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**THE NONGRADED PROGRAM, A MEANS OF GROUPING
THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, WITH EMPHASIS
ON SOME SCHOOLS IN WESTCHESTER
COUNTY, NEW YORK**

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Nongradedness, a program of continuous progress, has become a much mentioned method of grouping. Several schools in Westchester County, New York have incorporated a nongraded program in their elementary schools. The New York State Department of Education has established a system of guidelines which schools may follow in order to use a nongraded program. The North Salem Elementary School, the Osborn School, Yorktown Elementary Schools, Hillside School, and Katonah-Lewisboro Schools are school systems which have adopted a nongraded plan. These schools are concerned with the child's progress as an individual and not as a part of a large nameless group.

Nongradedness is a means of school organization. Curriculum is the core of a school system. Therefore, the nongraded school is classroom organization based upon curriculum. The curriculum provides continuity and sequence so that skills that a child begins to develop in kindergarten may be continuously strengthened in primary grades to prepare the pupil for more complex skills to be acquired later. In order for the child to get through the curriculum, different means of grouping children are suggested. Grouping children by ability is one way. To do this, a standardized test is used as a criterion. Another suggestion is grouping children according to achievement. A third method of grouping is on the basis of interests of the students. A fourth means is grouping

according to the degree of independence, self-propulsion, study skills, or other work habits already developed in individual pupils. A combination of one or all of these methods is possible, too.

In a nongraded program efforts are made to evaluate and record pupil progress in relation to actual accomplishment rather than in relation to some assumed grade-level standard. The child's present performance is compared with his past performance instead of comparing with other children in similar situations. Reporting to parents is done by report cards and parent-teacher conferences.

As the schools are employing a continuous progress program, advantages and disadvantages of nongradedness come into evidence. Some advantages of the nongraded school are: the range of abilities is reduced within the class, the sense of defeat among less capable students is reduced, competition among children is lessened, less capable children are able to respond more freely, capable children are able to work to top ability, and different materials most suitable for each group are able to be used.

Some of the disadvantages of the nongraded program are: there is a need for curriculum reform, the size of some classes becomes unwieldy, instruction time for reinforcing skills in language arts and arithmetic is reduced, time for giving special help is reduced, poor work habits due to lack of follow-up are not checked, and there is a tendency to overburden the students with homework.

The educational system should be geared to prepare children for living in and improving society. It is important that schools be able to keep in stride with recent scientific developments and technological advances. There is growing evidence that parents, teachers, and administrators are concerned with the growth of the individual and are hopeful that the schools will provide adequate means for this growth to occur. The nongraded program is a possible step in this direction.