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# The Study of Split Grade Management

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THE STUDY OF SPLIT GRADE  
[REDACTED]  
MANAGEMENT

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A Research Paper  
Presented to  
the Graduate Faculty  
Central Washington College of Education

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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Education

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by  
Jack A. Anderson

August 1958

THIS PAPER IS APPROVED AS MEETING  
THE PLAN 2 REQUIREMENT FOR THE  
COMPLETION OF A RESEARCH PAPER.

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Mary I. Simpson, FOR THE GRADUATE FACULTY

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Clifford Erickson

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Charles Lienert

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## CHAPTER I

### THE PROBLEM AND DEFINITIONS OF TERMS USED

Since the very start of public education in the United States, educators have been concerned with the problems of classroom management. The majority of writings have been concerned with the typical teaching situation where an instructor is responsible for teaching one elementary grade.

#### I. THE PROBLEM

Statement of the problem. The purpose of this composition is to help teachers obtain a better understanding of the management of rooms which include more than one grade. This is a problem that small one and two teacher schools have faced for many decades and with recent increased enrollments, has carried over to large city schools as well. This type of situation presents unique managerial problems. Perhaps teachers with the help of background reading will not fall into some of the pitfalls that tend to be so prevalent in this area. It is hoped that this paper will prove beneficial to teachers in this situation, whose work is so difficult and yet, so interesting.

Importance of the study. Combined grades have always been a part of rural communities and in all probability will remain

for some time to come. Many states have reduced their numbers through reorganization, but there still remain 45,000 one teacher schools alone in the United States. There are also 70,000 teachers who hold emergency certificates, an increase of 20,000 over the 1944 figure. The great majority of these teachers are employed by rural districts. Now, as then, the reason for the crisis is not a shortage of competent people, but the shortage of funds to attract a more qualified teacher.<sup>1</sup> Teacher training institutions with other important mandatory courses, have little time to add additional classes that would benefit only a limited number. It is with this helping attitude that this paper is being written.

## II. DEFINITIONS OF TERMS USED

Split grades. This will refer more to a classroom in which a single teacher has more than one grade. It will also be used synonymously with multi-grade or combined grade.

Rural school. Any public school that is situated in a town, city, or locality having a population of less than 2500 persons shall be a rural school.

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<sup>1</sup>Rural Education, A forward look (Yearbook 1955), Washington 6, D. C., Department of Rural Education, National Education Association of the United States, p. 9.

School district reorganization. A term used to mean the consolidation of two or more active rural school districts into a larger single entity.

## CHAPTER II

### GROUPING IN SPLIT-GRADE SITUATIONS

All teachers in any school systems have had the task of separating or the placement of students in the classroom. Usually this is not accomplished until after the teacher knows some of the basic traits, abilities, and backgrounds of the pupils. The basic purpose in the selection of various steps is to shorten the range of abilities and make the groups more homogenous.

While rural and city schools have many common organization problems, the smaller multi-grade country schools have some other quite difficult problems. The planning of the daily program is very important to the teacher. She must consider the ages of the children, the different grades, and all of the subjects. Then she must draw up a schedule so that everyone is taken care of. The problem under the best possible conditions is very complicated.

The problems are obvious. Some classes are huge while others are small. The time factor is hard to distribute as some subjects need more time than others.<sup>1</sup> If every subject in a one-teacher

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<sup>1</sup>John R. Slacks, The Rural Teacher's Work (Boston: Ginn and Company, 1938), p. 200.

school were given time to recite daily, there would be forty different lessons with just a few minutes spent on each one. In addition to this almost impossible task the correcting of papers that accumulate would add up to a tremendous job indeed. In actual practice, group activities would be very inconspicuous which is counter to modern teaching methodology. This type of program has been used in countless small rural schools, but is being replaced by other more efficient practices.

## I. VARIOUS GROUP PLANS

Combination and alternation of grades. Numerous programs have been inaugurated for the betterment of split grade situations. Most of these plans have had similar goals but have differed in their ways to achieve it. Simply stated the goals are: (1) To increase the size of the individual groups, (2) To have the teacher spend more time with the groups, and (3) To extend the length of the recitation period.

U. J. Hoffman, an educator from Indiana, popularized the concept of "Combination and Alternation of Grades." The system, as the name implies, combined consecutive grades to meet the local needs. Some states were in opposition to the merging of certain subjects and skills so ramifications were made so that the plan was acceptable. Usually the grades of one and two, three and four, five and six, and seven and eight were combined. These were many times given letters for identification as A, B, C, and D grades. Under this organization

the eight original grades were divided into four groups.<sup>2</sup> In this plan a teacher would teach grades one, three, five, and seven one year, and reverse the process by teaching grades two, four, six, and eight the following year. The critics of this plan were quick to point out the weaknesses. They felt that it was not always possible to lay out plans two or three years in advance without interfering with the natural development of the child's ability. Another weakness was the "long jumps" from grades two to grade four, and grades six to grade eight. On other years he would be forced to revert backwards from grades two to one, four to three, and eight to seven. Teachers who taught under this plan tried to solve the inequality of the students through the use of sliding assignments, which could be shortened or lengthened depending upon the pupils' ability. Some people believed that the steps were not excessive, and that in learning it matters little which subject matter is mastered first.<sup>3</sup> Problems also arose when children moved into or out of the community. One can imagine what a teacher would say if a boy moved to a city school and was currently in the fourth grade, but had not attempted the third grade. Of

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<sup>2</sup>Slacks, op. cit., p. 202.

<sup>3</sup>Kate V. Wofford, Modern Education in the Rural School (New York: Macmillan Company, 1938), pp. 87-88.

course the reverse of this situation would be an urban child moving into a rural school and being unable to attend his correct grade as it was not being taught that year. The foregoing program was very well thought of by educators as a study by Charles M. Reinoehl attests. He found after examining forty-four state courses of study that seventy-three percent recommended its use in small schools and that most states made it mandatory.<sup>4</sup>

The Dalton Plan. Another study that tended to manifest itself was the working of individuals on a system in which the student worked at his own speed. This was accomplished by the use of a "Contract" between teacher and pupil. These agreements were carefully constructed in each subject and then the student set out to attain the goals that were outlined by the previous agreement. Helen Parkhurst, the originator of the plan, believes that the result and progress has been very noteworthy. Its many advantages tend to be a development in industry, independence in study and in thinking, cooperation, scholarship, honesty and sincerity.<sup>5</sup> This plan emphasizing self-direction serves each pupil according to his needs and relieves the

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<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 83.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., pp. 112-113.

teacher for truly creative teaching in place of routine instruction.<sup>6</sup>

Wofford sums up the disadvantages in this program as follows:

That the plan of individual instruction has its handicaps is evident, even to the uninstructed. To keep account of each individual child in each of the subjects seems on the face of it an impossible task. The chief purpose of individualized instruction, as the Michigan Guide points out, is to free the teacher from routine to creative tasks. This is an ideal on which both advocates and critics of the plan agree, but the critics inquire practically at this point if the constant correction of work sheets and workbooks is not the most deadly of routine tasks. Yet the whole scheme of individualized instruction falls down unless the teacher is in close touch with pupils via their written work. Another weakness of the plan lies in the fact that many teachers are prone to believe that teaching responsibilities are met as long as children are busy with their lesson sheets or workbooks. This tendency is a danger which cannot be lightly dismissed. It is a regression to the "busy work" of the first graded schools, and, ignored, tends to make the activity an end in itself.<sup>7</sup>

The Winnetka Plan. The city of Winnetka, Illinois, also adopted a plan for individualized instruction. Frederic Burk and Mary Ward originated the principles, which divide the subject matter into two distinct groups. The one segment contains the tool subjects which are important to every student. These would include spelling,

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<sup>6</sup>State of Michigan, Department of Public Instruction, Instructional Guide for Elementary Schools, Bulletin 301, 1936, p. 46.

<sup>7</sup>Wofford, op. cit., p. 126.

arithmetic, language, and reading. Superintendent Washburne firmly believes that mastery of the preceding subjects at the individuals own rate is a necessity. The second group of subjects would include such courses as social studies, art, literature, creative crafts, and other subjects in which individual accomplishments and attitudes may desirably differ.<sup>8</sup> The general plan seems to be to teach tool subjects and skills on an individual mastery basis, and then to teach creatively other social aspects as interest and needs seem justified.

The program consists of three steps. The first is a group of goals written down as facts that set standards of what every child for each grade should master. It is usually thought that the more specific the statement the better, as teachers tend to think in generalities. The second measure would be to set up a diagnostic test program, to cover the objectives that were set up by the teacher. These tests would be short subject matter tests, that would be given to individuals as they are ready for them. After the test was taken, the instructor would work on strengthening the students' weaknesses and inadequacies. Many times individual tests are given on an individual basis in place of recitation. The third progression is the making of self-instructive and self-corrective materials which

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<sup>8</sup>Carlton Washburne, Adjusting the School to the Child (New York: World Book Company, 1922), p. 5.

children can efficiently use. According to Washburne, this is the most difficult, and one in which the average teacher needs assistance.

The disadvantages of this program, as its proponents point out, are that frequently the learner achieves the tasks without any meaning relation, or reason for doing the work. All teachers who accept the principles of individualized instruction would do well to examine their practices from time to time, to ascertain if in them they are exchanging the precious substance of teaching for its shadow.<sup>9</sup>

Grouping of subjects. Still another approach to overcome the problem of many classes of small size, is the grouping of related subjects.<sup>10</sup> History and geography and civics have been grouped as social studies in many courses of study. More is involved in such organization than simply a merging of subjects. This modern approach is something relatively new, and an area which no doubt will become extremely popular in small rural schools. The same is

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<sup>9</sup>Wofford, op. cit., pp. 113-127.

<sup>10</sup>F. H. Gorman and Francis Holliday, "The Problems of Rural School Teaching," The National Education Journal, 43:553, December, 1954.

true of other subject groupings, such as the language arts area where reading, writing, spelling, composition, and speech may be taught.

Frequently, large integrated units of work are now incorporated into the curriculums of both city and rural schools. In the multigrade rural schools, many grades, or even all eight grades, may be organized for a particular study. Everyone joins the planning and when group discussions are held, the whole room is encouraged to actively participate in the discussion. The written work on all levels would be adjusted to the situation. Many integrated activities can be incorporated through the use of resource people, field trips, programs, and other various projects. The length of the unit is not specifically stated at the outset, but should be variable for different projects according to the interest, number of projects, and length of class time to complete the work. The class time allotted for each day may also vary from one to several hours, but interest and other factors would probably be served better if the period would extend not more than two hours. Many advantages are claimed for this approach, as it obviously reduces the number of classes and gives the students problems that are interesting and meaningful. Group activities are many, and varied, which make it more desirable than the other plans previously discussed. While this plan is easily set into motion, careful planning is vital so that all activities in the unit are being taught. Many

supervisors feel that teachers should follow a fairly rigid program, so that no studies will be neglected. This unit of work program seems to be gaining in favor. Mr. Kelly, writing in the Nations Schools had this to say.

Only through a fusion of related areas can we hope to retain valid knowledge and teach effectively. This will mean doing away with separate subjects entirely. Where essential skills are unrelated to any broad area of learning, they must be taught as separate subject matter skills. This is particularly true of the teaching of the three R's.<sup>11</sup>

The time when rural teachers must scurry through forty separate lessons is now behind us. With proper planning and modern ideas, the basic problems of multi-grade groupings have grown small. To be sure problems concerning resource material and library books will remain problems in many districts, but even with this minor hazard, the prospects for an improved grouping and teaching system are bright.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup>Marcella Rose Kelly, "Problem of the Overloaded Schedule," Nations Schools, 38:43, November, 1946.

<sup>12</sup>Ernest Hilton, Rural School Management (New York: American Book Company, 1949), pp. 87-88.

## CHAPTER III

### PLANNING, AN ESSENTIAL PART OF MANAGEMENT

"Every minute of time and every piece of school machinery should (at least in theory) give an educational account of itself." This is an exacting requirement. It says that our techniques of drill, our method of presenting factual content, our conduct of classes, our tests, and our means of recording results of tests and of reporting to parents and administrative officials must be evaluated constantly in terms of the results in the learning process.<sup>1</sup>

Only through careful planning can educators live up to this statement. One of the outstanding characteristics of a competent teacher is how well her time is used both in and out of the classroom.

#### I. PLANNING WITH STUDENTS

Although most teachers have very definite objectives that they want to reach, the intelligent teacher will not tactlessly impose these on her students. Rather, she directs the pupils to see the merits of the goals and accept them as their own. A master teacher, when asked what percent of the time his goals were reached stated that he felt his objectives in planning with sixth grade students were followed about eighty percent of the time, but the group believed, they were

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<sup>1</sup>Edwin John Brown, Managing the Classroom (New York: The Ronald Press Company, 1952), p. 179.

doing one hundred percent of the planning.

It was indeed a pleasure to observe a skillful educator have such control of the situation through democratic or group processes.<sup>2</sup> It is this type of situation in which students enjoy participating, and so do their utmost to make the project successful.

In meeting the program for split grade groups, the planning should be more explicit and concise. Again the idea being to have had as little confusion as possible as the segments of the class perform their part of the project. It is quite easy for things to get out of control if good planning is absent.

Daily planning. Probably the most efficient and helpful part of a teacher's day is planning for the next day. It would be hard to find a better use of time. The teacher operating with a modern point of view, will find the task fairly easy for usually the momentum of the unit will provide the details and procedures for the following day's work. Quite often, the teacher's interest in the project itself will carry him to do a great deal more than he might need. In each lesson plan the instructor should have a definite idea of what is to be accomplished during the period. There is no set form for daily

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<sup>2</sup>Stewart Van Wingerden, Western Washington College of Education, Campus School Teacher, During post observation question and answer period, February, 1955.

planning as it is an individual matter, and many different forms can be used.<sup>3</sup> The subject matter to be taught is included and an outline form is very practical because of its ease in reading. Questions and answers are usually included so as to draw interest and stimulate thinking. The following are a few rules to follow in helping to achieve good lesson plans.

1. In the first place, it is suited to the age, grade, intellectual ability, previous knowledge, interests and general background of the pupils to whom it is given.

2. The second characteristic of a good assignment is its absolute clearness and definiteness.

3. Whenever possible, assignments should require the pupils to do something that will appeal to them as immediately practical and useful.

4. It is always desirable and almost always possible to connect any given lesson with the work that has gone before.

5. It is also desirable that assignments should be made in as large units as possible.<sup>4</sup>

Some other good traits of lesson planning would be the wise budgeting of the time factor. Split grade scheduling is flexible to certain degrees, but it is much better to have a little extra time than

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<sup>3</sup>Ernest Hilton, Rural School Management (New York: American Book Company, 1949), p. 88.

<sup>4</sup>Luella Cole, Teaching in the Elementary School (New York: Farrar and Rinehart, Inc., 1939), pp. 306-311.

to run short. Not every lesson can be neatly wrapped up in a two minute session at the end of a period, but some pinpointing and recapitulation is certainly essential.

This pinpointing may be done by the teacher or a pupil, and is a rewarding process for either. Students taught to single out the things of chief importance will benefit by the experience all their lives. Teachers who attempt to state in a sentence or two, the core of the lesson, will find the best possible antidote for loose planning.<sup>5</sup>

The unit of work. While planning the daily lesson is important, it is not the only type of planning in which teachers engage. Actually, it is a continuous process that goes on all the time. The short term plan, or the unit, lasts for several weeks of time, while the long term planning may be for a year's duration. The general goal of the various unit plans, is to guide children through a series of unified experiences.

Teachers who are going to use the unit should prepare it in advance of the opening of school. Selection is important and consideration should be given to several different projects. It might be wise to review what other successful teachers have done with children

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<sup>5</sup>Walter F. Fogg, "Don't Let Your Teaching Tools Get Dull," The National Education Association Journal 45:405, October, 1956.

of this age level. The children themselves should be observed to see exactly what their interests and backgrounds reveal. Informal discussions could be held to determine whether the proposed unit will offer an adequate stimulation of growth. The unit if well organized, should be of a sufficient importance to merit persistent study. It should have a range of difficulty so that many levels of student ability can be reached. The sources of material should provide a variety of experiences so that the individual will learn how to find and organize materials. This would include assignments in dictionaries, encyclopedias, books, and other primary sources. After the facts are accumulated, the knowledge of their organization is important. If these meaningful situations do not develop in the unit, valuable skills are being overlooked. The great number of different activities could be extended to cover pages, but we shall not attempt the project in this paper. The author believes that other factors in unit management are of greater importance in this study.

The planning that leads up to the introduction is of vital importance as a foundation. Educators should arouse interest by bringing up challenging questions. Pictures, films, or even resource speakers, could assist them in arousing the keen curiosity of the group. The reasoning is that many units need the extra shove to get the project in motion. All units do not have the same emotional appeal and so the more enthusiasm that can be generated, the more successful

the start is to be. At the onset, it is sometimes hard to predict how much momentum the project will develop.<sup>6</sup>

Once the unit has commenced, the teacher seeks information that will enhance his own knowledge. This would take the form of integrating other subjects to the basic unit by reading, searching, and collecting data that will become an asset to him in the weeks ahead. He also must think on different grade and achievement levels. Split grade situations are difficult and he mustn't neglect the lower grade or grades in this endeavor. Making one's self available with helpful knowledge for various levels, takes versatility of the highest order. In some cases he encourages students to speed their activities up, and in others he advises caution. Frequently his time is taken up advising, commending, and kindly giving suggestions for improvement.

At other times the teacher conducts discussions on the work, and helps the student grasp the concepts and meaning of the different projects. Inquiring questions are asked to ferret out logical answers.

The preparations for the recording and audio-visual materials are arranged in proper sequence, so as to be of the greatest benefit. Bookmobile schedules may be checked, and additional trips

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<sup>6</sup>John A. Hockett and E. W. Jacobsen, Modern Practices in the Elementary School (Boston: Ginn and Comapny, 1943), pp. 74-78.

to the county office may bring more useful materials.

At the correct time the unit is culminated with reviews, quizzes, and an evaluation from the children themselves. Usually the class will summarize the good experiences, and explain why they enjoyed certain parts especially, and how they grew interested in other aspects as the unit unfolded. Their shortcomings should also be discussed with the idea that "next time we will improve." Shall we do it again? Unanimously the class nods in approval. This is the unit of work in a modern classroom.

## CHAPTER IV

### CONTROLLING THE CLASS THROUGH GUIDANCE

In all types of learning processes, standards must be set to guide individual behavior within the group. One of the major objectives in the public schools is to encourage the harmonious relationships that children foster towards their peers and adults. The elementary classroom with an environment of living and learning represents an ideal area to enhance these social needs. Most teachers at one time or another have experienced difficulties in controlling classroom behavior. All teachers at some time have wished for a magic formula to help them in a disastrous situation. This formula has not yet been devised, but many procedures have been evolved to guide the teacher in developing satisfactory techniques. The purpose of this chapter is to discuss these modern methods in relation to the split-grade classroom situation.

#### I. THE CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT

The problem of discipline. One of the complex traits of discipline is that the correct behavior should change according to the project at hand. In a unit of work for example, many different types of actions are used in the project. If a panel discussion is being prepared, soft talking is a must; while in observing an educational film,

silence is usually the rule. The point that seems apparent is that there are not rules for every learning situation. Children working under these conditions will have to understand what their objective is and match their behavior to fit the situation. There are so many different situations that emerge that an unwritten understanding is a vital part of unit work and control. Every classroom has some concrete standards to aid in routine classroom behavior.

The teacher's role. When children enter the classroom at the beginning of the term, a teacher must evaluate the child in relation to the group. The teacher must also see the learners as individuals, and attempt to understand the factors that make up his behavior patterns. His home life, family, success, and weaknesses, all tend to influence his actions. Guidance does not start at a given age, but is a continuing process that motivates people to react to their environment in certain ways. In the elementary school the teacher is extremely important as he is the person that the children imitate. If children receive help with their problems from the school, their attitudes and values of these institutions are changed. An improvement in the school-pupil relationship is likely to improve his behavior at school.

The teacher's work in a good guidance program should start with the cumulative record. These records are very

informative and usually do an adequate job of describing his past record in school. While these folders are helpful in pointing out certain desirable and undesirable traits, they are just indications of how he probably will fit into the class. Frequently a change in teachers affects the behavior pattern to some degree. Many times having a male instructor for the first time will improve the behavior of certain students.

Teachers in general and split-grade teachers in particular, should be compelled to study some of the basic needs of children. It is hard for certain age levels to "sit still" until they have developed their large muscles through activities. Rest periods and physical education help in dividing the school day. This type of balanced programing is stimulating to the students and helps them to perform as a whole, more efficiently.<sup>1</sup>

Security and the feeling to let the child know he is welcome and wanted is valuable. This should not only be present in the school, but also in his family and community relationship. Any child that has the feeling that he does not belong is likely to have serious trouble in his daily activities. These symptoms are not always evident and the

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<sup>1</sup>Ralph H. Ojemann, Personality Adjustment of Individual Children, Department of Classroom Teachers American Educational Research Association of the National Educations Association (Washington, 1954), pp. 10-11.

reactions may vary from the shy, retiring child to the boisterous, over aggressive individual. Other problems that reflect security are economic family background relationships. Any or all may be reflected through his behavior at school. Children of all ages comprehend more family difficulties than adults often suspect.

Schools are tending to offer a greater variety of activities, so that children may all have interests and gain some recognition. These encouragements to do something well, have been effective in many cases. Some enjoy athletic events, others excell in crafts or content subjects. It makes little difference what the school activity is, as long as he is appreciated and praised for his accomplishments. If he has not been guided into a constructive project he may well gain prestige through misconduct.

Everyone should recognize the fact that children differ a great deal. In every imaginable way children are individual beings. They walk and talk at different ages and maintain different rates of growth throughout their growing years. In education it is impossible to expect the same quality and interests for the various phases of a unit. Narrow subject-centered curriculums have been found to be lacking in helping individuals advance at their greatest rate. Ruth Strang, a competent psychologist, believes that curriculum and guidance are closely related. Five of the most important ways are listed below.

1. An unsuited curriculum will create more problems than a large staff of counselors can correct.
2. An inadequate curriculum will block effective guidance by stifling initiative and resourcefulness.
3. Insights gained in the guidance of individual pupils should be used in curriculum modification.
4. Many phases of guidance may lead toward curriculum modification.
5. Guidance through groups is an important part of the curriculum.<sup>2</sup>

The human organism is a complicated mechanism. Behavior may be brought about by an innumerable number of situations. It is in a constant state of change and therefore hard to evaluate. When teachers realize these complexities, they may sense the great need for child guidance in the classroom.

The previous type of organization that the children were under should be taken into consideration in formulating plans. Traditional classroom patterns should be broken gradually so the change is not too drastic. The new democratic atmosphere may be abused if the transition is not brought about in a gradual process. Group activities like other things, must be learned through doing and achievement.

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<sup>2</sup>Ruth Strang, "How Guidance Relates to the Curriculum," The Personnel and Guidance Journal, 32:263, January, 1954.

Most teachers who are new to split-grade situations may find that they will stress discipline a little more. With groups working on different levels, it is easy to have certain problems develop. It might be well to consider in part, Shorling's list of "preventive discipline" measures.

1. Learn the names of pupils quickly.
2. Study carefully the seating of the students.
3. Learn to "ride your eye" through the eyes of the students.
4. Learn to call upon those pupils whose attention is wavering.
5. Be business like.
6. Make every effort to avoid all suggestions of criticism, disorganization, or anger before the group.
7. When a member of the group obstructs the work, the treatment of the case should be calm, dignified and firm.
8. Use special occasions to carry over to the pupils the idea that you are interested in them as human beings.
9. Stop the little things.<sup>3</sup>

Items of this nature are very helpful to any teacher. Quite often in presenting lessons teachers overlook minor distractions. Other class members may feel that it is condoned, and try this mode

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<sup>3</sup>Raleigh Schorling, Student Teaching an Experience Program (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1940), pp. 59-60.

of behavior in the future. Usually educators try to halt improper conduct as soon as possible, as major problems have developed out of minor situations. Alert teachers can sense these situations, and remedy them with prompt action and a minimum of distraction.

Value of personality. In any classroom situation the one factor of utmost importance is the educator's personality. The sympathetic understanding of the behavior tendencies of different age levels are qualities that make the learning process easier. The knowledge of how to present facts and concepts through meaningful experiences is a product of the teacher himself. Sincerity in human relationships, sincere enthusiasm for the good, the true, and the beautiful, carry far more weight with children than clever techniques or devices in classroom management.<sup>4</sup> A teacher must constantly show that he believes in them and encourage them to believe in themselves. Not just the outstanding, but also the exceptional, the dull, and the average. His children will be encouraged by his cheerful smile, his humor and patience, or be disillusioned by his quick temper, short patience, and unsympathetic attitude. The influence that this will have on young children will be one of success or disappointment.

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<sup>4</sup>John A. Hackett, E. W. Jacobsen, Modern Practices in the Elementary School (Boston: Ginn and Company, 1943), p. 308.

The courageous teacher shares a priceless gift with children; the timid one passes his handicap on.<sup>5</sup> Today's teacher must be one of foresight and vision, a true leader that children and adults alike will both admire in his position. Baxter believes that a teacher must be a "social engineer" capable of setting up a provocative environment for children's learning, charting the course of each individual child through the ever changing social relationship in which he is involved and assisting each pupil to grow in his understanding of himself and of others.<sup>6</sup> The day of the traditional classroom and the Icabod Cranes are behind, and replacing them are professional educators with modern methods who enjoy and are enjoyed by American youth.

Co-operating agencies. This part of the chapter shall discuss the assistance that schools can secure in their guidance problems from public and private agencies outside of the schools themselves. The writer believes that this section is of more importance to small rural split-grade units than to those in city schools. Quite often the larger districts will employ additional personnel with professional training in guidance work to assist the classroom teacher,

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<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 309.

<sup>6</sup>Bernice Baxter, Teacher Pupil Relationships (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1941), p. 7.

while smaller districts, short on funds, will seek other solutions to their problems. The task of guidance was thought of as strictly a school function for many years. Although the school still has a prime responsibility in the area, the public has realized that they too have certain implications in this matter. The results have been that certain organizations have been formed to meet the pressing demands.

At the local level Parent-Teacher Organizations have enlisted the help of the medical doctors, teachers, psychiatrists, psychologists, and law enforcement officers to better understand the problems of youth. Discussions relevant to guidance are being conducted with emphasis on community co-operation. The professional people can be called in to give advice and recommend preventive procedures in many cases. These groups are still in their infancy, but already a better understanding has been brought about. Private fraternal groups have also realized the needs and responded with action. The Fraternal Order of the Elks, Rotary Club, Lions Club, Knights of Columbus, and others have helped out financially in many instances. Sometimes they contribute to the support of certain cases, board others outright, and contribute in various ways to the support of the less fortunate people.

The counties themselves have established agencies for special education. Usually this consists of a director, who concurs

with the numerous school districts concerning guidance problems and individual case studies. The director may be called in for advice or administer tests to determine the capabilities that children possess. The results may be analyzed and supplemented with information gained from interviews. All of this data is helpful in placing the individual in a situation where his abilities could be utilized to the utmost in the learning environment. Sometimes referrals are made to particular programs in the district or other schools for exceptional children.

Social workers and welfare operations can be of much help to teachers and administrators. They very often can give valuable insight into emotional problems of school children. The classroom teacher will then be able to give constructive guidance to the pupils' needs. There are innumerable situations that if undetected, can cause serious types of maladjustment. The only way to correct the trouble is to find the cause, and work from there in helping individual children. In this respect, the welfare agencies are providing a valuable service to educators.

Teachers should know of these community agencies so that they could consult with them if the need should arise. They are most co-operative and are eager to help schools build a stronger community through guidance. Most communities are doing more than ever before to help in the guidance of the young. Perhaps this is the most urgent time in our history for co-operation between the community and the school forces.

## CHAPTER V

### SUMMARY AND IMPLICATIONS

Managing classrooms with more than one grade level has long been a problem in the field of education. Rural communities with sparse population have necessitated schools with small enrollments. The trend to reorganize these through consolidations has been slow in most cases. Improved roads and transportation facilities have shortened the distances, but still parents dislike the idea of long tedious bus rides for their offspring. Quite often consolidation is interpreted as a means of taking school control away from parents and is opposed bitterly.

Urban schools usually combine grades because of increased enrollment and a shortage of space. With the so called war babies in school now, and teacher shortages at a high level, it would seem to indicate that no solution will be forthcoming overnight. The number of combined grades in urban schools is few compared with the many small country teaching units.

#### I. ADVANTAGES IN RURAL MULTI-GRADES

The rural school with fewer teachers than grades should not be considered as an inferior learning institution. Actually there are some definite advantages in rural education. The country has an

abundance of space in which children can run, climb, or engage in much muscular activity. The child learns about nature's workings and how man is limited because of these forces. Life proceeds at a continual pace with the seasons of each year bringing new experiences and work to be done. The pets and animal companions of farm life are relationships that few children in our society can match.

The human relationships on farms are also very personal as it is the economic unit. Everyone must do his share to make the farm supporting. Recreation is frequently participated in by the whole family. Everyone is concerned about the other family members because of the common bond of family experiences. These students who have a background of family co-operation tend to help out rural multi-grade situations. Many times they are able to organize their assignments and are self-reliant. This enables the teacher to give additional time to other younger class members who have not been in school so long.

Disadvantages. The disadvantages of rural schools are many. Financing is probably the biggest single factor, as good educational institutions require funds on which to operate. This money buys books, teaching equipment, and pays the teacher's salary. If the teacher does not have adequate tools with which to work the instruction may be of inferior quality. Visual aids of all types may

be difficult to secure in such situations. When teaching a unit of work the most single important tool is reference books. The teacher in a rural school must see what type of materials are available before any class planning is established. The teaching methods will be compelled to correlate with materials on hand. Regular schedules for bookmobile visits should be known so that appropriate literature will be available when it is needed.

Challenging instruction. Split-grade classrooms are a real challenge to teachers. They must plan their assignments so that they will help the dullest member of the group and stimulate the brightest member. The teacher must show through action and deed that he is vitally interested in the progress of the students. Friendliness and a good sense of humor are also desirable in relieving the tensions of the classroom. It is best to plan for a joke so that irritability may be reduced. New methods should be tried and old ones revised as the situations progress. One should not become stagnant or complacent, but should be continually searching for ways to achieve more meaningful experiences.

Experience a factor. A teacher who plans on teaching in a multiple grade should know some of the problems. The author believes that at least two years of successful teaching experience would be an asset if one were contemplating this type of teaching

assignment. Most student teaching in college is done with one grade level. Usually beginning teachers do not begin to get the "feel" of the situation until after the second year, and so a third year split-grade would still be a large assignment. The teaching load is another factor that could make a big difference in the problems involved. Combined grades which are over thirty pupils in size would prove to be a large assignment for any teacher; however, loads this size are becoming fewer in split-grade situations.

The best organizations. During the last thirty years many types of school organizations have been tried. The combination-alternation approach, Winnetka Plan, Dalton Plan, Unit Plans, and Platoon System have all been used with varying degrees of success. Some have been successful in certain districts and have failed to impress educators in others. It would be a difficult assignment to choose which one is "the answer" to multiple grade problems as weaknesses have been shown in each. The implication would seem to be that each district should evaluate its objectives and facilities to see which would meet its needs best. Some of the factors that should be taken into consideration would be: (1) the size of the classes, (2) the professional background of the staff, (3) the ages of the staff members, (4) the physical plant, (5) the views of the faculty, (6) the community opinions, (7) the school budget, and (8) the objectives of

the schools. The writer feels that it is unwise to generalize about which plan will ultimately serve the community best. Having experienced success with the long-view unit approach, it has become the writer's favorite, but in certain localities under unfavorable conditions, it might well be doomed to failure.

Good split-grade management is a combination of many things; planning, organization, human relationship, group control, patience and wisdom. Progressive educators long have been displaying these traits and with continual evaluation taking place, multi-grade instruction should reach new heights of perfection.

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