

STATE OF NEW YORK COMMISSION ON SCHOOL BUILDINGS  
THIRD REPORT  
FEBRUARY 1952

# TOWARD BETTER SCHOOLS

**THIRD REPORT**

COMMISSION ON SCHOOL BUILDINGS  
OF THE  
STATE OF NEW YORK

*Toward Better Schools*

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FEBRUARY, NINETEEN FIFTY-TWO

ALBANY, NEW YORK

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FRANK C. MOORE  
*Chairman*

February 15, 1952

## LETTER OF TRANSMITTAL

*To the Governor and the Legislature of the State of New York:*

The Commission on School Buildings, created by Chapter 612 of the Laws of 1950, presents herewith its third report concerning school building problems in New York State.

This report demonstrates that with few exceptions the localities in the State which have had serious school building problems have made significant progress in solving them.

Many communities will be confronted with similar problems for a decade at least, but measures already adopted by the Legislature or being recommended by the Commission, will enable school districts to continue to make outstanding progress in the future, subject, of course, to any restrictions caused by our country's defense needs.

Respectfully submitted,



FRANK C. MOORE  
*Chairman*

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## I. Meeting the

### New York State Commission on School Buildings

#### Members

*Chairman:* HON. FRANK C. MOORE, Lieutenant Governor  
ALLEN, DR. JAMES E., Deputy Commissioner, New York State Education Department, Albany  
CAMPAGNA, ANTHONY, President, Campagna Construction Corporation, New York City  
CHRIST, HON. MARCUS G., County Judge of Nassau County, New Hyde Park  
CLEVELAND, CARLETON A., President, Clark-Cleveland, Inc., Binghamton  
DYER, EVERETT R., Executive Secretary, New York State School Boards Association, East Greenbush  
GRIFFITH, HENRY W., Chairman, (1945-50) Public Education Committee, New York State Senate, Palmyra  
MILMOE, HON. WHEELER, Chairman, Public Education Committee, New York State Assembly, Canastota  
REID, WILLIAM, President, Hudson and Manhattan Railroad, New York City  
ROBERTSON, HUGH W., Vice President, Westchester County Publishers, Inc., White Plains  
ROWE, MRS. ROBERT B., Past President, New York State Congress of Parents and Teachers, Rochester  
UPSON, CHARLES A., Chairman of the Board, The Upson Company, Lockport

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#### STAFF

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MORRISON, J. CAYCE, Consultant

The New York State Commission on School Buildings was created by the 1950 Legislature to help the localities meet their emergency and long-range needs for public school buildings.

The Commission was established upon the recommendation of the Moore Committee on Constitutional Tax and Debt Limitations after that Committee, at the request of the Governor and the State Education Commissioner, had considered various reports of school building needs and proposals to finance those needs.

The Moore Committee determined that a huge State bond issue for school construction was not necessary and that, with the aid of informed guidance and modernization of local taxing and borrowing powers, most of the State's school districts could meet school construction needs for a number of years with their own resources.

In compliance with the Legislature's direction, this Commission has attacked school construction problems from every angle.

#### Causes of the Problem

Public concern about the need for new school buildings and the financial ability of localities to construct them had been aroused by the large number of births in postwar years. The average was more than 300,000 a year between 1946 and 1951.

However, the Commission's study has disclosed that most of the school building problems to date have not been caused by increased births alone. Elementary school enrollments for the 1951-52 school year generally are no higher than in 1936-37. There still are more than 100,000 fewer children in elementary schools than during the peak year of 1931-32. The postwar births will not raise elementary school enrollments to a record high until sometime during the next six years. High school enrollments generally are at the lowest level reported in 20 years.

# **York State on School Buildings**

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Commissioner, New York State Education  
  
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## **STAFF**

1 Co-ordinator of Research  
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Primary causes of the school building problems with which the localities have been faced in recent years are the heavy postwar migration to the suburbs, shifts of population within cities, development of new industrial centers and expansion and relocation of industries, enlargement of school districts, postponement of school construction during the depression and war years, the inadequate size of many buildings constructed during the 1930's (mostly in central school districts) when births were at a very low level, and changes in educational programs.

The Commission first concentrated attention on the needs of districts with special or acute problems (New York City, the rapidly growing suburbs, and districts with heavy debt or tax burdens).

It initiated studies to determine the immediate and long-range school building requirements of all school districts in the State and undertook to develop a program whereby the localities could meet these needs from local resources to the fullest extent possible.

### **The Commission's Reports**

In its first report to the Legislature (January 10, 1951), the Commission discussed the school construction problems of the City of New York and the reasons why that City's construction program had bogged down. It also offered recommendations for local action to break bottlenecks and speed construction in that City where nearly half the public school children of the State are educated. How New York responded and what remains to be done is discussed later in this report.

In its second report (February 14, 1951), the Commission discussed state-wide problems of school construction, disclosed that some 50 school districts appeared to be facing financial hardship in meeting construction needs, advocated continuance of the emergency aid program inaugurated in 1950 at the suggestion of the Moore

Committee, and offered a broad program of State legislation and local action designed to provide the public schools when and where they were most needed. Details on how these recommendations were carried out are discussed in subsequent pages.

The Commission was gratified that the Governor and the 1951 Legislature concurred in all of its recommendations for legislative action.

Both the first and second reports emphasized that improvements must be made in methods of determining school building requirements and the priority of needs. The Commission pointed out that until these improvements were achieved, it would not be possible to determine with reasonable accuracy the extent of school building needs in the State, or to decide when and where these needs would occur.

Those reports also stressed the fact that the fair appraisal of local resources to finance necessary school construction depended upon improving the accuracy of estimates of need, achieving all potential economies in construction and financial management, revising real estate assessments or State equalization rates, or both, and developing uniform standards for measurement of local resources.

During the past year the Commission has continued to attack these problems and has broadened its line of inquiry, giving special attention to difficulties arising from shortages of building materials, overcrowding in schools, plant replacement or modernization, and housing of non-resident pupils.

This third report will demonstrate that, with few exceptions, the localities in the State which possessed serious school building problems have made significant progress in solving them.

Many communities will be confronted with similar problems for a decade at least, but measures already adopted by the Legislature, or to be recommended by the Commission, will enable school districts to continue to make outstanding progress in the future, subject to any restrictions caused by our country's defense needs.

## II. Summary of Pro

### Finance

The ability of our localities to finance their necessary school building construction was strengthened by the voters of the State when they overwhelmingly approved at the November, 1951, election a Constitutional amendment revising the limitations on borrowing power.

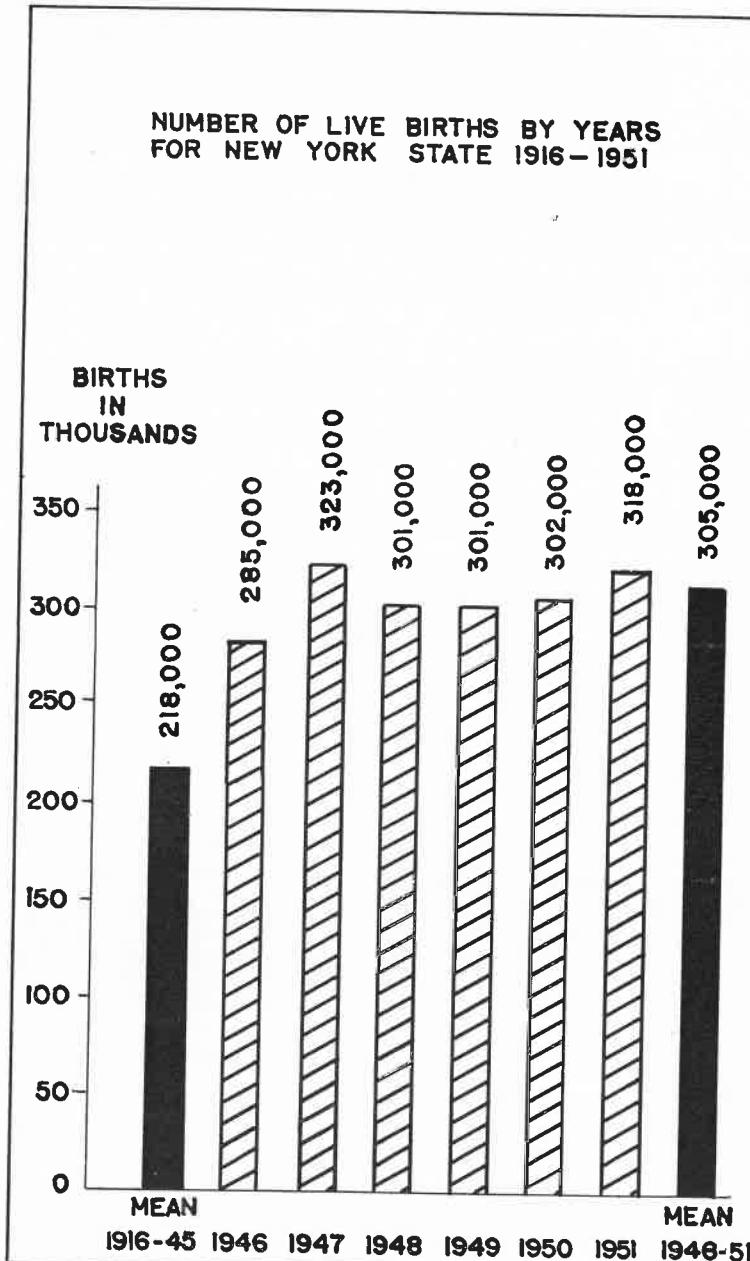
The amendment was proposed by the Moore Committee on Tax and Debt Limits after a long and thorough study of the Constitutional provisions affecting municipal and school district borrowing power. The amendment was designed to relate Constitutional debt limitations more accurately to the localities' ability to pay.

Major provisions of this amendment, effective January 1, 1952, change the debt limit base from assessed valuation to full valuation, create separate debt limits for cities under 125,000 population and school districts in these cities, and expand the borrowing power of New York City.

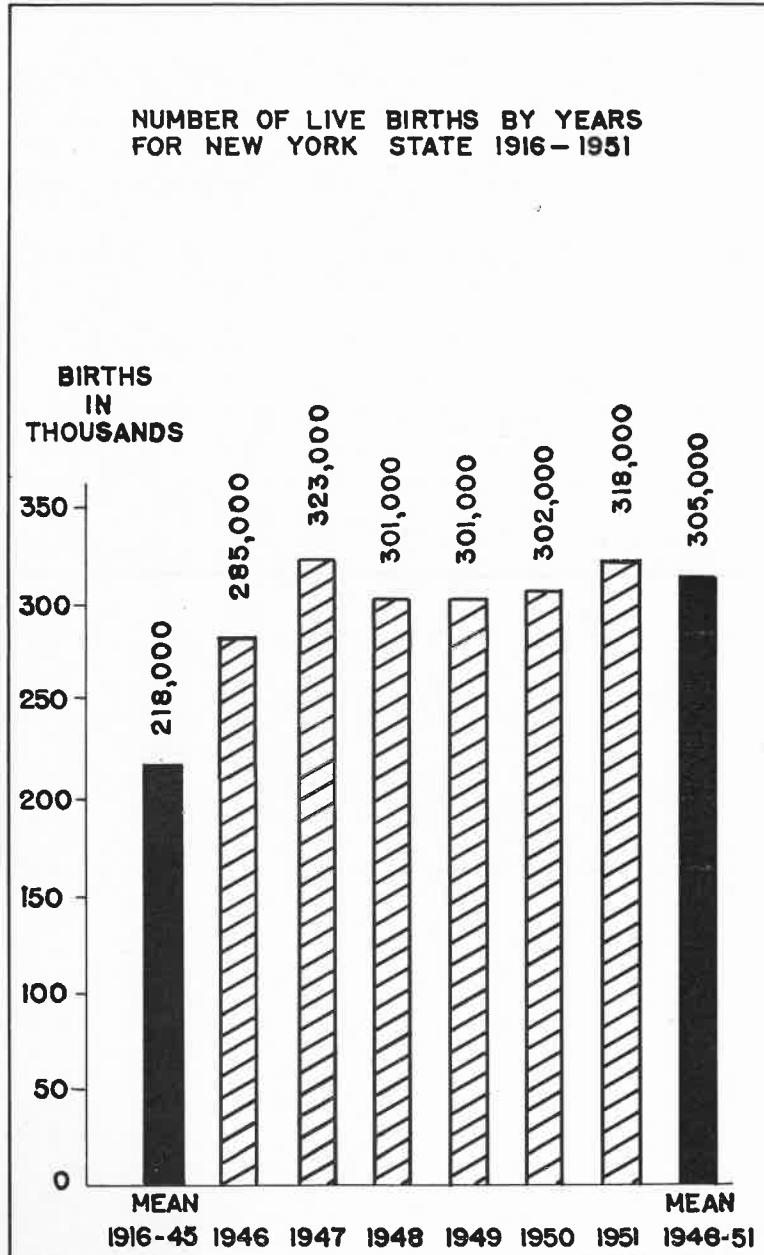
Meanwhile, through amendment to existing laws, the Legislature has modernized the debt limitations imposed on other school districts in the State and better equipped them to use their own resources in providing the school buildings that are needed, now or in the future. (See Second Report of the Commission, Pages: 32-34, 36).

The 1951 Legislature also continued for another year the program of emergency State advances to school districts which do not have sufficient local resources to pay all the debt service on bonds issued for essential school construction. A resume of the operation of this program is contained in a subsequent section of this report.

The change to full valuation as the debt limit base for localities has placed increased emphasis on the importance of the State equalization rates which are used to compute a locality's full valuation.



## II. Summary of Progress in 1951



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On the basis of existing State equalization rates, most of the localities received increased borrowing power as a result of this change.

Currently, the State Board of Equalization and Assessment is conducting an intensive study of the State equalization rates. It is expected that within the next year the Board will establish new equalization rates which will reflect more accurately the ratio of local assessments to full property value and the true borrowing capacity of our school districts and cities.

However, recognizing the close relationship between State education aid and the financial ability of local school districts, the Commission believes the establishment of new State equalization rates will make necessary a thorough review of the present formulae for distribution of education aid.

### New Construction

Areas with critical school building problems made substantial progress in school construction during the year.

Outside of New York City, 62 school districts reported that overcrowding has curtailed school sessions in the current year. Nearly all of these districts are in the critical areas listed in the Commission's second report. Most of them are located in Nassau, Suffolk, and Erie Counties.

In the 62 districts, there are 101 school buildings with curtailed programs for one or more grades. Half of these buildings (52) are in Nassau County. Suffolk reports 15 and Erie, eight.

However, almost all of these districts have vigorously attacked the problem and have taken corrective steps. Bond issues were voted down in three. Six others have taken no action but one of these is a new central district, another is about to vote on centralization, and a third is considering centralization.

For the current school year, New York City reports 101 elementary schools with 1,203 classes on curtailed sessions.

With few exceptions, the city now has buildings, additions, or modernization projects under construction or in the 1952 capital program which will provide relief for these schools.

Relief for some of the exceptions depends on site acquisition, but in most instances it depends on such factors as completion of modernization projects, rehabilitation of existing schools, readjustment of attendance areas, provision of transportation and other means for increasing the utilization of available school space in the area.

The volume of school construction both in the city and the rest of the State in 1951 reached the highest level in more than 20 years.

### Modernization or Replacement

The Commission has devoted a substantial part of its resources to the problem of bringing existing school facilities up to acceptable standards. Its findings and recommendations on this problem are summarized in a later section.

In its inventory of school facilities in the State and special studies in New York City, the Commission found that cities generally have a large problem involving rehabilitation, modernization or replacement of existing school buildings. It also found many substandard school facilities in all types of school districts.

Little progress was made during the year in bringing existing school plants up to what the Commission believes are reasonable standards. The shortage of essential materials and high building costs undoubtedly are contributing to the delay. Rising enrollments also are a factor. To accommodate increased enrollments, many cities are planning new buildings which will later become replacements for existing buildings after the enrollment peak has receded.

### Forecast of Needs

The Commission made a major effort during the past two years to find methods, procedures and standards which can and should be used locally to make more accurate estimates of the need for new school buildings.

The determination of future need for school facilities in individual school districts or segments of school districts presents difficult questions, most of which can best be answered at the local level once the facts are known. As pointed out previously by the Commission, future need is affected by a great many factors, such as:

Changes in district boundaries; capacity, utilization and condition of existing buildings; space standards; relative advantages and costs of rehabilitating, modernizing or replacing existing buildings; policy and standards on design and construction of new buildings; estimates of future enrollments, and policy on accommodations for temporary enrollment increases.

The Commission has completed its studies of enrollment forecasting and these are summarized in its first manual which now is being printed for the guidance of local officials. The fact that the number of births in 1951 almost reached the 1947 peak means that enrollment increases will create school building problems for another fifteen or sixteen years. However, the Commission has found no reason for altering its conclusion that the present high level of births is not likely to continue very long.

In a second manual being prepared the Commission will detail its findings to date on standards, costs and economies in the design and construction of school buildings.

Still in the experimental stage are standards and procedures for determining the capacity, utilization, condition and relative advantages and costs of rehabilitating, modernizing, or replacing existing substandard buildings.

The Commission is still working to solve remaining difficulties hampering reliable forecasts of school building requirements. (*See Third Section*).

### Colonial Heights Elementary School



### Lighting Study

In considering the development of designs for better schools at lower cost, the Commission gave special attention to the effect of classroom lighting standards.

Research has indicated that by effective use of modern artificial lighting techniques, window space may be reduced and more functional classrooms designed at lower construction cost.

The question unanswered, however, was: Would the reduction in window areas and the greater use of artificial lighting harm the physical and mental health of children?

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sion to answer this question and to make recommendations for the guidance of the Commission.

After reviewing evidence presented by various specialists, the Committee unanimously agreed greater use could be made of adequate and proper artificial light in a suitable classroom environment (i.e.: clear windows and pleasant color schemes) without harm to the children.

This Committee's recommendations for revision of the State Education Department's present lighting regulations can pave the way for construction of more functional and economical school buildings. Some of the details of this study are covered in Section III of this report.

### **Federal School Building Survey**

In its second report, the Commission urged adoption of legislation permitting this State to accept on a matching basis up to \$233,000 of Federal money for making a survey of school facilities.

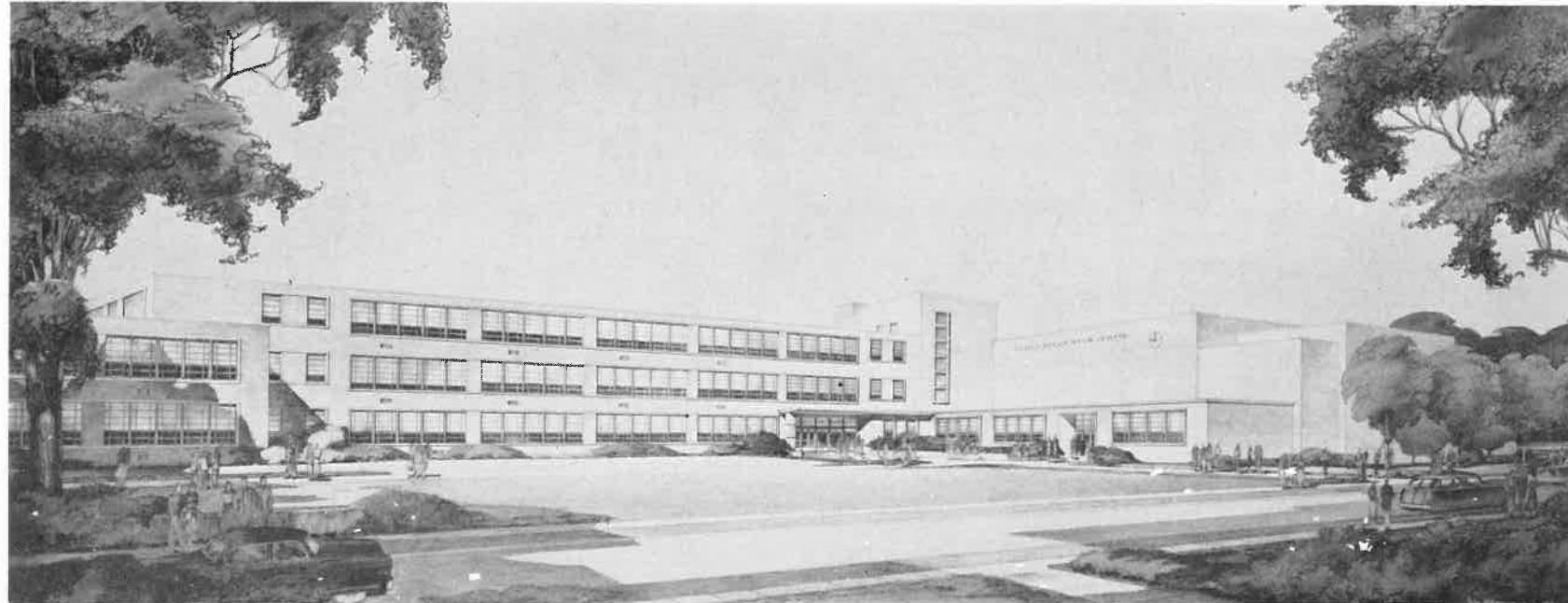
The Legislature approved this proposal, but further investigation by the Commission and the State Department of Education indicated that New York would be delaying the solution of school building problems in this State and wasting State and Federal money by complying with the requirements for the Federal survey.

The Commission and the Education Department decided that gathering the statistics required by the Federal government would have duplicated in different

form activities already accomplished by the Commission. Other aspects of the Federal plan were equally unsatisfactory both as to expected results and most efficient use of funds.

The Commission and the Education Department further pointed out to the Federal Office of Education that the national summary of the data being sought could be misleading and might easily distort the relative position of New York's school needs and the financial ability of localities and the State to meet them because of wide variances among the states in measurement of local resources, standards of school construction and validity of information furnished. Consequently, New York State declined to participate in the Federal plan at this time.

### **New High School at Glens Falls**



### **Before Modernization**

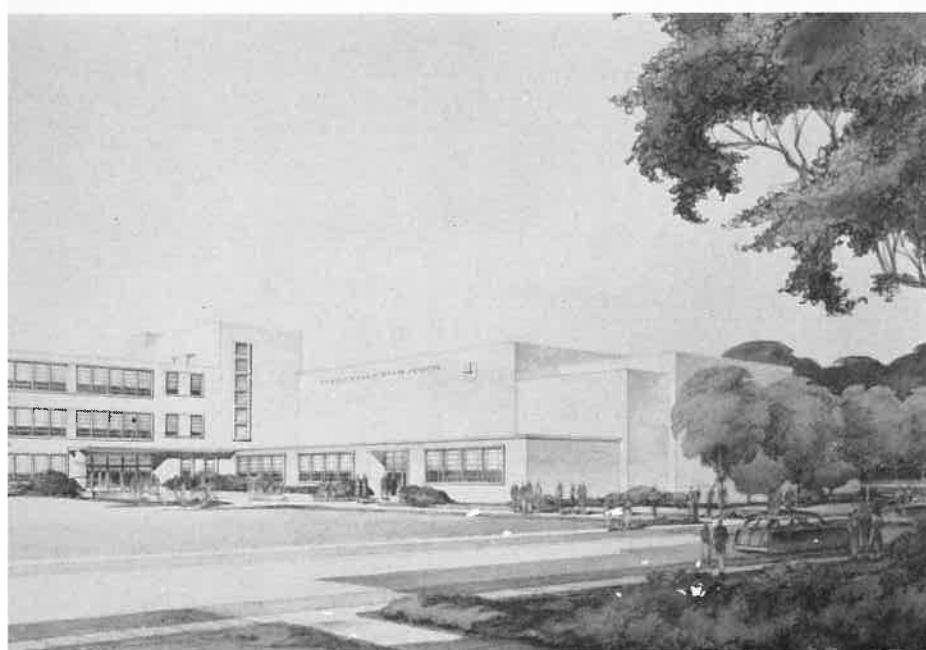


Moveable and functional furniture, as shown in this photo, is used in many modernization projects. This room is in the same public school building as the one shown above. Note the cork tack board, storage units and asphalt tile floor covering.

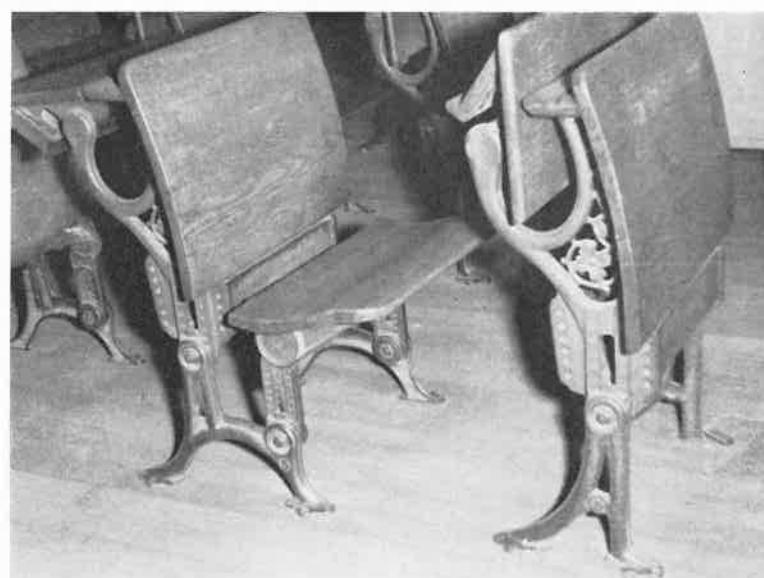
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## Before Modernization



This fixed seating which provides no desk storage space has long since passed by its functional life span. Many classrooms still have this type furniture in use.

## After Modernization



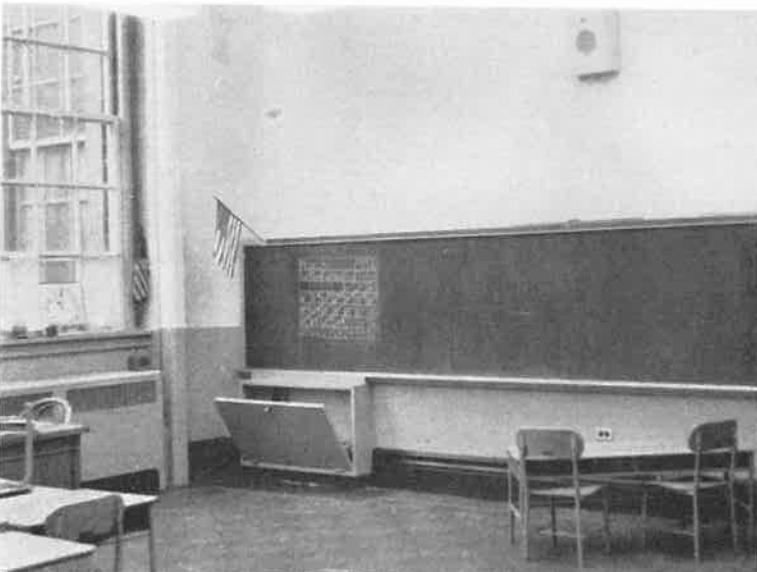
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### **Before Modernization**



Old style fixed seating, poor incandescent lighting and moveable wooden partitions limit the use of this room.

### **After Modernization**



Complete redecoration, improved heating, fluorescent lighting, new asphalt tile floor covering, reconditioned chalk boards, moveable furniture and public address system greatly improve this classroom. This room is in the same public school building as the one above.

### **Problems Created by the National Emergency**

The rapidly expanding defense effort of the United States has made it increasingly difficult to obtain critical materials for construction of urgently needed school buildings.

Recognizing the tremendous problem that this posed for the school districts individually, the Commission directed its staff to exert every effort to assist in overcoming this major obstacle.

The United States Office of Education required school districts to apply directly for allocation of critical materials and did not assign priorities on a state-wide basis. Therefore, the Commission did not use standby legislation under which the State Defense Council could assign priorities to school buildings and channel applications for Federal allocations of material.

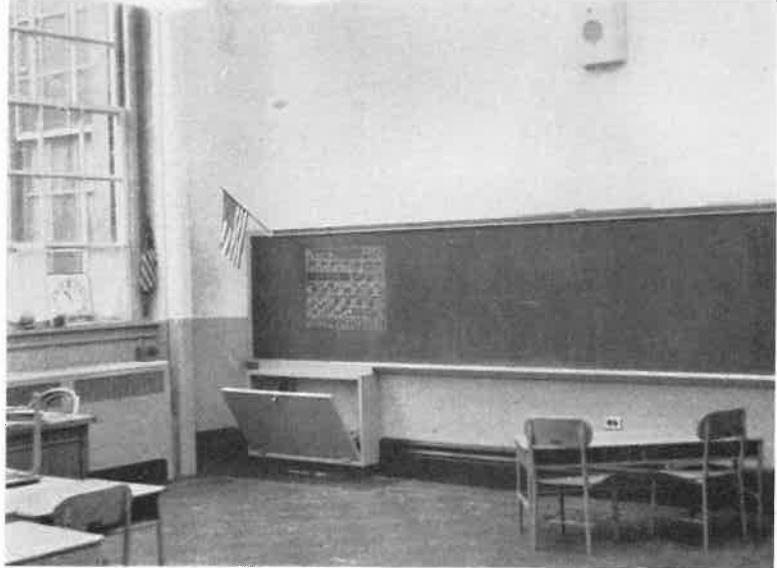
Early in the year, the Commission asked its staff to begin studies of the possibility of reducing the use of steel, copper and aluminum in school construction. Beginning in September, 1951, the Commission issued a series of Information Bulletins showing how these scarce materials could be conserved. The bulletins were distributed to architects and school authorities throughout the State.

This pioneer effort to conserve critical materials drew commendation at a Congressional hearing in Washington and elsewhere in the Nation. Subsequently, the Commission sent bulletins upon request to many architects, educators and construction men in other states.

Last April, with the co-operation of the State Education Department, the Commission made a survey to determine to what extent school construction was being delayed by material shortages. It found that about 20 per cent of the buildings under construction were encountering shortages which could delay occupancy of the buildings. Most of the delays were caused by lack of structural steel.

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Federal authorities immediately were contacted in an effort to expedite the flow of materials to the school districts. In the meantime, the National Production Authority's controlled materials plan was placed in operation. Under this plan, school districts applied to the U. S. Office of Education in the Federal Security Agency for authorization to build and for an allocation of the steel, copper, or aluminum allotted to schools by NPA.

For the last three months of 1951 and first quarter of 1952, the National Production Authority allotted to school construction less than half the amount of steel requested.

Through staff contacts with Federal authorities and the Chairman's personal conversations with the head of NPA, the Commission strongly urged better allocation of critical materials for urgently needed school buildings.

**Although the NPA has increased the amount of steel allowed for schools, the total still is far below estimates of requirements based upon local requests to the U. S. Office of Education and it is anticipated that material shortages will remain a major problem for the Commission during the period ahead.**

In view of the relatively small amount of steel made available for school construction in the nation, the Commission recommended to the U. S. Office of Education a more thorough screening of applications from various school districts in this and other states.

After analyzing the Federal agency's methods of determining which school projects should receive the available steel, the Commission urged several means of tightening the screening process so that applications could more accurately be assigned priority on the basis of urgency and approval could be withheld from projects until a maximum effort to conserve critical materials had been made.

The Commission's suggestions were adopted by the U. S. Office of Education. As a result, a new application form, requiring more specific information for determin-

ing essentiality of a project, was developed for national use.

In accepting the Commission's recommendations, the U. S. Commissioner of Education said:

"The applications from New York reflect the work your Commission has done in the conservation of critical materials and your cooperation in this regard is much appreciated."

### New York City

A year ago, the Commission pointed out that it was not a lack of money that had retarded school construction in New York City. Disunity and mismanagement had placed a practical limit on the number of schools which could be built in a year, regardless of the need.

After detailed study of the school construction bottlenecks in the City, the Commission reported five major sources of delay:

Lack of co-ordination among the numerous agencies involved; failure to substantiate needs and priorities; ineffective practices in planning the building program; time-consuming procedures in selecting, acquiring and clearing sites, and failure to have plans and specifications ready when needed.

The Commission recommended appointment of a temporary school construction co-ordinator and suggested far reaching changes in responsibilities, procedures and practices for the Board of Education and its staff as a means of removing the obstacles which thwarted the City's efforts to build the schools its children needed.

It is gratifying to observe how quickly adoption of several of the Commission's recommendations was translated into substantial progress in the construction of schools.

### The 1951 Program

With a school construction co-ordinator functioning, bids for construction of the 31 schools included in the

City's 1951 capital program were received within that year. All except one of the schools were authorized for construction by the Board of Estimate and contracts were awarded. The one exception is a school which, after receipt of bids, was deferred to 1952 for redesign to effect economies.

The 1951 capital program cost almost \$67 million of which \$19 million was for eight projects carried over from the previous year.

Successful initiation of this large program is evidence of increased co-operation among the City agencies concerned with the construction of schools. As an example of this new co-operation, it can be noted that advance agreement among City agencies enabled the Board of Education's Bureau of Design to start preparation of plans for eight of the schools in the 1952 program two months before the beginning of the year.

The 1951 program, however, was criticized in the interim report of the Education Management Survey, a subcommittee of the New York City Mayor's Committee on Management Survey.

The Survey recommended elimination of six of the projects included in the Board of Education's 1951 program and transfer of this money to other projects for which greater need could be established. The Survey declared the six schools unnecessary, if existing schools in their areas were better utilized.

Commenting on the Survey's recommendation, without passing upon the substantiation of need for any school, the Mayor's Committee said that "Adequate organization and procedures do not now exist to assure that sound decisions of this sort will be arrived at."

The Committee strongly recommended that "decisions as to new construction be deferred wherever possible, pending development of a greatly strengthened planning organization."

## New York City Public S



The Board of Education, however, made no changes in its 1951 program.

The Commission endorses this recommendation of the Mayor's Committee with respect to new construction. Although a start has been made by the Board of Education toward accomplishing the recommended changes in organization and procedures, they need to be carried through promptly, if sound decisions are to be made and the school building problem met.

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The Commission believes inclusion of a school project in a capital program does not and should not neces-

sarily preclude further consideration of its desirability by the Board of Education.

The decision to build a particular school should be carefully reviewed to determine whether its priority should be changed. This procedure is particularly advisable in New York City in view of the sluggish development of a planning organization in the Board of Education.

In 1952, opportunities to transfer allocations to other more urgently needed school projects undoubtedly will present themselves.

### **The 1952 Program**

The Board of Education's staff recommended 18 schools for construction in the 1952 capital program. The Board of Education itself deleted four of these, then added 11 to bring the total proposed for the 1952 program up to 25.

When it first considered the Board of Education's proposals, the City Planning Commission approved 16 of these schools. It added four, two of which were in staff proposals, and placed the 20 in the tentative capital budget. All were to be financed within the City's Constitutional debt limit.

Later the Planning Commission revised the budget and dropped seven of the schools. Subsequently, these seven schools were restored to the 1952 program and one more project added before the capital budget was adopted by the Board of Estimate and certified by the Mayor. Only 11 of these 21 projects finally approved were in the original staff proposals for 1952.

**This apparent uncertainty as to which schools should have priority in the capital program is a further indication of the need for carrying through the recommendations for changes in organization and procedures.**

Construction of the eight schools added by the Planning Commission is contingent upon exclusion of the

\$25.3 million capital expenditure for them from the City's Constitutional debt limit under terms of the Constitutional amendment approved by the people in November, 1951.

A provision of this amendment, which became effective January 1, 1952, permits the City to exclude school construction debt to the extent that it can be financed by up to \$2.5 million of the City's annual education aid. It is estimated this provision permits the exclusion of from \$30 to \$40 million of school construction debt.

Thus, the original proposal of the City Planning Commission to provide funds for 20 schools within the City's debt limit has been converted into a 21-school program which will use a substantial part of the school debt exclusion made available on January 1, 1952.

Although part of this borrowing power outside the debt limit which now is being used will finance higher construction costs on some 1951 projects, the acquisition of more sites and a greater allocation for modernization, it is apparent the remainder is being used to permit non-educational capital programs to be expanded.

**In view of the required expenditure of State aid revenue from the Board of Education's expense budget, there is a question whether use at this time of the additional school construction borrowing power is necessary or merely expedient.**

### **Use of Private Architects**

In line with the Commission's recommendation, private architects were employed to prepare plans for new school buildings and supplement the work of the Board of Education's Bureau of Design and Construction.

Private architects designed 16 of the schools in the 1951 program, while the Bureau completed plans for 12. The City's School Construction Co-ordinator says that

### **New York City Public School 133, Manhattan**



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the cost of design by the Bureau was  $5\frac{3}{4}$  per cent of actual construction costs, compared with a cost of  $4\frac{1}{3}$  per cent for schools designed by private architects. The average cost per pupil of construction for buildings designed by each group is substantially the same.

The employment of private architects has eliminated, at least temporarily, the problem of staff vacancies in the Bureau of Design. It also is affording an opportunity to reorganize the Bureau, as suggested last year by the Commission.

### Reorganization of Board and Staff

A year ago the Commission recommended a reorganization of the Board of Education to limit its functions to educational policies and standards, changes which the Board itself recognized as necessary. The Commission also recommended changes within the Board of Education staffs which are connected with school construction. (See First Report of Commission, Page 17.)

These recommendations have been supported in the report of the Education Management Survey and by the School Construction Co-ordinator who has advanced specific proposals.

Prompt action by the Board in carrying out these suggestions can save months in construction time and avoid considerable waste.

However, little more than a start has been made toward accomplishment of these changes. Unless they are soon put into effect, the program now under construction in 1952—33 new schools and 15 to 21 modernization projects costing \$70 million—will suffer from a lack of efficiency in planning, supervision of construction and co-ordination of modernization projects with the remainder of the construction program. The City's school construction co-ordinator also has expressed this view.

### Determining Needs and Priorities

During the past year, the Board of Education has made improvements in its methods for determining school building needs. Enrollment forecasts have been much more realistic because greater attention is being given to migration, non-public school enrollments and large scale housing developments.

Further refinement of its estimates is being attempted in 1952 by the Board's staff. New techniques are being developed in cooperation with other City agencies and the staff of this Commission.

Realistic revisions in enrollment forecasts during the year have cut down estimates of the amount of con-

struction required to reduce overcrowding. As a result, plant replacement or modernization projects have been moved up in priority.

As pointed out by the Education Management Survey, procedures have not yet been established to substantiate adequately the need for construction, or the order of need, especially where the questions of existing capacity, utilization and modernization or replacement are involved.

One of the major purposes of the Commission's area study, discussed later in this report, is to develop and refine such procedures.

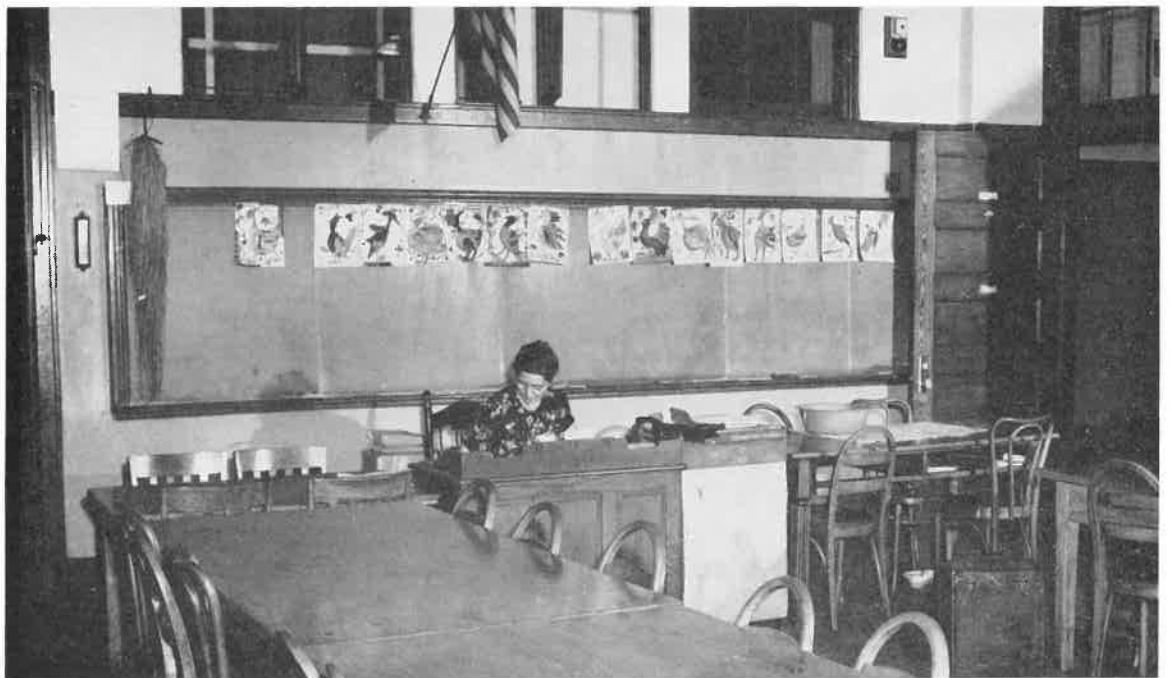
### Removing Site Problems

Site problems have been reduced to a minimum by adoption of the Commission's proposal that, in so far as determination of priorities permits, money for acquisition of sites be allocated sufficiently in advance to make possible clearance and preparation well ahead of construction.

No project in 1951 was deferred because of inability to clear a site. A dozen sites for buildings on the 1952 program already are available and the others are expected to be available as needed during the year.

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This is a Classroom in



Before  
Modernization

Public School 85, Queens

After  
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annual construction programs only when sites can be cleared within the year.

### Conserving Critical Materials

During 1951, the school construction co-ordinator acted promptly in substituting reinforced concrete for structural steel and in curtailing the use of other critical materials.

This action undoubtedly helped New York City to secure Federal authorizations to build and priorities to obtain material. For this and other reasons, the City of New York has had fewer difficulties in procuring critical materials than other school districts in the State.

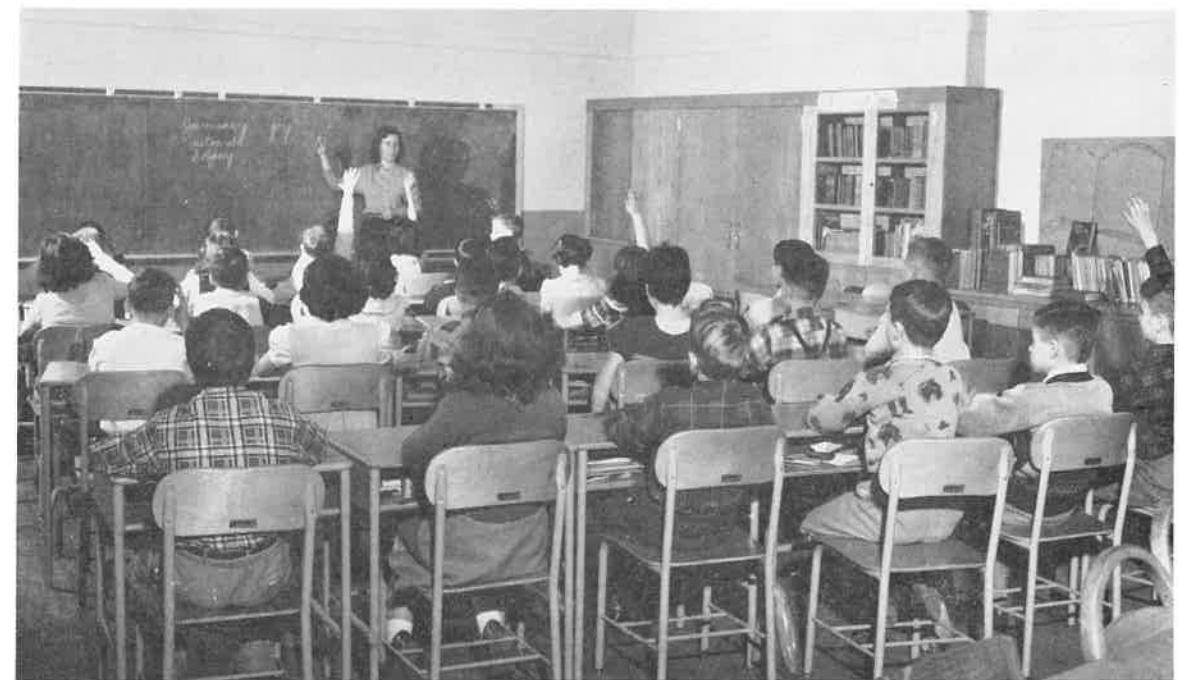
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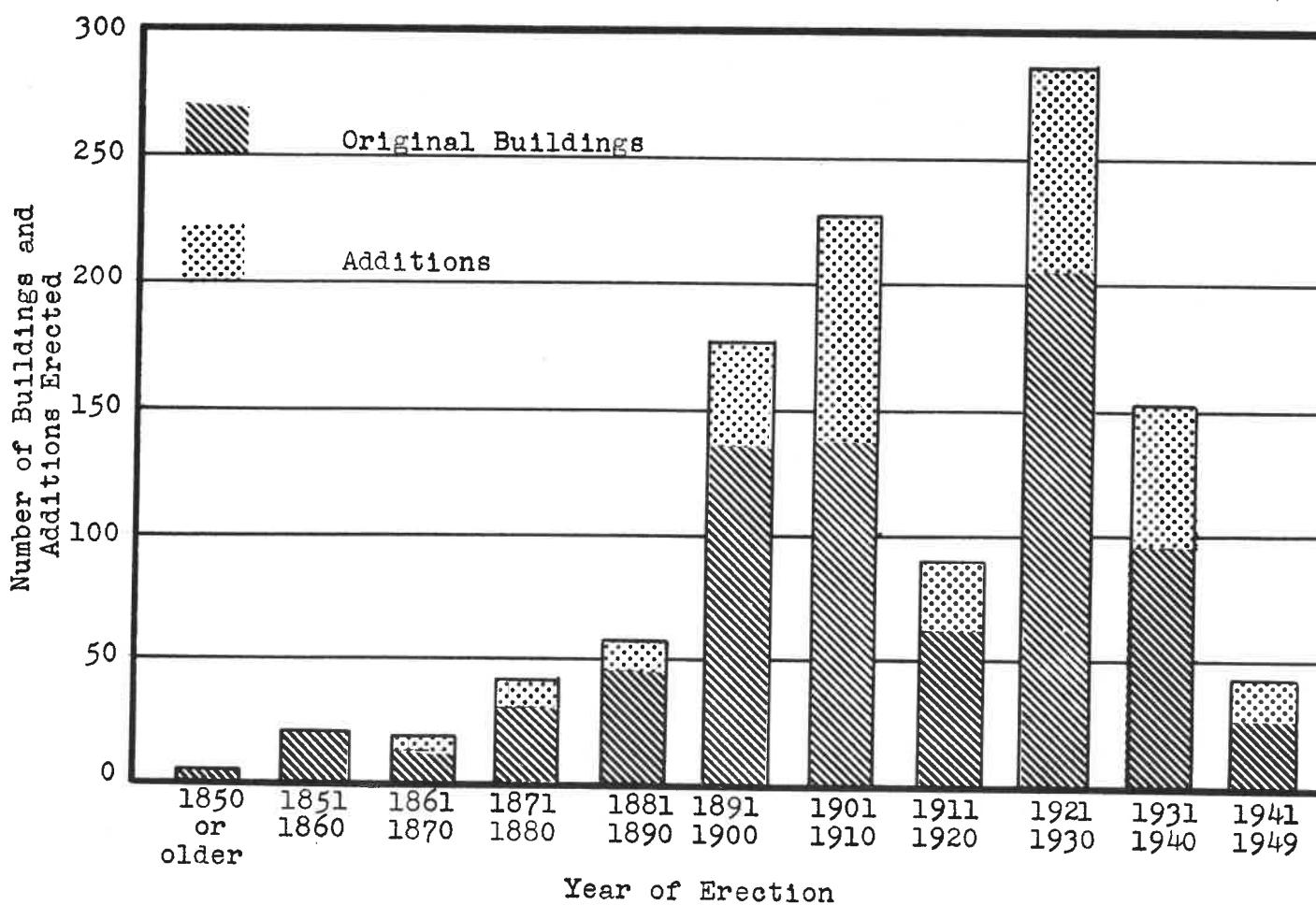
Before  
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### III. The Work



NUMBER OF PUBLIC SCHOOL BUILDINGS AND ADDITIONS ERECTED AND BEING USED FOR INSTRUCTIONAL PURPOSES IN NEW YORK CITY

The Commission considers its primary function is assisting the localities define and solve their school building problems.

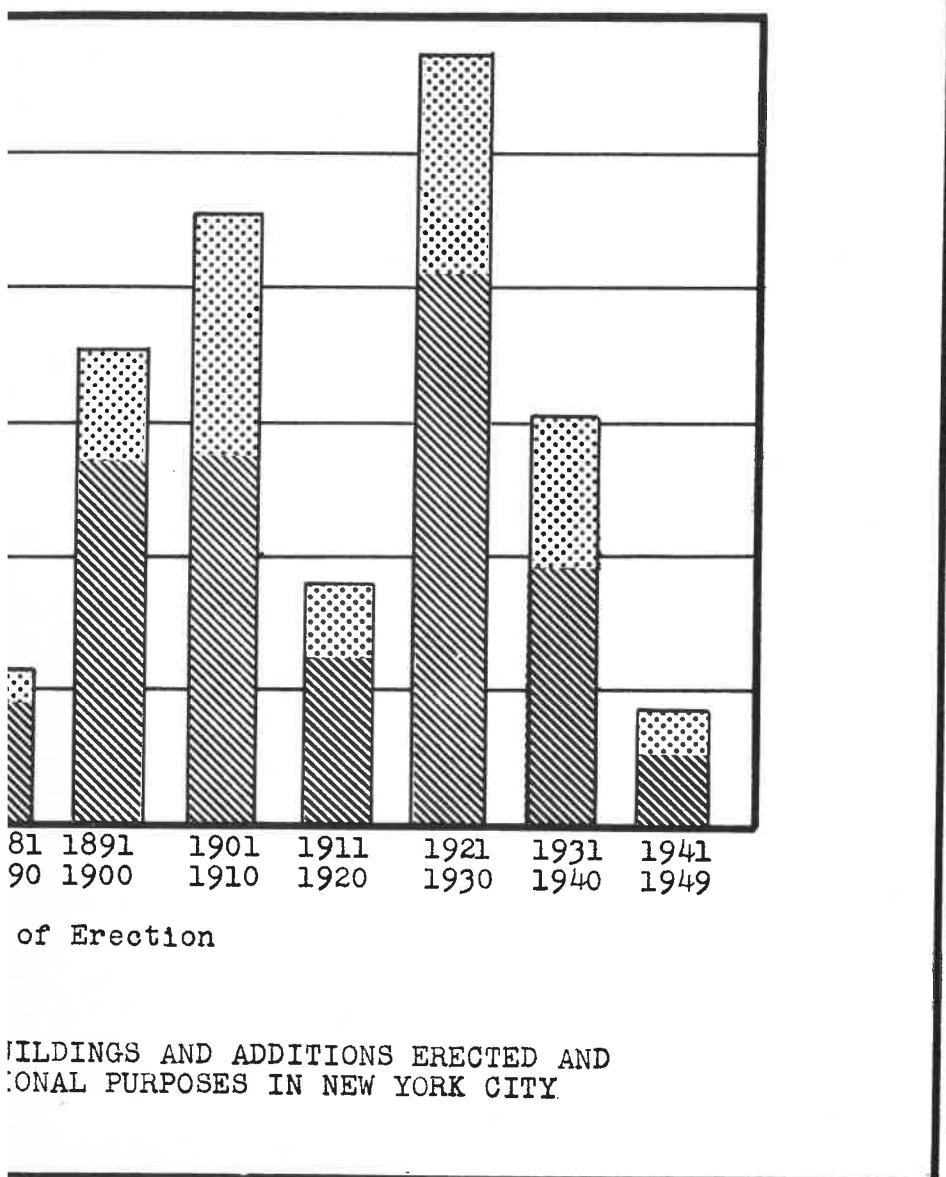
During the past year, the Commission has directed nearly all of its work toward that end. It has:

1. Revised and made more effective the procedures for determining local school building needs.
2. Studied the problem of enlarging city school districts to obtain better utilization of existing facilities and improve local ability to provide for future building needs.
3. Inventoried existing school facilities outside the City of New York and tentatively developed standards and procedures for determining when schools should be rehabilitated, modernized or replaced.
4. Launched a study in an area of the City of New York to assist in the improvement of such standards and procedures.
5. Studied means of attaining economies in school construction and made recommendations available to architects and local school authorities, particularly on conservation of critical materials.
6. Reviewed existing school lighting standards and enlisted the aid of a committee of technical advisers who are offering recommendations for changes.
7. Continued its studies of school building finance.

#### Determination of Local Needs

Last year in its second report (Pages 10, 11) the Commission suggested 11 procedures to be followed in determining school building requirements. As a result of its studies during the past year, the Commission has modified the original recommendations into these:

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#### Determination of Local Needs

Last year in its second report (Pages 10, 11) the Commission suggested 11 procedures to be followed in determining school building requirements. As a result of its studies during the past year, the Commission has modified the original recommendations into these:

1. Determine what changes, if any, should be made in the attendance area boundaries and define the area to be studied.
2. Make a complete physical inventory of existing school buildings which could be used to accommodate the pupils living in the area.
3. Adopt acceptable standards relative to safety, health and usefulness of a school building in the educational program of the community.
4. Appraise available facilities, according to the standards adopted.
5. Determine the relative advantages and costs of rehabilitation, modernization or replacement in order to bring substandard facilities up to accepted standards.
6. Compute the capacity and potential utilization of the facilities which conform or economically can be made to conform to the standards.
7. Investigate all available means for making maximum use of these facilities: transportation, transfer of grades to other schools, changes in attendance area boundaries, conversion of space to new uses, revisions in class schedules.

Information obtained by the foregoing procedures will indicate what capital funds are needed to bring existing buildings up to acceptable standards. It also will provide the basis for determining whether additional buildings will be required. However, before making this last determination, a school district also should:

1. Isolate the factors in the area or the community which might affect future enrollment.
2. Obtain accurate information on the child population of the area and other factors, such as migration, housing developments, age of adult

population, private and parochial school growth. A special census should be made, if necessary.

3. Make special area studies of these factors as a basis for the assumptions or judgments involved in estimation of future enrollment.
4. Use a tested method of forecasting enrollment on the basis of this information.
5. Exercise care in the interpretation and use of enrollment estimates, being careful to identify temporary increases and avoid over-estimation.
6. Adopt policies and standards relative to type, size, design, construction and cost of any new or additional facilities.
7. Adopt policies and take steps to handle peak or temporary enrollment increases.
8. Determine what additional facilities are required to house the probable long-range enrollment in the area.
9. Make plans for converting new facilities to other uses in the event of error in the long-range estimate.

Other studies which should provide helpful guidance on this problem are under way.

## Enlarging School Districts

Experience throughout the State has demonstrated that large school districts offer the best opportunities to achieve maximum utilization of school buildings, greatest economy in construction costs, ability to adjust facilities to the fluctuations of school enrollments and most effective use of local borrowing and taxing power.

However, there are 2,295 small common school districts still numbered among the 3,143 school districts in

this State. Nearly half of these common school districts (1,132) do not operate schools, but contract with other types of districts for instruction of their children. The remaining common school districts contract with other types of districts for education of high school students. Some of the union free school districts and a few of the central districts also do not have high schools.

Many of the contract districts are clustered around cities and other large population centers and help complicate the school building problems of these areas.

In view of these facts, the Commission, with the cooperation of the State Education Department, completed a study of the problems which contract districts and non-resident pupils have created. It also studied the practical obstacles which have prevented enlargement of the city school districts.

The Commission found that localities, with the assistance of the State Education Department, have made good progress in eliminating small school districts. Since July 1, 1950, 265 union free and common school districts have been eliminated by local action, bringing the total number eliminated since 1915 to more than 7,000. Most of those eliminated in the past 18 months were absorbed into 15 central districts, bringing the total of central districts to 424. However, much remains to be done.

In attempting to draw its 1947 Master Plan for completing the centralization of rural schools, the Joint Legislative Committee on the State Education System found areas adjacent to many cities and larger villages that did not readily fit into any proposed central school district and that, standing alone, could not provide an adequate educational program.

Since legal restrictions at that time precluded the annexation of school districts to most cities, the Master Plan attached the approximately 500 districts in these areas to 38 cities and marked them "left for future determination." For example, 62 districts were listed under Corning and 42 under Ithaca.

As a result of the new City School Law of 1950 and the Constitutional tax and debt limit amendments of 1949 and 1951, which gave fiscal independence and responsibility to city school districts in cities of less than 125,000 population, it is now a simple matter legally to annex one or more contiguous districts to a city school district. However, because of practical reasons, only one of the approximately 500 districts referred to in the 1947 Master Plan has been annexed.

In its study, the Commission found these major factors retarding enlargement of the city districts:

1. Present State education aid provisions for contract districts and non-resident pupils and the resulting low tax rate in most of the contract districts make them unenthusiastic for change. The tax rates in the districts sending students to cities usually are \$5 to \$6 per \$1,000 full valuation lower than the city school tax rates. At the same time, many city areas which have indicated an interest in enlarging the city school district also have a fear that increased tax rates might result.
2. Under present conditions, contract districts and districts which send only high school pupils to other schools generally are not bearing their fair share of the cost of education. The receiving districts which build schools to accommodate non-resident pupils are taking all of the risk for they are creating long-term debt to provide facilities for pupils who are being educated on annual or short-term agreements.
3. Annexation of outside districts, under present circumstances, often would operate to the disadvantage of the city because:
  - A. The city often would have to provide transportation for these pupils at local expense.
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  - B. The education program and school facilities generally would have to be brought up to the city level.

C. Retention of rural teachers would require placing them on city salary schedules. Over a period of years, this results in an increased cost per year of more than \$1,000 for each teacher retained.

D. There are many one and two room schools in the districts adjacent to cities, which will have to be replaced.

E. The amount of real estate valuation per pupil in the 500 districts is generally much lower than in the cities.

F. By reorganization under present laws, city school districts generally would lose substantial amounts of State aid.

As a result of these findings, the Commission is offering recommendations to the Legislature to expedite the reorganization of city school districts. (See Section V.)

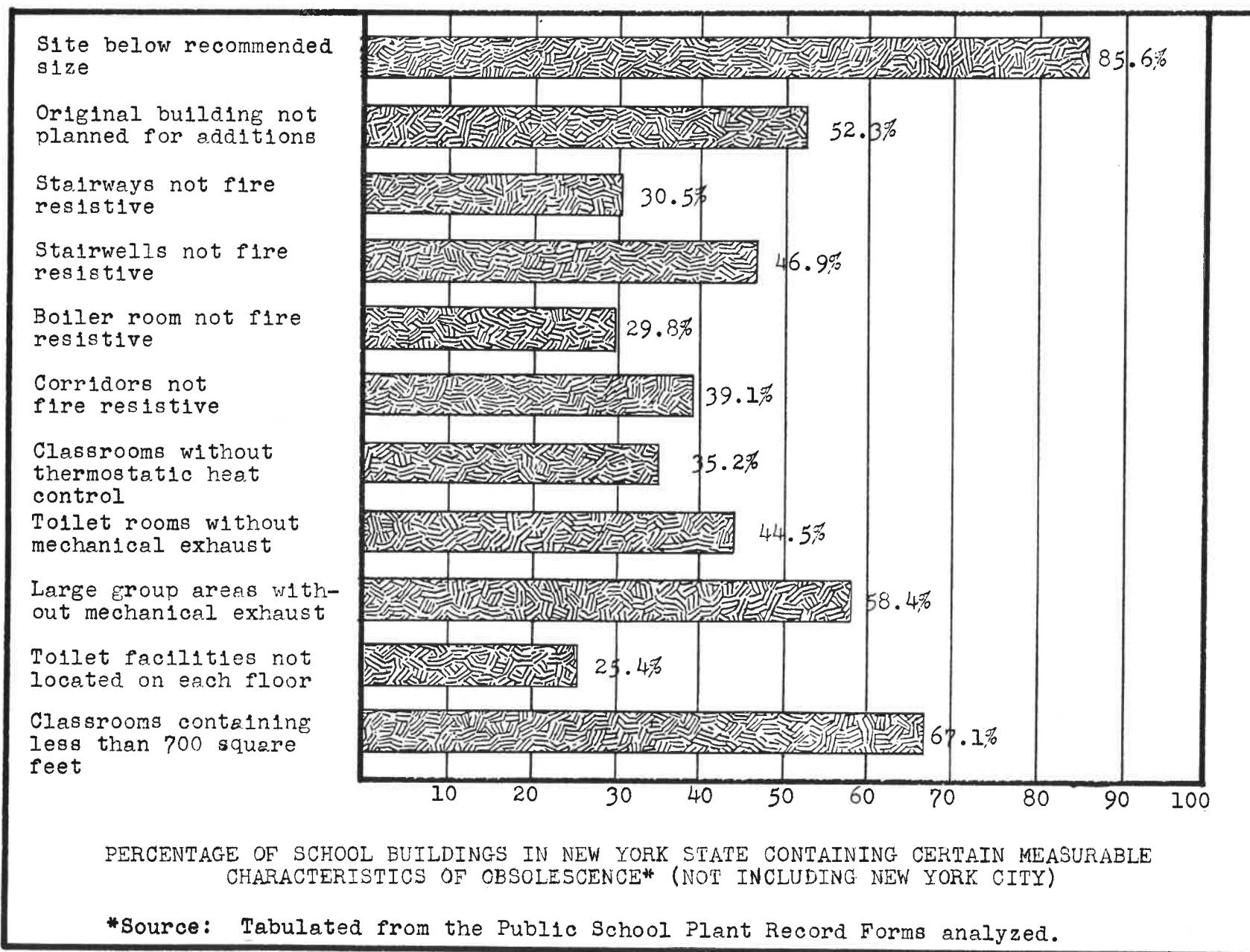
### **Area Study in New York**

New York City and other cities of the State face a major problem in bringing existing school buildings up to acceptable standards and in determining whether this can be accomplished best by rehabilitation or modernization.

Although this type of problem can be met gradually over the years, it cannot safely be postponed year after year. Its solution requires a systematic and orderly approach.

Because of the seriousness of this problem and the difficulty in developing standards and procedures for determining when a building should be modernized, rehabilitated or replaced, the Commission decided to make an intensive field study in a selected area.

The Commission enlisted the cooperation of the City of New York's Board of Education, Planning Commis-



sion and Bureau of the Budget and the pilot study was launched in August, 1951, in an area bounded by the Hudson River on the west and Central Park on the east. North and south boundaries fixed tentatively at 116th Street and 59th Street were left to adjustment as the study progressed.

The purpose of this study is to test standards and procedures already developed by the Commission and the New York City agencies and to seek agreement on the data, standards, procedures, organization and staffing required to determine and justify the need for school buildings in a given area—with particular attention to modernization versus replacement.

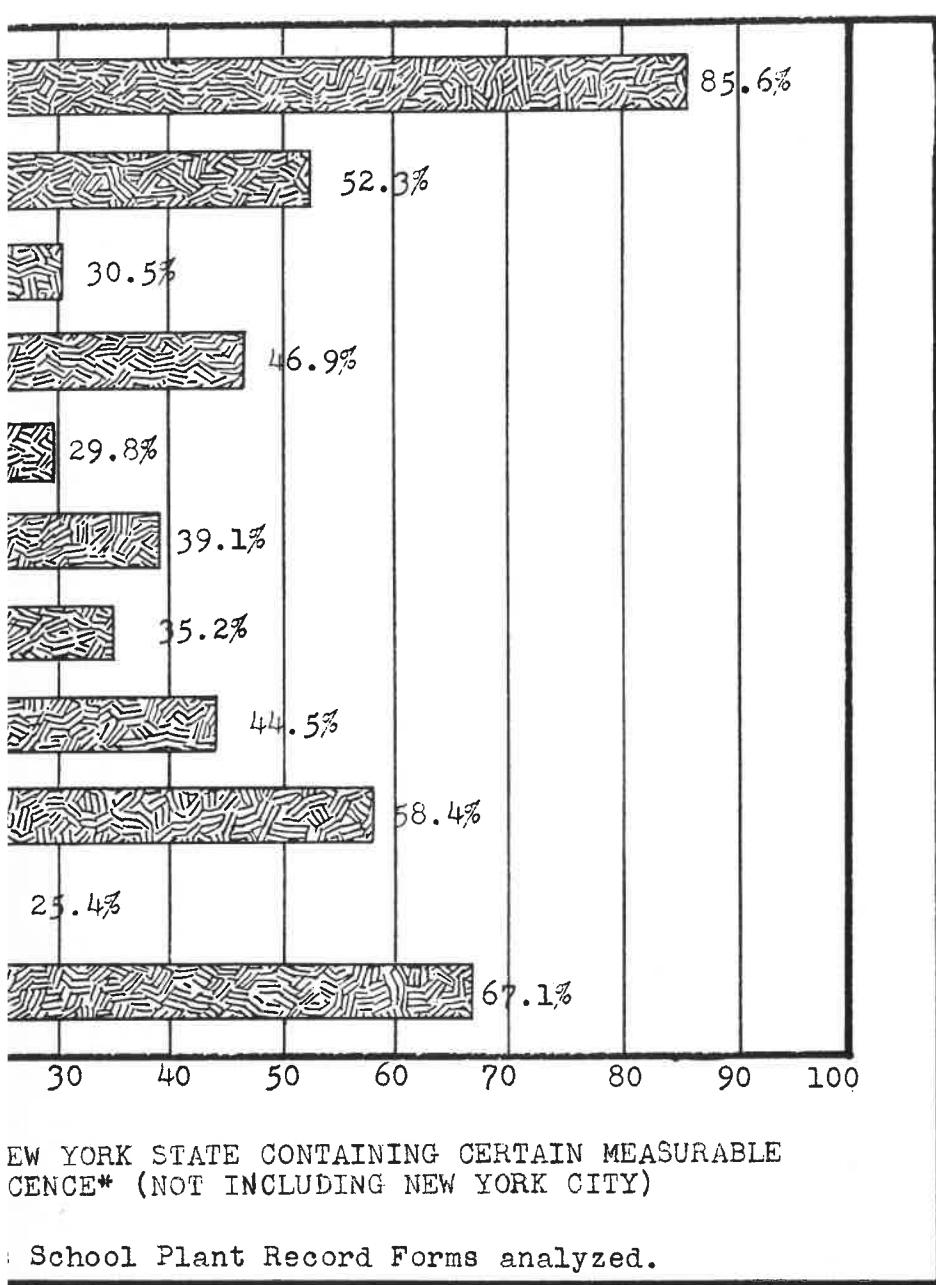
A second purpose is to discover, if possible, a method of establishing the relative order of construction for all types of needs.

Although the study is being conducted in the City of New York, the information developed from it is expected to be equally valuable in making rehabilitation, modernization or replacement determinations in other cities of the State.

Staff representatives from the Commission and the City agencies have organized committees on capacity and utilization of buildings, inventory and appraisal of buildings and enrollment estimation.

To date these results have been achieved:

1. The Committee on Capacity and Utilization has agreed upon a definition of terms and has determined the standards and methods to be applied in computing capacity.
2. The Committee on Enrollment Estimation has prepared maps showing public and parochial school enrollment and utilization; has tentatively forecast future enrollments and has compiled figures on migration and birth rate.
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4. The eleven school buildings in the area have been screened and rated by a team composed of an architect, an educator and a City borough inspector. Floor plan sketches have been completed for all the buildings.

### Economy in Construction

In its second report, the Commission indicated that it found numerous opportunities for economy in school planning and construction.

The Commission has continued its studies of possible economies and has summarized its findings to date in a manual now being prepared for distribution. Supplements will be issued as other studies are completed.

The first year's studies were limited to elementary school buildings and were used as a basis for space and cost allowance incorporated into the revision of the law providing emergency advances to financially hard-pressed districts.

This year, the Commission has concentrated on cost and space allowances for secondary school buildings and is offering recommendations based upon these studies.

It should be noted the Commission's Information Bulletins on conserving critical materials also suggest means of achieving economy in construction.

Experiments with demountable partitions are being continued at Pratt Institute. The work on prefabricated sectional classrooms has gone through the design stage but production studies must be postponed while metals are so scarce.

### SCHOOL LIGHTING STANDARDS

Present standards for school lighting, which are enforced by the State Education Department in school districts under 70,000 population and generally followed in other places, were found to be outmoded and to result in higher construction costs than might be necessary in view of modern-day techniques in lighting and building design.

## COMMITTEE ON SCHOOL LIGHTING

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YOUNG, MISS MARJORIE A. C., Consultant in Education, National Society for the Prevention of Blindness, 1790 Broadway, New York, New York

These standards require natural light as the primary source for classrooms and among the requirements is the following:

"The distance from the floor to the top of the window should be equal to or greater than half the width of the room, less one foot."

Although the purpose of this requirement is to increase natural light in the classroom, experience has shown that drawn shades and other methods of reducing glare and unpleasant sunlight actually defeat this purpose.

Its practical effect is to require that classrooms be constructed approximately 22 or 23 feet wide, with unnecessarily high ceilings. This produces relatively long, narrow classrooms, although other shapes would be more functional for many types of classroom activity. In instances where wide classrooms have been built, costly construction to obtain supplemental natural light has been necessary.

This provision also increases the amount of corridor space, exterior wall and cubage required for the building and consequently increases costs.

The Commission was convinced that a lighting standard based upon a satisfactory combination of artificial and natural lighting would make possible more functional and economical school buildings. However, because any change in the standard might have an effect on the health of the children, the Commission sought expert advice from specialists in this field and representatives of organizations and agencies concerned with the problem.

Lieutenant Governor Frank C. Moore, Chairman of the Commission, on October 8, 1951 designated a 19-member committee to review the State's present lighting standards and offer recommendations for changes, if they could be made without harmful effect on the children.

As a result of its thorough studies, this committee will submit a report to the Commission and the State Educa-

## IN SCHOOL LIGHTING

### Members

HARRIMAN, ALONZO, Member Committee on School Buildings of American Institute of Architects, 292 Court Street, Auburn, Maine

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**tion Department recommending new standards for the use of artificial lighting. Adoption of the committee's recommendations would permit the design of simpler school buildings having squarer rooms, lower ceilings, less corridor space and reduced exterior wall area. The result would be lower construction costs and more useful classrooms.**

The Commission takes this opportunity to publicly thank the committee members for their unselfish service and valuable work.

### Standards for Existing Buildings

The Commission pointed out last year the difficulty of obtaining dependable information on the capacity of the public school buildings which are in satisfactory condition. Without this information, a reliable estimate of future school needs in the State cannot be made.

The Commission has completed its inventory of school facilities outside the City of New York and has computed capacity and utilization data for almost all of these school buildings.

Overcrowded, extremely substandard and underutilized schools and unsatisfactory temporary facilities will be given further study.

During the year, the City of New York has improved its inventory of elementary school buildings, but it still lacks adequate information on its high schools.

It is clear at this stage that cities generally have a major task in bringing many of their school buildings up to acceptable standards.

However, after studying this problem two years, the Commission now is convinced that reliable and useful information of this kind cannot be obtained for the State as a whole. It requires a special study in each school district. This conclusion was one of the major reasons why the State Education Department did not apply for Federal funds to make the Federal school facilities survey.

The reasons for the Commission's conclusion that it cannot obtain a reliable State-wide figure on existing building capacity are these:

1. It is extremely difficult to formulate standards for appraising existing buildings which would be acceptable and applicable State-wide; but the Commission will develop standards which can be used with modifications in all types of districts.
2. It also has been difficult to develop objective procedures for appraising the structural, health, safety, educational, and other aspects of school buildings.
3. It is time-consuming and expensive to determine the relative advantages and costs of bringing existing buildings up to standards, through rehabilitation, modernization, or replacement, because it involves field study by competent engineers, architects, and educators.

**The Commission has formulated various standards and procedures, and tested them in particular school buildings. Each trial has led to further improvements and refinements, but no completely satisfactory solution has been found to date. When field tests have demonstrated that workable standards and procedures have been found, these will be summarized in handbook form for local use.**

The job of developing standards and procedures relative to existing buildings was assigned to the New York City office of the Commission.

After extensive experimentation several sets of forms were developed for rating and checking school building facilities. These forms were then utilized in various studies and reports:

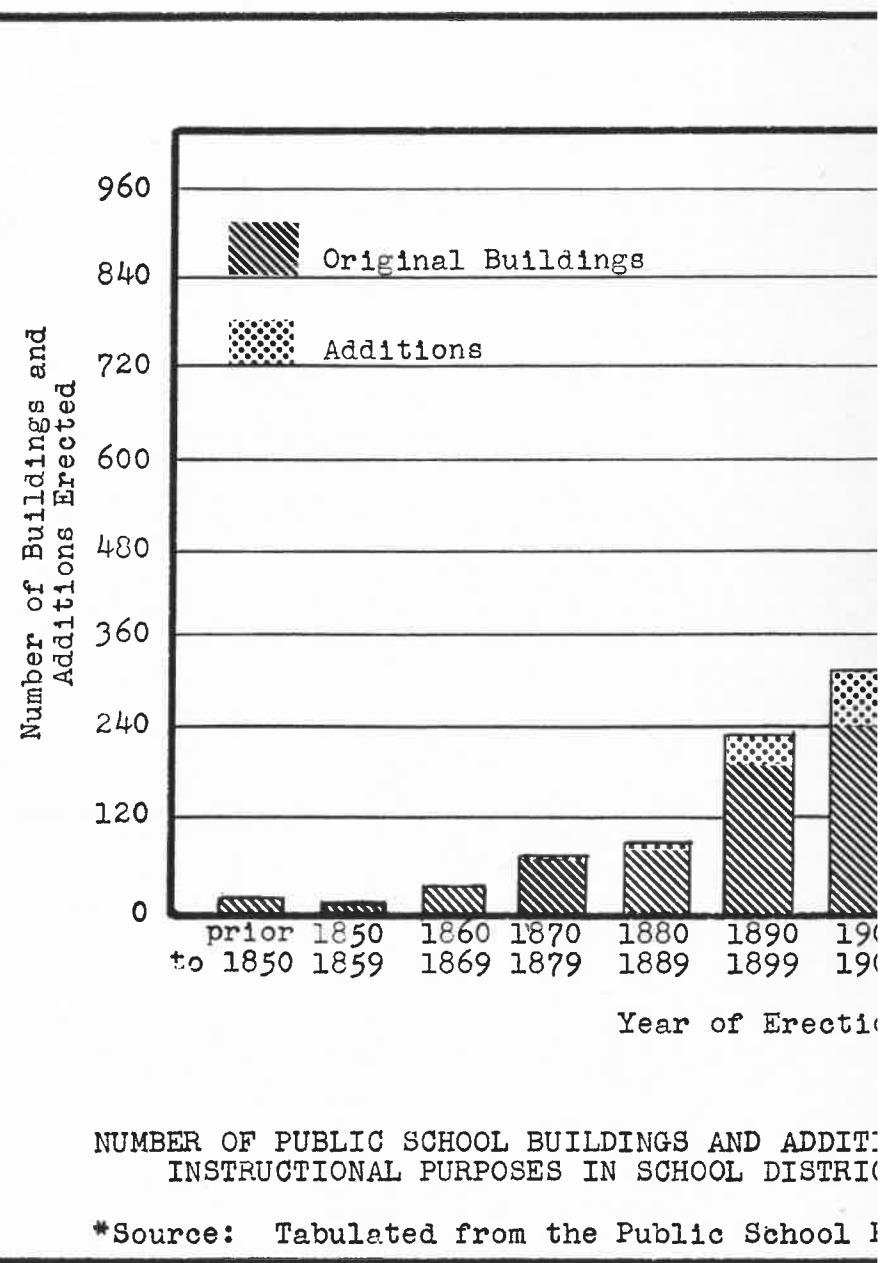
1. *Check List of Substandard or Obsolescent Characteristics*—It enables school administrators with the assistance of building service personnel to check substandard and obsolescent characteristics.

2. *Rating Form for Elementary School Buildings*—It provides ratings for the various categories of structural and educational facilities.
3. *School Building Inventory Form*—This was developed in cooperation with the State Department of Education to determine the condition of school buildings. Copies were submitted to all schools in the State, except in New York City.
4. *Guide for Field Study*—It utilizes the professional skills of an educator, architect, and technical inspector in the rating and screening of school buildings.
5. *Architect's Check List*—To assist architects in their rating of school buildings, this form was developed with the assistance of the New York City Planning Commission.
6. *Building Inspection Report*—This represents the final arrangement of the rating form designed for screening educational and building facilities in New York City. It was developed in conjunction with the New York City area study.

The New York Office also completed a Handbook on Modernization and Rehabilitation, designed to help communities determine whether it is feasible to modernize or rehabilitate their school buildings.

Included in this handbook are a set of tentative minimum acceptable standards for school building and educational facilities; an estimate of unit costs, developed in conjunction with Mr. Emil Schmidlin, an architect; findings and recommendations based on the school building inventory form which was sent to school officials throughout the Nation, and a selected, annotated bibliography of the current literature on modernization and rehabilitation of schools.

Unless the area study in New York City shows that further work needs to be done on the tentative standards and procedures, the Commission soon will issue a technical report on the appraisal of capacity and utilization of school buildings.

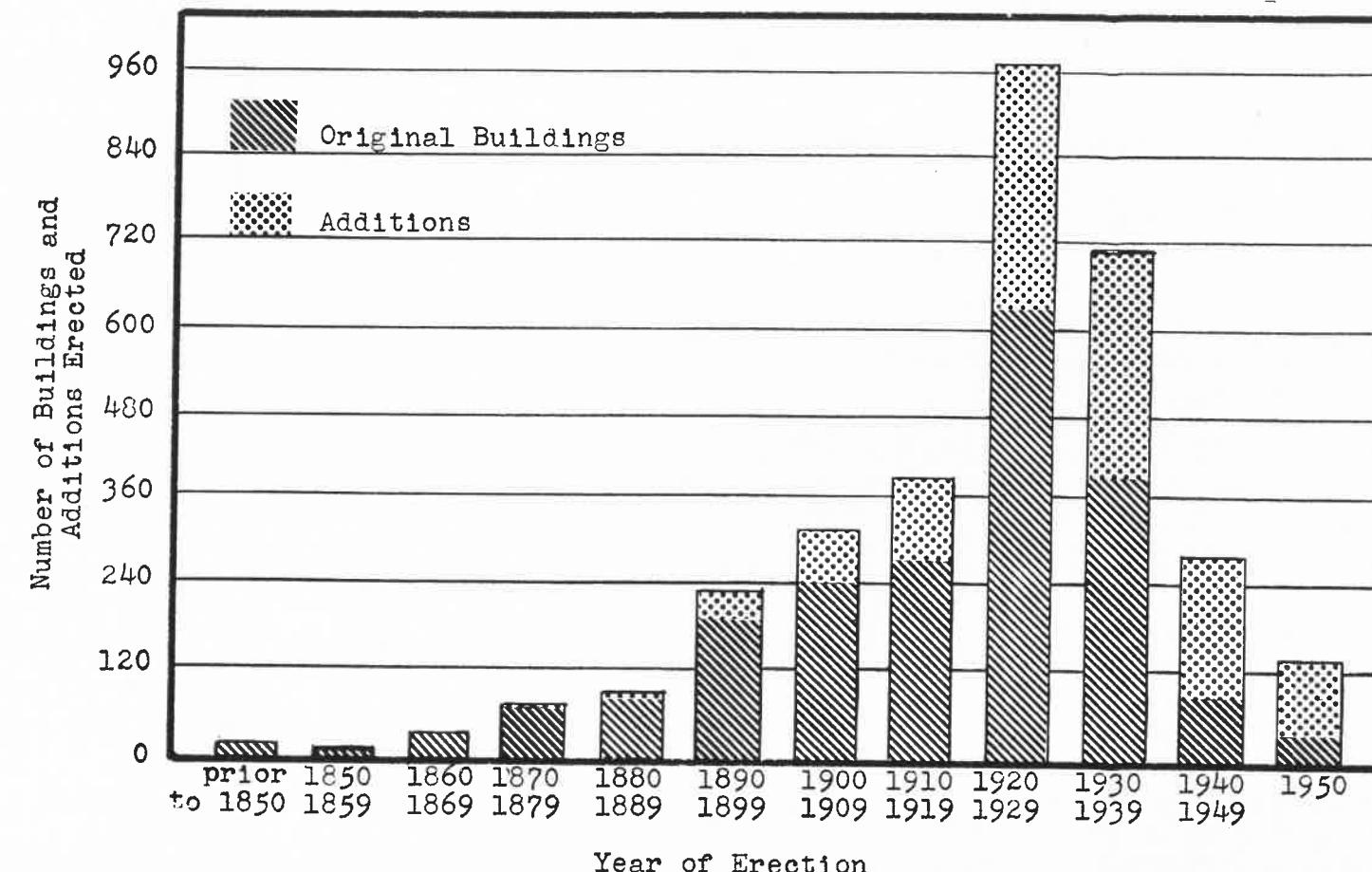


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NUMBER OF PUBLIC SCHOOL BUILDINGS AND ADDITIONS ERECTED AND BEING USED FOR  
INSTRUCTIONAL PURPOSES IN SCHOOL DISTRICTS OTHER THAN NEW YORK CITY\*

\*Source: Tabulated from the Public School Plant Record Forms analyzed.

## IV. Local Ability to Finance Schools

The Commission has the responsibility to determine the ability of the localities to finance their own school construction and to determine whether State assistance is necessary to assure that schools can be constructed when and where they are needed.

To this end, the Commission again has reviewed the financial resources of the cities and other school districts and has drawn these conclusions:

### City School Districts

Under the amendment to the Constitutional debt limitation which became effective January 1, 1952, the school districts in cities under 125,000 population and all of the larger cities upstate have borrowing power sufficient to finance at least during the next four years the schools which they will have to construct.

**Partly as a result of the same amendment, New York City will be able to finance within its debt limit a \$200 million school building program during the next four years. Such a program would be double the normal school replacement and modernization needs of the City.**

If effectively used, this allocation of \$50 million annually for schools during that period would enable the City to make rapid progress toward elimination of its backlog of necessary school construction and modernization.

Approximately \$40 million of this annual total would provide 15 to 20 new schools each year to relieve overcrowding or to replace buildings that are not worth modernizing. With the balance of about \$10 million, the City could modernize 15 to 25 additional schools each year.

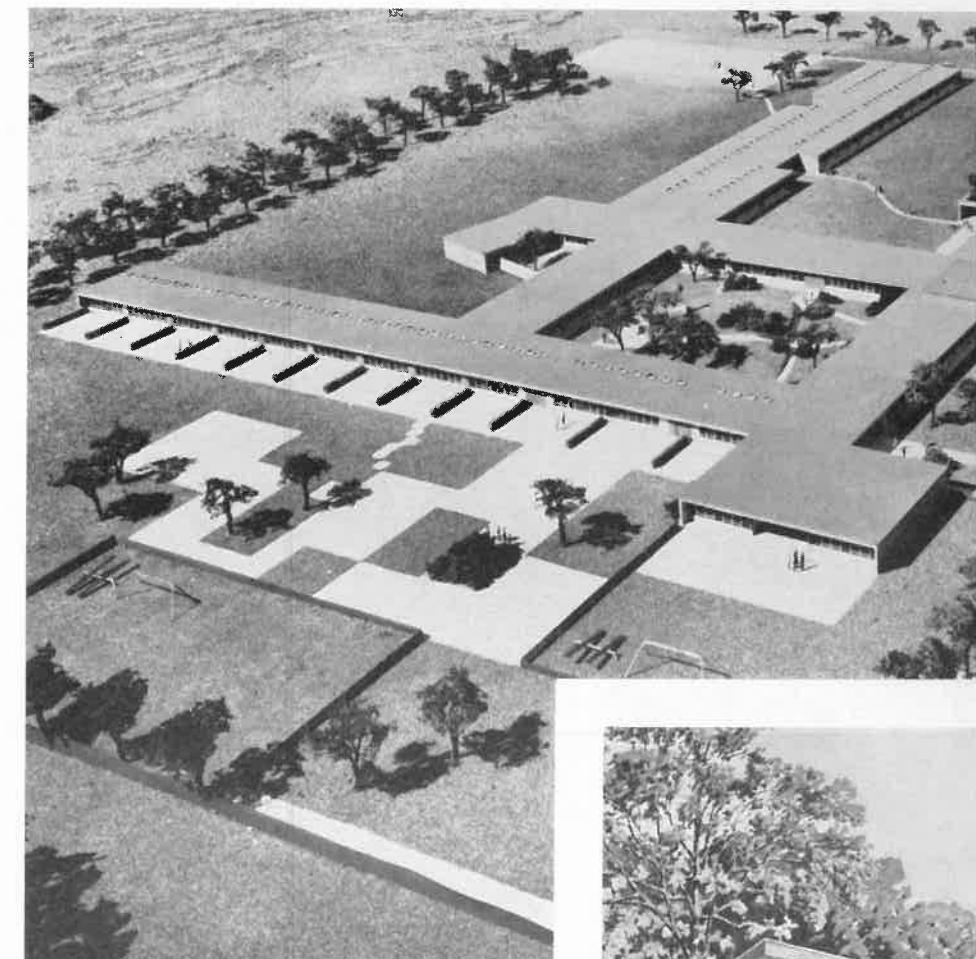
To accomplish successfully a program of this scope, the City Board of Education, in the opinion of the Commission, must improve its organization and procedures as suggested in the recommendations for local action summarized in Section V of this report.

### Other School Districts

During 1950 and 1951, the State provided for advances of money to financially hard pressed school districts to help them with debt service on emergency school construction. Under certain conditions prescribed by Section 3603-c of the Education Law, a school district is eligible for this type of assistance when its local tax rate for approved debt service goes above \$7 on \$1,000 full valuation of local real property.

Continuation of the State's emergency advance program for another year will enable all of the non-city school districts to finance school construction which will be necessary in that period without an excessive local tax burden.

## Elementary-Junior High School Unde



Hexagonal design of this new elementary school which will be constructed in 1952 at East Scarsdale provides maximum classroom flexibility.

## City to Finance Schools

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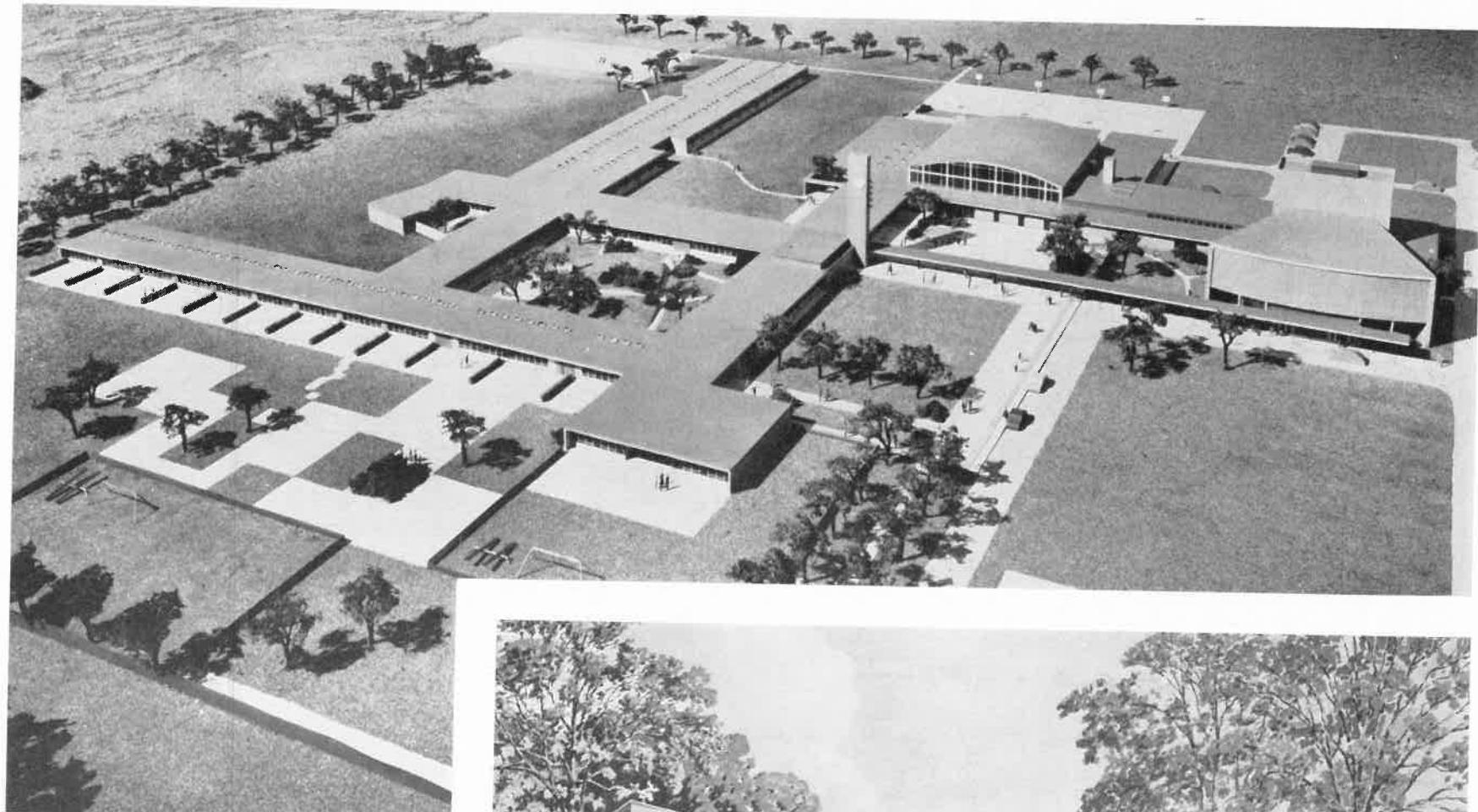
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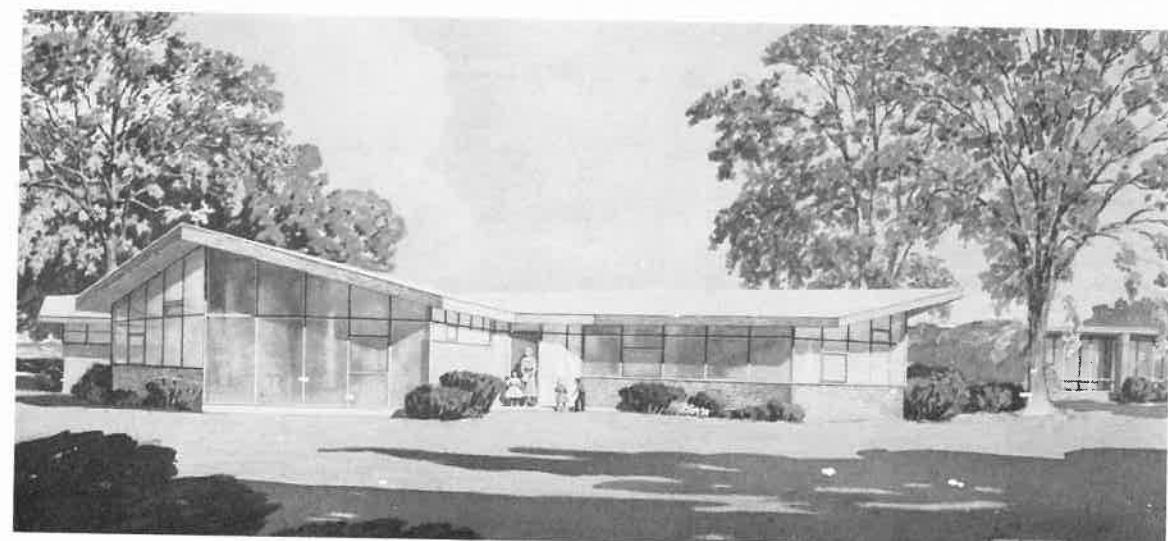
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## Elementary-Junior High School Under Construction at Long Beach



Hexagonal design of this new elementary school which will be constructed in 1952 at East Scarsdale provides maximum classroom flexibility.



## V. Recommendations

The Commission, as a result of its intensive studies during the past year, makes the following recommendations for State legislation and local action:

### STATE LEGISLATION

It is recommended that the 1952 Legislature adopt measures which will:

1. Improve and extend for another year the program of State advances to financially hard-pressed school districts with emergency school building requirements (Section 3603-c of the Education Law) and increase the appropriation from \$300,000 to \$700,000.
2. Encourage school districts in cities under 125,000 population to consolidate with suburban districts to form enlarged city school districts through a special State aid formula, thus making it possible to provide better schools, better use of schools, a broader base for taxing and borrowing, and a more equitable distribution of the tax burden.
3. Encourage the formation of larger school districts in cities, suburbs, and rural areas so that high schools will be available for peak enrollments of the future and local expense of providing high schools will be more equitably distributed over the territory the schools serve by revising the State aid provisions for non-resident pupils, contract districts, and districts which do not operate high schools.
4. Speed up the payment of normal State assistance to the rapidly growing school districts; thereby increasing local ability to finance school buildings.
5. Clarify certain provisions of the Education Law which relate to designation of sites for school buildings and the jurisdiction of the State Educa-

tion Commissioner over health and safety regulations.

6. Extend the life of the Commission another year.

Detailed information on each recommendation follows:

#### 1. Emergency State Advances

During the past year, six districts qualified for emergency advances from the \$300,000 appropriation made by the Legislature for the 1951-52 State fiscal year. However, the Commission estimates that a greater number of districts will qualify during the next year and that an appropriation of \$700,000 will be needed to finance this program in 1952-53, providing the provision for rapidly growing districts is adopted.

The bill being submitted by the Commission for extension of the emergency advance program contains several amendments to the existing law (Section 3603-c, Education Law) which experience has indicated are needed. These amendments will:

- A. Give preference during this period of increasing elementary school enrollments to applications for construction of elementary schools to eliminate or avoid overcrowding.
- B. Give preference at this time to applications for high school construction to the districts which cannot send their high school pupils to other districts and which have taken action to include in the districts all the territory that should be served by the new high school.
- C. Change and clarify cost allowance provisions, define more precisely the debt service for which advances of State money will be made and otherwise clarify the computation of the emergency advances.

D. Clarify provisions relating to repayment of advances and provide for a longer repayment period under certain conditions.

E. Eliminate the section relating to districts which had emergency school building requirements prior to April 1, 1951, because they have had two years to apply for advances and include a section for districts which have had emergency requirements since that date.

F. Repeal the provision granting aid for planning of school construction because there have been no applications for this type of assistance.

#### 2. Enlarged City School Districts

City school districts in cities under 125,000 population generally provide for the education of pupils from a large number of districts in the areas surrounding the city.

In the past, much of the cost of educating these non-resident pupils has been borne by the city district and the State through education aid, while the local tax rates of the outlying districts have remained far below that of the city district.

The Commission has found that the present State law on education aid for contract districts and non-resident pupils is one of the factors which has caused an inequitable local tax burden as between the districts which operate schools and those that do not and has erected a barrier to enlargement of the city school districts. The fact that some districts do not charge tuition sufficient to cover the cost of instructing non-resident pupils is another factor.

To facilitate the enlargement of city school districts, the Commission is recommending the Legislature approve a revised State aid formula applicable to annexation of rural districts to a city school district.

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To facilitate the enlargement of city school districts, the Commission is recommending the Legislature approve a revised State aid formula applicable to annexation of rural districts to a city school district.

The State aid revision proposed by the Commission will provide additional aid to the reorganized city school district in an amount nearly equivalent to the aid which would be granted the annexed districts if they had formed a central school district. It also will prevent the loss of State aid that city school districts experience when annexing outlying districts under present laws.

Without a change in these State aid provisions, instances might occur in the future where city districts would reject non-resident pupils because of the cost of financing new buildings. The rural area districts then would have to construct their own schools and for that purpose organize small central school districts, costly to the locality and the State. The Commission believes its proposal will prevent such an occurrence.

At the same time, the Commission recommends revision of the procedure for annexation of outlying districts to a city school district. Its proposal would provide that:

- A. Residents of the area outside the city district would submit to the State Commissioner of Education a petition for consolidation, which must be approved by the school board of the city school district.
- B. The State Commissioner would determine boundaries of the area to be annexed in order to have a vote upon the proposition for consolidation.
- C. A majority vote in this area would be required for approval of the proposed consolidation.

The changes being recommended by the Commission should encourage the city school districts to take in all the districts which ought to be part of the city district and should prevent the creation of "islands" surrounded by the enlarged city school districts.

The Commission's plan is a substitute for a provision of the Education Law, adopted by the Legislature in

1950, which permits city school districts in cities under 10,000 population to become part of a central school district and thus qualify for additional State aid.

The Commission believes that a uniform law should apply to enlargement of city school districts in all cities under 125,000 population, but it is not sound State policy or finance to treat these cities as central school districts.

State aid provisions for central school districts were designed to help the districts with the higher costs which result from sparsity of population. The sparsity of population factor in enlarged city school districts generally exists only in the area outside of the city.

Therefore, the Commission recommends that the present law affecting school districts in and around cities of less than 10,000 population be discontinued after June 30, 1954.

At present, these districts are eligible for centralization if the local real estate valuation is less than \$15,000 per resident pupil. This figure is considerably higher than the average valuation per resident pupil in central school districts and should be changed to \$9,000. Two low valuation city school districts which have taken steps to form central districts would still be eligible if the figure is reduced to \$9,000.

### 3. Contract Districts and Non-Residents

The Commission believes that the State education aid formula should be changed so that its provisions help bring about greater equity in local tax rates as between districts which operate schools and those which do not.

Therefore, it recommends (1) that the provisions of the State education aid formula be modified at some future date (possibly July 1, 1957) so that the apportionment of State aid will be based upon resident pupils only and (2) that State aid provisions for contract districts and districts not operating high schools be gradually modified to help bring about greater equity in local tax rates.

The first proposal would have a threefold effect:

- A. Districts would be inclined to charge more tuition for instructing pupils from another district.
- B. School districts contracting for the education of all their children and districts which do not operate high schools would have to assume their fair share of the cost of educating their children.
- C. The tax advantage now enjoyed by the districts which send all or some of their children to school in other districts would be reduced and creation of larger school districts in these areas would be encouraged.

The change would not mean a sudden or drastic readjustment in State education aid beginning with the future date selected because a three year average of attendance is used in computing State aid. The full effect, therefore, would not be felt until the third year following the effective date.

If the year 1957 were used, the districts affected would have about nine years in which to become part of a central, consolidated or enlarged city school district capable of providing a broader tax base to support a complete educational program and to finance school buildings.

The second proposal would involve gradually raising the minimum tax rate required for apportionment of full State aid to contract districts and districts not operating high schools to a point where the rate would be approximately the same as the average of rates in the districts which do operate high schools.

Contract districts now are required to have one of three minimum tax rates, \$4, \$5, or \$6.20 per \$1,000 full valuation, depending upon the particular formula under which they receive State aid. Almost all districts operating high schools must have a \$6.20 minimum local tax rate before they can receive full State aid.

As the first step in carrying out the second recommendation the Commission is submitting a bill providing a minimum local tax rate requirement of \$6.20 per \$1,000 full valuation for all contract districts.

The further steps to be taken will depend upon the result of the state-wide study of State equalization rates and the effect of the new rates upon the education aid formula and the local full valuation tax rates.

The Commission's studies indicate that timely construction of high schools needed after 1956 will place greater burdens upon local resources and make it imperative that the real estate tax base supporting the high school include all of the assessed valuation in the territory it serves.

The Commission recommends, therefore, that after a reasonable period of time, (for example, 1960) a school district that does not instruct all of its own high school pupils should become part of a district large enough to operate a high school.

### 4. Rapidly Growing Districts

The use of a three year average of daily attendance in the formula for apportionment of State education aid has created a lag in payment of aid to rapidly growing school districts, unduly increased local tax rates and made it difficult for these districts to finance the volume of school construction required.

Last year, the Commission recommended that relief be afforded districts having an attendance increase of more than 10 per cent in one year. The Legislature authorized a special appropriation to assist the rapidly growing districts, but the application of the statute was limited thereafter to those districts which had an attendance increase of 50 per cent in one year or 90 per cent in two years.

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increases have equally high tax rates resulting from the increases.

A study of districts in Nassau County and other rapidly growing areas of the State has shown that the lag in State aid in some of the rapidly growing school districts has produced tax rate increases of more than \$9 on \$1,000 full valuation of local real estate.

The effect of the State aid lag on the tax rate in these districts depends upon the wealth of the district as well as the per cent of increase in pupil attendance. The tax rate increase as a result of the State aid lag may be as high in a district where the latest average daily attendance figure is 12 per cent more than the three year average as in a district where the increase is 66 per cent.

**Therefore, the Commission is proposing that the present emergency statute for special aid to rapidly growing districts be revised to provide that:**

**When a school district's average daily attendance figure for the latest year exceeds the three year average by 10 per cent or more, the district's State aid will be computed on the latest year's average daily attendance, less an amount equivalent to a tax of \$1 on \$1,000 full valuation of local real estate.**

Under this proposal, the State and the district will share the cost of providing for rapidly increasing enrollments. The \$1 deduction is the tax rate increase which, in the Commission's opinion, the district should reasonably be required to bear before becoming eligible for special State assistance.

For example, take the case of one particular district whose average daily attendance for 1951 is 40 per cent more than the three year average of attendance. If the 1951 attendance figure were used in computing State aid, this district would receive \$180,000 more than the State aid apportioned on a three year average of its attendance. However, a local tax increase of \$1 on \$1,000 full valuation would raise \$20,000. Thus the district's special aid, under the Commission's proposal, would amount to \$160,000.

The 10 per cent increase fixed as the eligibility minimum is more than double the normal attendance increase which school districts can expect in the next five or six years.

The Commission estimates the cost of this program in the school year beginning July 1, 1952, will be approximately \$1,800,000. Because the State fiscal year and the school year of these districts does not coincide, however, it is estimated that the cost in the State fiscal year beginning April 1, 1952, will be about \$900,000.

Governor Dewey's proposed budget for the 1952-53 State fiscal year already contains a \$900,000 appropriation to finance the emergency statute now in effect for rapidly growing districts. Consequently, no change in this appropriation would be necessary.

However, an appropriation of \$1,800,000 probably will be required in the State fiscal year beginning April 1, 1953.

If the Commission's proposal for assistance to the rapidly growing districts were in effect at the present time, it is possible that as many as 67 school districts in 17 counties would be eligible for participation.

## 5. Education Law Amendments

In an effort to help the localities avoid costly mistakes, the Commission last year sponsored legislation giving the State Education Commissioner power to approve sites as well as plans and specifications of school buildings in districts having less than 70,000 population.

This year, the Commission is recommending two amendments to this law which will:

- A. Require the district to follow specified criteria before title to the site is acquired.
- B. Provide that the Commissioner of Education may approve plans for school buildings on sites that

are deficient in one or more respects if a site conforming to all standards is not available.

Other changes which the Commission proposes are these:

- A. Amend Section 409 of the Education Law to make it clear that the Education Commissioner's regulations under this section do not apply to city school districts in cities having 70,000 or more population.
- B. Delete the last sentence in Section 1806, subdivision 1-e of the Education Law to eliminate difficulties experienced in interpretation. At the time of voting on a bond issue it is impossible to get more than an estimate of cost, so that the voters cannot be advised of any excess of actual cost over computed building cost.
- C. Increase from \$50 to \$100 the amount which the trustees of common school districts may spend for repairs, furniture and equipment without a vote of the district under subdivision 14 of Section 1604 of the Education Law; and from \$150 to \$300 the amount which a trustee of such district may expend for repairs without a vote of the people when ordered by the district superintendent to do so under subdivision 4 of Section 2215 of the Education Law.

## 6. Continue the Commission

In his 1952 message to the Legislature, Governor Dewey commended the Commission for its work and recommended its continuance for another year. Legislation to continue the Commission already has been approved. A bill appropriating \$100,000 for its work in the 1952-53 State fiscal year will be introduced.

A large volume of important work remains to be done. For instance:

- A. It is anticipated a shortage of materials will continue to be a major problem in school construction during the year. The Commission will continue its efforts to find methods of conserving materials needed in the nation's defense effort and will assist small districts to obtain Federal approval of essential school construction and Federal allocation of critical materials. Small districts frequently are at a disadvantage in obtaining construction priorities because they lack the direct contact with Federal officials that is possessed by many cities.
- B. In the fall of 1952, many more school districts will begin to feel the effects of increased enrollments in the elementary schools. It is expected there will be an increase in the number of districts seeking advances of State money for emergency school building construction. The Commission will endeavor to simplify and improve the administration of the emergency advance statute. In considering future applications for advances, particular attention should be given to determining accuracy of enrollment estimates, the need for enlarging school districts, capacity and utilization of available schools in the area and possible adjustments in the formula used to compute the emergency advance.
- C. It is expected that the review and revision of State equalization rates will be completed within the year. Establishment of new rates will require a review of local financial resources, reconsideration of the formula used in making advances of money for local debt service on emergency school construction and an examination of the effect changes in the State education aid formula will have upon the ability of localities to finance their own school building requirements.

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- D. In view of the shortage of materials, high construction costs, expanding need for elementary schools and the increased need for high schools that can be expected within a six year period, it is imperative the Commission complete its development of the best method of modernizing existing schools and increasing their capacity and utilization, particularly during periods of peak enrollment.

It also is important that the Commission continue its search for economies in planning and construction of schools and continue to give the localities guidance in meeting temporary overcrowding.

- E. The Commission should continue its work on school district reorganization so that completion of this program will be possible before 1960 when many more high schools will be needed. Unless elementary school construction is planned economically and financed soundly, the school districts will face their greatest difficulties when high school enrollments start growing. Before a district considers expanding high school facilities it is important that it study the possibility of enlarging the district to include all the territory which it should serve.

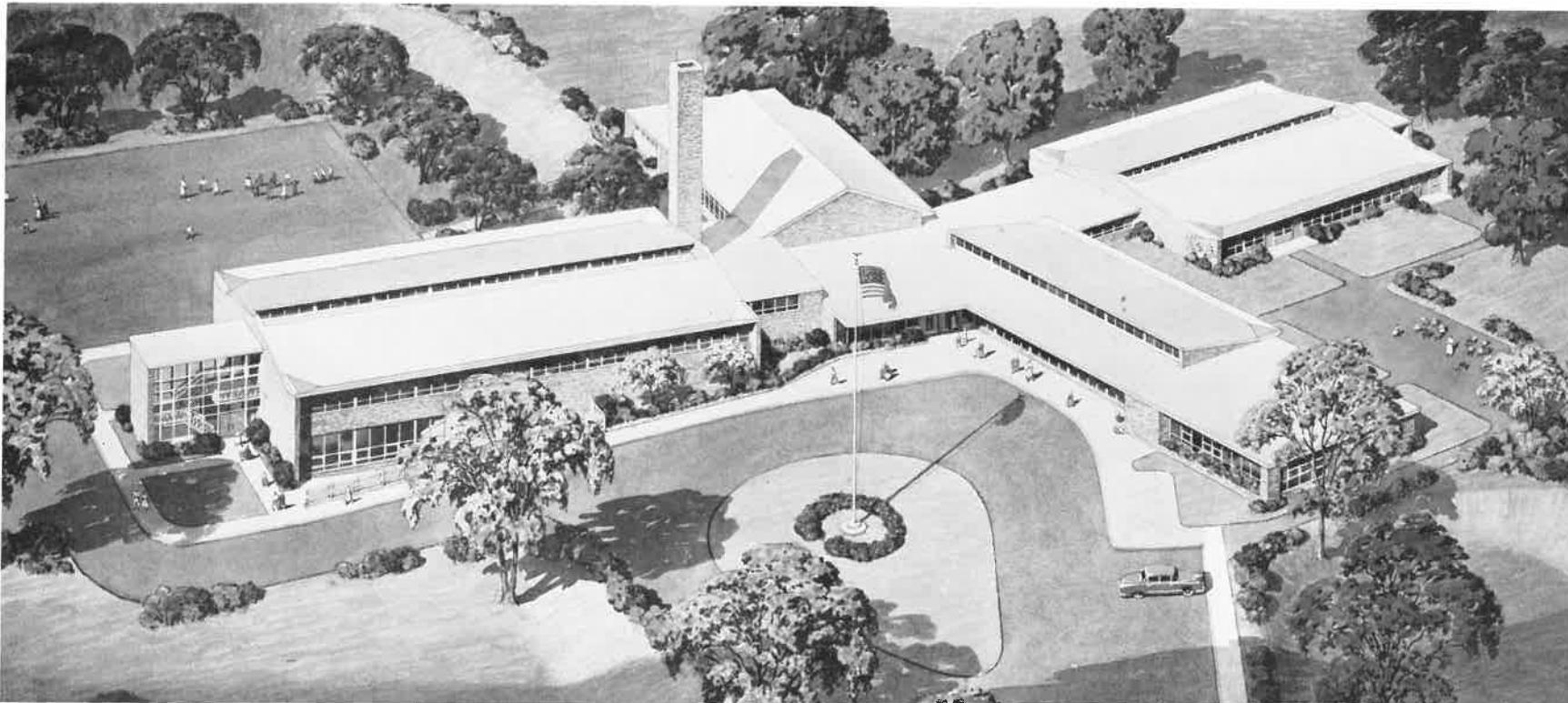
## LOCAL ACTION

The Commission urges that in the year immediately ahead and during the next five or six years of rapidly rising school enrollments all of the school districts in the State adhere to these recommendations:

1. Follow the procedures for determining need, as outlined by this Commission, before undertaking school construction.

2. Before planning to replace old buildings consider whether modernization will produce satisfactory facilities at reasonable cost.
3. Determine whether enrollment increases in a district are temporary or permanent before abandoning a school building that is not hazardous.
4. If possible, postpone construction of high schools until increased elementary school enrollments
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- have been housed and high school enrollments begin to rise again.
5. Exercise the utmost economy in school construction, consistent with education values and maintenance costs.
6. Make maximum use of borrowing power through short maturities and special efforts to obtain favorable interest rates, and use reserve funds and current revenues to reduce the amount of borrowing.

### **Elementary School Under Construction at Hyde Park**



### **New York City**

The Commission recommends that New York City appropriate approximately \$50 million a year during the next four years for construction of new schools and modernization of old ones.

About \$40 million should be spent each year for 15 to 20 new schools to relieve overcrowding and \$10 million each year for 15 to 25 modernization projects.

However, this program to substantially eliminate the backlog of school construction and modernization needs in the City cannot be accomplished unless the following steps are taken:

1. The City must appropriate sufficient funds annually to keep its school buildings in repair and the Board of Education must streamline its organization for handling repair work.
2. The Board of Education must put into effect without further delay the recommendations of this Commission, the Management Survey and its own construction coordinator for properly dividing responsibility between the Board and its staff and achieving an effective and efficient staff organization to plan and supervise construction of schools.
3. In cooperation with the City Planning Commission and the Office of the Budget Director, the Board of Education must immediately appraise the condition, capacity and utilization of all schools in the City and determine their place in the overall construction program. Without this information, it is impossible for the Board to establish whether buildings should be replaced or modernized and in what order construction of new buildings or modernization of old should take place.

On the basis of experience gained in its State-wide studies, the Commission believes this physical inventory

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On the basis of experience gained in its State-wide studies, the Commission believes this physical inventory

of existing schools could be completed in six months with a staff of 12 persons. It would be to the Board of Education's advantage to release 12 competent engineers, architects and other persons familiar with schools and their construction to do this work during the next six months, even if one or more school projects had to be given to private architects for planning in the meantime.

If the City-wide appraisal began with the oldest buildings and those of wooden construction, the Board soon would have specific information available to modify its 1952 school construction program, if necessary, and to begin planning its 1953 program.

## Other Cities

Other cities in the State which have a backlog of school building replacement and modernization projects should undertake a similar appraisal of all their schools in order to plan a well-spaced schedule for meeting their needs.

Such a program is much sounder, both from an educational and financial point of view, than one which continually postpones capital projects and places an unduly heavy burden upon some future generation of taxpayers.

## Other School Districts

School districts outside of the cities and some city school districts within the next decade will face a large and expensive program to accommodate increased enrollment of high school pupils.

Unless these high schools are supported by all of the territory from which the pupils come, the debt burden for high schools on top of the debt incurred to house increased elementary school enrollments will strain local financial resources.

The Commission offers these recommendations to districts operating high schools:

1. Discontinue practices which give a local tax rate advantage to the districts which contract for education of their children.
2. Charge tuition at least sufficient to cover all the cost of instructing the pupils from a contracting district.
3. Do not build new schools for pupils from contract districts, but rather insist that these districts become part of the tax district operating the high school.

Districts which do not operate high schools should not expect the operating districts or the taxpayers of the State, through State education aid, to give them an advantage in payment of taxes for support of schools. Such districts should consolidate with the district operating the high school and bear a fair share of the cost.

## Photograph Credits

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*Note:* The schools at Yonkers, Long Beach, Scarsdale and Hyde Park were among the winners in the American Association of School Administrators' 1951 National Competition for Better School Design.