DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 132 714 EA 009 009

AUTHOR	Burges, Bill
TITLE	You Can Look It Up: Finding Educational Documents.
INSTITUTION	Institute for Responsive Education, Boston, Mass.
SPONS AGENCY	Hazen Foundation, New Haven, Conn.
PUB DATE	76
NOTE	26p.
AVAILABLE FROM	Institute for Responsive Education, 704 Commonwealth Avenue, Boston, Massachusetts 02215 ($2.00, orders for $10.00 or less must be accompanied by payment or requisition)
EDRS PRICE	MF-$0.83 Plus Postage. HC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS	Action Research; Elementary Secondary Education; *Research Methodology; Research Reviews (Publications); *Research Tools; *Resource Guides

ABSTRACT

This publication is intended to help people find the documents most suited to solving their researchable problems. It begins by discussing how to approach research and then outlines such sources of documentary evidence as current books, indexes, periodicals, bibliographies, and the ERIC system. (Author/IRT)

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You Can Look It Up

Finding Educational Documents

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by bill burges

A Project of the Institute for Responsive Education under a grant from the Edward W. Hazen Foundation, New Haven, Connecticut.

EA 009 003

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The INSTITUTE FOR RESPONSIVE EDUCATION is a non-profit, tax exempt organization created to study and assist citizen participation in educational decision making. It is housed in the Department of System Development and Adaptation, School of Education, at Boston University.

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INTRODUCTION

INFORMED PARTICIPATION AND CITIZEN ACTION-RESEARCH

"What?" Another study? What we need is some action for a change."

We've all heard this many times. Doing a study often seems to be the surest way to avoid taking action. Politicians and government officials have long buried controversial issues in studies--studies that end up in yesterday's newspapers, written so that nobody will want to wade through them.

We should not stop studying things. Or fail to get the facts before we act. But in the area of local public schools, we should ask, "Who should study what? Toward what end? Why? And how can we combine research with action to solve the problems we uncover?"

We are convinced that some of the most useful research on community and education problems can be done by the people most affected, the local residents. The community that will influence its schools can make them accountable. Professional educators or school board members who encourage citizens to become involved in fact-finding and making recommendations will discover new channels for community involvement and improved community relations.

It's no surprise that as public schools have increased their expenditures, they have also faced increasing demands for accountability from the clients they serve and the constituents who "pay the freight." But for many reasons school board members and school officials are less able or willing to be responsive to the people they serve or represent. Highly centralized districts, for example, mean more constituents for each representative. The average school board member now represents twenty times more people than s/he did in 1900. When people are demanding accountability, and officials are less able to respond, the result is often public suspicion, lack of support, and misunderstanding.

Citizen participation in education can help alleviate these problems by making parents, students, and community members equal partners in educational decision making. In this sense, citizen participation means informed involvement in which the people power of a community or an entire city is marshaled to solve the community's problems.

I.R.E.

The Institute for Responsive Education (I.R.E.) has been working to help public officials and community groups increase their ability to work together toward common goals of better education. I.R.E. recently completed a year-long field project on "Citizen Action-Research," funded by the Hazen Foundation of New Haven, Connecticut.

Citizen Action-Research is a process designed to increase positive citizen participation through community learning. Fact-finding and follow-up, when it is done by the people who themselves must act, can be a powerful form of citizen action, a new style of community politics. The work includes programs at the local, state, and national levels.

In a citizen action-research program citizens become involved in defining the issues, getting the facts, determining what needs to be done, and doing it. They draw on local resources wherever possible to help accomplish their goals. The politics of alienation, frustration, and confrontation are replaced by the politics of planning together and acting together.

We are not naive enough to think that adversarial situations and conflicts will never come up, even in this process. But neither can we ignore the evidence that in the absence of positive steps by public officials and community groups, the result is at best distrust, apathy or nonsupport, and at worst, open hostility. Citizen action-research offers one good way to build a climate, structure, and set of programs for cooperative problem solving by public officials and lay people.

I.R.E.'s first action-research publication was Parker Palmer's Action-Research: A New Style of Politics in Education, which outlined eight techniques for citizen fact-finding. One of the most important ways that citizens can get the facts is by using documents. How to use them most efficiently is the topic of this report, You Can Look It Up. Other publications in I.R.E.'s Action-Research series are listed on the back cover.

YOU CAN LOOK IT UP

The late Casey Stengel of baseball fame, after winding up an intricate story or incredible anecdote, would often catch an unbelieving gleam in his listener's eyes. Noting that look, "Professor" Stengel would counter with a reassuring, "You could look it up." Somewhere, Casey was sure, the information to substantiate his argument could be found in writing. His tale could be substantiated, his knowledge validated.

Citizens conducting an action research project may face similar problems. You'll often want to rely on written materials to substantiate your proposals for change. And in answering questions about the schools, documents are a great source of data. You too, can look it up.

Books, articles, public documents, court decrees, laws, meeting minutes, newspapers, and other print media are useful sources of background information, informed opinion, and ideas for change. Whatever your researchable problem or issue, someone has probably done prior research on the questions you are asking. Finding that research as efficiently as possible will help you immeasurably.

-- prescreening the literature --

Many people have the idea that research is a logical, predictable process. Unfortunately, that's not always the case. Life would be dull in the absence of little surprises and unusual twists. So would researching your problem. Plodding through reams of materials--however rationally--is neither efficient nor exciting.

What can be both enjoyable and effective is to zero in on people and reference tools that help you find the answers to your questions. That way, you'll be able to chase down promising leads and avoid--to some extent--unproductive outlays of time and effort. Sure, there'a always a certain degree of "muddling through" in document research, just as in any other project. You Can Look It Up will help you find switchboards to plug you into the documents most suited to solving your researchable problem.

Since a wealth of information is available on almost any educational question, you must be selective. There's probably too much written about education. Many documents are jargon-laden, practically unreadable. Many more have accumulated because the "publish or perish" syndrome plaguing professors leads to the proliferation of publications that have no practical application.

Your problem will be selecting a manageable quality of current, readable, to-the-point information. Thus it is important to prescreen the literature. The first step in prescreening is developing a clear understanding of your goals in looking for information.

What's your researchable problem?
Why are you looking into it?
What type of information are you looking for?
How do you plan to use it?

These are questions you should answer at the outset. Facts For A Change, the core handbook of I.R.E.'s Action-Research Publications, can be very helpful in answering these questions.

The second step in prescreening is asking for suggestions from people who are well read on your topic or familiar with educational literature in general. Advocacy groups, community workers, planners, teachers and administrators, librarians, researchers, and university professors can help you. With their assistance, you'll be able to zero in on practical material that applies to your concerns.

Professors may not always be especially interested in nonacademic, applied, action-oriented research, but they usually have a really good grasp of the literature in their fields. Graduate students may be able to suggest more current, less technical readings. Universities may have a wide range of institutes and specialists in your field.

A group concerned about science curriculum or school governance, for instance, could find help from the staff of most schools of education. A group concerned about student rights might ask the law school for help. Don't be shy. Contact these people, explain what you're doing, and ask for free advice.

Teachers, school administrators, nonprofit research and advocacy groups, newspaper reporters, and citizen activists can help you find documents too. They may not have as wide a grasp of the literature as do university people, but the documents will guide you and will frequently be shorter, more readable and more practical.

It's also wise to find out what is available in the libraries in your area. University libraries are more extensive than all but the largest public libraries. University libraries also have lots of specialized material and extensive collections of periodicals.

Public libraries, on the other hand, carry more popular literature. They also have picture files, special journals, and back copies of local and national newspapers. Many newspapers also maintain small libraries and "vertical files" of pictures and clippings. Ask a librarian or another resource person you've contacted to tell you "what's where."

Don't use only libraries. Find out which bookstores stock up-to-date material on your subject. Check to see where public documents are located, and to which you have access. Look for films, slides, recordings, and other audio-visual materials. Libraries may be the most extensive sources of information, but there are other possibilities too.

These two simple steps of goal setting and suggestion seeking can save time and improve the quality of your work. You'll find relevant titles, authors, magazines, films, bookstores, indexes, catalogues, and new resource people. Considering that it takes only a few hours, the payoff in prescreening can be terrific.

-- the most important sources --

Once you've taken these initial steps, you'll be working with other sources of documentary evidence on education. These include:

-Current Books
-Indexes
-Periodicals
-Bibliographies
-ERIC (the Educational Resources Information Clearinghouse)

-Newspapers
-Government documents and reports
-The U.S. Census for your area
-Public and quasi-public records in your community.

CURRENT BOOKS

Current books and periodicals provide timely, up-to-date information on most topics in education. Large libraries, such as those found in many cities and at universities or colleges, are the best places to look for books and periodicals. Check the card catalogue listings under your topic. Librarians are there to help you locate specific materials, compile reading lists, and teach you to use indexes and bibliographies.

Books in Print is a resource book that lists every currently published book. It's arranged by subject, title, and/or author; lists both paperbacks and hard-covers; and can be found in almost any library or bookstore.

Another excellent source of information about education is the library at the high school in your town. Most school systems maintain "professional libraries" for teachers and administrators. These are usually located at the high school. If you can't find it there, ask the principal or librarian if your town, or neighboring community, has a professional library and how you can use it.

INDEXES

An index tells you where to find books, articles, and reports. The following are the most important education-related indexes:

The Education Index -- lists educational books, periodicals, papers, reports, pamphlets. Arranged by subject and date. Available at most university and large urban libraries.

Readers Guide to Periodical Literature -- lists articles from general periodicals such as Newsweek, Time, Harpers, etc. Arranged by subject and date. Available at most libraries, although the material it refers you to may not be as accessible.

Abridged Readers' Guide to Periodical Literature -- same as full version, but indexes only about thirty-five

magazines, (compared to the one-hundred in the complete Guide.)

Subject Guide to Books in Print -- look under Education for a complete listing of subtopics, titles, authors, prices, publishers, etc. Books in Print also comes indexed by author and title. Separate version: Paperbound Books in Print, available for paperbacks, found at virtually any library or bookstore.

Magazine and Journal Indexes -- Most magazines or journals compile and print their own index every six months or year.

PERIODICALS

Magazines and journals are the best sources of current studies, statistics, facts, and professional opinion. They frequently cover new ideas, up-to-the minute issues, and themes that are untouched in books.

Over 40,000 periodicals are published each year in the U.S. and Canada on every imaginable topic. The indexes described in this paper tell you how to cut through this potential morass. It's helpful to find out which journals are scholarly, professional, and popular.

Monthlies like Phi Delta Kappan and Clearinghouse are useful for professional and lay readers alike. Trade journals such as those published by principals' and teachers'associations will also be useful for school/community projects. Citizen Action in Education, the I.R.E. quarterly, is particularly helpful to groups interested in improving school/community relations.

BIBLIOGRAPHIES

Bibliographies list books on particular subjects. They are available in almost every library, and some can be found in bookstores. Ask for assistance when you're looking for a bibliography, because they can be hard to find.

The best bibliographies are specific and annotated. That is, they are geared to a single topic and include a capsule description and/or critique of each listing. Don Davies' Citizen Participation in Education: Annotated Bibliography, is an example.

Sometimes organizations and publishers compile bibliographies or publication lists. The National YWCA,

for instance, has an excellent bibliography on fund-raising. The National Commission on Resources for Youth, to use another illustration, catalogues their materials on youth programs and mails out a publication list. If you know of a group interested in your problem, write to them for a bibliography. If they don't have one, they may be willing to compile one for you.

THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

Like Books in Print, ERIC is both an index and a bibliography. ERIC provides anyone interested in education with a nationwide computerized information network. It's designed to acquire, index, annotate, retrieve on request, and distribute the most significant and timely educational reports. Recently, ERIC has begun to list projects and programs as well as documents.

The basic ERIC reference tools are an annotated monthly publication, Resources in Education and a computerized information retrieval system. ERIC is available at most city, university, and state college libraries.

Each volume of Resources in Education contains an index announcing recent reports. These materials are listed by author, subject, and sponsoring institution. Each report is concisely summarized. Ordering and pricing information is included.

For about $15, ERIC will conduct a computerized search for titles related to your researchable problem. This is an amazingly efficient way to generate written materials for your study. Ask a university librarian where you can find the ERIC reference tools at a convenient location.

NEWSPAPERS

Newspapers can be a rich source of facts and opinions on educational problems, especially local problems. Newspapers supply information on news events, and help you sort out the background, personalities, issues and decisions.

To trace a local story, head for the local newspaper office. An editor or librarian will help you find the appropriate clippings and pictures. You'll be able to get stories, editorials, features, and background information about your issue. If you ask,

you'll probably be able to meet with and interview staff members who've been covering your issue. They can give you some of the "inside information" you need.

Libraries usually keep back copies of local papers for 10-60 days. Many national newspapers are also available, in current issues, at large libraries. Metropolitan dailes like The Boston Globe, or Washington Post for instance, are available on microfilm at libraries across the country. Naturally, the closer you get to Boston, for instance, the more libraries will carry the complete set of Globe microfilms.

Perhaps the most well known and most frequently microfilmed newspaper is The New York Times. The Times is a fully indexed, first class source of information on national educational issues and events. The Times offers, in addition to its daily education coverage, an annual supplement on education. Furthermore, the Times microfilm series is so well indexed that important issues, articles, and developments are actually summarized and historically traced in The New York Times Index.

The Times offers complete coverage of educational affairs and is widely accessible.

GOVERNMENT DOCUMENTS AND REPORTS

Government documents and reports are a useful source of background information, statistics, and proposals. The U.S. Office of Education and state Departments of Education, for instance, compile lists of their publications (sometimes in conjunction with federal or state printing offices).

The annual indexes of The Monthly Catalogue of U.S. Government Publications and The Monthly Checklist of State Publications are good sources of government documents. In addition to nationally known reports (such as the Kerner Commission on Civil Disorders), government publication lists, catalogues, and indexes include a host of titles that may be obscure, but are on target for you.

One particularly valuable government document is the U.S. Census and its report on your area. As explained in Facts For A Change, the community setting is a crucial component of many educational problems. And the census compiles all sorts of data about the community setting.

Census data are broken down into small geographic units called "tracts" within towns, cities, metropolitan areas. The report on each census tract, and the summation of tracts into larger areas, include classifications by age, race, educational level, occupation, income and other characteristics. The Census statistics can:

-Serve as useful background for your study;
-Document and measure social and economic trends;
-Help project population movements;
-Locate and identify population groups;
-Reinforce your proposals for change.

The following example, taken from Census Data for Community Action illustrates how you can use the Census to document and prove the need for certain policies and programs.

Establishment of Adult Education Programs

City school systems, junior colleges, or other community organizations sometimes conduct adult educational programs to enable persons to complete high school, learn new skills, or study other subjects of interest to them. A community action organization may find census statistics of considerable value in proving the need for an adult education program or in convincing officials to add particular types of courses or conduct courses in more convenient facilities.

The nature of the neighborhood involved will suggest the types of census data which should be checked in connection with assessing the need for adult education programs. In general, data on education, employment status, income, and similar subjects will be of greatest value. Since the key subjects are based on sample results census tracts are the smallest area which can be studied.

A quick review of some of the kinds of tract data and their implications for adult education planning will demonstrate their potential value.

The number of persons 65 years old and over is important in determining the need for daytime and evening courses in arts, crafts and other leisure-time pursuits.

The count of persons with Spanish language background or Puerto Rican birth or parentage may suggest a need for courses taught in Spanish and courses to improve English language usage.

A low percentage of 16 and 17 year olds enrolled in school, and the percentage of 16 to 21 year olds who are not high school graduates and not enrolled in school, might indicate the need for offering high school completion courses.

Counts of persons 25 years old and over in each tract by years of school completed will help determine the need for job training and the kind of job training which should be offered. Employment opportunities in the area are also an important determinant of job training needs.

The number of families with income below the poverty level and with children under 8 or children under 6 may suggest the need for instruction in low budget meal planning, health care, and similar family and home-oriented subjects.

The preceding illustrations suggest some of the ways in which census data may relate to adult education planning. Each community group will probably be able to find other ways to use census data to understand its own neighborhood. It will usually be necessary to consider several different characteristics in order to plan an adult education program which will meet the needs of the community.*

PUBLIC AND QUASI-PUBLIC RECORDS

Public and quasi-public records are very valuable in community research. For example, every jurisdiction issues an annual report, budget, and financial statement. These are public records, and you have access to them.

In addition to public laws, a variety of legislative documents are available: staff reports, the Congressional Record, state legislative records, etc.

*U.S.Dept. of Commerce, Census Data for Community Action, November, 1972, pp. 10-11.

You might also find useful information in county codes, school board records, transcripts of council meetings, or the minutes of hearings. The list of available records is long and complex.

The trick is to become familiar with agencies and people whose business it is to know what records are available and where. That's how you build your own mental inventory of public records. Almost all of these records are public information--more now than ever since the passing of the Freedom of Information Act--but you will undoubtedly have to request them.

You may have to do more than just ask, in fact. Too often public records are treated like private property by the officials who keep them. Legally you have the right to see them. But you may have to insist on that right. Be firm and persistent, especially when officials seem to have something to hide.

Obtaining these records is often worth a hassle over access. When combined with data from observations (what's really going on), surveys (what people think about what's going on), and readings (what ought to be going on), public records (what the system says is going on) can paint a full picture of what's happening and why. Even without complementary data from other sources, public and quasi-public records can help illuminate official conduct, or misconduct. Without these records it's almost impossible to hold officials accountable for their public actions.

Common examples of records you might want include the minutes and transcripts of official meetings, policy statements, reports of state and regional accreditation committees, the contracts negotiated by a school district with teacher organizations, student handbooks, and job descriptions. Like newspapers, records can be particularly helpful in tracing community issues.

Perhaps the main limitation of the use of public records is your imagination. Most of us, for instance, would not be particularly interested in the fact that reports are available on the revenue collected from downtown parking meters. But one researcher used those reports to measure the impact of a strike on downtown shopping.

AUDIO VISUAL MATERIALS

Audio visual materials are another good source of information. You'll find them in libraries and media centers. They are listed either in the card catalogue or in a special section. (Check with the librarian or instructional resource coordinator.)

Some of the materials that are available are maps, picture collections, filmstrips, slides, TV tapes, films, tapes, records, and oral history collections. And you aren't limited to the library you're using. Catalogues of materials that you can borrow or inexpensively rent are available at most libraries. You'll find general catalogues such as the Educational Media Index (McGraw Hill) or Sources of Audio-Visual Materials (U.S. Government Printing Office). Catalogues are also distributed by rental agencies, nonprofit and government organizations, and public and university film libraries.

Audio Visual materials often cover the same material as found in documents, but are more graphic and suitable for group presentations. They are worth looking into.

OTHER SOURCES

A few other sources deserve brief mention. Encyclopedias provide background materials, but are often too general. One exception is the Encylopedia of Educational Research, published every ten years by the Educational Research Council and the MacMillan Company. It summarizes major research findings on children and education.

Educational dictionaries such as Good's Dictionary of Education (McGraw Hill, 1959) can be useful. But current ones are hard to find.

Yearbooks and directories are more helpful. Among the best of the yearbooks are the Standard Education Almanac (Academic Media, Los Angeles) and the Education Directory (Government Printing Office, Washington). Both provide current information on many topics in education. The best source directories are usually available from special interest organizations and explore one specific area. For instance, I.R.E. has one on school/community collaboration.

-- advantages of document research --

Using the documentary evidence doesn't create opportunities for face-to-face interaction with the public. However, it has several important advantages for action-researchers.

-It is efficient.
-It is the most effective, thorough way to find out how others have looked at your problem and what solutions have been proposed.
-It is nonthreatening to the researcher. People who would prefer not to conduct an interview or do first hand field research may not mind spending a few hours in the library.
-It is valuable for finding background information and ideas for change.
-It is the only way to investigate rules, budgets, and other records of "what the system says it is doing."
-It is, therefore, a useful way to check on public officials and, if necessary, to prove official misconduct.
-It is one way to increase your organization's familiarity with its area of interest. You'll develop a "mental file" of resources about your topic.

The following example demonstrates how using documents helps build community skills and teamwork. I.R.E. worked with an inner city neighborhood organization in Boston that recently solved a "flooding problem." Basements of local homes had mysteriously flooded, causing substantial inconvenience and property damage to poor and working class residents. Nobody was willing to take responsibility for the flooding. And nobody in the area knew the cause.

The organization's community organizers developed a group of thirty residents to investigate the problem. They pored over underground maps and engineering reports in city offices and public works agencies. It was a demanding and time consuming process, but it worked!

These action-researchers found evidence which (they believe) demonstrated an underground stream was re-routed unintentionally during a public construction project. Because this informal action-research group dug up this evidence, residents are now negotiating a settlement with government agencies.

They also undertook a subsequent project: monitoring the quality of food at local markets -- in cooperation with the Massachusetts Attorney General's Consumer Protection Division.

-- make documents work for you --

There are countless ways to make documents work for you.

- -Student handbooks and pamphlets explaining student rights can help avoid unwarranted suspensions.
- -Census data can help solve social, education and curriculum problems.
- -Articles, books, and studies can give you the knowledge you need to make wise educational decisions and help your group gain respect.
- -Your own studies can provide evidence to officials that you are a serious, persistent, knowledgeable interest group.

The keys to using documents are planning, thoroughness and access. Start out by talking to the experts. Use the reference tools listed in this section. Judicious use of the literature and public reports can add tremendously to your project.

THE OVERCROWDING COMMITTEE:

A Citizen's Report

by Diane Cantara

Diane Cantara is a senior at Brockton HIgh School. She helps coordinate an internship program for other high school students and writes feature articles for the Permanent Press, the high school newspaer. Encouraged by her friends to join a student-faculty administration committee to study overcrowding, Diane first helped shape a brief survey. She then searched the literature for information related to overcrowding in schools. What she discovered changed the shape of the committee's proposals. How she discovered it is a vivid illustration of how you too can "look it up."

The facts seemed conclusive. Brockton High School was originally constructed for a student capacity of 4800; but now, six years after opening its doors, the school is housing over 5800 students daily. There are as many as thirty-five to forty students in some classes. The school administration was forced to adopt a modified open campus plan simply because there was not enough room inside for all the students, and not enough teachers to supervise them. Obviously, Brockton High School has a serious overcrowding problem. And it will only become more acute with each incoming class.

These "facts" prompted two members of the Brockton High Student Senate to initiate a committee to study overcrowding and suggest solutions. I joined the committee whose members included several administrators, one teacher, one social worker, and four students. It was christened with a most unoriginal moniker--the Overcrowding Committee--and set about to tackle the overcrowding problem head on.

We asssumed that the school was overcrowded. The school enrollment, planned capacity, and class size figures, plus our own experience, seemed to support the assumption. What we needed was some eye-opening data that would rattle the Brockton School Committee into action. We decided to poll student and faculty opinion on overcrowding and other topics. Surely an overwhelming majority of students would consider the school and their classes oppressively overcrowded. The results would be a real eye-opener! With that as our goal, we constructed a short questionnaire and

distributed it to every student.

The final results were eye-opening all right--to us. The percentages revealed that students do not find Brockton High over-crowded; that students evaluate their classes as "just right" in size; and that kids feel neither overwhelmed, lost, nor insignificant by the school's large population. Other questions also revealed that students were satisfied with the education offered at Brockton High. This was one conclusion we least expected at a school where grumbling seemed omnipresent.

Rather than answering our questions or supporting our assumptions, the results raised new questions. Does school or class size have any relation to the quality of education? And if factors such as these are important, what was their effect at Brockton High School? We recognized that we needed to step back and do what perhaps should have come first--check the literature for relevant information, or, in the jargon, do a little plain old library research.

The library was the logical starting point. Armed with sharp pencils and empty notebooks, I spent one fine Saturday afternoon in the research room of the Brockton Public library. My goal was to find four or five relevant articles about school and class size and the relationship between size and the quality of education in high schools.

I started my assault at the card catalogue. My former Research and Report Writing teacher suggested that I try the headings URBAN STUDIES and MEGALOPOLIS as possible leads. URBAN STUDIES referred me to EDUCATION, URBAN, which referred me to BROCKTON, MA: PUBLIC SCHOOLS, which yielded absolutely nothing. MEGALOPOLIS was not listed in the catalogue. Rather than waste more time searching for potentially useless headings, I asked the librarian for suggestions. She directed me to a special card catalogue compiled from the local newspaper, The Brockton Enterprise. Headlines had been clipped from the newspaper and arranged by topic. Happily, I took the drawer labeled Brockton High School News. Unhappily, it was the length of my arm. I retreated to my seat, file drawer in hand.

After two hours of mind-boggling and finger-numbing perusal of that catalogue, my notebook was still empty and my eyes were bloodshot. I had wasted a whole afternoon chasing false leads. The Committee would be proud of me.

Monday morning I tried a different approach. I contacted Mr. Thomas Cibotti, a Brockton High administrator, for advice. Mr. Cibotti is a major force in our overcrowding study and a doctoral student at Boston College. I knew that he'd help. He told me that the easiest route would be to write to ERIC for a bibliography and have them do a computer search for titles on high school overcrowding. "Let them do the legwork for you," he said. Unfortunately, time was limited and our committee was without a budget. The advice was good, but I couldn't use it. Cibotti's tip about ERIC, however, came in handy later in my search. Mr. Cibotti also suggested the Superintendent of Brockton Schools as a possible source, and gave me the phone number of a Dean at Boston College who had helped him in several similar situations.

These referrals would be helpful when we were ready to interpret and build proposals from our data, but we still needed concrete information from other studies and theories about school size, class size, and overcrowding. A teacher gave me a copy of Big School Small School, a Philadelphia study, and a summary of school effectiveness research. But that wasn't enough. Reluctantly I headed back to the library.

But this time I went to the Mugar Memorial Library at Boston University accompanied by a social studies teacher who was also a graduate student at Boston University's School of Education. After the local library, the university facilities seemed incredible. The collection on education was extensive, probably because the School of Education at BU is a very large institution.

We first looked in the Library of Congress Subject Headings, which is available at most college libraries, but found nothing particularly pertinent. Neither of us had titles or authors at our fingertips, so those indexes didn't help much.

We decided to look for periodicals. First, we checked ERIC, by hand. Resources on Education is a quarterly magazine that indexes professional and scholarly publications on various topics in education. A concise summary of each article is included in the listing. I found two summaries which were particularly relevant and xeroxed the pages for handy reference.

The index that proved most useful was the Education Index. We looked under several different topic

headings such as Overcrowding, Class Size, School Size, and then came up with the call numbers of nine relevant magazine titles. I either took notes on the various articles or had the pages duplicated.

I did not waste nearly as much time as I had before because my "resource person" was familiar with the various indexes and publications. I avoided the dull and time-consuming task of searching under vague, highly general headings in the card catalogue, and started immediately in the more specific indexes. Three hours of my time and a fifty cent investment in a Xerox machine plus a pleasant day in Boston lead me to five useful, pertinent articles for the overcrowding study.

The information drawn from the articles helped the Committee analyze our survey data more effectively. New factors such as teacher satisfaction, union demands, junior high school enrollment, and the competence and creativity of the faculty were related to class size. These factors hadn't occured to us when we originally defined our problem and interpreted our survey. The literature enabled us to re-evaluate the data in a more professional, in-depth manner. Even if class size is judged "about right" by students, other factors may be important in deciding the ideal class size for a school.

For example, a 1974 National Education Association Research Survey of public school teachers revealed that 74.1% of the respondents believed small classes to be extremely important for job satisfaction--a fact which helped us conclude that teachers consider class size of greater importance than students do. In an article entitled, "Crowding and the Education Process," Reuben M. Baron emphasizes the strong influence of the physical environment (noise, lighting, room temperature, etc.) on student perceptions of overcrowding. From this study we concluded that Brockton High's extensive facilities are aesthetically pleasing and climactically comfortable. These and other findings helped us give new meaning to our facts and figures.

The committee is preparing a report on its findings to be submitted to the Brockton School Committee in May, 1976. With the added strength of the literature on overcrowding, we have compiled a more intelligent and comprehensive analysis than could be gleaned from statistics alone. We may not rattle the School Committee into action, but we have at least provided the basis for further action and study on the overcrowding problem at Brockton High.

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Report of a national survey of citizen participation in educational decision making, 1975, is no longer available from I.R.E. For copies, send $4.43 (hard cover price) or $.76 (microfiche) to: ERIC Document Reproduction Service, P. O. Box 190, Arlington, Virginia 22210 and ask for document number: ED 108 350.

CITIZEN PARTICIPATION IN EDUCATION: ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY
by Don Davies, 1974.
Not available from I.R.E. For copies, send $7.50 to ERIC, Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402.

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