

THE DETERMINATION OF A CURRICULUM DESIGN
FOR THE UNIVERSITY HIGH SCHOOL,
JUNIOR HIGH DIVISION

by

Phyllis Iverson Bush

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Phyllis I. Bush

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DATE

<u>Galen Saylor</u>	<u>July 29, 1957</u>
<u>N. F. Thorpe</u>	<u>July 29, 1957</u>
<u>Leroy Laase</u>	<u>July 29, 1957</u>
<u>Marshall S. Hiskey</u>	<u>July 29, 1957</u>
<u>G. W. Rosenlof</u>	<u>July 29, 1957</u>

SUPERVISORY COMMITTEE

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION TO THE PROBLEM

The movement for the reorganization of the American public school system began during the latter part of the nineteenth century, after the educational ladder was essentially complete in form. Up until that time, the energies of those interested in public education had been directed largely toward the establishment of the system as such. The internal organization of the system had been more or less a matter of individual development.

Once the battle for public support and control had been won and the system was essentially complete in form, educational leaders began to turn their attention to a critical examination of the institution. Investigators of the several divisions--the elementary, the secondary, and the higher--scrutinized the proper relationships of each to the other. As time went on and the defects of the system became obvious, investigation led to proposals for reorganization. The actual work of reorganization did not get under way, however, until about 1910. Prior to this, numerous departures from established practices were undertaken.

Educational leaders mentioned economy of time, excessive student drop-out, and discovery of previously ignored

adolescent needs as reasons for intensive study of the practices common in organization.

With these factors in mind it seemed desirable to establish a separate division of the secondary system through separation of grades seven and eight from the elementary school to create a new unit, the junior high school. The movement toward the establishment of the junior high school had its true beginning nearly fifty years ago. It has proven to be one of three things in practice: a downward extension of the senior high school, an independent organization between the senior high school and elementary school, or an extension of the elementary school.

There is agreement as to the specific functions of the junior high school, but the most effective means possible to effect these functions are still not satisfactorily resolved.

The creation of a junior high school at the University High School at the University of Nebraska has brought sharply into focus the problem of establishing a forward-looking curricular pattern in a six-year high school.

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this study is to formulate the best possible design or plan for the curriculum of the Junior High School Division of University High School of the University of Nebraska.

Methods of Investigation

In order to formulate a sound curriculum design for this junior high school this study uses the following procedures of study:

1. To investigate the historical development of the function of the junior high school through literature.
2. An analysis of the needs, characteristics, educational achievement of the student body of the Junior High Division of University High School of the University of Nebraska.
3. From all readily available methods to analyze significant practices now used to carry out the functions peculiar to the junior high school.
4. The development of a curriculum plan which promises to best serve the functions for the University High School, Junior High Division.
5. To submit to a Jury the proposed plan for their evaluation of its effectiveness.

Scope of the Study

The present study is designed to propose a curriculum for the Junior High Division of University High School which consists of grades seven, eight, and nine.

Since the school is a laboratory school which serves as a training situation for student teachers, this function

must continuously be taken into account in any planning.

The facilities, grouping of students, or scheduling of the school are primarily administrative matters and should be excluded from consideration except where they impose themselves upon the curriculum.

Definition of Terms

The "junior high school" has many definitions. Most definitions consider the early adolescent period with its attending needs, interests, and developmental tasks as the basis for this organization.

For purposes of this study the term shall be defined as it is in the Dictionary of Education:

The Junior High School is the lower part of a divided reorganized secondary school comprising usually grades 7, 8, and 9; less frequently consists of grades 7 and 8 or grades 8 and 9.

The Junior High School, segregated: a unit of school organization comprising one or more but not all of the grades beyond 6 (or grade 7 in 11 year systems) usually grades 7 to 9 and housed apart from other units of the system in a separate building or wing of a building, with its own principal and staff.¹

The "function" of the junior high school is the

The responsibility for providing those conditions or elements in the program of a school which will lead most directly to the satisfactory realization of the ultimate aims of education.²

The function of this junior high school will add one specific area of responsibility: the laboratory function

¹Carter V. Good, (Editor), Dictionary of Education.

²Ibid.

common to a teacher training school.

The term "curriculum design" refers to the organization of those learning experiences which provide the most efficient means toward meeting the educational, social, and developmental needs of the pupils selected for admission to University High School, Junior High Division.

Sources of Data

In order to carry out the purposes of this study, data were drawn from many sources, including published professional literature, unpublished dissertations and theses, surveys conducted in selected schools, correspondence with selected authorities in the field of junior high school curriculum, and questionnaires mailed to schools recommended by the authorities.

Two particular studies were obtained for careful study in relation to the problem. The first, by William T. Gruhn,³ is listed as a basic source in nearly all junior high school literature. The second, the research of John Lounsbury,⁴ is the most recent comprehensive study dealing with the status and role of the junior high school.

³William T. Gruhn, "An Investigation of the Relative Frequency of Curriculum and Related Practices Contributing to the Realization of the Basic Functions of the Junior High School."

⁴John H. Lounsbury, "The Role and Status of the Junior High School."

The Historical Development
of Reorganization
of the Secondary School

One of the most obvious ways to determine the function of the junior high school is to trace the development of the attitude toward function as recorded in publications. Since the development of the junior high school has been exclusive in America, and since the development has been recent, this attitude toward function is easily available.

It is noted in the writings that shortcomings in the reorganization of public education were mentioned in literature in the latter part of the nineteenth century. College and university officials were especially prone to criticize school practices.

The first major criticism reported was the one dealing with the age of students upon their entrance into college.

President Eliot Initiates Reorganization Movement

The movement to reorganize secondary education in the United States was undertaken largely because of the efforts of President Charles W. Eliot of Harvard University to shorten the period of elementary and secondary education in order that the student could enter upon his college or university work earlier. As early as 1872 President Eliot pointed out that the average age of admission at Harvard was then a little over eighteen years. He indicated further that it was the opinion of the Harvard faculty that this age

was too high.⁵

In his report for 1885-86 President Eliot again referred to the subject, stating that the age of admission had increased until, in that year, two-fifths of the freshmen were over nineteen years of age at entrance. After studying this problem the Harvard faculty decided upon several remedial measures. They suggested that elementary and secondary educators be persuaded generally to condense their courses so that the students could begin college work at least one, and preferably two, years earlier. Harvard modified entrance requirements in 1886. Letters were sent to parents and teachers of applicants urging them to send the boys to college as soon as they were prepared.

Although President Eliot mentioned the concern he had over the increasing age of the entering students at Harvard, there was little done to solve the problem. In 1888 when speaking before the Department of Superintendence in Washington, D. C., he not only restated his concern over the increase in the age of college freshmen, but he indicated a possible solution.

In that address, "Can School Programs be Shortened and Enriched?" and in a second one made in 1892, "Shortening and Enriching the Grammar School Course", Eliot pointed out that although the American high school graduate was older than his European counterpart, the amount of knowledge the American

⁵Frank F. Bunker, Reorganization of the Public School System, p. 44.

student had did not equal the amount possessed by a French student.

In the first address President Eliot urged (1) the improvement of instructional efficiency by raising the standards and skills of the teachers, (2) the improvement of the educational program by increasing the attractiveness of school work, (3) a reduction in the number of reviews and a change from the kind of attainment encouraged by the kind of reviews then employed, (4) a reduction in pupil retardation by permitting the great body of children to pass from grade to grade without delay, and (5) a lengthening of the school year and possibly the school day.⁶

In the address delivered in 1892 he suggested that the content of the elementary school course be shortened by (1) reducing the amount of time devoted to arithmetic, (2) introducing a foreign language as an optional replacement in the fourth or fifth grade for the work in spelling, grammar, reading, literature, and writing, (3) combining geography with history and improving the instruction in geography by introducing suitable apparatus, and (4) eliminating instruction in bookkeeping in the last grade, a practice found at that time in quite a few elementary schools. In this address Eliot also proposed to enrich the elementary school courses by (1) introducing natural history--botany, zoology, geology,

⁶Charles W. Eliot, "Educational Reform: Essays and Addresses," in Frank F. Bunker, The Junior High School Movement: Its Beginnings, passim.

and physical geography--earlier in the school program, (2) placing elementary physics in the upper-elementary grades, (3) introducing pupils to algebra and geometry at ages twelve or thirteen, and (4) offering French, Latin, or German to the ten year olds.⁷

Since President Eliot represented one of the foremost institutions in the United States it was obvious that his proposals attracted great attention.

The Committee of Ten Proposes Reorganization

The first of a series of committees appointed by the National Council of Education and its parent organization, the National Educational Association, the Committee of Ten on Secondary-School Studies,⁸ was composed of five college presidents, one college professor, two private school headmasters, one public high school principal, the United States Commissioner of Education, and President Eliot, Chairman. The composition of this committee reveals the dominance of the college. The voluminous reports of the main committee and each of the nine individual committees published in 1893 contain many recommendations and conclusions about both elementary and secondary education. No statement, however, was

⁷Ibid.

⁸The National Council of Education, established in 1880, was an organization within the NEA. Its purpose was to investigate educational questions of general interest and import and to publish reports on the deliberations. The membership consisted of 60 members chosen by the Council, 60 chosen by the Board of Directors of the NEA, and three chosen by each of the Departments of the Association.

more significant than the following:

In the opinion of the committee, several subjects now reserved for high schools--such as algebra, geometry, natural science, and foreign languages--should be begun earlier than now, and therefore within the schools classified as elementary; or as an alternative, the secondary school period should be made to begin two years earlier than at present, leaving six years instead of eight for the elementary school period. Under the present organization, elementary subjects and elementary methods are, in the judgment of the committee, kept in use too long.⁹

The Committee of Ten's Report was the first of a series of influential reports published under the auspices of the National Educational Association.

The Committee of Fifteen

Appointed to begin work before the issuance of the Committee of Ten Report, the Committee of Fifteen, which was appointed by the Department of Superintendence, completed its work in 1895. This committee was composed mainly of large city superintendents who were members of the appointing organization. They had been charged with investigating many points, some of which bordered directly on the reorganization movement. One of the three sub-committees made a questionnaire survey on, among other things, the questions of shortening the period of elementary education and introducing Latin or a modern language in the elementary school course. The results indicated considerable hesitation toward cutting the period of elementary education. The Committee in

⁹National Educational Association, Report of the Committee of Ten on Secondary-School Studies, p. 45.

its report commented on these points as follows:

Your committee is agreed that the time devoted to the elementary school work should not be reduced from eight years, but they have recommended, as hereinbefore stated, that in the seventh and eighth years a modified form of algebra be introduced in place of advanced arithmetic and that in the eighth year English grammar yield place to Latin. This makes, in their opinion, a proper transition to the studies of the secondary school and is calculated to assist the pupil materially in his preparation for that work. Hitherto the change from the work of the elementary school has been too abrupt, the pupil beginning three formal studies at once, namely, algebra, physical geography, and Latin.¹⁰

This Committee's work, while somewhat discouraging to the advocates of an extended period of secondary education, was important because of the attention directed to articulation between elementary and secondary education. The width of the gap between the two divisions was brought to light. This gap was due to the attitude that basic skills were the province of the elementary school and cultural or formal academic subjects were the province of the secondary school. The assumption was made that students leaving the elementary school were capable in all basic skills and needed to learn their application only. The Committee proposed to bridge this gap by introducing more formal academic content and method one or two years earlier.

The Committee on College Entrance Requirements

In 1899, following four years of deliberation, the Committee on College Entrance Requirements released its

¹⁰National Education Association, Journal of Proceedings and Addresses, 1895, p. 329 f.

report. The Department of Secondary Education and the Department of Higher Education of the National Educational Association had each named five members to this Committee. The membership elected A. F. Nightingale, Superintendent of the Chicago Public High Schools, chairman. The Committee on College Entrance Requirements recommended a six-year high school. They pointed out that:

The most necessary and the most far-reaching reforms in secondary education must begin in the seventh and eighth grades of our schools. Educators agree that these grades must be enriched by eliminating non-essentials and adding new subjects formerly taught only in the high school. These reforms require the highest pedagogic knowledge and the most efficient supervision. In our opinion these problems can be solved most quickly and surely by making the seventh and eighth grades parts of the high school under the immediate direction of the high school principal.

The seventh grade, rather than the ninth, is the natural turning point in the pupil's life, as the age of adolescence demands new methods and wiser direction. Six elementary grades and six high-school, or secondary, grades form symmetrical units. The transition from the elementary to the secondary period may be made more natural and easy by changing gradually from the one-teacher regimen to the system of special teachers, thus avoiding the violent shock now commonly felt upon entering the high school.

The inspiration afforded by a well equipped high-school principal and by a special teacher in language, science, or mathematics would do much to retain desirable students in the high school, thus raising the educational standard of American citizenship . . . As far as statistics are accessible on this point, the experiment of placing these grades in the high-school building has been successful, resulting in better scholarship and a greater percentage in the number of students entering the ninth grade.¹¹

¹¹National Educational Association, Journal of Proceedings and Addresses, 1899, pp. 659-660.

The Chicago Conference

Under the initiative of the University of Chicago's President, William Rainey Harper, the Chicago Annual Conference directed its study to the problem of reorganization. In 1901 and 1903 John Dewey addressed the conference. He described the period of elementary education and expressed the opinion that six years ought to be enough to accomplish the task of elementary education. He felt, furthermore, that the years thereby added to secondary education would permit this division to fulfill better its proper role.¹²

At the 1902 conference President Harper presented the following propositions as a basis for discussion:

1. To connect the work of the eighth grade of the elementary school with that of the secondary school.
2. To extend the work of the secondary school to include the first two years of college work.
3. To reduce the work of the seven years thus grouped together to six years.
4. To make it possible for the best class of students to do the work in five years.¹³

Three committees of seven members each¹⁴ were appointed to study these proposals. In reporting the following year, the three committees supported in general the plan.¹⁵ The

¹²John Dewey, "Discussion on Topic, 'Shortening the Years of Elementary Schooling'", School Review, 11:17-20 (January), 1903.

¹³William R. Harper, "The High School of the Future," School Review, 11:1-3 (January), 1903.

¹⁴Referred to in some sources as the Committee of Twenty-One.

¹⁵"The General Conference," School Review, 12:15-28 (January), 1904.

committees represented the elementary school, the secondary school, and the college.

Address by Superintendent Greenwood

In point of time the next important event in the reorganization movement was an address by Superintendent Greenwood of Kansas City. In an address¹⁶ before the Department of Superintendence in 1903 he did much to dispel the fears of many who felt that the shortened elementary period would result in greater elimination of pupils and poorer preparation. Kansas City Public Schools had been organized on a 7-4 basis since 1867. Greenwood expressed the belief, based on his experience, that the seven-year elementary school was fulfilling its functions quite satisfactorily. He presented data which showed that Kansas City was retaining an unusually high percentage of pupils. These facts made a deep impression upon the audience. This experience played a part in the report of the Committee of Twenty-One.

Report of the Committee on Six-Year Courses

Another influential body giving strong support to the reorganization of secondary education was the standing Committee on Six-Year Courses of High School Study appointed by the Department of Secondary Education of the National Education Association.

¹⁶National Education Association, Journal of Proceedings and Addresses, 1903, pp. 247-263.

Members included three high school principals, a city high school director, and a college professor. In its report of 1907, the group specifically, and in detail, enumerated the advantages of the six-year course. The chief objections, the Committee reported, were economic, since the seventh and eighth grades would be more costly on the new basis. Specifically, the Committee recommended (1) departmentalization of teaching, (2) daily contact with different teachers, (3) laboratory experiences begun at an earlier age, (4) manual training possibilities, (5) earlier study of modern languages, (6) greater ease of transition for students from the elementary to the secondary curriculum, (7) more consistency with the European structure, i.e., six years allotted to the elementary and six years to the secondary period, and (8) the downward extension of the secondary course so as to give pupils more time to prepare for college.¹⁷

Succeeding reports in 1908 and 1909 reinforced the first committee's findings.¹⁸ The 1908 report listed specific expectations of seventh and eighth grades. These reports are significant because for the first time nationally recognized groups specifically investigated proposals for reorganization. That is, the problem they were charged to investigate was the basic issue of reorganization.

¹⁷National Education Association, Journal of Proceedings and Addresses, 1907, pp. 705-710.

¹⁸National Education Association, Journal of Proceedings and Addresses, 1908, pp. 625-628; and 1909, pp. 498-503.