Nongraded Education: A Modified Plan for Implementation in the Elementary School

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NONGRADED EDUCATION: A MODIFIED PLAN
FOR IMPLEMENTATION IN THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

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**CONTENTS**

**Part I. Problem**
- Introduction ........................................................................ 1
- History ................................................................................. 2
- Statement .............................................................................. 3
- Procedures ............................................................................ 3

**Part II. Review of Related Literature**
- Graded education .................................................................. 4
- Nongraded education .............................................................. 8
- Research findings ................................................................. 17
- Summary ............................................................................... 19

**Part III. Modified Nongraded Plan**
- Administrative support ......................................................... 24
- Staffing ............................................................................... 28
- Organization (grouping) ......................................................... 30
- Curriculum and teaching strategies ........................................... 35
- Reporting .............................................................................. 39
- Resources ............................................................................ 42
- Evaluation ............................................................................ 45
- Budget Implications .............................................................. 48
- Program constraints .............................................................. 50
Appendices

Appendix A - A letter for reporting periodic pupil progress......................... 54

Appendix B - Sample pupil progress report for nongraded school.................. 56

Appendix C - Student's evaluation scale on the nongraded program.................. 58

Appendix D - Teacher's evaluation scale on the nongraded program.................. 60

Appendix E - Parent's survey regarding nongraded education.......................... 63

Appendix F - Summary of five-year plan for non-grading.................................. 66

Figures and Tables

Figure 1 - Timetable for initiating the nongraded program................................. 27

Figure 2 - Self-contained nongraded classroom floorplan................................. 32

Figure 3 - The reporting timetable.......................................................... 41

Table 1 - Approximate cost for the first year................................................. 49

Bibliography...................................................................................................... 71

Vita...................................................................................................................... 74
Introduction. --Public education, during the last one and one-half decades, has been the victim of continuous criticism by the American public. Schools have been attributed the responsibility for the increasing number of drop outs, underachievers, and failures among school age youth. Schools have been severely attacked for their failure to adjust the school's programs to meet the needs of contemporary society.

Many people are convinced that a fundamental change is needed in American Education. It is obvious to those who study this need that a new system of education, based upon a different organization and on what we know about learning should be designed.¹

Schools, despite the technological revolution in the United States, have been conservative and inflexible in their structure and organization. Dominant among the organizational structure is the graded school plan.

The most widely accepted plan of school organization today is the graded school plan in which each grade level represents a predetermined year of work, and subject content for all the pupils is approximately the same.²

During the initial development of public schools, the organizational structure was quite different and represented what we now refer to as the non-graded school.


The schools were not always graded in the colonies; the seventeenth-century dame schools and the eighteenth century district schools disregarded grade classification. In the dame school children ranging in ages from three to ten met together for instruction and usually young-sters received twenty minutes or so of individualized help twice a day.¹

History. -- The first graded school was founded in 1848, and was known as the Quincy School. Its survival has outlived the predictions or success probability of many enthusiasts.

When the Quincy Grammar School opened its doors to pupils in 1848, enthusiasts predicted its new organization would set the pattern for fifty years to come. More than one hundred years later, the basic pattern is scarcely changed! Quincy School was graded.²

There were numerous other early innovations in education following the inception of public education. Among them were:

1. the monotorial system which put older children in helper's roles for younger children
2. the normal school which was the teacher-training institution

Within two decades, however, the graded school had spanned the nation. It dominated the organizational structures of public school and outlived each of the others by a wide margin.

¹Ibid., p. 4.
Nongraded One Room School House

Mecklenburg County, North Carolina, 1897
Statement of Problem. --Nongraded education differs theoretically from graded education in administrative and curricular design. The nongraded program responds to individual abilities and achievement, and groups accordingly. The graded school is organized on the basis of age and group expectation, and prescribes curriculum which equates with grade level requirements rather than ability. This project presents selected details of both graded and nongraded education and a modified plan for implementation of a nongraded program.

Procedures. --Through literature search, interviews, and media, the writer explored various topics and programs which represented innovations in the elementary school. The decision to pursue nongraded education resulted from these efforts. The writer then reviewed selected literature on nongraded education with specific attention to a series of nongraded plans. A summary of the findings was prepared.

Following the review of the literature, the writer identified a school population for which a nongraded plan could be developed. From the literature search, interviews with school personnel, and previous experience in education, the writer developed a modified nongraded plan for the specific school identified. The descriptive writing format was used to compile this project.
REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Graded School. --The graded school grew out of the needs of society and was structured to serve those needs at that point in time. Two authors wrote in 1877 for the Cyclopaedia of Education:

... The advantages of the graded system have been thus enumerated: (1) They economize the labor of instruction; (2) They reduce the cost of instruction, since a smaller number of teachers are required for effective work in a classified or graded school; (3) They make the instruction more effective, inasmuch as the teacher can more readily hear the lessons of an entire class than of the pupils separately, and thus there will be better opportunity for actual teaching, explanation, drill, etc.; (4) They facilitate good government and discipline, because all pupils are kept constantly under the direct control and instruction of the teacher, and, besides, are kept constantly busy; (5) They afford a better means of inciting pupils to industry, by promoting their ambition to excel, inasmuch as there is a constant competition among the pupils of a class, which cannot exist when the pupils are instructed separately. On the other hand, many objections have been urged against the system of graded schools, chief among which is, that the interests of the individual pupil are often sacrificed to those of the many, the individual being merged in the mass.\(^1\)

School buildings were designed to accommodate a specified number of grades. The number of classrooms in a building was determined by the predicted number of

children to be served in an area. The classrooms were furnished with rows of desks arranged in an orderly fashion which added to the rigidity of the structure.

Teachers no longer had to teach the wide range of age that they had taught in the one room school house. The main job of the teacher was to select and organize information appropriate to the grade level then pass it on to the learner. The level of instruction she gave was designed to meet the expectations of the age group she was to teach. Textbook companies were quick to grade the contents of the printed materials. John Goodlad said,

> Textbooks series—first in reading and arithmetic and later in science, social studies, health, and so on—came to be vigorously ordered by grades. The work considered appropriate for a given grade level determined the content of the textbook, and then the content of the textbook came to be regarded as appropriate for the grade.¹

The children were conveniently divided into chronological age groups beginning with six year olds in the first grade and continuing through the lock-step design through eleven or twelve grades. Children who met the standards were promoted to the next grade at the end of the school year. Those who did not meet the grade expectations failed to be promoted and had to repeat the grade again the next year. The brand of failure had negative effects on the nonpromoted child. Nonpromotion caused children to develop defeatist attitudes and feelings of

failure. This sometimes created psychological blocks so the child couldn't learn anymore. Nonpromotion could cause the child to become socially mis-grouped which could turn him into a behavior problem.

A report card was used to communicate to parents the progress of the child's achievement of the standards set for him at his particular age at his assigned grade level. Much of the evaluation of his progress was measured by tests designed for a certain age group of children in a certain grade. This type of reporting did not usually measure objectives nor did it show the potential or ability of the child. It showed simply the child's ability to perform on a given test. Many children were hampered by language difference and background.

The system of classifying children, teachers, textbooks, and instruction by the chronological age of the children is very much the same today as it was in the beginning of the graded school, and, just as predicted by those writers in 1877 quoted previously. The main problem with graded structure is and has been in failing to deal with the individual differences of children. Individual differences in children make it impossible to fit them together according to ages into neat packages and to impose the same expectations on all in a grade group.

A summary of research done by John Goodlad points out that "Several important generalizations about the pupil realities with which elementary-school teachers must deal
have been brought into sharp focus through the analysis of classes at several grade levels:

1. Children enter the first grade with a range of from three to four years in their readiness to profit from a "graded minimum essentials" concept of schooling.
2. This initial spread in abilities increases over the years so that it is approximately double this amount by the time children approach the end of the elementary school.
3. The achievement range among pupils begins to approximate the range in intellectual readiness to learn soon after first grade children are exposed to reasonably normal school instruction.
4. Differing abilities, interests, and opportunities among children cause the range in specific attainments to surpass the range in general achievement.
5. Individual's achievement patterns differ markedly from learning area to learning area.
6. By the time children reach the intermediate elementary grades, the range in intellectual readiness to learn and in most areas of achievement is as great as or greater than the number designating the grade level.¹

The most dominant weakness of graded school appears to be the expectation for groups of children to learn the same thing at the same time. This is in violation of human growth and development theory.

A careful look at these realities about the individual differences in pupils points to glaring inadequacies in prescribing rigid standards to levels and imposing them on a certain age group. Edward G. Buffie says that

...this is simply not in harmony with the basic purpose of American education: namely, that every child should have an opportunity to develop his talents to the fullest extent possible. If one recognizes that all children vary tremendously in past achievement, potential, interest, and socioeconomic background, and if one believes

¹Ibid., pp. 27-28.
what many decades of painstaking study have taught regarding learning theory and child development, then it becomes obvious that graded schools, graded classrooms, graded expectations, and graded instructors are all out of step with the goal of individualized teaching.¹

In view of the criticism of the past one and one-half decades, the low achievement of pupils, and the drop-out rates, there is a need for a drastic change in instructional program in education. One such change which has implications for an improved success rate is an organizational and process design known as the Non-Graded School.

**Nongraded School.** --The literature suggests that a better name is needed for the term nongraded. A new vocabulary to describe the concept might help to implement the philosophy since the term graded has such deep roots in our society. Until society can completely reject the idea of gradedness in education, nongradedness will not have the chance for success that it deserves. Robert Anderson's definition of nongradedness points out that it is more than a vertical pattern of school organization. He says

> Nongradedness refers to at least two dimensions of the school and its atmosphere: 1) the philosophy (or, if you will, the value system) that guides the behavior of the school staff toward the pupils, and 2) the administrative and organizational machinery and procedures whereby the life of pupils and teachers is regulated and facilitated.²

¹Beggs and Buffie, *Nongraded Schools*, pp. 15-16.

Richard Miller clarifies this definition by citing three identifying characteristics of the nongraded school:

The nongraded school is one without grade failure and/or retention in the conventional sense; it has individualized instruction with the purpose of permitting youngsters to progress as they—individually—show competence to do so; and it permits sufficient flexibility in the instructional program to make instructional adjustments both in terms of intrapersonal variability (differences within an individual) and in terms of interpersonal variability (differences among individuals).^1

Miller states that some kind of grouping of children seems necessary for a controlled sequence of learning.^2 The literature emphasizes the flexibility of nongradedness by describing the wide variety of patterns for grouping children.

According to John Goodlad, progress in reading is one of the major factors in making most decisions about grouping.^3 Reading achievement is a consideration in the three principle plans for grouping children described by John Tewksbury:

In the first of the three plans, placement is made in self-contained classes according to age. The children are heterogenous in terms of academic performance....

In the second plan, placement in self-contained classes is on the basis of performance levels, and instruction is provided from one class to the next on different levels of difficulty. In this way interclassroom achievement is practiced....

In the third plan for implementing a nongraded program, a large aggregation of children is regrouped from time to time during the day or week to form clusters or


^2Ibid., p. 134.

^3Goodlad and Anderson, Nongraded Elementary School, p. 64.
classes that work on different levels under the direction of different teachers. This plan could be conducted as either a departmentalized program or one involving team teaching....

Robert Anderson recommends deliberate heterogeneity as the broad criterion for establishing pupil groups. To support this, he states:

It is argued that children require regular social and intellectual contacts, not only with other pupils of like mind, talent, and experience, but also with pupils of differing backgrounds and predispositions. This implies that a nongraded class (or, preferably, team) of children spanning several years would be preferable to a class or team of youngsters all about the same age. 2

Maurie Hillson made a survey of one hundred and seven nongraded programs to ascertain what criteria were employed in grouping. These were the eight basic categories that he reported:

1. Chronological Age (with special note of behavioral activities)
2. Achievement Test Results (with special note of reading ability)
3. I.Q. Test Results (with special note of the Mental Age)
4. Social Maturity (with special note of relations with others)
5. Reading Ability (with special note of readiness at that stage)
6. Interest (with special note of desire or motivation to achieve)
7. Needs (with special note of school and family background)
8. Physical Set (with special note of physical maturational terms of motor skills) 3

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1 John L. Tewksbury, Nongrading in the Elementary School. (Columbus, Ohio: Charles E. Merrill Publishing Co., 1967)
3 Beggs & Buffie, Nongraded Schools in Action, p.40.
Another important aspect of the change to nongraded school is reporting to the parents the progress of the learner. The real purpose of reporting achievement is to let the parent know how the individual is progressing—not to compare his progress with standards assigned to all children in certain group leading to the brand of pass or fail at the end of the school year. John Tewksbury's sample form of report card is one version that indicates the particular task the child is working on, the effort he is putting forth in terms of his own capabilities and background, and the degree of depth in the child's work as compared to that of other children who have performed the same task.\(^1\) He makes a distinction between skill subjects (reading, arithmetic, spelling, handwriting) content subjects (science and social studies) and music, art, and physical education.

Richard Miller advocates parent conferences as a means of reporting pupil progress and he predicts this will become a very natural outgrowth of the change in organization.\(^2\) John Goodlad agrees with this method when he says, "The parent teacher conference conducted in the school, it is safe to say, is the approach most universally advocated in the current literature on reporting, and beyond that is probably

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\(^1\) Tewksbury, *Nongrading*, pp. 102-119.

\(^2\) Miller, *Nongraded School*, p. 25.
the most fruitful and effective single means available.\textsuperscript{1}

Just as in the case of unlimited variations in grouping children for the nongraded school, the kind of reporting can have as many alternatives. An appropriate procedure for reporting progress to the child and his parents would never classify the child as promoted or not promoted. The nongraded school is concerned with the progress of an individual child working at his own level and not with whether the child passes or fails standards set for him to meet because he is a certain chronological age.

The teacher is an important key to the success of the nongraded school. Knowing, understanding, believing, and accepting the value of individual differences in her students is her guideline for planning and teaching. Evelyn M. Carswell points out, "To provide personalized learning experiences, teachers must become ever more skillful as diagnosticians, more sensitive to all persons in the school, and more knowledgeable in content, skill development, and structure."\textsuperscript{2} She must be willing "to function as a facilitator of learning rather than as a dispenser of information".\textsuperscript{3}

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{1}Goodlad and Anderson, \textit{Nongraded Elementary School}, p. 123.
  \item \textsuperscript{2}Evelyn M. Carswell, "The Nongraded School", \textit{The Nongraded School} (Washington, D.C; NEA, 1966) p.17.
\end{itemize}
With regard to the teacher's role, Tewksbury said that there are two practices that are essential:

1. A teacher must provide multi-level instruction for the class assigned to him, and
2. he must conduct whole class discussions and projects so that children who perform differently are helped to participate, each in his own way.

Team teaching is mentioned throughout the literature as a useful organizational device; however, it does not guarantee that nongrading will occur. There are many interpretations of the term 'team teaching', but in this discussion of nongraded schools, the writer uses the term as it applies to furthering the learner's progress through individualized instruction.

The use of teacher aides relieves the teacher of some of her duties so that she can assist the children in their individual approach to learning. The Wyandanch School District plan for nongraded schools made this statement about aides:

Teacher aides can assist the teacher in administering the educational program, particularly the individually prescribed instruction, in areas such as correcting papers, assisting with small group instruction, the administering and scoring of tests, recording data, assisting pupils in getting their materials, the keeping of day-to-day records, and providing feedback information.

Parents as aides sometimes serve the dual purpose of indoctrinating the parents with the philosophy of nongradedness

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1Tewksbury, Nongrading, p.30.

as well as aiding the teacher in carrying out this philosophy. The teacher, even using a team teaching approach and with the assistance of aides, must have a broader concept of the curriculum and must have more skill in working with children in the nongraded school than in the graded school.

The curriculum design in nongraded schools is directly related to the goal of dealing with individual differences. John Goodlad defines the curriculum as:

the scheme whereby an institution fulfills its educational responsibilities to these learners. This scheme includes purpose, content, and mode. In a good curriculum the relationship among purpose, content, and mode is carefully planned, since all three are interdependent. Decisions about purpose directly affect the selection of content, which in turn bears on method.¹

The teacher and the curriculum are hard to separate when the academic subjects are organized to emphasize the fundamental methods of inquiry, concepts, principles, and generalizations. When the teacher acknowledges the many ability levels among her students, the graded textbooks are no longer appropriate since graded textbooks are written for a particular level ability assigned to be appropriate for all students of a certain chronological age. This is not to say that all textbooks used by a graded school must be discarded; rather, that sets of graded textbooks must be divided differently among teachers and reevaluated in

¹Goodlad and Anderson, Nongraded Elementary School, p. 79.
terms of meeting the individual differences of the children. One teacher might have four or five copies of many different sets of books in her room and she would constantly seek different sources of materials for her class to meet their needs. John Goodlad points out that, "The child studies a topic not because it is specified for the fifth grade, but because it carries him one step further in understanding the concept to which it relates".\(^1\)

The literature describes many different curriculum plans emphasizing that there is no one best plan to follow. James Lewis categorizes his concept of non-graded curriculum into three basic formats: The Skill Concept Sequence plan; the Individual Study Unit Plan; and the Multiple Phase Plan.\(^2\) Lee L. Smith describes a levels plan of curriculum organization in the skill subjects: "We have 14 levels which replace Grades 1-6. Each child is placed in an instructional group in which we feel he can make the best progress from level to level at his own rate."\(^3\) In a nongraded school, the teacher has the freedom and flexibility to strengthen any of the curriculum designs with her own ingenuity. A wide variety of learning materials including tapes, slides, films, record players, overhead projectors, books, models,

\(^1\)Ibid., p. 225.


magazines, etc., will enrich the learning experiences. These materials, machines and audio-visual equipment should be organized in a media center so that they will be available to both students and teachers.

Even the physical facilities of the nongraded school have a different look. Sidney P. Rollins said,

A properly designed elementary school building can help to provide a physical environment that encourages and stimulates the development of a nongraded curriculum and facilitates the roles of the teachers and administrators.¹

School rooms are more inviting, more homelike, making a different use of the space than when formally filled up by rows of desks. Carpet on the floor reduces noises of the constant movement. Interest centers are set up around the room with tables placed appropriately for working. Children's work is attractively arranged on bulletin boards around the room. The library serves the dual purpose of housing books as well as audio-visuals and other teaching aids. Although it is advantageous to have a new building designed especially to meet the needs of the organization and process of the nongraded school, it is not absolutely necessary. Many schools have made minimum changes in the school environment to accommodate the concepts of the nongraded school.

Research. --Changes in education for the past hundred years have been painfully slow, but some improvements have taken place. Psychologists Thorndike, Skinner, and Piaget have made significant contributions to education through research on the learning process. In implementing a change in education, teachers and administrators turn to research that supports or rejects the innovation they are about to try. It is not hard to find research studies comparing the graded and the nongraded schools; however, most of the research up to this point has been too inconclusive to either support or reject the nongraded school. Psychologists recognize that in applied research in education there are too many confounding variables to deal with to be able to arrive at anything more than generalizations. Tewksbury isolates two variables that are particularly hard to control in comparing graded and nongraded:

1. type of teaching employed in the two plans and
2. the method of assigning children to classes.\(^1\)

He points out another important factor which seems to be overlooked in research when he states that

Most of the studies to date have attempted to evaluate children's performance in the skill subjects, especially reading. There have been few attempts to investigate such important factors as children's self-concepts, attitudes toward learning, and level of self-reliance. These might be even more important than reading and arithmetic performance.... The lack of research to evaluate these various non-academic factors is another reason why it is premature to judge the value of nongrading on the basis of existing studies.\(^2\)

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\(^2\)Ibid., p. 27.
John Anderson adds several other reasons why research has been inconclusive:

1. The concept itself is difficult to define and is subject to various interpretations.
2. The "educational research community" has not yet developed appropriate research technology.
3. Because excellent examples of nongradedness are too few, there is little research evidence on which the profession can base its decision.
4. Researchers rely too heavily upon inappropriate research designs.¹

Carbone's research² compared graded and nongraded pupils with respect to achievement, mental health, and the instructional practices of their teachers. The study rejected the hypothesis that there was no significant differences in achievement of comparable groups of pupils. The graded pupils scored higher than the nongraded pupils on achievement. There was no significant differences in the mental health of the two groups and this supported the hypothesis relating to mental health. His conclusion that there were no significant differences in instructional practices raised the possibility that 'admonition to "recognize individual differences" has a common meaning for teachers regardless of the organizational structure of their schools'.² Cardone seemed to realize the weakness of his own research when he pointed out:

It seems clear that if any new form of school organization is to produce the benefits that its advocates envision, it must be accompanied by appropriate adaptations in the instructional practices of teachers. Changes in organizational structure alone are not enough.¹

Louis T. DiLorenzo and Ruth Salter summarize eight comparative research studies done between 1959 and 1965.² Comparisons of achievement in reading, arithmetic, and spelling found significant advantages in favor of non-graded. These results are not conclusive since "Most of the studies were based on new or relatively short experiences with nongrading. The variations in the programs make it impossible to treat them as eight replications of the same treatment".³

Summary. --The need for a change in education has been increasing for the past century. The nongraded school as one design for meeting the need for change has emerged since World War II. Goodlad states that the real beginning of the nongraded school was in 1942 in Milwaukee.⁴ Since then, many schools throughout the United States have attempted to replace the lock-step design of the graded school with the more flexible, more humanistic nongraded design.

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¹Ibid., p. 87.


³Ibid., p. 274.

⁴Goodlad and Anderson, Nongraded Elementary School, p. 53.
Maurie Hillson describes the nongraded school in a way that makes it appear to be a good alternative for the graded school in meeting the needs of society:

The nongraded school is a realistic attempt to recognize the various ways and rates of learning which exist in any normal school population. It is an attempt to create flexibility so that pupil progress is better, tensions lessen, attempts at unrealistic accomplishments are eliminated, individual adequacy replaces personal rivalry, and higher levels of general academic performance are achieved. The collected research to date indicates this is the case as it concerns nongraded schools.1

In implementing this philosophy of education, educators and administrators must deal with the realities of individual differences in the students. Vertical grouping that allows the student to progress continuously replaces the lock-step design of being promoted or not promoted from one grade to the next each year. There are many ways and combinations of patterns of grouping. Most patterns of grouping use achievement in reading as a criteria. Other considerations in grouping might be I. Q. Test results, social maturity, interests, or physical maturation in terms of motor skills. In nongraded organization, classes can be self-contained, departmentalized, or have a team-teaching approach. Robert Anderson strongly recommends deliberate heterogeneity as the broad criterion for establishing pupil groups.

There is a distinct difference in reporting pupil progress in the graded school and the nongraded. In the

1Beggs and Buffie, Nongraded Schools, p. 46.
graded school, all grades are interpreted as indication of progress the child has made in relation to what is expected of all children in that grade. In the nongraded school, the report card shows the progress the individual is making in moving through levels of learning. There is no fixed standard fixing the level of where he should be at a certain time. Parent-conferences are favored in the literature as perhaps the best means of reporting the progress of the individual to the parents.

The role of the teacher is different in nongraded school. She no longer imposes knowledge on the class, but she facilitates the learning of individuals or small groups within the class. The inquiry or discovery methods of teaching fits individualized instruction better than the traditional method most often used in the graded school. More skill and broader knowledge are required of the nongraded teacher than the graded school teacher. Teacher aides can be a valuable asset to the nongraded school program in freeing the teacher from routine tasks so she can be available for diagnosing and prescribing individualized instruction.

Graded curriculum materials began to flood the market soon after graded schools opened. These same materials must be re-distributed in order to be useful in a nongraded school. A few of each of many different sets of textbooks would be appropriate in meeting individual needs. It is inconsistent with learning theories to think that
any one book is suitable for all children in a classroom at the same time. The nongraded curriculum should include using tapes, films, record players, overhead projectors, etc. Traditional use of graded textbooks and materials does not fit the concept of nongraded school.

New school buildings designed especially to accommodate nongraded groupings and teaching processes will have quite a different look from the square or rectangular building with rooms lining each side of the halls. There is a more spacious and informal feeling in the interior of the nongraded school building. It is impractical to think that all old graded school buildings will be replaced by new buildings designed especially for the nongraded school. Of course, it is what goes on inside the building that makes the school graded or nongraded. Old graded buildings can be adapted to the needs of the nongraded school.

Research on the comparison of graded and nongraded schools has been inconclusive. Cardone's study is one of the few that supports the graded school and the design of his study causes the validity of his conclusions to be questioned. The uncontrollable variables in research in education make the results insignificant. John Tewksbury said,

The practice of limiting the measuring of grading and nongrading solely to differences in the way the curriculum is organized has been one of the reasons why some of the research studies comparing the relative effectiveness of graded and nongraded programs have yielded meaningless results. In these studies, little attention was paid to the instructional or grouping
procedures that were employed. It is not really feasible to determine whether a program is graded or nongraded unless consideration is given to teaching and grouping procedures which are employed, because it is these procedures which transform nongrading from a mere expression of intent to something that is real and operative.\(^1\)

Recognizing that there is a need for change in education and considering all of the advantages offered by the organizations and processes of the nongraded school, the nongraded school certainly gives the school administrators and teachers the opportunity to meet the needs of individuals and to equip them to be self confident, healthy, emotionally sound citizens in tomorrow's world. It seems to the writer that the nongraded school fits present day needs more realistically and it deserves closer scrutiny from more school administrators across our land.

\(^1\)Tewksbury, *Nongrading*, p. 9-10.
A MODIFIED NONGRADED PLAN

Administrative support. -- The worn cliche "Necessity is the mother of invention" can be applied to implementing a change in education. The need for change does exist and must be recognized to the extent of doing something about it in order to bring about a change for improvement. Teachers are the prime initiators and implementors of change in the educational system, but are limited in what they can do. Roy A. Larmee points out that

Basic change such as nongrading a school has far-reaching implications for staff members at the investigation, decision making, programming, implementation and evaluation levels. The administrator from his unique vantage point in the educational enterprise has a critical role to play as planner, decision maker, facilitator, allocator of resources, stimulator, and appraiser.¹

The administrator (principal or supervisor) is a logical person to initiate the change. His reasons for wanting to implement the plan for a nongraded school must be backed by substantial evidence that there is a real need for change. The particular evidence considered in this study is accumulated records of student progress as measured by standard achievement tests showing a decline from the national norms in reading from first grade through

¹Beggs, III and Buffie, Nongraded Schools, p. 80.
the fourth grade. After establishing a factual need for change, the instigator of the plan must defend the plan as an alternate solution to the problem. Through reading the literature, interviewing consultants, and visiting schools who have successfully changed from graded to non-graded school, the administrator must become a salesman of his plan because he alone cannot implement the change. First, the school board must approve and support the idea and the plan because all changes affecting the staff, the budget, resources, curriculum, and progress reporting to parents will have to be approved by the board.

The selling job by the administrator must reach out to the parents and children who will be included in the change. Little can be accomplished without the support and confidence of the tax-paying citizens whose children will be the "victims" of the "experiment". The teachers must be excited and enthusiastic about accepting the challenges of this new opportunity for a more flexible organization and individualized continuous progress process for educating children. The first role of the administrator in implementing a change is to establish the need for the change and to sell the plan for the change to the school board, the staff (teachers who will be the backbone in implementing the plan) and the community (the parents whose children will be involved in the change).

The community might offer the most resistance to the change since it is not expected to be as up to date
on educational processes as the school board and the teachers should be. Informing the community might begin with a series of programs, dedicated to the task of educating the community about nongraded school, presented at P.T.A. meetings during the first year of planning for the change. P.T.A. officers, board members, or any interested person in the community should be invited to accompany teachers to visit nongraded schools selected by an administrative committee. Careful consideration must be given to the job of selling nongraded education to the community because without their support, very little progress can be made.

Books, consultants, films, and visits to selected nongraded schools will aid in educating people who will be involved in implementing the change and in insuring its success. The timetable, Figure 1, page 27, gives a schedule for the first phase of implementing the concept of nongrading. Each of the actions has been briefly dealt with and some of the actions will be discussed in more detail later.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Actions</th>
<th>Aug</th>
<th>Sept</th>
<th>Oct</th>
<th>Nov</th>
<th>Dec</th>
<th>Jan</th>
<th>Feb</th>
<th>Mar</th>
<th>Apr</th>
<th>May</th>
<th>June</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Collecting and Reading Nongraded Materials</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Visiting Nongraded Schools</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Inservice Nongraded Workshops Supervised by Consultant</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P.T.A. Programs on Nongraded Education</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Obtaining Teacher Understanding and Involvement is Continuous Throughout the Year!!!

Figure 1. Timetable for initiating the nongraded program.
Staffing. -- The teaching staff is at the very base of the school structure since they directly influence the behavior of the children. After the teachers have become familiar with the philosophy of the nongraded school, the administrator should give the staff an option to remain on the staff and become a part of this nongraded school, or to be transferred to a graded school within the system. It is absolutely imperative for the teachers who are going to be working in the nongraded school to understand the concept of nongradedness and to want to be a part of changing from graded to nongraded because the change will demand more work from the teachers. Negative attitudes among teachers could cause the plan to fail. A change in name and vocabulary only will be meaningless and will result in chaos and confusion. Teachers must beware of labeling old ways with new terms as an easy way out. New teachers to take the place of those who choose to leave should be carefully screened to be sure they are willing to enter into a nongraded school. Ideally, teachers with experience in a nongraded or an open concept school should be sought out to fill any vacancies.

Once the staff is established, they should become involved in the long range plan which includes reading about nongraded education, visiting nongraded schools, attending inservice workshops, participating in meetings with the community, working on special committee assignments. This kind of teacher involvement would take place
during the school year preceding the year of reorganizing the school structure.

When the administrator uses the special talents of the teachers to develop the plan, there is less chance that the teachers will feel that the plan is being imposed on them. Special assignments should be made to committees of staff members to search the literature for recommendations for grouping the children, individualizing the curriculum, keeping records, and reporting progress to parents. Each committee should produce a plan for their particular task for nongraded the school.

Carefully selecting and educating the staff are two important steps toward implementing the change. It is idealistic to think of having the entire school in harmony on the philosophy of nongraded education, but it is a worthy goal to strive for.

The need for additional staff as a result of nongrading is discussed in the section "Resources". A coordinator of the program as well as aides to help implement the program are necessary. The best consultant available should be contracted to conduct the inservice workshops.
Organization. --During the year the staff spends studying the nongraded school, the teachers should observe the range of attainment in their own classes and also be aware of how the individual child's achievement differs from learning area to learning area. From a year's study and observation of their children in view of nongrading, the staff will become knowledgeable in alternate ways of organizing a classroom and grouping children. The classroom organization may be determined by the design of the building--whether the building is a traditional design or a more contemporary design. If the building were designed for the traditional graded school, two systems of organizing nongraded classrooms are the self-contained classroom or the cluster classroom pattern. The self-contained classroom is more easily adapted to an old building since the clustered classroom organization works better if structural changes are made in the building. The cluster classroom plan can be adapted to the old building without drastically changing the physical structure of the building.

The self-contained classroom seems more appropriate for the school in this study. Even furniture arrangement is important in individualizing the instruction. An example of an arrangement of furniture in a self-contained classroom is shown in Figure 2, page 32.

(a) This section shows 4 individual study carrels for independent study such as for programmed
instruction, for individual study units and for reading.

(b) Four tables are arranged in this area so students working with common interests and similar abilities can be sub-grouped.

(c) This section for relaxation is similar to a living room. Students may spend free time here or read for pleasure in this section.

(d) This is a place for viewing T.V. Only a small group would be viewing with the arrangement shown in the diagram, but a large group could watch T.V. if the T.V. were turned around.

(e) Isolated areas like this are located throughout the classroom for independent study spots. Some children need to be isolated while others actually prefer to be isolated.

(f) This is another section for small group instruction such as reading.

(g) This section is for small or medium group instruction. A student could remain in charge after the teacher meets with the group then moves on to another group.

(h) Single concept film loops, head sets, or other educational equipment could be used in this section.

(i) Outside the classroom in the hall, 2 or 3
Figure 2. Self-contained nongraded classroom.
desks or chairs can be placed for students who have a common project to work on. Working in this area is a privilege given only to those students who are responsible and trustworthy.

Although arranging the furniture is important, grouping the children is even more important. With self-contained classrooms, multi-age grouping has proved successful in the nongraded school since it organizes students in a way that is more compatible with their daily existence. Lewis points out the following advantages of multi-age grouping:

1. It induces the teacher to individualize the instructional program to suit a class composed of heterogeneously grouped students.
2. Various discipline problems within the group tend to diminish.
3. There is a high degree of cooperation among all children in the class regardless of age or ability. This is particularly true in terms of those students who may be older by approximately two years than others in the class, because what has developed in these cases is the "big brother"/"big sister" attitude.
4. There also tends to be a greater degree of independence and individual initiative on the part of the teacher and students in the class.
5. In each classroom, group work and committees can be organized with less delay and with more efficiency because of the leadership which evolves on the part of the older students.
6. A closer to normal situation is provided where students are exposed to other students who differ in age within a two or three year age range. This is the kind of situation to which children are accustomed at home with brothers and sisters, or at play in the community with peers, and one which renders the school setting more natural.\footnote{Lewis, A Contemporary Approach, p. 122.}
Other considerations for grouping might be combined with the multi-age grouping. Richard Miller recommends the following criteria:

1. Reading achievement or readiness evaluation based on standardized tests.
2. Achievement measured by teacher-made tests.
3. Basic learning ability as measured by standardized tests.
4. Emotional and social maturity.
5. Combined judgment of the teachers, counselors, and principals.

The clustered classroom organization lends itself ideally to team teaching. For instance, four or six rooms might be included in a cluster and four or six teachers plus two or three aides would be assigned to the cluster. Each room would be equipped to handle different kinds of teaching and different sized groups. Teachers would be selected on the basis of their strengths and would work together for a total program of individualized learning.

The reason for team teaching is crucial. John Goodlad has this to say about the motives behind team teaching:

The desire of the social studies teacher to exchange his social studies teaching for the arithmetic teaching of another is not a good reason for considering team teaching. The fundamental criterion is whether certain desired learnings can be effected this way with greater consideration for the individual pupil.²

Since the success of this organizational plan depends so strongly on the cooperation of teachers in planning

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¹Miller, The Nongraded School, p. 237.
and working together, the writer recommends the self-contained multi-age grouping plan as a beginning. Clustered classrooms and team teaching would be good goals to gradually work towards in the third or fourth year after making the change from graded to nongraded school.

Curriculum. --Nongradedness cannot be accomplished through mere organizational changes. The curriculum is the heart of the school's program and it must be changed to meet requirements of the process design for the nongraded school. It is the vehicle used to help the individual child reach the educational goals. Goodlad defines curriculum as...

...the scheme whereby an institution fulfills its educational responsibilities to these learners. This scheme includes purpose, content, and mode. In a good curriculum the relationship among purpose, content, and mode is carefully planned, since all three are interdependent. Decisions about purpose directly affect the selection of content, which in turn bears on method.¹

During the initial year of implementing the change, an inservice workshop on the curriculum should be presented by the consultant. The faculty then begins to work on designing a curriculum suitable for nongrading their particular school. They might be divided into study groups to work on specified areas of the curriculum. The first task would be to look at the subject areas from a very broad point of view considering what values, concepts, and skills you want to develop in the individual child

¹Goodlad and Anderson, The Nongraded Elementary School, p. 79.
over a period of 12 to 14 years. The next step would be to arrange the broad values, concepts, and skills into a logical sequence in order to provide for the learner a broad base to build on--relating new ideas and skills to previously learned ones. Smaller steps with more specific objectives would follow under each of the original items of content. From this, the curriculum for a content area becomes categorized into levels. A level is defined as a given number of basic skills to be mastered before proceeding to the next level. Lewis gives the following example of a partial outline of content and expectations in skill subjects such as language arts and arithmetic:

**LEVEL I**

**Language Arts**

1. Mastery of proper nouns in the first basic pre-primer
2. An awareness of rhyming words
3. An awareness of beginning sounds
4. Recognition of color words
5. Language development through vocabulary enrichment by organizing thoughts into sentences (orally)
6. Eye-hand coordination
7. Left to right reading of pictures

**LEVEL II**

**Language Arts**

1. Mastery of the vocabulary of the basic pre-primer reading text
2. Knowledge of color words and number words
3. Printing name legibly
4. Forming letters correctly with direction
5. Picture reading--ability to get meaning from a picture
LEVEL I

Arithmetic

1. Set theory and cardinal numbers 1-5
2. Counting 1-10
3. Recognizing symbols 1-10
4. Number concepts to 10
5. Denoinate numbers
   a. Calendar and clock - introduce days, weeks, hours, and minutes
6. Matching shapes
7. Understanding comparison terms - smaller, larger, more, less
8. Ordinals - 1st-5th
9. Points and line

LEVEL II

Arithmetic

1. Set theory and number concepts 1 - 10
2. Understanding the writing of numbers, etc. 
3. Denoinate numbers
   a. Calendar - days, weeks
   b. Money - penny, nickel, dime
4. Addition and subtraction combinations through 6
5. Recognizing and naming shapes
6. Addition - concept of adding one more
7. Ordinals - 1st through 10th

The content of the reading program which had been previously divided into 6 years of work in a graded school might be divided into 14 or more levels. Some children may complete all levels in five years while some children may take 7 years to complete them. One of the main differences to note is the elimination of failure. A slow child simply takes longer to complete all of the levels, but he does not fail so that he has to repeat a grade because he is slow.

\[\text{1}^\text{Lewis, A Contemporary Approach, pp. 83-84.}\]
In Duval County, a team of teachers has been writing curriculum for several years. This curriculum is called Individual Paced Instruction (I.P.I.) and it should be considered for adoption or modification for what it has to offer in individualizing the curriculum for the non-graded school.

As pointed out earlier, different subject areas call for different teaching strategies. Goodlad says that in the fields of science and social studies, there are broad principles to be developed: the interdependence of man, the functioning of the human organism, natural forces at work, and so on.¹

There are certain cognitive processes to be refined: collating data, interpreting facts, synthesizing related information, etc. There are certain study skills to be fostered: locating appropriate sources of information, using reference materials, working with others, and so forth. These principles, processes, and skills become threads running along the entire length of the program.²

Discovery and inquiry strategies of teaching are appropriate for science and social studies since the learner engages primarily in the inductive process of building larger concepts and principles from specifics.

Arithmetic has its own unique characteristics which deserve special attention. Goodlad has this to say about arithmetic:

In arithmetic, the learner begins with certain concepts and deduces from them. These concepts include number,

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²Ibid.
quantity, and spacial relationships. These must be studied in their own right. The sequence here is determined by the nature of the content itself and advances the learner through an orderly, disciplined process. Large topics, problems, and units do not suffice for this. Nor can large numbers of students of widely differing abilities proceed together through the process.¹

When designing the curriculum, the teachers must simultaneously design tests or other means of evaluating the student's progress through the levels of the curriculum. This is mentioned again under Reporting.

Curriculum, teaching strategies, and organizing children into groups are so interwoven that it is hard to discuss one without discussing all three. The task of the teacher is to be able to fit the contents of the curriculum to the children and to present the content to the children in a way that will result in optimum learning. Changing the graded curriculum to a curriculum for individualized instruction in the nongraded school is one of the most important steps in becoming nongraded.

Reporting. --Reporting the progress of the child to his parents is another major change that will have to take place in implementing the nongraded school. The key emphasis shifts to the individual and his own ability to progress at his own pace. In the graded school, the individual was evaluated in terms of his ability to meet standards set for him according to expectations assigned to a certain age level. The report card must

¹Ibid.
clearly reflect the change of emphasis. The inservice workshop after the one concerned with curriculum design should be directed towards designing an appropriate report card. The teachers themselves should contribute to designing the instrument after considering many sample forms that have already been designed to evaluate progress in a nongraded school. The change will have to be approved by the school board. This is another concrete example of why the school board needs a complete understanding of all aspects of the nongraded school. The old graded school report card is not appropriate in the nongraded school.

In addition to designing a form for communicating with parents, teachers must also design tests or other means for determining whether the learner has accomplished the objectives set by the curriculum and how well he has performed his task. These tests are an integral part of the curriculum and should be written simultaneously with the curriculum. The results of these tests would be a record of day-to-day or week-by-week progress of the individual. Since the student needs to know where he stands at all times, he should keep a tally or score card that is easily available for the teacher to make quick check marks to indicate that the student has satisfactorily completed a task. When the child moves from one level to another, a note should be sent home to report this to the parents. A sample of this periodic
pupil progress report is in the appendix. The accumulation of this data into a folder for each child would give the teacher a reference to use in parent conferences and in making the report card that goes home three times a year.

The first parent conference will include the teacher, the parent, and the child. The teacher should have samples of the child's work which illustrate the student's skills, talents, and interests. Both the parent and the child should be encouraged by the teacher to freely express their concerns about school related topics. Some explanation of the report card should be made since it will go home the following month.

The reporting timetable, Figure 3, shows a balance between parent conferences and the progress report card in communicating with parents.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method of Reporting to Parents</th>
<th>S.</th>
<th>O.</th>
<th>N.</th>
<th>J.</th>
<th>F.</th>
<th>M.</th>
<th>A.</th>
<th>M.</th>
<th>J.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parent-Student-Teacher Conference</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Progress Report Card</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent-Teacher Conference</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
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</table>

Figure 3. The reporting timetable.
The report card should be designed to meet the needs of the particular school that will use it. It is a help to review samples of report cards that have been used successfully in other non-graded schools. There is a sample report card in the appendix that might be used or modified to suit the needs of the school using it.

Just as there are no perfect models of the non-graded school, there is no perfect way of communicating progress of the child with the parents. James Lewis reiterates this when he says:

There is no one perfect method of reporting to parents. Each method provides some advantages as well as disadvantages, and each serves a particular purpose. It lies within the purview and discretion of the teacher and administrator to determine which method or combination of methods, will prove most successful when considered in conjunction with the calibre of the student population and the character of the adult population of the community.  

Resources. --Additional staff: Although the principal is a leader in implementing the change to non-graded school, the routine administrative duties of running the school will keep her from always being available to help teachers when they need help. A staff person should be hired to fill this need. She may be called a resource teacher, a coordinator, a curriculum assistant, or whatever title the principal thinks best fits this position. Her duties are to be specified by the principal. The major areas of her responsibilities would probably

fall under the categories of grouping children, curriculum, teaching strategies, progress reporting, assigning aides, encouraging the use of all available audio-visual equipment, and evaluating the overall progress of the school towards nongrading. She would be a trouble-shooter in that she would spot incidences where graded tactics were still being used under the guise of nongraded vocabulary, and she would point this out to the teacher who would correct the situation before it became too widespread. Ideally, this staff person should have a rich background of teaching experience in a nongraded school.

For teachers to individualize the curriculum, aides are needed. Parents hired as aides can serve a twofold purpose: 1) to educate the parent about the program, and 2) to relieve the teacher from routine tasks so she can spend more time individualizing instruction. At least one aide for every two teachers is needed. Some of the ways aides can help teachers is discussed earlier in this paper.

An outside consultant with expertise in nongraded education should be available to the school to conduct six workshops for teachers during the year. Topics for the workshops should include: designing curriculum, reporting to parents, grouping students, teaching strategies for individualized instruction, educating the community, and evaluation of the program.
Travel time should be made available to all teachers to visit a nongraded school. The school board should supply substitutes to give this release time to the teachers.

Instructional materials:

1. Textbooks—no more than 5 of any one text used in a room to allow greater variety to suit individual needs.

2. Educational kits such as Science Research Associates, Inc.


5. Modern equipment to enable teachers to vary teaching strategies: film projectors, tape recorders, head sets, opaque projectors, record players and records, charts and maps.

6. Pupil placement tests—Lewis recommends the Botel Reading Inventory.¹

7. Revised testing program including teacher-made tests and standardized tests.


Environmental needs:

1. Carpeting—either wall-to-wall or large area rugs to create a more home-like environment.

2. Student desks and chairs (standard equipment)

3. A variety of tables—trapezoidal, round, and rectangular to provide work surfaces in interest centers.

¹Ibid, p. 130.

5. Carrels for undistracted, independent study.

6. Couch and lounge chairs for reading area (might be donated by parents).

7. Media center--formally the library, but with added responsibility of housing and dispensing equipment and other teaching aides.

**Evaluation.** --Is the plan working? There was a concrete reason for implementing the plan and now that implementation is under way, what criteria will be used in judging the success or failure of the plan? The basic goal simply stated is to provide individualized instruction designed to promote continuous progress education for every student. In implementing this goal, many people are involved; therefore, in making a value judgment on the success, the reactions of these people will have to be considered. The concerned people are: the school board, the administrator (principal), the teachers, the children, and the parents. Their reactions can be measured to some degree through a survey or questionnaire. Examples of these surveys from Lewis' book, *A Contemporary Approach to Nongraded Education*, can be found in the Appendix.

The process of evaluation is a continuous one and the collection of data begins with the teacher's progress file on each child. This file includes scores on standardized tests as well as a variety of other evaluation instruments.
such as paper-and-pencil tests, check lists, rating scales, or observation forms for use in all subjects in the curriculum.

After a period of time (at least three years), some comparison must be made between the nongraded school and a graded school. This must be planned in advance. The nongraded school would be the experimental group and the graded school would be the control group. Research has shown how difficult it is to produce significant results from a study like this since there are so many variables in education. After careful selection of the control group, a plan should be made for administering the same standardized tests at the same time in both schools.

In Hillsboro, Oregon, pupils instead of schools, were matched on the basis of chronological age and intelligence quotient.

Intelligence quotient measurements were obtained from the Science Research Associates Primary Mental Abilities Test which is administered in September to all six-year-olds as part of a district-wide testing program. Reading achievement was measured using the Reading Battery of the California Achievement Test.¹

A similar comparison study was made in arithmetic matching students according to sex, I.Q., chronological age, and socioeconomic background. Their arithmetic achievement was measured utilizing the Arithmetic Battery from California Achievement Test, 1957 edition.²

¹Beggs, III and Buffie, Nongraded Schools, pp. 181-182.
²Ibid, p. 182.
Even though studies like this are not conclusive, they
do provide some incites into the worth of the program.

The principal, coordinator, and a committee of
teachers and parents would compile the evaluation data
and present their report to the school board following
the first year that children were involved in the nongraded
school. This report would include results of achievement
tests and a compilation of surveys by principals, teachers,
parents, and children.

A primary school evaluating committee in Cedar
Falls Community School District, Cedar Falls, Iowa, used
the following major objectives in the evaluation of their
school. From the data gathered, was there evidence

1. Supporting the belief that children do better in
   a program that adjusts itself to the child's rate
   of development.
2. That the teacher operating with more freedom to
   make adjustments is able to be more effective in
   his teaching and also feels positive about his
   pupil's accomplishment.
3. That the individual child benefits from going
   through a Primary School program.
4. That parents are satisfied with their child's
   progress and experiences in the Primary School.
5. That the administrators are better able to evaluate
   the work of the teachers and pupils in a Primary
   School than in a traditionally organized school.¹

These broad goals are pertinent to nongrading and
could be modified or adapted to more specifically state
the goals of a particular school. There must be specific
goals and ways of measuring the attainment of the goals
of the nongraded school. Establishing both the goals and

¹Ibid, p. 195.
the instruments for evaluating the goals are basic steps in changing from the graded to the nongraded school.

**Budget implications:** -- The cost of implementing the change from graded to nongraded is a concern to school boards, administrators, and to the tax-paying citizens. There will be an increase in the cost of the nongraded school, but the cost increase should be proportionate to the increased progress in the development of the total child. Lewis says

The need for additional funds is obvious when the following needs are taken into account:

1. Visits to model schools and attendance at seminars and conferences;
2. The purchase of books and journals to accomplish the compilation of an extensive nongraded library;
3. Extra remuneration to, or release of, professional staff members to work on curriculum and in the latter case an allowance for substitutes' salaries;
4. Extensive duplication and reproduction of materials;
5. Honorariums to experts invited to speak to professional staff members and parents;
6. Purchase of additional furniture, supplies, books, and equipment;
7. Structural renovations necessary to accommodate the many facets of individualized instruction;
8. Dissemination of nongraded materials; and
9. Remuneration for training and retention of teacher aides. ¹

In terms of dollars, only an approximate cost can be figured for implementing the change. The table on the following page outlines in broad terms an approximate cost for the first year.

**Approximate cost for the first year**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Additional staff</th>
<th>Cost</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Coordinator</td>
<td>$11,000.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Aides</td>
<td>18,900.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Substitute teacher for 28 days</td>
<td>700.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>$30,600.</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Instructional materials**

| Textbooks, programmed materials, etc.                 | 2,000.   |

**Environmental Needs**

| Carpeting, tables, carrels, dividers, etc.            | 15,000.  |
|                                                      |          |
|                                                     | **$47,600.** |
Constraints. --From the beginning of the idea of implementing a change from graded education to nongraded education, administrators, teachers, and the community must be educated toward understanding the philosophy of nongraded education. They must accept the idea that the nongraded school can offer their children a unique opportunity for continuous progress as an individual, and they must be willing to become involved in the change rather than having the change forced upon them. Many people resist change and look upon any innovation with suspicion.

The pace of the change is vital to its survival. A gradual change rather than a sudden change is necessary. At least a year must be devoted to education of the faculty and the community before any organizational or curriculum changes are made. A long range five year plan would result in a smooth transition. During this time, constant evaluation and improvement of the program should be taking place. There is a sample five-year plan in the appendix.

Graded terminology is hard to eradicate. Care must be taken to prevent the change from becoming a change in name only. For instance, a mere substitution of the word "level" for the word "grade" would be meaningless.

The program will be expensive since a wide range of materials are needed; however, most schools could begin by sharing in a new way what is already on hand. At
present, most textbooks are designed for graded programs; so teachers will have to use ingenuity in using the graded texts for individual instruction. No room should have more than 5 copies of any text at any time.

Staffing the nongraded school can be a problem. Experienced personnel is hard to get since colleges are not training teachers for the nongraded school. Teacher turnover maybe greater since success in the nongraded school demands more skill and more time in planning and reporting progress. Older teachers may resign or retire because they find it difficult to change their thinking and procedures. Reverting to uniform expectations and standards is a common tendency for teachers and this is incompatible with nongradedness.

Although most children are happier and healthier in the nongraded school, some children may become unhappy if changes from group to group are not made smoothly. To transfer to a graded school at the end of the year from a nongraded experience may be hard. If the school population is very transient, problems could occur.

There is no perfect model of the nongraded school. The philosophy of nongradedness must be adapted to fit the needs of the school to which it applies. Lewis says

The primary reason for the fact that so many districts fail to implement a successful nongraded program lies in the virtual non-existence of specific guidelines for nongrading. There is simply no strict rule of thumb to follow in making a successful transition from traditional education to nongraded education.1

1Ibid. p. 50.
The change is not an easy one to make and there is no guarantee that by changing, the children will suddenly improve. There is evidence that when the change is successfully implemented, children do benefit. Most people will agree that something is wrong with our present school system. It seems to the writer that today's children deserve a change to a system more in keeping with today's world—even if it does mean extra work for everyone!
APPENDIX A

A Letter for Reporting Periodic Pupil Progress
Dear Parent:

As you know, your child has been enrolled in a program of nongraded education. This means that instead of being placed in a traditional "grade," he will be placed at a particular level in each subject area. He will then progress from level to level as he absorbs certain skills within the subject area. So that you will be informed of your child's progress, periodic reports such as this will be sent you whenever he progresses from one level to another.

Your child has progressed in ________ from Skill ________
subject area Level ________, to Skill ________Level ________.

If you have any questions with regard to your child's progress or placement, please feel free to contact me.

Most sincerely,

Principal

Periodic pupil progress report

1Lewis, A Contemporary Approach, p. 184.
APPENDIX B

Sample Pupil Progress Report for Nongraded School
PUPIL PROGRESS REPORT FOR NONGRADED SCHOOL

Key: Line indicates level of student achievement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reading Levels</th>
<th>Readiness</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>9</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Report Period 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Report Period 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Report Period 3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Mathematics Levels Readiness  Book One  Book Two  Book Three

| Report Period 1 |           |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| Report Period 2 |           |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| Report Period 3 |           |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |

Social Habits:
1. Self-control
2. Gets along with others
3. Obey school regulations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Work Habits:
1. Pay attention
2. Follows directions
3. Works neatly
4. Uses time and materials wisely
5. Puts forth effort
6. Completes work
7. Understands work
8. Works independently

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

A check indicates that there is need for improvement

Parent: If a conference is desired with the teacher, please check here.

Days Absent:  
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Times Tardy:  
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Parent's Signature
APPENDIX C

Student's Evaluation Scale on the Nongraded Program
Student's Evaluation Scale on the Nongraded Program

Name of Student__________________Age__ Date of Birth__________________

Teacher_________________________Date______________________________

This is not a test. We would like to know how you feel about the nongraded program so that we will know where to make improvements. Check ( ) whether yes or no best expresses your feelings:

1. Do you feel that the nongraded program does more for you than last year's program? YES NO

2. Do you feel that you get more individual attention in the nongraded program? YES NO

3. Do you work more in a nongraded program? YES NO

4. Has your interest in school increased since being placed in a nongraded program? YES NO

5. Do you think your teacher likes teaching in a nongraded school? YES NO

6. Do your parents like the nongraded program? YES NO

7. Do your classmates like the nongraded program? YES NO

8. Are there any slow students in your class? YES NO

9. Do you like your school? YES NO

10. Have you failed a subject since being placed in the nongraded program? YES NO

11. Do you get poor marks? YES NO

12. Do you feel that you can work by yourself since your placement in the nongraded program? YES NO

13. Are there many more things to learn from the nongraded program? YES NO

14. Do you like the new report card? YES NO

15. Do you like the new parent-student-teacher conferences? YES NO

16. Do you feel that you have learned enough in the nongraded program? YES NO

17. Do your teachers have more discipline problems in a nongraded class? YES NO

18. Would you like to remain in the nongraded program? YES NO

A Wide-Range Attitude Scale of Behavioral Correlates

1Lewis, A Contemporary Approach, p. 237.
APPENDIX D

Teacher's Evaluation Scale on the Nongraded Program
Teacher's Evaluation Scale on the Nongraded Program

Please check ( ) indicating whether yes or no best indicates your feeling about the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>YES</th>
<th>NO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Do you like being a nongraded teacher?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Do you think that the nongraded program has been effective?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Do you have enough books, supply materials and equipment to individualize instruction?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Do you believe that individual study units have assisted you in individualizing instruction?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Do you prefer multi-age grouping to single age grouping?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Do you feel more contact has been made with the home since you have been a nongraded teacher?</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Do you believe that the parents favor the nongraded program?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Do you believe that the students favor the nongraded program?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>9. Can most of your students work independently?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Have most of your students learned how to team?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Do you like the new report card?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>12. Do you feel that you are more aware of individual differences in students since becoming a nongraded teacher?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>13. Do you believe nongraded education is here to stay?</td>
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<tr>
<td>14. Have you been able to make better use of your professional skills due to your placement in a nongraded program?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Do you favor team teaching with nongraded education?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
16. Do you believe there should be more nongraded workshops?  

17. Do you feel that there should be more opportunity for visits to the other nongraded programs?  

18. Do you feel that the entire educational program has improved because of the nongraded program?  

19. Has your students' behavior changed for the better since being placed in a nongraded program?  

20. Is the academic climate more stimulating in a nongraded program?  

21. Do you feel that your fellow teachers favor the nongraded program?  

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Teacher's Evaluation Scale on the Nongraded Program

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\(^{1}\)Ibid., pp. 240-241.
APPENDIX E

Parent's Survey Regarding Nongraded Education
Parent's Survey Regarding Nongraded Education

Name of Parent_________________________Date________

Name of Student_________________________Age________Date of Birth________

Your child has been in a nongraded program for approximately one year. We would like to know your attitudes about the nongraded program and how well your child has learned in this new program. Check ( ) whether yes or no best expresses your feelings:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>YES</th>
<th>NO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Do you want your child to continue in the nongraded program?</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Do you believe that your child has learned to work independently?</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Has your child shown a greater interest in school since being placed in the nongraded program?</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Do you feel that your child is learning more in the nongraded program than the traditional program?</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Have your own attitudes about school changed due to the child's placement and performance in a nongraded program?</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Do you prefer traditional education to nongraded education?</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. Have your interests in the total school program increased?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>8. Have your friends and neighbors indicated a preference for the nongraded program?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>9. Do you feel that there is more school work for your child to do since his placement in a nongraded program?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Do you feel that there is more contact with the home since your child has been placed in a nongraded program?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Have you noticed a difference in your child's attitude toward school?</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. If your answer is yes to number 11, is the difference favorable?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Do you feel that you have received sufficient information about the non-graded program?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Do you feel that the nongraded program has really individualized instruction for your child?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Do you like the new report card?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Do you feel that nongraded education is here to stay?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Parent's Survey Regarding Nongraded Education

\[1\text{Ibid.}, \text{pp. 243-244.}\]
APPENDIX F

Summary of Five-Year Plan for Nongrading
Summary of Five Year Plan for Nongrading

Four Years of Elementary School

I. Before the first year

A. Principal

1. Collects factual evidence of the need for the nongraded school
2. Writes a plan for nongrading the school
3. Seeks approval of the plan from the school board and the faculty
4. Gives staff the option of being involved in the nongraded school or moving to another school
5. Fills vacancies made by transfers with teachers who have had some experience in nongraded school or open concept school or who have a strong desire to work in a nongraded school

B. School board

1. Accepts plan for nongraded school
2. Approves budget for financing expenses involved in the change

II. First year

A. Principal

1. Saturates faculty with literature on nongraded school assigning *Nongraded School* by John Goodlad and Robert Anderson as required reading and suggesting other books to read.
A. Principal (continued)

2. Schedules trips, 2 teachers at a time, to go to visit a nongraded school in action. P.T.A. officers, board members, or any interested member of the community should be encouraged to accompany teachers to observe the school.

3. Assign committees of teachers the task of designing curriculum for individualized instruction. Duval County's Individual Paced Instruction may be available in reading and mathematics to use as a guide. It may be adapted and modified to fit the needs of the particular school.

4. Assigns faculty committee the task of designing a system for reporting progress to parents.

5. Assigns faculty committee the task of writing a plan for grouping children.

6. Evaluates progress of year's program to educate faculty and community for Nongraded school.

B. Teachers

1. Develop understanding about nongraded schools by reading, visiting a nongraded school, and attending inservice workshops.

2. Become involved in planning for the nongraded school by working on the tasks assigned by the principal.
B. Teachers (continued)

3. Present series of programs to the P.T.A. to educate the community on nongraded school

C. Consultant

1. Conducts 6 inservice workshops for teachers
2. Assists faculty with their committee work

III. Second year

A. Principal, coordinator, and faculty

1. Begin year with multi-age groups including 5, 6, and 7 year-olds
2. Individualize reading program as much as possible
3. Arrange rooms for interest centers
4. Use new report card for 5, 6, and 7 year old
5. Schedule 2 teacher-parent-student conferences and 2 teacher-parent conferences for the year
6. Constantly evaluate and revise groupings

IV. Third year

A. Principal, coordinator, and faculty

1. Add 6, 7, and 8 year-olds to the multi-age groupings
2. Continue individualized reading program
3. Begin to individualize math
4. Use new report cards and schedule conferences for the new multi-age groups
5. Evaluate and revise program to meet needs of the children
A. Principal, coordinator, and faculty (continued)

6. Evaluation committee compiles survey questionnaires from parents, teachers, and students plus test data from teachers into a report for the school board

V. Fourth year

A. Principal, coordinator, and faculty

1. Expand multi-age grouping to include 7, 8, and 9 year-olds (total school population)
2. Continue individualized instruction in reading and mathematics
3. Individualize science and social studies
4. Introduce team teaching where faculty requests it
5. Evaluate and revise program to meet needs of children

VI. Fifth year

A. Principal, coordinator, and teachers

1. Multi-aged grouping for total population
2. Individualized instruction in all areas of the curriculum
3. Team teaching in a cluster of classrooms determined by the needs of the children and the desires of the teachers involved
4. Evaluation committee takes another survey of attitudes of teachers, parents, and students to determine feelings toward success of the program
A. Principal, coordinator, and teachers (continued)

5. Test scores are compared with test scores from the school selected to be the control group

6. Evaluation data is carefully considered as a basis for planning for the sixth year.


VITA

COWAN, BETTY S.

**Education**

B.A., University of North Carolina at Greensboro, N. C. (Art Education), 1946; further study through Continuing Education, Florida A. & M. University, University of Florida, Florida State University, and Jacksonville University.

**Experience**


**Field of Concentration**

Elementary education with specialization in early childhood education.

**Personal Information**

Married, mother of four children; member Duval Teachers Association, Florida Education Association, National Education Association, Florida Art Education Association, National Art Education Association, Jacksonville Art Museum, South Jacksonville Presbyterian Church.