

FAILURE, ITS INFLUENCE
in
THE ELEMENTARY GRADES

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This thesis, *Failure and Its Influence in the Elementary Grades*, was written primarily to determine what academic failure is in the early school years. This involved defining, clarifying and analyzing the word failure from the standpoint of the student as well as the teacher. Secondly, it was wished to discover what failure actually means to the under-achieving child, and to find the fundamental causes for non-achievement. The author felt, in addition, that an exploration into the ways of coping with failure would tend to bring into focus the overall processes of adjustment to non-attainment of goals.

This investigation has tended to bring out the more common and universal aspects of failure as well as the unique and less often observed manifestations. In this regard, the study endeavored to point out what relationship fear, anxiety and aspiration have to failure and whether success must be ruled out if failure is present.

This exploration has involved principally the review of current literature relative to the failing situation. A personal interview with the Pupil Personnel Advisor of the Greenwich, Connecticut school system, and an observation at the Mead School in Greenwich, gave further insight into the possibilities of turning failure into a successful outcome. The information and sources

which presented themselves to the author provided sufficient material to create a clear and broad picture of failure.

It is of great importance to our elementary school children that a pattern of failure does not become ingrained in their academic lives. With this goal in mind, and with the knowledge that failure is never a desired part of a student's history, it can be concluded that the ways and techniques of handling failure are equally as significant as the methods of its prevention. This paper has emphasized that the student's and teacher's appraisal of failure will tend to steer progress away from perpetual failure toward success. When causes of non-achievement are realized, it can be fairly assumed that those causes can be overcome. The early detection of fear, anxiety, boredom, inattention, low self-esteem and poor motivation is vital to our present-day educators in order to reverse a possible slide toward failure by students.

In the realization that most students at one time or another experience failure, that its manipulation is often possible, and that its removal will facilitate learning, this study has presented the reader with some remedial measures for dealing with the difficult problem. These include some research projects on (1) special schools for the slow student, (2) programmed instructional devices, (3) special personnel groups, (4) learning centers and (5) self-consistency and resistance-removal programs.

An entire review of failure has led to a broader outlook on the subject and to the conclusions that (1) failure need not have a permanently detrimental effect on the student, (2) no school teacher or system can guarantee personal adjustment even if an experience of success has been attained, (3) a conscientious effort on the part of teachers to help children see the true value of their goals will ease the struggle to attain them.