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# A Survey: What Elementary Teachers Recommend About Their Multi-Purpose Rooms

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A SURVEY: WHAT ELEMENTARY TEACHERS RECOMMEND  
ABOUT THEIR MULTI-PURPOSE ROOMS

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A Research Paper  
Presented to  
the Faculty of the Graduate School  
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  
Charles Wesley Anderton  
August 1955

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## INTRODUCTION

School population trends have been the topic of discussion in most of our communities since World War II. Increased enrollments, the need for new schools and inflated costs of construction have prescribed a review of school uses and needs in most communities. Each function of the school has been under survey, and many of our leading school construction specialists have stressed the need for flexibility and combination of special units.

Special units needed in the elementary school to provide for physical education, assemblies, band and community functions are too expensive to be included in most school plants, yet these functions are recognized as a part of our elementary school program. Many school districts have attempted to resolve this situation by constructing a multi-purpose room.

### I. THE PROBLEM

Statement of the problem. What functions are commonly associated with multi-purpose rooms, and how are the activities managed? Reference to professional literature indicates that many activities commonly associated with cafeterias, auditoriums,

physical education centers, libraries and community-school centers are adequately accomodated in single unit, centralized facilities.<sup>1</sup> Individual units such as gymnasiums and auditoriums are more commonly provided for in the secondary school than the elementary. The multi-purpose room affords elementary schools the basic accomodations for activities that require special space facilities. Frequently, multi-purpose rooms are being constructed for combined utilization by school and community. This research proposes to determine the solution to those aspects of the problem that are encompassed by teacher experiences.

Statement of the purposes. The present study was undertaken (1) to compile objective evidence of current uses of multi-purpose rooms; (2) to obtain recommendations of elementary teachers concerning the utilization of their multi-purpose rooms.

## II. DEFINITION OF TERMS USED

Teacher. Any person in possession of a valid

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<sup>1</sup>N. L. Engelhardt, N. L. Engelhardt, Jr., and Stanton Leggett, Planning Elementary School Buildings (New York: F. W. Dodge Corporation, 1953), pp. 118-123.

teaching certificate in Washington is considered a teacher irrespective of whether the position held is administrative, supervisory or instructional.

## RESEARCH DATA

### I. TECHNIQUE

This research was conducted at Central Washington College of Education during the summer quarter 1954. Instructors in the following courses gave class time so that elementary teachers who had recent experience with multi-purpose rooms and were disposed to participate in the research had the opportunity to acquire and fill out a questionnaire.

Education	103a	Teaching Procedure in Language Arts	Lembesis
Education	109	The Elementary School Principal	Murphy
Education	110	School Supervision	LaCoste
Education	132Int.	The Modern Reading Program	Lembesis
Education	140a	School Production of Instructional Aids	Howard
Education	146	Introduction to Guidance	Russell
Education	160	Secondary Education	Langton
Education	175	School Building Planning	LaCoste
Education	200	Introduction to Graduate Study	Samuelson
Education	204	Administration of the Guidance Program	Muzzall
English	103a	American Literature	Anshutz
English	154a	The Short Story	Anshutz
Psychology	1	General Psychology	Thompson
Psychology	102	Educational Psychology	Thompson
Psychology	200	Human Growth and Development	Jacobsen

These courses were selected because most of the elementary teachers on the campus could be conveniently contacted in them.



The questionnaire was distributed to 138 teachers who indicated they had recent experience with multi-purpose rooms. Of this number, 114 returns were received and the compilation is based on this number.

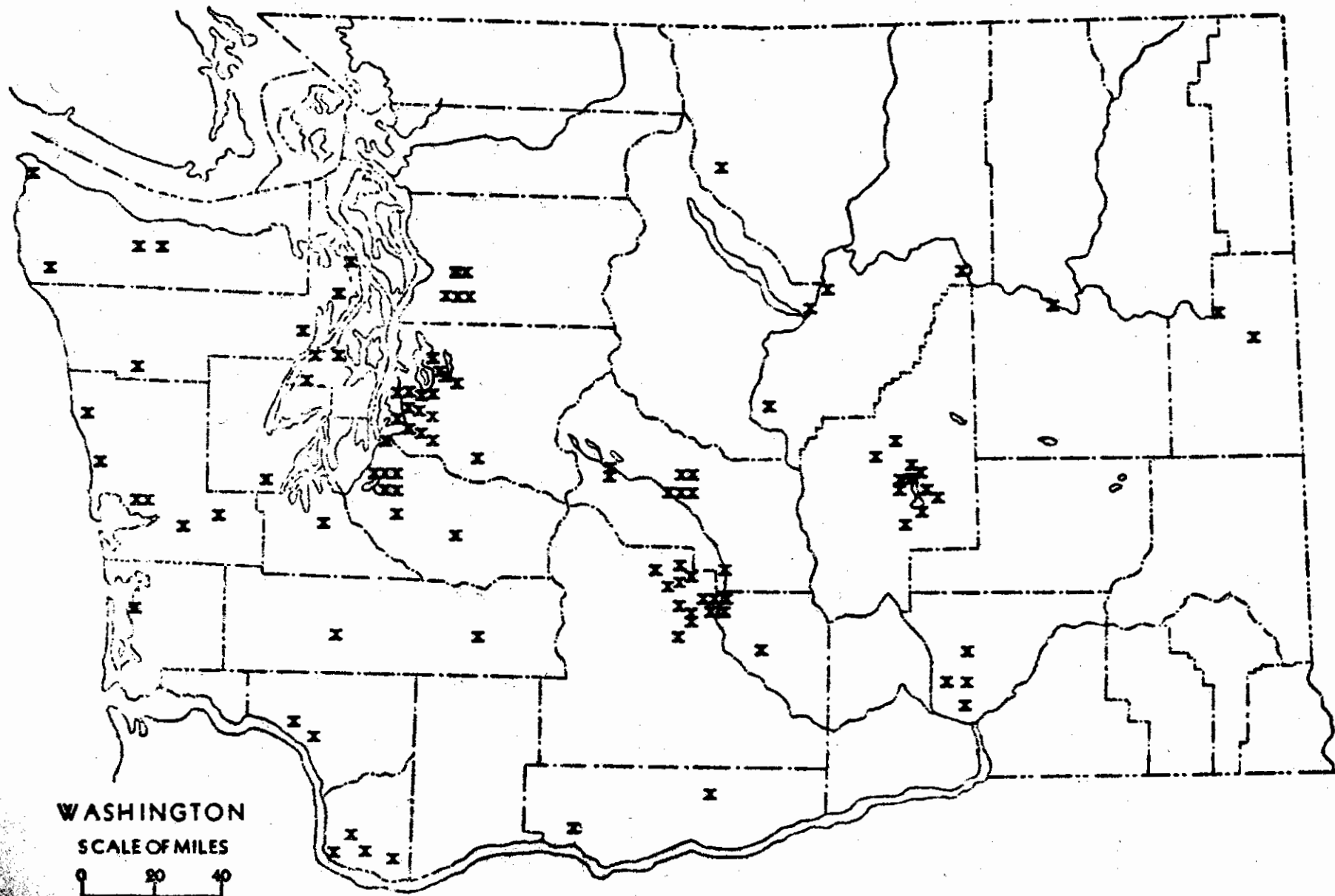
The geographical distribution of school buildings within the several school districts employing teachers whose reply was received is indicated on the following page. It shows the greatest coverage for the Puget Sound area and the central portion of the state. The survey covered eighty school districts and 106 school buildings.

## II. QUESTIONNAIRE REVIEW

### 1. What position do you hold?

Teacher Primary	30
Teacher Intermediate	55
Principal	20
Supervisor	8
Superintendent	1
	<u>114</u>

The answers to this question indicate that this research incorporates the opinions of the several levels of professional personnel common to elementary schools. It is possible that three differing attitudes might be expressed as viewed from the varying perspectives of administrator, supervisor and classroom teacher. The administrative branch is represented with twenty one persons reporting, supervisors with



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eight and classroom teachers with eighty five.

2. Does every teacher in your building have an opportunity to use the multi-purpose room?

Yes	108
No	6
	<u>114</u>

a. If "no" what teacher or teachers are denied its use?

Kindergarten	4
Primary (Grades 1-3)	3
Intermediate (Grades 4-6)	0
Specialist (Music, Art)	3

b. Why are these teachers denied its use?

Physical Education conflict	2
Lunch conflict	
Other areas provided	2
Lack acoustics	

Almost all teachers are conceded time in the multi-purpose room.

The six negative answers do not necessarily imply a scope that is too narrow to accomodate the named activities; rather, facilities other than the multi-purpose room are available. In the case of the few who were denied the room due to a conflict, this inadequacy serves to emphasize the competition that exists for time and indicates that the schools surveyed were extensively utilizing the facility.

3. How many days a week does each teacher use the multi-purpose room.

By request	31
One to three days a week	36
Five days a week	38
No response	9

The answers to this question were written in long hand by the teachers, so the above analysis is a summary.

Of 114 teachers reporting, seventy four state that the multi-purpose room is scheduled to them either one, three or five days a week. This implies that the desire for time in this special unit is great enough that scheduling has become necessary to avoid conflict. The thirty one teachers who obtain time by request may be in a school in which facilities are spacious enough to allow less scheduling formality. It appears that the multi-purpose room has not become routinized as an integral part of the daily program in every school.

4. How long is the scheduled period?	
By request	27
Less than thirty minutes	17
Thirty minutes	26
Over thirty minutes	10
Forty five minutes or over	27
No response	7
	<u>114</u>

In the oral discussion conducted prior to the filling out of this question, it was stipulated that the answers be expressed in daily, rather than weekly use. It is apparent that the multi-purpose room lends itself readily to frequent usage for short periods. This flexibility suggests that the pupil traffic each day is quite heavy.

5. What functions does the multi-purpose room serve?

Cafeteria	53
Auditorium	109
Gymnasium	82
Classroom	20
Library	6
Visual Aids room	63
Adult meetings (P.T.A. only)	99
Adult meetings (other than P.T.A.)	90
Parties	87
Play area before and after school	63
Scheduled P.E. activities	90
Youth center (Boy Scouts, Campfire)	65
Band	61
Other (Choir 4; Dances 8)	12

The broad scope of activities is demonstrated in the replies to this question. The extent that the multi-purpose room implements and expedites modern education can be deduced from the variety of utilizations that are indicated. It is difficult to visualize any one unit serving so many functions, but these responses prove the room's flexibility.

6. What markings do you have on the floor area?

Basketball	59
Shuffleboard	9
Badminton	7
Volleyball	17
Circle games	8
None	46
No response	4

a. Are any of these markings not used?

Basketball	3
Badminton	2

Multi-purpose rooms are being partially utilized for basketball instruction. It is also noted that few floor markings other than basketball boundaries

have been placed on the room's floor area. Approximately forty per cent have no floor markings, revealing that the activities in these rooms are such that no guide lines are required. The organized play and game activities of lower grade children do not require the specific markings commonly found in high school gymnasiums.

7. Does the multi-purpose room have a stage?	
Yes	92
No	20
No response	2
	<u>114</u>

A great majority of multi-purpose rooms in the schools covered by this survey have stages as an added educational facility.

8. How often is the stage used?	
Seldom	32
Once a week	8
Frequently	10
Daily (Band)	12
Three to five times a week	25
As scheduled	5

The stage in multi-purpose rooms does not have the full utilization that would be expected after examining the responses to question seven. Its frequency of use is not impressive with thirty two replying "seldom". There is an inference that the stage may be of real value in some schools, but of debatable value in others. A district contemplating the construction of a multi-purpose room should carefully

evaluate the extent of use to be derived from a stage.

9. What type windows does the multi-purpose room have?

Opaque	15
Clear	68
Wire protected	37
Glass brick	7
Plastic	7
Other (skylight 1; shatter proof 1; none 1)	3

The obvious preference for clear windows discloses an attempt to have the multi-purpose room adequately lighted. Evidence that multi-purpose rooms are being constructed with a view toward physical education activities is shown in the responses indicating windows are wire protected.

10. Is there storage space?

Yes	87
No	22
No response	5

a. What is stored in this space?

Physical education equipment	26
Visual aids equipment	11
School supplies	11
Piano	52
Chairs	52
Tables	13
Stage equipment	24
Music equipment	13
Community storage (youth and adult groups)	5

The importance of storage space in the multi-purpose room is illustrated by the diversity of equipment stored in this space. Evidence of planning for a broad scope of activities in this room is indicated

by the number of responses that show the incorporation of storage space in this unit. Further evidence of the wisdom of planning for flexibility is shown by the variety of equipment for different types of activities that are stored in this room.

11. In general, are you satisfied or dissatisfied with the present use of your multi-purpose room?

Very well satisfied	37
Satisfied	46
Uncertain	6
Dissatisfied	16
Very much dissatisfied	5
No opinion	4
	<u>114</u>

A great majority of the teachers indicate a degree of satisfaction with the present use of their multi-purpose room. This is an important observation in that activities served by this room are so numerous and broad in scope that its ability to satisfactorily meet these needs might be doubted. With only twenty one teachers indicating some dissatisfaction it appears that the inclusion of a multi-purpose room in an elementary school plant is pedagogically justified.

12. How valuable is the multi-purpose room in the development of learning experiences.

Great value	44
Considerable value	42
Some value	22
Little value	3
No value	3
	<u>114</u>

The wealth of learning experiences available



through the multi-purpose room is illustrated in the response to question twelve. Of 114 teachers reporting, eight six indicate that the room is of great value or considerable value in the developmental learning process. A need for this type of room in school plants that do not have the several special units such as auditorium, physical education center and cafeteria is evidenced in that only six professional educators indicated it was of little or no value.

The replies to this question bear an implication concerning the twenty one teachers who indicated dissatisfaction on the preceding question. At least some of them find that value is to be derived from the room.

13. How much time do you feel your children should be allotted in the multi-purpose room for optimum social and physical development?

a. Daily

Minutes	For Organized Play	For Free Play
0	9	4
10-29	15	22
30	16	30
31-40	4	9
45-up	25	21

b. Weekly

Minutes	For Organized Play	For Free Play
0	9	4
50-145	23	36
150	16	30
155-200	4	9
225-up	25	21

Minutes		
0		
50-145		
150		
155-200		
225-up		

9	
23	
16	
4	
25	

4
36
30
9
21

Free and organized play is recognized by the respondents as a part of the modern school program. A major portion of the teachers indicate that periods of thirty minutes or less give sufficient time to adequately fulfill the daily educational requirements of social and physical development.

The responses to section "b" coincide with those of "a" except for the one time of "50-145" minutes. The reason for the deviation at this point is that this time allotment includes the groups that receive one fairly long period a week.

14. What uses do you make of your multi-purpose room?

Cafeteria	22
Physical education-gymnasium	56
Auditorium	102
Free play	23
Organized play	34
Social	49
Adult groups	35
Youth center	10
Visual aids	43
Music	39
Free rhythm	19
No comment	12

The variety of responses implies that some activities can be managed with greater success in a multi-purpose room than in a classroom. The value of the multi-purpose room as a part of our modern educational plant can readily be seen by examining the varied and multiple uses teachers make of it.

The meaning of this question contrasts with the apparently similar question five, as follows: question fourteen is concerned with individual teacher utilization, question five with the function of the room relative to the balance of the building.

15. If you were planning a multi-purpose room, for what facilities would you plan?

Cafeteria	22
Physical education-gymnasium	54
Auditorium	94
Free play	22
Organized play	27
Social	42
Adult groups	35
Youth center	12
Visual aids	35
Music	27
Free rhythm	14
Storage space	20
No comment	14

Teachers recommend that the multi-purpose room be constructed to implement a broad scope of activities. The variety of facilities they would plan in this room denotes their wish for a multiple activity unit that will aid them in attaining educational experiences for children beyond the limits of their classroom.

If we consider that a multi-purpose room should be designed for well defined uses, those most commonly proposed by teachers would be, in order, as follows:

(1) auditorium; (2) physical education-gymnasium; (3) social; (4) and (5) visual aids and adult groups. In comparing this with the responses to question fourteen

it can be seen that of the listed activities, "music" has the highest ratio of "use" responses to "plan" recommendations. That is, music is the activity that shows the greatest discrepancy between the two questions. This casts doubt on the advisability of assigning music activities to the multi-purpose room.

16. What type floor do you prefer for a multi-purpose room?

Wood	58
Cement	3
Tile	48
Linoleum	1
No comment	4

The response to question sixteen clearly indicates that wood or tile floors are the only types of floor covering teachers consider suitable to their purposes.

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This study was undertaken to determine what type facilities are commonly associated with multi-purpose rooms, and what type activities are presently managed in this room. An attempt was made to obtain evidence of its current uses and to gather recommendations of elementary teachers concerning this room.

The questionnaire technique was selected as a means of obtaining objective data only after a search of the library at Central Washington College of Education gleaned information that was too sketchy for the purpose of this study. Several instructors gave of their class time to assist in the distribution of questionnaires. The classes were selected because of the probability that most of the experienced elementary teachers on the campus this summer would be enrolled in them, and that all of these teachers should have an opportunity to participate in this study. All told, 138 questionnaires were handed out, and 114 teachers availed themselves to assist with this survey.

The teachers returning questionnaires were representatives of eighty school districts and 106 school buildings. The distribution was state wide, and included the several levels of professional educators common

to the elementary school.

The breadth of learning experiences that the multi-purpose room is capable of accommodating is illustrated by data indicating that almost all of the teachers are extended the opportunity to use this room. Further proof of its importance to the school program is found in the need for regularly scheduled periods to avoid conflict and to assure that teachers are not denied its use.

The current utilization of the multi-purpose room is primarily as an auditorium, social center and physical education center. It is interesting to note that the uses made of this room by teachers, and what they would plan for if they were constructing a building, are rather closely correlated. One feature, the stage, found in the majority of multi-purpose rooms is of debatable value. It may be however, that although the stage be used infrequently, its value when used would be so great as to justify its inclusion in the room.

Storage space is included in most of the multi-purpose rooms, and the utilization of this space for a wide variety of equipment indicates that flexibility is greatly enhanced by this feature.

The variety and number of activities that are

carried on in the multi-purpose room suggests its intrinsic value in the educational program. How this room can meet the needs of so many separate activities is of interest for further study, but the implication that a wide variety of needs are being met is demonstrated by comparing how teachers use this room with the facilities they would recommend if they were planning to construct such a unit.

A majority of the teachers report they are at least satisfied with their present multi-purpose room, and that they feel there is considerable value derived from this facility in terms of learning experiences.

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## APPENDIX



- Parties
- Play area before and after school
- Scheduled P. E. activities
- Youth center (Boy Scouts, Campfire)
- Band
- Other; explain \_\_\_\_\_

6. What markings do you have on the floor area?

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a. Are any of these markings not used?

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7. Does the multi-purpose room have a stage?

- Yes
- No

8. How often is the stage used?

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9. What type windows does the multi-purpose room have?

- Opaque
- Clear
- Wire Protected
- Glass brick
- Plastic
- Other; explain \_\_\_\_\_

10. Is there storage space?

- Yes
- No

a. What is stored in this space?

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11. In general are you satisfied or dissatisfied with the present use of your multi-purpose room?

- Very well satisfied
- Satisfied
- Uncertain
- Dissatisfied
- Very much dissatisfied
- No opinion

12. How valuable is the multi-purpose room in the development of learning experiences?

- Great value  
 Considerable value  
 Some value  
 Little value  
 No value

13. How much time do you feel your children should be allotted in the multi-purpose room for optimum social and physical development?

	Each day	Each week
Organized play	_____	_____
Free play	_____	_____

14. What uses do you make of your multi-purpose room?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

15. If you were planning a multi-purpose room, for what facilities would you plan?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

16. What type floor do you prefer for a multi-purpose room?

- Wood  
 Cement  
 Tile  
 Other; \_\_\_\_\_