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## A Survey on the Preparation of Becoming a Nongraded Elementary School in the State of Washington

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A SURVEY ON THE PREPARATION OF BECOMING A  
NONGRADED ELEMENTARY SCHOOL IN THE  
STATE OF WASHINGTON

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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  
Terry S. Ryan  
July, 1969

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## CHAPTER I

### THE PROBLEM AND DEFINITION OF TERMS USED

The nongraded elementary school has created considerable interest among persons in education. The organization of the nongraded school is of importance to all teachers and administrators who desire to know more about the nongraded school. This paper was an attempt to show how this organization takes place in a nongraded elementary school.

#### I. THE PROBLEM

Statement of the problem. It was the purpose of this study (1) to review the literature regarding the organization of the nongraded elementary school; (2) to ascertain through the use of a questionnaire how the nongraded elementary schools have been organized in the State of Washington; and (3) to compare what the literature stated in organizing the nongraded school as to what was actually done in nongraded school systems in Washington State.

Importance of the study. The nongraded elementary school in the past years has been given wide acceptance in helping to ease the wide span of individual differences in a classroom. But as stated in many articles, there has been very little planning or any real reorganization in the

nongraded school. In this study an attempt was made to determine if this was true with school systems which implemented a nongraded elementary program in Washington State. In addition, it was hoped that this study would aid schools in organizing a nongraded elementary school.

Limitations of the study. The study was limited to a small sampling of nongraded elementary schools which the writer surveyed through the use of a questionnaire. In this respect, the findings of this study were representative of only those schools surveyed.

The study was further limited in that some of the nongraded schools reporting may have been nongraded in name only. The principals responding used their own criteria of a nongraded school in checking the questionnaire.

The study was also limited in that the data was collected through the use of a questionnaire.

## II. DEFINITIONS OF TERMS USED

Learning levels. A set of academic skills and concepts in some specific content area that have been grouped in sequence of difficulty.

Continuous progress. "Continuous progress permits upward movement according to the real abilities of the students" (8:28). The school curriculum is adjusted to the

learning pattern of each pupil. There is no failure or retention.

Nongraded elementary school. The nongraded elementary school has been referred to as the ungraded elementary school, continuous progress school, or simply, nongraded school. In this paper it is referred to as either the nongraded elementary school or the nongraded school. The Dictionary of Education defines it as:

A school that has a flexible system of grouping in which children . . . are grouped together regardless of age and in which extensive effort is made to adapt instruction to individual differences (9:586).

The grade labels, such as first grade, have been dropped in the nongraded school.

Graded elementary school. Children are placed in grades one through six, according to similar chronological ages. The children do only the work reserved for that grade and complete the work in a year's time.

Vertical school organization. The vertical organization serves the purpose ". . . of moving pupils upward from the time they enter the school unit until the time they leave" (11:210). There are two alternatives for doing this: (1) the graded, and (2) the nongraded systems.

Horizontal school organization. Assigning or grouping of children to available teachers is the function of

horizontal school organization. This apportionment can be according to ability, achievement, interest, or study habits. The children may be assigned to one teacher or a group of teachers (team teaching). The horizontal school organization can be used in either the graded or nongraded school.

### III. ORGANIZATION OF REMAINDER OF THE THESIS

The remainder of the thesis will contain in Chapter II a review of the literature which includes the history, philosophy, organizing the nongraded program and evaluation of the nongraded school. Chapter III will present procedures used in the study. An analysis of the data will be included in Chapter IV. The final chapter will comprise a comparison of the organization of the nongraded school as related from the literature and questionnaire. Conclusions of the study and further recommendations will conclude this final chapter.

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Eugene Howard stated in his book, How to Organize a Nongraded School:

One of the great unsolved problems of education is how to organize instruction so that every child--without exception is always being taught what he is ready to learn next (18:3).

With this problem in mind the writer has looked toward the philosophy of the nongraded school as a possible answer, with its program tailored to the individual child.

#### I. PHILOSOPHY OF THE NONGRADED SCHOOL

Dufay summarized the philosophy of the nongraded school as that which:

. . . includes the notion of continuous pupil progress, which promotes flexibility in grouping by the device of removing grade labels, which is designed to facilitate the teacher's role in providing for pupil's individual differences, and which is intended to eliminate or lessen the problem of retention and acceleration (8:24).

The idea of continuous progress is important to the nongraded concept. Thus nonpromotion or retention is not used. The teacher has to make a decision about what skills are most suited for each individual learner within the classroom.

The nongraded school is a vertical organizational plan designed to meet each child's educational needs. The vertical



organizational plan gives greater flexibility than the graded system, and takes into account more than just the child's age. The nongraded program ". . . is aimed at giving each child the opportunity to proceed at the speed most appropriate to him" (7:65). Goodlad further stated this in his book, The Nongraded Elementary School: "The nongraded school provides for the continuous, unbroken, upward progression of all pupils, the slowest and the most able" (11:219). The vertical organization serves best the purpose of moving the pupils upward through various needed skills.

The nongraded school organization also takes into account the irregular growth of a child. The child might slow up for a while and then spurt ahead. In the nongraded program he is not tied down to one year of learning to one grade ". . . their (pupil's) development does not fit the school schedule with its cycle of promotions and nonpromotions" (11:220); the nongraded school is fitted to each child's own needs.

There are three premises that underlie the organization of the nongraded school (24:85). These are: (1) meeting of individual differences; (2) skills are learned before moving ahead; and (3) once concepts are learned child is moved ahead.

Nongrading is an organizational plan that does not leave a child's placement to chance, but rather forces educational decision-making that takes three important considerations into account: the teaching style that

most successfully motivates, the peer group that most successfully stimulates, and the educational opportunities that most successfully advances the learning of each child (11:86).

## II. HISTORY OF THE NONGRADED SCHOOL

The early one room school house was probably the first nongraded school in America. Here the needs of each child were met, no matter his age. The one room concept was soon changed for economic and administration reasons with the creation of the Quincy Grammer School, that was built in Boston in 1848 (29:13). It was said that the Quincy Grammer School would be the ". . . pattern of American school for fifty years to come." It has been in existence for over one hundred years (10:204).

The Quincy Grammer School from its very beginning was designed to provide separate classrooms with a teacher in each room. Soon other schools followed the graded concept of a certain age with a specific grade label. Graded textbooks also followed, further locking each child within his prescribed grade (29:13).

From its early development the graded school was criticized for lack of meeting each individual learner's needs and the disregard of children's individual differences. The children in graded schools were expected to all work at the same speed. The below average student was faced with work

too difficult for him and the above average student found work not a challenge to him. Critics labeled "the graded program the lockstep plan" (29:14), with all the children moving at the same speed with no regard to the capability of each individual child. Some educators saw mass conformity and regimentation. "Some regarded learning more as a process of intellectual inquiry than the possession of a classified body of facts and ideas" (11:204). In light of these criticisms, several programs were developed.

William T. Harris, Superintendent of St. Louis Schools, in 1868 organized a program that had frequent promotions and reclassifications of students at six week intervals (11:49). Pupils who were below average were retained during the school year and were put into groups closer to their ability. The reclassification of pupils, though, only partially broke away from the graded concept because children were usually held together for all of their work.

Other multi-track programs were developed such as the Cambridge Plan (early 1900's), where more able pupils were given less time to complete the work. The Cambridge program provided different rates at which the children could learn. The Santa Barbara Plan had three tracks of students remaining the same number of years, with the second and third track given more depth of content. The Santa Barbara organization

provided for the variations of content which children of different ability were expected to learn. The XYZ plan of the 1920's was similar to the Santa Barbara plan (29:15), but in addition to this, the more able children were helped to progress at a faster rate.

Tweksbury, in his book, said of multi-track programs, that:

Each of these multi-track programs was an attempt to break the lockstep, but the nongraded approach was only partially implemented because sufficient attention was not given to helping individual children in a given track progress at their own rate (29:15).

Helping each individual child to progress at his own rate is an important concept of the nongraded elementary school, as was pointed out in the philosophy section. In multi-track programs no provision was given for the child that performed at different levels of subject matter. A child was expected to do all his work on the same level of difficulty.

Other programs were developed that were more closely akin to the nongraded school. One was the Pueblo Plan developed by Preston Search in 1888. In the Pueblo organization, the children did work for which they were ready, an essence of the nongraded school. Frederic Burk followed Search implementing the ideas of individualized, self-instructional materials in the San Francisco Normal School (29:15-16). The San Francisco Normal School was a further effort in breaking away from the graded concept.

Carleton Washburne in the Winnetka Public Schools developed a program which helped each child progress according to his own ability. The children were grouped in all subjects complying to their abilities, including the subject areas of social studies, art, shop, music, and physical education. The Winnetka Staff prepared self-instruction materials which were similar to what we now refer to as "programmed instruction". The topics were sequential with simple directions to be followed by the children.

Washburne, Burk, and Search did not refer to their plans of organization as nongraded, "but a study of these plans reveals clearly that they were attempts to develop programs that were thoroughly nongraded" (29:2). The organizations of Washburne, Burk and Search were directed at the individual child, with his own special educational needs being met, through individual instruction.

Between these early beginnings there was a period of many years. The first labeled Nongraded School was reported in Western Springs, Illinois (21:2). Within the same period of time (1940's) schools in Milwaukee organized on a nongraded basis. Milwaukee nongraded school organization is still in existence today (29:17).

In a survey conducted by Goodlad and Anderson in 1955, sixteen centers were identified as nongraded and in another survey conducted by Kent Austin in 1957 there were thirty-one centers (21:3).

In a report conducted as early as 1964, through the N.E.A. Educational Research Service, 441 school systems of 12,000 or more children reported having some form of non-graded elementary school (21:4). Although the nongraded school system tends to be experimental, there seems to be an ever increasing number of elementary schools developing this type of vertical organization, as shown by these surveys beginning with Goodlad and Anderson's.

The history section of the nongraded school has attempted to indicate there have been many attempts made to break away from the lockstep approach of the graded system. The battle has been an uphill one, as Tewksbury pointed out about the advantages of the graded system.

It (graded system) . . . (is a) very simple plan to administer, and it is by far the easiest type of program for a teacher to conduct. Because of these circumstances, many teachers and administrators cling to the graded plan even though it appears not to be the best type of instructional program for children (29:16).

The ease of administering the graded school is one of the biggest obstacles to overcome in getting away from the graded organization of the elementary school.

### III. ORGANIZING THE NONGRADED PROGRAM

The writer has found two important ideas expressed in most of the literature concerned with organizing the nongraded elementary school. The concepts were to proceed slowly in

initiating the program and that no two nongraded programs are alike.

A period of at least one to three years is needed to initiate the nongraded program (22:132; 8:197; 18:50). An accelerated speed will only cause public action against the program and threaten the security of the staff. It was also suggested to begin the nongraded program at one grade level within the nongraded schools. Another idea would be to have only the primary level become nongraded and in future years include the intermediate grades.

In looking at nongraded programs in operation, the innovator must understand that "no two programs are alike and therefore any programs developed should be directed to satisfy the particular situation" (22:20) within his school. Each school will have its own particular needs that must be met, and meeting the particular needs can only be done by the school's staff and community members.

Miller stated that there are seven basic steps necessary for becoming a nongraded school (22:226-27):

1. Orient the faculty and P.T.A. groups to the nongraded plan of organization.
2. Obtain permission from school board for the initiation of nongraded plan.
3. Gain the cooperation of faculty and community.
4. Form study groups to define the specific purposes and philosophy of the nongraded plan.

5. Develop a sequential pattern of learning in all subject areas and have current information available on audio-visual aids, specialized materials and current texts.
6. Prepare a set of policies that will cover personnel needs, pupil evaluation and placement, pupil progression, articulation and reporting.
7. Define criteria to be used in the evaluation of the program.

These seven steps are suggested as a framework, that the organizer may use in setting up the nongraded school.

In the remainder of this section the writer will deal separately with the parts played in the organization of the nongraded school by the administration, school staff, and community, as well as the development of curriculum, grouping of pupils and reporting to the parents.

Administration. The writer is including the principal, superintendent and supervisors as a part of the administration. The administration stimulates, encourages, and provides leadership in organizing the nongraded school.

The principal should assume the major role in the organization of a nongraded program, as Tewksbury stated:

Without active leadership from the principal and support from the central administration, there is little likelihood that a new program can be introduced (29:10).

Dufay stated further in his book, Ungrading the Elementary School:

The major share of responsibility for the successful inauguration of the ungraded school rests with the building principal (8:180).



The principal must be alert to all happenings and relate every act taken by his school to the nongraded philosophy. He must keep the philosophy of serving each and every child in the minds of the teachers at all times.

The superintendent also must support the organizing phase of the nongraded school. The superintendent must be kept informed at all times on the progress of the nongraded program, because he is a vital link between the school and the community.

School staff. The school staff plays an important role in organizing the nongraded program. The faculty members' attitude toward nongradedness must be enthusiastic, with total involvement within the re-organization. Professional support is the key to the success of the nongraded program. Goodlad and Anderson pointed out that one "factor contributing to the successful development of nongraded programs (was the) strong interest and desire on the part of teachers" (11:171).

Once the teachers have decided to investigate the nongraded program there are several ways to proceed. Four ways are reading available literature, visitations to nongraded schools, small discussion groups, and resource consultants.

A small library should be kept in the faculty room or in a central place available to all teachers. This library

should contain applicable literature on the nongraded school including pamphlets from nongraded schools.

The interested faculty should be given a chance to see nongraded elementary schools in action. The teachers should not only observe the classroom procedure, but also find out how the organization of both the curriculum and class grouping took place.

Small study groups should be formed to discuss the pros and cons of nongrading. The groups can later be expanded to larger groups and should include people from the community. The give-and-take discussion groups are most important in laying the groundwork of organizing a nongraded school.

Resource people should be contacted to give information on organizing the nongraded school. The consultants should be kept in contact with during the total reorganization, so their help can be obtained when needed.

Through information gathered from the readings it appears that the teachers should be well informed and in complete favor of the nongraded program before progressing any further than the beginning stages. It was said ". . . resistance to the change over to a nongraded program will more likely come from the teaching staff than from layman" (11:188).

In Dufay's book, Ungrading the Elementary School, the teacher's role in organizing the nongraded program was summed up as:

Ultimately, it is the teacher staff that succeeds or fails in putting a program into effect. When the classroom teacher withholds support, openly or otherwise, that program is Damned! (8:18)

Community. Community understanding of what the nongraded program will do for their children is of utmost importance. It must be stressed that the nongraded program is not a radical change, but a step to better instruction as well as meeting the needs of each child. Smith in his book, A Practical Approach to the Nongraded Elementary School, stated:

One of the most important steps in preparing for the change was orientation of the parents and community (27:9).

"The Board of Education represents the most important single group to be convinced of the merits . . ." of the nongraded school (11:181). The school staff must show the board that they (the teachers) know how to go about organizing the nongraded program. The staff must act confidently in presenting their ideas of the nongraded school to the Board of Education and community. Some possible approaches in orienting the community to the nongraded program would include the following:

1. Large group meetings could be held prior to the beginning of the nongraded program where the philosophical reasons for the program, and comparisons with graded and nongraded systems could be discussed. These meetings could be started with teachers at first and then a gradual participation of the community.
2. Pamphlets could be made by the school describing the nongraded program and these circulated to parents who are new to the school service area and have not had a previous experience with the nongraded school.
3. District newsletters can be sent to parents describing the process of organizing the program. Also, this could be done through the local newspaper, which may reach more people.
4. During the organization period many informal meetings between community and principal or staff members should be held. This could be a coffee hour once a week where any interested persons could come and have questions answered.

At any of the meetings with the community, all questions must be welcomed and answered as best as possible. The parents throughout all of the meetings, however, must realize that the final decision making must be left to those who are in charge of organizing the nongraded school.

In conclusion to this section on the community, the writer quotes from Dufay:

An important aspect of the program is parental understanding of the program's main goal, accompanied by parental cooperation (8:165).

Parental understanding of the nongraded program is important and time must be given in the orientation of the community to have a complete understanding of the nongraded school.

Curriculum. The greatest challenge in establishing a nongraded program is the revision of the curriculum. The curriculum in the school has to be revised to be used in a nongraded organization, where there is continuous progress. Most textbooks now in use in graded schools do not allow for individual differences and ". . . without supporting . . . materials, the individual program is no easy task" (8:142).

The basic content need not be changed, but the sequence in learning of concepts, skills and values must be changed. Most schools at the early stage of becoming non-graded organize learning levels. The learning levels are primarily in reading and arithmetic (11:212). The learning levels are an "administrative tool to encourage and promote the philosophy of continuous growth" (27:8), within the non-graded elementary school.

Nongraded schools are now gradually moving away from the learning levels they have set up. One case where the removal of levels was accomplished was in the Detroit schools (22:34-35).

Criticism has been made of the learning levels. Two criticisms are that the levels are simply a graded program in disguise and the levels do not provide adequately for individual differences (29:52-60; 11:212-213).

The curriculum must have a sequential development within the content areas, meet the needs of each child, and

consider all skills to be developed. "It is not essential, probably not possible, to complete such a large undertaking within a single year" (8:155).

Grouping. The grouping of children must be considered before the nongraded program is underway. There must be a flexible concept of school organization, so that the child's educational needs can be met. Several diagnostic tests, teacher observations, and specialist's evaluations of each child must be used in placing each child in the best learning situation.

There are three types of grouping procedures that should be considered. The first grouping is according to the attainment of the pupil in one skill or curricular area known primarily as achievement (or performance) grouping. Another is grouping according to interest shown by different pupils in some special subject area. The last would be grouping according to the degree of independence shown by the child.

Achievement grouping can be mainly used in the areas of reading and arithmetic. In these two areas it is essential to have children of like attainment, environmental and academic backgrounds. Considerable homogeneity must be maintained in these areas to best meet the different backgrounds of each child.

Interest grouping can be done in the other areas involving less rigorous skills and concepts. The areas of science and social studies need children of different backgrounds to provide for the interchange of ideas through discussions. For example, there is not always a need to study one particular country if another country would provide the same skills and concepts and be of more interest to the children.

The elementary school is mainly concerned with developing learning skills basic to higher education. The learning skills would include working independently, using a wide range of resource materials, and self-propelling to a high degree (11:95). Grouping according to the degree that a child can work independently will help develop the learning skills. The more advanced group would proceed with minimum of teacher guidance. The groups lower in independent study skills would require more of the teacher's time in explaining and directing the lesson.

Within all of these various forms of grouping children of different ages may be included, depending on what best meets their needs.

Reporting. Along with the flexible groupings of children, a new type of reporting system should be developed. There is a need for new reporting methods that place emphasis

on individual learning. The report card simply does not show a true picture of the individual child. An example would be a child working to the best of his ability in a certain subject, but not working up to the grade standards.

The most commonly used forms of reporting pupil progress are the formal and frequent informal parent-teacher conferences. The parent-teacher conference can be the best mode of reporting pupils' progress when constructive suggestions are given by the teacher as well as the parent. Parents and teachers must collaborate in treating the child as an individual.

In some nongraded schools teachers have done away with letter grades entirely, and use the words "satisfactory or unsatisfactory, with some explanation of causes of trouble areas" (7:67). The progress of the child must be measured against what the child has done in the past and what he is capable of doing.

It was said by Goodlad that, "reporting is neither a greater nor a lesser problem in the nongraded school than in a graded school" (11:102).

#### IV. EVALUATION OF THE NONGRADED ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

There is no conclusive data on the effectiveness of the nongraded school over the graded or for that matter,



graded over nongraded. Those studies that have been conducted for the most part favor the nongraded school.

In setting up a comparative study of the nongraded and graded school, there are many variables to control.

Tewksbury (29) and Goodlad (11) pointed out that not only differences in utilizing teachers in graded and nongraded schools could effect the outcomes of a research study, but also ways of grouping pupils and the type of vertical organization. Clear definitions of the graded and nongraded school must also exist before any comparative study can be made.

Several researchers have reported in favor of the nongraded school. Provus (25) set up a research study of children in the fourth, fifth and sixth grades. The children were compared only in the area of math. The data gathered favored the nongraded approach, with the superior students profiting the most from the nongraded organization. It was stated in this study that the teachers preferred the nongraded school.

Morgan (23) conducted a study comparing the reading achievement of self-contained (graded) and ability grouped (nongraded) fifth and sixth grade pupils. The study showed that the nongraded children in fifth grade were superior in reading achievement at the .01 level of confidence and the sixth nongraded children superior at the .05 level of confidence. Morgan's study also showed the nongraded school was an advantage to the bright pupil.

Another comparative study on reading achievement was set up by Skapski (27) with second and third grade pupils. It was shown that the nongraded organization was significantly superior in reading achievement.

Ingram (19) investigated the effects of the nongraded and graded pupils at the end of their third year of schooling. The study showed the nongraded pupils superior at the .01 level of confidence in paragraph meaning, word meaning, spelling, and language.

A group of third grade children were matched on the basis of sex, age, IQ, and socio-economic status by Hart (14). He compared arithmetic achievement as taught in a nongraded program and a graded program. The results of the study showed that there was a significant superiority in arithmetic achievement for nongraded pupils.

Halliwell (13) conducted a study with graded and nongraded primary pupils. No change was made in curriculum or methodology for the nongraded pupils. The study showed the first year nongraded pupils superior in word knowledge and reading comprehension. The second year nongraded pupils showed superior significance at the .05 level of confidence for total arithmetic. Third year nongraded pupils proved to have superior significance at the .01 level in spelling and computation and to be significant at the .05 level in problem solving. Halliwell suggested that the nongraded approach was quite effective but further research is needed.

Hillson (16) conducted a study for a three year period, 1960-1963. The study was related primarily to the organizational structure of the nongraded school, rather than to either superior pupil ability or teaching methods. One group of children were assigned to nongraded classes, another to graded classes. At the end of the three year period, the nongraded group achieved significantly higher in reading, paragraph meaning, and word-meaning tests.

Carbone (3) organized a study with two groups of intermediate grade pupils. One group had been through a nongraded primary program and the other group the traditional graded primary. He found that the graded pupils tested higher in six areas of achievement: (1) vocabulary, (2) reading comprehension, (3) language, (4) work-study skills, (5) arithmetic, and (6) total achievement.

These comparative research studies show no real conclusive evidence on the superiority of nongraded school over the graded school as Tewksbury stated:

To date, research efforts to determine the relative effectiveness of graded and nongraded programs have not yielded results which are particularly meaningful (29:27).

Summary. The nongraded elementary school, as pointed out, is not a new idea. Several schools have tried to abandon the lockstep organization of the graded school, but few seem to be as lasting and successful as the nongraded elementary school organization.

Setting up the nongraded school is no easy matter. Many hours of hard work will be put forth by all those who are concerned with organizing a nongraded school. It will not just merely be a little organizational reshuffling, but a complete revamping of the school system, especially in the area of curriculum.

The need for new revision was stated in Goodlad and Anderson's article in The Elementary School Journal.

. . . we suspect that so-called nongraded schools are brought forth without a new plan of vertical organization. As a consequence what emerges is really a graded plan under a new name (10:37).

Here Goodlad and Anderson were referring to the idea that the nongraded school is a vertical organization in moving the child upward through learning levels.

In developing a nongraded school a model should not be looked for, but organizing and planning should be done for what is best for the individual planning school. Eugene Howard suggested in his book:

Ungradedness is not an objective, it is a tool. Properly used by a faculty dedicated to individualizing instruction, it can free teachers to do better the job they have always wanted to do (18:51).

The nongraded school cannot be a cure-all of all the educational ills that exist in the graded system, but it can give the teacher more freedom within which to work. It appears this program given an honest endeavor can improve the educational program by setting up a school organization

that will successfully meet all the educational needs of each child.

## CHAPTER III

### PROCEDURES USED IN THE STUDY

Questionnaire. The questionnaire was prepared to ascertain what was done in the organization of a few non-graded elementary schools in Washington State. This questionnaire specifically was designed to find out first, the general information about the school reorganization. Secondly, what was accomplished in the reorganization of curriculum as well as the teacher and parent participation in the reorganization?

The first section dealt with general information asking if the principal's school was nongraded based on his criteria and if so for what reasons was it so organized. The other question of great importance was how long was the transition from graded to nongraded school.

The questions asked in the curriculum section were concerned with development of a new philosophy, learning objectives, and organization of learning levels; also, if more emphasis was placed on individual instruction.

The sections dealing with teachers and parents were primarily the same. Both sections asked for teacher and parent attitudes before and after the reorganization, the part they played in planning for the nongraded school, and how they were introduced to the nongraded school. An

additional question was asked in the parent section, this being if a new form of reporting to parents was developed. A copy of the questionnaire is included in Appendix A.

Data gathering. The writer, in gathering a list of the nongraded elementary schools, contacted the State Superintendent of Schools for a compiled list of such schools. The information received from Olympia was insufficient. Telephone calls were then made to various school districts. A brief conversation was held with the superintendent or elementary supervisor confirming if their district did or did not have a nongraded elementary school.

With the list of known nongraded schools compiled, the writer added, at random, schools from districts of 2,000 or more pupils. This was done to substantiate the study, by enlarging the number of schools to be queried. The questionnaires were then mailed to principals of the schools contained in this list. A total of 137 schools were mailed the questionnaire with a return of ninety-eight (71.5 per cent) answered questionnaires. Out of the ninety-eight returned questionnaires, forty-two (42.9 per cent) schools reported they were or at one time were nongraded according to the principal's criteria. A list of the nongraded schools is contained in Appendix B. This list contains forty-nine non-graded schools showing that not all of the questionnaires were returned.

The writer discovered that the nongraded schools reporting were mainly nongraded primary schools; this meant they were only organized with a nongraded program for the first three years of schooling and not the total years of the elementary school.

Treatment of the data. When each questionnaire was returned the information was compiled into table form and responses converted into percentages. Those schools reporting that at one time they were nongraded but since had abandoned the program were included in compiling the percentages and tables. The inclusion was done so the abandoned schools could be included in the final chapter as a comparison study of what was actually done by some schools who abandon the nongraded program. In the following chapter, this data is summarized using tables and analyzed in a descriptive narrative.



## CHAPTER IV

### ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

This chapter presents the findings from the responses to the questionnaire in the form of tables. Also included is a discussion of these findings. The chapter will be divided into four main sections dealing with general information, curriculum, teachers, and parents. The item number used in the paragraph sidehead will correspond to the item number used in the questionnaire.

#### I. GENERAL INFORMATION

Item number one. This first question asked if the principals had a nongraded school according to their own criteria. The response to this question was forty-two saying "Yes, they did" and fifty-six saying "No, they did not."

Item number two. Table I shows the reasons why some nongraded schools abandoned the program.

Seven schools reported that at one time they were nongraded, but for various reasons they had to abandon the nongraded organization. Table I shows the main reason given was that the parents were not involved in the planning for the nongraded school. Other reasons mentioned were short transitional period from graded to nongraded, and parents'

TABLE I  
REASONS FOR SOME NONGRADED SCHOOLS  
TO ABANDON THE PROGRAM

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Item	Number of Responses
Parents not involved in planning	5
Short transition time (one year or less)	4
Parents opposed to program	3
Teachers grade minded, inflexible	2
Number of students increased	2
Reduced number of teachers	2
Turn over in staff	1
Decrease in school enrollment	1

---

opposition to the program. The teachers being inflexible, a reduction of teachers, and the increase of students were rated the same by respondents.

Item number three. Table II shows the reasons for beginning a nongraded school.

TABLE II  
REASONS FOR BEGINNING A NONGRADED SCHOOL

Item	Percentage
Better provision for individual differences	37.6
Pupil's continuous progress	34.1
Better mental health for pupils	16.5
Eliminating nonpromotion	11.8

Table II shows the reasons for beginning of nongraded schools were mainly to better provide for individual differences and to maintain pupil's continuous progress. To a lesser degree the principals checked provisions for better mental health for pupils and the elimination of nonpromotion.

Item number four. Table III shows how long the transition was from graded to nongraded school.

Table III shows that most of the schools (86.4 per cent) took from one to three years in setting up the nongraded

TABLE III  
YEARS IN TRANSITION FROM GRADED  
TO NONGRADED SCHOOL

Years	Number of Schools	Percentage
Less than one year	3	8.1
One year	11	32.4
Two years	10	27.0
Three years	10	27.0
Four years	0	0.0
Five years	2	5.5

school. There were two schools that took five years and three who took less than one year.

## II. CURRICULUM

Item number one. Table IV shows the percentage of schools who developed a new educational philosophy and learning objectives.

TABLE IV  
DEVELOPMENT OF THE PHILOSOPHY AND LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Response	Number	Percentage
Yes	32	94.1
No	2	5.9

Table IV shows there was quite a difference to response in developing a new philosophy and learning objectives, with 94.1 per cent answering "Yes, they did," and 5.9 per cent answering with a "No" response.

Item number two. Table V shows the number of schools that developed a series of learning levels at the beginning stage of organizing the nongraded school.

TABLE V  
DEVELOPMENT OF LEARNING LEVELS

Response	Number	Percentage
Yes	31	83.8
No	6	16.2

Table V shows that 83.8 per cent of the schools surveyed reported developing learning levels at the early stage of organizing the nongraded school. The remaining schools (16.2 per cent) did not develop learning levels.

Item number three. Table VI shows how many learning levels were developed by the nongraded schools reporting.

Table VI shows that over one half (54.1 per cent) of the schools returning the questionnaire reported they had nine or ten learning levels. The other number of levels most used

TABLE VI  
NUMBER OF LEARNING LEVELS DEVELOPED

Number of Levels	Number of Schools	Percentage
8	1	4.2
9	5	20.8
10	8	33.3
11	1	4.2
12	3	12.5
13	1	4.2
14	1	4.2
15	0	0.0
16	4	16.6

were four schools using sixteen levels and three schools using twelve levels.

Item number four. Table VII shows if any emphasis was placed on team teaching in the nongraded elementary school.

TABLE VII  
EMPHASIS PLACED ON TEAM TEACHING BY  
NONGRADED SCHOOLS

Response	Number	Percentage
Yes	18	42.9
No	24	57.1

Table VII shows that 42.9 per cent answered "Yes, they did," and 57.1 per cent answered, "No, they did not" place any emphasis on team teaching.

Item number five. Table VIII shows if more stress was placed on individual instruction within the nongraded school.

Table VIII shows a wide margin in the number of schools answering "Yes, they did," (88.1 per cent) and "No, they did not," (11.9 per cent) place more emphasis on individual instruction.

Item number six. Table IX shows if more money was needed for teaching materials in the nongraded school.

TABLE VIII  
STRESS PLACED ON INDIVIDUAL INSTRUCTION

Response	Number	Percentage
Yes	37	88.1
No	5	11.9

TABLE IX  
WAS MORE MONEY NEEDED FOR TEACHING MATERIALS  
IN THE NONGRADED SCHOOL?

Response	Number	Percentage
Yes	24	61.5
No	15	38.5



Table IX shows that 61.5 per cent of the nongraded schools reporting needed more money for teacher material, while 38.5 per cent of the principals said "They did not."

### III. TEACHERS

Items number one and two. Table X shows the attitude of the teachers toward the nongraded school at the beginning of the transition and at the present time.

TABLE X  
ATTITUDE OF TEACHERS TOWARD NONGRADED SCHOOL

Opinion	Beginning of Transition	Attitude at Present Time
	Percentage	Percentage
In Favor	71.1	82.0
Neutral	24.5	15.4
In Opposition	4.4	2.6

Table X shows a change in teachers' attitudes toward the nongraded school. Those teachers who were neutral at the beginning of the transition became of more favorable opinion after the nongraded program was once started. The responses of being in favor of the nongraded school increased from 71.1 per cent to 82 per cent after the program was once

started. The teachers who were neutral about the nongraded program decreased from 24.5 per cent to 15.4 per cent.

Item number three. The question asking if teachers took part in planning for the nongraded school was answered as a 100 per cent "Yes."

Item number four. Table XI shows the teachers' part in planning for the nongraded elementary school.

TABLE XI  
TEACHERS' PART IN PLANNING FOR THE  
NONGRADED ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Item	Percentage
Organizing learning levels	47.8
Writing philosophy and objectives	35.0
Testing and scheduling pupils	8.6
Parent orientation	4.3
Developing instructional materials	4.3

Table XI shows the teachers' part in planning for the nongraded school was limited to five areas. Writing the philosophy and objectives, along with organizing the learning levels, were the major activities involving the teachers. The principals wrote in other types of work done by the teachers such as testing and scheduling pupils, parent orientation, and developing instructional materials.

Item number five. Table XII shows how teachers were introduced to the nongraded elementary program.

TABLE XII  
HOW TEACHERS WERE INTRODUCED TO THE  
NONGRADED ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Item	Percentage
Inservice meetings	35.8
Teacher research	21.0
Teacher workshops	18.5
Visiting consultants	17.3
Visitations to nongraded schools	7.4

Table XII shows that teachers were mainly introduced to the nongraded program by inservice meetings (35.8 per cent). Teachers' workshops, visiting consultants, and teacher research were grouped close together. Table XII shows that visitations to nongraded schools were used little in introducing teachers to the nongraded program.

Item number six. Table XIII shows if additional staff members were necessary during the early stages of the reorganization.

Table XIII shows that additional staff members were not needed by most schools during the early stages in reorganizing for the nongraded school.

TABLE XIII  
 ADDITIONAL STAFF MEMBERS NECESSARY DURING  
 EARLY STAGES OF THE REORGANIZATION

Response	Number	Percentage
Yes	15	39.5
No	23	60.5

Item number seven. Table XIV shows the types of staff members needed in the reorganization.

TABLE XIV  
 TYPES OF ADDITIONAL STAFF MEMBERS NEEDED

Item	Percentage
Teachers	34.2
Teacher Aides	34.2
Clerical Help	31.6

Table XIV shows that there was a need for all three of the additional staff members listed in those nongraded schools reporting they needed additional staff members.

#### IV. PARENTS

Items number one and two. Table XV shows the attitude of the parents toward the nongraded school at the beginning of transition and at the present time.

TABLE XV  
ATTITUDE OF THE PARENTS TOWARD THE  
NONGRADED ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Opinion	Beginning of Transition	Attitude at Present Time
	Percentage	Percentage
In Favor	62.5	75.0
Neutral	32.5	22.5
In Opposition	5.0	2.5

Table XV shows an increase of parents in favor of the nongraded program once the program was started. A decrease is shown in Table XV of those being neutral from 32.5 per cent to 22.5 per cent.

Item number three. Table XVI shows if the community took part in planning for the nongraded school.

TABLE XVI  
DID THE COMMUNITY TAKE PART IN PLANNING FOR  
THE NONGRADED ELEMENTARY SCHOOL?

Response	Number	Percentage
Yes	13	32.2
No	25	67.8

Table XVI shows that in 67.8 per cent of the nongraded schools reporting there was no community help in planning for the nongraded school.

Item number four. Table XVII shows in what ways the community took part in planning for the nongraded school.

TABLE XVII  
WAYS THE COMMUNITY TOOK PART IN PLANNING  
FOR THE NONGRADED SCHOOL

Item	Percentage
Help in writing philosophy and objectives	20.0
Community level meetings	80.0

Table XVII shows that the community was mainly involved in community level meetings.

Item number five. Table XVIII shows the different methods of relaying information about the nongraded school to the parents.

Table XVIII shows that the main methods of relaying information about the nongraded school to the parents were P.T.A. meetings, pamphlets, and letters sent by the principal. Other methods of relaying this information mentioned included small informal meetings and parent conferences.

TABLE XVIII  
HOW PARENTS WERE INTRODUCED TO THE  
NONGRADED ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Item	Percentage
P.T.A. meeting	36.0
Letters sent by principal	29.0
Pamphlets or brochures sent to parents	25.0
Small informal meetings	7.0
Parent conferences	3.0

Item number six. Table XIX shows if a new form of reporting to parents was developed.

TABLE XIX  
WAS A NEW FORM OF REPORTING TO PARENTS DEVELOPED?

Response	Number	Percentage
Yes	34	85.0
No	6	15.0

Table XIX shows that 85.0 per cent of the nongraded schools reporting developed a new form of reporting to parents.

Item number seven. Table XX shows the forms of reporting to parents that were developed.

TABLE XX  
FORMS OF REPORTING TO PARENTS THAT  
WERE DEVELOPED

Item	Percentage
Parent-teacher conference	48.6
Written reports sent home	37.1
Parent-pupil-teacher conference	14.3

Table XX shows the most widely developed forms of reporting to parents were parent-teacher conferences and written reports sent home. The least used form of reporting was the parent-teacher-pupil conference.



## CHAPTER V

### SUMMARY, COMPARISON OF LITERATURE TO CURRENT PRACTICES, CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS

The first section will summarize the results of the writer's study of some Washington nongraded schools. The second section, comparison of literature to current practices, will make a comparative analysis of organizing the nongraded school in Washington to the readings on the nongraded school. The third section, conclusions, will suggest two areas that need special attention in organizing a nongraded school. The final section, recommendations, will deal with suggestions for setting up a nongraded school and suggestions for further research.

#### I. SUMMARY

General information. The main reasons that many Washington schools became nongraded were better provisions for individual differences and pupil's continuous progress.

Most of the Washington schools studied took from one to three years in their reorganization.

Seven nongraded schools abandoned this type of organization; the main reasons given were not having involvement in helping plan the nongraded school and a short transition time from graded to nongraded school.

Curriculum reorganization. The Washington nongraded schools reporting said they developed a new educational philosophy and learning objectives for their schools. Learning levels were the chief mode in reorganizing the curriculum in Washington nongraded schools. The Washington schools reporting said more stress was placed on individualized instruction.

Teacher involvement. Not all teachers at the beginning of reorganization were in favor of the nongraded school in Washington schools reporting. The teacher attitude, however, did change to a more favorable opinion of the nongraded school after the program was once started.

The teachers were involved in planning for the nongraded school mainly in organizing learning levels and writing the philosophy and learning objectives. Teachers were introduced to the nongraded school by inservice meetings and teacher workshops. There were no additional staff members needed by the reporting Washington nongraded schools in this study.

Parent involvement. Most parents were in favor of the nongraded school at the beginning of the transition and at the present time. Parents took only a small part in planning for the nongraded school. Those nongraded schools reporting that did involve the parents, had parents help to write the

philosophy and learning objectives and participate in community level meetings.

The parents were introduced to the nongraded school in various ways. The methods most often used were P.T.A. meetings, letters sent by the principal, and pamphlets or brochures sent to parents.

New forms of reporting to the parents were developed by the reporting Washington nongraded schools. These new forms were parent-teacher conferences, written reports sent home, and parent-pupil-teacher conferences.

## II. COMPARISON OF LITERATURE TO CURRENT PRACTICES

General information. Most of the Washington schools surveyed took from one to three years in their reorganization (Table III, page 33). One out of three schools that took less than one year in organizing the program has since dropped the nongraded program. Out of the eleven schools taking one year to organize, three have dropped the nongraded program. The literature placed much emphasis on the gradual transition from graded to nongraded school. However, this was not followed by some of the reporting Washington schools.

Curriculum reorganization. The forming of a new educational philosophy and learning objectives must be

developed by the nongraded school in reorganizing its curriculum. Most all the Washington schools surveyed reported they did so. Out of the two that said, "They did not," one has abandoned the nongraded program.

The literature stated that learning levels were one mode in reorganizing the curriculum. Most Washington nongraded schools surveyed said learning levels were used at the beginning stages of reorganizing their curriculum. The literature stated learning levels were gradually being abandoned by nongraded schools. However, the item was not included in the questionnaire.

It has been stated in this paper that one of the chief reasons for initiating a nongraded elementary school is to meet individual needs. With this in mind many of the Washington nongraded schools reporting said more stress was placed on individualized instruction, again being consistent with the literature.

Teacher involvement. Not all the teachers at the beginning of reorganization were in favor of the nongraded school in the Washington schools reporting. The literature stated this was very important to have the teachers in favor of the program. The teacher's attitude, however, did change somewhat to a more favorable opinion after the program was once started.

The teachers in the nongraded schools surveyed were involved in planning for the nongraded school. However, it is not known if this included every teacher. The literature suggested that all teachers should be involved in planning for the nongraded school. The teachers were involved in writing the philosophy and objectives, organizing learning levels, testing and scheduling pupils, all of which were suggested as being important by the literature.

Teachers were mainly introduced to the nongraded school by use of inservice meetings and teacher research. These are two ways suggested by the literature. Another method that was highly recommended, but little used by the schools reporting, was visiting the nongraded schools in their areas.

Parent involvement. It was reported that most of the parents were in favor of the nongraded school and after it was begun the parents were even more in favor. This was important to the reorganization as brought out by the literature.

The Washington nongraded schools surveyed did not involve to a wide degree the parents in planning for the nongraded school. There were five Washington schools that said they did not involve the parents and have since dropped this form of organization. Literature has stated that involving the parents is one important aspect in organizing

the nongraded school. The administration is the one to take the responsibility of involving the parents in organizing the nongraded school.

The parents were introduced to the nongraded school in various ways. Two methods, the small informal meetings and parent conferences, were seldom used by the Washington schools reporting. The literature made some comment that small informal coffee hours could be set up to discuss the nongraded school. These informal meetings could give better results than large meetings.

New forms of reporting to the parents were developed by the surveyed Washington nongraded schools. These new forms were parent-teacher conferences, written reports, and parent-pupil-teacher conferences. The literature stated that new forms other than report cards were needed to report pupil progress to parents and these new forms met the needs more effectively.

### III. CONCLUSIONS

The writer can see at least two areas that proper attention was not given by the Washington nongraded schools. One problem was not giving the parents opportunity to help or take part in the planning for a nongraded elementary school. The other was not taking enough time in the reorganization needed for implementing a nongraded school.

The failure of some reporting schools to continue the nongraded program may have been due to the fact that they did not involve the parents in any of the planning before beginning the nongraded program. Understanding the nongraded system by the parents is an essential point. The writer has concluded that involvement in planning the nongraded school by both school and parent is needed for a fundamental understanding. The administration must see that the parent involvement is achieved.

The literature pointed out that a period of one to three years was needed in the transition to become a nongraded school. The writer has concluded that the time needed for the change should be at least one year if not longer. A few schools reporting made the change in less than a year, while several more took only one year to reorganize their schools. The brief transition period in some schools may have caused them to abandon the nongraded program. Here again, the administration, primarily the principal, did not take on the leadership role in the transition from graded to nongraded.

#### IV. RECOMMENDATIONS

Two areas of reorganization are recommended for consideration by schools planning a nongraded program. The first would be to gain complete parent understanding of the

nongraded school through parent involvement in the planning of the nongraded school. The other is not to hasten the implementation of the nongraded school. A period of at least one year should be used in the implementation of the nongraded school.

Further research is needed to determine if there is continued reorganization in the nongraded school once the program has commenced. There needs to be continued re-evaluation in a program such as the nongraded school, for further improvement of curriculum and better meeting the needs of the children.

A list has been prepared of some Washington schools that indicated they were nongraded according to their own criteria. There are many more nongraded schools within the state that are not listed. A more complete list could be compiled by some interested persons for an aid in further research.

A further search could be made in looking for schools who have abandoned the nongraded school program and data analyzed to discover reasons for dropping the program.

A study could be made on analyzing what so called non-graded schools considered to be nongraded. The study could be directed at three groups; (1) administration or principals, (2) teachers, and (3) parents.



The literature stated that there is a gradual trend in the abandonment of learning levels in nongraded schools (22:34-35; 11:212-213). A further search could be made of Washington nongraded schools to ascertain which schools have abandoned the learning levels. The research could include reasons for abandonment of learning levels and what curriculum organization the nongraded schools have developed.

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APPENDIX A

QUESTIONNAIRE MAILED TO WASHINGTON SCHOOLS

A Letter to Principals of Nongraded  
Elementary Schools

Dear Principal,

In cooperation with Central Washington State College, I am attempting to determine the preparation most schools in Washington State went through to become a 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 moments to react to the following questionnaire? Please check the best fitting response or write in a more fitting response after the word "other". 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 you completed questionnaire within a few days.

Sincerely yours,

Terry S. Ryan

## Questionnaire

General Information

1. Do you now have a nongraded elementary school?  
     \_\_\_ yes, go on to #3      \_\_\_ no, answer #2
2. If at one time you had a nongraded school, please state why it was abandoned.  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_
3. What made your district want to have nongraded elementary school?  
     \_\_\_ Better provision for individual differences  
     \_\_\_ Eliminating nonpromotion  
     \_\_\_ Better mental health for pupils  
     \_\_\_ Pupil's continuous progress  
     \_\_\_ Other: \_\_\_\_\_
4. How long was the transition from graded school to non-graded school?  
     \_\_\_\_\_ years

Curriculum

1. Was a new educational philosophy and learning objectives developed when organizing the nongraded school?  
     \_\_\_ yes                      \_\_\_ no
2. Were a series of learning levels developed to progress the child vertically through school?  
     \_\_\_ yes, answer #3      \_\_\_ no, go on to #4
3. How many levels were developed and over how many years of schooling?  
     \_\_\_ levels                      \_\_\_ years
4. Was there any emphasis placed on team teaching as an organization?  
     \_\_\_ yes                      \_\_\_ no



5. Was there more stress placed on individual instruction?

yes  no

6. Was more money needed for teaching materials?

yes  no

### Teachers

1. What was the attitude of most teachers upon beginning the transition from graded to nongraded?

in favor  neutral  in opposition

2. What is the predominant attitude of teachers at the present time?

in favor  neutral  in opposition

3. Did the teachers take a part in planning the nongraded program?

yes, answer #4  no, go to #5

4. What part in planning did they take?

Writing philosophy and objectives

Organizing learning levels

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

5. How were the teachers introduced to the nongraded program?

Inservice meetings

Teacher workshops

Consultants

Teacher research

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

6. Were additional staff members necessary during the early stages of the reorganization?

yes, answer #7  no

## 7. What types of staff members needed?

- Teachers  
 Teacher aides  
 Clerical help  
 Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Parents

## 1. What was the attitude of most parents toward the nongraded school?

\_\_\_ in favor    \_\_\_ neutral    \_\_\_ in opposition

## 2. What is the predominant attitude of parents at the present time?

\_\_\_ in favor    \_\_\_ neutral    \_\_\_ in opposition

## 3. Did the community take part in planning the nongraded school?

\_\_\_ yes, answer #4    \_\_\_ no

## 4. What were the ways the community took part in the planning?

- Help in writing philosophy and objectives  
 Community level meetings  
 Other: \_\_\_\_\_

## 5. How was information about the nongraded school relayed to the parents?

- P.T.A. meetings  
 Pamphlets or brochures  
 Letters sent by principal  
 Other: \_\_\_\_\_

## 6. Was a form of reporting to parents other than report cards, developed?

\_\_\_ yes, answer #7    \_\_\_ no

7. What form of reporting was developed?

- Parent-teacher conferences
- Parent-pupil-teacher conferences
- Written reports sent home
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

APPENDIX B  
ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS REPORTING THAT THEY  
WERE NONGRADED

Aberdeen School District

Central Park  
Stevens

Bellevue School District

Ardmore  
Ashwood  
Lake Heights  
Sunset  
Surrey Downs

Bremerton School District

Armin G. Jahr  
East Bremerton  
Manette

Clover Park School District

Tyee Park  
Custer  
Lakeview  
Idlewild

Coupeville School District

Coupeville

Darrington School District

Darrington

Eastmont School District

Grant  
Robert E. Lee

Edmonds School District

Mountlake Terrace  
Martha Lake  
Maple Park

Everett School District

Washington

Federal Way School District

Mark Twain  
Nautilus  
North Lake  
Twin Lakes

Highline School District

Beverly Park  
Burien Heights  
Gregory Heights  
Parkside  
Riverton Heights

Kent School District

O'Brien  
Scenic Hill

Lake Washington School District

Robert Frost

Seattle School District

Rainier  
Minor

Sedro Woolley School District

Mary Purcell

Shoreline School District

Briarcrest

Snohomish School District

Central

Tacoma School District

Larchmont  
Mann  
McCarver  
Boze

University Place School District

Sunset  
University Place  
Narrows View

Vancouver School District

Sara J. Anderson  
John R. Rogers  
Lieser