

JUNIOR  
HIGH SCHOOL  
EDUCATION

DAVIS



# JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL EDUCATION

By

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## PREFACE

**F**IFTEEN years ago, while he was a student working under Professor Paul H. Hanus of Harvard University, the author of this book became acquainted with the theory of the junior high school. From the beginning it appealed to him greatly. It seemed to him to be based upon sound psychology, sound pedagogy, and sound common sense. As an American educator, he has ever since been an advocate of the junior high school plan. He has watched it grow in favor among teachers, school administrators, and members of the general public. He has noted the changes that have taken place in it during the past decade and a half and, while studying the practical treatment it has received in the public schools, he has endeavored to do some constructive thinking on the subject of the plan himself. He is convinced, as a result of his observations, that the junior high school has come into the American educational system to stay.

As an agency for fostering democracy and a way of giving boys and girls a keener interest in their school work and a better preparation for post-school life, the author believes that the junior high school plan should be still further developed and its use extended. He believes its development should be guided and not left wholly to chance, and he has prepared this book in the hope that he may be able to indicate the application of certain pedagogical principles to the new plan and to present them in a plain and straightforward fashion to all those who have the cause of American education at heart. He is well aware that his is not the first book to occupy the field, nor can he hope that it will prove the most conclusive. He has endeavored to add his contribution to the good work of others rather than needlessly to duplicate their conclusions. Although he has made rather free use of data gathered by others and has availed

himself of permission to quote from printed authorities and to utilize particular accounts of the work now being carried on in various junior high schools of America, he has also drawn somewhat heavily upon his own resources, especially upon the facts he obtained in the course of many visits paid to junior high schools in various parts of the country, and upon his collection of printed courses of study, syllabi, and special circulars pertaining to particular schools.

In this connection it may be said that in the effort to obtain data upon which to base his presentation of the junior high school plan in operation, the author applied to nearly every board of education in the United States that was reported to have adopted the new arrangement and to have junior high schools with unique and interesting features under its control. The result of these inquiries was very disappointing. Replies were received from nearly all of the authorities addressed, but the majority of them either had no unique school features to describe or else had no data at hand that would serve to illustrate the matter. There were, however, a few notable exceptions. Los Angeles, St. Louis, Detroit, Buffalo, and Rochester forwarded material of great interest and value, and important aid was furnished by Grand Rapids, Kalamazoo, Columbus, Berkeley, and Duluth. Among the smaller cities, Adrian, Menominee, Bellevue, and Monmouth afforded the greatest help. To the school authorities of these various cities, the author wishes to express his gratitude. His thanks are due also to the State Departments of Public Instruction of Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, Wisconsin, and California. The pages of the *School Review*, and especially the articles concerning the junior high school written by the editor, R. L. Lyman, have been an inspiration to him, and he has likewise derived great encouragement from the publications of the Committee on the Reorganization of Education, edited by Clarence D. Kingsley.

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In addition, the author acknowledges his special obligation to Dean A. S. Whitney and Professor J. B. Edmonson, of the University of Michigan, both of whom have helped him by constructive criticism. He also wishes to acknowledge his indebtedness to his wife, Winifred Ellen Davis, for painstaking help in preparing the manuscript, editing the index, and correcting the proof.

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# JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL EDUCATION

## CHAPTER ONE

### WHAT THE JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL IS

**A**LTHOUGH the term Junior High School has been in use for more than a dozen years, there is evidence to show that confusion exists in the minds of many school administrators and educational theorists as to just what a junior high school is. The North Central Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools<sup>1</sup> has probably done more to define the term than any other agency in the United States. For the past twenty-five years this Association has been at work clarifying the issues, establishing the principles, and determining the policies that pertain to the secondary schools of America. The junior high school is one of the subjects with which the Association has dealt at length, and, this being so, we can hardly do better than to take its formulations in regard to the matter as a starting point for this chapter.

In 1918 the North Central Association unanimously approved the following declaration of principle: *RESOLVED, That the term Junior High School, as used by this Association, shall be understood to apply only to schools including the ninth grade combined with the eighth grade, or with the eighth and seventh grades, in an organization distinct from the grades above and the grades below.*<sup>2</sup>

In formulating the above resolution, the Association tentatively defined a junior high school, so far as external organization is concerned. It did not attempt to deal with the

<sup>1</sup> For a brief account of this organization, see an article entitled "The North Central Association," *School Review*, Vol. 29, June, 1921. At present the Association covers the territory of nineteen Middle Western states, and includes in its membership about two hundred institutions of higher learning and about fifteen hundred secondary schools.

<sup>2</sup> Bulletin, 1918, page 6.

program of studies, buildings, and other vital topics. Nor did it aim to establish a fixed convention in regard to the school's external form. It merely tried to make a finding that would serve as a definition for the time being.

In order to obtain data to guide it in making a more comprehensive and detailed finding, the Association, that same year, made an investigation concerning the junior high schools in North Central Association territory. A questionnaire was addressed to the accredited secondary schools of the Association. Replies were received from all (1165 in number). Two hundred and ninety-three schools reported that they had taken steps in the reorganization of their systems and had done so according to the junior and senior high school plan. The following are summaries of those reports:<sup>1</sup>

### ORGANIZATION

#### A. COMBINATIONS OF GRADES ORGANIZED AS UNITS

| GRADES ORGANIZED AS A UNIT | NUMBER OF SCHOOLS | PERCENTAGE OF SCHOOLS |
|----------------------------|-------------------|-----------------------|
| 7-8-9                      | 89                | 30.4                  |
| 8-9                        | 8                 | 2.7                   |
| 7-8                        | 133               | 45.4                  |
| 7-8-9-10-11-12             | 18                | 6.1                   |
| 6-7-8                      | 22                | 7.5                   |
| 8                          | 11                | 3.8                   |
| Other combinations         | 12                | 4.1                   |

#### B. NAMES OF SCHOOLS

| NAME                 | NUMBER OF SCHOOLS | PERCENTAGE |
|----------------------|-------------------|------------|
| Junior High School   | 168               | 57.3       |
| Departmental School  | 46                | 15.7       |
| Six-Year High School | 12                | 4.1        |
| Various other names  | 67                | 22.9       |

<sup>1</sup> Bulletin, 1919, pages 10 *et seq.*

## C. HOUSING ARRANGEMENTS

| ARRANGEMENT                                       | NUMBER OF SCHOOLS | PERCENTAGE |
|---|-------------------|------------|
| Junior and Senior High Schools together           | 138               | 47.1       |
| Junior High School and Elementary School together | 85                | 29         |
| Junior High School housed in a separate building  | 49                | 16.7       |
| Unspecified                                       | 21                | 7.2        |

## D. DIVISIONS OF THE SCHOOL DAY

| NUMBER OF PERIODS         | NUMBER OF SCHOOLS <sup>1</sup> | PERCENTAGE |
|---------------------------|--------------------------------|------------|
| Five . . . . .            | 16                             | 5.5        |
| Six . . . . .             | 46                             | 15.7       |
| Seven . . . . .           | 69                             | 23.5       |
| Eight . . . . .           | 77                             | 26.3       |
| More than eight . . . . . | 77                             | 26.3       |

## E. CLASS PERIODS

| LENGTH OF PERIOD           | NUMBER OF SCHOOLS <sup>2</sup> | PERCENTAGE |
|----------------------------|--------------------------------|------------|
| 30 minutes . . . . .       | 37                             | 12.6       |
| 30 to 45 minutes . . . . . | 166                            | 56.7       |
| 45 to 60 minutes . . . . . | 58                             | 19.8       |
| One hour plus . . . . .    | 16                             | 5.5        |

<sup>1</sup> Schools not replying, eight.<sup>2</sup> Schools not replying, sixteen.

## F. CERTAIN CURRICULAR MODIFICATIONS

| MODIFICATIONS  | NUMBER OF SCHOOLS | PERCENTAGE |
|--|-------------------|------------|
| Departmental organizations . . .                                   | 285               | 97.3       |
| Promotion by subject . . . . .                                     | 241               | 82.3       |
| Supervised study . . . . .   | 173               | 59         |
| Choice of subjects . . . . .                                       | 153               | 52.2       |
| Vocational guidance . . . . .                                      | 136               | 46.4       |
| Introduction of secondary school<br>subjects below ninth grade . . | 81                | 27.6       |
| Practical arts below ninth grade                                   | 260               | 88.4       |
| Music and drawing below ninth<br>grade . . . . .                   | 221               | 75.4       |
| Commercial work below ninth<br>grade . . . . .                     | 49                | 16.7       |
| Distinctive vocational work<br>below ninth grade . . . . .         | 15                | 5.1        |

## G. CERTAIN ADMINISTRATIVE PRACTICES

| PRACTICES   | NUMBER OF SCHOOLS | PERCENTAGE |
|---|-------------------|------------|
| Junior High School graduation<br>exercises . . . . .              | 80                | 27.3       |
| Admission of retarded or accel-<br>erated pupils . . . . .        | 108               | 36.9       |
| Special qualifications for Junior<br>High School teachers . . . . | 88                | 30         |
| Election of a Junior High School<br>principal . . . . .           | 176               | 60.1       |
| Admission of part-time pupils .                                   | 139               | 47.4       |

These figures show that, even as late as 1918, a considerable number of school authorities were far from agreeing as to what constitutes a junior high school. If the North Central Association's resolution be taken as a criterion, only 97 of the 293 schools claiming to be junior high schools were

truly such schools. This is less than one third of the number making the claim, and only a little over 8 per cent of the entire number canvassed.

Confusion is also apparent when matters of organization and administration are considered. Of the 293 schools that claimed to have adopted the reform, only 16 per cent plus had segregated their junior high school pupils in a separate building,—to many educators, an absolutely indispensable part of the plan. Provision for some form of vocational guidance, for supervised study, and for some individual choice of subjects on the part of the pupil have also long been considered cardinal principles of the junior high school method; and yet only 52 per cent plus of the 293 schools in question allowed pupils a chance to choose subjects, only 46 per cent plus afforded pupils vocational guidance, and only 59 per cent claimed to have made provision for the supervision of study. Indeed, the only unity of practice among these schools is found in departmental organization, promotion by subject, and the introduction of certain forms of manual and household arts and of drawing and music; and all of these are modifications that had been made in many school systems before the junior high school plan, as such, was known. Yet these changes and a change of name constituted the only reorganization that had taken place in many of the schools under consideration.

The confusion indicated is by no means confined to the territory covered by the North Central Association. Briggs, in investigations covering the entire United States, found the same confusion everywhere.<sup>1</sup>

It can scarcely be doubted that most, if not all, of the authorities claiming to have junior high schools have in recent years made notable changes in their school organization

<sup>1</sup> *Junior High School*, page 58.

and administration — particularly in the organization and administration of the seventh and eighth grades. But, in many of the schools, the changes have certainly not gone far enough to warrant giving to the modified unit a new rank and a new name. As the writer of the North Central Association report expresses it:

Precisely what constitutes a junior high school (or anything that closely approximates it in fact) is a difficult question to answer. . . . Evidence is strong that, almost in scores of cases, the alleged reform school plan has consisted primarily of an altered name. Possibly the departmental organization of subject matter and teaching, possibly promotion by subject, and possibly one or two other desirable, but inconspicuous and not vital, changes have been made; but there is little to show that such schools have modified the purposes, the program of studies, the spirit, the methods, or the internal administration of the older type of school. . . . In short, it seems certain that altogether too many school systems are deceiving themselves with names, are mistaking the husk for the kernel.<sup>1</sup>

What, then, is a true junior high school? Many definitions have been formulated. None, perhaps, is wholly satisfactory. The following are among the best that have come under the author's observation. Dr. Charles H. Johnston says:

The junior high school is the name we have come to associate with new ideas of promotion, new methods of preventing elimination, new devices for moving selected groups through subject matter at different rates, higher compulsory school age, new and thorough analysis of pupil populations, enriched courses, varied . . . curriculum offerings, scientifically directed study practice, new schools for all sorts of educational guidance, new psychological characterizations in approaching the paramount school problem of individual differences, new school year, new school day, new kind of class exercise, new kind of laboratory and library equipment and utilization, and new kinds of ultimate community service.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> North Central Association, Bulletin, pages 10 *et seq.*, 1919.

<sup>2</sup> *Educational Administration and Supervision*, Vol. 2, pages 413 *et seq.*



Obviously, Dr. Johnston is here describing a vision and not a reality.

The North Central Association Commission on Secondary Schools said, under date of March, 1919:

A junior high school is a school in which the seventh, eighth, and ninth grades are segregated in a building (or portion of a building) by themselves, possess an organization and administration of their own that is distinct from the grades above and the grades below, and are taught by a separate corps of teachers. Such schools, to fall within the classification of junior high schools, must likewise be characterized by the following:

1. A program of studies decidedly greater in scope and richness of content than that of the traditional elementary school.
2. Some pupil choice of studies, elected under supervision.
3. Departmental teaching.
4. Promotion by subject.
5. Provision for testing out individual aptitudes in academic, prevocational, and vocational work.
6. Some recognition of the peculiar needs of the retarded pupil of adolescent age, as well as special consideration of the super-normal.
7. Some recognition of the plan of supervised study.<sup>1</sup>

In the course of an article published in the *Educational Review* in 1919, T. W. Gosling remarked:

The purpose of the junior high school is to offer a program of studies which shall be suited to the varying needs of boys and girls in their early adolescence; to take into account the individual differences among boys and girls; to assist boys and girls to develop right attitudes toward life and its problems; to assist them in discovering and developing their natural aptitudes; to guide them carefully by a wise discipline through the trying time when they are passing from the period of control imposed by others to the period of self-control; to take into account their budding idealism and their emerging religious concepts; to give them opportunities for expressing their social instincts in helpful and inspiring service; to correct physical defects and to build up habits of clean and healthy living;

<sup>1</sup> North Central Association, Bulletin, page 4, 1919.