

Despite recommendations from internees on the educational needs of their children, the War Relocation Authority (WRA) had not originally planned for the establishment of educational curricula and facilities within the temporary detention centers and internment camps.

Internees thus undertook initiatives to develop their own educational programs, even after official WRA guidelines on the establishment of internment camp school programs were distributed. They developed and taught classes for their nearly 30,000 children whose schooling had



requirements for courses of study and for graduation from both elementary and high school, as well as provide the courses necessary for admission to state colleges and universities.

The developers of this national educational policy were assisted by members of a Stanford University graduate seminar on curriculum development. Drawing from observations made during a two-day visit to the Tule Lake detention camp, seminar members developed a curriculum proposal that was eventually submitted to the Western Regional Office of the WRA. In this proposal, they argued for the adoption of a "community school" concept of creating and organizing educational programs in

Education In Camp

Administrative Instructions 23 & 24

by Lisa S. Hirai Tsuchitani

been disrupted, as well as for their parents and other family and community members who were incarcerated.

Despite these efforts, however, the WRA proceeded to make its own recommendations on how these educational programs should be run. Official educational policy for internees was eventually codified on August 17, 1942. Administrative Instruction Number 23 called for the employment of teachers, school superintendents, and other educational staff members as temporary war service appointments under Civil Service regulations. On August 24, 1942, Supplement No. 2 to Administrative Instruction 23 was issued, declaring that internment camp schools would meet state re-



Amache Detention Camp, CO.

the internment camps -- that the curriculum of the schools reflect the lived experiences of the students in the internment camp community.

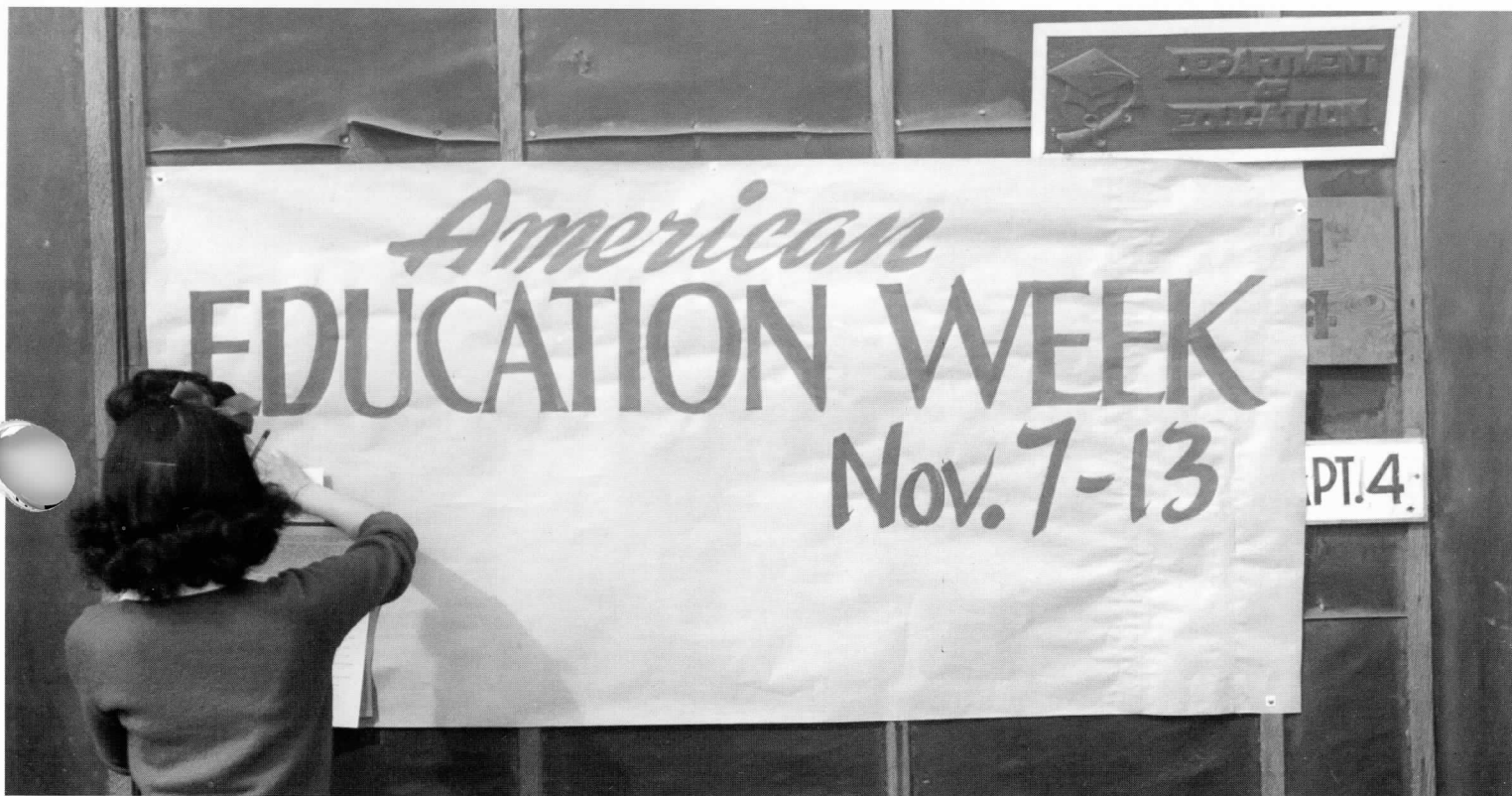
By September 1942, all WRA Education Sections were asked to adopt these curriculum measures. Using these guidelines, each internment camp then designed its own curriculum. Although the curriculum design varied for each camp, the objectives for these schools were similar: "to promote an understanding of American ideals, loyalty to American institutions and training for the responsibilities of citizenship and of family."

Although classroom conditions also varied between camps, facilities

and resources available for students and teachers were generally inadequate. Four or five classes were usually crowded into a single barrack without sound insulation between adjacent groups of students of various ages. Because central heating did not exist, temperature control within a classroom was also an impossibility.

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documented, very little has been written about the educational policies and programs that existed in the temporary detention centers and internment camps. Unfortunately, accounts written from the perspectives of internees on this topic have been particularly scarce. The purpose of this article has been to offer a brief historical overview of the development and implementa-



Education week sign, Manzanar, 1943. Photo by Ansel Adams, Library of Congress.

Some classroom supplies and textbooks were donated by the county and state schools which the children had attended before the war. Groups such as the American Friends Service Committee, as well as sympathetic local individuals, also sent contributions. Despite these contributions, however, students usually attended classes with or no books, blackboards, pens, chairs, tables, shelves, tools, art supplies, or typewriters.

Nearly half of the educational staff that was eventually hired were internees. Serving primarily as assistant teachers, they did not receive civil service status for their work. Because of a shortage of certified teachers, they taught a large percentage of all the classes offered in the internment camps, teaching usually four to six classes a day, for a monthly salary of nineteen dollars.

Although the history of the incarceration of Japanese Americans during World War II has been

tion of these policies and programs, in order to help contextualize the powerful personal testimonies which are featured in this issue of *Nikkei Heritage*.

R e f e r e n c e s :
War Relocation Authority files.

Thomas James, "Exile Within- The Schooling of Japanese Americans 1942-1945," Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA, London, England, 1987.

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