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A Discussion of the Merits of Grouping Youngsters in the Elementary School

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A DISCUSSION OF THE MERITS
OF GROUPING YOUNGSTERS
IN THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

A Research Paper
Presented to
the Graduate Faculty
Central Washington State College

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

by
Irving Leo O'Grady

August 1962

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

Maurice L. Pettit
FOR THE GRADUATE FACULTY

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The present classification of children used by many school districts (our school in particular) was felt to be inadequate to fulfill the educational goals and needs of the child. The placement of children on the basis of chronological age and their satisfactory achievement of the previous year's work should be considered, but other factors are also important.

Ability grouping, or various forms of grouping, can be another means of bringing about a more effective classification when placing a child in a new educational environment. This should provide the student with the best opportunity to achieve optimum growth.

Paul Woodring, in his article on ability grouping, says: "The purpose of grouping and its probable results is not to develop such a group but rather to provide a better learning situation for fast and slow learners" (27:164).

I. THE PROBLEM

Statement of the problem. One of the major problems that confronts many teachers is the wide range of ability in any given classroom. How is a teacher going to meet the needs of all the children who are different in so many ways? For many years teachers have tried various means of educating the entire class to the satisfaction of the pupil, parent, teacher, and administrator.

The principle that should be first in the minds of all educators is that optimum growth of the pupil is the schools' primary objective. Schools are a place of learning where children may have success in their school experiences.

Our present philosophy and criteria for classification did not meet these objectives; consequently, the school did not meet the needs of many children. Many students superior in ability and the slow learners should have more opportunities, individual and group work with proper supervision, and a chance to excel to their potential.

Would our methods of instruction and learning environment increase in the classroom through a new system of classifying the pupil? Would grouping the children decrease the wide range of abilities and help the child during the school day? Would this help each child grow into a better student and future citizen, the main

objective of any school?

Importance of the study. Next year our school will undertake a new plan in school organization. The fourth, fifth, and sixth grades will be classified by scholastic ability, achievement, and teacher evaluation. Teachers will then have to organize their curriculum, methods, and philosophies to meet this new challenge. Some of the many questions that will come to our attention are:

(1) How will our grading system change? (2) What will our goals be for each room? (3) Will the teacher know how to cope with the new problems that may arise? (4) Will each teacher prepare new plans for the program or continue to teach as in the past? (5) How will the children and parents accept this new policy? (6) Will this program have continuity?

Many of these problems have been answered through research. Many new problems concerning this controversial topic were brought to the author's attention. With a new understanding of the terms, aims, objectives, and group practices used by other school districts, the coming year should be a fruitful and educational experience for all in the classroom. The secret of teaching is to have knowledge and enthusiasm concerning the aims of the program and instill this in the minds of pupils.

II. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This study was limited to the improvement of grouping children through the use of heterogeneous and homogeneous methods in the hopes of improving the environment for learning and instruction. Materials were gathered from Central Washington State College library and some data from Sacajawea Grade School.

The study is confined to five areas: (1) Seattle School District #1, (2) Elementary Grade Level, (3) Sacajawea Grade School (500 pupils), (4) Fourth, fifth, and sixth grades, (5) Six teachers and one principal.

III. DEFINITIONS OF TERMS USED

The greatest problem to overcome in our educational system is to arrive at a universal understanding and classification of the word "group." Educators disagree as to the policy, philosophy, and use because there still is no mutual language covering this subject.

Group. This will mean the entire school group which varies in size and character due to the social and economic conditions within the attendance area.

Grouping. This is classification of pupils for the purpose of

instruction or organizing pupils into teaching groups.

Ability grouping. This is bringing together pupils who are able to work and progress together in school activities which provide for each the fullest development obtainable (20:129).

Gifted. This includes children who have an I. Q. score range above 120 or have an excellent academic record.

Average. These children will be in the majority, and their I. Q. range is from 90 to 119.

Slow learner. This is a child who may have a low I. Q. or is failing in his academic work. Many times average students of normal ability will fall into this category as will children who are not achieving up to their potential.

Heterogeneous grouping. This attempts to take care of the range of intelligence and aptitude in the class. Age, interest, and maturation also must be considered in their differences.

Homogeneous grouping. This is placing together pupils with like ability. It is sometimes thought of as ability grouping.

Instructional group. This is an efficient manner of placing

students together who are homogeneous in ability to further their educational needs.

Social groups. Membership in such groups is determined by certain personal objectives and interests.

School life groups. These are special activity groups found in play, music, patrol, lunchroom, office, and library. Membership is determined by interest and special abilities.

CHAPTER II

HISTORY AND PHILOSOPHY OF GROUP TEACHING

The writer has devoted much research to the history and philosophy of the term "grouping" because of the need to overcome the fear and misunderstanding that may be in minds of educators and the general public about the purpose and reason for groups.

Grouping of children by abilities in the same grade is not new. It is now widely used in many school systems throughout the country. There are many different ways and means to develop a new program or classification in any school.

By explaining the history and philosophy of the proper use of grouping, it was hoped to bring to the reader the importance of grouping and how, under proper supervision, one can utilize the values derived from such a method of instruction.

I. EARLY HISTORY

Group instruction was first used by the Brethren of the Christian Schools about 1684 and was later developed by Andrew Bell in India and Joseph Lancaster in England. The monitorial or Lancaster plan for teaching was brought to this country by the Free School Society

of New York in 1806 and served a useful purpose in this country for more than thirty years, providing a means whereby large groups of children could be handled (17:165).

Lancaster devised a system whereby a great many children could be taught by one teacher. Each teacher had as his assistants a group of older students called monitors. The children would gather in a very large room. The teacher in charge would teach some small bit of information to the monitors. They in turn would teach it to the children in small groups (7:356-57).

The method employed by Lancaster many years ago is now being considered by some present-day educators who believe that students who are advanced in their work can help other students who are having difficulty. The only difference between this modern concept and those of Lancaster is the size of the classroom. Today the teacher explains the subject matter to the entire group before asking assistance from his more able learners. Many educators believe that children can learn from one another. It allows the superior child an opportunity to assist a fellow student.

The next method of teaching developed later in our early growth as a nation. Elementary classes were held in vacant shops, unoccupied barns, or basement rooms. The schools were often rotated

from place to place to take care of more children and the term was short. Every attempt was made to provide education for "all the children at low cost." This rotating plan was just a partial answer (7:356).

In both plans previously mentioned, the curriculum had to be fixed and detailed. Several hundred children in one room or many children of different ages in one room being taught by one teacher made it necessary for the children to learn the same things at the same time. It was obvious that this would be an impossible task, both for the teacher and for the pupil.

II. PRESENT HISTORY

Beginning about 1920 and extending through the next two decades, two major developments had great impact on the school curriculum and organization.

Child-centered movement. This emphasized individual differences, giving attention to the basic needs of all children and to growth and development patterns, feeling a concern for the development of the child's total personality, and emphasizing the importance of "learning by doing."

Sociological approach to curriculum. This development emphasizes the demands of society upon the individual. It led to a concern with democratic learning within the school and to a concern over "group processes" and human relationships. It suggested that children be given the opportunity to participate in socially desirable enterprises (7:364).

Now that the schools had a new philosophy of education and the instruction of children, new methods began to appear throughout the country to meet the needs of our growing school population. The philosophy of "the old time teacher taught subjects" was removed from the schools and replaced with "the modern teacher teaches children." But we soon began to have new problems. In what ways or how could children learn? Which method was best?

The grouping movement, which boomed in the "Twenties and early Thirties" and dwindled in the next decade, has risen strikingly again, so that samplings show a high proportion of schools grouping extensively or planning to do so (26:410). Hagman reports from his survey:

In 1926 reports from forty cities with populations of one hundred thousand or more showed that in thirty-six of them the elementary school pupils in some or all grades were classified into ability groups. Similar practices were reported for 66 of eighty-nine cities with population of ten to thirty thousand. As the years went by, experiences with

ability grouping and critical research studies raised many questions and doubts about its values. In spite of the fact that ability grouping still remains as a much debated practice, many school systems continue to use it. In 1948, fifty-three per cent of 1,598 school systems were using it in one or more schools. The per cent of cities reporting its use in 1948 ranged from seventy-two in places of over one hundred thousand population to forty-four in cities of two thousand five hundred to 4,999 (8:169-70).

The simple A-B-C sectioning of elementary grades and secondary courses were started in Detroit around 1921, and then hundreds of schools followed suit. This was just after the Army's impressive World War I use of classification testing had given the testing movement an exciting impetus. The fascinating new concepts of I. Q. and M. A. seemed to offer a handy norm for each child, to predict what he should do in reading, arithmetic, or whatever--a ready-made device for classifying¹ (26:410).

That first fine faith in the I. Q. soon dwindled. Yet other measures kept coming along, measures of achievement or of special aptitudes. There was still faith that some classifying index based on just the right combination of measure could be found. As time went on the base was broadened. Reading scores were often weighed heavily. Previous grades, attitudes, and work habits were considered.

¹It has been proven that larger cities are prone to use grouping methods over smaller cities and towns.

Teachers' judgment got added attention.

Between the Twenties and Fifties, teachers broke away from the wholesale pattern for reading instruction. Arranging children into three groups became a practice. But grouping within the bounds of a basic reader was soon found inadequate. Then came the practice of bringing into a classroom a supplementary reader to be used for a third or slower group. Now the three groups had materials, but the teachers, vigorously following plans outlined in teachers' manuals, still found themselves trapped. Two clearly defined movements have emerged: one, homogeneous grouping on an interclass basis with the practice of using one book; two, individualized reading instruction (22:44-45).

As American elementary education looks forward to the 1960's, the matter of grouping children can be characterized by the following three problems:

1. Problems of terminology including the overlapping terminology and the conflicting interpretation of such.
2. Insufficient comprehensive research data.
3. Appreciable differences to both practices of opinions (15:371).

III. PHILOSOPHY IN GROUPING

Hildreth (10:386) explains that the program of the modern school is based on the democratic conception of education which implies respect for individual differences. Neither curricula nor standards have any validity unless they are based upon the abilities, interests, and requirements of individual children. Every child is considered as a unique person with individual interests and talents to be studied and developed.

Since the school and the teacher are interested in having each child experience continuous, optimum, well-rounded growth, the objective to be sought through classification is to place each child in an educational setting which will give him the best opportunity to achieve his natural growth. Since well-rounded growth implies physical, mental, emotional, and personality growth, as well as academic achievement, the objective of classification is to place each child in a group where he can work in a happy and well adjusted manner (18:90-91).

We should emphasize the value of every individual and the fact that he is entitled to as much consideration from our social organization as any other person, but we must realize that no two individuals will function exactly alike. We must recognize differences between

individuals and groups of individuals and be more specific as to their distinctive functions.

If we are serious in a desire to interpret democracy in present-day terms, education must offer not the same program to all but an equal opportunity for all varieties of interests and abilities to find and develop their potentialities. Individual and group differences must be emphasized rather than minimized in our educational system (3:14). As Rousseau states:

Apart from general human characteristics, each individual is born with distinctive temperament which determines his genius and character. There is no question of changing or restricting this temperament, only of training it and bringing it to perfection (3:12).

School organization should, then, provide for the grouping of pupils in relation to the educational objectives to be achieved. The important factor to have always in mind in school organization is that grouping pupils is not a mere administrative procedure for dividing them among the teacher but that it bears directly on the outcomes which may be realized through the educational program (2:227).

Vice-President Richard Nixon, in "A Challenge to American Education," said:

A related complaint is that too often we do not challenge our superior students. Even when they are taking demanding subjects, they find that the level of teaching is geared to the least gifted student. Too many students are being lost among

the normal and mediocre. We need to seek them out, to inspire them, to encourage the development of the intellectual that alone can make them ultimately useful to society (16:103).

If we accept the idea that talent can be developed by a rich and challenging school environment, then we will not rest with the presently popular pursuits of trying to find talent and fit it to existing programs. We will search for learnings that are more nourishing and more stimulating (6:91).

Merle B. Karner wrote in the N. E. A. Journal:

. . . narrowing the range of abilities in a given classroom will help improve the lip service philosophy of meeting the needs of all children in the classroom. However, it is extremely difficult to put this philosophy into practice if a teacher is given thirty-five children who range in mental ability from the mentally retarded to the very gifted, particularly when some of them have problems of a physical or mental nature (13:22).

The primary reason for grouping children within a class is to insure that each individual will be placed where he can work with other children who need to learn the same skills he needs to learn at a particular time and speed or to practice special skills or to carry on other types of learning activities. Instruction through grouping has many merits and values if properly organized. In a good program, learning functions in all activities carried on throughout the child's day. The classroom teacher will be the difference of success

or failure in this new program which, in all honesty, could explain the failure of the old system.

IV. VALUES IN GROUPING

Evidence is fairly conclusive that grouping practices in a school can assist in developing social situations that influence the student's perception of self, his sense of dignity and worth, and his attitude toward other children. Grouping practices should be concerned with developing social climates that will encourage the intellectual, social, and personal development of every child without detrimental effects on individual children (5:434).

Individual attitudes and behavior are anchored in the group to which a person belongs. Changes in these attitudes and behavior occur more widely by changing group properties than by direct teaching. The effect of group standards on behavior (social behavior) is well recognized. The student who refrains from participating in discussion because he fears ridicule, censure, or even ouster by his classmates will not behave differently unless the group standards are altered to approve participation or unless he fits into another group.

In concentrating on the individual child we have frequently neglected group procedures. We must understand the dominant role

of the group on the individual (19:72). Boys and girls are taught in groups, and our teaching methods must recognize this fact if we are to capitalize on the efficiency of group experiences for certain kinds of learning. The proper administering of groups can improve the learning procedures of both the very capable and very slow child.

In conclusion, placement, as a guidance function in the elementary school, implies the satisfactory adjustment of the pupil to grade, group, and subject. Each child has his own background of experiences, physical and mental growth rates, abilities, interests, achievement level, and personality traits. Guidance is concerned with these individual variations and assesses and reassesses each carefully in the placement of each child. Through proper placement, each child is introduced to and maintained in grade and groups in mental, social, and physical capacities (4:365).

Whatever plans are used, the teacher must hold in mind that he needs to care not only for the capacities of children but also for their interests and needs. Grouping children seems to stress the importance of their academic need, which seems to violate our democratic view of education. Our values concern the school and the group rather than the child in the group and his acceptance by that group through his mental ability and achievement.

The primary objective of proper grouping is to place each child in an educational setting which affords an optimum, well-rounded opportunity for learning without hampering his physical and social development or his emotional adjustments (9:6).

Recent research shows that there are twenty-three or twenty-four different criteria of selection now in use for the grouping of children. Which one should we use? What we are really saying is that there is no one best single method of organizing instruction that will perfectly meet the educational needs of all the children all of the time. Here are just a few methods now being used by various school systems to combat this difficult and complex problem:

1. Self-contained classroom
2. Team teaching
3. Departmentalized classes
4. Special schools for gifted or retarded
5. Trade or technical schools
6. Various forms of ability grouping
 - A. Problem method
 - B. Laboratory plan
 - C. Morrison and Dalton Plan

Grouping or placing children is a tremendous responsibility

as it will have an everlasting effect on the child in his later years. There are many answers to learning, and the school must explore other possibilities in order to be fair to its students whose profile of abilities is adjusted to comprehend this new learning. Meanwhile many other boys and girls are forced by law to spend unhappy years in a situation to which it is impossible for them to adapt themselves very successfully (25:503).

V. GROUP DYNAMICS

The main basis for social acceptance of instructional group members must be that of willingness and ability to perform assigned work roles and take part in problem-solving activities (11:113).

The rate at which class members will experience gratification or personal reward is affected by group structure. Personal gratification depends upon the kind of progress a group can make. If the group is in disagreement about goals, it will likely engage in much activity unrelated to the kind of learning experiences necessary for high personal achievement. This is often the case when students feel they are not learning as much as they would like because of conflicting goals of another group. This often separates the group

and causes an interaction among the class members. The two different factions begin to have unsatisfactory feelings toward the other members as they are stopping the progress of the advanced group. In turn, the slower group have a guilt feeling because they are holding back the class and their ultimate goal. Regardless of the kind and amount of interaction, the significant factor for group formation is that the pupils act as a unit; they belong (11:84).

Gale Jensen describes group behavior in this manner:

"A teacher will not be successful in instituting a plan of group organization and action for achieving given learning objectives unless the other dimensions of the group are in harmony with it" (11:98).

The pupil's learning is influenced by the group, its mores, and its power structure. The all-important concern is the relationship of the individual pupil to his learning group. We must help him adjust to role so that he may be attracted to the group and feel a sense of belonging (11:251-52).

We can accomplish these goals if we establish a climate of learning in which a child is capable of mastering, yet challenge the child to his utmost mental ability without causing any harmful reaction-- and yet still have these goals apply to the group as well.

Critics against grouping.

1. We should keep our children in classes with others because that is the nature of their later environment.
2. Enrichment in regular classrooms can be used in schools of all sizes and in every community.
3. This is the least expensive and most realistic method of all.
4. Bright children gain from being with the slower ones, so do the latter profit and feel stimulated to do better work through class observation.
5. Flexibility can aid the teacher in meeting the needs of all (1:90).

Critics for grouping.

1. The slower child is not stimulated by the bright child.
2. The gifted youngster receives no stimulus when his school environment consists of those who cannot share his ideas.
3. If one is brighter than others he develops some unwanted characteristics.
4. Neglect is the reward for giftedness in the regular classroom, for other children get more help with their work. An average education penalizes youngsters at both ends of the scale.
5. Fifth grade work for the fourth grader, twice as many problems or extra homework.
6. What happens when the principal demands rigid and strict conformity with a defined course of study? Will all the children gain in understanding equally without the same equal ability (1:91)?

CHAPTER III

THE USE OF GROUPS IN OUR SCHOOL PROGRAM

The graded elementary school with a self-contained classroom and youngsters with a wide range of ability and for the most part homogeneous in age has been the most prevalent pattern of organization.

Defects in this concept of grade standards were quickly debated. Fast learners could complete the work of the grades in much less than a year's time, while slow learners required more time. Retarding all pupils who could not meet the grade level standards had such poor results that many schools practiced social promotions. Grouping within the class on the basis of ability has become a common practice, at least in the intermediate grades, while primary grades do this for their reading programs (23:20).

One handicap the teacher in the self-contained classroom faces today, if individual needs are to be adequately met, is class size. Meeting individual needs must of necessity come through successful interaction with the other individuals within the group.

Frustration arises over and over again when teachers attempting to maintain classroom atmosphere conducive to good mental

health and maximum growth for each child fall short of their goal.

Some means to curb this were (1) Class size reduced to twenty pupils, (2) Trained assistants, (3) School day structured to fit the teacher's schedule (21:174).

These ideas were out of the question or impossible to be utilized by our teaching staff. The idea of a strict form of ability grouping was undemocratic towards the pupils and unpopular with the teachers. What was needed was a program that would help the pupils in their educational environment for better learning and still follow the democratic processes of programming.

It was felt that a great many of the gifted children never have the opportunity of developing their special abilities during their elementary school experiences. The responsibility of identifying and providing for the special needs of these children lies with the school, for it is our philosophy that all our children should be provided for.

Hildreth (10:398) states that 20 per cent of the school population consists of mentally slow children who cannot keep up with school work organized for normal children of the same age. The faculty felt that more time should be spent with the slow learner without sacrificing the other able learners. How could more time be spent with the slow learner and the advanced pupil? It was a unanimous opinion that the present system of homogeneous grouping

by age or grade did not meet with our approval.

The staff felt the obligation of the school was to discover and develop the inherent abilities of each child. Educators have long accepted the fact that children of like chronological age are not necessarily capable of doing like quality of school work (24:264). This conclusion changed our ideas from the casual separation of classes by homogeneous grouping, using age and grade as the basic criteria. The idea of adding some form of homogeneous grouping by ability was discussed and approved. There still must be some spread or heterogeneity in this group as this was essential to provide competition and stimulus to the group. An important factor was that these ideas should not be extreme in nature; our main concern was still the child. Jensen explains it in this manner (11:85): "The hope of the individual member will acquire a position in this structure which will enable them to balance gratification and privations of their needs in a way that is satisfying to them." Would our new program answer this important fact or would it continue to exist as in the old program?

I. METHOD OF SELECTION

Through a combination of selecting pupils by homogeneous and heterogeneous methods, a small number of differences was hoped

to be reduced. There would still be a range of abilities to give it a heterogeneous factor but some ability similarity to give it a homogeneous grouping. The classes still could be democratic in nature and the change would be very minor so as not to cause any great concern by the pupils or the parents.

Under the old system, pupils were listed by abilities or in alphabetical order. Slight comments were placed by each name that may have a bearing on next year's classification. The principal, along with the previous teacher and the future teacher of this child, would divide the pupils by ability, giving each room an equal number of children--an equal number of high, low, and average. Many other unusual factors would count in this placement program, such as a man teacher, social acceptance, or teacher opinion.

This program was felt to be wholly inadequate as the range of abilities in any classroom varied from a low I. Q. of 85 to a high I. Q. of 130. No thought was given to the ability of the class as a whole or the difficulty of instructing such a group. Teachers should be able to work effectively under this system and many do extremely well, but the staff was still not satisfied and sought ways to improve it even more.

Our plan is not a new method of classification, just a slight change with the high ability student and the slow learner. Our greatest

concern regards the wide range in the classroom and whether there is some way to close this spread or range.

Accelerated group. The top ten or twelve students will be selected from the third, fourth, and fifth grades and placed into one room, at their grade level, for the coming year. The criteria used or the basis on which the students will be selected will be quite varied. The most important factors are (1) I. Q., (2) Achievement, (3) Teacher evaluation, (4) Personality of the child, (5) Goals to be achieved by each child, and (6) Unusual situations that may occur that would affect the child, such as parental request or very close friend.

Children who have a high I. Q. and are achieving, low achievement but with high I. Q., and the high achiever with an average I. Q. will be chosen for this accelerated group. Many problems may arise and will have to be handled on an individual basis. The important feature of this program is to allow our more capable students an environment for optimum growth.

The remaining students will be chosen from the average median. Students who possess good study habits, doing average or above average in their work, and students from the low average will be selected on the basis of study habits and future potential and capable of competing in this newer atmosphere of learning. It is important that

students selected from the average or below average will be selected on the basis of good study habits and willingness to work. They should also be free from any serious school problems that would affect their learning in this advanced group. It is important that this class have differences in ability and characteristics, and the extreme grouping of superior students at all levels must be watched carefully.

Average group. Children who have had serious difficulty in school or with low I. Q. ratings will be placed into one room at their grade level. This group would range from six to eight students in need of special assistance. At times there will be students with emotional problems and students who are not able to attend special adjustment classes. This would occur very seldom, and our community is such that this is a rarity (using the past four years as a guide).

The criteria used in selecting these pupils will be similar to that of the accelerated group: (1) I. Q., (2) Achievement, (3) Teacher evaluation, (4) Personality (extremely important with this group), (5) Goals to be achieved by the student, and (6) Special data from the child's folder such as a psychological test or report from the social worker.

The majority of children in the classroom will be average students. There will be students doing strong "B" work or above average in academic standards. These students may possibly possess good study habits but with an average or strong average I. Q. rating.

The class will also have many average workers, though some need extra time or direction of the teacher. The remaining students will consist of those pupils who find school very difficult or are not doing the work up to the desired class standard expected at that grade level.

Students in this classroom will be given longer time to do assignments, shorter assignments, books will be chosen for reading at their ability level, and standards will be met to fit the needs of the special group. It is hoped that through this new classification the student can work towards the normal class standard that is expected at that grade level. Many students will be doing outstanding work in this group, only the superior "A" student will be absent.

The most important objective with this new means of classification is to use it wisely. The only purpose of this new program is to improve the learning or instruction over the old method and to produce better results.

When organizing classes in a school on two levels of ability the reduction in range is about seven to ten per cent difference.

Usually this reduces the range of achievement and frees the teacher from making many adaptations to individual differences (28:254).

The entire program is designed to further or improve our teaching. It should be noted that a survey was taken by Howard L. Jones of some students concerning grouping tendencies and that students tend to select their friends according to academic ability (12:486).

Through the use of this new program we hope to improve the social and physical environment for the children. Will our children's behavior improve in this new program? Will it relieve pressure or will it add more pressure to both groups as they are now closer together in academic ability?

The reaction of the pupils in their new classrooms is of grave concern to the faculty; their reactions and behavior patterns should be watched carefully. The school is fortunate in having a school psychologist, a social worker, and a school nurse to help in case of problems beyond our scope.

Research data on the acceptance and rejection pattern of elementary school children in Colfax School, Pittsburgh, indicate that acceptance and rejection were more marked within an ability group than between ability groups (14:18). This should prove in favor

of our classification as the one important feature in this new grouping system was to relieve a strain or academic pressure between such a wide group in a given classroom.

II. SPECIAL GROUPS

The school provides many different functions and learning situations that help the pupil further his educational needs. So many of our school activities and learnings depend upon proper grouping and their contributions to the child and school.

Special reading teacher. Our school is very fortunate in having a full time reading teacher and librarian. Each day a group of youngsters meet in the library or reading room for special instruction while the regular classroom continues their reading program. With our new classification of pupils, there will no longer be four pupils leaving from each room; all the remedial readers will be in the same room. This will allow for better scheduling. The home room teacher is allowed more time with fewer pupils to improve their reading program, and the special reading teacher is working with only seven or eight pupils who need special attention. Placing all the superior pupils (on the basis of I. Q.) in one room will allow us a better start for their program in the library.

Band-choir groups. A special teacher instructs instrumental music and band. This is available to all people who have ability in music. This provides a rich experience for groups of children who have a special talent in the arts. The pupils are excused from class and all pupils are urged to participate, regardless of academic achievement. This meets the needs of a part of our school population.

Choir is open to all interested fifth and sixth grade students who excel in music or have the interest to participate in group singing. These pupils meet before school, on Friday, to participate in one of our social groups offered by the school.

Patrol. Boys are chosen from our fifth and sixth grades for this important task. To be able to join this group a child must be of average academic ability, have good moral character, and be a willing worker. They soon become a close group or clique, highly respected by the student body.

Lunchroom. Girls are usually chosen for this experience, but some boys do volunteer. They serve in the food line, sell milk, collect lunch money, and clean up. The students are selected on the basis of cleanliness, academic standards, and sometimes need (a free lunch is provided).

Office. This is the most sought after job in the school. Five of our most outstanding girls from each fifth and sixth grade rooms are asked to work as office assistants. They will answer the phone, greet parents or pupils in the office, and do minor tasks in the daily routine. This job is held for one quarter and gives recognition to the outstanding pupil.

Library. Students who seem interested in library or reading are asked to become library assistants. They do many tasks that are required in any school library. This gave many students of exceptional talent a chance to work for our school (pupils who usually did not play an instrument or were not strong enough for patrol). This new activity gave life to a group of children; they, too, could perform a worthwhile activity for our school.

Summary. Schools are democracy in action. Many groups of children unite to perform the school a worthwhile service. The objective is twofold. One, they serve the school. Two, the service gives them the recognition of being in one of our school-life groups. These experiences allow the pupils to associate with others of equal interest or abilities. Their social groups are nurtured during the many hours before and after school or during the noon hour. This group also plays a vital part in the growth of any school child.

CHAPTER IV

SUMMARY

Educators must expect a tremendous range of differences among children. The real educator knows that a sixth grade is primarily a group of children about eleven years old. It is not unusual to find a spread across a six to eleven year range. This wide range will create problems.

No two children within the same environment will develop to the same point at the same time in any given characteristic. In practice, we have done far too little in organizing our instructional program in the light of this principle. We have assumed that by the processes of making grade placement, promotions, and retention, a group could be reached. Schools cannot and should not guarantee uniform progress along all lines of endeavor.

The U. S. educational system can be made more efficient, and it almost certainly will be. Schools are now exploring a wide variety of new techniques, some concerned with teaching methods and some with school management. A substantial number of good schools are attempting to use the judgment of the teachers and various socio-metric devices to bring together children who seem likely to work well

as a group.

The disturbing point at present seems to be that just at the point where ability grouping seems to be generally practiced, we are raising justifiable questions about its value and failing to supply busy teachers with practical ideas for improved ways of caring for individual differences. The answer would be far simpler if elementary teachers were working with twenty to twenty-five children, but that is not general. Let us work to reduce class size and at the same time explore all possible ways of organizing a classroom for the most effective development of each child's abilities.

I. CRITERIA BY WHICH TO MEASURE A NEW PLAN

1. Any plan must take into account that teachers must deal with children who differ not only in general ability but in specific abilities.
2. We must help the child to understand his own weaknesses and strengths.
3. Our plan must be understood and accepted by the majority of the parents.
4. Children should learn to live with people of varied abilities.

5. Any plan must be practical under present-day conditions possible for the teacher to work out.
6. Any plan must bring results which show that effective teaching is taking place.

Grouping, then, could be defined as the scheme followed when children were placed within two or more sections or classes at a given grade level. Why should we group children? (1) We group in order to provide for the vast differences that exist among any aggregation of individuals, (2) to vary our teacher-learning procedures, (3) to promote more effective learning, and (4) by using group work, to help achieve one of the most important goals of education--the development of an individual capable of living and working within a society of men.

II. CRITICISMS

A controversial topic in education or teaching is the advisability of dividing students into classes so as to form a homogeneous ability grouping at two or more levels. It is sometimes felt that the slower students can benefit from the stimulation of the faster ones, that this is a truly democratic procedure as all the children are placed into a room without regards to ability, and some parents may complain that their children may receive inferior teaching in the

remedial classes. Other ideas critical to grouping are (1) lack of trained teachers, (2) system may become labeled, (3) insufficient materials and curriculum, and (4) poor procedures to determine who belongs in each group.

III. CONCLUSION

More than thirty million children are attending elementary schools in America in 1961. This phenomenal increase in numbers has taxed the ingenuity of administrators to organize classes for quality education.

Present-day philosophy and methods are inadequate; new means must be found to cope with the large task that lies before us. Our present means of educating children is failing to do the job that is expected. The criticism from the public, the demand from the colleges, the large number of "drop outs," and our society, which is changing into a higher level of educational standards, demand new trends.

The conclusion seems justified that the emphasis should be towards finding new methods of changing our organizational pattern. This is the weak link in American education. We have ample equipment and vast knowledge; this must be applied in a better environment than

at present.

Grouping isn't a way of teaching. It is simply a technique of classroom management that helps you create an environment in which you can teach better. That total environment is what really matters. You can be sure that grouping will help you make your room an interesting, happy, and effective working place if you work everlastingly for the good of each child.

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