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A Study to Determine a Program for the Gifted Child in the Eastmont Elementary Schools

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A STUDY TO DETERMINE A PROGRAM
FOR THE GIFTED CHILD IN THE
EASTMONT ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

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

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

by
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APPROVED FOR THE GRADUATE FACULTY

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CHAPTER I

THE PROBLEM AND DEFINITIONS OF TERMS USED

I. THE PROBLEM

Statement of the problem. The humanitarianism of American people has demanded help for all types of the handicapped. Since this problem is on its way to a solution, attention has been placed on the gifted child. How to meet his needs is a problem foremost in the minds of educators and the general public. This trend is indicated by the number of articles appearing in educational and popular periodicals.

Surely there is no problem of greater or more far-reaching implications for the strength and welfare of the nation today than the appropriate and maximum use of the manpower resources. Excellence, creativity, inventive powers, superior competence; indeed the special intellectual and personal talents of all should be developed to the maximum as a matter of sound state and national policy (19:2).

This paper was written to suggest a possible approach to the problem of meeting the needs of gifted elementary children in the Eastmont Schools of East Wenatchee, Washington.

Scope of the problem. It was designed to (1) evaluate the need of a special program for gifted children in the Eastmont Schools, (2) investigate the types of programs

used in selected school systems, and (3) suggest a philosophy which will best fit the needs and facilities of the Eastmont Schools.

This paper does not attempt to provide a fixed plan to be followed or a program of study within the curriculum but to point out the feasibility of establishing such a program. A program for the gifted child should not lessen the attention to a program of education designed to develop to the maximum all pupils regardless of specialized talents. The uniqueness and worth of every child must be recognized at all times.

Procedure of study. A survey was made of curriculum materials and articles in current periodicals to find courses of study and programs used by selected schools. A sampling of achievement and mental maturity was obtained by using test results from one sixth grade room in the Eastmont Schools. This was done to determine the correlation between these two factors through a small random sampling. Studies of the school buildings and school populations were used. After the school and community factors were considered, an evaluation was made to suggest a philosophy for the Eastmont Schools.

II. DEFINITIONS OF TERMS USED

Gifted. Used in a very broad sense, the term gifted

includes those who have very high intelligence and also those who have special abilities in creative fields such as art, music, or writing regardless of their academic standing in other subjects. This, the connotation of gifted used by Goldberg, is also used in this paper (14:277).

Segregation. As applied to the education of the gifted child, Goldberg describes segregation as any organization in which specific students are selected for special groups not open to other members of the student body (14:278).

Acceleration. Acceleration has been described by Pressey as "... movement of students through an educational program in shorter times or at younger ages than has been conventional" (22:2).

Enrichment. Enrichment is commonly thought of as provisions for gifted children within the framework of the regular classroom. Abraham says that it is designed as learning experiences in which the pupil is provided with greater depth of knowledge and a broader content of the curriculum. Enrichment should be a part of any classroom, special class, or special program (1:82).

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

A review of recent courses of study from schools in different sections of the country reveals that the study of the gifted child has become popular among educators.

Although there have been many articles in the current popular press and in recent educational periodicals on the education of the gifted child, there have been but few books published on this subject.

Baker devoted two chapters of his book on exceptional children to mentally superior and gifted children (3:389-440). The section of this book dealing with the mentally gifted child includes a discussion of a definition of the gifted; their characteristics, background, and history; and the development of programs of study for them.

Paul Witty, perhaps one of the more prominent educators writing in this field, has written a number of articles appearing in various publications of popular and professional appeal. He served as editor of a book for the American Association for Gifted Children (2:1-338). This book summarizes a considerable amount of available information on gifted children and their education.

The Stanford Study of gifted children was begun in 1921 by Dr. Lewis M. Terman, who also made a follow-up

study of the same individuals from time to time over a period of twenty-five years. These have been written up in the Genetic Studies of Genius (28:1-641; 27:1-448). This study showed that nearly all the people involved entered professional or related fields. None of them, however, made an outstanding contribution to society.

Recently Sumption made a study of the results of Cleveland's Major Work classes. The results indicated that the pupils had benefited to varying degrees from having been in the class. The advantages were shown to far outweigh the disadvantages of the special grouping. Sumption found that the Major Work program developed leadership ability to a greater extent than did the regular school.

Sumption and Luecking have brought together the major research findings with regard to understanding and educating the gifted. This comprehensive study of theory, organization, procedures, and personnel offers help to administrators, teachers, and the community. It presents objectively the information available as to the advantages and disadvantages of the various types of educational organizations and practices without promoting any one program (26:1-476).

Science Research Associates have published a book on practical programs for the gifted. This book briefly outlines some of the programs used by various school systems throughout the country (17:1-188). It makes no attempt to

evaluate the programs.

The book edited by Shertzer for Science Research Associates is a collection of papers presented at conferences conducted by the North Central Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools Project on Guidance and Motivation of Superior and Talented Students (21:1-364). Many points of view are presented on organization and procedures of development. Ways of identifying the pupil with special abilities in the arts are presented in one section of the book.

In a study of the literature on the gifted child, numerous suggestions and recommendations can be found advocating how least to hinder his progress and how best to motivate and guide him. In some instances there is a unity of opinion regarding the advisability of a given program, plan, or practice. In other instances it is possible to find opposite opinions regarding the same activity. On one point most literature on the gifted child is in agreement. There should be a definite advancement in our schools in making provision for the gifted child.

CHAPTER III

STUDY OF TYPES OF PROGRAMS USED IN SELECTED SCHOOLS

There are three recognized general organizational techniques for working with the gifted child. These are segregation, acceleration, and enrichment. Enrichment is recognized as a technique of study as well as a form of program. For each program there are supporting evaluations advocating adherence to that program. Criticisms can be found which deny the virtue of the procedures. In fact so many disadvantages in using these techniques are cited that it would seem that any positive values might be annulled by the possible dangers accompanying them.

History of the development of classes for the gifted indicates efforts to provide special educational opportunities during the latter part of the nineteenth century (3:288-290). The modern period of special classes began about 1920 with programs in Cleveland, Los Angeles, and Rochester, New York. The trend toward classes in special education has not had a very encouraging history. In 1930 Heck reported that only 30 of 762 cities over 10,000 population had special classes or schools, and his report covered 96.6 per cent of all cities of that size (15:20-21). In 1948 there were fewer than 21,000 gifted students enrolled

in special classes in the elementary and secondary schools in the United States.

Segregation. Some schools have developed special classes for gifted children. These do not take the child out of his own age group but do place him with his intellectual peers.

Goldberg has stated that most grouping plans are intended to bring together students of relatively high ability or achievement in one or several areas in order to increase the interstimulation of students upon each other and to facilitate enriched instructional procedures.

. . . helping gifted students to develop more realistic self-appraisals; providing these students with greater opportunities for testing out original ideas on a group of peers capable of understanding and reacting critically to such ideas; . . .

are some suggested advantages of this plan (14:277).

Cutts and Moseley believe the child is challenged by competition with other gifted children. The work is not only more advanced than work in the normal class but it is more stimulating as well. The pupils are able to give and take criticism, exchange ideas, and share research. There is no feeling of discrimination if a great deal of work is expected of the entire class (10:91).

In periodic surveys made of Cleveland's Major Work Classes, Barbe found that the former students responded with enthusiasm (4:60-62). The survey showed that most of them

had benefited from the class, particularly in the field of leadership. The survey showed that the best liked aspects of the program were the opportunity to express individuality, differences in the curriculum, stimulation and challenge, foreign language study, student-teacher relationships, and small size of the classes. Suggested improvements included better trained teachers, more mixing with other students, more acceleration, and more vocational guidance.

Some arguments say these classes are a form of unhealthy segregation that breeds conceit. They say, further, that instead of molding potential leaders, special classes reduce the ability of bright children to communicate with others of less capacity. Also, separation is unfair to the average students, who are deprived of the extra stimulation they are entitled to get from their gifted classmates. The wrong people may be selected for placement in the class and be deprived of the advantages.

Cutts and Moseley suggest that a periodic reshuffle of pupils minimizes the chances of these disadvantages. They find that conceit is just as apt to occur in the regular classroom where the pupil of superior ability receives high grades with very little effort (10:92).

In making a study of this problem, Horace Mann used sociograms to determine the value of friendships between average and gifted children (18:199). The study was carried out in a plan of partial segregation. The sociometrics

indicated that as a group, the gifted children tended to both accept and reject other children from their own group. The average people also selected children from their own group for acceptance and rejection. It would indicate that children tend to gravitate to their own kind even in the intermingling of the classroom.

Hollingworth found that gifted children may deliberately fail to achieve to their maximum in a regular classroom in order to gain respect from their classmates. The same children were able to express their ideas more freely in a special class where they felt they were understood (1:74).

French summarized his findings from research of the advantages of special grouping as follows: teachers can provide greater breadth and depth to teaching, other teachers will have a smaller span of intelligence with which to contend, the gifted children are in a position to stimulate each other, leaders will have more competition to develop leadership, increased competition will decrease smugness, and the competition will be more realistic in terms of adult life (13:141-142).

Acceleration. If no other special provision is made for gifted children, the most common means of acceleration is double promotion. This is known as "longitudinal" acceleration.

Sumption and Luecking made a survey of various ways pupils have been accelerated (26:163-171). They found that at times combinations of these forms are used to avoid the disadvantages found in any one form.

Pupils are sometimes accelerated by early admission. After psychological tests are given, the results may show that the child may be allowed to enter school six months to one year younger than the usual admittance age. This poses a problem in testing which is prohibitive in some school systems. Early entrance into secondary school is usually no problem as the child entering is ordinarily a product of the school system.

Skipping one or more grades is the most frequently practiced of all forms of acceleration. No administrative problem is formed by skipping. It is assumed that the child already has some knowledge of the material being missed and that he will be able to acquire the skills taught in the grade skipped.

Rapid progress is defined as the practice of pupils proceeding through the school program faster than normal. In this plan the pupil does not skip any work. He accomplishes the same work at a faster than normal rate. The pupil has the advantage of having had all the work. In this plan an administrative problem is created. Special groups must be formed, and most schools do not have a sufficient number of pupils to form such a group.

Tests and surveys made by Terman and Odin show that most students who are accelerated do well in college. In making this study, they divided the gifted children into two groups, accelerated and nonaccelerated. This disclosed the fact that in most respects the accelerated group showed slight excellence over the nonaccelerated group. They concluded that the risk of moderate acceleration was not as great as commonly believed (27:1-448).

In her study of acceleration, Hollingworth found that acceleration may present some dangers. Some children who are advanced beyond their normal age group find it difficult to adjust emotionally. Unless they are well developed physically, they often have trouble keeping up with the physical prowess of their classmates (2:52). There is some danger that gifted children who are accelerated will absorb only the intellectual phases of subject matter without much realization of their social, political, and economic values. If the plan for acceleration is followed, it is not wise to allow the child to skip grades during the middle elementary years when he learns the rudiments of reading and arithmetic and the techniques of how to study.

The concept of acceleration is just as applicable to situations in which a child's knowledge or capacity are increased by giving him more difficult, higher grade work to do. By this method he would continue to be in the same

grade level as those of his own age group. He would, however, be doing the same work as those in higher grade levels in those areas in which he excelled. By this plan of "verticle" acceleration, the gifted child would acquire an extra year of high school electives and be better prepared for his college work.

Enrichment. Enrichment provides many opportunities for gifted children without some of the possible disadvantages of acceleration or of segregation. Through supplementary assignments and additional materials, it is possible to provide unlimited opportunities. Unless some reasonable limits are placed upon enrichment, gifted children may overwork because of the great interest they find in the additional materials. An enriched program does not mean longer assignments of the same thing. Assignments should be increased in quality rather than quantity.

Cutts and Moseley state that the general objectives of enrichment are to challenge the full use of abilities, broaden the base of knowledge, deepen understanding, increase the level of skills, develop a love of learning, inculcate desirable methods of learning, thinking, and sharing, encourage initiative, and give opportunity for creativity (10:42).

Sumption and Luecking believe that enrichment should broaden the child's interests and stimulate his desire to

learn new things. If he is able to finish his regular work with less drilling than others require, he should be able to expand his reading and learn how to carry out simple individual research (26:171-172).

An enrichment program in the regular classroom keeps outstanding children in their regular classes. It benefits the gifted child, the above average child who might not be chosen for special classes, and the average child who gets the advantage of being with the others. According to French, another advantage of the enrichment method is the lower cost to schools, although it does place a heavier load on the teacher (13:31-32).

Cutts and Moseley suggest that one of the problems of enrichment in the regular classroom is the desire of all the pupils in the room to do the enrichment projects. If the classroom is democratic, they must be given the opportunity to try. This slows down or defeats the purpose of the enrichment program (10:69).

CHAPTER IV

EVALUATION OF THE NEEDS AND FACILITIES OF THE EASTMONT SCHOOLS

I. COMPARISON OF PUPIL ACHIEVEMENT AND MENTAL MATURITY

In the Eastmont Schools a comparison of the mental maturity and achievement of the pupils was made to see if a difference between these two factors existed. California Tests of Mental Maturity and Achievement were given to all sixth grade pupils (8; 9). Some results were verified by the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children. The tests for the study were given over a five-year period.

Since the results of the tests from all the rooms were similar, one was chosen at random for this paper (Appendix A). This study showed that the scores between achievement and mental maturity were closely correlated up to the upper one-fourth of the class. The scores then tended to differ by as much as three or four years in most groups, with some scores showing even greater differences.

According to French, this study correlates with the findings in studies made with gifted children throughout the nation (13:392-393). He states that gifted children are the greatest underachievers since their achievement is

further below their capacity than that of any other group. The mentally handicapped achieve closer to their capacity than any other group. This is thought to be because the child operates on his concept of himself. The superior student seldom thinks of himself as superior or as having the capacity to do better work.

Although special classes are conducted for other pupils having difficulties, there are no special classes for gifted children who are not reaching their maximum of achievement. It can be assumed that the gifted child needs special help and guidance to reach his greatest potential; the study in the Eastmont Schools indicated he is now failing to do so.

II. SOCIO-ECONOMIC BACKGROUND OF THE COMMUNITY

The cultural and economic background of the community has a great influence in dictating the policies and curriculum of the Eastmont Schools of East Wenatchee, Washington.

East Wenatchee, located across the Columbia River from Wenatchee, serves as a residential area for that city. Nearly all of the industrial and commercial activities of the vicinity are centered in Wenatchee. Since Wenatchee and East Wenatchee are in different counties, the school districts and school taxes are affected.

While the site of new industry tends to gravitate to the Wenatchee area, the influx of residential population is toward the East Wenatchee area. This imbalance of the school dollar is not equalized by the homes being constructed in the area.

Because the population and building growth of East Wenatchee are changing so rapidly, only approximate figures are available. About 90 per cent of the homes are owned or are being purchased by the residents. The area has homes of all degrees of comfort. Large sections of the community have homes averaging \$17,000 to \$18,000 in value, with a few having values of \$75,000 or more. The large number of executive and professional people living in East Wenatchee tends to encourage a greater interest in the schools than is usually shown.

III. GROWTH OF THE SCHOOL COMMUNITY

Grand Coulee, Rock Island, Chief Joseph, Rocky Reach, and Wells Dams have been built or are at the present time under construction. These have brought new industry to the area, and with it an increase in population. The school enrollment has increased as a result. The Eastmont School District has expanded from an enrollment of 850 pupils on October 1, 1946, to one of 2,700 pupils on October 1, 1960, (Appendix B). The East Wenatchee Planning Commission

predicts that this growth will continue through 1965. Although an extensive building program has been carried on to match this rapid growth, classrooms are crowded during years when new buildings are being constructed.

IV. AVAILABLE SCHOOL PERSONNEL AND FACILITIES

The pupil load in the Eastmont Schools will continue to be heavy until the population growth becomes more stable. This probably will prevent as much participation in a program of enrichment as might be desired by the classroom teacher. Since any outstanding provision being made for the gifted pupil depends largely upon the interest, enthusiasm, and general competence of the persons directing the work, this is an unfortunate situation.

The Eastmont District employs a testing and guidance person who devotes his full time to this field. Facilities for identifying the gifted child are readily available.

In a study made by Dye on the attitudes of gifted children toward school, the results showed that one out of ten girls and two out of ten boys were unhappy in school (11:301-308). From a comparative study made of the attitudes of the average pupil, it would seem that perhaps the gifted students were more in need of guidance than the average student. Counseling parents of gifted children is

another function in which the school counselors play a dominant role.

A reading specialist is available for help in accelerated reading classes and guidance in research. The library staff has a supervisor who directs the libraries of all the schools. The work of the libraries is coordinated in such a way that books from one building are available at another. The librarians are available to direct research and to help make book selections.

In the Eastmont District are many well-qualified teachers who have studied techniques of teaching gifted children. Tutors give private vocal and instrumental instruction.

There is a library and a multi-purpose room in each school in the Eastmont District. Some of these schools have music, art, and audio-visual rooms. A sufficient amount of science, visual, audio, art, and music equipment is available for special classes. Used radio and telephone equipment can be obtained free from local companies.

V. AVAILABLE COMMUNITY RESOURCES

The main resource of the community is its people and community spirit. The people, who represent nearly every profession, have a willingness to offer their services for the betterment of the community and its schools.

The industrial plants offer a source of study. These industries include an aluminum processing plant, a smelter, mines, lumbering, fruit and vegetable processing plants, and manufacturing of small articles.

The cultural centers include a library and a historical and geological museum. Musical organizations offer a concert series with outstanding artists and concerts presenting local talent. Art exhibits form a part of the functions of one society. The medical centers are unusual for a small community, and the directors encourage young people to become acquainted with the work of the centers.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTED PHILOSOPHY FOR THE EASTMONT SCHOOLS

I. CONCLUSIONS

To create a program to meet the needs of the gifted children of the Eastmont Schools will require continuous study, evaluation, and re-evaluation. As Abraham has suggested, enrichment is the key to any provision for the gifted child (1:82). This will bring greater challenge and stimulation into his school work, broaden and deepen his knowledge, enhance his love of learning, and give him opportunities to pursue his individual interests. This must be done if the full potential of the child is to be developed.

Whether it is preferable to provide enrichment in classes grouped by ability, interest, or chance; or whether greater coverage of specified segments of knowledge is more enriching than rapid progress through various levels of difficulty requires study.

Sumption and Luecking believe that the best program for the education of the gifted child will develop only as each community and each school investigate the many facets of the problem and decide upon the program best suited to

their particular needs and resources (26:111).

Decisions on these questions can be made in a school situation only when the needs of the children and the school's educational policies, facilities, and personnel are carefully studied.

In reaching conclusions from this study, the following points might be considered:

1. The gifted should be segregated for special learning tasks.
2. Planning should include special grouping for every kind of high competence.
3. Students should be segregated for only those areas in which they excel.
4. To be effective segregation must be based upon as many factors as possible.
5. Methods of segregating and teaching have not been adequately tested.
6. A combination of enrichment, segregation, and acceleration may be found to be the best program.

II. SUGGESTED PLAN FOR THE EASTMONT SCHOOLS

It is the national philosophy that all children should have equal opportunity for education. The philosophy of education in the Eastmont Schools is "to take the child from where you find him as far as he can go." The administrators and teachers have shown a great interest in furthering education in the Eastmont District. Studies of the ungraded primary and of grouping in reading are now being

made in pilot schools. Studies of the reading, language arts, and science curricula have been made in recent years. Any suggestions to improve the curriculum are sure to be carefully considered because of this interest in increasing educational advantages for the pupils.

Because of the findings of this paper, a philosophy of partial segregation resulting in special classes might be suggested for the Eastmont Schools. A program of additional or advanced subject matter could be used.

Since a study of the ungraded primary is being made on the primary level, a study of special classes for the gifted child could be made in the intermediate grades. The special classes would need to be limited to one or two sessions each week since the time of the personnel is already well scheduled. As additional staff is available, a more ambitious program should be developed.

Each of the special service personnel could conduct a special class one hour each week. If one of these teachers were not qualified to teach a class for gifted children, she could replace a qualified classroom teacher in her classroom during the time the classroom teacher was conducting the special class.

Pupils from the special class would have time for research or experimental work when the class was not in session. This would save the time of the regular classroom

teacher, who would otherwise need to spend time planning enrichment work for these pupils. She could use the time in helping other pupils in the classroom, and they would benefit from the extra time. It would be hoped that the gifted pupils would bring ideas and projects from the special class back to the classroom for the benefit of the entire class. The curriculum for the class could be determined by the staff of each school as they evaluated the weaknesses and needs of the gifted pupils in that particular school.

Some parents have expressed a desire for a local organization to study the needs of gifted children. This organization could be a parent-teacher group or a local branch of one of the national organizations for gifted children. Such a group could be of help in providing for the extra equipment required for the class.

It is hoped that this study might be a beginning which would develop into further educational advantages for all superior students.

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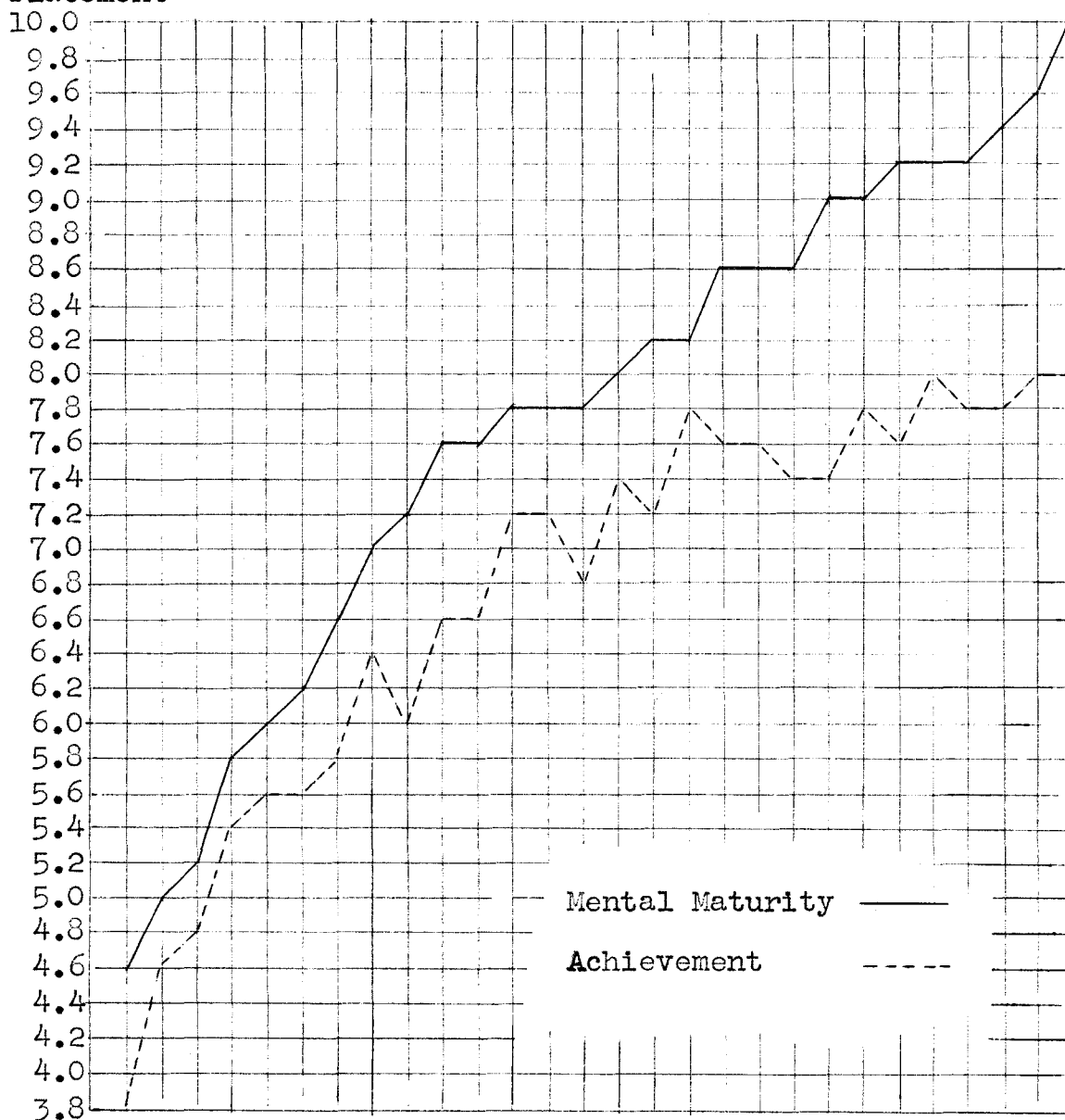
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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

COMPARISON OF THE MENTAL MATURITY AND ACHIEVEMENT
OF THE PUPILS OF A SIXTH GRADEGrade
Placement

APPENDIX B
ENROLLMENT AND CAPACITY OF EASTMONT SCHOOLS
1946 - 1961

