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## A Survey of Teachers' Attitudes Regarding the Effectiveness of the Nongraded Elementary School

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A SURVEY OF TEACHERS' ATTITUDES REGARDING  
THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE NONGRADED  
ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

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A Thesis  
Presented to  
the Graduate Faculty  
Central Washington State College

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

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by  
Merton L. Thornton  
August 1967

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APPROVED FOR THE GRADUATE FACULTY

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## CHAPTER I

### THE PROBLEM AND DEFINITIONS OF TERMS USED

The public schools in a democracy have the responsibility of educating all the children within its jurisdiction capable of learning. The nature of education varies depending on the different abilities, needs, and interests of the child. It must work to develop fully each individual's capabilities.

Each person must take an individual place in society and therefore he should be educated as an individual. Only through this individualized process can the person's abilities and limitations be recognized and developed. The extent to which this is accomplished is the measure of the success of the educational program.

Schools are ever changing, attempting to meet more adequately the needs of each child. The nongraded elementary school plan attempts to satisfy this purpose by eliminating traditional grade divisions. The grades, with their body of subject matter within each grade, are replaced by learning levels through which the child progresses at his own rate. The individual, as rapidly as he is capable, moves through a flexible curriculum designed to stimulate him to work to his capacity. Progress is measured not

against a rigid standard, as in the graded plan, but rather by the capability and application of the child.

## I. THE PROBLEM

Statement of the problem. It was the purpose of this study to determine teachers' expressed attitudes regarding the effectiveness of the nongraded elementary school in the state of Washington, as revealed through a questionnaire study.

Importance of the study. It is the opinion of this writer that a person's attitude toward a program is a prime determiner as to how effective that program will be. If a person believes what he is doing is the most effective way of doing it, he will work harder at the job and accomplish far more than if he does not consider it to be the most effective procedure. This is true of the nongraded elementary school. In a survey of thirty-four school districts by John I. Goodlad (9:171), the item mentioned most frequently as a factor contributing to the successful development of nongraded programs was strong interest and desire on the part of teachers. It is important then that some attempt be made to ascertain the attitudes of teachers regarding its effectiveness. It is hoped that in some way this study may help school districts improve their nongraded elementary programs.

Procedure of the study. In order to secure adequate knowledge upon which to base conclusions, one must first sample the field to be studied. The field to be studied in this survey included 125 teachers who are teaching in public nongraded elementary schools in the state of Washington. The selected teachers were asked to complete an attitude questionnaire. When this form was completed, the respondents were instructed to return the survey in the mail for tabulation and evaluation.

Limitations of the study. It is hereby acknowledged by the investigator that a small group may not adequately or accurately reflect the attitudes of the majority of which it is a part. The sample included in this study was limited to 125 teachers who are teaching in nongraded elementary schools in the state of Washington.

## II. DEFINITIONS OF TERMS USED

Ungraded primary. The ungraded primary is a plan whereby children beyond kindergarten age and below the fourth grade are grouped in classes, without a grade level designation in which great effort is made to adjust instruction to individual differences (1:68). "The ungraded primary organization is not a method of teaching, but rather an administrative tool, designed to encourage and promote

a philosophy of continuous growth" (12:79). For the purpose of this study, "ungraded" and "nongraded" are synonymous.

Grade. A "grade" is one of the major divisions of the graded school, representing the body of work designated for one school year.

Grade standards. "Grade standards" refers to standards set up by the school for pupils to achieve in order to be promoted.

Grouping. "Grouping" is the process of classifying pupils for instructional purposes; applied to class groups or intraclass groups.

Continuous progress. "Continuous progress" is continual progression from one stage to the next in difficulty.

### III. ORGANIZATION OF THE REMAINDER OF THE THESIS

The remainder of this thesis is organized into four chapters. The review of literature pertaining to the non-graded elementary school will be presented in Chapter II. The procedures of the investigation will be discussed in Chapter III. Chapter IV will include the presentation of the data. Chapter V contains the summary, conclusions, and recommendations made as a result of this study.

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

#### I. HISTORY

The idea of nongrading classes is not a twentieth century innovation. The dame schools of the seventeenth century and the "district" schools of the eighteenth century were without grade classification. In the dame school, each child received twenty minutes of individualized instruction twice a day. The students spent the balance of their time listening to others recite, talking, or getting into mischief (9:44). Groups were small and the teachers poorly prepared. The curriculum was meager and they taught what they themselves knew. The "Monitorial" system came into being during the eighteenth century. A master would teach a group of older and sometimes brighter boys, then these boys went to a small group of younger students and transmitted their knowledge to them. An ordering of instruction began to appear. Emphasis was on subject matter and skills. The low cost of the "monitorial" schooling for each child helped promote free public education (9:45-46).

The American culture was changing during this period of time and the reports of interested people concerning German education received favorable attention. The German

school impressed people because of their operational efficiency, trained teachers, centralized control, and modern methods. Normal schools, for training teachers, opened in 1823 and 1827. New textbooks appeared which were graded. McGuffey Readers sold so well others started printing graded material. The Quincy Grammar School came into being with its separate rooms, one for each teacher, and an assembly hall large enough to accommodate all the students in the building. Pupils were separated into graded of like abilities of achievement. At the end of each year they either passed or failed. It was predicted that this new organization would set the pattern for fifty years to come. It has been around for over 100 years and is essentially the same now as it was then.

The nongraded school came into the limelight around 1940. Milwaukee, which began nongrading in 1942, has the oldest plan still in operation. "In the school year 1957-58 some forty-four communities reported the operation of non-graded schools" (9:55).

## II. PHILOSOPHY

"The non-graded organization is a natural outcome of a philosophy of education that implies respect for each individual" (19:152). It is a philosophy of providing for individual differences. In the nongraded elementary school

the child moves along through the work at his own speed and rate of progress. He is not pressured by the realization that he must learn a certain amount of material in a limited time. The total development of the child is considered. His growth is measured, not against his classmates as in the graded system, but against himself. There is a realistic balance of success and failure. The child is not required to repeat work he is capable of doing. A wider use of teaching materials are brought into play. The problems of retention and social promotion are eliminated. Curriculum emphasis is shifted from the horizontal view of concepts and skills, to the longitudinal view. Nongrading facilitates horizontal and vertical flexibility in moving students (24:2). The teacher is no longer plagued with the problem of retaining students because they did not complete the required work for their grade. The student does not lost his sense of dignity or suffer the defeat, ridicule, and mental anguish of failure. Nongrading is not a method of instruction, but an organizational device to facilitate continuous pupil progress.

### III. GROUPING FOR INSTRUCTION

In most school districts that have tried nongrading, grades one through three have been replaced with eight or more reading achievement levels. (See Appendix A.)

"The total length of time a child spends in the primary school depends upon his abilities, accomplishments, and readiness for advancement to grade four" (12:80). If it takes a child four years to complete his primary work, the retardation takes place gradually and almost imperceptibly within the intra-class groupings that are used, the failure itself is often disguised, and the child sees no artificial or repetitious break in the sequence of his learning experiences.

Only those children who are physically, emotionally, and socially mature are permitted to move rapidly through the ungraded primary program. The children of this category would complete the program in two years. The other bright children who are intellectually capable of advancing to the fourth grade, but whose physical, social, or emotional needs would be better met by remaining with their age mates, are given enriched programs (1:71-72). The average child would complete the program in three years and advance to the fourth grade.

A child's progress is measured primarily by his progress in reading. A modified plan of homogeneous grouping has proved to be a very workable arrangement. There are also various other ways of grouping children in a nongraded school. Age, random selection, social relationships, interest levels, work-study skill groups are examples. The grouping used has no necessary connection with the nongraded idea (9:70).

Changes from group to group, either within classrooms or between classrooms, occur at any time on the basis of academic progress or social adjustment. These changes may be either up or down in level. The transfer has less stigma to it because the child is moving from primary group to primary group and not from third grade to second grade or vice versa. In moving a child from room to room, one idea used was an introductory period of two weeks in the new room for part of the day during reading. This would help the child adjust to his new class group while he still maintained the social ties of his old classmates. After finding experiences with the new group to be satisfying, he would then desire to be moved permanently. During this two-week period, while the child is becoming accustomed to his new classmates, a conference or perhaps a series of conferences are held with the parents (3:260-261).

When a student transfers to another school, his records are sent to the new school.

Each child's academic record includes the results of standardized achievement tests, given at least once a year. These test scores, together with teacher's estimates, a list of textbooks and materials the child has mastered, and other data, make it an easy matter to place him at the proper level in a graded school (4:26).

Problems may arise, however, for the accelerated student, or for the student who hasn't covered the material of a specific grade. The accelerated student may have to repeat

some units of work he has already completed in the non-graded school. This can be a profitable time for the student, none the less, since each teacher's approach to instruction is slightly different. The student who has not completed all the work for a specific grade, but who, upon transfer will be promoted rather than retained, will have some problems adjusting and may need a tutor temporarily.

#### IV. CURRICULUM AND MATERIALS

"The Curriculum is the heart of a school's program" (9:79). The curriculum is the means whereby a school fulfills its educational responsibilities to its students. A well planned curriculum has continuity and sequence. That is, present learnings are related to past learnings and a foundation is laid for future learnings. The skills learned at one level should help the student master skills at the next and subsequent levels. Learning is a process of finding relationships among facts and incidents and applying these learnings to a variety of situations. The curriculum embraces both the student and the subject matter to be learned.

There must be a continuous unbroken process of learning from kindergarten through the intermediate years. This is the longitudinal view, which is a framework of organizing elements running vertically through the curriculum around

which learning activities should be organized (9:80). In determining organizing elements, learner behavior and subject matter, or content, are considered. The teacher will vary the kinds of groupings according to the content and the range of achievement in the group. In reading and arithmetic, grouping by achievement levels could be used. Social studies, health, and science could be grouped into interest levels or units. Work-study skill groups could be used in art, research projects, and language arts projects. Children differ widely in their capabilities, attainments, and rates of speed. Each student progresses at his own rate achieving his own insights as he goes along.

What is taught when becomes less important than what concepts, skills and values are being learned and how well. The timing and pacing of learning processes becomes more important than the grade placement of specific learning tasks (9:84-85).

The teacher's decisions as to what to teach is dependent upon her view of when and to which students. In the longitudinal curriculum view, the what and the who are viewed over a span of years. The course of studies should not be a listing of topics to be covered grade by grade. The non-graded teacher can select organizing topics, problems, and units from a wide range of possibilities. Pupil interest in and readiness for these learning situations help a teacher select what is to be studied.

Materials and equipment should be centralized and classified in order that teachers may locate quickly what they need in providing for the several levels to be found in their rooms (10:255).

## V. REPORTING TO PARENTS

Reporting pupil progress to parents is an essential part of the educational picture. In a study of methods of reporting to parents by Henry J. Otto (15:153), it was determined that:

Parents and teachers were in close agreement about the objectives for which schools should strive and in full agreement that reports to parents should be in terms of the objectives sought by the school.

Some educators and parents advocate one way in which to do this, others advocate another.

Parents want to know how their child is doing in his academic areas, and they also want to know how he compares with his peers. Parents need a base, or norm, to for understanding the development of their child. Teachers usually have the information parents want, but it is a difficult task to transmit this information to the parents.

Some schools use a report card, based upon a comparative marking system, as the sole means of reporting to parents. Others use report cards and supplemental reports in the form of teacher's notes, letters, and personal confer-

ences. The latter is the better plan of the two. The report card alone provides only one-way communication between parents and teachers. Two-way communication is necessary to provide the parent and teacher with insights and understandings which each needs to help the child.

Because of the individualized frame of reference in the nongraded school, the parent-teacher conference is the most valuable means of reporting to parents. Since each child is measured in terms of his own progress, there is less chance of a parent being shy about conferences. In the graded plan, where children are measured in terms of their achievement compared to their classmates, parents tend to be a little shy and hesitant about personal conferences. This type of reporting makes quite a bit more work for the teacher, but they realize the benefits of the practice and are usually pleased to conform.

In-service training courses, teacher's workshops, handbooks, and bulletins can help a teacher in the setting up and procedures to follow in the actual conference. These conferences should cover such items as:

1. Planning conferences carefully in cooperation with administrators, parents and pupils.
2. Clarifying and emphasizing the construction and cooperative purpose of conferences.
3. Agreement on a school-wide policy.

4. Preparation of friendly and courteous invitations.
5. Arranging a friendly conference setting.
6. Demonstrating the teacher's interest in and respect for the pupil.
7. The conducting of conferences on a constructive not a destructive basis.
8. Complimenting the parents for their contribution to the student's well-being.
9. The closing of each conference with some mutual understanding as to how the parent can constructively help the child to achieve in the future.

Goodlad (9:136) suggests that a pupil-teacher conference be held prior to the parent-teacher conference. This gives the student an idea about what his parents and the teacher are going to discuss and why. It helps the student realize, perhaps more fully, that his parents and the school are truly interested in him as an individual.

In conducting a parent-teacher conference, rapport between the parent and teacher is desirable. This can be accomplished by discussing the student's achievements in some area. This is not too difficult because each child is better in some areas than in others. This need not be an academic area, although it could be. Use objective, descriptive, and factual statements concerning the child's work, progress, and problems.

In the discussion of a student's problems, the teacher needs to be very tactful. The teacher must be aware

of the parent's disposition to recognize, understand, and accept such facts and the effect such facts will have on the attitudes the parents will have toward the school. Use specific illustrative incidents in the discussion of attainments. Parents like to see samples of their child's work. Discuss the planning for the future achievement of the child with the parent. Too much cannot be settled in any one conference. Closing the conference on a positive note is important. This could be a humorous incident which happened in school involving the parent's child or some accomplishment the child has made.

Parent-teacher conferences have many advantages over other forms of reporting to parents. Among these are:

1. Both parties can ask questions and offer explanations.
2. Illustrations and examples can be viewed in detail.
3. Misunderstandings can be cleared up.
4. The comparative-competitive elements can be reduced to their proper perspective.
5. The parent and teacher can become better acquainted.
6. The teacher is kept more on his toes, alert to many aspects of a child's development that might otherwise be overlooked.
7. The need for reporting serves as a stimulus to better curricular planning.

The advantages far outweigh the disadvantages, but it would not be fair to list one and not the other. Some of the disadvantages are:

1. Administrative problems.
2. Fathers can seldom come because of work.
3. Teachers do not know their pupils as well as they should.
4. Sometimes a parent will allow himself to volunteer more information than he intended to and regrets it later.

The use of paid nonprofessional assistants, or teacher's aids as some call them, has helped to alleviate some of the teacher's clerical load. They help in clerical work, supervision of lunch rooms and playgrounds, routine housekeeping tasks, and many other chores which do not require professional training.

John I. Goodlad (9:125) gives a good outline of an excellent reporting plan.

The general consensus is that there should be at least two regularly scheduled conferences each year, these to be supplemented with other conferences as needed for individual cases. They go on to recommend interviewing, written reports, checklists, or notes, two and four times a year, and state that, since the conference is certain to provide the necessary comparative information, these written reports can and should be different from the conventional report card using the symbols of a comparative marking system.

He also suggests the occasional use of home visits. Some schools use a bulletin, published periodically, to report

to parents between conferences on what is being taught in school and suggest family activities to help reinforce learnings. These activities include selected television programs, movies, plays, and museum exhibits. Marian Tucker (26:160) suggests the use of student letters, written as a language arts assignment, which tell their parents what they are learning in school.

At the close of the school year the parent is simply advised that the child will continue next year where he left off in June. The parent no longer has to fear the end of a school year wondering if his child "passed" or "failed" as in the graded plan.

## VI. INITIATING THE PROGRAM

The initiation of a nongraded plan in a school, or group of schools, must be undertaken with great care. It is a complex task because it calls for the mobilization of many forces and the skillful application of many psychological and social principles.

There are a variety of ways a staff member or lay person could become acquainted with the program. They may move into the community from a community where the non-graded plan was in operation. They may read about it in professional magazines and periodicals. They may know college people who introduced them to the idea.

The first major step in establishing a nongraded elementary program is to convince the superintendent and his administrative-supervisory staff that the elimination of grade classifications is not only desirable but feasible. Solid and unanimous support from administrators is necessary if the plan is to succeed.

After the administrators have studied and discussed the plan, the second step is to acquaint the teachers with the plan. The teachers selected to participate in this program would depend on the size and policies of the school district. It would also depend upon the decisions of the administrative staff. Perhaps the best way to begin is to hold informal intimate discussions with the teachers directly affected and then include the rest of the staff as it becomes necessary. This group may consist of teachers from only one school, or more depending on the number of schools involved with initiating the program.

Gaining the support of the teachers should not be a problem if they are concerned at all with the problems of promoting, of reporting, and of individualizing instruction. Strong interest and desire on the part of teachers is absolutely essential to the success of the program as pointed out in Goodlad's survey. (See Appendix C.) The study of the literature available about the plan will fan the spark of interest teachers already have. This research is further

expanded by visits to schools where the nongraded plan is in operation. These visits will probably have more psychological value than informational value.

The special, or unique factors in the local school system can be fitted into the framework of the plan through staff discussions. These discussions could proceed for a period of time from six months to a year. Through research, visits, and discussions the staff should obtain an excellent working knowledge of the nongraded philosophy and its mechanics.

In any new undertaking it is important that the participants have a sense of security. After study of the plan, the next move to enhance security is to gain the understanding and cooperation of the school board. The school board should have been aware of the staff's interest in the plan through the superintendent's reports of the staff's in-service activities. Thorough and complete records of the study activities will make it easy for board members to acquaint themselves with the plan. Convincing the members of the community may not be as difficult a task as it may first appear. The support of many parents can be gained if staff members can show how the plan will solve some of the problems which parents themselves have experienced.

As in all school-public relations, the enthusiasm and support of the professional staff is the real key to preparing the way with parents for a nongraded

school. It is difficult to imagine a community of parents, represented by their Board of Education, denying a staff the opportunity to attempt a non-graded program if the staff very clearly believes it to be desirable and knows how to go about it (9:183).

The school district's public relations is an important factor in the gaining of parental support. If, through its long range planning, the district has built up a healthy communications relationship with the public, it will be receptive to new ideas proposed by the schools. All available news media should be used in transmitting the message of the plan. All of the public needs to be informed, not just the parents of the students. A strong Parent-Teacher Association will be a big help in the campaign. District news-letters, bulletins, or pamphlets will help. Parental understanding and support is essential. (See Appendix B.) It is essential that all of the staff members, not just those directly involved with the program in their schools, be intelligently informed so that when they are approached by the public they can intelligently answer their questions. The public needs to be aware of some of the vocabulary of the nongraded program so that they will talk and think in the terms of the program and not in graded terminology.

Orientation to a nongraded school is very important. Parents need to understand thoroughly the philosophy of individual differences and how this affects their child's school progress. Parents need to recognize the individual

growth patterns of their child and in this way be better able to accept his academic development on an individual basis.

Early in the fall an "open house" might be conducted in each school. This would involve a short group meeting of all parents followed by an informal explanation of the work being done and the work planned for the year by the individual teachers. Parents appreciate an opportunity to examine the books and materials their children are using. A district policy handbook which describes the nongraded program should be given to each parent at this time. Parent-teacher conferences, which were discussed earlier, also help in school-community relations. In the spring an orientation meeting should be held for all parents of kindergarten children who will enter the nongraded primary school next year.

Results of a 1955 Parent Opinionaire showed 96% of ungraded primary children as satisfied with the general operation of the gradeless primary program in Park Forest (Ill.) (3:263).

This stems from the fact that these parents were undoubtedly well informed as to the program in their elementary schools.

Parent opposition to the program stems largely from the various methods of grouping children according to the needs and capacities of each. While many parents endorse the idea of classifying children on the basis of reading

ability, they hold back when the moment of truth about their child has to be faced. Their pride is wounded if their child is assigned to any but the best or top group.

A one-week pre-school workshop in the fall would help new teachers become familiar with and adjusted to the nongraded program. Newly employed teachers would be assigned a veteran nongraded primary teacher who acts as a big sister in professional and personal matters. Various types of in-service programs should be scheduled to help them also. Professional advancement can be encouraged by offering extension courses for credit whenever necessary arrangements can be worked out.

The best arrangement for instituting the plan is to start with the children who enter the lowest grade level first. As this group moves up the program is expanded. This way each group of children and their parents can be gradually indoctrinated into a pattern which becomes more easily accepted as the years pass. The first group of children in the program will need the most attention and guidance. This work usually begins in the kindergarten where the children can receive orientation into the program. The kindergarten teacher should not use the terms "passing" or "first grade" as these words should be edited from their vocabulary.

During the kindergarten year a more accurate appraisal of each child's needs and potentiality can be determined prior to assignment in the nongraded program of the primary department. This is a great help in setting the emotional growth of the child. Evelyn D. Adlerblum (9:186-187) states:

A child who has a favorable start in a good kindergarten with a warm, perceptive teacher is . . . less likely to develop into the one out of twelve who (at the present rate) will someday be a patient in a mental hospital.

In the kindergarten a bond of mutual understanding and a basis for estimating the child's future can be formed under less pressure than would exist later.

In a short time--three or four years--the philosophy, vocabulary, and structure of the nongraded organization can replace the "graded" ideas in people's minds through constant vigilance on the part of teachers, administrators, and parents.

## CHAPTER III

### PROCEDURES USED IN THE STUDY

The purpose of this study was to determine teachers' expressed attitudes regarding the effectiveness of the non-graded elementary school through the use of an attitude questionnaire. The names and addresses of school districts within Washington State containing nongraded elementary schools was obtained from School Information and Research Service. The superintendents of these districts were contacted for permission to send questionnaires to their non-graded elementary school teachers. The responding superintendents provided the names and addresses of 125 teachers.

The questionnaire. A list of questions were developed from the related literature. The questionnaire was developed into four sections. The first section of the questionnaire was intended to provide information concerning the respondent's general background and attitudes with respect to the philosophy of the nongraded elementary school.

The second section of the questionnaire was intended to provide information concerning the respondent's attitudes with respect to the administration of their nongraded elementary school.

The third section of the questionnaire was intended to provide information concerning the respondent's attitudes with respect to the advantages for pupils purported by the nongraded philosophy.

The fourth section of the questionnaire was intended to provide information concerning the respondent's attitudes with respect to their relationships with their fellow teachers.

A brief introductory letter, indicating the purpose of the study and soliciting their cooperation in completing the survey, was sent.

Data gathering. The questionnaire, an introductory letter, and a self-addressed reply envelope was sent on February 20, 1967.

Response to the questionnaire mailed on February 20, 1967, to 125 teachers, was 92 replies (73.6%).

Treatment of the data. After the data had been gathered according to plan, it became necessary to analyze the responses.

Response to the first section of the questionnaire--dealing with general information and the nongraded philosophy --was tabulated, summarized, converted to percentages, and retabulated.

Responses to the second section--dealing with administration on a five point scale--were tabulated, summarized, converted to percentages, and retabulated. An index of agreement was established as follows: 5 points for excellent, 4 points for good, 3 points for satisfactory, 2 points for fair, and 1 point for poor. Ratings 4 and 5 were grouped together and labeled very good. A rating of 3 remained as satisfactory, while ratings 1 and 2 were grouped together and labeled as fair and poor.

Responses to the third section of the questionnaire--dealing with pupils--were tabulated, summarized, converted to percentages, and retabulated.

Responses to the last section of the questionnaire--dealing with teachers--were tabulated, summarized, converted to percentages, and retabulated.

## CHAPTER IV

### ANALYSIS OF DATA

The purpose of this chapter is to present the data gathered and to present an analysis of these findings. The questionnaire contained questions dealing with the background of the respondents, their understanding of the non-graded philosophy, the administration of their nongraded program, the advantages for the pupils and their relationships with their fellow teachers.

#### I. BACKGROUND

It was the intent of this section of the questionnaire to provide information concerning the respondent's sex, teaching experience, orientation to the nongraded elementary school plan, student population of their district and building, and length of time their school has been nongraded.

In response to the query concerning their sex, four respondents (4.3%) indicated that they were male teachers, while eighty-eight (95.7%) indicated they were female teachers.

In exploring the background of the respondents, it was necessary to determine their teaching experience in terms of total years of teaching and total years of teaching

in a nongraded elementary school. Table I reveals their responses.

TABLE I

TEACHING EXPERIENCE IN TERMS OF TOTAL YEARS TAUGHT  
AND TOTAL YEARS IN A NONGRADED ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Item	Number	Per Cent
Total Years		
1 to 5	31*	35.2
5 to 10	13	14.5
10 to 20	21	24.0
20 to 30	15	17.1
30 to 40	8	9.2
Years in Nongraded		
1 to 5	64*	71.8
5 to 10	23	25.9
10 to 15	2	2.3

\* Not all respondents answered these items

The data shown in Table I reveals that the largest percentages for years of teaching experience, both in total years, 35.2 per cent, and in years in nongraded schools, 71.8 per cent, occurred in the one to five year range. In addition, 14.5 per cent indicated that they had been teaching from five to ten years, while 25.9 per cent indicated they had been teaching in nongraded elementary schools from five to ten years. Forty-four (50.3%) respondents have been teaching for more than ten years. Only two (2.3%) of the

respondents have been teaching in nongraded elementary schools more than ten years.

Strong interest and desire on the part of teachers, which is very important to the successful development of a nongraded program (9:171), can be initiated and fostered through proper orientation to the nongraded elementary school program. Table II reveals the number and percentage of the responses concerning orientation of the respondents to the nongraded elementary school plan.

TABLE II  
RESPONDENT'S ORIENTATION TO NONGRADED  
ELEMENTARY SCHOOL PROGRAM

Item	Number	Per Cent
College class	13*	12.0
In-service workshop	15	13.8
District orientation program	33	30.1
No class of any kind	38	34.9
Other	10	9.2

\* Some respondents answered more than one item.

The data shown in Table II suggests that over one-third of the respondents attended no class or orientation of any kind prior to commencing teaching in a nongraded school. Approximately one-third attended a district orientation program while only 12.0 per cent attended a college class.

The student populations of the districts in the state of Washington containing nongraded elementary schools ranged in size from small districts (1-1,000 students) to large districts (50,000 students or more). Student population within the individual school buildings ranged from 1 to 1,000 students. Table III reveals the populations according to size of the school districts and buildings.

TABLE III

STUDENT POPULATION IN DISTRICTS AND SCHOOLS  
UTILIZING NONGRADED ELEMENTARY PROGRAMS

Item	Number	Per Cent
District		
1 - 1,000	10*	13.7
1,000 - 5,000	30	41.1
5,000 - 10,000	27	37.0
10,000 - 20,000	2	2.7
20,000 - 50,000	3	4.1
50,000 or more	1	1.4
Schools		
1 - 300	8*	9.3
300 - 500	32	37.2
500 - 1,000	46	53.5

\* Not all respondents answered these questions

Only ten respondents (13.7%) indicated that their districts contained 1 to 1,000 students. Thirty respondents (41.1%) indicated their districts contained 1,00 to 5,000

students. Twenty-seven respondents (37.0%) teach in school districts containing 5,000 to 10,000 students. Forty-six respondents (53.5%) indicated that their schools contained 500 to 1,000 students, while thirty-two (37.2%) revealed that their schools contained 300 to 500 students.

The respondents were asked to indicate the length of time their school had been nongraded. Twenty-seven respondents (31.8%) taught in schools which have been nongraded from one to five years. The largest number of respondents, 56 (65.9%), taught in schools which have been nongraded from six to ten years, while only two respondents (2.3%) have taught in schools which have been nongraded from ten to fifteen years.

## II. PHILOSOPHY

The intent of this section of the questionnaire was to determine the respondents' attitudes concerning the philosophy of the nongraded elementary school.

"The ungraded primary (nongraded elementary school) organization is not a method of teaching, but rather an administrative tool, designed to encourage and promote a philosophy of continuous growth" (12:79). This is a philosophy that implies respect for each individual (19:152). It is a philosophy of providing for individual differences.

The respondents were queried as to their understanding of the nongraded elementary school philosophy. Most of the respondents (64.2%) considered their understanding of the nongraded philosophy to be classified as good; 15.4 per cent classified it as excellent, and 20.4 per cent felt their understanding was fair.

In response to the query concerning their attitudes with respect to the soundness of the nongraded elementary school philosophy, 93.5 per cent of the respondents indicated that they felt it was a sound philosophy, 3.25 per cent felt it was not sound, and 3.25 per cent had no opinion.

Social promotions and retention have long been problems in the graded school plan. The ideas of social promotion and retention are not analogous to, nor can they be considered a part of, continuous pupil progress (9:53). The respondents were queried as to the nongraded plan eliminating social promotions and the problems involved in retention. Their responses are indicated in Table IV.

The majority of the respondents, sixty-one (66.4%), felt that the nongraded elementary school plan eliminated the problems of social promotion and retention. Nineteen (20.4%) did not feel that social promotions were eliminated, and twenty-five (27.1%) felt that the problems of retention were not eliminated.

TABLE IV

ELIMINATION OF SOCIAL PROMOTIONS AND RETENTIONS  
WITH THE NONGRADED ELEMENTARY SCHOOL PLAN

Item	Number	Per Cent
Social Promotions		
Yes	61	66.4
No	19	20.4
No opinion	12	13.2
Retention		
Yes	61	66.4
No	25	27.1
No opinion	6	6.5

In response to the query, "Do you feel you are doing a better job of teaching with the nongraded plan?" sixty-seven (72.9%) of the respondents felt that they were doing a better job, twelve (13.1%) did not feel they were doing a better job, and thirteen (14.0%) had no opinion.

Only 38.1 per cent of the respondents felt satisfied, at the end of the school day, that they had done all they possibly could for each student. The majority of the respondents, 46.7 per cent, did not feel satisfied that they had done all that they could have for each student, and 15.2 per cent had no opinion.

### III. ADMINISTRATION

It was the intent of this section of the questionnaire to provide information concerning the respondents' attitudes

with respect to the administration of their nongraded elementary schools.

Nongraded programs have little hope for success in buildings supervised by principals whose support is not solid and unanimous. The attitude of the administrator is a vital factor in the success of the nongraded elementary school (9:176).

The attitude of the administrators toward the nongraded program received a rating of very good from seventy-two (78.3%) of the respondents. Fifteen respondents (16.3%) rated the attitude of their administrator toward the nongraded program as satisfactory, and only five (5.4%) rated their administrator's attitude as fair to poor.

The respondents were asked to rate their administrator's personal knowledge of their students and the amount of time spent by the principal in discussing the problems of those students with the teacher. Table V shows their responses. Seventy-three of the respondents (79.3%) rated their administrator's personal knowledge of students as very good, twelve (13.0%) rated their administrator's personal knowledge of students as satisfactory, and only seven (7.7%) rated it as fair to poor.

Responses to the query concerning the amount of time the principal spent discussing their students with the

TABLE V

ADMINISTRATOR'S PERSONAL KNOWLEDGE OF STUDENTS AND  
THE AMOUNT OF TIME SPENT DISCUSSING STUDENTS IN  
THE NONGRADED ELEMENTARY SCHOOL PROGRAM

Item	Rating	Number	Per Cent
Personal knowledge of students	Very good	73	79.3
	Satisfactory	12	13.0
	Fair to poor	7	7.7
Time spent discussing students	Very good	51	55.5
	Satisfactory	21	22.8
	Fair to poor	20	21.7

teacher was rated very good by fifty-one (55.5%) of the respondents. Twenty-one (22.8%) of the respondents rated the time their principal spent discussing their students with them as satisfactory, while twenty (21.7%) gave this item a rating of fair to poor.

The respondents were asked to rate their administrator's supervisory role in their school. Sixty-one (66.4%) rated the supervision in their school as very good. Seventeen respondents (18.4%) rated the supervision in their school as satisfactory, and fourteen (15.2%) rated this item as fair to poor.

Because the curriculum is the heart of a school's program and is the means whereby a school fulfills its educational responsibilities to its students (9:79), the curriculum design is very important to the success of a good

program. Table VI reveals that less than one-half of the respondents (43.5%) felt their design was very good, and only thirty-five (38.1%) felt it was satisfactory.

Table VI shows that thirty-six respondents (39.1%) rated the coordination of their units of study as very good. Thirty respondents (32.6%) rated the coordination of their units of study as satisfactory, and twenty-six (28.3%) rated it as very poor.

In response to the query requesting the respondents to rate the quality of their enrichment program, fifty-six respondents (60.9%) gave their enrichment programs a rating of very good. Twenty-three (25.0%) rated their enrichment program as satisfactory, while only thirteen (14.1%) gave their enrichment program a rating of fair to poor.

Teachers must have a wealth of materials which are easily accessible to help fulfill their responsibilities to each child in their rooms. Table VI shows that fifty-nine respondents (64.2%) rated the procurement of their materials as very good and twenty-six (28.2%) rated it satisfactory. Fifty-nine (64.2%) rated the accessibility of their materials as very good. Twenty-one (22.8%) rated the access to materials as satisfactory, and only twelve (13.0%) rated it as fair to poor.

TABLE VI

CURRICULUM DESIGN, COORDINATION OF STUDY UNITS, ENRICHMENT  
PROGRAM, PROCUREMENT AND ACCESSIBILITY OF MATERIALS IN  
THE NONGRADED ELEMENTARY SCHOOL PROGRAM

Item	Rating	Number	Per Cent
Curriculum design	Very good	40	43.5
	Satisfactory	35	38.1
	Fair to poor	17	18.4
Coordination of units	Very good	36	39.1
	Satisfactory	30	32.6
	Fair to poor	26	28.3
Enrichment program	Very good	56	60.9
	Satisfactory	23	25.0
	Fair to poor	13	14.1
Procurement of materials	Very good	59	64.2
	Satisfactory	26	28.2
	Fair to poor	7	7.6
Access to materials	Very good	59	64.2
	Satisfactory	21	22.8
	Fair to poor	12	13.0

Class loads and the movement of students from one level to the next can create problems for some teachers. The respondents were queried as to the class loads in their slower moving groups and the movement of students from one level to the next within their schools.

Table VII reveals that forty-two respondents (45.7%) rated their class loads as very good. Twelve respondents (13.0%) rated their class loads as satisfactory, while thirty-eight (41.3%) felt that the number of students in

their slower moving groups merited the rating of fair to poor. The movement of students from one level to the next received a rating of very good from forty-six (50.0%) of the respondents. Twenty-eight respondents (30.4%) rated the movement of students as satisfactory, and eighteen (19.6%) gave this item a rating of fair to poor.

TABLE VII

CLASS LOADS IN SLOWER GROUPS AND MOVEMENT OF STUDENTS  
FROM ONE LEVEL TO THE NEXT IN THE NONGRADED  
ELEMENTARY SCHOOL PROGRAM

Item	Rating	Number	Per Cent
Class loads	Very good	42	45.7
	Satisfactory	12	13.0
	Fair to poor	38	41.3
Movement of students	Very good	46	50.0
	Satisfactory	28	30.4
	Fair to poor	18	19.6

Record keeping procedures received a very good rating from 45.8 per cent of the respondents. Only 11.9 per cent rated their record keeping procedures as fair to poor, while 42.3 per cent felt their procedures were satisfactory.

Time to perform clerical tasks and prepare for the next day's activities seem to be areas of differences of opinions on the part of the teachers in this study. Table VIII reveals that the responses to queries concerning the time provided for clerical tasks and preparation were evenly distributed.

TABLE VIII

TIME PROVIDED FOR CLERICAL TASKS AND PREPARATION IN  
THE NONGRADED ELEMENTARY SCHOOL PROGRAM

Item	Rating	Number	Per Cent
Clerical tasks	Very good	27	29.3
	Satisfactory	34	37.1
	Fair to poor	31	33.6
Preparation	Very good	27	29.3
	Satisfactory	38	41.4
	Fair to poor	27	29.3

In rating the time provided for clerical tasks, twenty-seven respondents (29.3%) rated it as very good, while thirty-four (37.1%) felt the time provided for clerical tasks was satisfactory. Thirty-one respondents (33.6%) felt the time they received to perform clerical tasks was fair to poor. The time provided for preparing for the next day's activities received a rating of satisfactory from thirty-eight respondents (41.4%). The ratings of very good and fair to poor each received the same number of responses, twenty-seven (29.3%).

The assistance gained from the psychological services, with slow moving students, is valuable to the teacher in the nongraded elementary school. In response to the query concerning the help they were receiving from the psychological services for their slow moving students, only twenty-five respondents (27.2%) rated this item as very good.

Twenty-one respondents (22.8%) felt the help they were receiving was satisfactory, and forty-six (50.0%) rated their assistance in this area as fair to poor.

A good orientation program for new teachers is especially necessary in the nongraded plan. Strong interest and desire on the part of teachers is absolutely essential to the success of the program (9:171).

Table IX shows the responses to the queries concerning new teacher orientation and the assignment of first-year teachers, as opposed to veteran teachers, to the non-graded elementary schools.

TABLE IX

NEW TEACHER ORIENTATION AND THE ASSIGNMENT OF FIRST-YEAR TEACHERS TO NONGRADED ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

Item	Rating	Number	Per Cent
Teacher Orientation	Very good	47	51.1
	Satisfactory	27	29.3
	Fair to poor	18	19.6
Assignment of first year teachers	Very good	30	32.6
	Satisfactory	40	43.5
	Fair to poor	22	23.9

Table IX shows that new teacher orientation received a very good rating from forty-seven respondents (51.5%). Twenty-seven respondents (29.3%) felt their new teacher orientation programs were satisfactory, and only eighteen

(19.6%) indicated their orientation of new teachers as fair to poor.

The assignment of first year teachers, as opposed to veteran teachers, to nongraded elementary schools received very good rating from thirty respondents (32.6%). Forty respondents (43.5%) rated this item as satisfactory, while twenty-two (23.9%) rated it as fair to poor.

Parents are interested in what the schools are attempting to do to help their youngster. Parental orientation to the nongraded elementary school philosophy is necessary for successful operation of a nongraded elementary school program (9:171). Parents also need to understand the promotion system used in the nongraded elementary school. The respondents were asked to rate their parent orientation programs and parental understanding of the promotion system. Table X reveals their responses.

The parent orientation program in the nongraded elementary schools received a very good rating from forty-two respondents (45.8%). Thirty-two respondents (35.8%) felt their parent orientation programs were satisfactory, and seventeen respondents (18.4%) rated their programs as fair to poor. Forty-one respondents (43.6%) felt the understanding of the promotion system of their schools by the parents rated as very good. Thirty-two respondents (35.8%)

rated their parents' understanding as satisfactory, and nineteen (20.6%) rated this item as fair to poor.

TABLE X

PARENTAL ORIENTATION AND UNDERSTANDING OF PROMOTION  
SYSTEM IN NONGRADED ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

Item	Rating	Number	Per Cent
Parent orientation	Very good	42	45.8
	Satisfactory	32	35.8
	Fair to poor	17	18.4
Parental understanding of promotion system	Very good	41	43.6
	Satisfactory	32	35.8
	Fair to poor	19	20.6

The respondents were asked to rate their system of reporting pupil progress to parents. Sixty-two respondents (67.4%) rated their system of reporting pupil progress as very good. Twenty-eight (30.4%) felt their system was satisfactory, while only two (2.2%) felt their system was fair to poor.

#### IV. PUPILS

It was the intent of this section of the questionnaire to provide information concerning the respondent's attitudes with respect to the advantages for pupils purported by the nongraded philosophy.

The nongraded philosophy is a philosophy of providing for individual differences. In providing for individual differences, the teacher needs to give his students more individual attention, be sure the program is meeting the needs of his students, and be aware of their strengths and weaknesses, and use this knowledge in structuring his program.

In response to queries concerning these ideas (see Table XI), seventy respondents (76.1%) felt that they were better able to give their students more individual attention. Sixty-seven respondents (72.9%) felt their program was meeting the needs of their students. Eighty-three respondents (90.2%) indicated they were aware of the strengths and weaknesses of their students, and eighty (87.0%) indicated that they used their knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses of their pupils in structuring their programs.

The nongraded philosophy is a philosophy of developing stronger mental health for students. ". . . it seems possible that through elimination of the grade barriers schools will be better able to develop strong mental health . . . in their students" (9:163).

Involved in the development of stronger mental health for students would be such items as the gaining of confidence and security, experiencing less frustration,

TABLE XI  
 PROVIDING FOR INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCES  
 IN THE NONGRADED SCHOOL

Item	Response	Number	Per Cent
Individual attention	Yes	70	76.1
	No	18	19.6
	No opinion	4	4.3
Program meets pupil's needs	Yes	67	72.9
	No	19	20.6
	No opinion	6	6.5
Knowledge of pupil's strengths and weaknesses	Yes	83	90.2
	No	5	5.5
	No opinion	4	4.3
Use knowledge of pupil's strengths and weaknesses to structure program	Yes	80	87.0
	No	9	9.8
	No opinion	3	3.2

making better social adjustments, developing leadership and initiative qualities, and the improvement of independent working habits. Table XII reveals the responses to the questions concerned with the improvement of the mental health of students.

Table XII indicates that 84.6 per cent of the respondents felt their students were gaining confidence, and 82.6 per cent felt their students were gaining security with the nongraded elementary school plan. It was felt by 76.1 per cent of the respondents that their students were experiencing less frustration. Better social adjustments

TABLE XII  
IMPROVEMENT OF THE MENTAL HEALTH OF STUDENTS  
IN THE NONGRADED SCHOOL

Item	Response	Number	Per Cent
Gaining confidence	Yes	78	84.8
	No	4	4.3
	No opinion	10	10.9
Gaining security	Yes	76	82.6
	No		
	No opinion	16	17.4
Less frustration	Yes	70	76.1
	No	8	8.7
	No opinion	14	15.2
Making better social adjustments	Yes	51	55.5
	No	22	23.9
	No opinion	19	20.6
Developing leadership	Yes	56	60.9
	No	15	16.3
	No opinion	21	22.8
Developing initiative	Yes	62	67.4
	No	15	16.3
	No opinion	15	16.3
Improvement of independent working habits	Yes	45	49.0
	No	25	27.1
	No opinion	22	23.9

were being made by students according to 55.5 per cent of the respondents. The idea of students having a better chance to develop leadership abilities in the nongraded plan received favorable responses from 60.9 per cent of the respondents. Two-thirds of the respondents (67.4%) felt that their students have a better chance to develop initiative in the nongraded program. The improvement of independent working habits received favorable responses from 49.0 per cent of the respondents.

The respondents in this study were very emphatic in their rejection of the idea that students in the nongraded elementary school plan need more competition. Opposition to the idea of the students in nongraded elementary schools needing more competition was expressed by 77.3 per cent of the respondents, while only 15.2 per cent responded in favor of more competition. No opinion was expressed by 7.5 per cent of the respondents.

With respect to the query, "Is the emotional atmosphere of your room improved with this plan?" 56.5 per cent of the respondents indicated that they felt the emotional atmosphere in their room was improved with the nongraded plan. Negative responses were indicated by 16.3 per cent and 27.1 per cent indicated that they had no opinion on the matter.

The respondents were asked if they were experiencing fewer discipline problems with the nongraded plan and if they felt that too many boys in a level increased their discipline problems. Table XIII reveals their responses.

TABLE XIII

EXPERIENCING FEWER DISCIPLINE PROBLEMS AND TOO MANY BOYS IN A LEVEL INCREASES DISCIPLINE PROBLEMS

Item	Response	Number	Per Cent
Experiencing fewer problems	Yes	38	41.3
	No	35	38.1
	No opinion	19	20.6
Too many boys increases problems	Yes	50	54.3
	No	30	32.6
	No opinion	12	13.1

Table XIII reveals that thirty-eight respondents (41.3%) felt they were experiencing fewer discipline problems with the nongraded elementary school program, while thirty-five (38.1%) felt they were not experiencing fewer discipline problems. Ninetten respondents (20.6%) indicated that they had no opinion on the matter. Fifty respondents (54.3%) felt that too many boys in a level increased their discipline problems. Thirty respondents (32.6%) felt that too many boys in a level did not increase their discipline problems and twelve respondents (13.1%) had no opinion with respect to this item.

In most school districts that have tried nongrading, grades one through three have been replaced with eight or more reading achievement levels (22:6-7). Because of the importance placed upon reading by these grouping procedures it would appear that students would need to have a positive attitude toward reading.

When queried as to their students having a more positive attitude toward reading in the nongraded elementary school plan, fifty-one respondents (55.4%) felt that their students had a more positive attitude toward reading. Fourteen respondents (15.2%) felt their students did not have a more positive attitude toward reading, and twenty-seven respondents (29.4%) had no opinion as to the reading attitude of their students.

## V. TEACHERS

It was the intent of this section of the questionnaire to provide information concerning the respondent's attitudes with respect to their relationship with their fellow teachers.

Cooperation between teachers and the exchange of new ideas are important factors in the success of any program. The sharing of materials as well as the sharing of materials taught in specific levels is equally important.

The respondents were asked to indicate if they felt that there was cooperation between the teachers in their programs and that new ideas were exchanged freely between teachers. They were also asked to indicate if they felt that teachers in their programs shared materials without reservation and if they felt they had problems with other teachers encroaching upon the materials taught in their levels. Table XIV reveals their responses.

TABLE XIV  
RELATIONSHIPS OF RESPONDENTS WITH FELLOW TEACHERS

Item	Response	Number	Per Cent
Cooperation between teachers	Yes	88	95.7
	No	4	4.3
	No opinion		
Exchange of ideas	Yes	83	90.3
	No	7	7.5
	No opinion	2	2.2
Sharing of materials	Yes	79	85.9
	No	9	9.8
	No opinion	4	4.3
Encroachment by teachers upon materials for a specific level	Yes	9	9.8
	No	82	89.1
	No opinion	1	1.1

Table XIV shows that eighty-eight respondents (95.7%) felt that there was good cooperation between the teachers in their programs. Eighty-three respondents (90.3%) felt

that there was a good exchange of ideas between teachers. Seventy-nine respondents (85.9%) felt that their fellow teachers shared materials without reservation. Eighty-two respondents (89.1%) indicated that they did not have problems with other teachers encroaching upon the material taught in their levels.

Goodlad and Anderson (9:209) consider grade mindedness among teachers as the most detrimental factor for success in the nongraded elementary school. Grade mindedness refers to the idea that a certain amount of subject matter and materials should be used at distinct grade levels only, and that these are not to be encroached upon by teachers not teaching that grade level. It also involves the use of the vocabulary of the graded school.

In response to the query "Are most of the teachers in your program grade-minded?" thirty-five respondents (38.1%) felt that the teachers in their programs were grade-minded. Forty-six respondents (50.0%) felt that the teachers in their nongraded elementary school programs were not grade-minded. Eleven respondents (11.9%) indicated that they had no opinion on this item.

The respondents were asked if they felt that teachers in their program made efforts to update their programs and if the teachers were interested in self-improvement. Table XV shows their responses.

TABLE XV

NONGRADED TEACHERS ARE INTERESTED IN SELF-IMPROVEMENT  
AND UPDATING OF PROGRAM

Item	Response	Number	Per Cent
Interested in self- improvement	Yes	82	89.1
	No	2	2.2
	No opinion	8	8.7
Interested in updating program	Yes	83	90.3
	No	3	3.2
	No opinion	6	6.5

Table XV reveals that eighty-two respondents (89.1%) felt that their fellow teachers were interested in self-improvement. Only two respondents (2.2%) felt their fellow teachers were not interested in self-improvement. Eight respondents (8.7%) had no opinion on this item.

Eighty-three respondents (90.3%) felt that their fellow teachers were interested in the updating of their nongraded program, while only three respondents (3.2%) felt they were not interested in updating the program. Six respondents (6.5%) had no opinion as to the interest of their fellow teachers in updating the nongraded program in their school.

## VI. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The three items discussed in this section were included in the first section of the questionnaire, general information. They are presented here as a summation of the questionnaire and the data it contained.

In response to the query, "Would you prefer teaching in a traditionally graded classroom?," 67.4 per cent indicated they would not prefer to teach in a traditionally graded classroom as opposed to teaching in a nongraded classroom. Only 15.2 per cent of the respondents indicated they would prefer to teach in a traditionally graded classroom, while 17.4 per cent expressed no opinion as to preference of which type of program they prefer.

The respondents were asked to classify their attitudes toward the nongraded elementary school program. They were given the following to select as the classification of their attitudes: strongly in favor, in favor, neutral, opposed, and strongly opposed. Table XVI shows their responses.

Thirty-three respondents (35.9%) classified their attitudes as strongly in favor. Thirty-eight respondents (41.2%) classified their attitudes as in favor. Eleven respondents (12.0%) classified their attitudes toward the nongraded elementary school program as neutral. Nine

respondents (9.8%) were opposed, and only one respondent (1.1%) classified his attitude toward the nongraded elementary school program as strongly opposed.

TABLE XVI

## RESPONDENTS' ATTITUDES TOWARD NONGRADED ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Item	Response	Number	Per Cent
Attitude toward non-graded elementary school plan	Strongly in favor	33	35.9
	In favor	38	41.2
	Neutral	11	12.0
	Opposed	9	9.8
	Strongly opposed	1	1.1

In response to the query, "Do you feel the nongraded elementary school plan will continue to gain acceptance in the future?" 68.6 per cent of the respondents indicated that they felt the nongraded elementary school program would continue to gain acceptance in the future. There were 10.9 per cent of the respondents who felt the nongraded elementary school plan would not gain acceptance in the future and 20.5 per cent of the respondents offered no opinion.

## CHAPTER V

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this study was to determine teachers' expressed attitudes regarding the effectiveness of the non-graded elementary school, as revealed through a questionnaire study.

The sample, included in this study, was limited to 125 teachers of all those teaching in nongraded elementary schools in the state of Washington.

#### I. SUMMARY

The survey indicated that ninety-three per cent of the respondents felt that the nongraded philosophy was sound, while eighty per cent rated their understanding of the nongraded philosophy as good to excellent.

Social promotions and retentions have long been problems in the graded school plan. When queried as to the effectiveness of the nongraded school plan in these areas, two-thirds of the respondents felt that they were adequately taken care of or eliminated.

In order for a program to be successful or effective, the attitude of the administrator must be favorable. Examination of the responses indicated that the respondents rated the attitude of their administrators toward the nongraded plan as very good.

In the area of curriculum and materials--curriculum design, coordination of units, enrichment programs, procurement of materials, and access to materials--all items received ratings of very good.

Two problems of concern to all nongraded teachers are class loads and the movement of students from one level to the next. In this survey, both items were rated as very good by the majority of the respondents. Forty-one per cent rated class loads in the area of fair to poor, however.

The time provided for clerical tasks and preparation for the next day's activities were considered inadequate by one-third of the respondents.

One-half of the respondents felt that the help they were receiving, with slow students, from the psychological services was inadequate.

The teacher orientation program received very good ratings from forty-seven respondents although over one-third did not attend a college class or district orientation of any kind prior to commencing to teach in a non-graded school.

The results also revealed that the respondents felt that they were better able to give their students more individual attention, and use their knowledge of the student's strengths and weaknesses in structuring their programs to meet those needs.

The nongraded philosophy is a philosophy of developing stronger mental health for students. In developing stronger mental health, the students need to gain confidence and security, experience less frustration, make better social adjustments, and develop initiative and leadership. Examination of the responses indicates that each of these items were given a "yes" response by a large percentage of the respondents.

The respondents were very emphatic in their rejection of the idea that the students in the nongraded plan need more competition.

The results also revealed that the emotional atmosphere of the classroom and the independent working habits of students were improved with the nongraded plan.

In response to the query concerning discipline problems, the results indicated that the respondents felt that they were not experiencing fewer problems and that too many boys in a level increased their problems.

It is interesting to note that every category in the section of the questionnaire dealing with the relationships with their fellow teachers, received very favorable responses.

Examination of the responses indicated that sixty-seven per cent of the respondents preferred to teach in a nongraded elementary situation as opposed to teaching in a traditionally graded program.

Only eleven per cent of the respondents felt that the nongraded program would not gain acceptance in the future as compared to sixty-nine per cent who felt it would gain acceptance.

Of significant importance is the fact that seventy-seven per cent of the respondents rated their attitude toward the nongraded elementary school plan as "in favor" or "strongly in favor," while only ten per cent were "opposed" and one per cent "strongly opposed."

## II. CONCLUSIONS

From the results of this study it may be concluded that the attitudes of the respondents regarding the effectiveness of the nongraded elementary school plan are very favorable, and that it will continue to gain acceptance in the future.

It may be concluded that the nongraded elementary school program is effective in solving the problems of social promotion and retention.

The respondents' attitudes with respect to the administration of their nongraded programs was rated very highly with the exception of class loads and the amount of time given for clerical tasks and preparation.

Conclusions drawn from the responses with respect to the advantages for pupils indicate very favorable attitudes

on the part of the respondents. The advantages for pupils purported by the nongraded philosophy were substantiated.

Responses in the area of relationships with other teachers indicate that the attitudes of the respondents were excellent.

### III. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Through the passage of time, attitudes change. It is therefore recommended that re-evaluation of the attitudes of teachers regarding the effectiveness of the nongraded elementary school is necessary.
2. No school or district should consider implementing the nongraded elementary school plan unless the administrators and staff are willing to support it.
3. A future study comparing the social maturity, emotional stability, and general mental health of students who complete the nongraded elementary school program in two, three, and four years is recommended.
4. Perhaps a study should be conducted to determine the correlation between the attitudes of the administrator and the attitudes of the teachers, with respect to the nongraded elementary school, in their respective buildings.

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## APPENDICES

## APPENDIX A

## READING ACHIEVEMENT LEVELS

- Level 1. Reading Readiness
- Level 2. Pre-Primer
- Level 3. Primer
- Level 4. First Reader
- Level 5. Second Reader
- Level 6. Advanced Second Reader
- Level 7. Third Reader
- Level 8. Advanced Third Reader
- Level 9. Children who progress more rapidly than others are able to spend a part or all of their third year in an enrichment program (22:6-7).

## APPENDIX B

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR INITIATING NONGRADED PLANS

RECOMMENDATIONS	FREQUENCY OF MENTION
Take time to get full parental understanding and consent	13
Get the cooperation of all teachers and staff members; common philosophy and knowledge	10
Move slowly, evaluate every move	9
Work closely with your P.T.A., and keep them informed on progress	8
Introduce the plan in one grade at a time, over a period of years	6
Have a sound program of testing and evaluation	5
Help teachers toward a complete understanding of child development	5
Study other nongraded plans in operation; adapt as necessary	4
Don't do it simply to be doing something new; it takes desire and hard work	3
Above all, understand what you are doing and why	3
Report carefully to parents on pupil progress	3
Use the conference method of reporting pupil progress	2
Emphasize the plan in teacher recruitment	2
Get Board of Education support in the early stages	2
Work with teachers first, then parents	2
Give plenty of consideration to unbiased teacher judgment	1
Make sure that leaders are the best informed of all	1
Protect teachers from large class size	1
Prepare and assist faculty	1
Never use the word "experiment"	1
Don't be discouraged by disappointments or setbacks	1
Have a strong program for entrance of pupils	1
Be sure secondary teachers are well informed	1
Work toward a system-wide plan (9:173)	1

## APPENDIX C

## FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO SUCCESS

FACTOR	FREQUENCY OF MENTION
Strong interest and desire on the part of teachers	13
Careful study by the staff of other plans in existence; local research	12
Effective use of P.T.A. and other public relations channels	10
Staff concern about pupil retentions and related pupil adjustment problems	8
Parent conferences; parent meetings	8
Special interest and leadership shown by a teacher, principal, superintendent, or supervisor	8
Continuous parent-education emphasis	7
Successful efforts to explain and promote the plan to parents	6
Very careful planning, step by step	5
Help given by other school districts and college personnel	5
Success of the program in a pilot school, leading to more general adoption	4
A friendly press and other publicity measures	4
Cooperation and harmony among the teachers	4
Moving slowly	3
Initiative shown by parents themselves in promoting the idea	3
Approval and support by the Board of Education	2
Permanency of staff personnel	2
The prospect of success for children and teachers	2
Conservative admissions policy in first year; care in determining which children to admit to nongraded groups	2
Help from central guidance and testing personnel (9:171)	1

APPENDIX D  
QUESTIONNAIRE USED IN THE STUDY

605 West 11th  
Port Angeles, Wash.  
February 20, 1967

Dear Teacher:

In cooperation with Central Washington State College, I am attempting to determine the expressed attitudes of teachers regarding the effectiveness of the nongraded elementary school. This study is being conducted as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master's of Education Degree.

Would you please take a few minutes to react to the following questions? On the multiple choice items, check the most appropriate answer or write in a more fitting response. Feel free to make any comments that would be beneficial. Your responses will be treated confidentially, therefore there is no need to sign the questionnaire.

May I express my sincere appreciation to you for your cooperation. I look forward to receiving your questionnaire within a few days.

Sincerely yours,

/s/ Merton L. Thornton

Merton L. Thornton  
Graduate Student  
C. W. S. C.

## QUESTIONNAIRE

General Information:

1. Please check: Male \_\_\_\_\_ Female \_\_\_\_\_
2. Pupil enrollment in your district: \_\_\_\_\_
3. Pupil enrollment in your building: \_\_\_\_\_
4. Length of time your school has been nongraded: \_\_\_\_\_
5. Years of teaching experience: \_\_\_\_\_
6. Years of teaching experience in nongraded elementary school \_\_\_\_\_
7. Prior to teaching in a nongraded elementary school did you attend:
  - a. A college class on nongraded \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. An in-service class or workshop on nongraded \_\_\_\_\_
  - c. A district orientation program \_\_\_\_\_
  - d. None of the above \_\_\_\_\_
  - e. Other \_\_\_\_\_
8. Do you feel the philosophy of the nongraded elementary school plan is sound?
 

Yes	_____
No	_____
No opinion	_____
9. How would you rate your understanding of the nongraded elementary school philosophy?
 

Excellent	_____
Good	_____
Fair	_____
No opinion	_____
10. Does the nongraded plan take care of social promotions?
 

Yes	_____
No	_____
No opinion	_____
11. In your opinion does the nongraded plan take care of the problems involved in retention?
 

Yes	_____
No	_____
No opinion	_____

12. Would you prefer teaching in a traditionally  
graded classroom? Yes \_\_\_\_\_  
No \_\_\_\_\_  
No opinion \_\_\_\_\_
13. How would you classify your attitude toward  
the nongraded elementary school? Strongly in favor \_\_\_\_\_  
In favor \_\_\_\_\_  
Neutral \_\_\_\_\_  
Opposed \_\_\_\_\_  
Strongly opposed \_\_\_\_\_
14. Do you feel the nongraded elementary school plan  
will continue to gain acceptance in the future? Yes \_\_\_\_\_  
No \_\_\_\_\_  
No opinion \_\_\_\_\_

\* \* \* \* \*

Ratings: 5 - excellent  
4 - good  
3 - satisfactory  
2 - fair  
1 - poor

(circle one)

Administration:

How would you rate:

15. Your principal's attitude toward the  
nongraded elementary school program? 5 4 3 2 1
16. Your principal's personal knowledge  
of students? 5 4 3 2 1
17. The amount of time the principal spends  
discussing pupils with you? 5 4 3 2 1
18. The supervision in your school? 5 4 3 2 1
19. The curriculum design of your nongraded  
program? 5 4 3 2 1
20. The coordination of units of study to  
eliminate overlapping or missing material? 5 4 3 2 1

Ratings: 5 - excellent  
4 - good  
3 - satisfactory  
2 - fair  
1 - poor

Administration: (circle one)

How would you rate:

- 21. The moving of students from one level to the next? 5 4 3 2 1
- 22. Your enrichment program? 5 4 3 2 1
- 23. The procurement of materials and textbooks? 5 4 3 2 1
- 24. Your access to sufficient materials to adequately meet students individual needs? 5 4 3 2 1
- 25. The class loads in the slower moving groups? 5 4 3 2 1
- 26. Your record keeping procedure? 5 4 3 2 1
- 27. The time allowed to perform clerical tasks? 5 4 3 2 1
- 28. The time given to prepare for the next day's activities? 5 4 3 2 1
- 29. The help you are receiving from psychological services for your slow moving students? 5 4 3 2 1
- 30. Parent orientation in your school? 5 4 3 2 1
- 31. Your reporting of pupil progress to parents? 5 4 3 2 1
- 32. The parents' understanding of your promotion system? 5 4 3 2 1
- 33. Your school's orientation of new teachers? 5 4 3 2 1
- 34. The plan of assigning first year teachers, as opposed to veteran teachers, to non-graded elementary schools? 5 4 3 2 1

\* \* \* \* \*



Pupils:

44. Do you feel your students are making better social adjustments? Yes \_\_\_\_\_  
No \_\_\_\_\_  
No opinion \_\_\_\_\_
45. Is the emotional atmosphere of your room improved with this plan? Yes \_\_\_\_\_  
No \_\_\_\_\_  
No opinion \_\_\_\_\_
46. Do your students have a better chance to develop leadership abilities in the nongraded plan? Yes \_\_\_\_\_  
No \_\_\_\_\_  
No opinion \_\_\_\_\_
47. Do you feel your students have more of a chance to develop initiative in the nongraded program? Yes \_\_\_\_\_  
No \_\_\_\_\_  
No opinion \_\_\_\_\_
48. Do your students need more competitive experience than they are now experiencing? Yes \_\_\_\_\_  
No \_\_\_\_\_  
No opinion \_\_\_\_\_
49. Are you experiencing fewer discipline problems? Yes \_\_\_\_\_  
No \_\_\_\_\_  
No opinion \_\_\_\_\_
50. Do you feel that too many boys in a level increases the discipline problem? Yes \_\_\_\_\_  
No \_\_\_\_\_  
No opinion \_\_\_\_\_

Teachers:

51. Are most of the teachers in your program grade-minded? Yes \_\_\_\_\_  
No \_\_\_\_\_  
No opinion \_\_\_\_\_

Teachers:

- 52. Do you have problems with other teachers encroaching upon the material taught in your levels?
  - Yes \_\_\_\_\_
  - No \_\_\_\_\_
  - No opinion \_\_\_\_\_
  
- 53. Do you have good cooperation between the teachers in your program?
  - Yes \_\_\_\_\_
  - No \_\_\_\_\_
  - No opinion \_\_\_\_\_
  
- 54. New ideas are exchanged between teachers freely?
  - Yes \_\_\_\_\_
  - No \_\_\_\_\_
  - No opinion \_\_\_\_\_
  
- 55. Teachers share materials without reservation?
  - Yes \_\_\_\_\_
  - No \_\_\_\_\_
  - No opinion \_\_\_\_\_
  
- 56. Do primary teachers make efforts to update the program?
  - Yes \_\_\_\_\_
  - No \_\_\_\_\_
  - No opinion \_\_\_\_\_
  
- 57. Are teachers interested in self-improvement through in-service workshops, etc.
  - Yes \_\_\_\_\_
  - No \_\_\_\_\_
  - No opinion \_\_\_\_\_
  
- 58. Do you feel you are doing a better job of teaching with the nongraded plan?
  - Yes \_\_\_\_\_
  - No \_\_\_\_\_
  - No opinion \_\_\_\_\_
  
- 59. Do you feel satisfied at the end of a school day knowing you have done all you possibly could for each student in your room?
  - Yes \_\_\_\_\_
  - No \_\_\_\_\_
  - No opinion \_\_\_\_\_

\* \* \* \* \*

If you wish the results of this survey, complete, detach and mail.

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address \_\_\_\_\_  
 City \_\_\_\_\_