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THE MICHIGAN RIGHT TO READ EFFORT

by Carolyn Farquhar

The goal of the Michigan Right to Read Effort is to eliminate illiteracy by 1980 so that 99 per cent of those people under 16 years of age and 90 per cent of all those over 16 years will possess and use literacy skills enabling them to benefit from the options American society has to offer.

The primary focus of Michigan's Right to Read Effort is staff development. As of May 14, 1974, the first phase of the training has been completed. This was conducted over a 30-day period of time beginning in January, 1974. Participants in the Right to Read Training Program represented 21 local school districts, six intermediate districts, two adult learning centers, a Michigan prison and a Catholic diocese.

Approximately 30 noted reading consultants addressed the participants on various aspects of reading content. However, the main thrust of the training involved the acquisition of planning and management skills in order to implement change, and to more effectively coordinate the total reading program in a school district.

The training culminated with each participant presenting a systematic plan for his district. Each plan included a definite time line for accomplishing each objective, and the inclusion of a task force and a local advisory council.

The plans were based on a Criteria for Excellence developed by the parti-

cipants in order to assist educators in the state to work toward the achievement of the Michigan Right to Read goals.

The participants felt it would be a distinct value to those involved in reading programs at various educational levels to be able to refer to a "standard of excellence for reading programs" in developing and evaluating their own programs.

The final draft of the Criteria for Excellence was approved by the Right to Read Advisory Council on June 13, 1974.

At the present time Right to Read is planning to incorporate the multiplier effect throughout the state. An intensive workshop for training of trainers was held at Colombiere at Clarkston, Michigan from August 3-11, 1974.

These participants were basically representatives of intermediate districts who took part in the original training. This fall they in turn will train reading consultants from local school districts within their regions.

On-site visits have been made to all the local reading directors trained thus far, and the office of Right to Read plans to keep in close touch with these people in the future to maintain assistance and support.

(Dr. Carolyn Farquhar is Coordinator for Michigan Right-to-Read Program.)