

PROBLEMS IN ELEMENTARY
SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION

FRANK P. BACHMAN

SCHOOL EFFICIENCY SERIES
PAUL H. HANUS

SCHOOL EFFICIENCY SERIES

Edited by PAUL H. HANUS

Problems in Elementary School Administration

**A constructive study applied to
New York City**

By FRANK P. BACHMAN, Ph. D.

**AUTHOR OF "PRINCIPLES OF
EDUCATION," ETC.**



**YONKERS-ON-HUDSON, NEW YORK
WORLD BOOK COMPANY**

1916

Copyright, 1915, by World Book Company
All rights reserved

SES: BPESA—2

EDITOR'S PREFACE

THREE important contemporary problems in the administration of elementary schools are treated in this volume by a method which is commending itself increasingly to students of Education, and has a special significance for all officers of school administration and supervision. These problems arise when the establishment of intermediate schools (or junior high schools) is under consideration; when we seek to ascertain what a satisfactory rate of promotion is, and under what conditions we may hope for a maximum rate of promotion; and when we try to secure age-grade standards that will yield us usable and valid information concerning the number of normal-age, over-age, and under-age children in the schools: and the method employed in dealing with these problems is the statistical or objective method—the method that is free from personal bias or general opinion, and seeks to arrive at valid conclusions on the basis of incontestable and well-organized data.

Dr. Bachman's brief but comprehensive introduction states these problems clearly, and also the principles of method on which his studies are based. The main body of the volume consists of three parts, each dealing with one of the problems under consideration. Parts I and II constitute Dr. Bachman's contribution to the report submitted by me to the Committee on School Inquiry of the Board of Estimate and Apportionment of the City of New York in 1912; and Part III is a report made to that Committee after my term of service had closed.

I welcomed the opportunity to publish these three important reports substantially unchanged in a volume of the School Efficiency Series, both because they contain comprehensive

data of much intrinsic value, and because they illustrate in detail Dr. Bachman's objective method of reaching conclusions, a method that can be advantageously employed in the study of school administration anywhere.

PAUL H. HANUS.

HARVARD UNIVERSITY.

CONTENTS

| | PAGE |
|--|------|
| EDITOR'S PREFACE | vii |
| INTRODUCTION | 3 |
| PART I. THE INTERMEDIATE SCHOOL | |
| CHAPTER | |
| I. EDUCATIONAL EFFICIENCY OF THE INTERMEDIATE SCHOOL | 9 |
| II. ECONOMY OF THE INTERMEDIATE SCHOOL | 33 |
| III. EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES AFFORDED BY THE INTERMEDIATE SCHOOL | 55 |
| PART II. PROGRESS AND CLASSIFICATION OF SCHOOL CHILDREN | |
| IV. THE PROBLEM OF PROMOTION AND NON-PROMOTION | 65 |
| V. THE RATE OF PROMOTION | 81 |
| VI. THE MAXIMUM RATE OF PROMOTION | 95 |
| VII. SIZE OF CLASS AND NON-PROMOTION | 122 |
| VIII. ABSENCE AND NON-PROMOTION | 132 |
| IX. OVER AGE AND NON-PROMOTION | 142 |
| X. INABILITY TO USE THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND NON-PROMOTION | 156 |
| XI. PART TIME AND NON-PROMOTION | 164 |
| XII. THE PROBLEM OF PUPILS WHO LEAVE SCHOOL | 185 |

| CHAPTER | PAGE |
|---|------|
| XIII. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS AS TO NON- PROMOTION AND PART TIME | 193 |
| XIV. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF OVER AGE | 199 |
| XV. AGE-GRADE STANDARDS TO USE IN AGE-GRADE REPORTS | 205 |
| XVI. WHEN AND HOW TO MAKE AGE-GRADE REPORTS | 234 |
| XVII. WHEN AND HOW TO TAKE THE AGES OF PUPILS . | 242 |
| XVIII. WHAT CHILDREN TO INCLUDE IN AGE-GRADE REPORTS | 252 |
| XIX. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS | 263 |
| INDEX | 267 |

Problems in Elementary School Administration

PROBLEMS IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION

INTRODUCTION

THE objective or statistical method is applied, in this volume, to the solution of certain practical problems related to the administration of the elementary schools.

In the solution of administrative problems there are three general methods of procedure in common use. The first of these may be called the method of personal judgment. A superintendent or principal studies the question of forming a class for backward children, and gives his judgment, which is essentially his personal opinion. Again, a number of persons canvass a field—for example, the causes of non-promotion—and submit a joint report. In such a report, the opinion of the individual is modified by the opinion of the group. This method may be termed the method of collective or group judgment. Finally, there is the objective or statistical method. Here the facts collected and presented, or the objective standards of measurement employed, become the prime factor in determining the conclusion reached, and there is little place left either for the opinion of the individual or of the group. Each of these methods has its use and its value. It is conceded, however, that, where applicable, the objective or statistical method is the preferable one to employ, and that in a judicious use of this method lies our hope of education becoming a science.

Few topics in the field of the elementary school are re-

ceiving to-day as much attention as the intermediate school, called also the junior high school. Part I of this volume is devoted to a consideration of a number of questions to which superintendents want satisfactory answers before they are willing to recommend the bringing together of the seventh and eighth grade pupils into a central building. For example, when children are sent from the home school to a distant intermediate school, will fewer or more of them continue beyond the sixth grade; will a larger or smaller number complete the elementary course of study; will their progress through the school be more or less rapid? What educational opportunities and advantages does the intermediate school offer over the ordinary school having all grades? What is the difference in the cost when the regular seventh and eighth grades are in a central school? These and other questions are answered in the light of the experience of New York City with the intermediate school. This experience should be helpful to those who have under consideration the segregation of the children of the upper grades.

In the management of the elementary school it is of the highest importance that children be properly classified and that they advance regularly from grade to grade. Accordingly, Part II of this volume has to do with the classification and progress of school children. Progress from grade to grade is conditioned on promotion and non-promotion. In the first section of Part II, the general problem of promotion and non-promotion, what the rate of promotion should be, and the conditions favorable to a maximum rate of promotion are treated in detail. An analysis is also made of the factors which contribute to non-promotion, such as size of class, absence, over age, inability to use the English language, and the short school day or part time. The data presented in this connection not only shed light on the causes of non-promotion, but also on the value of special classes, such as classes for children unable to speak the English language and classes for backward children.

The relation between the age of the child and the grade in which he should be enrolled, and the relation between the length of time a child has been in school and the number of units of work or the grades he has completed, have of late years been widely discussed. Indeed, we have come to appreciate that insight into these age-grade relations is fundamental, not only to the proper classification of children, but to the adaptation of the work and the life of the school to their capacities and needs. While the value of definite knowledge of the relation between the ages of the children and the grades they have completed is generally accepted, there is by no means a like unity of opinion with regard to the method to be employed to determine whether or not a child is under age, normal age, or over age. There should be a common method of determining over age, both for the sake of exactness and for the sake of comparison of one system of schools with another. The second section of Part II takes up the essential features of such a method, dealing with the age-grade standards to be used, when and how to make age-grade reports, when to take the ages of children, how to take the ages of children, and what children to include in an age-grade report.

This volume thus contains a large amount of data that may be used in determining educational policies. Useful particularly to those who would base their policies on facts and who would measure the results of their work are the examples contained herein of the application of the objective or statistical method to the solution of administrative problems.

Part I

The Intermediate School

CHAPTER I

EDUCATIONAL EFFICIENCY OF THE INTER-MEDIATE SCHOOL

AN intermediate school in the City of New York is an elementary school which receives only pupils promoted from the 6B grade,¹ and in which the instruction is restricted to the seventh and eighth years of the elementary school course of study.

There are three such schools in Greater New York, all in Manhattan: Public School Number 24, opened in 1905; 62, opened in 1905; and 159, opened in 1907.² These schools were organized to relieve congestion. The seventh and eighth year classes in several neighboring buildings were small, and, by bringing these pupils into one school, it was possible to set free a number of rooms for the use of children of the lower grades. The organization of these intermediate schools at once made clear the worth of this kind of school as a means of relieving congestion, also the economy of such schools in caring for seventh and eighth year pupils, as compared with schools having all grades. The amount of congestion is steadily increasing—the number of pupils on part time having increased from 69,035, on September

¹ In New York City each year of the elementary school comprises two grades, A and B. Thus, Grade 6B means the second half of the sixth year.

² Public School No. 159 has classes below the 7A grade. It is, however, officially recognized as an intermediate school.

10 *Problems in Elementary School Administration*

30, 1907, to 79,338, on September 30, 1911,¹ but no new intermediate schools have been established.

Our study of the intermediate schools now in operation not only will show that the intermediate school, apart from its serviceableness in relieving congestion, affords opportunity for economy, but will show besides that it affords peculiar opportunities to adapt the education of seventh and eighth year pupils to their varying needs. Our investigation accordingly comprises (1) a study of the educational efficiency of the intermediate school; (2) a study of its economy; and (3) a review of the peculiar opportunities it affords for adapting the instruction to the varying needs of seventh and eighth year pupils.

SOME OBJECTIONS MADE TO THE INTERMEDIATE SCHOOLS

The City Superintendent of Schools records the establishment of intermediate schools as one of the achievements since the consolidation of Greater New York. Both the City Superintendent of Schools and the Board of Education are favorable to intermediate schools and to increasing the number of them. There are, however, supervisors and principals who are unfavorable and who express the opinion:

(1) That, when the seventh and eighth grades are removed from a school, in order to organize an intermediate school, a larger per cent. of pupils leave the 6B grade without completing it in schools having only 1A-6B grades than leave the 6B grade in schools having all grades.

(2) That a larger per cent. of pupils promoted from the 6B grade fail to enter the 7A grade when they must go to an intermediate school than fail to enter the 7A grade when they can advance to this grade in their home school.

(3) That a larger per cent. of seventh and eighth year pupils leave the seventh and eighth grades without completing these grades in intermediate schools than leave these grades in schools having all grades.

¹ Annual report of the City Superintendent of Schools, 1907, and special report made to the Committee on School Inquiry.