

EDUCATION FOR PARADISE
IMPROVING ELEMENTARY EDUCATION IN THE TRUK DISTRICT,
UNITED STATES TRUST TERRITORY OF THE PACIFIC ISLANDS
1955 TO 1959

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This is an attempt to recapitulate the developments in elementary education in Truk District, U.S. Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands, from October, 1955, to May, 1959. During this period I was an Education and Training Specialist¹ working for the Truk District Education Department. Because of physical, professional, and emotional involvement in many of the projects described, I cannot claim to be an impartial observer. There was a definite excitement and challenge in the day-to-day happenings on Truk, which, it is hoped, will be communicated to the reader.

The recapitulation is being done without reference to accumulated materials and notes; they are still somewhere on the Pacific Ocean between Truk and the United States. It is a subjective description and evaluation. Facts and figures which are used are those worked with for over three and a half years. They should not need further verification. Rather than presenting statistical details, the intention is to give a broad view of programs designed to develop a functioning, functional, and meaningful elementary education for the children of Truk.

Much of the character of the programs developed in Truk have depended on the personalities involved. A large number of people have contributed to the development of the educational program, both Micronesians and Americans, from Dr. Robert E. Gibson, Director of Education for the Trust Territory, to the Trukese elementary teachers and pupils.

¹See Appendix for the official job description of an Education and Training Specialist in the Truk District.

It was certainly the interaction of different personalities and different cultures at all levels that produced what was vital in Trukese educational development.

While leaving out specific personalities in the body of this report, it is only fitting to mention here that Cicely Pickerill, an old-time "school marm" from the state of Washington, with unflagging energy and with new and important insights for developing, training and working with teachers in an alien culture was a key person in the institution and inspiration for the projects which were developed.

Felix Keesing's comments on colonial education in the Pacific area written before World War II and the American occupation of the Trust Territory have been the cause for some of the reflections in this paper.² Most of the generalizations that he makes about the then existing educational programs, particularly in American Samoa and Guam, are directly applicable to the situation in Trust Territory today, almost twenty years later.

Before describing the actual educational programs it will be necessary to review the setting in which they took place.

²Keesing, F. M., The South Seas in the Modern World, pp. 243-268.

CHAPTER II

THE SETTING

In a palm-thatched canoe house, in a former Japanese school with a rotten tin roof, in a community hall built of burned coral cement, in a modern seven-room frame building, and occasionally in the cool shade of a giant breadfruit tree, native Trukese elementary school teachers today are attempting to educate the children of their villages. To understand the problems faced by the teachers and their pupils, it is necessary to know something of the natural, historical, political, and social background of the Trukese people.

To begin with this, Truk is a part of the area known as the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands.

Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands

The United States now administers the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands, a section of the Pacific Ocean as large as its own continental area containing about seventy separate inhabited islands with a total population in the 1958 census of about 70,000 people. These tiny islands, called Micronesia by the anthropologists, have a wide range of cultures and languages that impose many barriers on the development of a territorial self-consciousness and a uniform program of political, social, economic, and educational advancement as called for in the trusteeship agreement between the United States and the United Nations Trusteeship Council.

The United States administration is the fourth of a series of

foreign administrations that have always complicated and sometimes encouraged the development of these islands. Spain, Germany, and Japan have also left their marks upon the islanders and the culture. The U.S. Navy occupied some of the islands by invasion during the war and the rest by surrender after the war. In 1951 the administration of most of the islands of the Trust Territory, including all of Truk District, was transferred from the Navy to the Department of the Interior. The Truk District is one of six administrative divisions of the Trust Territory under United States administration.

The Truk District

The Truk District includes the atoll complex of Truk and the islands within a 120 mile radius of Truk. There are about 20,000 people living in the district; 14,000 of them in Truk, an atoll 40 miles in diameter encircling numerous small, mountainous islands; 3,000 in the islands to the south called the Mortlocks, all low coral islands; and 3,000 in the islands to the north and west, also low coral islands and the most isolated in Truk District.

The people of Truk District were almost completely isolated from contact with the outside world until about eighty years ago, and maintained their isolation by rather inhospitable and certainly warlike attitudes that they displayed to any ships unfortunate enough to be looking for shelter in the good harbor that Truk afforded. Their warlike attitudes applied also to their immediate neighbors and Trukese life was one long succession of wars, usually caused by disputes over women or land, between islands and even villages on one island. They never

developed a unified political entity of Truk until forced to by foreign administrators. There are separate language dialects from village to village in the atoll; a similar but distinct language is spoken in the Mortlocks; and islanders from the western islands speak a language that is unintelligible to most Trukese. In order to communicate, the western islanders have learned the Trukese language of the people of Truk Atoll.

Despite these internal differences there is a degree of cultural unity in Trukese society.

Trukese Society

Today, Trukese society has made many outward changes. The people wear, and are dependent on, foreign clothing, whenever they can get it. The women wear dresses over their traditional lavalavas. A well-dressed young man will have a white shirt, long trousers, and leather shoes. The older-style thatch homes are rapidly giving way to wood, cement, and tin imitations of Japanese houses. Imported rice, sugar, canned fish, and corned beef are used extensively to supplement foods grown locally. Everybody proclaims outwardly some form of the Christian religion, Protestant or Catholic.¹ The old dancing has disappeared because of missionary concerns about the sexual overtones. The village church led by a native pastor has become a focal point of village society and commands a large amount of time and loyalty. A democratically elected representative Truk Congress for all of the district has been formed, but technically it has only advisory powers. The people have seen

¹The standard for determining a "true" Protestant is based on whether a person smokes or drinks!

representatives from the outside world, have learned something of the standard of living in other countries, and deeply desire some of the material benefits for themselves and their relatives.

But they still exist on an agricultural subsistence economy, each family raising its own food, particularly the breadfruit, preserving excess breadfruit for the times when it is not in season, and gathering a meagre quantity of fish and seafood from the ocean around them.

The basic loyalty of a Trukese is still to his extended family group with strictly secondary loyalties to his village or island. He has little sense of community with all of the islanders in Truk District, and considers a Palauan, a native from another of the districts in the Trust Territory, as a foreigner. Christianity is generally a thin veneer covering ancient beliefs in magic and spirits.

Within Trukese society there has always been a system of education for children and adults, even before the missionaries and foreign administrators began schools based on foreign models.

History of Education on Truk

The history of education on Truk is an interesting study, particularly while the historical influences are still evident in the schools and society of today. Although schools are a recent innovation in the Truk District, it cannot be said that there was no education on Truk before the advent of foreign sponsored educational programs.

Primitive education. The Trukese people have always had a system of primitive education, an education for life in their culture and environment, as brought out by Keesing.

In pre-white days, indigenous societies had definite systems of education, in the broad sense that every generation took steps to transmit the cultural heritage to the growing youth. Modern studies of child training among so-called primitives . . . reveal the use of a great variety of educational techniques. Much was learned through non-institutionalized channels, just as in the modern home: children copy grown-ups and play at or assist in adult tasks, while the adults variously encourage, instruct, praise, admonish, and compel. For some matters formal "schooling," often of an elaborate character, was given, as in a skilled craft or priestly learning or the training of a chief's son. But the educational process was direct, and the prime task was to transmit an already existing tradition.²

On Truk, specialized education was necessary for canoe builders, navigators, medicine men, and the keepers of traditional history and magic known as itang. These specialists acquired their knowledge through an apprenticeship system. Special knowledge was considered to be the valuable property of an individual and his family. The itang, and others, could not and would not pass on their knowledge to just any interested person. Knowledge, like personal property, followed the customs of inheritance. To teach one's skills to a person not entitled to them by inheritance, the Trukese would be giving away the birthright of the person to whom the knowledge rightfully belonged. This knowledge was as valuable as any other commodity in Trukese society.

The first formal education to supplement the primitive education of Trukese society was begun by foreign Christian missionaries.

Missionary education. The arrival of American Protestant missionaries on Truk under the sponsorship of the American Board of Foreign Missions in 1884 marked the beginning of missionary education and formal schools in the western tradition. Rev. R. W. Logan in describing his

²Keesing, op. cit., p. 243.

pleasure at the results of a missionary school examination held just two years after the beginning of mission work on Truk wrote:

Forty-eight scholars can read, and it was a joy to see the whole number stand up and read, each from his own copy of the Scriptures; many of them are getting beyond the stage of word-calling into that of intelligent reading. The school also did creditably in singing, writing, and the beginnings of arithmetic and geography.³

The first teachers of these mission schools were natives of other islands already converted by the American missionaries. Later reinforcements for the American missionaries provided American teachers in some of the mission schools. But the tradition of native pastor-teachers was established and continues today in the village church Sunday Schools, which usually meet an afternoon a week and on Sundays to conduct classes in memorization of the Trukese translation of the Bible, which the people consider learning to read, and hymn singing.

An impression of missionary teaching can be gotten from the journal of Rev. Logan's daughter, in which she describes the school her family set up and in which she taught, in the statement:

I am teaching nearly five hundred people all in one room. They are divided into about fifteen classes, and each class studies in an undertone, which makes such a din that it is almost impossible to make one's self heard.⁴

The Spanish and German administrations made no attempts to set up schools of their own, but allowed and encouraged the missionaries to keep on with their system. The Japanese, while allowing the missionaries to

³Bliss, Mrs. T. C., Micronesia, p. 60.

⁴Quoted in Appendix of Ibid., p. 5.

continue their schools, began to establish a separate public school system.

Japanese education. Japanese education stressed Japanese style public elementary schools for the native children to teach Japanese language and the usual elementary skills, beginning soon after the Japanese occupation of the islands in World War I. Japanese teachers taught the upper levels of the elementary schools while Trukese teachers were used to give the beginners their first instruction in the Japanese language. Enough schools were set up to provide instruction for the major centers of Trukese population, including the outer islands, but not all of the children on the smaller islands had an opportunity to attend. After about four years of elementary education, selected pupils attended an advanced intermediate school for a couple of years of further education. The intermediate school was located in Truk Atoll and brought its students in from the islands of Truk District. Further vocational education, particularly in carpentry and agriculture, was available to some of the intermediate school graduates in the vocational school for older students from all parts of the present Trust Territory. The vocational school was located on the Palau Islands about a thousand miles to the west of Truk.

The purpose of the Japanese educational system was to bring the Trukese people into the Japanese historical and cultural tradition, to make Truk a functioning part of the Japanese Empire. However, there was always a separate school system for the children of Japanese immigrants, and no Trukese student was ever sent out of the mandated islands to continue his formal education.

Although the amount of governmental funds spent by the Japanese for educational purposes was about the same as the amount spent by the United States for the same purpose, the patterns of education sponsored by the two governments have been quite different.

United States administered education. When the U.S. Navy administration for the Truk District arrived after the Japanese surrender, it began the program of United States administered education. An immediate attempt was made to establish a school system. During the war the Japanese schools had been abandoned. The first step on the part of the Navy was to establish a school for the teaching of English to promising young Trukese, most of whom had already gone thru the Japanese schools. These young men and a few women were to be prepared as elementary teachers and for work in the civil administration of Truk. After two or three years of such schooling, the graduates were to be sent to a teacher training school on Guam or, in some cases, were to be put to work immediately as elementary teachers or administration workers. With much U.S. Navy encouragement and assistance, villages provided buildings and the Navy sent out supplies and recruited teachers for elementary schools. As quickly as possible a six year, universal, co-educational, elementary school system was set up for the teaching of reading, writing, arithmetic, and the English language. Established by the Navy, the schools were viewed by the Trukese community as a part of the "American" program, and felt very little responsibility for the continued operation of the schools. The people were anxious, however, for their children to learn English, a skill that would help them to get a paying job with the American administration, and so provided support for the schools when directed to by the

American authorities.

In a few years time schools had been established and teachers appointed for every village or island with enough children to justify a school.⁵ In some cases of islands with very small populations, arrangements were made for children to attend school on nearby islands.

Since elementary education was terminal education for the large majority of Micronesian children, the beginning age for enrollment in the elementary schools was set at eight years. This had the result of enrolling more mature pupils in the elementary schools with greater possibilities of efficient learning during their short school experience.

The school originally established for teaching English to prospective teachers, medical workers, and administration employees gradually evolved into a three year "Intermediate School" for selected elementary school graduates.

Thus the primitive patterns of education, the missionaries, the Japanese, and the U.S. Navy prepared the way for the present organization of education on Truk.

Present Organization of Education on Truk

The elementary schools. In about fifty elementary village schools, a hundred native Trukese teachers are expected today to provide six years

⁵But in many cases the teachers were still insufficiently motivated or prepared to conduct school regularly except when representatives of the administration were there to check up on them. In 1955 one American education specialist lived for three months on the island of Tol studying the Trukese language. The people told her that the period of her stay was the first time that the local school teacher had conducted daily classes.

of elementary education for twenty-four hundred children. A standard program for an elementary school consists of one hundred eighty school days a year with most schools following a daily schedule of classes from eight in the morning to twelve noon. The Trukese village provides and maintains the building, the Truk District Tax Collector pays the teachers' salaries from the proceeds of a district import tax, and the Education Department of the U.S. district administration provides the blackboards, chalk, paper, pencils, and other supplies for teacher and pupil use.

About seventy-five graduates of the elementary schools are chosen each year by their teachers and communities to attend the Truk Intermediate School.

Advanced education. Advanced education for selected Trukese youth begins with three years at the Truk Intermediate School, the boarding school located at the district center. The Intermediate School is completely under the jurisdiction of the Education Department and utilizes experienced and proven Trukese elementary school teachers, vocational experts, and others to carry out a program of academic and vocational training which will further prepare the Trukese student for life in his home community, and prepare some for further education. Much emphasis is placed on the teaching and use of English in the Intermediate School along with vocational emphasis in agriculture, carpentry, boatbuilding, and homemaking for the girls. About a fourth of the Intermediate School graduates are chosen by their teachers to attend the Pacific Islands Central School (PICS) which is a centrally located boarding school for all of the Trust Territory. American PICS teachers give these select few three more years of general education. Beyond PICS a few students each

year receive government sponsored scholarships for further study in Hawaii, Guam, the Phillipines, or other areas.

The Education Department, a section of the Truk District Administration, is responsible for the supervision and direction of the total educational program of the district.

The Education Department. The Education Department of Truk District has about five American education specialists, the number varying with the budget and personnel recruitment problems, who work with the Educational Administrator, an American, and the Micronesian staff in the supervision and development of the elementary schools, the Intermediate School, political and community development, and other educational programs. During the past three years two of the American education specialists have concentrated their efforts in the development of elementary education with help and encouragement from the rest of the staff.⁶

In considering the educational programs of Truk District it is necessary to relate them to the goals of education in the Trust Territory as a whole.

Goals of Education in Trust Territory

Dr. Robert E. Gibson, Director of Education for the Trust Territory, in describing "America's purposes in Micronesia and (the) need for education," gives a good description of the goals of education in Trust Territory.

⁶Mrs. Cicely Pickerill and the author.

Under the terms of the Trusteeship Agreement, the United States has accepted responsibility for furthering the economic, social, educational, and political development of Micronesia. Having assumed such obligations, community education . . . becomes a necessity. The need for Micronesians to be literate in order to achieve a fuller and more creative life is obvious if the United States is to live up to the responsibilities imposed upon it in the Trusteeship Agreement. If they are to become self-governing and to participate more effectively in the economic, social, and educational progress of their respective communities, then Micronesians must have a minimum of general education in order to understand the problems of their immediate environment and their rights and duties as citizens and individuals.⁷

Specific objectives of the Trust Territory educational policy are quoted in the 1959 report of the United Nations Visiting Mission to the Trust Territory:

The main objectives . . . are (a) to develop skills in reading, writing, speaking, listening, discussing and calculating; (b) to develop the vocational skills necessary for the economic progress of the people; (c) to improve homemaking skills; (d) to stimulate peoples self-expression in their indigenous arts and crafts; (e) to promote better health education through personal and community hygiene; (f) to give more knowledge and better understanding of the physical environment and natural processes (science, geography) and of the human environment (economic and social organization, law and government); (g) to impart knowledge about other areas of the world and the people who live in them; (h) to develop qualities to fit the people to live in the modern world (civic responsibilities, understanding of human rights, respect of other people's views, personal integrity, the meaning and exercise of freedom and its relation to the general welfare, etc.); and (i) to develop spiritual values and ethical ideas by promoting understanding between peoples, development of a sense of social responsibility and individual self-discipline; encouraging respect for the good features of the traditional beliefs and customs of the people.

To promote these aims, the Administration has recognized the necessity of rooting the school system in the community

⁷Gibson, R. E., "Community Education in the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands" in Community Education, p. 217.

where it could respond adequately to the needs of the people.⁸

The state of elementary education in 1955 was the direct outgrowth of the natural, social, historical, and administrative factors described in this chapter.

⁸United Nations Trusteeship Council, Report on the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands, 1959, pp. 80, 81.

CHAPTER III
ELEMENTARY EDUCATION IN 1955

In the education of American children, it is assumed that teachers will have a wide background of knowledge and professional preparation for teaching; that a variety of educational materials, texts, and references will be available for teacher and pupil use; that professional supervision and administration will be in direct contact with all teachers, and particularly beginning teachers; that schools will be housed in adequate buildings with attention paid to pupil and teacher comfort and provision of facilities for learning experiences of many kinds. To develop an elementary educational system on Truk, or anywhere, it is necessary to recognize these goals and make plans to meet them to the fullest extent possible, while realizing that the degree to which these goals may be met will be determined by the abilities of the people and the resources at their command in the area which the schools will be serving. A Guatemalan professional educator who was a member of the United Nations Visiting Mission to the Trust Territory in 1956, made similar observations to a meeting of the United Nations Trusteeship Council, relating them to the need for more financial aid to education.

The Administering Authority should consider the advisability of providing additional financial aid so that it would be possible to recruit more United States personnel (supervisors), increase the training of Micronesian teachers, obtain and prepare more educational materials and aids, especially in the audio-visual field, rehabilitate deteriorated school buildings, construct new ones and generally improve the educational system.¹

¹United Nations, Security Council Official Records, Eleventh Year, Special Supplement No. 1, p. 83.

Thus it is possible to describe the situation of elementary education on Truk in 1955 in four sections; teacher education, school materials, supervision, and school buildings. As indicated above, development was needed in all of these sections.

More than any other part of a school system the teachers, their preparation and education, determine the level of education that will be reached.

Teacher Education

All of the teachers in the elementary schools of Truk in 1955 were natives of the Truk District who had had varying amounts of education under the Japanese and American administrations, and some under missionary auspices. An average teacher was a young man who had spent a couple of years in a Japanese elementary school, a couple of years in one of the first Navy schools or an American administered elementary school, and two or three years in the Truk Intermediate School. He had not been chosen as a student for PICS and was not able to get a job in the administrative offices at the district center, an ambition of most Intermediate School students. Therefore, he turned to teaching on his home island or in his home village. He participated in several summer teacher training sessions designed to give him a background in teaching methodology, but these were generally regarded by him as vacations rather than as times for concentrated effort and study.

Eighty per cent of the Trukese teachers had no education beyond the Intermediate School or its missionary equivalent. The other twenty per cent attended PICS for one or two years. All of the teachers had

attended some of the yearly, district-wide teacher training sessions; some of the old-timers were even included in territory-wide teacher training sessions held under Navy auspices because the Navy had transportation to bring all of the teachers from one end of the Trust Territory to the other together in one spot. But that has not been possible since the Department of Interior took over the administration.

The teachers had very little of the background and knowledge necessary for good teaching. The large majority of them, including a surprising number of PICS graduates, had very little ability in reading, speaking, or understanding English. A meaningful discussion in English could not be conducted with a normal group of Trukese teachers. They were weak in social science and physical science. Fundamental arithmetic skills had usually been mastered but there was very little comprehension of the meaning of their arithmetic manipulations.

In their teaching, they relied on the methodology of the Japanese and the early missionaries. Rote learning, memorization, and group recitation were the methods they were brought up with. These were the methods they could use with confidence. But these were not methods conducive to a functional, meaningful education for village children leading to an understanding of their environment and its place in the world scene.

In addition to a lack of background and preparation, teachers were hampered by a lack of materials which they could use in the development of their school programs.

School Materials

By 1955, after ten years of American educational supervision and assistance, seven Trukese language pamphlets were the only printed school materials that had been distributed for school use. Of these, the only substantial one was an English-Trukese pamphlet designed for the teaching of English and printed by the Navy about 1947. All copies of it had disappeared from the educational system, including the Education Department files, by 1955. Around 1950 three small Trukese translations of social studies readers about the breadfruit, the banana plant, and the giant African snail were mimeographed and distributed. Later, a first reader, a short story about some Micronesian children, was printed using a new orthography as the basis of its Trukese spelling. The new orthography was never accepted in use by the administration or the Trukese people and the primer was probably of little help to the teachers who would have had difficulty with the spelling. At the teacher training session in 1952, two short collections of Mortlockese legends were mimeographed and distributed.

Most of the schools in Truk District had none of these pamphlets for teacher or pupil use in 1955. Copies of some were not even available in the Education Department office.

The reasons behind the lack of school materials seem to have been (1) the problem of orthography -- there was still no district-wide agreement on a standard spelling for the Trukese language or on the method to arrive at one, (2) the problems involved in producing materials for such a limited language area, and (3) a belief in the beginning of the Navy administration that the elementary schools should just concentrate on the

teaching of English from the first grade and use standard American elementary texts as soon as possible.²

A further factor retarding the development of an adequate elementary school program was the lack of direct supervision of the teachers.

Supervision of Elementary Schools

The scattered islands and villages of Truk Atoll and the dispersed outer islands of Truk District, some as far as a hundred and twenty miles away from Truk, made supervision of island elementary schools very difficult for the District Education Department. Generally only those schools located near the district center, those on the eastern side of Truk Atoll, received any direct supervision and assistance from Education Department personnel. Education Department representatives accompanying the field trips to the outer islands made at intervals of six weeks to six months, depending on the availability of a field trip ship, would see only the school buildings. The pupils and teachers of the schools would be too busy carrying on their business with the field trip operations of copra buying, selling of trade goods, or seeing the doctor, to spend much time talking about education, much less actually holding school.

Inter-island transportation within Truk Atoll was almost as unorganized and undependable as the field trips to the outer islands.

²Official Trust Territory policy on the teaching of English in the elementary schools was spelled out soon after the change from Navy to Interior administration. The vernacular languages were to be the medium of elementary instruction, and English was to be taught as a foreign language beginning in the upper elementary grades.

A second factor limiting supervision of the elementary schools was the shortage of supervisory personnel. Until 1955, American teachers in the Education Department were responsible for a daily schedule of classes in the Intermediate School and did not have time to get off to the elementary schools. In 1955, a new organization for the Education Department was approved that would allow for several elementary education specialists who would not be held down by district center teaching assignments, and all classes in the Intermediate School were turned over to Trukese teachers. Yet there were no Trukese Education Department staff members qualified to supervise elementary teachers.

Although the elementary teachers probably had mixed feelings about the value of more supervision, they did recognize that one of their major problems was the lack of adequate school buildings.

School Buildings

Every Trukese community by 1955 had a building of some sort designated as an elementary school, but most of the buildings were small, dark, and unfurnished. Children sat on sand floors, wrote on paper tablets held in their laps, and squinted at well-worn painted plywood blackboards. Many of the school roofs leaked badly because of unmaintained thatch or rusted tin; school was automatically dismissed on rainy days. Materials furnished by the Education Department were limited to lined paper tablets, pencils, chalk, blackboards, erasers, crayons, rulers, some recreational equipment -- mainly softballs and bats, and scratch paper which was just left-over, spoiled mimeograph paper from the administration offices.

By the end of 1955, the elementary teachers had had some preparation

and education for their jobs, buildings and supplies were available for school use to a certain extent, but supervision and school materials were definitely lacking. Some of the elementary teachers were making a real effort to carry on a meaningful elementary program, more were drifting in old patterns, and still others were making no effort at all. Clearly there was much to be done in the ensuing period in the development of elementary education.

CHAPTER IV

THE DEVELOPMENT OF ELEMENTARY EDUCATION, 1955 TO 1959

The work of the Education Department staff during the period from 1955 to 1959 directly related to the elementary school program can be best described in seven sections covering the programs in curriculum development, development of school materials, field supervision and assistance, the model school, teacher certification, teacher institutes, and grants-in-aid for school construction. Although many of these programs took place concurrently and were important in relation to each other, they will be described separately.

The first program to be taken up, and perhaps the most important, was the development and implementation of a curriculum guide.

Curriculum Development

Curriculum development was an untouched field in Truk up to 1955. The Trukese teachers had no guide book, course of study, or curriculum outline to follow in their teaching. A few of the PICS graduates had a curriculum guide with suggestions for teaching that they had used in an education course at PICS, but the rest of the teachers had nothing to turn to for suggestions or reference in their teaching program except the information they had gleaned in summer teacher training sessions. In order to formulate a short, graded curriculum guide for Trukese teachers, one of the American staff members¹ wrote an outline guide for the teaching of language arts including the teaching of English, arithmetic, and the

¹A. Richard King, then Educational Administrator for Truk District.

social studies in the Trukese elementary schools. A curriculum committee was formed to include the Director of Education for the Trust Territory, the five American staff members of the Education Department, the Trukese Superintendent of Elementary Schools, and eight of the Trukese Intermediate School teachers -- all of whom had proven themselves as elementary school teachers before coming to the Intermediate School. For about two weeks this committee worked over the draft outline of curriculum suggestions, trying to include relevant material from their experience. They also added a section of graded suggestions for the teaching of science to the original outline. A good deal of time was spent discussing the teaching of English as a foreign language in the elementary school, following the methods developed by Charles Fries at the University of Michigan.

Because most Trukese schools have only one or two teachers, the suggestions of the curriculum outline were divided into three groups, rather than six grades, combining the first and second, third and fourth, and fifth and sixth grades. It was definitely recommended that a teacher try to form no more than three separate groups for teaching a particular subject.

The object of the curriculum guide was to describe the types of activities and scope of material appropriate for the different groups of Trukese pupils, to give specific suggestions for making the elementary educational program meaningful in the Trukese environment and functional for Trukese society, and to avoid activities which were merely academic and unrelated to Trukese aspirations or environment. Thus no suggestions were given for a program of physical education. The daily life and activity of a Trukese youngster was sufficiently rugged and demanding to

obviate the need for physical development in the schools.

Because school equipment was limited, only simple suggestions for equipment were introduced. Notes on the teaching of reading stressed the use of teacher and pupil developed reading charts because Trukese primers were then unavailable. Arithmetic problems based on the sale of copra to the trading companies and other Trukese quantitative situations were emphasized.

The final mimeographed curriculum guide was ready for distribution at the beginning of the 1956 teacher training session when all of the teachers were brought to the district center for an eight week program. The curriculum guide, written in English, contained many new ideas for Trukese teachers, so it was made the basis for study of four workshop groups of teachers. In their workshops the teachers not only studied the curriculum suggestions but also tried to develop materials that would be useful for implementing the suggestions; such as a crude Trukese primer, some stories about Trukese life to fit in with the development of social studies, suggestions for children's games, simple Trukese arithmetic problems, and a Trukese language arts book.

Two years after the first curriculum guide was distributed, the two education specialists most involved in the elementary schools collaborated to rewrite and enlarge the curriculum suggestions on the basis of their experience in trying to implement the curriculum in specific elementary school situations. It was realized that simple English and a great deal of explanation were necessary to get some meaning of the suggestions across to the teachers. Sections on music and art related to the school program were added and notes on the teaching of English were

made a separate section and based on English texts that were then being prepared for use in Trukese schools. Suggestions for using materials produced by the Education Department in other subject fields were also introduced.

The development and implementation of the curriculum guide was the core of the elementary education program from 1956 to 1959. Other elementary programs had as their goals the preparation of teachers to enable them to understand and use the curriculum suggestions, to give them a background of knowledge necessary for the implementation of the suggestions in the different subject areas, to show them a functioning school program that was based on the suggestions, and to develop materials that the teachers could use with their pupils in carrying out the goals of the curriculum.

After introducing the curriculum guide to the teachers, the next step was to develop materials which would help them to carry out the suggestions of the curriculum guide.

Development of School Materials

Starting with the development of school materials in the teacher workshops of the 1956 teacher training session, impetus was given for the development of printed materials that would be useful in all of the Trukese elementary schools. In following the policy that elementary schools would use the vernacular language for instruction, it was necessary to print all materials for pupil use in Trukese. Although special manuals and directions for teachers were usually printed in English, it was recognized that the suggestions might be more effectively used over a wider

area if a Trukese translation of the English materials was available to the teachers. This sometimes conflicted with the desire to develop the teachers' understanding of English by making them use their knowledge of English as much as possible.

The first Trukese language book available for use in 1956 was a translation of a book written by the Ceylonese coconut expert, W. V. D. Pieris, Wealth from the Coconut, and published by the South Pacific Commission as a manual for coconut raisers in the Pacific. As copra, dried coconut meat, is the major source of cash income for the Trukese islander, and as the book related directly to methods that would improve coconut production in Truk District, it was considered a very important reference for both elementary teachers and pupils. After becoming acquainted with the book and the methods for improvement of coconut agriculture which it advocated in the 1956 teacher training session workshops, the teachers were given a few copies to use in their school programs. Later a list of suggestions for activities in connection with the study of the booklet was drawn up and distributed to the teachers. A shortage in the supply of the pamphlet meant that it took two years, time for reprinting, to supply every school with sufficient copies for use in the fifth and sixth grades.

The Education Department was very limited in the kinds of materials which it could turn out because it had access only to two dilapidated and out-dated mimeograph machines for the reproduction of locally developed materials. However, late in 1956, three story booklets were published in Trukese in rather rough form to provide reading material for classes in the upper grades. The stories included a Trukese version of "King Midas";

a Japanese folk tale about two bamboo trees, and a Trukese legend about a fish and a crab. At the same time a booklet of health and sanitation information was produced, somewhat inappropriately called Puken Semwen, book of sickness. There were enough copies of all of these to distribute to all of the schools, but they were poorly mimeographed and weakly bound so that they fell apart after less than a year's usage.

In order to put out sturdier books of better quality, the Education Department gradually began to acquire the necessary machinery and assigned a quonset building for use as the Curriculum Materials Workshop. An electric silk-screen style mimeograph machine became the basic unit of production, heavy covers were stapled to the books produced, and improved design made for stronger, longer-lasting, more satisfactory booklets for pupil and teacher use.

To provide primers for the children learning to read in the beginning grades, several stories originally written in English about island children were translated into Trukese.² It was realized that these were a substitute for original reading material written in Trukese from the beginning, but there was no one prepared to produce and illustrate such materials at that time, while there was a definite need to put some kind of reading material into the teachers' and pupils' hands. To overcome some of the difficulties of using these books for beginning readers,

²Back in the 1940's the Navy had prepared some beautifully illustrated simple stories of island life, with the idea of using the stories to teach English in the early elementary grades. As examples for the teaching of reading in a vernacular language they were excellent, but as textbooks for the teaching of English as a foreign language, they had little to offer. However, they provided a ready source of material relevant to Micronesian life, complete with illustrations, that only needed an imaginative translation into Trukese to be eminently useful.

the preparation and use of experience charts for the teaching of reading was emphasized in work with the teachers and all teachers were supplied with the necessary materials to make the charts.

An important project in the development of school materials was the writing and production of a language arts booklet for the teaching of simple grammatical concepts in Trukese. The elementary teachers had very little idea of the kinds of things they should stress about their own language beyond the simple recognition of written words and the physical reproduction of them in handwriting. Trukese material when written was not usually separated into sentences or paragraphs, although in spoken form there were definite sentence patterns. There was a tendency to use the Trukese equivalent of "therefore" as a connective between all sentences in a discourse. So the language arts book, entitled Ach Kapasen Chuk,³ developed the concepts of sentence, paragraph, and the methods of indicating these in writing. Beyond this it gave examples of personal and business letters including the proper method of addressing a letter. Sections on the simple parts of speech separated out nouns from pronouns, and gave some information on subjects and predicates. All of this was done without reference to English and was intended to make the pupils and teachers more aware of the grammar that existed in their own language, while preparing the way for the learning of English and English grammar later. Ach Kapasen Chuk was designed for the pupils in the fourth grade and higher. It was hoped that all pupils would be exposed to it before beginning their formal study of English. Three different revisions of the book were published in the time from 1956 to 1959, each one

³"Our Language-of Truk"

incorporating changes and additions found necessary in its use in the schools.

In the field of social studies materials, a combined edition of a book about the natural environment of Truk, emphasizing the theory of island formation and the geography of Truk District, and the Trukese translation of a short history of the Eastern Caroline Islands was the major publication. This volume was designed to provide a basis for the social studies during a part of the year in the upper two grades of the elementary schools. It was a difficult book for some teachers to use constructively since their own knowledge of the areas covered was very slight.

To alleviate the problems of teachers who had to teach English while not having a sufficient background in the language themselves, a series of two texts for the teaching of English with accompanying teachers' manuals was prepared in 1958 and 1959. In the past, Trukese teachers had been observed teaching English with such methods as writing a number of English words on the blackboard and having the children copy them on their tablets. At times the teachers would write down words describing English grammar which they remembered vaguely from their own instruction or which they had found in cast-off English grammar books, of which there were a large number floating around the Territory. But the teachers did not know the meaning of the terms they were using and could certainly not give their students meaningful experiences with them.

The new English texts were prepared with this background in mind and were designed to give the simplest possible instructions to the

teachers for their work with the pupils. They were adapted from the beginning books of a series of texts that were being used in the Intermediate School English classes and it was hoped that they would form the basis for a continuing, integrated learning of the language. Adaptation was used to make the English lessons meaningful in a Trukese environment; the idea of an American numbered address could have no meaning for a Trukese child, so an early lesson was changed to have a child say, "I live on Nama Island," rather than, "I live at 2700 Fifth Avenue." In the instructions to the teachers, special emphasis was given for lessons to help Trukese children pronounce English sounds that did not exist in Trukese.

Although not directly connected with the elementary school program, the publication of a monthly Trukese language newspaper, the Truk Review, provided additional material for reading and discussion of current events in the upper elementary grades.

By 1959 a substantial amount of materials had been turned out for teacher and pupil use, but it was only the beginning of a program that would have to continue to turn out materials for the schools that would help Trukese teachers in developing functional and meaningful programs of instruction in the language arts, social studies, arithmetic, health, science, and music. At least some materials had been turned out in each of the subjects just mentioned, along with teachers manuals and instructions for other areas of the curriculum. But all of these materials could not teach by themselves. They were really valuable only in the hands of a well-trained teacher.

To get at the basic problems of the teachers and to develop them

in their jobs, professional on-the-job supervision was necessary.

Field Supervision and Assistance

Beginning in 1956, after three months residence in a Trukese community for the purpose of learning the Trukese language, one of the American education specialists was given the assignment of carrying out a program of field supervision and assistance to elementary school teachers in their own communities. The purpose of the program was to provide meaningful, useful assistance and supervision for the teacher in his own environment with specific emphasis on the problems which he faced in his own school. With the American specialist staying at a given school for a week, or longer, it was possible to get at the roots of some of the real problems. Although the first year of the field supervision program was concentrated on the schools located in the western half of Truk Atoll, eventually most of the schools in Truk District were visited and helped.

In practice, the American specialist would teach along side of the regular elementary teacher during the morning sessions. In the afternoon, planning for the next day's lessons and discussions of the problems observed in the morning session were carried out. The Trukese teachers, generally, responded very well to this approach and were grateful for help that they could get in their teaching, although not all of them continued to make efforts to improve their instructional program in the interim between visits.

A Trukese field assistant usually accompanied the American specialist in this work. Three such assistants, two of whom have since gone on to the University of Hawaii on government scholarships, not only helped

in the program but also received valuable experience and training that should enable them to become independent field supervisors when they have completed their own education.

One of the major problems in developing a regular, consistent field program was transportation. Although the American specialist would live in the villages while working with the teachers, transportation between villages and islands was necessary and usually difficult to obtain. For a while the Education Department maintained a sixteen foot open motor boat for the use of the field program, but rough weather and waves finally forced the retirement of the little boat and the use of larger, more protected boats.

The success of the field program, in the final analysis, was due to the dedication and drive of the American specialist who put up with inconveniences that few Americans would suffer very long; remained months on end on tours of duty in the Trukese villages without returning to her home on the American base; ate five years old, Army surplus C-rations; lived in a tent; bathed in a portable bathtub; and still retained a sense of humor about her experiences.⁴

Other American education specialists participated occasionally in the field program, but only for short periods of time.

While the field supervision program was acknowledged to be the most effective form of in-service training for individual teachers, it was still necessary to set up a situation for the group training of teachers in order to cover all of the teachers of the district.

⁴See Trumbull, R., "The Saga of Cy (Ci) Pickerill" in Paradise in Trust, pp. 117-128.

The Model School

The model school program came into being when it was realized that the transportation facilities for bringing teachers into the district center for teacher training sessions were inadequate, particularly as the number of teachers in Truk District increased to take care of an expanding school-age population. In the past the field trip ship had been used to bring the teachers in for annual teacher training sessions, but with the increase of teachers, the ship could not meet its regular obligations and pick up all of the teachers, too. It was necessary to devise a plan for the training of teachers that would only bring a small group of teachers into the district center at one time.

In 1957 plans were made for the organization of a school that would be used as a demonstration or model school for elementary teaching. Two adjacent village schools near the district center on Truk were combined and their instructional program was put under the direct supervision of an American education specialist. The school was organized to put into effect the suggestions of the curriculum guide, using only the resources that Trukese teachers would have at their command in their own village schools. Groups of six to sixteen Trukese teachers were brought in for periods of six weeks or longer to observe the classes in action, work under the supervision of the American specialist, and actually conduct the classes in a manner similar to the organization of practice teaching in United States teacher training institutions.

This program was conceived as a replacement of the teacher training sessions in which all of the teachers of the district were assembled at one time for in-service training, with the advantage for the new

program that teaching methods would be taught by actual participation in a real teaching situation with Trukese children in a Trukese school. It also provided a time for the observation and evaluation of the abilities and problems of the individual teachers.

Most of the emphasis in the model school program was on the effective use of the teaching suggestions in the curriculum guide and in the procedure of lesson planning. As in the field program, mornings were used for the teaching program of the elementary school and afternoons were used for lesson planning and discussion of group and individual problems.

In the second year of the model school program, four superior Trukese teachers were available on a full-time basis to be used as critic teachers in the model school program. This meant a direct increase in the benefits to the temporary practice teachers who had more direct supervision and assistance available.

Even before the beginning of the model school program, it was realized that recognition of and reward for good teacher preparation and performance was necessary to improve the quality of elementary teaching. A program of teacher certification was developed to perform this function.

Teacher Certification

The first plan for certification of Trukese teachers was made in 1956 when it was decided to certify those elementary teachers who were graduates of PICS or had equivalent schooling and could pass a written test including English ability and a knowledge of Trust Territory law. In the tests given at the end of the 1956 teacher training session, about

half of the PICS graduates who were teaching were able to pass the test and receive their teaching certificates, which amounted to about ten per cent of all of the elementary teachers. A second test was given at the end of the 1957 teacher training session, the last district-wide teacher training session to be held, and a few more teachers received their certificates. Certified teachers received a higher salary and were eligible for annual salary increments which were not given to the non-certified teachers.

At the first meeting of the Truk District Congress late in 1957, a new certification plan was proposed by the Education Department and adopted by the Congress. The new plan created three grades of certificates; "Teacher", "Senior Teacher", and "Master Teacher." The new requirements for the "Teacher" certificate were the successful completion of a sixteen week teacher institute and a period of practice teaching under an education specialist. PICS graduation was not required, since it was felt that there were good teachers being left behind who were really doing a better job of teaching in their elementary schools than many of the PICS graduate teachers. However, it was assumed that the candidates for the sixteen week institute would be either PICS graduates or teachers with several years of successful teaching experience.

The "Senior Teacher" certificate was set up for those successful teachers already holding a "Teacher" certificate who would complete a special year-long teacher institute. The candidates for this certificate would be picked carefully and it was not expected that there would be more than a very few teachers every other year who would complete the requirements. This certificate meant a substantial increase in salary and

prestige for the holder.

The "Master Teacher" certificate was set up in the hope that some of the people who would complete two years of university-level work on government scholarships might be lured into elementary teaching as a career. The requirement for this certificate was merely the satisfactory completion of a two year program of study at the university level. The salary it offered compared favorably with the salary offered to such people by the American administration offices. To date, no one has qualified for such a certificate, but the possibility remains of attracting the most highly qualified people into the elementary teaching field.

With the approval of the new certification plan in 1957, plans were made immediately for the setting up of the teacher institutes required for certification

Teacher Institutes

The first teacher institute to be set up was designed to prepare selected teachers for the "Teacher" certificate. About twenty teachers, most of them PICS graduates, were chosen by the Education Department staff on the basis of their academic ability and their teaching record to participate in the institute. The program that was set up stressed a general education theme with remedial work in the areas of knowledge that the teachers were weak in. Advanced English and a course in English reading were included. Most of the classes for the institute were taught by the American education specialists although some of the Trukese staff also carried teaching responsibilities. At the end of the sixteen week course, the entire group of teachers worked for four weeks to start a

vital elementary education program in a nearby school that had had two very unimaginative teachers for the past year. At the completion of what had expanded into a twenty week course, the teachers who had successfully completed both the academic and practical phases of the work were given their "Teacher" certificates.

Soon after the close of the first institute, six Trukese teachers were chosen to participate in the first year-long "Senior Teacher" institute. Again a program of varied general education was carried out, although American personnel problems and vacations sometimes conflicted with the arrangements and continuity of the program. These "Senior Teacher" candidates also participated in a practice teaching session at the model school as a part of their program. All six received the "Senior Teacher" certificate. Two of them became critic teachers at the model school, two returned to elementary schools in the outer islands, and two accepted jobs with the administration offices, dropping out of teaching.

The two "Senior Teachers" who became critic teachers at the model school were able to return to a brand new building, built under the auspices of a new program for grants-in-aid to communities wishing to build new schools.

Grants-in-Aid for School Construction

In contacts with the Trukese communities and people, members of the Education Department staff always encouraged community responsibility in maintenance of school buildings and in the provision of adequate buildings and facilities for school use. However, there was no official help that could be given the communities for their school building in 1955.

Materials and labor were both the responsibility of the local communities according to Trust Territory education policy. However, a source of Trust Territory governmental assistance was opened later with the development of a grant-in-aid program administered from the office of the High Commissioner of the Trust Territory. Under the new program, certain amounts of financial assistance were available to Micronesian municipalities which were ready to put some of their own resources into the building of new school facilities. In Truk the Moen Island Municipality, in which the model school operated, showed interest in the building of a new school plant to replace the former deteriorated buildings, already too small to accomodate the children of the municipality. With help from the Education Department and as a part of the program of political development, plans were made by the Moen Island Council to construct a modern seven-room building. Plans for the building were drawn up by the Education Department and a grant-in-aid was obtained from the High Commissioner to purchase some of the necessary materials. All details, labor, and supervision of the construction were carried out by the municipality and its officials. By the end of 1958 the new building was ready for use, including locally-built furniture for the pupils and teachers. The Education Department used this school for the continuation of its model school program, and the people of Truk District saw a practical example of cooperation between the Trukese municipality and the American administration for the furnishing of adequate, modern school facilities.

In 1959 other communities were beginning to think about developing similar school building programs with grants-in-aid from the High Commissioner. One municipality, though, went ahead on its own initiative

and constructed a new school building, but because they did not apply for or receive a grant-in-aid, their resources were not adequate to provide a plant with the standards of the grant-in-aid school already built.

On one of the Mortlock islands devastated by a 1958 typhoon, the Trust Territory government furnished the materials for a new and better school building. But for the majority of the villages, new schools or a good deal of maintenance work was still necessary for adequate elementary school facilities.

Thus the programs of curriculum development, development of school materials, field supervision and assistance, the model school, teacher certification, teacher institutes, and grants-in-aid for school construction operating during the period from 1955 to 1959 made a coordinated and concerted effort to meet the needs of the Trukese elementary educational system. By 1959 it was possible to look back and begin an evaluation of the work which had been done.

CHAPTER V

ELEMENTARY EDUCATION IN 1959

Over the four year period of time from the middle of 1955 to the middle of 1959, real and important gains in the development of elementary education have been achieved. There is a higher level of teacher education and preparation. Many materials have been developed and distributed for use in the schools. Effective supervision has reached many schools never reached before. And a start has been made in providing assistance for school construction.

But the same basic needs remain that were described in chapter three of this paper; more education and training for teachers, more school materials, more field supervision, more school buildings of better quality. The influx of new teachers into the system, to teach the rapidly expanding younger generation of Trukese, presents a particularly challenging problem. The new teachers are mostly coming from the group of recent Intermediate School graduates and need to be prepared and trained for their jobs to bring them up to the level of the veteran teachers.

The problem of developing real community understanding of and desire to take responsibility for the operation of the elementary schools still remains and must continue to be an underlying consideration in the development of all educational programs.

At the beginning of 1959 a United Nations Trusteeship Council Visiting Mission again visited the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands to inspect the operations of the United States administration at first hand.

Observations of the United Nations Visiting Mission

The observations of the United Nations Visiting Mission were written anonymously by a man familiar with the Trust Territory, having participated in visiting missions in 1953, 1956, and 1959. In the report to the United Nations Trusteeship Council, he observed:

In developing the educational system in accordance with its stated principles, the Administration was faced with two chief problems. One of these was the need for developing among the peoples of the Territory a sense of responsibility for education which the previous Administration had failed to impart to them. The second and equally important problem was that of training as rapidly as possible Micronesian teachers who could staff the schools of the Territory.

There is evidence that the first of these problems is being overcome. Local municipalities . . . have taken increasing initiative for building new schools, for raising salaries of teachers and for demanding higher standards of teacher training. . . . Everywhere it went, the Mission received requests for better trained teachers, more scholarships and more education in every field. Such demands came not only from the younger people of the community but also from older persons who stated that they regarded education as a prerequisite to the ultimate improvement of the community.

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The Mission also considers that the Administration should provide a larger measure of financial support to the educational system as a whole in order to enable it to make the much needed improvements in school buildings and their equipment and to achieve greater uniformity in educational standards throughout the Territory.¹

Thus the United Nations noted some of the progress made between 1956 and 1959, the period between visiting missions, and also noted the problems of teacher training, the development of community responsibility,

¹United Nations Trusteeship Council, Report on the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands, 1959, pp. 80, 81, and 83.

and the improvement of school facilities.

From these evaluations, some goals for future programs in elementary education can be drawn.

Goals for the Future

In the future development of Trukese elementary education, three goals seem crucially important to the author.

1. The system of elementary education must be rooted in the Trukese community. The curriculum of each of the schools must be based on Trukese society, be functional for Trukese people, and meet Trukese aspirations. In meeting these requirements, the Trukese communities will be brought to a further realization of the functions of a community school and the necessity for their assuming responsibilities in its continued operation.

2. A high level of teacher preparation and professional training must be reached for as many Trukese teachers as possible to enable an effective elementary school program to be maintained. An imaginative approach to the problems involved in in-service training of teachers must continue. The use of college-trained Trukese field supervisors in an extensive program of field supervision and assistance would be an important boost to the educational system.

3. The preparation and distribution of school materials must be continued and expanded with growing emphasis on the development of graded materials for social studies, science, arithmetic, and other subjects that might be standard in content for all of the Trust Territory, although the language of the materials cannot be standardized.

The educational work carried on in the period from 1955 to 1959 was certainly significant in its development of some of the potentialities of universal elementary education in Truk District. But it will continue to be significant only as there is continued emphasis in maintaining and expanding programs designed to meet the educational needs of Trukese society.

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APPENDIX

OFFICIAL JOB DESCRIPTION
EDUCATION AND TRAINING SPECIALIST
TRUK DISTRICT, 1955

This position is located in the Education Department of the Truk District of the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands. The incumbent will be under the administrative supervision of the Truk Educational Administrator. He will be responsible generally for Teacher Training, Curriculum Development, and Community Development with respect to the indigenous population.

Major Duties

Develop and implement the program of teacher training and in-service supervision. Carry out further training of the indigenous teachers and improve their personal and professional standards.

Plan and conduct post-PICS (Pacific Islands Central School) teacher training programs, including summer school training.

Determine factors of culture which are significant for curriculum development and work with students and teachers in determining and satisfying local needs and problems.

Assist the Curriculum Materials Specialist in the collection and organization of printed and other curriculum materials.

Assist in developing workable orthography and provide instructions for such.

Advise municipal leaders, teachers, and students on social organization of schools as well as academic organization.

Conduct or supervise actual class instruction in experimenting with or teaching of new curriculum developments.

Actively participate in any one of the many school-community programs in the district.

Work directly with governmental and other social-control factors in the communities which are concerned with education. In performing this function, the incumbent is expected to acquire a conversational knowledge of the Trukese language, sufficient to enable him to work independently without recourse to English or translators.

Work toward the development of community leadership and understanding of the educational program and serve as liason between community, school, and/or government in the implementation of all related activities.