THIS DOCUMENT IS A BIBLIOGRAPHY OF BOOKS AND ARTICLES ON THE SUBJECT OF NONGRADED ELEMENTARY SCHOOL SYSTEMS. THE BASIC BIBLIOGRAPHY IS TAKEN FROM A BIBLIOGRAPHICAL WORK BY VOGEL AND WEINGARTEN DONE AT NORTHWESTERN UNIVERSITY. THE PRESENT BIBLIOGRAPHY IS DIVIDED INTO THREE PARTS, (1) RESEARCH STUDIES EVALUATING THE RESULTS OF NONGRADED ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS, (2) ANNOTATED ARTICLES DESCRIBING VARIOUS FACETS OF NONGRADED ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS, AND (3) BOOKS AND ADDITIONAL ARTICLES DESCRIBING NONGRADED ORGANIZATION. SECTIONS (1) AND (2) INCLUDE A BRIEF DESCRIPTIVE PARAGRAPH OR TWO OF THE NATURE OR FINDINGS OF THE DOCUMENT LISTED, WHILE SECTION (3) IS MERELY A LISTING OF BOOKS AND ARTICLES WITH THEIR USUAL BIBLIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION. (WD)
NONGRADED ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS
(with selected annotations)

University of Illinois
805 W. Pennsylvania
Urbana, Illinois
A BIBLIOGRAPHY (with selected annotations)
ON NONGRADED ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

Compiled by
Byron M. Shinn, Jr.
Research Assistant

under the direction of
Fred D. Carver
Coordinator, School-University Research

Bureau of Educational Research
College of Education
University of Illinois
Urbana, Illinois

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Introduction

Basically, nongrading is an organizational plan. Perhaps the simplest definition is the one used by Goodlad and Anderson in surveying schools during the 1957-58 school year. They defined the nongraded school "as one where the grade levels ('first grade,' 'second grade,' 'third grade,' etc.) have been entirely removed from a minimum of two grade levels". Their later studies reveal two major misunderstandings of the nongraded school movement: "The first is the failure to understand that nongrading is a scheme for organizing schools vertically. The second is the false assumption that a scheme of school reorganization automatically changes other educational practices." The most frequently stated purposes for ungraded school organization are to provide for individual differences in abilities and rates of development and to remove the arbitrary barriers to promotion and retention found in the graded school organization. As a glance at the titles of the articles reveals, many names are used to describe various forms of nongraded organizational plans. Among these are continuous growth, primary cycle, ungraded primary, and ungraded primary unit.

The compiler wishes to gratefully acknowledge the work of Frances X. Vogel and Mary Jo Weingarten under the direction of Professor Norman D. Bowers in preparing a "Bibliography of Articles and Studies Related to Nongraded Schools" (mimeographed) at Northwestern University in January of 1966. The present compiler has added the annotations and some articles but the work of Vogel and Weingarten comprises the basic bibliography.

This bibliography is in three parts. In the first are research studies evaluating the results of nongraded elementary schools. The second contains annotations of articles which describe various facets of nongraded elementary schools. These articles were selected as representative of the descriptive articles in the bibliography compiled by Vogel and Weingarten. Some recent articles were added by the present compiler. The third and final section lacks annotations. It lists books and additional articles and descriptions of nongraded organizations.

BMS, Jr.


2Ibid, p. 210
Part I - Research Studies
Evaluating Results of Nongraded Elementary Schools


This is a report on a three-year experiment in ungraded primary grouping according to reading achievement and rate of learning. Ungraded primary programs in two schools showed approximately one year superiority over control schools in reading ability. Other apparent advantages are listed which could not be measured by standardized tests.


Bockrath, Sister M. Bernarda, An Evaluation of the Ungraded Primary As an Organizational Device for Improving Learning in St. Louis Archdiocesan Schools, Unpublished doctoral dissertation, St. Louis University, 1958.

The scope of the problem investigated was three-fold: (1) to determine if this organizational device has resulted in better reading; (2) to report the specific findings of a three-year study of a group of children as they progressed through the ungraded primary unit in one of the Archdiocesan schools; (3) to ascertain through a survey of primary teachers if the program has contributed to an improved teaching-learning situation. A comparison of reading scores for fourth grade pupils in 1953 (before ungraded organization) with those of 1956 showed a median increase of 5 months. The three-year study showed how the organization can function. The questionnaire answers revealed that an overwhelming majority of primary teachers favor the program and consider it a contribution to more effective learning and to teacher-growth.


Two public school systems in a midwestern state were selected for this study. One had nongraded primary schools while the other utilized the traditional graded primary school form of organization.

The evidence uncovered in this investigation generally supports the claims, as these pertain to general academic achievement and general adjustment, made by the proponents of the nongraded school. Children attending schools under the rationale of the nongraded primary plan seem to be clearly superior to graded pupils in the areas of language and work study skills, as well as in the overall academic composite score. Furthermore, a trend is readily apparent indicating that this same group is better adjusted than its graded counterpart.
The author reports on his study of 244 intermediate grade pupils, randomly selected, half of whom attended an ungraded primary school and half of whom attended a graded primary school. The two groups were matched for a comparison of differences in achievement and mental health. The differences in teaching practices in the two situations were also compared. Significant differences in favor of the graded group were found in all areas of achievement. Four of the factors in mental health showed no significant differences while one, social participation, showed a significant difference in favor of the graded group. The hypothesis of no difference in instructional practice was tentatively accepted. In his discussion of the results the author points out that if schools are to be organized to promote the continuous progress of each pupil, instruction must become increasingly individualized and the area of evaluation must be given more attention.


The sample selected was of fourth grade children in three selected experimental schools and four selected control schools who had been in an ungraded situation or a graded situation for three years. Pupils who had been in an ungraded school or graded school for three years, but who were still not in the fourth grade, were also tested. The 1959-1960 Otis Quick-Scoring Mental Ability Test Scores were used as the control, except on attitude, where there was no attempt to control. The sample had 210 pupils from each situation.

There was no significant difference in academic achievement between the two plans in 33 of the 40 testing situations. The graded had the advantage in six cases, and the ungraded one.

There was no significant difference in attitude toward school.

A major portion of this article is devoted to an excellent review of the literature which includes the background of nongraded organization, recent research findings and a discussion of the implications of the conflicting evidence. In the study itself a comparison was made of the achievement of 146 primary pupils who had been taught for approximately one year under a nongraded program in reading and spelling with the achievement of 149 primary pupils who had been taught solely within the framework of the graded class structure. All the significant results favored the nongraded group with the most significant results (p< .01) being found on word knowledge and reading comprehension at the first grade, total arithmetic at the second grade, and spelling and computation at the third grade level.


The author gives a background of organizational practices in which he gives his opinion that the time has come to leave the graded system of organization. He then explains how the school where he is principal organized for nongraded instruction in arithmetic including the rewriting of their arithmetic program independent of textbook series. The study reported compared arithmetic achievement of children who had spent three years in a graded program with those who had spent three years in a nongraded school. The reported results show the mean of the nongraded to be one half year above that for the graded group. This is reported as "significant at the .02 level of confidence."


Pupils from 7 ungraded and from 7 graded schools were selected as subjects for the investigation. The 745 ungraded pupils and the 603 graded children had completed three years of schooling. Significant differences in favor of the ungraded group were found on achievement in reading, arithmetic computation, and arithmetic problem solving. No significant differences between the groups were found in personal adjustment. A significantly large number of teachers preferred to teach in ungraded schools, believed that children achieved better scholastically in this type of school, believed that parents understood the ungraded primary program and favored it, and believed that type of school program did not influence the personal-social adjustment of children at the primary level. No significant difference was found between parents of the two groups with respect to satisfaction with their children's academic progress and statements regarding their children's attitudes toward school. A significantly large number of parents who had children in ungraded schools believed it to be superior to the graded school program.

In the study 52 pupils were taught reading either in graded or nongraded organization. One half the pupils were randomly assigned to each type of organization. At the end of 1 1/2 years of the three-year experimental period, analyses of grade level achievement for three measures related to reading achievement favored the non-graded organization at a level which was statistically significant.


The major purpose of this study was to determine whether differences exist in reading vocabulary and comprehension between pupils in a graded program and pupils in an ungraded primary program. The groups were also compared with respect to (1) teachers' evaluations, (2) sociometric patterns, and (3) attendance. The 45 primary classrooms studied (20 ungraded and 25 graded) are in a district in Los Angeles County. The results of this experiment indicate that the ungraded primary program was neither inferior or superior to the graded in any of the following respects: pupil achievement, teacher satisfaction, sociometric patterns, or pupil attendance. At the end of the four-year study, the participating school district decided to return to the conventional graded organization mainly because the pupils in the ungraded program which posed more administrative problems, had achieved no more on the average than those in the graded classes.


A brief description and background is given of the "primary cycle" program which began in September, 1956, at the Washington Community School in Flint, Michigan. Achievement scores were compared with scores of pupils in the traditional graded program when the first group completed the three-year primary cycle. The results showed significant differences (p<.01) in favor of the nongraded pupils in paragraph meaning, word meaning, spelling, and language on mean scores. Based on a parent questionnaire it was found that 97% of the parents favored the program. Though no data are given it is reported that teachers were "just as enthusiastic." In June, 1958, the Flint Board of Education established the primary cycle as part of the regular organizational pattern of Flint public elementary schools.

This study attempts compare ability grouping within grade levels with students of like ability grouped for reading instruction without regard to grade level (All reading classes scheduled throughout the school at the same time). Differences are also examined by IQ ranges. While the data are presented in a difficult manner for comparison, it is reported that there are no significant differences in vocabulary and reading comprehension skills between the two groups. The method for reaching this conclusion is not given.


The purpose of this study was to investigate the differences in reading and arithmetic achievement between children in an ungraded primary organization and children in a conventional graded school organization. In addition, the instructional grouping practices of teachers in the ungraded and conventional organizations were compared. The study was conducted in four elementary schools in the Wayne Community School District, Wayne, Michigan, during the 1961-62 school year.

The major findings of the study reveal that:

1. In this study the mean score of pupils enrolled in graded classes exceeds the mean score of pupils enrolled in ungraded classes in nearly all measures of achievement.

2. In this study it appears that within the confine of one academic school year the idea of greater flexibility is not a unique attribute of the ungraded organization.

3. The results of this study strongly suggest that the provision for the variability of pupils can be as adequately met in the conventional organization as in the ungraded organization.

4. It appears that the ungraded organization is largely an arrangement that attempts to provide for the individual differences of pupils along a single dimension, that of rate of pupil progress.
This article reports the percent of schools using a nongraded sequence, the grades replaced, and the advantages and disadvantages given for the nongraded sequence.


The author studied the pupils in a public elementary school in Vermont which has an ungraded primary program in reading, while instruction in other subjects has been carried on under the traditional, graded system. When she compared their reading achievement with that of the reading achievement in similar graded schools she found significant differences (p<.01) in favor of the ungraded group. Similar results were found when pupils classified as average, superior, and very superior were compared. She also reported that on the lower "end of the intelligence scale, under the ungraded plan, less than half as many children spend four years in the primary as would if the question or promotion came up at the end of their first year of school."
Part II - Annotations of Selected Descriptive Articles on Nongraded School Organization


This article reports on the non-graded, homogeneous grouping facet of the Achievement Grouping and Teacher Specialization Plan of school organization introduced in all the public schools of East Brunswick, New Jersey, in the fall of 1960. Children who would ordinarily be in fourth-, fifth-, or sixth-grade classes have been placed in classes that are homogeneous in ability and achievement. The reasons for the plan are given and the related research in the literature is reviewed briefly. The incidental advantage of better class size through better deployment of pupils and teachers is the final topic discussed.


The author first discusses problems of the graded school with emphasis on the promotion-retention-class assignment problem. He then discusses ungraded primary programs in practice at Milwaukee and Park Forest, Illinois. The author was superintendent in the later system and discusses it in more detail. There he found the necessity of having the classroom teachers understand and accept the philosophy which underlies ungraded primary programs. They had fewer than normal number of pupils take four years for primary education. They also found that parents are less affectionately attached to grade-level designations than is generally supposed. The author concludes with, "What are we waiting for?"


The purposes of the study were to get information concerning the development, objectives, operation, professional staff, and public relations of the ungraded primary unit. The data on which the study was based were obtained from a questionnaire returned by schools or school systems throughout the United States which were known to be using the ungraded primary program. Extensive supplementary data were also obtained from School District 163, Park Forest, Illinois, and its 61 un-graded primary units.

This article provides a very complete look at the present status of the ungraded primary. Beginning with a very brief history of the movement, the ungraded primary is defined and basic assumptions of it are given. Reviewing the literature, the authors discuss the ungraded primary plans in practice and the differences found among them. A brief resume of the research studies is given without any attempt to evaluate the relative quality of the investigations. The final portion of the article is devoted to a description of the comprehensive multi-district study underway by the New York State Education Department. The references cited provide a good bibliography of the current literature on ungraded primary organization.


The author begins by discussing the weaknesses of the "traditional graded school with its single standard and restrictive program." Included in this is the statement, "studies seem to show that some dropouts who are fit are eliminated while others less fit receive a high school diploma." After stating that "if each child were met where he is at each stage of his educational experience, grade repetition would disappear," he discusses the high cost of retention. He sees the nongraded school as the solution to these problems and briefly discusses 14 characteristics of the nongraded school. He also proposes differentiation in the reporting of progress including diplomas and certificates of attendance. Finally, he cites advantages he has seen as an administrator for seven years.


It was the purpose of this study to develop procedures for the implementation of the nongraded primary school in this district. One part of the investigation dealt with a study of the literature on the topic. Additional information was obtained from selected nongraded schools through the issuance of a questionnaire. Through this instrument, the problems, failures, and successes of the participating communities were identified. Finally, the local school district was examined in terms of its suitability as a setting for a nongraded primary school.

This article, written by the Superintendent and a principal from Cabool, Missouri, reports their felt success with dull-normal children in their nongraded program. After briefly pointing out the important features of their nongraded program, the authors stress the need for a central library which has materials in sufficient amounts for all ability levels. The importance of the proper teacher for the dull-normal children is then discussed.


The article is somewhat summarized by its subtitle, "No different, just more lively!" More use is being made of previously existing A-V materials. Items like filmstrip projectors are now being used with groups rather than exclusively by the entire class. A-V materials were used extensively for in-service education of teachers to prepare them for the nongraded program.


After very briefly reviewing the historical development of the graded school, the author states, "Increased knowledge of human growth and development with accompanying recognition of individual differences and advancements in how students learn caused a number of educators to question the graded school concept." Historical examples of nongraded organizations are cited. She describes three types of nongraded plans and gives examples of each and combinations of types. Type 1 replaces grades with a number of subject matter levels; Type 2 replaces grades with a multigraded or an interage arrangement; and Type 3 replaces subject-centered philosophy with learner centered philosophy. The author concludes with five philosophical statements underlying all nongraded schools.


Beginning with the statement, "It must be remembered that few, if any, truly nongraded schools exist," the author discusses two variations of the concept. The first is "differentiated progress for learners through subject-matter sequences which are relatively common for all." The second encompasses a broader view of schooling. Finally, he discusses nongrading as a stimulus of change.

This article reports on the second phase of a 1960 survey of nongraded schools in 89 communities reported to have one or more such schools in operation. It is based on questionnaires which sought information on reasons for introducing a nongraded plan on changes affected in any part of the school program as part of the process of bringing the nongraded plan into existence, on changes in program that followed introduction of the nongraded plan, on current modifications in school practices related to nongrading, on long-term plans for the future, and reporting to parents. The questionnaires were sent to only one person in each school system. As a result, the report is largely the perceptions of supervisory and administrative school personnel.


Looking briefly at the many innovations and changes on the educational scene, the author discusses the role of field researcher in evaluating these changes. While the "pure researcher" may deplore the fact that most educational research is "applied research," Dr. Heathers sees this as necessary for two reasons. "One is that the schools must run while educators await the findings of basic research. The other is that the findings of basic research must always be engineered into educational practice." The three ways he sees that educational research can help educators improve the practice of education are (1) through his knowledge of theory and research findings, (2) by developing objective and practical measures of educational variables, and (3) by conducting studies that determine the relationships between certain educational practice and the attainment of certain educational goals. The researcher cannot, and should not, answer value questions concerned with deciding which educational outcomes are good or bad, better or worse.


A brief background of the ungraded primary plan is followed by a summary of its strengths. A survey showing the prevalence of its use is then reported. The remainder of the article is devoted to a survey of elementary education majors. After a unit on school organization they were asked one question: "Presume that you are fully trained to teach in the primary grades or in the ungraded primary unit, and that two options are given, viz., to teach one primary grade or to teach the ungraded primary unit, choose one, giving a reason for your choice." Of the 148 responses 51.35% chose the ungraded primary unit and 48.65, the primary grade. A sampling of the reasons given is reported in the article.

This article reports briefly on the extension of the ungraded primary through the six-year elementary school as it is done at the Maple Park School, Edmonds, Washington. In the ungraded primary there were nine achievement levels, eight of which had to be completed before entrance to fourth grade. There are now 19 definite achievement levels, 17 of which must be completed before a child can enter the seventh grade.


This article reported on the experimental program at Christ the King School, Chicago, Illinois, developed and introduced by Saint Xavier College. The college has taken a leadership role in the in-service education of the teachers and parent education programs. Teaching teams are used. Special arrangements have been made for supervision, selection of textbooks, and reporting to parents. The problem of pupil transfers from the school has been handled by reporting skills taught and degree of mastery. A need is seen to counsel parents about the effects of such a transfer.


Data from the literature produced the following conclusions:

1. The basic commitments of the nongraded concept were described.

2. Nongraded programs in the United States were reported to be more similar than different.

3. In nongraded organizations, grouping for instructional purposes was more flexible and was not associated with chronological placement of learners. Nongraded grouping practices, based on planning for continuous, sequential growth, tend to encourage increased pupil achievement and improved pupil attitude.

Fifty-two teachers and eight principals responded to two perceptionnaires developed by the researcher which produced the following conclusions:

1. Teachers and principals reported the need for increased knowledge in the field of child growth and development.

2. Teachers and principals reported that indiscriminate transfer of teachers might handicap nongraded program of development.

3. Some type of pupil classification-index should be devised for non-graded organizations. The removal of grade designations has created problems in central departments that are concerned with statistics and pupil-accounting.
The general purpose of this study was to make case studies of two nongraded elementary school programs as implemented in Golfview Elementary School, Brevard County, Florida, and Tuttle Elementary School, Sarasota County, Florida. Additional objectives were to describe the utilization of facilities in relation to selected essential elements of the two programs and to identify commonalities in desirable physical requirements of facilities for nongraded elementary schools as viewed by staff members of the two schools.

Through analyses of the described programs thirteen conclusions are reported as appearing to be justified.

This article describes how two teachers in Gloucester, Massachusetts, ungraded a two room school. The old schoolhouse was modernized and one class each of first and second grade was assigned because of the need for more school space. The situation became one of both team teaching and ungraded organization. Part of the reason for this is that Gloucester has no public kindergartens and there was a tremendous readiness range among pupils arriving at school. Some had attended private kindergartens. The organizational plan is described briefly in the article.

After briefly mentioning the weaknesses of a lock step graded system, the author briefly reviews the literature on nongrading, especially that of Goodlad and Anderson and Di Lorenzo and Salter. She then expresses the need she sees for more individualization of instruction and makes clear that she is not advocating a tutorial system. She concludes by explaining why she favors multi-age classrooms.
Part III - Selected Books and Articles
on Nongraded Organization

Books


Articles


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