PROGRESS OF ACADEMICALLY RETARDED PUPILS
IN URBANDALE SCHOOLS

A Field Report
Presented to
The Graduate Division
Drake University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Science in Education

by
Richard Allan Whipple
August 1963
PROGRESS OF ACADEMICALLY RETARDED PUPILS
IN URBANDALE SCHOOLS

by

Richard Allan Whipple

Approved by Committee:

Simon Bartley
Chairman

Sara L. Campfield
Dean of the Graduate Division
**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHAPTER</th>
<th>PAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I. THE PROBLEM AND DEFINITIONS OF TERMS USED</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Problem</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statement of the problem</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Importance of the study</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limitations of the study</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Procedure of the study</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definitions of Terms Used</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promotion</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retention</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History of American Education</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The colonial period: 1647-1776</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The national period: 1776-1876</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The period of expansion and reform: 1876-1929</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The period of basic reorganization: 1929 to present</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literature Pertaining to Pupil Promotion-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retention Practices</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Why do pupils fail in school?</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Should pupils be retained?</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is the incidence of failure and drop-out?</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### What should be the school’s promotion policy? 24

### Summary of Chapter II 25

#### III. ANALYSIS OF THE DATA PERTAINING TO ACADEMICALLY RETARDED CHILDREN, URBANDALE PUBLIC SCHOOLS, 1954-1962 28

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Grade Level at which Retention Occurred</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Sex and Chronological Age of the Pupil</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scores of Standardized Tests of Intelligence and Achievement</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scores on Tests of Reading Readiness and Achievement</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Report Card Grades of Academically-Retarded Pupils</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reports from Psychologists and Other Consultants</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reasons for Retention Noted by Teachers</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### IV. SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS 61

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Statement of the Problem</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Procedures Employed in the Study</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary of the Findings of the Study</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusions Drawn from the Study</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recommendations to Urbandale Community Schools</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### BIBLIOGRAPHY 70
# LIST OF TABLES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE</th>
<th>DESCRIPTION</th>
<th>PAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I.</td>
<td>Distribution by Grade Level of Academically Retarded Boys in Urbandale Schools, 1954-1962</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II.</td>
<td>Distribution by Grade Level of Academically Retarded Girls in Urbandale Schools, 1954-1962</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III.</td>
<td>Chronological Age of Academically Retarded Pupils in Urbandale Schools at Time of Enrollment in Kindergarten, 1952-1960</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV.</td>
<td>Distribution of Scores on Standardized Tests of Intelligence Taken by Academically Retarded Pupils in Urbandale Schools, 1954-1962</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V.</td>
<td>Distribution of Scores on Stanford Achievement Tests Taken in Third Grade by Academically Retarded Pupils in Urbandale Schools, 1954-1962</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI.</td>
<td>Distribution of Scores on Iowa Tests of Basic Skills Taken by Academically Retarded Pupils in Urbandale Schools, 1954-1962</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VII.</td>
<td>Distribution of Scores on Gates Reading Readiness and Primary Reading Tests Taken by Academically Retarded Pupils in Urbandale Schools, 1954-1962</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VIII.</td>
<td>Distribution of Scores on Row-Peterson First Grade Reading Tests Taken by Academically Retarded Pupils in Urbandale Schools, 1954-1962</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IX.</td>
<td>Distribution of Scores on Row-Peterson Second and Third Grade Reading Tests Taken by Academically Retarded Pupils in Urbandale Schools, 1954-1962</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X.</td>
<td>Distribution of Academically Retarded Pupils in Urbandale Schools by Grade Level and Year of Retention, 1954-1962</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER I

THE PROBLEM AND DEFINITIONS OF TERMS USED

A basic psychological principle of education states that each child is a unique individual who must be dealt with as such in all his classroom experiences.

The teacher who sees each child as unique must then evaluate each child individually, not only as to his ability to achieve in school, but also as to his physical, mental, emotional, and social development, in order to determine at year end whether to promote or retain the child.

In the Urbandale Community Schools, seventy pupils currently enrolled in elementary and junior high school have repeated one or more grades during the past eight years.

I. THE PROBLEM

Statement of the problem. The purpose of this study was (1) to determine the specific reasons given by teachers for having retained children; (2) to determine the academic or personal problems involved in the retention of children; (3) to determine whether retention appeared to have alleviated their problems; and (4) to determine whether the academically retarded pupils benefited from having repeated a grade, as evidenced by subsequent improvement in classroom performance over that previously indicated by the pupil's cumulative class records.
Importance of the study. In the Urbandale Community Schools the promotion-retention policy has varied over the years. At one time, the school's decision in this respect was final, with or without the approval of the child's parents. In more recent years, however, it has become apparent to the administrators that the child's attitude toward school has had a marked effect upon his academic progress and that without parental approval and encouragement, the attitude of an academically retarded child would likely be so strongly negative as to make retention worthless.

The present study will be of value in the shaping of an enlightened-by-past-experience policy of promotion-retention in Urbandale Community Schools, keeping in mind that any policy must be based on what is best for the individual child involved. So far as could be determined, no such study had been made previously in the Urbandale schools.

Limitations of the study. As the study progressed, the following limitations developed:

1. Records were complete for only seventy academically retarded pupils in Urbandale schools.

2. The study was limited to those pupils currently enrolled in Urbandale schools.

3. High school pupils were not included because some test forms on which study of lower elementary retentions was based had been removed from the cumulative
folders, but had not been recorded thereon.

4. Not all seventy children studied had taken all the tests given throughout the grades, due to the pupil's absence, or enrollment after the test date.

5. No specific measurement of intelligence had been taken in kindergarten or first grade classes.

6. Certain reading tests covered specific material of a textbook series which could not be broadly standardized on a national or regional basis.

Procedure of the study. The study was organized as follows:

1. Literature related to the problem was reviewed to determine the thinking of recognized authorities on the subject of promotion-retention policies of schools.

2. Similar studies were analyzed against which the present study could be evaluated.

3. Cumulative records of seventy academically-retarded pupils currently enrolled in Urbandale Community Schools were reviewed to gather the following data:
   a. The grade level at which retention occurred.
   b. The sex and chronological age of the pupil.
   c. Scores on standardized tests of intelligence and achievement.
   d. Scores on reading tests.
e. Report card grades.

f. Reports from school psychologists and other specialists to whom the pupil had been referred.

g. Reasons for retention noted by teachers.

Data were tabulated and analyzed for patterns of behavior and other common factors which might be useful in shaping promotion practices and for predicting the success of such practices in the future. Evidence was also sought as to the value of retention to the children included in the study.

II. DEFINITIONS OF TERMS USED

For the purposes of this study, certain terms have been defined as specified below to insure clarity of meaning.

**Promotion.** In general, the term promotion refers to the advancement of a pupil to the next higher grade or level of instruction at the end of the specified term, usually the end of the school year. "Automatic promotion" or 100 percent promotion involves each child in a group, regardless of his ability or achievement level, as compared with the norms for the grade. "Earned promotion" is attained only by those pupils who have met a specified minimum standard of performance required of all children regardless of their individual differences.

**Retention.** As used herein, the term retention is used interchangeably with the term "retardation" or "academic
retardation to mean the act of repeating the work of a grade or subject, either as result of failure to meet minimum levels of performance for the grade, or because of some physical, psychological, or social problem making it advisable to place the child in a group of younger or more immature children. The word "retarded" does not necessarily refer to a mental deficiency in the usual sense of the word in educational literature, although mental development may be a factor in academic retardation.
CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The literature related to pupil promotion-retention practices revealed that the thinking of writers in this area has embodied one of three educational philosophies:

1. The "traditional" or subject-centered philosophy.
2. The "progressive" or life-centered philosophy.
3. The "psychological" or child-centered philosophy.

These three schools of thought were closely associated with the social philosophies of the American people which have evolved in our country since its founding. While it was not possible, nor pertinent to this study, to review at length the history of American education, some mention of the development of our educational system was necessary to an understanding of its philosophies and practices down through the years, and to place the present-day philosophies in perspective.

Having traced the history of educational philosophy in America, the writer sought answers to four questions pertaining to current promotion practices:

1. Why do pupils fail in school?
2. Should pupils fail in school?
3. What is the incidence of failure and drop-out?
4. What should be the school's promotion policy?

In the closing pages of this chapter, the review of
literature was summarized to correlate theory with practice.

I. HISTORY OF AMERICAN EDUCATION

Ragan traced the growth and development of American education during four periods in our nation's history:

1. The colonial period: 1647-1776.
2. The national period: 1776-1876.
3. The period of expansion and reform: 1876-1929
4. The period of basic reorganization: 1929-present.¹

His purpose in so doing was "to illustrate the principle that the school curriculum reflects the realities and ideals of the society which supports the schools."²

The colonial period: 1647-1776. The first legislation establishing public schools for children at community expense was enacted in 1647 by the Massachusetts General Assembly. As its title would imply, the "Old Deluder Satan Act" indicated clearly the religious motive for education in the New England colonies, according to Ragan. Various schools were established, but they were all dominated by the authoritarian concept of education, which taught reading, writing, arithmetic, the catechism, prayers, and the singing of hymns. There was a definite belief in the "church-

²Ibid., p. 8
state" relationship in New England during this period. The pupils were taught individually by the memorization method.

Discipline was strict: "The continual flogging, wailing, and tears which were associated with the school made it resemble a prison rather than a place for happy, busy children."

It was here that the "traditional" or subject-centered philosophy of public education had its beginning.

The national period: 1776-1876. The dominant aim of education during the national period was political. It was interesting to note that the first mention of Federal aid to education in this country was made by George Washington in his first address to Congress. John Adams, Jefferson, Madison, Monroe, and many others on the political scene urged the necessity of education as the basis for success of a democracy.

Private school and sectarian religious leaders were strongly opposed to public education, which they termed the "pauper school" and "socialistic." The public school plan won out, and by 1876, public school systems had been established in all but the Southern states, where the Civil War had wrought economic chaos.

The public school of this period still operated on the aristocratic principle of selection and elimination, in spite

\[1\text{Ibid.}, \text{p. 9-10}\]
of efforts to make the schools democratic in practice as well as in theory. As Ragan put it:

The elementary school was regarded as a place where a few of the brighter pupils were prepared for high school rather than as a place where every child prepared for effective participation in the life of his community and nation.¹

This would indicate that the educational philosophy remained strongly traditional at this point in history.

The period of expansion and reform: 1876-1929. A number of changes came about between 1876 and 1929. This was a period of tremendous industrial and economic growth in our country, the result of which was an emphasis on reform, both in government and educational practices. In government, the policy was shaped by such men as Grover Cleveland and Woodrow Wilson. In education, John Dewey had become a driving force behind a movement to develop a program for schools based on individual needs and characteristics of children. Even so, it will be remembered as the period in our history when child labor in the factories and sweat shops, unsavory politics under the influence of newly-wealthy industrialists and others, and exploitation of natural resources was the rule.

The advent of standardized achievement tests, individual and group intelligence tests, adjustment inventories,

¹Ibid., p. 12.
and aptitude tests, to replace oral quizzes, teacher-made written examinations, ciphering matches and spelling bees as instruments for the measurement of pupil achievement and native ability for learning, marked the beginning of an emerging concept of education geared to the individual child.

Disregarding the growing emphasis on educational and child psychology, measurement and evaluation of pupil growth, curriculum development, and practice teaching which had become part of teacher-training programs in the colleges and universities, the public schools remained "hidebound" to the traditions of the past. The high schools continued to impress upon the elementary schools the importance of having every child master a standardized list of facts and skills as preparation for entrance into high school, where the emphasis was upon repetition as the means of learning.

The school remained regimented, undemocratic, and more concerned with facts and skills than with the development of desirable social behavior, creative expression, good work habits, self-direction, or wholesome attitudes. It was basically the same as it had been in 1876.

**The period of basic reorganization: 1929 to present.** The year 1929 saw the stock market crash, plunging the nation into a period of economic depression. Seeking causes for the failure of the business structure, the public turned its attention to its economic and social institutions. Much of
the experimentation carried on during the period of adjustment was short-sighted and ill-conceived, but served to give education a definite turn away from the traditions of the past. The strict attention to subject-matter gave way to a system termed "progressive education", which was built on the solution of life-problems through social experiences and group interaction in the classroom. In its extreme application, subject-matter and textbooks were banned from the school. Testing, drill, written reports, and planned curriculum—which were the "evils" of the traditional school—were thrown out in favor of the planless curriculum, built upon creativity and the chance happenings of the moment, in the belief that pupils' purposes were the ends of education.

This was the child-centered school of the 1930's. It was indeed an educational revolution.

Education in the 1960's appeared to have taken a more common-sense turn. Ragan called it "a balance between extremes."¹ In his words:

The common-sense middle ground course is not an easy one... The educator who faces the facts realistically and selects the central position will be called a traditionalist by the extremists on the left and an impractical dreamer by the extremists on the right. It is the conviction of the author, however, that better educational opportunities can be obtained for boys and girls by pursuing a sensible middle-ground course than by exclusive devotion to either of the extremes.²

¹Ibid., p. 19.
²Ibid., p. 28.
This brief look at the schools in the light of our nation's history revealed that the schools did indeed reflect the changing ideals and realities of the times.

II. LITERATURE PERTAINING TO PUPIL PROMOTION-RETENTION PRACTICES

The promotion-retention policies of a school were but one phase of its total philosophy, and would, quite logically, be in agreement with that philosophy. Having reviewed the history of American education and seen its philosophies evolve and change with the times, the writer observed that the thinking of individual educators did not necessarily agree with the general practices of the schools of the day. There have always been reformers, and those who have clung to the traditions of the past. In current times there has appeared on the educational scene a third faction—a group of moderate-thinkers who have sought to pick the best of both extremes, traditional and progressive, as the pattern for the school of the future.

Each of these three groups of educators personifies one of the three philosophies: (1) traditional, subject-centered; (2) progressive, life-centered; and (3) psychological, child-centered. Each group has expressed itself on the question of pupil promotion-retention practices, the first two groups having taken diametrically opposite points of view on the subject. The third group has taken the middle road, as might be expected.
The thinking of each group will be presented and compared in an effort to develop a better understanding of the problems and, if possible, to draw some conclusions applicable to this study.

In developing this portion of the review of literature, answers were sought to the following questions:

1. Why do pupils fail in school?
2. Should pupils be retained?
3. What is the incidence of failure and drop-out?
4. What should be the school's promotion policy?

Satisfactory answers to these four questions would serve to guide a school toward an enlightened promotion-retention policy.

Why do pupils fail in school? Elsbree offered five reasons for retention advanced by the "traditionalists":

1. Lack of knowledge.
2. Inability to learn.
3. Irregular attendance.
4. Ease of teaching a homogeneous group.
5. Threat of failure as a stimulus to work.¹

A study by Smeltz of several hundred failing pupils found that their teachers had listed the following reasons for retention, some of which duplicate Elsbree's list of the traditional arguments for retention. Smeltz' list included:

1. Irregular attendance.
2. Poor health.
3. Poor home conditions.
4. Low mentality.
5. Lack of interest.
6. Poor foundation.
7. Lack of teacher competency.
8. Poor effort.
9. Changing schools often.

Hussey added to this list another reason for failure: "fear of the teacher."  

Children with academic problems may also become behavior problems in the classroom. Poor behavior in itself has been a factor in the decision to retain a child.

Cutts and Moseley investigated causes of misbehavior among disorderly pupils and found that: "The pupil who is habitually disorderly in school and who defies standard measures of correction is a child with an unsolved personal problem or problems." Among these problems were:

1. Ill health
2. Physical handicap
3. Low intelligence
4. Subject-matter disability
5. Home environment

Only the problem of subject-matter disability was directly related to classroom circumstances, the other

problems being due to various physical, mental, or environmental deficiencies unrelated to school.

Among the environmental problems were (1) broken homes due to illness or death of a parent, disharmony or divorce, or the delinquency of one or both parents; (2) improper discipline, whether lax or harsh; (3) lack of parental interest; and (4) sub-standard housing. These problems would be present whether or not the child attended school, and could not always be alleviated by the school. Matters of poor home environment might necessarily be referred to other social agencies such as child welfare or health departments of local government.

On the question of low intelligence, variously termed "low mentality" by Smeltz and "inability to learn" in the list of reasons for retention given by Elsbree, Cutts and Moseley observed:

You may assume that an over-age boy who has repeated a grade or two and is doing poor work for you is below average in intelligence, only to find, when test results are available, that he is average or well above. The poor work that originally caused retardation of the brighter group was presumably due to factors other than intelligence.¹

Should pupils be retained? Divergent philosophies of education were apparent in the writings about retention. As Reed put it:

¹Ibid., p. 66.
It's no simple matter to decide whether promotion or non-promotion is better for a child who isn't making satisfactory progress. Even professional educators disagree. One says, "Forcing a child to repeat a grade is an unjustified waste of time and money," while another says flatly, "Automatic promotion destroys academic standards." ¹

That not all writers on the subject are sincerely concerned with the welfare of the school or the pupils, but seem more concerned with "making the headlines", has been pointed out by Ragan:

The appearance in recent years of a series of organized attacks on the public schools by individuals and organizations skilled in the distortion of evidence and the obscuring of issues has caused great concern in regard to the future of modern educational practices. ²

The reader was thus forewarned to proceed with caution and to weigh carefully the motives and competence of the authors of the literature available for review, before drawing any conclusions as to the best promotion policies to pursue.

In answer to the five reasons for retention he had attributed to the "traditionalists", Elsbree offered the following point-by-point rebuttal:

1. There is little evidence to support the argument that repetition of a grade enhances pupil achievement; in fact, several researchers point to the opposite conclusion.


2. There is little hope that slow learners will profit more by non-promotion than by normal progress; in fact, they are less responsive upon repeating a grade than their new classmates who are intellectually brighter.

3. The average pupil whose attendance is irregular can make up 25 to 50 per cent of his work if given a chance and some encouragement, and in many instances, he can make up the work more economically in a later grade.

4. The range of ability and achievement is great, even in the best chosen "homogeneous groups."

5. The stimulus which comes with remaining with one's own class is far more potent than that provided by an assignment to live with younger children.

6. Failure produces psychological effects which are harmful to desirable child development.

In spite of this strong plea for annual promotion of all pupils, Elsbree acknowledged that:

There may be occasional instances where children with temporary social maladjustments gain more by grade repetition than by remaining with their starting group...but these cases are rare and cannot account for the high number of repeaters in the average school system.1

Reed was concerned over the limitations imposed on promotion practices by both the "100 per cent social promotion" policy of the progressives and the "minimum passing standards" of the traditional school:

The most important question, then, is not whether promotions should be automatic or earned but, What is best for the child's total development? When promotion is at stake, the decision should be made only after the most careful study of the child, including his age, mental maturity, social adjustment, attitude, home environment, and the likelihood of cooperation from his parents. If there is any doubt that non-promotion will

1Elsbree, op. cit., pp. 21-22.

not favor his all-around development, he should be promoted.¹

This statement by Reed was similar in substance to the words of Ahmann and Glock, who advocated a promotion policy consistent with the best interests of the child. They cited the great harm that could be done to a child who faced the threat of failure under the minimum-standards-for-promotion policy, which might result in "feelings of inadequacy and insecurity that...do irreparable damage to his personality."²

Ahmann and Glock further expressed their concern that pupils lacking the necessary intellectual capacity to meet promotional standards would be doomed to repeated failure, with resultant damage to their mental health.

In response to the argument that non-promotion marked the child as a failure, Barr remarked that the pupil who was subject to retention was already experiencing failure. He cautioned teachers to weigh carefully the relative effects on the child of continued frustration if promoted versus the shock of failure indicated by his retention, before making a decision.³

¹Reed, op. cit., p. 13.
Rogers was more positive in his conclusions in the automatic versus earned promotion controversy: "The social and emotional effects outweigh the value of retention; usually, little positive academic accomplishment results. 1

Cutts and Moseley also voiced their opposition to retention for most children with academic problems:

Experience and research agree that requiring a child to repeat a grade, even if he has been absent for a long period because of illness...is seldom advisable. The repeater is likely to be oversized for his grade and consequently a behavior problem. His attitude toward learning is usually poor, and he may actually retrogress during the year...Retardation is recommended only if the child is physically and socially as immature as the majority of the boys and girls who will be in his class if he is kept back. 2

On the other hand, they labeled "scholastic misfits" those pupils who could not do the work of a grade, or who were so bright the regular work did not interest them as well as those who were markedly older than their classmates. 3 For such children, retardation for the slow learner and promotion for the intellectually-bright or physically-overaged child would be advisable, other factors being favorable.

Throughout the literature, repeated references were

1 D. D. Rogers, "Success or Failure in School," American School Board Journal, CXIII (October 1946), 46.
2 Cutts and Moseley, op. cit., p. 58.
3 Ibid., p. 64
made to human intelligence as a factor in determining pupil placement in school. The standardized intelligence test was introduced and in common use by 1929, according to Ragan's summary of the history of American education. That this means of evaluating children has not gained universal acceptance was evidenced in the writing of Lagemann, who stated flatly, "Let's abolish I.Q. tests." In his words:

Judgment day comes early for American children. In many grade schools they are sorted out for success or failure on the basis of I.Q. (intelligence quotient) tests. The 5 to 10 per cent who score highest are told, in effect, "The fate of the nation is in your hands," and are set on the academic highroad that leads to college and career. A similar number with low I.Q.'s are labeled "slow" and are academically sidetracked. The rest are lumped together as "average" and are given instruction to match.1

In support of his argument, Lagemann quoted various educators who shared his point of view. Among them were Kenneth Clark, psychology professor at New York's City College, who had said: "I.Q.'s based on the usual group tests are worse than meaningless; they are seriously misleading," and John Holland, director of the National Merit Scholarship Corporation, who was concerned because, "Too much scholarship money is going to students who are good at tests but who lack creative talent."2

2 Ibid., p. 8
3 Ibid., p. 8
Lagmann had previously expressed the view that the tests favored the conformist over the creative mind. He had deplored the inaccuracy of group tests of intelligence, terming them "unreliable...wildly erratic...culture-bound...a crude method indeed for measuring something as subtle and complex as intelligence."¹

Clark, who had voiced his opposition to group testing, had not ruled out all I.Q. tests:

An I.Q. score is meaningful only under rigorously controlled conditions of individual testing by a specially trained psychologist who can draw out the best in a child and who can remain sensitive to the level of the child's motivation during testing.²

If I.Q. tests (and Lagmann had included other types of standardized tests in his remarks) were as unreliable as he thought them to be, how was the school to evaluate the child for purposes of grade placement? Lagmann offered this alternative:

...Abandonment of standardized testing...would mean that teachers and school administrators would have to deal once more primarily with individuals rather than with numbers and depend upon their own judgment, with all its limitations. But which is worse—to use individual human judgments with their known fallibility or to use an impersonal system that operates logically from a FALSE PREMISE?³

Lagmann did not indicate upon what material evidence of the pupil's ability or achievement the human judgment of the teacher should be based, if not on the results of

¹Ibid. ²Ibid. ³Ibid., p. 10.
standardized tests. In defense of the test, Elsbree and McNally listed these positive values of standardized tests:

1. To understand the class range.
2. To identify individuals needing help.
3. To identify individuals who are far in advance of the rest of the class.
4. To identify points of needed emphasis in the instructional program.
5. To assist in selection of instructional materials.
6. To help determine the causes of unsatisfactory progress.
7. To help group children for instruction within the classroom.
8. To use in public relations.¹

They pointed out the limitations of the standardized tests, and warned against their indiscriminate use or misuse in the classroom.

In the present study, both standardized tests and the human judgments of teachers, administrators, and, in many cases, the reports of school psychologists and therapists, were available for analysis in the pupil's cumulative files.

Should pupils be retained? The consensus of opinion seemed to be a qualified "No." It was acknowledged that in certain isolated instances of physical or emotional immaturity, retention was of value, but that in the majority of cases, the possibility of damage to the personality and mental health of the child outweighed the values.

What is the incidence of failure and drop-out?

Jones found that an average of 10 per cent of children in schools were repeaters; that in a typical system, there were four times as many pupils retarded as accelerated; and that there was a high relationship of drop-outs and failures.¹

Pugsley's figure was even higher: 1/3 to 1/6 retained in first grade in 1933.²

Kitch noted that the non-promotion trend was downward, with the highest number being retained in first grade: 10 to 25 per cent.³

Rogers noted that in 1925, 32,000 children had failed in the Chicago public schools, enough to fill thirty-two large school buildings. In 1946, the number of pupils retained had been reduced to 8,000 in Chicago.⁴

It would appear that the findings of research on the subject of pupil promotion, which had been strongly against retention, were reflected in the downward trend in retentions indicated in the literature.

⁴ Rogers, loc. cit.
If neither 100 per cent promotion nor minimum standards for every child gives due consideration to the individuality of the pupil, the next question should logically be this:

What should be the school's promotion policy?

An answer consistent with the thinking of the majority of those whose works have been reviewed for this study was found in the Ninth Yearbook of the Department of Superintendence, National Education Association, published in 1931, in which six basic principles of pupil promotion were listed:

1. Promotion should be decided on the basis of the individual pupil.
2. Promotion should be on the basis of many factors. The final decision as to whether a pupil should be promoted should rest not merely on the academic accomplishment, but on what will result in the greatest good to the all-around development of the individual.
3. In order that promotion procedures may be more or less uniform throughout a particular school system, a definite set of factors should be agreed upon, which each teacher will take into consideration in forming his judgment as to whether a particular child should be promoted.
4. Criteria for promotion must take into consideration the curriculum offerings of the next higher grade or unit and the flexibility of its organization, its courses of study, and its methods.
5. It is the duty of the next higher grade or unit to accept pupils who are properly promoted to it from the lower grade or unit and adapt its work to fit the needs of these pupils.
6. Promotion procedures demand continuous analysis and study of cumulative pupil case history records in order that refinement of procedure may result and guesswork and conjecture be reduced to a minimum.  

---

These principles were adopted and endorsed by Elsbree and also by Ahmann and Glock, who remarked that:

The above principles were stated a number of years ago, and then only as a basis for discussion. However, they are sound and applicable in the classrooms of today.

III. SUMMARY OF CHAPTER II

The literature related to pupil promotion-retention practices revealed that the thinking of writers in this area has embodied one of three educational philosophies:

1. The "traditional" or subject-centered philosophy.
2. The "progressive" or life-centered philosophy.
3. The "psychological" or child-centered philosophy.

These philosophies have evolved and changed in accordance with the aims of education during four periods of our nation's history:

1. The colonial period--1647-1776, during which the aim of education was religious; to teach strict morality and the reading of the Bible, until then a home function.

2. The national period--1776-1876, during which the aim of education was political; to develop intelligent citizens in free, tax-supported, nonsectarian, compulsory, and state-controlled schools.

3. The period of expansion and reform--1876-1929, during

---

1Ahmann and Glock, loc. cit.
which the aim of education was economic; to prepare pupils for the "machine age" in business, industry and government.

4. The period of basic reorganization--1929 to the present, during which the aim of education was social; to prepare pupils for life-problems and their social and economic betterment in a time of national depression. World War II also revealed need for social reorganization.

The literature was searched for answers to four questions related to the problem of pupil promotion policy:

1. Why do pupils fail in school?
2. Should pupils be retained?
3. What is the incidence of failure and drop-out?
4. What should be the school's promotion policy?

As the three educational philosophies evolved and waned in keeping with changing economic and social conditions it became apparent the practices of the schools must also become much more flexible and pupil-oriented. There seemed to be little disagreement as to the objectives of the modern school. In spite of the research, however, there remains much disagreement as to the means by which the objectives are to be met. Shane has summed up the problem:

Good promotion policy insures children leave elementary school broadly literate, intellectually alert, well-informed, equipped with a good set of personal values, and emotionally well-balanced.
The disagreement seems to be over the fact of whether all children should be held up to meeting a certain standard of accomplishment at each level.¹

CHAPTER III

ANALYSIS OF THE DATA PERTAINING TO ACADEMICALLY RETARDED CHILDREN, URBANDALE PUBLIC SCHOOLS, 1954–1962

I. INTRODUCTION

Cumulative records of seventy academically-retarded pupils enrolled in Urbandale Schools were reviewed to obtain the following data:

1. The grade level at which retention occurred.
2. The sex and chronological age of the pupil.
3. Scores on standardized tests of intelligence and achievement.
4. Scores on reading tests.
5. Report card grades.
6. Reports from psychologists and other consultants.
7. Reasons for retention noted by teachers.

The information thus obtained was tabulated and analyzed to determine causes of retention and its effect on the subsequent progress of the pupil.

II. THE GRADE LEVEL AT WHICH RETENTION OCCURRED

The seventy academically retarded children included fifty-two boys and eighteen girls. Table I shows the distribution by grade level of the boys and Table II gives similar information about the girls. The incidence of retention in Urbandale Community Schools was most frequent in first and
second grades. The literature had revealed a similar trend throughout the country.

**TABLE I**

**DISTRIBUTION BY GRADE LEVEL OF ACADEMICALLY RETARDED BOYS IN URBANDALE SCHOOLS, 1954-1962**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Present Grade</th>
<th>Grade in Which Retained</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1962-63 Kg.</td>
<td>1st 2nd 3rd 4th 5th 6th 7th 8th Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kg.</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st</td>
<td>1 7 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd</td>
<td>1 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd</td>
<td>3 4 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4th</td>
<td>5 4(a) 2(a) 11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5th</td>
<td>4 1 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6th</td>
<td>1(b) 2(b) 3 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7th</td>
<td>1 2(c) 2(c) 1 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8th</td>
<td>1 2 1(d) 1 1(e) 3(d) (e) 9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total** 3 21 14 2 6 6 2 3 0 57

**NOTES:**

(a) One boy retained in 2nd and 4th grades.
(b) One boy retained in kindergarten and 4th grade.
(c) One boy retained in 2nd and 5th grades.
(d) One boy retained in 4th and 7th grades.
(e) One boy retained in 6th and 7th grades.

Table I showed a total of 57 retentions. Five of the fifty-two boys had repeated two grades, which resulted in their being counted twice in figuring the total. Distribution of academically-retarded boys in order of the frequency of retention was: first grade, 21; second grade, 14; fourth and fifth grades, 6; kindergarten and seventh grade, 3; third and sixth grades, 2; and eighth grade, none.
In addition to the fifty-two boys, there were eighteen academically-retarded girls in the survey group as shown in Table II.

**TABLE II**

**DISTRIBUTION BY GRADE LEVEL OF ACADEMICALLY RETARDED GIRLS IN URBANDALE SCHOOLS, 1954-1962**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Present Grade</th>
<th>Grade in Which Retained</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1962-63</td>
<td>Kdg. 1st 2nd 3rd 4th 5th 6th 7th 8th Total</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Kdg.</th>
<th>1st</th>
<th>2nd</th>
<th>3rd</th>
<th>4th</th>
<th>5th</th>
<th>6th</th>
<th>7th</th>
<th>8th</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kdg.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd</td>
<td>1(a)</td>
<td>3(a)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4th</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5th</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6th</td>
<td>1(b)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1(b)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7th</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8th</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**NOTE:**
(a) One girl retained in Kdg. and 1st Grade.
(b) One girl retained in 1st and 4th Grades.

Two of the eighteen girls had repeated two grades which resulted in their being counted twice in figuring the total.

Distribution of academically-retarded girls in the order of frequency of retention was: first grade, 8; second grade, 4; third, fourth and sixth grades, 2; kindergarten and seventh grade, 1; fifth and eighth grades, 0.

There was a marked similarity in the proportion of
boys and girls who were retained at each grade level. The incidence of retention for both boys and girls was highest in first grade—twenty-one boys and eight girls. Approximately half as many boys and girls were retained in second grade—fourteen boys and four girls. The remaining number of pupils were distributed quite evenly among the other grades. No boys or girls in the survey group were retained in eighth grade.

III. THE SEX AND CHRONOLOGICAL AGE OF THE PUPIL

Table III shows the chronological age in years and months of the seventy academically retarded children involved in the study.

TABLE III

CHRONOLOGICAL AGE OF ACADEMICALLY RETARDED PUPILS IN URBANDALE SCHOOLS AT TIME OF ENROLLMENT IN KINDERGARTEN, 1952-1960

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4-9 - 4-11</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-0 - 5-2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-3 - 5-5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-6 - 5-8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-9 - 5-11</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-0 - 6-2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-3 - 6-5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Age measured from date of birth to September 1 of the year of enrollment in kindergarten.
The greatest number of children, 22, entered at the age of five years to five years, two months. Second most numerous were the fifteen who entered at the next older interval, five years, three months to five years, five months, followed closely by 14 children aged five years, six months to five years, eight months. Only six children entered kindergarten at the age of five years, nine months to five years, eleven months.

The youngest child in the study group entered at the age of four years, nine months. In all, 12 of the total group entered kindergarten between the ages of four years, nine months to four years, eleven months. Of these, six were judged to be immature by the teacher who retained them, plus four children who were described as having developed poor study habits.

One child, who entered kindergarten at age six years, three months, was examined in first grade by the school psychologist, who described him as a premature twin, having an eye defect, a slightly misshapen head, and possible brain damage, accounting for his late entry into school. Further examination in second grade found him practically blind in one eye. Individual administration of the Stanford-Binet Test by the school psychologist placed his Intelligence Quotient at 91, considered to be low-normal. The child was retained in second and in fourth grades.

In summary, of the seventy academically retarded
children, twelve would be considered under-age, fifty-seven of normal age, and one over-age in accordance with the five-
to-six year age limits considered normal for kindergarten by
Elsbree and McNally.

IV. SCORES ON STANDARDIZED TESTS OF
INTELLIGENCE AND ACHIEVEMENT

Scores on two tests of mental ability, the Otis Quick-
Scoring Mental Ability Tests, administered in second grade, and the California Short-Form Test of Mental Maturity, given to fifth grade pupils, are shown in Table IV. Thirty-five pupils took the Otis test; twenty took the California test.

TABLE IV

DISTRIBUTION OF SCORES ON STANDARDIZED TESTS OF INTELLIGENCE TAKEN BY ACADEMICALLY RETARDED PUPILS IN URBANDALE SCHOOLS, 1954-1962

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Intelligence Quotient (IQ)</th>
<th>Otis Quick-Scoring Mental Ability Tests</th>
<th>California Short-Form Test of Mental Maturity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Boys</td>
<td>Girls</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>125-129</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>120-124</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>115-119</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>110-114</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>105-109</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100-104</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>95-99</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>90-94</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>85-89</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80-84</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>75-79</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70-74</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table IV indicates that 11 of the 24 boys and 5 of the 11 girls who had taken the Otis Quick-Scoring Mental Ability Tests had ranked on or above the norm for the test, which was a score of 100. The highest score for a boy was in the 120-124 range, while one girl scored in the 125-129 range, by some measures considered to be in the borderline area of the "gifted" or "talented child" classification of pupils.

The psychologists from the Polk County Superintendent's office have considered for placement in special classes for the mentally retarded only those pupils who scored lower than 80 on individually-administered Stanford-Binet or Wechsler tests of intelligence. One boy scored below 80 on the Otis test; his score was 73. However, in subsequent testing by the Polk County school psychologist, he scored 90 in a Stanford-Binet test and two years later, received a score of 87 on the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children.

Fewer numbers of children included in the study had reached fifth grade at the time of the survey, accounting for the lesser number of test scores available for the California Short-Form Test of Mental Maturity given in fifth grade. Sixteen boys and four girls took the California test, as shown in Table IV. In general, the range of scores was lower for the California test than had been recorded on the Otis test. Only 4 boys and 1 girl scored at or above 100 on the California test: 2 boys scored in the 110-114 range; 2 boys ranked in the 100-104 range; 1 girl scored in the 105-109 range.
In the test manual, I. Q. scores derived from the California Short-Form Test of Mental Maturity were classified as follows: 130 - Up, Very Superior; 115 - 129, Superior; 100 - 114, High Average; 85 - 99, Low Average; 70 - 84, Inferior; and 69 --, Very Inferior.\(^1\)

According to this classification, four boys and one girl whose I.Q. scores were shown on Table IV were high average. Ten boys and three girls would be considered to be low average. Only two of the sixteen boys tested, and none of the four girls, would be thought to have inferior intelligence. The boys were in the 80 - 84 I.Q. range.

The Intelligence Quotient, (I.Q.) has been called "the most popularly known intelligence concept...a measure of potential, an indicator of what the maximum ability level will be at full maturity."\(^2\)

An achievement test, however, measures the level of performance or achievement of the pupil at the time of the test. Like the intelligence test, it is standardized to establish norms for the grade or age level at which the test is to be given. Distribution of scores on the Stanford Achievement Test for third grade is shown in Table V.

---


\(^2\)Ibid.
## TABLE V

DISTRIBUTION OF SCORES ON STANFORD ACHIEVEMENT TESTS
TAKEN IN THIRD GRADE BY ACADEMICALLY RETARDED
PUPILS IN URBANDALE SCHOOLS, 1954-1962

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5.5-5.7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2-5.4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.9-5.1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.6-4.8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3-4.5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.0-4.2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.7-3.9</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4-3.6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1-3.3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.8-3.0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5-2.7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2-2.4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.9-2.1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.6-1.8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3-1.5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.0-1.2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.7-0.9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.1-0.3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total</th>
<th>27</th>
<th>27</th>
<th>33</th>
<th>32</th>
<th>32</th>
<th>30</th>
<th>27</th>
<th>30</th>
<th>33</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Median</td>
<td>3.23</td>
<td>2.93</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>3.41</td>
<td>2.40</td>
<td>3.01</td>
<td>3.23</td>
<td>3.23</td>
<td>3.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norm</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Same pupils did not take every sub-test.*
In Urbandale schools, the *Stanford Achievement Test, Elementary Battery* - Form K, was given in April of each year to third-grade pupils. The norm for the test was a grade-equivalent score of 3.7. The median score for the thirty-three pupils tested was 3.01 on the total test. This was about six months below the norm of 3.7.

The median for each subtest was also below the norm. The group ranked highest in Spelling and lowest in Language. Sub-test medians in descending order were: Spelling - 3.41; Paragraph Meaning, Arithmetic Computation, and Arithmetic Average - 3.23; Arithmetic Reasoning and Battery Median - 3.01; Reading Average - 3.00; Word Meaning - 2.93; and Language - 2.40.

Scores on the Language sub-test ranged from 0.0 to 5.7. The wide range of scores and the fact that five pupils scored 0.0 would indicate that this was the most difficult test of the battery. However, 5.7 was the highest score earned on the test as a whole. The girl who scored highest in Language was also highest for the total test, with a Battery Median of 4.6. Her lowest score was 3.7 in Arithmetic Reasoning. This was the norm for the test.

Six pupils scored a Battery Median of 3.7 or above. The top three were girls, the next three, boys. Of the thirty-three pupils tested, twenty-two had been retained prior to third grade. Twenty-six boys and seven girls in the survey group had taken the *Stanford Achievement Tests.*
The pupils in Urbandale schools were given another test battery to reveal their proficiency, the *Iowa Tests of Basic Skills*, which were given in third through eighth grades as shown on Table VI.

### TABLE VI

**DISTRIBUTION OF SCORES ON IOWA TESTS OF BASIC SKILLS TAKEN BY ACADEMICALLY RETARDED PUPILS IN URBANDALE SCHOOLS, 1954-1962**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Distribution of Scores by Grade-level Equiv.</th>
<th>At Which Tests Were Administered</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3rd</td>
<td>4th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.5-8.9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.0-8.4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.5-7.9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.0-7.4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.5-6.9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.0-6.4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.5-5.9</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.0-5.4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.5-4.9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.0-4.4</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.5-3.9</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.0-3.4</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5-2.9</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.0-2.4</td>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>31</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Median</strong></td>
<td>2.67</td>
<td>3.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Norm</strong></td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**NOTE:** This table should be read as follows: Twelve pupils who took the test in 3rd grade had grade-equivalent scores of from grade 2.5 to 2.9 on the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills. Eight pupils in 4th grade were similarly placed.
The following fundamental areas were tested: vocabulary, reading comprehension, language skills, work-study skills, and arithmetic skills. Eleven sub-tests made up the battery. Items of appropriate difficulty were assigned to each grade level, arranged in order of difficulty to provide a measurement of a pupil's level of performance in terms of a grade-equivalent score, as compared with norms for each grade in which the test was given. Only the pupil's composite score, which was the average of the sub-tests making up the battery, was tabulated.

Scores for the thirty-one pupils of the survey group who took the third-grade tests ranged from 2.0 to 3.6. The median was 2.67, compared with the norm of 3.5 for third grade. Two pupils scored above the grade norm; twenty-nine scored below. The median was 0.83 below the norm.

The twenty-seven pupils who took the test in fourth grade scored from 2.4 to 4.9, the median being 3.22. This was 1.28 below the norm of 4.5 for fourth grade.

In fifth grade, the fourteen pupils tested were all below the grade norm. Their scores ranged from 3.0 to 5.2, with a median of 3.75. The norm was 5.5, indicating that the median was lower by 2.15 grades.

The fifteen sixth-grade pupils also scored below the class norm. Their scores ranged from 3.2 to 6.1. The median score of 4.4 was 2.1 grades below the norm—6.5 for sixth grade.
Nine pupils scored from 4.3 to 8.0 on the seventh grade test. Their median, 4.9, was 2.6 grades below the grade norm of 7.5. One pupil scored above the norm.

Only seven pupils of the survey group took the test in eighth grade. Their scores ranged from 4.4 to 8.1, for a median of 6.2, which was 2.3 grades below the norm of 8.5. All seven pupils scored below the norm.

V. SCORES ON TESTS OF READING READINESS AND ACHIEVEMENT

Reading has been the most basic of the skills, and perhaps the most strongly emphasized in the first and second grades because it is the skill upon which all other subject areas depend for the communication of knowledge.

Table VII shows the distribution of scores on three tests given in the primary grades:

1. The Gates Reading Readiness Tests—Kindergarten
2. The Gates Primary Reading Tests—First Grade
3. The Gates Advanced Primary Reading Tests—Second Grade.

Results of the Reading Readiness Tests are expressed in a percentile score placing the pupil in comparison to the norms for his age and grade. The Primary and Advanced Primary tests are expressed as grade-level (or reading grade) scores as a measure of skill development in word-recognition, sentence reading, and paragraph reading, averaged together.
TABLE VII
DISTRIBUTION OF SCORES ON GATES READING READINESS AND PRIMARY READING TESTS TAKEN BY ACADEMICALLY RETARDED PUPILS IN URBANDALE SCHOOLS, 1954-1962

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reading Readiness Test (Kindergarten) Percentile Score</th>
<th>Primary Reading Test (First Grade) Grade Level</th>
<th>Advanced Primary Reading Test (Second Grade) Grade Level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>f. c.f.</td>
<td>f. c.f.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>90-99</td>
<td>1 38</td>
<td>2.9-3.0 1 49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80-89</td>
<td>2 37</td>
<td>2.7-2.8 1 48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70-79</td>
<td>8 35</td>
<td>2.5-2.6 0 47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60-69</td>
<td>5 27</td>
<td>2.3-2.4 1 47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-59</td>
<td>8 22</td>
<td>2.1-2.2 8 46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-49</td>
<td>6 14</td>
<td>1.9-2.0 11 38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-39</td>
<td>5 8</td>
<td>1.7-1.8 12 27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-29</td>
<td>2 3</td>
<td>1.5-1.6 12 15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-19</td>
<td>1 1</td>
<td>1.3-1.4 3 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0-09</td>
<td>0 0</td>
<td>0-1.2 0 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Norm: 50%-1le Range: 17-90%-1le Median: 55.75%-1le
Norm: 1.7 Range: 1.3-2.9 Median: 1.79
Norm: 2.7 Range: 1.7-3.6 Median: 2.57

NOTE: The table is read as follows: eight pupils who took the Gates Reading Readiness Test scored at the 50-59 percentile; twenty-two pupils scored at the 50-59 percentile or lower. "f." is "frequency"--the number of pupils who attained a given percentile score interval. "c.f." is "cumulative frequency"--the total number of pupils who attained at or below a given percentile score interval. The other portions of the table are read accordingly, except the score is given in terms of standardized Grade Levels of reading achievement.
The scores of the 38 pupils who took the Gates Reading Readiness Tests in kindergarten ranged from the 17th to the 90th percentile. The group median was a percentile score of 55.75, which would be considered average for any group scored on a percentile basis.

Forty-nine pupils taking the Gates Primary Reading Tests in first grade differed in grade-level by as much as 1.6 years, the range being 1.3 to 2.9. The median score for the group--1.79--was normal for a test given during the seventh month of the first grade. Each of the three Gates Reading Tests was given in April, the seventh month of the school year.

The Gates Advanced Primary Reading Tests were taken in second grade by twenty-six pupils whose grade-level of reading ability ranged from 1.7 to 3.6. The group median of 2.57 was slightly below the 2.70 norm for the test.

The survey group as a whole performed in a very normal manner, with certain pupils scoring well above the expectations of their grade.

In addition to the Gates reading tests, a series of reading tests prepared by Row-Peterson Company has been administered in Urbandale schools in connection with the Alice and Jerry Readers.

Although these tests, shown in Tables VIII and IX, were primarily measurements of reading readiness or achievement, they also provided evidence of general mental maturity.
TABLE VIII

DISTRIBUTION OF SCORES ON ROW-PETERSON FIRST GRADE READING TESTS TAKEN BY ACADEMICALLY RETARDED PUPILS IN URBANDALE SCHOOLS, 1954-1962

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>First Year Readiness</th>
<th>Basic Preprimer Achievement</th>
<th>Primer Reading Achievement</th>
<th>First Reader Achievement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Score f. c.f.</td>
<td>Score f. c.f.</td>
<td>Score f. c.f.</td>
<td>Score f. c.f.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>67-70 38</td>
<td>48-50 7 37</td>
<td>48-50 10 31</td>
<td>72-75 1 25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>64-66 2 38</td>
<td>45-47 7 30</td>
<td>45-47 7 21</td>
<td>68-71 3 24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>61-63 4 36</td>
<td>42-44 7 23</td>
<td>42-44 3 14</td>
<td>64-67 2 21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>58-60 0 32</td>
<td>39-41 5 16</td>
<td>39-41 2 11</td>
<td>60-63 4 19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55-57 5 32</td>
<td>36-38 5 11</td>
<td>36-38 1 9</td>
<td>56-59 2 15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>52-54 10 27</td>
<td>33-35 1 6</td>
<td>33-35 0 8</td>
<td>52-55 2 13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>49-51 9 17</td>
<td>30-32 2 5</td>
<td>30-32 1 8</td>
<td>48-51 4 11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46-48 3 8</td>
<td>27-29 2 3</td>
<td>27-29 3 7</td>
<td>44-47 4 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43-45 1 5</td>
<td>24-26 1 1</td>
<td>24-26 2 4</td>
<td>40-43 0 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-42 2 4</td>
<td>0-23 0 0</td>
<td>21-23 1 2</td>
<td>36-39 0 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37-39 1 2</td>
<td>18-20 0 1</td>
<td>32-35 1 3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34-36 1 1</td>
<td>15-17 0 1</td>
<td>28-31 1 2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0-35 0 0</td>
<td>12-14 0 1</td>
<td>24-27 1 1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9-11 1 1</td>
<td>0-23 0 0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0-10 0 0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
TABLE IX

DISTRIBUTION OF SCORES ON ROW-PETERTSON SECOND AND THIRD GRADE READING TESTS TAKEN BY ACADEMICALLY RETARDED PUPILS IN URBANDALE SCHOOLS, 1954-1962

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Second Year Readiness</th>
<th>Second Reader Achievement</th>
<th>Third Year Readiness</th>
<th>Third Reader Achievement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Score</td>
<td>f. c.f.</td>
<td>Score</td>
<td>f. c.f.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>75-78</td>
<td>0 42</td>
<td>72-75</td>
<td>6 32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>71-74</td>
<td>3 42</td>
<td>68-71</td>
<td>7 26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>67-70</td>
<td>2 39</td>
<td>64-67</td>
<td>5 19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>63-66</td>
<td>2 37</td>
<td>60-63</td>
<td>5 14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55-58</td>
<td>3 34</td>
<td>52-55</td>
<td>0 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51-54</td>
<td>6 31</td>
<td>48-51</td>
<td>2 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>47-50</td>
<td>5 25</td>
<td>44-47</td>
<td>0 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43-46</td>
<td>9 20</td>
<td>40-43</td>
<td>1 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39-42</td>
<td>5 11</td>
<td>36-39</td>
<td>2 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35-38</td>
<td>2 6</td>
<td>32-35</td>
<td>0 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31-34</td>
<td>2 4</td>
<td>28-31</td>
<td>0 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27-30</td>
<td>1 2</td>
<td>24-27</td>
<td>1 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23-26</td>
<td>0 1</td>
<td>20-23</td>
<td>0 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19-22</td>
<td>0 1</td>
<td>16-19</td>
<td>0 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-18</td>
<td>0 1</td>
<td>12-15</td>
<td>0 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-14</td>
<td>1 1</td>
<td>7-11</td>
<td>1 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0-10</td>
<td>0 0</td>
<td>0-06</td>
<td>0 0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table VIII shows distribution of scores on four Row-Peterson reading tests given in first grade. The thirty-eight pupils who took the First Year Readiness Test scored from 36 to 64. The median was 52. Total possible score was 70. Interpreted in terms of the ratings established by the publisher for each test on the basis of its standardization data, the results were: Very Low - 0; Low - 2; Average - 27; High - 9; Very High - 0.

Scores of the thirty-seven Urbandale pupils who took the Basic Preprimer Achievement Test ranged from 26 to 50, with a median of 43. Total possible score was 50. Distribution of score ratings was: Very Low - 0; Low - 7; Average - 16; High - 10; Very High - 4.

Following the completion of the reading primer, the Primer Reading Achievement Test was given to thirty-one first-grade pupils. Scores ranged from 11 to 50, the highest possible score. The median was 45. An even greater span of scores was noted: Very Low - 3; Low - 6; Average - 5; High - 12; Very High - 5.

The final test in the first-grade series was the Row-Peterson First Reader Achievement Test. Twenty-five pupils were tested. The diminishing total of pupils tested was possibly due to certain pupils not having completed the work of the reading text and related activities at the time the test was administered. The practice of grouping pupils according to reading rate and ability is common at this level.
Scores on the First Reader Achievement Test ranged from 24 to 74, with a median of 54. Total possible was 75. Distribution of scores on this test was broad, as had been true of the previous test, but fewer pupils scored at either extreme of the rating scale. Ratings were: Very Low - 3; Low - 1; Average - 11; High - 4; Very High - 6.

Analysis of the four reading tests disclosed that the survey group had not performed substantially below the standardization group, even though twenty-nine Urbandale pupils were destined for retention in first grade, as was shown in Table 1, page 29, and Table II, page 30. No more than nine pupils had rated Very Low or Low on a first grade reading test. Investigation showed that the total of the four tests—131 scores—were distributed as follows: Very Low - 6; Low - 16; Average - 59; High - 35; Very High - 15.

The number of times the same pupil rated Very Low or Low was also determined through review of the original data sheets compiled for each pupil. Thirteen pupils scored Low or Very Low on one test; five pupils on two tests; only one pupil scored Low or Very Low on three of the four reading tests.

Two possibilities would account for the unexpected high scores: (1) Reading problems were not a major cause of retention in first grade; or (2) The Row-Peterson reading tests do not positively identify pupils with reading problems of a nature so serious as to warrant retention.
Table IX shows distribution of scores on Row-Peterson second-and third-grade reading tests. Two tests were given each year, a reading readiness test at the first of the school year and a reading achievement test at the close of the year. The format of the tests was similar to those taken during the first grade, and scoring was the same, i.e., the raw score was interpreted as a rating on the basis of standardization data gathered separately for each test.

The forty-two pupils in Urbandale schools who took the Second Year Readiness Tests scored from 13 to 74 out of a possible 78. The median was 47.3. The range of raw scores was broad, but only six pupils scored below the average rating for this test. Distribution of ratings was: Very Low - 1; Low - 5; Average - 29; High - 7; Very High - 0.

Thirty-two pupils took the Second Reader Achievement Test at the close of second grade. Scores ranged from 11 to 73. Total possible was 75, while the median was 65.1. This was substantially higher than the median for the Second Year Readiness Test, although the total possible score on that test was only three points higher. The fact that ten fewer pupils took the year-end test might indicate that the pupils who were having the most difficulty had not completed the prerequisite work in the second-grade texts. There was no evidence available in the pupils' records to verify this, however.

The pupils' scores on the Second Reader Achievement
Test were distributed as follows: Very Low - 2; Low - 4; Average - 14; High - 12; Very High - 0. The evidence at the close of second grade was much the same as the previous year. Six below-average readers could not account for the fourteen boys and four girls who were retained in second grade. None of these eighteen children were previously retained in kindergarten or first grade. However, two second-grade retainees were destined to be retained again in the future—one in fourth and one in fifth grade, according to Table I.

Two reading tests of the Row-Peterson test series were given in third grade. The thirty-nine pupils taking the Third Year Readiness Test scored from 42 to 94 of a possible 97 points. The median was 66.25. Distribution of scores in comparison to test norms showed: Very Low - 0; Low - 9; Average - 25; High - 5; Very High - 0. Twenty-seven pupils previously retained rated: Low - 5; Average - 17; High - 5. The remaining twelve pupils rated: Average - 8; Low - 4. These children had not yet experienced retention. Two of the Average-rated pupils and two who rated Low in the Third Year Readiness were subsequently retained in third grade.

Table IX also includes the scores for the Third Reader Achievement Test. The seventeen pupils who took the test scored 39 to 74 out of a possible 75 points. Their median score was 65.1. Interpreted from standardization data for this test, the Urbandale pupils rated: Very Low - 1; Low - 2; Average - 10; High - 3; Very High - 1.
VI. REPORT CARD GRADES OF ACADEMICALLY-RETARDED PUPILS

This study of academically-retarded pupils in Urbandale Community Schools covered retentions which occurred between the years 1954 to 1962.

From 1954 until 1959, report cards were marked according to an S, I, N, U system. The pupil's daily classroom work and teacher-made tests were rated as: Satisfactory (S); Improving (I); Needs to improve (N); and Unsatisfactory (U).

In 1959, the grading system was changed to the letter grades, A, B, C, D, F. These were interpreted as follows: Consistently Superior (A); Above Average (B); Average (C); Unsatisfactory but Passing (D); Failing (F).

The change of the grade system denoted also a change in the attitude of the school administrators toward the academic retardation of pupils in the Urbandale Community Schools. The present superintendent of schools, Lyle W. Kehm, has verified that from the time of his first association with the Urbandale schools in 1958, the teachers had been encouraged to study the pupils' achievement very carefully to determine if certain pupils might benefit from academic retardation.

As a result of this concern for the pupil, sixteen children were retained at the end of the 1958-1959 year. Prior to that time the school administration had practiced what amounted to automatic promotion, as shown in Table X,
which compared the incidence of retention from year to year during the period of the study. Distribution of retentions by grade-level for each school year from 1954-55 to 1961-62 is shown in Table X

**TABLE X**

DISTRIBUTION OF ACADEMICALLY RETARDED PUPILS IN URBANDALE SCHOOLS BY GRADE LEVEL AND YEAR OF RETENTION, 1954-1962

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Level</td>
<td>B G</td>
<td>B G</td>
<td>B G</td>
<td>B G</td>
<td>B G</td>
<td>B G</td>
<td>B G</td>
<td>B G</td>
<td>B G</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kdg.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4th</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5th</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6th</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7th</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8th</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NOTE: Table X is read as follows: Five boys and two girls were retained in first grade at the end of the 1958-1959 school year.

Prior to the change of administrative policy in 1958-59, no retentions had occurred beyond the fourth grade. During 1960-61, the year in which the most retentions occurred, eight retentions occurred between fifth and seventh grade.

Two of the seventh-grade pupils retained that year had already
been retained in a lower grade.

Four of the ten pupils retained between 1954-55 and 1957-58 were apparently quite retarded, for they were retained a second time during their elementary or junior high school years. The survey records show that: (1) the one boy who was retained in kindergarten in 1954-55 was also retained in fourth grade in 1959-60; (2) the one girl retained in 1955-56 at the first grade level was also retained in 1959-60 at the fourth grade level; (3) one of the two boys retained in 1955-56 at the second grade level was also retained in 1959-60 at the fifth grade level; (4) the one boy retained in 1956-57 at the fourth grade level was also retained in 1960-61 at the seventh grade level.

During the first year of the new administrative policy regarding retention, 1958-59, the old report card system—S, I, N, U—was employed. This apparently was believed to be unsatisfactory evidence of pupil achievement, for the A, B, C, D, F system was introduced the following year.

Under the new grading system, each teacher was free to set grade standards for the class, upon which the report card grades would be based. No particular percentage of correct answers on tests or specified level of proficiency in daily class assignments was outlined by the administration. While such a system offered the desired flexibility of grading according to the general capabilities of a particular group of pupils, which varied from year to year, it also made
more difficult the task of comparing grades from year to year, due to the lack of specific and uniform marking procedures for all teachers at all grade levels.

The superintendent had specified, however, that the grade was to be objectively based on pupil actual performance in relationship to class standards of achievement, not subjectively based on the individual pupil's capacity to perform or effort put forth in the completion of the graded assignment. Thus the "slow learner" or "Low I.Q." would most likely expect low or unsatisfactory or failing marks.

One premise of the study was that review of report card grades would show evidence of improved scholarship as a result of retention if the grades were generally higher following the year of retention than they had been previously.

Every available report card grade for each pupil involved in this study was transcribed during the study survey. The results have not been completely tabulated herein, due to the complexity of such a tabulation. However, the data were summarized to gather evidence upon which some general conclusions could be based.

Of the seventy academically-retarded children included in the study, forty appeared to have benefited from retention as evidenced by improved grades for the years subsequent to the year of retention. The remaining thirty appeared to have maintained a level of performance which was unaffected by retention.
Since report card grades were an important factor in the decision to retain a child, reasons for retention noted in the records by the teachers were noted.

VII. REPORTS FROM PSYCHOLOGISTS AND OTHER CONSULTANTS

The Urbandale Community Schools have engaged the services of the staff of psychologists, hearing specialists, and speech therapists from the office of the Polk County Superintendent of Schools, Ralph C. Norris, for the purpose of testing, interviewing, and treating those pupils in the school system who need such help. The reports of these child specialists are made part of the pupil's cumulative class records for the guidance of the classroom teacher and the administration.

Of the seventy academically-retarded pupils, twenty-nine had been interviewed and tested by a staff psychologist from the Polk County office. One purpose of the examination was to identify those children who because of their poor performance might be subject to placement in special classes for theeducable mentally-retarded. The criterion had been an I.Q. score of 80 or less on a Stanford-Binet Intelligence Scale, individually administered by the psychologist. One child was recommended for placement in a special class in West Des Moines in 1961. This was apparently not done, however, since the records indicated that the child remained in the Urbandale schools at the time of this study. This child's
intelligence scores on four different tests were 78, 76, 75 and 77, which were interpreted as definite indications of mental retardation, requiring special class placement.

A second child was found to be similarly retarded. Although this child was five years retarded at the time he was tested by the psychologist, he was described as friendly and cooperative, but conscious of failure and defeated in his efforts to compete with normal classmates. He was to be put on the waiting list for the special class in West Des Moines, which may have explained why both these two children remained in the regular classrooms in Urbandale. At the time of the study, several other mentally retarded Urbandale pupils were attending special classes outside the system, and therefore, were not included in the survey on which this study was based.

At the other extreme were four children whose high scores on intelligence tests, ranging from 110 to 144, were causing their difficulties. Urbandale had no special class for them, either. The psychologist suggested that special efforts be made to challenge these bright children by means of special assignments to leadership positions in class. One of these children was, in fact, reported as having resorted to stealing and lying to gain the recognition and attention his superior ability had apparently failed to earn for him.

One of the four children in the high I.Q. group was
retained in first grade. His teacher described him as small, immature, physically inattentive, with a short interest span—all good reasons for retention if his classroom performance were sub-normal. The psychologist's report also described him as slow, but a child who performed well if given time, and mentioned that his parents had separated the very year he was retained. In spite of this, the child managed to bring his class grades from F's in Language, Reading, Social Studies and Science, to three B's and one C grade the second year of his retention in first grade, and to maintain a C average in second grade, where the teacher described him as "immature, still a little boy, with family problems."

This was, in the opinion of the writer, a big accomplishment.

Of the twenty-nine children interviewed by the school psychologist, twelve were experiencing some sort of problem at home, ranging from divorce or death of parents to lack of parental interest in the child—both parents worked; low income family with ten children; little home motivation—or, at the other extreme, parental pressure on the child to perform beyond his ability, which was just as bad.

Three children of one family had been retained, two of them the same year, following the retention of the third child the previous year. All three children scored in the 85-95 range on various tests of intelligence—combined with an uninspired home environment. All three children took home an assortment of D's and F's on their report cards, as
revealed in their cumulative class records.

The psychologist described these children as slow learners, and recommended one retention. There was little evidence that retention had benefited any of them, however.

In addition to mental ability, and the influence of the home on the child's performance at school, the psychologist sought evidence of physical problems. Five children were found to have defective speech in varying degrees of severity. One of these also had a hearing defect. Two of the pupils had vision problems. These children were referred to the appropriate therapists and to family doctors if needed.

Of the twenty-nine academically retarded children who were interviewed and tested by the school psychologists, a total of fourteen appeared to have shown academic improvement following their retention, according to their record files. Of these, nine pupils had been described as immature, three had speech or hearing defects, and five were influenced by an adverse home environment—death or divorce of parents, parental pressure, or lack of educational facilities in the home. While serious enough, none of these were cases of low mentality of the child or his parents. Most were social or emotional problems capable of alleviation or solution with the passing of time, and with the proper attitude toward the assistance offered by the school specialists.

Fifteen children were not helped by retention, so far
as could be determined from their records. Six of these children were found to have deep-seated psychological problems. One child was referred to the Des Moines Child Guidance Center for treatment. The two described as educable mentally-retarded would not be expected to meet the standards of the normal classroom. Other problems of a physical nature—retarded motor coordination, serious speech defect, kidney problem, possible brain injury at birth—would possibly require long periods of treatment, to which the child might or might not respond. Four children had chronic physical defects.

Poor home environment due to inherited low mentality or low-class cultural patterns would likely persist in spite of efforts of the school or other public welfare agencies. Five or more cases referred to the specialists were of this nature. In summary, approximately one-half of the twenty-nine pupils referred to the school psychologists seemed to have improved with academic retardation.

VIII. REASONS FOR RETENTION NOTED BY TEACHERS

Thirty-one children were described as "immature" by the teachers who retained them. Of these, eighteen were so termed without further elaboration as to specific problems. Four of the remaining thirteen were found to have superior intelligence ratings on a variety of tests. Low intelligence ratings were a problem of six "immature" pupils, including
the two who were educable mentally retarded when tested by
the psychologist. Physical immaturity was responsible for
two children's difficulties in school—visual perception and
motor coordination. Physical defects were also discovered in
the speech, hearing, or sight, or bodily functions of four
children in the "immature" group. Emotional or psychological
problems were associated with the academic difficulties of
five children. Parental pressure, broken homes due to death
or divorce of parents, and parental apathy toward the child
or the school, were cited in varying combinations on the pu-
pil's cumulative class records along with the physical de-
fects which further complicated the lives of certain of
these pupils. In several cases, the records indicated that
retention was requested by parents who felt it to be best for
their child. In other instances, parents refused to allow a
child to be retained, although he showed obvious signs of
academic problems at a given grade level and retention was
urged by the school. In summary, the child's maturity had
many facets aside from his bodily growth.

The second most prevalent reason for retention given
by teachers was expressed in a number of ways, but each one
reflected the apparent attitude of the child: poor work
habits; poor attitude; lacking incentive; listless; will not
work; and bluntest of all, "lazy". One or another of these
terms was applied to fifteen of the seventy academically
retarded pupils included in the survey. Records for ten of
the fifteen pupils gave no other indication of specific problems noted in teacher's remarks. Review of the records showed that the intelligence quotients ranged from 90 to 105. The group ranged from 2.2 grades below normal to .5 grades above the norms for their class level on the latest available scores on Iowa Tests of Basic Skills, analyzed on Table VI, page 38. Their scores on the Stanford Achievement Tests ranged from 2.6 to 4.1, compared with a norm of 3.7 for the third-grade test battery shown on Table V, page 36. The test results would indicate that most of these ten children were capable of meeting grade standards at the time of retention. The remaining five of the fifteen pupils whose attitudes were in question were more specifically described. Two pupils had intelligence scores above 110, indicating a need for enriched classroom assignments. Two scores were low, with added complications of physical problems cited by the psychologist who tested them. Two instances of problems at home were noted, one being a low-intelligence child also. Whatever the actual reasons were, retention seemed to result in higher marks on report cards following the year of retention in approximately one-half of the fifteen cases of "poor attitude". The remaining half remained unchanged or performed below the pre-retention level. One of the arguments against retention cited by Elsbree in the review of literature had been that the pupil would not be further motivated by the fear or fact of retention, but, if anything, he would become more apathetic
in his attitude toward study.

The third major reason for retention which appeared in class records was that the child was a "slow learner". There was, in some instances, little distinction made between slow pupils who were unable to do the work and those who had no desire to do so. In fact, immaturity and learning rate were mentioned together on four survey reports; immaturity and attitude were related on three others. Other causes of difficulty were of a physical nature, primarily associated with speech development in four cases and general motor coordination in another. In all, fourteen pupils were slow-learners, according to the teachers or psychologists. The home environment was mentioned--one of family of ten; little home motivation, all children slow; broken home--on five of the survey forms. Report cards for five "slow learners" were improved following their retention; nine were not higher.

Ten reports showed no specific reason for retention. The report card grades of seven children had improved.
CHAPTER IV

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS

I. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The purpose of this study was (1) to determine the specific reasons given by teachers for having retained children; (2) to determine the academic or personal problems involved in the retention of children; (3) to determine whether retention appeared to have alleviated the problems; and (4) to determine whether academically retarded children benefited from having repeated a grade, as evidenced by subsequent improvement in classroom performance over that previously indicated by the pupil's cumulative class records.

II. PROCEDURES EMPLOYED IN THE STUDY

The study was organized as follows:

1. Literature related to the problem was reviewed to determine the thinking of recognized authorities on the subject of promotion-retention policies of schools.

2. Similar studies were analyzed against which the present study could be evaluated.

3. Cumulative records of seventy academically-retarded pupils currently enrolled in Urbandale Community Schools were reviewed to gather the following data:
a. The grade level at which retention occurred.
b. The sex and chronological age of the pupil.
c. Scores on standardized tests of intelligence and achievement.
d. Scores on tests of reading readiness and achievement.
e. Report card grades.
f. Reports from psychologists and other consultants.
g. Reasons for retention noted by teachers.

The data were tabulated and analyzed for patterns of behavior and other common factors which might be useful in shaping promotion practices and for predicting the success of such practices in the future. Evidence was also sought as to the value of retention to the children included in the study.

III. SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

Seventy pupils were included in the study, fifty-two boys and eighteen girls.

The incidence of retention for both boys and girls had been highest in first grade, where twenty-one boys and eight girls were retained, followed by second grade retentions of fourteen boys and four girls. Retentions had been substantially lower in the remaining grades included in the study, which covered pupils in kindergarten through eighth grade. There had been no retentions at the eighth grade level between
the years 1954 and 1962.

The majority of the survey group were found to have entered kindergarten between five and six years of age. Twelve pupils were a maximum of three months below the age of five years, fifty-seven were of normal age for entry into kindergarten—five to six years old—and one child would be considered over-age, having entered at the age of six years, two months.

Intelligence tests of boys and girls who took the Otis Quick-scoring Mental Ability Test in second grade and the California Short-Form Test of Mental Maturity in fifth grade were studied. An unexpected result of this study was the number of pupils scoring higher than the 100 level on the Otis test. Of the twenty-four boys and eleven girls who took the test, eleven boys and five girls scored 100 and over. The highest intelligence quotient was 129, scored by a girl.

Sixteen boys and four girls took the California Short-Form Test of Mental Maturity in fifth grade. Four boys and one girl scored 100 or higher on that test. Two boys and no girls were rated "inferior" according to the classification provided with the California test.

Thirty-three pupils took the Stanford Achievement Tests in third grade. The Battery Median scores of six pupils were equal or above the norm for the test. The median score of the survey group on this test was highest on the Spelling sub-test and lowest on the Language sub-test.
The Battery Median of the group was approximately six months below the norm for third grade.

The Iowa Tests of Basic Skills were given in third through eighth grades. The group median at each grade level was consistently lower than the grade-equivalent norms for the test, being closest to the norm in third grade, where the median was .83 grades below the norm. The nine pupils who took the seventh-grade test ranked lowest as a group, their median being 2.6 grades below the seventh-grade norm. The range of scores also broadened at each grade level, from a span of 1.6 years in third grade to a span of 3.7 years in both seventh and eighth grades. Only two pupils in third grade, one in fourth grade, and one in seventh grade, scored above the grade-equivalent norms for their respective grades.

In addition to standardized tests of intelligence and general achievement, the Gates Reading Tests and the Row-Peterson Reading Tests were given. The group as a whole scored very nearly equal to norms for these tests, although the range of the individual scores on each test was very broad; 17th to 90th percentile in the Gates Reading Readiness Test in kindergarten; grade-level scores of 1.3 to 2.9 on the Gates Primary Reading Test in first grade; and grade-level scores of 1.7 to 3.6 in second grade. The number of pupils who scored above the grade-level norms was unexpectedly high, considering the nature of the group, all of whom were presumably retained by reason of their inability to perform at
the given grade level.

The Row–Peterson reading tests for first grade showed similar results to those of the Gates tests. Pupils' raw scores were interpreted in terms of ratings established for each test by the publishers on the basis of standardization data. The ratings ranged from Very High to Very Low. Although the total number of pupils who took the Row–Peterson tests varied from test to test, the proportionate number who scored at each rating level was quite consistent. No more than nine pupils ranked below Average on any one test, in contrast to the large percentage of the group who were retained in first and second grades.

The report card grading system was changed from an S, I, N, U range of marks to an A, B, C, D, F range at the beginning of the 1959–60 school year. The marked increase in the number of retentions which occurred during the 1958–59 school year accompanied the change in administrative policy in regard to pupil promotion–retention. Prior to that year, no more than four pupils had been retained during any one school year. Several of those students were to experience a second retention at a higher grade level, attesting to the severity of their academic problems. The greatest number of children were retained at the close of the 1960–61 year—sixteen boys and four girls. The total retentions declined the following year, marking a modification of the school's retention policy, according to the superintendent, Lyle H.
The analysis of report card grades for the seventy academically retarded pupils involved in this study showed that the grades of forty of the pupils had improved following retention, while the remaining thirty showed little or no change. Twenty-nine children were tested and interviewed by the Polk County school psychologists. Two children were found to be educable mentally-retarded pupils, unable to perform in accordance with the minimum standards of the normal classroom. Their enrollment in a special class in West Des Moines was recommended, but impossible at present due to lack of space for them. At the other extreme were four pupils whose intelligence was well above average. For these children an enriched program in the regular classroom was advised.

The influence of the home was evidenced in several cases in which parental pressure, lack of interest, separation, or death of a parent was considered to be a factor in the pupil's academic difficulty.

The most frequently expressed reason for retention given by the teachers was "immaturity." There was little evidence that the age or sex of the child was related to his maturity level, either in the review of literature or in the tabular data gathered from this study.

Fifteen pupils were retained due to poor work-study habits or lack of incentive. The intelligence and achievement
test data showed that both high- and low-scoring pupils were included in this category.

The "slow learners" made up the third group of retained pupils. Lack of self-confidence was a factor, in addition to the problems of low mental ability or poor skill development which accounted for the pupil's lagging behind his classmates.

IV. CONCLUSIONS DRAWN FROM THE STUDY

As a result of the study of the performance of seventy academically retarded pupils in Urbandale Community Schools over a period of eight years, from 1954 to 1962, the following conclusions were drawn:

1. Academically retarded children demonstrated a wide range of individual differences on all tests employed in the study, making impossible the establishment of a precise definition of academic retardation which could be applied to an individual pupil's performance record to identify him as a child who should be retained in grade.

2. The performance of the academically retarded child on the standardized group test of intelligence or achievement would not necessarily distinguish him from other children in the test group, as some of the academically retarded children equalled or exceeded the standardized test norms.
3. The classification of a child as "immature", a "slow learner", or "apathetic" did not adequately define the problems nor suggest solutions upon which the child's future program in the classroom could be based. Such an oversimplification of the problem offered little information upon which to base his academic retardation.

4. Each child's academic problems might be related to a physical, emotional, or social problem which must be identified and treated before the pupil's achievement in school could be expected to improve.

5. Most pupils of average or above average intelligence who lacked incentive were not improved by retention.

6. The group of children classified as "immature", without other extenuating circumstances, appeared to benefit most from academic retardation.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS TO URBANDALE COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

The following recommendations, based upon the conclusions drawn from data of the study, are offered to Urbandale Schools for their consideration in the formulation of pupil promotion policies:

1. That the academic progress of each child should be considered in the light of any known physical, emotional, or home-related problems in determining the advisability of retention.
2. That each child considered for retention should be subjected to complete physical and psychological examinations prior to retention, if acceptable to the child's parents, in order that any unforeseen handicaps might be discovered and treated; and that the judgments of these specialists might be sought as to the value of academic retardation under existing physical and emotional conditions of the child.

3. That the testing program of Urbandale Community Schools be reviewed to determine that such tests were valid and reliable in the identification of the child's level of intelligence and achievement as compared with both the test standards and those established by the teacher and the school administration.

4. That the teacher of an academically retarded child should, at the time of retention, prepare and insert in the pupil's cumulative record folder: (1) a complete diagnosis of the child's problems, both academic and personal, upon which that teacher's decision for retention was based; and (2) recommendations to the on-coming teacher for the most probable solution or alleviation of the child's problems.
BIBLIOGRAPHY
BIBLIOGRAPHY

A. BOOKS


D. PERIODICALS


C. PUBLICATIONS OF THE GOVERNMENT, LEARNED SOCIETIES, AND OTHER ORGANIZATIONS
