

1951

A Study of first Grade Entrance Practices in the State of Washington

James L. Martin
Central Washington University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.cwu.edu/etd>



Part of the [Other Educational Administration and Supervision Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Martin, James L., "A Study of first Grade Entrance Practices in the State of Washington" (1951). *All Master's Theses*. 58.

<https://digitalcommons.cwu.edu/etd/58>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Master's Theses at ScholarWorks@CWU. It has been accepted for inclusion in All Master's Theses by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks@CWU. For more information, please contact scholarworks@cwu.edu.

A STUDY OF FIRST GRADE ENTRANCE PRACTICES IN THE STATE OF WASHINGTON

by

James L. Martin

A paper submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree
of Master of education, in the Graduate School of the
Central Washington College of Education

August, 1951

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Grateful acknowledgment is expressed to Dr. Emil E. Samuelson for his consideration and guidance in directing this study.

Acknowledgment, too, is made to Associate Professor Mabel T. Anderson and Professor J. Wesley Crum for special courtesies and inspiration.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter		Page
1	A Review of Current Literature Concerning First Grade Entrance Practices.	2
11	Report of Washington Administrators on First Grade Entrances.	13
	Chronological Age as a Basis for First Grade Entrances	13
	Mental Age as an Entrance Factor	16
	Social Age as an Entrance Factor	20
	Emotional Age as an Entrance Factor	20
	The Rejection of the Emotionally and Socially Maladjusted Child	22
	Kindergarten Experience as an Entrance Factor	24
	Reaction to Present Entrance Practices	26
	Recommendations for Improving Entrance Requirements	26
111	Report of First Grade Teachers Relative to First Grade Entrances.	31
	Reaction to Present Entrance Requirements	31
	Recommendations for Improving Entrance Practices	34
	Comparison of Points of View.	38
1V	Recommendations Relative to First Grade Entrance Factors	42
	Bibliography.	49

TABLE OF TABLES AND FIGURES

Table		Page
1	Distribution of First Grade Entrance Ages in the State of Washington.	15
11	Distribution of First Grade Entrance Dates in the State of Washington.	15
111	Summary of Reports Relative to Mental Age as an Entrance Factor	18
1V	Summary of Reports Relative to Social Age as an Entrance Factor	21
V	Summary of Reports Relative to Emotional Age as an Entrance Factor	23
VI	Summary of Reports Relative to Kindergarten as an Entrance Factor	25
VII	Summary of Entrance Factors as Reported by Administrators.	30
VIII	Summary of Professional Opinion Relative to First Grade Entrance Requirements	41
Figure		
1	Questionnaire Used in Survey	14

This paper is submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master in Education in the Graduate School of the Central Washington College of Education.

Approved:

Dr. Emil E. Samuelson, Chairman

Miss Mabel T. Anderson

Dr. J. Wesley Crum

CHAPTER 1

A REVIEW OF CURRENT LITERATURE CONCERNING FIRST GRADE ENTRANCE PRACTICES

The age at which a child enters school is of the utmost importance in the success he will have in his educative venture. The matter of maturation is so vital that the difference a few months would make in his entrance might be the determining factor in his success, not only in acquiring skills, but in being emotionally and socially secure, as well.

Is there the possibility that many of the problems of poorly adjusted children that are confronted in the upper grades is traceable to a too early entrance into the school program?

In the state of Washington the matter of entrance into the first grade is more or less set by statute, in that attendance money from the state is not available for a child under six years of age. This means that a school accepting a child younger than six years at the start of school is not legally in a position to ask for state assistance for that child.

The problem here is to determine the actual practice. What is the requirement for entrance into the first grade in the various districts in the state of Washington? Is chronological age the only determining factor? Is any consideration given to mental age? To what extent are the emotional and social factors considered? Is attendance in a kindergarten a factor?

There is little difficulty in obtaining a fairly complete picture of compulsory school attendance ages, but there is relatively little available on the ages at which children are permitted to enter school. This is be-

cause compulsory school laws are state wide while regulations governing school entrance are in most states left up to individual school boards. The result is that in most states there may be as many different rulings as there are boards. Some states have laws specifying minimum and maximum ages for attendance at school but differences in interpretation may vary widely among local systems.

Grace S. Wright says that six-years-of-age-by-January-first is the most frequently mentioned age criterion for entrance to first grade. December first and November first are the next most important age-criterion dates. Alabama, North Carolina, South Carolina and Virginia have state laws requiring the child to be six on or about the time of entrance to the first grade.¹

There are other schools in California, Massachusetts, Michigan, New Hampshire and New York which accept children for first grade work who are just over five or are less than five and a half. Fairly early entrance is permitted in the states of Illinois, Kentucky, Nebraska, Ohio, Pennsylvania and West Virginia.¹

The six year entrance age has come to us out of the past with no particular basis for it other than it seemed to be the proper stage of maturity for formal education. That age was one when children were independent enough of home ties to be separated from them. Nothing very basic was used as a guide for this important step until the dawn of a means of objective

¹

Wright, Grace S. "Permissive School Entrance Ages in Local School Systems," School Life 28:20-23 (July, 1946)

measurement of mental age. About the year 1930 school officials began to realize that a mental age of 6 or 6.5 years was necessary for success in a first grade reading program. From that point there have been various experiments with entrance requirements based on mental age and experiments with curriculum revision.

Urban areas tried to meet the vast range of ability in beginners by starting groups in the fall and other groups in midyear. This policy is on the way out, however, because of problems entailed. Much additional clerical work is needed besides the fact that there is a certain lack of continuity in the year's work. There are problems, too, when midyear people reach high school graduation age.

Gertrude Hildreth says that entrance problems arise chiefly from two factors. (1) "The eagerness of many parents to enter children in the first grade ahead of schedule." (2) "Candidates for the first grade have an age range of at least one year."² She has set up a chart to show just what the range in age would be if the entrance age at the start of a school year were five years seven months, five years eight months, five years nine months and so on through six years of age. The chart is as follows:

<u>Plan</u>	<u>Minimum</u>	<u>Median</u>	<u>Maximum</u>	<u>Range</u>	<u>Minimum Birth Date</u>
Plan 1	5-7	6-0.5	6-6	5-7 to 6-6	6-0 by Feb. 1
Plan 2	5-8	6-1.5	6-7	5-8 to 6-7	6-0 by Jan. 1
Plan 3	5-9	6-2.5	6-8	5-9 to 6-8	6-0 by Dec. 1
Plan 4	5-10	6-3.5	6-9	5-10 to 6-9	6-0 by Nov. 1
Plan 5	5-11	6-4.5	6-10	5-11 to 6-10	6-0 by Oct. 1
Plan 6	6-0	6-5.5	6-11	6-0 to 6-11	6-0 by Sept. 1 ²

She points out that the range would probably be even greater than indicated above because of late entrance of some pupils, transfers and repeaters.³

A study in the schools of Lovell, Wyoming showed that failures were usually children who were youngest chronologically i.e., barely six years old by the time set as deadline for admittance to first grade. Their records of reading readiness scores and subsequent progress of first grade pupils supported the belief that usually the youngest children failed.⁴

Ruth Strickland writing in the Bulletin of the School of Education in Indiana University says that the requirements that all children begin the process at age six or before appears to many educators out of all reason. She points out that mental age, maturity of physical and social development, facility in the use of language, and background of experience, rather than chronological age, determine a child's capacity to learn to read. She says, "Some five year olds are capable of learning to read, but other children of even average or better mental capacity cannot succeed with this most complicated process until they are seven or eight years of age."⁵

The problem seems to revolve around the fact that children at six are ready for experiences away from the home but many of them are not capable of handling the tasks that educators have set up as achievements for first

³
Ibid., p. 26

⁴
Houston, J. E. "We Separate Beginners into Three Progress Levels," Nations Schools 45:42-43 (April, 1950)

⁵
Strickland, Ruth G. and Plichta, Phyllis, "Age of Entrance into First Grade" Bulletin of the School of Education, Indiana University 25:7-12 (Jan., 1949)

grade work.

Ruth Strickland says that a legal entering age of six years for first grade is logical and justifiable.

At the age of six most children have intellectual interests and curiosities which the home environment does not completely satisfy. The need for enlarged social experience is evident at this age, and most children fit into and enjoy the group experience of primary school. It is therefore the logical time for the child to enter into this school experience so that he may explore and experiment with other children under the guidance of a teacher who understands his interests and needs.⁶

It seems evident that what is needed is a program that will meet the varying needs of the wide range of ages encountered rather than trying to limit that range.

Gates, of Columbia University, has come to the following conclusions:

It has by no means been proved that a mental age of six and a half years is a proper minimum to prescribe for learning to read by all school methods or organizations or by all types of teaching skill and procedures. It is quite conceivable that the crucial mental age will vary with the materials, the type of teaching; the skill of the teacher; the size of the class; the amount of preparatory treatment of special difficulties, such as visual defects of the pupil and other factors.

If the school is one in which little children are almost literally screwed into screwed down seats and put through a rigid skill-drill program, it may take a mental age of eight or older for some children to succeed. If children are to attend a first grade that is committed to a rigid program of requirement for skill development and launches that program in the first grade year, the age of entrance must be set as high as possible in order to have the children old enough to succeed with this kind of program.

If a school plans a program for young children which is built upon their needs and interests the age of entrance can

be lower.⁷

There are schools, many of them, that are attempting to set up programs that will meet the needs of all the children. Some schools have set up pre-primary or transition classes in which a non-academic activity program is carried on. This is an intermediate program between kindergarten and the traditional first grade.

Gertrude Hildreth recommends this type of program for schools in some communities. She states:

Schools of this type are needed where there is an influx of young children with rather poor home training. If there are three levels of such classes, then the children can be promoted from one level to the next each term without encountering the formidable requirements of a conventional first grade program. This means that some children would spend a year and a half from the age of six before they have much regular drill work with symbols. This period gives the teacher time to train children in good habits, to help them develop linguistic skill, and to gain a background of meaningful experiences before they try to read or have much formal number work.⁸

Another trend is to have no sharp grade break in the first three years of compulsory schooling but to group the children in any way that will make instruction more effective. To insure that there will be continual progress this three year training plan can be done under one teacher.

In Lovell, Wyoming beginning pupils who are most nearly ready for school are grouped. These pupils are determined through the use of reading

⁷ Gates, Arthur I. "The Necessary Mental Age for Beginning Reading," Elementary School Journal 37:497-498 (March, 1937)

⁸ Hildreth, Gertrude, op. cit. p. 24.

readiness tests, personal interviews, principals' and teachers' appraisal of the child's interests and reactions. In a second level within each grade they place those pupils who are most nearly average in maturity and readiness for reading. In a third section are placed those who are chronologically old enough for school (six years by September first) but who need much readiness work. This third group is given experiences in developing muscular control in preparation for a reading readiness program. Grouping continues in this manner through the fourth grade. Promotion is from one growth level to another.⁹

One of the outstanding experiments conducted in the way of meeting individual needs is that conducted by the Brookline, Massachusetts schools. Writing in the *Elementary School Journal* of February 1948, J. R. Hobson says:

If we are to provide for individual differences after the child enters school, it would seem logical and reasonable to recognize those differences as he approaches school age and to formulate an elastic system of school admission based on the differences which are readily measurable and which do not, in the main, depend on environment and training and hence are not readily subject to improvement.¹⁰

The Brookline experiment in its beginning (1932) admitted pupils to the first grade with a mental age of five years ten months. Later (1936) this age was raised to six years.

Officials there recommend that all children with a chronological age of five years nine months by October first of the year of entrance be admitted to grade one. They further recommend that children between five

9

Houston, J. E., op. cit. p. 43.

10

Hobson, J. R. "Mental Age as a Workable Criterion for School Admission," Elementary School Journal 48:312-21 (Feb., 1948)

years and three months and five years and nine months as of October first be admitted to grade one on trial. Psychological examinations will have determined for this last group that the children involved had a mental age of six years and two months. All admissions of under-age children are dependent upon a thorough physical examination.

The Brookline people have found that the under-age pupils are superior academically and can not be distinguished physically. There is a record for these youngsters, too, of less trouble emotionally, socially and other personality maladjustments. Finally, the statement is made that:

Since none of them is as much as a year outside the normal age range for his grade, most of them being within a few months of this range, they do not suffer the handicaps in social and athletic activities encountered by children who are accelerated a year or more by a system of double promotion after they enter school.¹¹

An experiment following the pattern of the Brookline schools is one conducted in the system at Western Springs, Illinois. Their problem was the same as that experienced by practically all schools: too many failures in the first grade. Studies showed that failures were greatest among the youngest members of the class, pupils who didn't reach the age of six until the fall or early winter. They found, too, that some of these younger pupils were doing better work than many of the older ones. At that time youngsters were admitted if they were six before December 31. A survey showed that surrounding schools were having the same trouble and that their entrance requirements varied from a six-by-October-16-rule to one admitting if the sixth birthday were reached by January 31.

The Western Springs board made the minimum chronological age for

¹¹

Hobson, J. R., op. cit. p. 20.

starting first grade six years by September 30. They made the provision, however, that children five years of age and who would be six by the next January 31, could enter school if they had a mental age of six years, six months. This age was to be determined by a qualified psychologist. The younger pupils had to qualify, too, by showing a social and physical maturity beyond the average for his age. This last factor was to be determined by a kindergarten teacher. The Stanford-Binet Intelligence and the Haggerty Reading Readiness Tests were used. They have a limited-success group consisting of slowly developing, immature pupils who have reached the required chronological age and those younger pupils with a mental age high enough for entrance but who are immature socially or physically. These pupils test higher at the end of the year than comparable youngsters pushed ahead into a first grade reading program.¹²

The success of young pupils with a superior mental age is further substantiated in a report by Edward A. Lincoln. This study is significant in that it checks these young pupils in their later years of schooling.

His results are quite similar to other studies in that it was found underage pupils surpass their classmates. This superiority is to the extent of 62% of them being in the upper half of test score distribution. The tests used are the Dearborn General Intelligence Examination, Series 1, and the Stanford-Binet. The results showed a decided superiority in reading ability. Penmanship showed a negative relationship. The study indicated that the people who were refused admission did inferior work

¹²

Wheat, Leonard B. "Readiness Controls in the Primary School," American School Board Journal 97:45-46 (July, 1938)

when they were admitted even though they had added months of age to their
 13
 advantage.

The difficulties of admitting on a strict mental age requirement should be quite obvious. Along this line Henry Otto says:

Such scientific evidence as has been gathered points to the conclusion that children cannot profit materially from reading instruction until they have reached a mental age of six years and preferable six years six months.

If either of these two mental ages is taken as the opportune time to begin instruction in reading, most first-grade teachers are faced each year with groups of pupils--admitted to school on a chronological age basis, usually six years--whose mental ages have not reached the point where instruction in reading could be expected to bring satisfactory returns.

If capacity to do school work is manifested by mental age and it should become the criterion for admission to the first grade, a much larger proportion of pupil success than now prevails would be assured. Under those conditions school systems will find a large proportion of children who will be seven, eight and nine years of age before they can enter the public schools.

It seems that the only defensible policy is to admit on the basis of chronological age and to provide such flexibility in organization, curriculum, and teaching procedures that the educational needs of various types of first grade pupils will be cared for adequately.¹⁴

It seems that a plan admitting people to a school which operates a conventional type of program on any chronological basis will probably not be successful. It seems, too, that a program tied too closely to admission

¹³
 Lincoln, Edward A., "The Latter Performance of Under-Age Children Admitted to School on the Basis of Mental Age," Review of Educational Research 19:22-30 (Jan., 1929)

¹⁴
 Otto, Henry J., "Implications for Administration and Teaching Growing Out of Pupil Failures in First Grade," Elementary School Journal 33:25-32 (Sept., 1932)

by mental age will encounter troubles, too. The trend seems to be one of admitting pupils at an age close to six years and a policy of admitting younger pupils who show superior ability. Under this program a curriculum must be developed that meets individual needs. With the knowledge of methods which the modern educator has and with a wealth of instructional aids this program has a good chance of accomplishing the aims schools have been striving for. This is mainly the meeting of the needs of each individual child in a manner that will make him a successful, happy child.

CHAPTER 11

REPORT OF WASHINGTON ADMINISTRATORS ON FIRST GRADE ENTRANCES

In an effort to get the opinion of the various administrative heads in the state of Washington relative to first grade entrance requirements, the following procedure was followed.

One hundred fifty administrators including county superintendents, superintendents of first, second and third class districts were contacted. One hundred and thirty four of these individuals granted permission to be included in a survey. Each received a questionnaire. One hundred twenty-one or 90.3% of the entire group returned the completed paper. (See Figure 1, page 14, for the complete questionnaire.)

The following material is based on information compiled from the survey.

Chronological Age as a Basis for First Grade Entrance

The entrance age varied from five years eight months to six years. By far the most popular entering age in Washington State is five years ten months. Fifty-two per cent of the schools reporting enter pupils at that age. The second most popular ages are six years and five years ten and one-half months. The complete tabulation is in Table 1, page 15.

It is apparent that the most popular criteria for first grade entrance in the state of Washington is that the sixth birthday must be reached by November 1. The time varies from August 31 to January 1. The complete tabulation is interesting in that twenty-two different dates are recorded

FIGURE 1

Questionnaire Used in Survey

At what chronological age are children permitted to enroll in the first grade of your school?

First grade entrants must reach their _____ birthday before _____.
(month and date)

Is mental age a factor?

If yes, explain:

Do you admit pupils with an above average mental age even though they have not reached the required chronological age?

If yes, explain:

Is social age a factor?

How is it determined?

Is emotional age a factor?

How is it determined?

Is an emotionally or socially maladjusted child ever rejected?

If yes, explain?

Is attendance in a kindergarten a factor?

To what extent?

Are you pleased with the results you are obtaining under the system now in use in your school system?

If no, why?

What recommendations do you have to better conditions?

TABLE 1

Distribution of First Grade Entrance Ages in the State of Washington

<u>Chronological Age</u>	<u>Number Reporting</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
5 years 10 months	63	52.5
6 years 0 months	17	14.1
5 years 10½ months	12	10.0
5 years 11 months	10	8.3
5 years 9½ months	7	5.8
5 years 9 months	4	3.3
5 years 11½ months	3	2.5
5 years 8 months	2	1.6
5 years 8½ months	1	.9
5 years 11 2/3 months	1	.9

TABLE 11

Distribution of First Grade Entrance Dates in the State of Washington

A child must have reached his sixth
birthday before the date listed below.

	<u>Number Reporting</u>
August 31	1
Before school starts	6
September 1	8
September 10	1
September 15	3
September 16	1
September 30	3
October 1	5
October 15	12
October 16	1
October 31	7
November 1	54
November 2	2
November 15	5
November 16	1
Thanksgiving	1
November 30	2
December 1	1
December 15	1
December 31	1
January 1	1

even though some of them vary only slightly. Only fifteen of those schools reporting have an entrance date later than November first. This tabulation is on Table 2, page 15.

Mental Age as an Entrance Factor

Apparently mental age is not a significant entrance factor in the majority of Washington schools. Only 18.3% of the one hundred twenty administrators who answered this question indicated that consideration is given to this phase of child development.

Where mental age is an entrance factor the method of determination varies from very specific testing to general observation. In five schools it is simply a matter of delaying entrance of those pupils not mentally ready for the first grade program and these cases are determined on a basis of observation by the teacher. Apparently, children are entered and then after the teacher has had time to know the individuals, decisions on each child are made. Two other systems reported a similar plan in that immature youngsters are sent home to enter the following year. It is not clear whether this segregation is done at the time of entrance or after a few weeks of the school year have elapsed.

In schools where a testing program is used the patterns are very much alike. Some simply stated that readiness tests are the basis for determining entrance. Others indicated that mental tests are used as a basis for advancing some very alert children from the kindergarten program to the first grade although the mental age required for this advancement is not given. Testing in two other systems is done for the children whose birthdays come between September first and November first. If a satisfactory score is made (the score is not given) entrance into the first grade pro-

gram is possible. In those schools the entrance age criterion is six-by-September-first. Two schools admit pupils on a basis of mental age when parental cooperation can be obtained. The determining method is not given.

The most extensive program for first grade entrance on a basis of mental age is reported in full below:¹

A child must be five years of age on or before September first to be admitted to kindergarten or children whose birthdays fall between September first and October 31 inclusive, may be admitted upon satisfactory accomplishment of a testing program. No children will be admitted to kindergarten whose birthdays come after October 31. Children will be admitted to the first grade who are six on or before September first or who are now in the ----- kindergarten and are recommended for promotion. Children whose birthdays come after September first must successfully pass the Binet test and a reading readiness test. Next year (fall of 1952) no children will be admitted to kindergarten or first grade whose birthdays fall after October 31. Between September first and October 31 tests must be taken.

Binet scores required for admittance in kindergarten and first grades:

Age	Month	Additional M. A. needed	M. A. needed	Necessary I.Q.
4-11	Sept.	6	5-5	110
4-10	Oct.	12	5-10	121
4-9	Nov.	18	6-3	132
4-8	Dec.	24	6-8	143
4-7	Jan.	30	7-1	155
4-6	Feb.	36	7-6	167
4-5	Mar.	42	7-11	170

(Age for kindergarten is listed above. Age for first grade can be compiled by adding one year)

A complete tabulation of the returns on the mental age factor is found in Table 3, page 18.

Admittance of Children of an Above-Average Mental Age

In the questionnaire, superintendents were asked specifically if child-

¹
Bulletin, Pullman Public Schools, Pullman, Washington (February 19, 1951)

TABLE 111

Summary of Reports Relative to Mental Age as an Entrance Factor

<u>Present Practice</u>	<u>Number of Schools</u>
Mental age not an entrance factor.	98 (81.6%)
Mental age an entrance factor.	22 (18.3%)
Pupils younger than required chronological age, admitted on a mental age basis.	11 (9.1%)
Pupils with chronological age sufficient for entrance but rejected on basis of mental age.	17 (14.1%)

ren of an above-average mental age were ever entered into a first grade program even though they had not reached the chronological age required by the school. This question was of particular interest because some schools, notably the Brookline, Massachusetts system, have developed an extensive program of this kind. A total of eleven schools in Washington indicated such a policy is followed: however, only one school, which was quoted under the previous heading, reported a highly developed plan. Another administrator has developed a formula that bases admittance on the results of a Stanford-Binet score that is equal to or above two months in advance of six years six months for each month or portion thereof that the chronological age falls short of six years.

The balance of the reports are less definite. Some simply stated that admittance is accomplished through the use of mental and achievement tests while in one instance the admittance is limited to a child large for his age providing his birthday comes before November 15. Although the standards for admittance are not given, another system admits under-age pupils because of a small enrollment. Others enrolled pupils in the first grade if they showed outstanding ability in kindergarten or if observation indicated an unusual social and mental maturity.

One administrator commented that his system would like to follow a program of admitting superior under-age pupils but overcrowded conditions would not permit it. Another stated that a plan of entering young pupils of over-age mental ability would be welcomed if a satisfactory explanation could be found for the parents whose children are not in this category.

Some schools have tried a plan of enrolling under-age pupils with a superior mental age and have not been pleased with the results. One superintendent reported that even the advanced young pupils found high school

work difficult at times. The slower young pupils generally failed some place in the primary department. The entrance standard was admittance of those youngsters with a mental age of six years six months if their sixth birthday came before January first.

Social Age as an Entrance Factor

It is apparent that social age is not an entrance factor in the majority of Washington schools. Those schools in which it is a factor use it as more of a negative factor than otherwise--that is, pupils who are immature are asked to wait a year before enrollment. It is not truly an entrance factor in those cases in that children are actually enrolled in a first grade program. Then because of failure to adjust they are either returned to a kindergarten program or are sent home for another year. No school reported a plan where a definite program involving social age was used. General observation, reading readiness tests, local questionnaires, parent-teacher consultations and the use of the Vineland Scale were devices reported for determining social age. Some very frankly stated that it is not a factor because no satisfactory method of determining it is available.

Two administrators commented that social age is not a factor in admittance but it does affect promotions.

A summary of these reports is found in Table 4, page 21.

Emotional Age as an Entrance Factor

Most of the schools in the state of Washington do not consider a child's emotional age in enrolling him in the first grade. Eighty-five per cent of the returns marked their questionnaire in this manner. In the schools indicating that it is a factor it is of a negative nature--that is, the child

TABLE IV

Summary of Reports Relative to Social Age as an Entrance Factor

<u>Practice in Schools Reporting</u>	<u>Number of Schools</u>
Social age not an enrollment factor.	107 (89.1%)
Social age an enrollment factor.	13 (10.8%)
<u>Method of Determining Social Age</u>	
Observation in kindergarten.	1 (.8%)
General observation.	7 (5.8%)
Local questionnaire--Vineland Scale.	1 (.8%)
Parent-teacher consultations.	1 (.8%)

who is immature emotionally is delayed in entering formal schooling. As in considering social age it is not truly an entrance factor in that children are actually enrolled and then sent home or to kindergarten if they are too immature emotionally to adjust to a first grade program. The methods of determining the emotional factor is largely by observations. Three schools reported the use of a psychiatrist in working out this problem. (See Table V, page 23, for a summary of reports on emotional age as an entrance factor.)

The Rejection of the Emotionally and Socially Maladjusted Child

One hundred eighteen questionnaires were checked in consideration of this topic. Sixty-three per cent answered that such rejection is not made. Thirty-seven per cent answered that these two factors are considered a basis for rejection of pupils. Some superintendents qualified their statement by asserting that such a procedure is used for only those children slightly younger than six years.

Very few schools make a decision of non-entrance of the emotionally and socially insecure pupil without first actually entering him in a first grade program. Rejection in most cases comes after an initial period of school. The action of delaying entrance is taken when conditions are too severe to tolerate. The principal, teacher, school nurse or doctor are the people responsible for this decision. However, in three schools such action is not taken if the parents object to it. In schools having kindergartens such a child is enrolled there; otherwise, he is sent home to wait another year. Only one school system reported that children are kept even though the mental age is so low that progress is impossible.

TABLE V

Summary of Reports Relative to Emotional Age as an Entrance Factor

<u>Practice in Schools Reporting</u>	<u>Number of Schools</u>
Social age not an enrollment factor.	107 (85.5%)
Social age an enrollment factor.	18 (14.4%)
<u>Methods of Determining Emotional Age</u>	
Observation in kindergarten.	2 (1.6%)
Observation by teacher, principal, pyschiatrist.	2 (1.6%)
General Observation.	2 (1.6%)
No special method.	1 (.8%)
Parent-teacher consultations.	2 (1.6%)
Testing.	1 (.8%)

Kindergarten Experience as an Entrance Factor

One hundred nineteen questionnaires were checked in response to a question in regard to kindergarten. Eighty-seven per cent indicated that kindergarten is not a factor in first grade entrances. Thirteen per cent stated that attendance in kindergarten is a factor. A complete tabulation of this material is found in Table VI, page 25. No school reported a plan that would require all children to attend kindergarten before first grade entrance. Obviously such a requirement would be an impossible one in the state of Washington because compulsory school laws are such that administrators would find difficulty in enforcing such a ruling. One administrator did comment, however, that nearly all children do attend kindergarten in his district even though it has no bearing on first grade entrance.

In the districts that did claim kindergarten as an entrance factor in their first grade programs the statements were qualified in all cases. In one instance kindergarten was required of those pupils whose birthdays fall between September first and November first. In other schools considering kindergarten as an entrance factor, it was done in a sense of taking care of the immature not ready for first grade. Three schools indicated that attendance in kindergarten qualified a youngster for entrance into the first grade implying that this requisite might do away with usual chronological age requirements. Two administrators registered concern for the kindergarten program because parental indifference towards regular attendance of their children made progress difficult. One superintendent enthusiastically stated his endorsement of the kindergarten program because he maintained that superior students were developing as a result of it.

TABLE VI

Summary of Reports Relative to Kindergarten as an Entrance Factor

<u>Practice in Schools Reporting</u>	<u>Number of Schools</u>
Kindergarten not an enrollment factor.	104 (87. %)
Kindergarten an enrollment factor.	15 (13. %)
<u>The Basis on Which It Is a Factor</u>	
For pupils whose birthdays fall between September 1 and November 1.	1 (.8%)
Kindergarten attendance in another district insures admittance to first grade.	1 (.8%)
Insures entrance in first grade.	3 (3. %)
Children of proper chronological age for first grade but immature place in kindergarten.	3 (3. %)
Pupils under-age for the first grade but outstanding in kindergarten are advanced.	1 (.8%)

Reaction to Present Entrance Practices

Out of one hundred seventeen responses to a question relative to satisfaction with present entrance practices, forty-one per cent answered that they were satisfied with the results obtained. Fifty-nine per cent said that they were not satisfied.

Dissatisfaction was voiced by four administrators because they felt that the mental, social, and emotional factors were of such importance that they should be included as a basis for determining entrance. Many superintendents simply stated that children were too immature for first grade work. Others were concerned because some children are not now entered who are very mature and then create a problem when they are entered. One remark simply stated that chronological age is not a sufficient guide for entrance, while another defended chronological age as the only easily administered device on which to base entrance.

Recommendations for Improving Entrance Requirements

Many administrators feel that the age at which children enter first grade should be established state-wide at a full six years. Of course, the state law at present would require just that; however, there seems to be much variance to the ruling. Other superintendents would advance that entrance age to six and one-half years and in some cases to a full seven years.

One administrator stated that chronological age is only an administrative expediency for determining entrance. He feels that the school program should take care of the wide ranges of maturity by further development of the junior-primary plan.

Conditions could be bettered, one educator felt, if measures were

taken to improve kindergarten attendance. Another felt that a six-weeks required kindergarten attendance would be a definite improvement. A statute requiring children to attend kindergarten was an additional thought of the same nature.

A testing program that would be complete enough to give school authorities knowledge of mental, social and emotional ages would be a distinct advantage according to various reports. Others felt that these matters are important but the school programs should be flexible enough to properly deal with them.

An approach that would make group rooms of segments of first, second and third grade pupils was advanced by one superintendent. His idea would be to make retention or promotion on a basis of whether a child is emotionally, socially, and educationally ready for intermediate work.

The administrators of one Washington county have apparently spent considerable time on entrance requirements and have concluded that the best step would be a gradual increase of the entrance age. They seem inclined to regard mental age as an extremely important factor but felt it involved too many administrative problems. There were numerous superintendents that voiced a desire for smaller classes, increased school facilities, and more money to establish testing programs, guidance staffs, and better trained teachers.

One school system in the state has studied the entrance problem to an extent that its thinking has been summarized in a bulletin for use in presenting the matter to parents. The problem is analyzed as follows:

Setting a definite age for the entrance of young children to kindergarten and first grade is an extremely difficult thing to do. It is obvious that a definite date must be chosen and yet, regardless of the date, there will always be a few

children born just a few days later.

Since it is impossible to choose a date free from all objections it would appear reasonable to make the choice on the basis of the welfare of the child.

To be eligible for kindergarten a child must have passed his fifth birthday on or before September 15. To be eligible for first grade a child must have passed his sixth birth date on or before September 15. Birth certificates are requested to verify the dates of birth.

In the Thomas Code, page 252, section 582, under Directors-- Powers and Duties it says, "Sixth: To suspend or expel pupils from school who refuse to obey the rules thereof, and they shall exclude from school all children under six (6) years of age."

In 1911 school boards were authorized to establish kindergartens.

Justification on an educational basis, for requiring that children be fully six years of age for entrance into first grade is not hard to establish. Points to be considered are: (1) Maturity develops very rapidly at this age and the difference of a few months in chronological age makes it possible for first grade teachers to make greater progress with the more mature pupils. The attention span is improved and directions can better be followed. The problem of handling thirty-five children is so great that the teacher needs this consideration. The child is obviously readier for the reading program when he is more mature. This will lead to fewer failures and fewer problem children throughout the entire school program. (2) Muscular control and coordination improve more rapidly with the added maturity. (3) Young eyes frequently are not ready to focus on near objects. There are authorities who maintain that children under seven are farsighted. Therefore, young five-year-olds need more time to permit their eyes to mature before reading pre-primers. (4) A survey conducted in a local school in 1949-50 revealed that a majority of reading failures and pupils in the slower reading groups were the younger, immature children whose birthdays were in October and November. (5) I.Q. tests of younger children often showed a high score (due to good memory but not necessarily to reasoning.) Yet such children were frequently not able to assert themselves and to take initiative due to immaturity. They had to be led rather than possibly becoming leaders if they had been given the advantage of added experience and growth. (6) In overcrowded rooms the younger children were not able to keep pace and became insecure and developed a dislike for reading. (Such harm may never completely be overcome in later years.)

Since the facts indicate that harm comes from forcing immature children and, that this harm can affect their whole lives as well as their school careers the present regulation has been instituted.

First grade teachers in this district are now working with children who are six before the 15th of September for the first time (September 1950) and all exclaim over their ability to adjust and their earlier indications of a real desire to enter learning situations. There will still be some children who are not ready for various reasons but by and large the outlook is more promising. More mature children and smaller enrollments will some day give first graders their rightful opportunity to learn to read joyfully and easily.

Norway, Sweden and other progressive European countries have eight years as the entrance age in their first grades. The added maturity insures better progress and industry. They have cut down failure and grade repeating. Children who are in our fifth grades would be successful third graders in these countries.²

TABLE VII

Summary of Entrance Factors as Reported by Administrators

<u>Factor</u>	<u>Number of Schools</u>	
	<u>Considering</u>	<u>Not Considering</u>
Mental Age.	22 (18.3%)	98 (81.6%)
Above Average Mental Age.	11 (9. %)	108 (90. %)
Social Age.	13 (10. %)	107 (90. %)
Emotional Age.	18 (15. %)	107 (85. %)
Rejection of poorly adjusted child.	44 (37. %)	74 (63. %)
Attendance in a kindergarten.	15 (13. %)	104 (87. %)

Reaction to Present Entrance Practices

<u>Present Practice, Favorable</u>		<u>Present Practice, Unfavorable</u>	
<u>By Administrators</u>	<u>By Teachers</u>	<u>By Administrators</u>	<u>By teachers</u>
41%	44.4%	59%	55.6%

CHAPTER 111

REPORT OF FIRST GRADE TEACHERS RELATIVE TO FIRST GRADE ENTRANCES

A second objective of this study was to determine the thinking of a cross section of first grade teachers in the state of Washington. To accomplish this, each superintendent who was contacted was asked to submit the names of first grade teachers in his system. From this list one hundred fifty names were selected and questionnaires were mailed. These people included teachers in first, second and third class districts. Returns were received from a total of ninety-one or sixty per cent of these people. It is from those returned questionnaires that the following material was organized.

The same survey sheet was used in working with the teachers of the state that was used in contacting the superintendents. The returns from the first part of the material, then, is a repetition of that reported in the previous chapter because it represents practices that are constant and need no additional interpretation. It is the last two items that are of particular interest as far as the teachers are concerned.

Reaction to Present Entrance Requirements

Fifty first grade teachers indicated that they are not satisfied with first grade entrances under present conditions in their respective districts. This represents 55.6% of the returned answers. Forty instructors stated that entrance factors as they now exist are proving satisfactory.

Teachers were critical of present practices in a variety of ways.

Many voiced the cry of most educators at the present time: overcrowded conditions, and lack of proper facilities and equipment. Commenting particularly on overcrowded conditions, a first grade instructor stated that it "results in mentally immature young children being neglected; it causes children to be retained in the first grade for an additional year with harmful effects, or children are promoted without a background sufficient for progress; it causes older, more capable children to be neglected in favor of the immature."

The majority of Washington teachers who were contacted feel that immature children are being placed in their care to such an extent that conditions need correcting. It tends to create a range of ability which makes individual help impossible and leads to conflicts throughout the school experience. It involves groupings within a grade unit of at least three groups which makes a tremendous problem for the teacher. Included in this group of immature pupils are some who are chronologically six years of age. One first grade teacher stated that in her school each year one-fifth to one-fourth of first grade classes are incapable of doing any formal reading before Christmas and that those children with a very few exceptions are passed on to make room for the next class. She concludes that those children thus are retarded through their entire school career.

In attempting to provide a program to properly educate the many children seemingly not ready for the program some schools are offering, conditions develop which are not to the teachers' liking. In schools with groups termed "readiness groups" there is the problem of convincing parents that it is a desirable arrangement. There is a problem, too, of making these groups flexible enough so that shifts from one group to another can be

made at any time of the year. Promotion is a difficult task if there hasn't been sufficient progress to place a child in a regular second grade program. Smaller schools attempting to group children in "readiness groups" find overloads in the regular first grade rooms. One teacher was concerned because the room for the immature is classified in the minds of youngsters as a "dummy room."

The criticism of many teachers is aimed at chronological age as a sole admittance basis. One commented that bright children are rejected because their chronological age is low. Other children with a chronological age high enough for admittance are accepted although their mental age is below six or six and one-half. One teacher put the same thought in this manner, "setting up a certain entrance age seems very arbitrary. Some children are as ready for school at five and one-half as others are at seven." Although one teacher simply stated that other factors are more essential than chronological age, others were more definite in pointing out that a child is happiest with children of his own social age which cannot be based on his own chronological age. One individual stated frankly that chronological age is the least important of the possible criteria. Put another way a teacher reasoned that first grade work involves learning to read which is a complex thinking process involving mental, emotional and physical processes. Writing specifically it was noted by one instructor that children in a first grade class may range in chronological age from five years eight months to six years eight months. She noted that the difference in mental, physical, and social maturity is even greater.

Other criticisms with current entrance practices included comments

on testing programs, and general philosophy concerning first grade problems. It was recorded that present testing programs are not adequate in that the one test used does not measure readiness in any way but measures actual experience gained from the home or kindergarten. If there has been an abundance of parental interest, a child tends to do well on the test. Finally, two observations are noted concerning the general first grade program. One stated, "School systems are interested in how to accommodate masses of children. They are not interested in children as individuals." The other said, "Administrators do not understand the problems of the first grade."

Recommendations for Improving Entrance Practices

Teachers of the state had numerous suggestions and recommendations to offer. These constructive measures are recorded not only from those questionnaires which indicated displeasure with present entrance plans but also from many reports of those people who were not particularly dissatisfied with requirements in their districts.

After reading the criticisms of the state's teachers one would expect a recommendation of an increased chronological age as a basis for entrance. These recommendations follow closely those of the administrators in that a full six years before the date of the beginning of school is advised. In a few cases six and one-half or seven years is the requisite suggested. Most of these teachers would make this a state-wide regulation. Many of the recommendations included an additional statement advising the need of a state-wide birth certificate requirement.

A common comment, too, was the need for a compulsory type kindergarten. Some reasoned that the children who need such training the most

are not now receiving it. Teachers stated that a situation of partial attendance leaves children with the experience in a boring atmosphere when readiness experiences must be given to non-attenders.

The need for an adequate testing program is indicated by a number of first grade teachers. It was frequently suggested that the results should be used as a basis for entrance and for grouping. One instructor suggested that I. Q. tests be used to determine mental age and that they be used as a basis for entrance. A mental age of six years or older is the recommendation of another instructor; however, this statement was qualified by the statement that a child, handicapped because of low mental ability, should be kept with a group in which he is socially secure.

Other suggestions included one that would establish ungraded primary schools, more remedial rooms, junior primary rooms, and a suggestion for a check on a child's heredity and environment.

Included in the recommendations were some comments in defense of plans now in use in some districts.

One pertinent observation told of a local survey that revealed that seventy per cent of those first graders whose birthdays fall between July and October inclusive were definitely low and showed signs of general immaturity. This resulted in a district policy of accepting only those first grade students whose sixth birthdays fall on or before September first. This teacher commented that in fourteen years of work with first grade children she has found that those children who have attained the age of six in the spring or mid-winter and are at least six and one-half years of age at the time school begins adjust to school more readily and make a continuing progress that is not evident in younger students.

One teacher who remarked that her school has a fairly workable system of entrances outlined their procedures as follows. Children are accepted according to their chronological age (six by September 30). They are given a reading readiness test. Children rating low on this test are grouped together. Some children in this group have shown greater progress than children in the regular first grade groupings.

Another teacher defended the entrance of children on a chronological age basis by stating that to admit children to school on the basis of chronological age is probably the best plan of any. Children develop differently and even though the age range of an entering group is from an even six years to an even seven years their mental, social and emotional ages will show a far greater spread than that. The same or greater differences would be present if children were admitted according to mental age. Chronological age is still the greatest common denominator. She stated further that the school program should be flexible enough to provide for the differences in mental, social and emotional ages. This flexibility is accomplished by a primary unit type of organization.

An instructor in a school that recently advanced its entrance age requirement to one of six-years-by-September-fifteenth remarked that a vast improvement had been noted. Classes are more alert mentally and physically. There are fewer discipline problems and work generally is at a higher level.

In a school with a junior primary room, entrance procedures are defended by a teacher who outlines procedures as follows. Children are given a readiness test during the first nine weeks of school. The immature are placed in a junior primary room where the unusual social and emotional

problems are worked out. This practice insures a child from being put into a reading program before he is ready for it. This teacher, however, believes that a change of entrance from the present November first deadline to one at the beginning of the school year would cut down the number of children needing junior primary work.

In defense of the junior primary unit a supervisor states that if children are found to be physically, mentally or emotionally unable to be successful in a first grade program they are placed in a junior primary room. Selection is based on reading readiness tests, teacher judgment and case studies. There is enough fluidity in the program to permit a transfer to the regular first grade program at any time a teacher judges a child is ready for the advancement.

Another teacher simply stated that the junior primary room satisfactorily takes care of the immature.

A program very similar to the ones just reported on also received a favorable comment from one who has worked with the plan. Under this method, too, reading readiness tests are given during the early weeks of school. No child is started on a regular reading program until he is ready. He progresses as fast as he is able. At the beginning of the second year he continues with reading from the level he has attained, whether it be first grade level or second grade level. He is retained only when physical, mental, and social development indicate he would profit by repeating.

Kindergarten solves the problem of having too many immature children in the first grade in another district. The immature are retained in kindergarten until they are ready for first grade work.

The first grade teachers in one district in the state were concerned about the problem of assigning children to the first grade to the extent

that they made a survey of forty elementary school systems and teacher training institutions. After they summarized their findings they developed a program of entrance for their own school. The chief aim of their plan is to promote a more effective criterion for assigning children to the first grade. As a result of this survey, the teachers in this Washington school district have developed a list of factors which are used to determine a child's readiness to enter the first grade as follows: (1) The child should make a satisfactory score on a standard readiness test. These tests should be given in the latter part of the kindergarten year. (2) Conclusions drawn by the kindergarten teacher are of great importance. (3) Wherever entrance into the first grade is questionable, the final decision should be a composite opinion of the kindergarten teacher, parents, principal and school specialists. (4) Provision should be made for assignment to the first grade at any time if sufficient progress by the child indicates it.

Comparison of Points of View

In asking a question of professional people relative to their reaction to present entrance practices, it must be understood that each will weigh the question in a different light. A very conscientious person possibly could never be pleased with present practices even though he might be reaching a higher point of achievement than someone who is not pleased. The intent of the question was to determine if there was general dissatisfaction with procedures as they now stand in the state of Washington. It was not meant to be an important answer as far as statistics are concerned. There is not enough variance in the forty-one per cent of the administrators and the forty-four per cent of the teachers who stated that they are pleased with present entrance requirements to be significant.

The important thing is that in each case there were more people unfavorably inclined toward the entrance practices than those who are favorably inclined. It is important, too, that the division of percentage points is very similar in each case. The teachers indicated a forty-four per cent favorable inclination to fifty-six per cent unfavorable while administrators were forty-one per cent favorable and fifty-nine percent unfavorable.

In comparing the reasons for dissatisfaction there is a high degree of similarity, also. The teachers show a wider variety of reasons than do the administrators, however. The recommendation that a full six years of age be required for entrance is the one that finds the greatest number of choices in each case, while a pre-school testing program is of second importance in each instance. Teachers recommend a grouping of children into one and two year first grade programs as their third most desired change while administrators recommend kindergarten for all children as a third most frequent item. Kindergartens ranked fifth in importance in teachers' choices along with a requirement of six years and six months as an entrance age requirement. More teachers would use mental age as an entrance factor than would administrators as the former made it their fourth choice.

Administrators mentioned just two factors that were not considered by the teachers. These were: (1) more cooperation between parents and teachers, and (2) test superior, under-age pupils. Teachers listed three recommendations that were not shown by administrators. These were: (1) adjustment rooms for children needing special help, (2) smaller classes, and (3) a state-wide plan of cumulative records.

The similarity in the general nature of replies from both superin-

tendents and teachers indicate that a state-wide program of planning is needed on first grade entrance practices. The recommendations for the type of planning that would solve some of the problems discussed here are found in Chapter IV.

TABLE VIII

Summary of Professional Opinion Relative to First Grade Entrance Requirements

<u>Recommendations</u>	<u>Administrators</u>	<u>Teachers</u>
More trained teachers, fewer substitutes.	3	1
Better housing and equipment.	4	2
More cooperation between parents and teachers.	1	
Adjust curriculum to meet needs of children.	1	2
Uniform entrance age of six years at the beginning of school year.	22	17
A pre-school testing program.	16	16
Group children into one and two year first grade programs. (junior-primary)	6	13
Kindergarten for all children.	7	7
Parental education.	4	4
Entering age of seven years.	2	2
Mental age entrance basis.	5	9
State-wide requirement of birth certificates.	2	4
Six years, six months entrance age requirement.	1	7
Test superior, under-age pupils.	1	
Eliminate graded system in primary grades.	2	2
Set entrance age at five years eleven months.	1	2
Adjustment rooms for children needing special help.		1
Smaller classes.		6
A state-wide plan of cumulative records.		1

CHAPTER IV

RECOMMENDATIONS RELATIVE TO FIRST GRADE ENTRANCE FACTORS

Entrance into the first grade in the state of Washington is really set by law in that school boards are directed to exclude from school all children under six years of age. Technically children who enter school in September but who do not reach their sixth birthday until October, November, or December are not being enrolled in accordance to the state's statutes. One hundred one of the districts contacted in this survey enter a child in school whose sixth birthday comes after September 15. Assuming that school starts by the first or second week in September, these one hundred one districts are not following school law.

Just how important is this? Teachers and administrators who indicated dissatisfaction with first grade entrance practices as summarized in the survey results, are concerned about the immature pupils in school. Teachers particularly added extra pages to the questionnaire form to voice the problem of immature youngsters who are enrolled in the state's schools. If schools follow a policy of accepting children who are six years of age by September first, then the child whose sixth birthday comes in late September, October, or November must wait until the following year before he can enroll in school. Then he will enter at an age of almost seven.

Such a procedure would probably solve the problem of immaturity in many cases but it would create others. The range of physical, emotional, social, and mental ages would still show a wide variance. A very brilliant

child who is held back from school work until he is almost seven will be at a definite advantage over the normal child who is just six. So too, the physically large child who is asked to enroll in school when he is almost seven will be noticeably larger than most children who have just turned six.

Regardless of the chronological age that is used as an entrance basis, the range in age in a given first grade will be almost a year. Hildreth shows this in the chart tabulated on page 4 of this paper. The range, too, in other developmental processes will vary widely. What criterion, then, will best serve as a basis of entrance to first grade? Should it be one of chronological age? Would it be best to devise a plan than would consider the emotional, social, physical and mental ages? Should kindergarten experience be a factor?

In attempting to evaluate the findings of this study, the first task is to define the problem that exists. It is necessary to determine whether teachers and administrators wish to develop a program that will place children into a first grade course of study as it has long been thought of--one of learning to read--or whether they wish to accept children at a certain age and adapt a program of studies and activities to fit the needs of all of them. There is a vast difference between the two. Some schools are attempting one program; others are following the other.

The general public associates the first grade in school with learning to read. If a child is placed in school and attends for a number of months, parents are disappointed if he doesn't bring home books and show to them his progress in reading. If the child fails to produce, the school is criticized.

If the goal, then, of our first grades is primarily to teach children the skills of reading, the standards of entrance should be such that success can be achieved in that first year of training. The immature, socially, mentally, emotionally and physically, should not be permitted to enter such a program. If they are confronted with the complex problem of reading before they are ready, and the evidence indicates that vast numbers of them are, then the problems of the entire school system are increased. Remedial cases in the intermediate, junior high school and senior high school have to be continually coped with. There are numbers of children in school constantly meeting tasks that are too great a challenge for them. This results in a struggle against failure and teacher abuse until the only road open is one of dropping from school. The numbers of young people who end their formal school career at the close of the eighth year or upon graduation from junior high school are far too many. Success in most of these cases is dependent upon being able to read.

Often times children who are good oral readers when they reach junior high school are failures because they lack the maturity to comprehend what is read. It has been noted that some poor students of this type upon reaching high school finally blossom forth and attain honor roll standings. They finally reach a point where school means something to them. Some reach college before their ability to read and comprehend is at its greatest peak. Their entire elementary and high school career may have been one of frustration. One year or a few months of maturity in entering school may have averted such a condition.

There are authorities who say that success in reading is dependent upon a mental age of six years and six months. Why should we expect children below that standard to learn to read well? There are very few children

who cannot learn to read but there are many in our schools today who are unsuccessful because of their inability to read.

If, then, our primary goal is to teach children to read in the first grade, entrance requirements should be such that children will be able to meet that task without failure and without frustration.

The idea of entering children in their first experience in school on a basis of mental age is not a new one to educators. It has been tried in varying procedures. Early in the nineteen thirties when educators began associating success in reading with mental age, a number of schools experimented with an entrance plan based on intelligence. The same problem existed then that exists now in some schools, the problem of too many immature children in the first grade, too many poor readers.

It sounds quite reasonable that if a mental age of six years and six months is needed to be successful in reading then why not make that age the standard of entrance? It's not quite that simple. Children are still very much individuals. Some come from an environment that is rich in experiences, where social contacts are many while others are devoid of such surroundings and reflect it in their actions. Some children are physically strong and have developed a coordination of muscles that permits a freedom of action that is denied others of this age.

Entering children in school on a purely mental age basis brings problems to some degree greater than the ones that are trying to be corrected. The physically large and small, the timid, the children of limited experiences would still take a great deal of consideration.

What plan of entrance, then, would be most satisfactory if all factors are to be considered, if children are to be in an atmosphere of pleasant

experiences?

It cannot be a program of enrolling children at a certain chronological age, no matter what that age may be, if it is the purpose of the school to keep all of them for a period of six or nine weeks until readiness tests can be given. Readiness tests are used in this reference as a basis of weeding out the immature to be sent home or to kindergarten. This is not a happy situation for the child or for the parents. The program must be an objective one, one that has a definite program for mature and immature.

It cannot be a segregating of groups into a pre-first grade room that could in any sense carry the stigma of being for the inferior.

It must be a plan that would be applicable in a school of small size where only one first grade teacher is available as well as for a large sized system where many first grade teachers are in service.

The entrance program visioned here must be one first of all that makes it clear to the public that the first grade program is not necessarily one of teaching children to read. The parents should understand that children of the same age vary in maturity, in experiences, in the many other factors that have been mentioned in this paper and that successful school accomplishments are dependent upon that maturity. There is a need for a strong parental education program.

This education task could be done in pre-entrance clinics, not after a child has been entered in school, not after readiness tests have been given. In these clinics the schools would have the opportunity to point out the problems that exist, to show that each course a child might take has been developed with definite goals in mind. With the vast knowledge that educators have on the subject and with the wide variety of films and

other aids, it should not be an impossible task. Without such an educational program some parents will be disappointed in the early progress of their children and there will be a continued reoccurrence of such comments as "all children do in school is play; they don't teach them to read."

The second recommendation is one that would base first grade entrances on a chronological age of at least six years by the opening of school. The survey shows strong evidence of the need of such a regulation. It should be state-wide. Certainly this would eliminate the problem of immature children in hundreds of cases. It is true that there are some children ready for school who are below this age. Provision should be made for them but only where the maturity is strongly evident and the mental age is at least six years six months.

To give youngsters the type of developmental program that has been suggested in this paper, primary units should be established. There should be no divisions in what are now termed the first, second and third grades. Children should be placed in this unit where progress for them is possible. It should not be designated as a three year primary unit. When progress is at such a point that the work of the intermediate grades can be accomplished advancement would be made.

The evils of the present graded system are two. There is a tendency to put children into a reading program too soon because the deadline that marks the end of the year is a constant reminder of goals to be met. Secondly the line of demarcation that exists between grades tends to disrupt the developmental process that is needed for success.

It is true that various reading groups are now developed within a given grade but as conditions now exist low readers in a third grade group

might fit very nicely with a top second grade group. Similar groupings could be made that would eliminate much wasted effort.

The desired goal under any system is a continued process of growth. Graded systems impede this process. When a teacher must make a decision of advance or fail, there are sure to be borderline cases that are advanced into a program for which they are not ready. Especially is this true where the pressure of large incoming groups make it necessary to clear rooms for new pupils.

Under a primary unit plan advancement would not necessarily be slowed. It would, in fact, accelerate the pace of those placed in a situation of accomplishment who under other systems would be retarded because of a continual attempt to do tasks that are impossible. This does not imply that the superior student should be permitted to advance in a primary unit at a rate that would complete his early school years in less than three years.

It would be foolish to imply either that this system would eliminate all the problems that exist in dealing with children. It would certainly not eliminate the harm of overcrowded rooms. It would certainly not overcome the great weakness that exists because of poor school plants and equipment. It would certainly not eliminate the mentally deficient student from our midst. It would, however, more nearly meet the need of a process for dealing with widely differing youngsters by offering them the chance to advance in a happy, goal-accomplishing atmosphere.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Books

Reed, Mary M., An Investigation of Practices in First Grade Admission and Promotion. New York: Teachers' College, Columbia University, 1927

Periodicals

Andrus, Ruth "When Should Children Go to School," Childhood Education 26:3 (Sept. 1949)

Ayer, Fred C. Review of Educational Research 3:198 (June, 1933)

Bain, Winifred E. "Bridging the Gaps Between Kindergarten and First Grade," Childhood Education 18:29-34 (Sept., 1941)

Brownell, S. M. "Preparing the Child to Meet the Demands of the First Grade," Nation's Schools 5:37-41 (June, 1930)

Buckley, H. M. "Combating the Problem of Failures," Nation's Schools 32:16-18 (Nov., 1943)

Gates, Arthur I. "The Necessary Mental Age for Beginning Reading," Elementary School Journal 37:497-98 (March, 1937)

Hildreth, Gertrude "Age Standards for First Grade Entrance," Childhood Education 23:22-7 (Sept., 1946)

Hobson, J. R. "Mental Age as a Workable Criterion for School Admission," Elementary School Journal 48:312-21 (Feb., 1948)

Houle, C. O. "Minimum School Age Attendance," Elementary School Journal 117:427-8 (April, 1947)

Houston, J. E. "We Separate Beginners into Three Progress Levels," Nation's Schools 45:42-3 (April, 1950)

Knight, James and Manuel, H. T. "Age of School Entrance and Subsequent School Records," School and Society 32:24-26 (July 5, 1930)

Lincoln, Edward A. "The Letter Performance of Under-Age Children,"
Journal of Educational Research 19:22-30 (Jan., 1929)

Otto, Henry J. "Implications for Administration and Teaching Growing Out of Pupil Failures in First Grade," Elementary School Journal 33:25-32 (Sept., 1932)

Polkinghorne A. R. "Grouping Children in the Primary Grades," Elementary School Journal 50:502-8 (March, 1950)

Rollins, N. E. "Readiness for School: A First Grade Teacher's Viewpoint," Texas Outlook 27:35-6 (Oct., 1943)

Strickland, Ruth G. and Plichta, Phyllis "Age of Entrance into First Grade," Bulletin of the School of Education, Indiana University 25:7-12 (Jan., 1949)

Washburne, Carleton "Primary Grades Origin of Later Remedial Cases," Childhood Education 16:29-33 (Sept., 1932)

Wheat, Leonard B. "Readiness Controls in the Primary School," American School Board Journal 97:45-6 (July, 1938)

Wright, Grace S. "Permissive School Entrance Ages in Local School Systems," School Life 28:20-26 (July, 1946)

Bulletins

Lake Washington Schools, Kirkland, Washington, "School Entrance Age," 2 pages, (Feb. 19, 1951)

Massachusetts, Department of Education, "School Readiness, School Admission, and First Grade Objectives," 23 pages, (1945)

Pullman Public Schools, "Entrance Age to Kindergarten and First Grade," 1 page, (March 14, 1951)