2. Preparation and distribution of bulletins, describing superior teaching procedures observed.
3. Participation in or assistance with planning county meet-

RURAL EDUCATION

- ings of teachers and teacher study groups.
4. Conferences with graduates, either at the college or in the field, to aid them in attacking their problems. Correspondence when conferences are not possible.
 5. Circulation of reference materials of various kinds.
- Another type of mutual service develops through conferences of various kinds held at the different colleges. Examples of these follow:
1. Conferences with city superintendents, county superintendents, and supervisors to discuss problems relative to educational policies and teacher education.
 2. Conferences with members of school boards in schools affiliated with the college to improve relations, spread information concerning changes in educational practices, and discuss problems of mutual interest.

A third type of contact is made by individual staff members or groups of students from the various departments and divisions of the college, academic as well as professional. For example, staff members may give lectures or demonstrations. Music, drama, or physical education groups give assistance in extra-curricular and community activities.

While many other services are offered by individual colleges, the illustrations given suffice to indicate the field of endeavor of the teachers colleges. The preparation of teachers is a responsibility that must be followed through in order to keep the program of preparation vital, practical, and developing.

The point has been made that the teachers colleges of Minnesota have excellent and adequate facilities for putting the policy for rural education into practice. Can the teachers colleges be relied upon to further the continued functioning of the policy by meeting educational emergencies and assuming a valid type of leadership?

Flexibility of program is maintained by Minnesota State Teachers Colleges.

Minnesota State Teachers Colleges have held to the point of view that teachers of rural schools should have as much preparation as teachers of graded schools. They have applied this principle in actual practice, by establishing two years as the minimum amount of preparation required to complete the briefest curriculum offered. They are ready at any time to offer additional preparatory courses.

During the present emergency, the teachers colleges are alert to the danger of teacher shortage. Their plans for meeting this danger include changes in the college calendar to provide additional sessions, accelerated programs whereby superior students may earn an increased number of credit hours per quarter, and refresher courses for former teachers who return to the profession.

In conclusion, it may be said that the chief resources of the teachers colleges for meeting the present and future needs of rural education in Minnesota are qualified staffs with a sound point of view toward rural problems; a suitable curriculum for preparing teachers in rural education; cooperative and informative relations with other Minnesota educational agencies; direct and intimate contacts with rural people; and affiliations with national educational and rural organizations that are studying and shaping the educational destiny of rural America.