

THE INVESTIGATION AND ORGANIZATION  
OF A NONGRADED ELEMENTARY SCHOOL PROGRAM

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The purpose of this paper is to provide information which may assist administrators and classroom teachers in the development of a nongraded system of education. It is believed that the adoption of a nongraded program can be successful only through careful planning and preparation.

After months of research and study of nongraded organization, it was decided that such a vehicle would best serve the needs of a community in Westchester County, New York. For its purpose, nongrading would function as a method of vertical organization by which pupils are allowed to progress through the curriculum at their own individual rates of speed. Each pupil covers as much of an appropriate curriculum as he can during the year.

All phases of a child's curriculum were considered. Development of physical, emotional, sociological and intellectual needs were carefully scrutinized and plans for fulfillment of these set forth in the development of the curriculum.

An evaluation of nongradedness, often referred to as the continuous progress plan, has revealed its purposes and functions. It is an administrative tool which provides:

1. A more flexible system for meeting the needs of children.

2. Continuous growth for the child.
3. Continuous evaluation.
4. Challenging roles for the administrator and teachers.
5. Evaluation of the curriculum and facilities.

Preliminary developments necessary in the organization of a nongraded school comprised three parts: preparation of the staff, preparation of parents and students, and preparation of the physical plant. Each of these developments were pursued with equal emphasis, for it was felt that the success of this program was dependent to a great measure upon the necessary preparation of all three categories.

The actual organization of a particular nongraded school presented the real challenge. The study had been made, all necessary preparations completed and then the actual application of the acquired knowledge was to be fulfilled. For beginning teachers or those with a few years of experience it was indeed a challenging experience. For teachers of many years' service it was most exhilarating. It provided a new catalyst for learning, and enthusiasm prevailed in every corner of the building.

In evaluating this program, one cannot help but recognize the fact that nongradedness meets the needs of the individual without the child being pressured. He is able to participate in a program of study that is applicable to his needs at a particular stage of his development. Since the

child is being challenged with selected activities, he is most likely experiencing success. This in turn assists in the development of the ego concept. More and more educators reveal that if children believe in themselves, they are able to succeed to a greater degree.

Success of a nongraded program is dependent upon the administrators, the teachers and the parents. They must all thoroughly understand its purposes and functions and learn to "think nongraded."