

ELIMINATIONS FROM THE CLASS OF 1950 IN THE
MARION HIGH SCHOOL

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In September of 1946, one hundred and sixty-two students entered the ninth grade of Marion High School. Only eighty-four of these students graduated in June of 1950. It is felt that the causes which prevented seventy-eight members of this class from graduating with the other members merit an exhaustive study. If, in the light of this and previous research, the causes of elimination from school may be ascertained, then an alleviation or elimination of some of the conditions causing drop-outs, failures, and retardations may be accomplished.

It is felt that a summary of the geographic, economic, and scholastic conditions which may have a bearing on this study should be given.

Marion, North Carolina, is located among the foothills of the Appalachian chain of mountains, about forty miles east of Asheville, North Carolina. The chief industries are textile manufacturing, hosiery mills, furniture plants, and farming. The town of Marion has a city school system separate from that of McDowell County. This city system consists of five elementary schools, one central high school, and one Negro union school. In this study only the high school was included, although the elementary schools are necessarily

included in some of the sources of data.

The town of Marion is unusual in some respects; primarily, it is a manufacturing town with a population of about 3,500. This population figure is erroneous, however, because there are almost 15,000 people in what one must regard as Marion. This discrepancy occurs because the mill villages of Clinchfield, East Marion, Cross Mills, and West Marion (although they are a part of the town) are not situated within the corporate boundaries of the town of Marion. This condition is the result of an agreement between the town and the several industries to the effect that the industries would not be incorporated if they would build in the environs of the town. In that way they would escape the payment of town taxes on their property.

The East Marion, Clinchfield, Eugene Cross, and West Marion Schools are literally in the county and not in the incorporated section of Marion, yet they are included in the Marion City School System, which is a separate unit from the county system. These schools, together with Marion Central Elementary School, send their graduates to Marion High School for their secondary education.

The economic backgrounds of the high school students vary greatly. *Pupils* range from the children of a family on relief or charity to the children of the most financially secure residents of the town. Since there is such a wide

range in the economic background of the children, there is also a wide range in social acceptance. This results in a certain degree of "clannishness" despite the efforts of the administration to prevent this occurrence.

Attempts have been made to secure the co-operation of industries in refusing to employ students prior to their graduation from high school, but this has not proved practical since the employers in the industries must maintain a force capable of operating the plants. However, preference is granted to high school graduates in every instance where it is practical to do so.

The faculty of Marion High School is composed of seventeen teachers, all holding North Carolina class "A" certificates or Master Teachers Certificates. There are six men and eleven women on the faculty. Four have master's degrees and three others are working toward this end. One member is just short of his doctor's degree. All teachers, with the exception of four, have been in the school four or more years. The faculty of this school compares favorably with the faculties of other schools of similar size.

Marion High School offers four years of the following subjects: English, mathematics, science, physical education, vocational home economics, foreign language (two of Latin and two of Spanish), band, girls' glee club, boys' chorus, dramatics, and commercial subjects. The school does not offer

courses in manual arts, carpentry, textiles, shop, agriculture, piano, architectural designing, draftmanship, blue-printing, and distributive education.

I. THE PROBLEM

Statement of the problem. It is the purpose of this study to ascertain to what degree the drop-outs, failures, and retardations in Marion High School's class of 1950 were caused by: (1) financial insecurity, (2) mental incapacity, (3) family interference, (4) physical defects, (5) faulty curriculum, (6) emotional disturbances, (7) irregular attendance, (8) poor study habits, (9) environment, (10) failure in subjects, (11) suspension from school, (12) economic necessity, (13) marriage, (14) ~~lack of interest~~, (15) poor health, (16) and other factors.

Importance of the study. The organization and content of our high school curriculum are so foreign to the interests of some of our students and to the demands of life immediately about them that they feel that they are better off out of school and working than they would be if they attended school. They seem to arrive at the conclusion that the acquisition of immediate cash is preferable to the (to them) doubtful advantages to be gained by further educational advancement. When a condition such as this prevails in the life of a student,

have the school administrators, teachers, and guidance staff done all they might have done for the student? When any student fails to gain from the school all that he is capable of receiving, he is either losing something that would have made him a better individual and citizen or there is little excuse for the existence of schools. The child dropping out of school loses whatever advantages he might have gained by remaining in school; and society, of which he is an integral part, also suffers the loss of whatever contribution a higher educational level might have enabled the student to make.

II. DEFINITIONS OF TERMS USED

Elimination from school. This broader term was used to include failure, suspension, retardation, drop-outs, and any other cause or reason for not completing the high school course of study on time.

Failure is used to indicate that the student did not meet the requirements of the school for promotion.

Suspension indicates the suspension from school of any student for disciplinary or other reason by the school administration.

Retardation means that the student has failed to meet the minimum requirements for a passing grade in a subject or subjects to the extent that he is not able to progress at the same rate as the other members of his class.

Drop-outs are students who left school of their own accord for any reason they deemed justifiable at that time.

III. PROCEDURE AND SOURCES OF DATA

The data. The data used in this study were secured through: (1) a survey of all the literature pertinent to this subject published during the last ten years or more, (2) results of individual case studies of the seventy-eight pupils who were eliminated from the graduating class of 1950, and (3) a study of school records pertinent to the subject.

Procedure used in collecting the data. Three methods were used in gathering data for the study. A three-page questionnaire was used to elicit information from students who failed to finish with their class; a teacher check list was used to determine how the teachers' ideas coincided or conflicted with the pupils' ideas; a copy of each pupil's school record was used in an attempt to determine other factors.

The questionnaires were mailed to all students who had dropped out, and a follow-up post card was sent to those

who failed to return the questionnaires. In a few instances personal solicitations were made where responses were hard to obtain. Self-addressed envelopes were sent to all seventy-eight drop-outs with adequate postage for their return included.

The response to the questionnaire was quite disappointing; but when one considers that the students had some reason for dropping out, and that reason, either justly or unjustly, would be ascribed by them to be a fault of the school, it is not surprising that the return would be disappointing. Only thirty-two replied.

The teachers were more co-operative. Out of the seventy-eight check lists sent to homeroom teachers, fifty-five were completed and returned. Some were not returned because the homeroom teacher did not have adequate information for replying. Some of the students were under teachers who had moved to another school or had left the profession for better jobs.

The checking of the students' records from the school records was a routine procedure, and this information was complete for all students who had dropped out.

In reviewing the literature the author was interested primarily in what factors caused the child to leave school or be retarded. He attempted to discover what part the (a) physical and mental health of the child had to do with his

leaving school, (b) what part the social and environmental status of the child played, (c) what effect the economic stability of the pupil's home had on his leaving school, and (d) to discover if the school was at fault in not having met the needs of the pupils.

Visits were made to the homes of the non-graduates whenever it was possible to do so, and all information was carefully recorded. It took one year to complete this study, an analysis of which will be found in Chapter III. Chapter IV presents a summary of conclusions and recommendations.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Some idea of the importance of this subject may be had by exploring the vast amount of literature that has been written in the last two decades. However, this writer did not attempt to summarize all the literature, but used only that which was pertinent to his particular problem.

Significance of the problem. A general review of the literature on elimination from school reveals that leaders in the field of education are agreed that the problem is of serious and primary importance. Authorities and research workers have pointed out that while in school a large number of the potential withdrawals tend to be uninterested in their studies, fail in school subjects, become truants, and frequently become problem children in school. They also find that after a child leaves school, he frequently fails to make proper adjustments and is apt to remain a problem to society.

H. H. Rickman,¹ superintendent of the Elizabeth, New Jersey, Public Schools, says:

¹
H. H. Rickman, "Drop-Outs--Elizabeth, New Jersey, School System's Plan Has Reduced Delinquency Almost Fifty Per Cent," Clearing House, 13:548, May, 1939.

The usual high school curriculums make little or no allowance for these subnormal, either in special subject matter, equipment, or type of teachers. To these unhappy and often unwanted boys and girls, frequently in hot water with their teachers and principals, the lure of the open streets with their absence of home work, tongue-lashings, detention, and uninteresting subject matter, is a tremendous pull. Of course their usual intention is to find work, but since most of the industries today won't hire any one under eighteen years of age, there is little choice but the streets.

A survey conducted for the American Youth Commission shows that for a sampling of youth who dropped out of school before the age of sixteen there was an average wait of three and a half years between the time that they withdrew from school and the time that they secured their first employment.²

Gragg,³ in an objective study of two widely separated communities in 1947, found that one of the most important factors in the lives of students who withdrew from high school was broken homes caused by death or divorce.

Howard N. Bell describes the state of perplexity in which a school-leaver finds himself thus:

Between the day when, for whatever reason, the young person sees the last of his schoolroom and the day when he experiences the gusto of his first job,

² Howard N. Bell, Youth Tell Their Story (Washington: American Council on Education, 1938), p. 143.

³ William Lee Gragg, "Some Factors Which Distinguish Drop-Outs from High School Graduates," Occupations, 45:457-60, July, 1948.

there has developed what, for him, is a veritable 'no man's land' of final futility.⁴

Pupils leaving school before graduation are not prepared to take their places in a rapidly changing social and economic order. No other satisfactory agency exists to bring to completion the school's unfinished task of preparing these boys and girls for a wholesome and useful life, yet the schools are letting them slip away to flounder aimlessly in a sea of uncertainty, because they have no preparation for meeting and overcoming life's obstacles.

Family background of school leavers. Dillon⁵ says that the United States Bureau of the Census (1940) showed that:

. . . about 80% of children 14 through 17 years of age were living with both parents; about 16% were living with one parent or other relatives; while 3% were living as lodgers, resident servants or hired hands, or as inmates of institutions. Therefore, though school leavers from broken homes were in a minority, the proportion from such homes was somewhat larger than for the 14 through 17 year age population in general.

⁴ Bell, op. cit., p. 2.

⁵ Harold J. Dillon, Early School Leavers (New York: National Child Labor Committee, 1949), pp. 19-20.

In a study of 900 school leavers Dillon⁶ found that the number of children in a family had a definite bearing on whether the child completed his high school training. He found that in families with one child, only 3% left school before graduation, while the percentage of school leavers from families having two children jumped to 13%. Families having three, four, five, or six children averaged about 15% in withdrawals, and families with eight or more averaged 17%.

Melcher⁷ found that marriage constituted another cause of drop-outs. High school pupils are not emotionally mature, are ambitious to begin an independent career, are sometimes unhappy in their home environment and go into marriage, thus depriving themselves of a normal youth.

Dillon⁸ found that the reasons school-leavers advanced for having left school before graduation, in the order of the frequency of occurrence, were that they preferred work to school, were not interested in school work, needed money to buy clothes and help at home, wanted spending money, were failing and did not want to repeat grade, could not learn in school and were

⁶ Ibid., pp. 21-22.

⁷ George Melcher, "Why Students quit School," School Review, 54:255-59, May, 1944.

⁸ Dillon, op. cit., p. 54.

discouraged, disliked a certain subject, disliked a certain teacher, friends had left school, could learn more out of school than in school, ill health, parents wanted youth to leave school.

Dillon⁹ went a step further in trying to find out what would have kept the students in school. They were asked what changes they would suggest, and the following changes were suggested, in the order of the frequency: provide work experience, specific vocational instruction, services of a guidance counselor, more personal contact with teachers, more participation in school activities, opportunity to change courses, smaller classes with more individual instruction, and transfer to another school.

Social and economic status of drop-outs. Bell¹⁰ states, "Of all the factors considered in this study, probably the most potent one in determining the youth's grade attainment is his father's occupation." For the youth whose fathers were unskilled, two out of every ten dropped out of school before graduation. For the youth whose fathers were technical or professional occupations, only one out of thirteen failed to go beyond the eighth grade, and only one

⁹ Ibid., pp. 56-57.

¹⁰ Bell, op. cit., p. 58.

out of five failed to graduate.¹¹ In addition to the occupational status of the father, Bell also lists race, relief status, sex, size of family, and education of the father as other factors which influence the withdrawal of the pupils.

Williams,¹² in a survey of 20,303 drop-outs found the following correlation between the economic status of the home and student mortality:

- (1) Fifty-two per cent of students whose parents were unskilled workers dropped out of school.
- (2) Thirty-seven per cent of the students whose parents were skilled workers dropped out of school.
- (3) Twenty-two per cent of the students whose parents were clerical workers dropped out of school.
- (4) Ten per cent of the pupils whose parents were professional workers dropped out of school.

Harl R. Douglass and Kate Wind¹³ in a study of 415 withdrawing pupils from the junior high schools of Minneapolis found that retardation and socio-economic status were the factors most closely related to elimination.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 60.

¹² Aubrey Williams, "Elementary and High School Students," School and Society, 49:441-2, April, 1939.

¹³ Harl R. Douglass and Kate Wind, "Factors Related to Withdrawal from Junior High Schools in Minneapolis," Elementary School Journal, 37:375-80, January, 1937.

H. H. Rickman¹⁴ points out that, "Most of the drop-outs. . . show failure in two or more subjects."

From the findings listed herein and from other sources it would seem that some of the basic causes for pupil elimination from high school are the following:

- (1) Economic status (Including the father's occupation)
- (2) Cultural background (Including the education of the parents and their attitude toward school)
- (3) Failure in school work (Including marks and retardation)
- (4) Mental status (Including intelligence and personality traits)
- (5) Age of pupil
- (6) Sex of pupil
- (7) Health of pupil
- (8) Lack of adjustment of the school to the needs of the pupil
- (9) Failure to enforce compulsory attendance laws.

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Rickman, op. cit., p. 548.

SUMMARY

Children who leave school are pupils who, according to Rickman, are often unwanted and frequently in hot water with their teachers and principals. The open streets provide more of a lure than their unhappy school experiences. They expect to get work, but the American Youth Commission reports that the average wait between the time they leave school and the time they secured employment was three and a half years.

Gragg found that broken homes contributed to the withdrawal from high school of students.

Drop-outs are left in a state of perplexity. The schools are not at present preparing these boys and girls for a wholesome and useful life. They have no preparation for meeting and overcoming life's obstacles.

Dillon found that the more children there are in a family, the greater the percentage of school-leavers.

The emotional immaturity of high school pupils sometimes leads them into early marriages, thereby depriving them of a normal youth.

Dillon found that children preferred work to school, wanted spending money, were not interested in school work, needed money for clothing, disliked subjects or teachers, and had parents who wanted them to leave school. Dillon then made a study to find what would have kept the pupils in

school and found that they wanted work experiences, vocational instruction, participation in school activities, and individual instruction.

Bell found that the parent's occupation as well as relief status, size of family, and educational level had a bearing on the child's withdrawal from school. Williams found that fifty-two per cent of the students whose parents were unskilled workers dropped out of school, but that only ten per cent of the children of professional people dropped out.

H. H. Rickman points out that most of the drop-outs had failed in two or more subjects.

It is hoped that this study will make a factual contribution that will assist in the determination of appropriate ways and means of reducing pupil eliminations and making school experiences more valuable.

CHAPTER III

ANALYSIS OF DATA

The information obtained from pupils answering questionnaires, the school records of the school-leavers, and information obtained from the teachers who were able to furnish data were carefully studied in an attempt to reach a conclusion as to the probable cause for pupils leaving Marion High School.

Two questionnaires, one to each pupil who had left school and one to his teacher, were sent out; and a study of the information garnered from them was made. These completed questionnaires and the school records of the pupils were used in all cases where this was practical. For purposes of comparison a number of records of the graduates of the class of 1950, chosen at random, and equal to the number of pupils replying to the questionnaire were employed.

It was the desire of the investigator to secure all available evidence that might have a bearing upon the child's leaving school, and to that end many questions were asked that, considered separately, might appear superfluous; but when looked upon as only an integral part of the whole picture should prove valuable factors. In the discussion of the findings, information from all the sources ~~was~~ used either separately or in combination with the other evidence.

The age of the pupil at the time he left school, the compulsory attendance laws, and the child labor laws, all combine to affect the child's remaining in school or dropping out. The heaviest mortality occurred in the ninth and tenth grades when the pupil reached the age of sixteen. Table I shows that out of the seventy-eight, forty-one dropped out when they attained the age of sixteen, and sixteen left at the age of seventeen. Out of the group of thirty-two who replied to the questionnaire, thirteen dropped out at age sixteen and six at the age of seventeen.

TABLE I

AGES OF ALL SCHOOL-LEAVERS AND THOSE REPLYING TO QUESTIONNAIRE AT TIME THEY LEFT SCHOOL

Age at time of leaving school	All 78 leavers	32 leavers
15 - - - - -	2 - - - - -	2
16 - - - - -	41 - - - - -	13
17 - - - - -	18 - - - - -	6
18 - - - - -	9 - - - - -	4
19 - - - - -	5 - - - - -	4
20 - - - - -	0 - - - - -	0
21 - - - - -	1 - - - - -	1
22 - - - - -	1 - - - - -	1
23 - - - - -	1 - - - - -	1
Total - - -	78 - - - - -	32

It will be noted that two pupils left school at the age of fifteen when they were still under the compulsory school law age. This was reported to the County Welfare Office, and an investigation was made; but, since the parents claimed that the pupils were needed at home, they were not compelled to return to school. It is virtually impossible to enforce the school attendance law when parents know about the "personal hardship" clause that is now contained in it. This clause permits parents who plead "personal hardship" to keep their children at home to assist with the work.

Retardation, which may have occurred in the lower grades, coupled with subject failures in high school, causes the pupil to be older than his classmates and is a contributory cause for his leaving school. This study shows that there is a decrease in the number leaving school as the student progresses.

Table II shows that of the seventy-eight who stopped school there were thirty-one pupils who left school in the ninth grade, twenty-four in the tenth grade, seventeen in the eleventh, and only six dropped out during their senior year.

Of the 162 who entered the ninth grade almost fifty per cent failed to graduate, and about seventy per cent of this number dropped out in the ninth and tenth grades, or at about the time they passed the compulsory school law age. Of the thirty-two pupils who replied to the questionnaire, over

one-half dropped out in the ninth grade, and almost one-half of the remaining students left when they were in the tenth grade.

TABLE II

THE NUMBER DROPPING OUT IN EACH GRADE FROM ALL SEVENTY-EIGHT AND FROM THE THIRTY-TWO REPLYING TO QUESTIONNAIRES

Grade	Drop-outs (all 78)	Drop-outs (32)
9	31	17
10	24	7
11	17	4
12	6	4
Total	78	32

Moving from town to town and from one school to another indicates cause for dropping out of school. The thirty-two students chosen at random who graduated had lived in or around Marion all their lives with the exception of five, and of this five only one had moved more than twice. From the answers of the thirty-two pupils answering the questionnaire, five had lived in Marion all their lives, five had moved only once, seven had moved twice, five had moved three times, three had moved four times, one had moved six times, and one had moved seven times. The number of schools attended naturally bore a close correlation to the number of times they had moved. Much time was lost in trying to adjust to the different schools, teachers and communities.

Operations and procedures vary from school to school as do the teachers and methods of teaching employed. Is it any wonder that a child was ready to give up his educational career when he had changed schools and environments six or seven times? This moving about from job to job might indicate a low income family and a marked degree of instability. It is not likely that those who moved three or more times owned their own homes.

The educational level of the parents seems to have considerable bearing on the child. Table III shows that about one-half of the parents had a level of about the seventh grade. Since the general educational level of the parents of those leaving school was low, it was expected that the quality of English spoken in the home and the limited vocabulary of the parents proved detrimental to the school progress of the child. Of the thirty-two graduates selected at random for this study, fourteen had parents with a high school education, five had parents with a college education, and the remaining thirteen had parents who had finished the seventh grade. The educational level of the parents of the graduates was higher than that of the parents of the drop-outs, but this evidence may not be considered as conclusive since nine pupils left who had parents with a high school education and thirteen pupils graduated who had parents who had not been to high school.

TABLE III

EDUCATIONAL LEVEL OBTAINED BY PARENTS OF THIRTY-TWO STUDENTS
REPLYING TO QUESTIONNAIRE

Grade completed	Mother	Father
Third - - - - -	1 - - - - -	1
Fifth - - - - -	3 - - - - -	5
Seventh - - - - -	13 - - - - -	13
Part of high school - - - - -	9 - - - - -	9
College or business training- - -	0 - - - - -	0

The fact that the drop-outs were in high school indicates that the general educational level of the family as a whole is higher for the children than that of the parents. This in itself is good, but when compared to the general increase in attendance in all grades, and the higher general average educational level this fact loses some of its significance. Some parents may say, "I've got along on a free school education, and that's good enough for my child," but most parents naturally want their children to have a better chance in life than they have had.

The occupations of the parents of the thirty-two students furnishing data fall into the low income group. Eighteen fathers and thirteen mothers are engaged in textile manufacturing, while furniture factory workers and store clerks are second for the fathers and mothers respectively. Table IV shows the occupations of the parents of the

thirty-two answering the questionnaire. The occupations of the parents of the thirty-two graduates are quite similar to the occupations of the parents of the drop-outs. Twenty-three of the fathers are engaged in textile work, four in furniture manufacture, two are engaged in professional work (dentist and judge), two are state employees, and one is dead. The occupations of the mothers are not listed on the permanent records except in the case of the pupil whose father is dead; the mother of this child is employed in a hosiery mill.

TABLE IV

OCCUPATIONS OF PARENTS OF PUPILS ANSWERING QUESTIONNAIRE

Occupation	Mother	Father
Textile manufacturing - - - - -	13 - - - - -	18 - - - - -
Furniture manufacturing - - - - -	0 - - - - -	5 - - - - -
Housewife - - - - -	11 - - - - -	0 - - - - -
Store clerk - - - - -	3 - - - - -	0 - - - - -
Mechanic- - - - -	0 - - - - -	3 - - - - -
Farmer- - - - -	0 - - - - -	2 - - - - -
Public works- - - - -	0 - - - - -	2 - - - - -

In trying to ascertain if the number in the family had any bearing on the number of drop-outs, it was asked in the questionnaire how many brothers and sisters were to be found in the family of each pupil questioned. The results of this study will be found in Table V. There was only one student who had no brothers or sisters, and the number in other families varied from one to eleven. Table V shows the

distribution from the thirty-two pupils who answered the questionnaire.

TABLE V
 SIZE OF FAMILIES

Number of families in each group	Number of brothers and sisters in family of those replying
1	0
1	1
3	2
4	3
3	4
5	5
2	6
5	7
0	8
4	9
0	10
1	11

The twenty-seven out of thirty-two answering this question showed that the average was 5.63 children per family. (The average number of children per family according to the 1950 Statistical Abstract of the United States shows that there were 2.5 children per family in North Carolina). This fact coupled with the fact that the majority of the pupils come from low-income-group families may be recognized as a factor in causing drop-outs. It is usually conceded that the larger the family is, the harder it is for the parents to pay for educational advancement. The higher a student advances in high school, the greater becomes the expense--if the

student is to have the advantages and privileges afforded by the school. The decreasing number of drop-outs shows, however, that the nearer a student is to his goal, the greater is his desire to achieve it.

Eleven of the drop-outs did not check any reason for having left school, and some checked more than one reason. About one-third said they were tired of school, and about one-half said they were either needed at home or were entering military service. About one-fourth of the answers checked showed that the child was needed at home or was failing and discouraged. Two or three said they were too old or could not get the subjects they wanted to study.

An analysis of the answers given shows that the largest group checked "I was tired of school." Obviously the school had no interest for them, else they would not have been tired of it. The lure of the military service proved stronger for five than the desire to complete high school. Many of the pupils who checked other reasons might have been helped by proper and timely guidance and counsel.

Table VI shows that the majority of the parents of the pupils tried to keep their children in school. The fact that they were unable to do so indicates that the parental control of the child was inadequate.

TABLE VI
DOMESTIC STATUS AND ATTITUDE OF PARENTS

Parent	Tried to keep me in school	Did not care if I left	Deceased	Not living together
Mother	16	6	1	3
Father	14	7	3	3

The parents who did not care if the child left school were giving permission by acquiescence at least. If the child were a half or whole orphan, again guidance and assistance might have helped him to remain in school.

About one-third of the students replying to the questionnaire said they were working and coming to school at the same time. They were working a full eight-hour shift beginning in the afternoon at three o'clock and ending at eleven o'clock at night. The loss of sleep and fatigue caused by the double task of working and attending school caused the pupils to be listless and sleepy on class and impaired their learning ability. Only about one-third of those dropping out had a regular job when they stopped.

The majority of those stopping school indicated that they were working in textile or furniture factories. The availability and accessibility of work for boys and girls in school appears to be a temptation to stop school. Boys and

girls are apt to take the short rather than the long-range view in matters concerning their wage-earning ability, especially if they are underprivileged in the first place.

Twelve pupils replied that they believed the teachers to be interested in the pupils and their affairs, but fourteen replied that they had not found the teachers to be of any help. One pupil wrote on the back of his questionnaire: "I have found that the pupil who needed help the most got the least."

Only a few of the questionnaires were answered in their entirety. The majority answered all the questions on the first page, but the number of replies grew fewer and fewer on the second and third pages.

A comparison of the intelligence quotients of the pupils who had dropped out of school and those of the thirty-two graduates picked at random showed that the I. Q. of the graduates ran about ten points higher than those of the drop-outs. The range of the graduates was from eighty-five to one hundred and thirty-one, while that of the school-leavers was from seventy-four to one hundred and eleven. This evidence is somewhat inconclusive, since many of the graduates had I. Q.'s that were lower than the I. Q.'s of some of the drop-outs.

The teachers replying to the questionnaire gave so many different answers to each of the questions that it would be

almost impossible to tabulate the answers from all teachers. Therefore, an attempt was made to ascertain what the majority of answers were and arrive at a general consensus of opinion from the teachers. Most of the questionnaires were sent to homeroom teachers, since they were the keepers of the records, and had been asked as a part of their homeroom guidance work to visit the homes of all their pupils.

In answer to the question as to the kind of work the student was doing, most of the teachers stated that the quality of work was poor. The teachers, however, thought that the pupils were capable of doing the work required of them. Most of the teachers stated that they believed the work was adapted to the pupil's needs, but one must discount something for prejudice's sake because of the fact that the teacher was being asked if her favorite subject was meeting the needs of her pupils.

In reply to the question as to the real reason for the child's leaving school, the answers ranged from "indifference" to "expelled." Eight teachers listed the former while only one listed the latter. "Lazy," "didn't try," "boy-crazy," "girl-crazy," "his jug was full," etc. were typical of the answers to this question.

About one-half the teachers said they had talked to the pupil about his intention of leaving school, and some teachers reported that it was necessary for the child to stop

school and go to work to help support his family. Almost all reported that the child would have profited by staying in school the remainder of the year and/or until he graduated.

The teachers were almost in complete accord in saying that the courses were not suited to the needs of those that dropped out, and that manual arts and handicraft work should have been introduced into the school. There was one discrepancy between the answers of the students concerning the help they received from teachers and the reports of the teachers on the help they had given the pupil. A teacher in Marion High School teaches an average of about 150 students per day. It is almost impossible for her to give individual attention to all her pupils, but the student only has to evaluate an average of four teachers. The student really has a better chance to study the teacher than the teacher has to observe the individual pupil.

Only two pupils answering the questionnaire stated that they would try to return to school.

Irregular attendance proved a very vital factor in their leaving school. It was necessary to choose the semester prior to the semester in which the student stopped school for this study because of the fact that the drop-outs left at different times. It was found that the average number of days absent in the last whole semester was 19.6 days--almost a whole school month. The number of days absent

for the students who graduated, taken from the same semester, averaged only 2.1 days per pupil. It is easy to see that a student who stays out or is kept out of school for almost a third of a semester is apt to become behind in his assignments, to neglect to make up work missed, to become discouraged and finally to leave school. Only the absences of the children under sixteen were turned over to the McDowell County Welfare Department, and many of those investigated by this agency continued to be absent from school. Nothing was done about those who had reached their sixteenth birthday other than a few futile appeals by the teachers.

SUMMARY

Three sources of data were used in this study: A pupil questionnaire, a teacher check list, and the school records of the drop-outs and a similar number of the records of the graduates. An attempt was made to secure all data that might be pertinent to the study.

It was found that the age of the pupil had a bearing on his leaving school. Most drop-outs occurred when the pupil reached sixteen and was in the ninth or tenth grade. The number of drop-outs decreased as the student progressed in high school.

Almost fifty per cent of the students who entered the ninth grade failed to graduate with their class. It is

believed that one cause of this high percentage of drop-outs was due to lax enforcement of the attendance laws. Children of transients showed a tendency to leave school prior to graduation. The educational level of the parents was found to affect the students. The children who dropped out had parents with a lower educational level than the parents of the graduates. Most of the drop-outs had parents who belonged in the low income group.

The fact that the majority of the parents tried to keep the pupil in school shows a lack of parental influence. The second largest group did not care if the pupil left.

The availability of work provides a cause for leaving school. Many of the students left school because the school did not provide work experience in school.

The teachers thought the pupils could have profited by remaining in school. They agreed that the school did not offer the courses suited to the pupils who dropped out, and recommended vocational courses.

The attendance records of the pupils who stopped school showed that they were absent from school the semester prior to the semester in which they left an average of 19.6 days out of the ninety days belonging.

It is hoped that, by close co-operation of administrators, teachers, parents and others interested in youth, Marion High School may become an agency capable of developing all students to the utmost limits of their capabilities.

CHAPTER IV

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The educational progress of children who are more or less constantly on the move is hindered to the extent that the child is often retained in a grade, gets behind his age group, becomes disheartened, and stops school. The ideal solution to this problem would be to eliminate the necessity for becoming a transient. By raising the educational level of the entire population, the incentive to become stable and financially secure would be strengthened. The best thing educators can do, in the opinion of the writer, is to educate the children of transients so that they may be able to assume a position of responsibility in the community and not follow in the footsteps of their "Ishmaelistic" parents. Therefore, take the child at whatever achievement level he happens to be and develop his potentialities. Give him a sense of "belonging"; trust him, guide him; and never cease to assist him.

The lure of immediate employment is much brighter than the ultimate benefits expected to grow out of a high school education. The home environment of the low income families is poor. The children of these homes do not have the comforts, conveniences, and luxuries that the children of higher income families do. There is, then, a constant longing on the part of the poorer child for the things he does not have. He

thinks that by securing employment, he will be able to purchase these things himself, and attain the status of his more fortunate classmates. Even such a small item as not having any spending money of his own might lead to frustration and despair.

Industry and trade at present will employ those persons who are available regardless of their educational attainment. If the merchants and manufacturers associations would pass and publicize a resolution that they would not hire any person in the future who had not completed his high school education, attendance would pick up in the schools, and a greater effort to finish high school would be made by the pupils. It is recommended that this proposed plan be presented to the merchants and manufacturers associations and their co-operation solicited.

Since lack of financial security is a factor in causing children to stop school, it is recommended that the local school district vote a special school tax to take care of all the expenses of the children in school. This would include lunches, book rentals, fees, entertainments, and every other expense connected with the school. This would not be unfair to those people who have no children in school since they would reap the benefits which accompany a better-educated, more desirable citizenry. Education is a public responsibility.

The teachers at present are overloaded and overworked in Marion High School. There are no guidance counselors, attendance officers, or social workers in the school. Whatever work is done along these lines is done by the faculty of the school. Needless to say, the result is very unsatisfactory. With the revenue derived from a special tax, these services could be rendered to the pupils, and it is believed that the percentage of drop-outs and failures would be materially reduced.

Some of the children are not mentally able to do the school work. In most cases, the families containing mentally deficient children are large. We now have on our law books a sterilization law which permits sterilization of mental incompetents, but only if the person or his guardian is willing to have this done. It is recommended that our state pass a compulsory sterilization law and compel all persons with the mentality of a moron or lower to be sterilized. This, in time, would raise the mental level of the population. There can be little or no argument for reproducing mental incompetents, and morons are more prolific than people of higher mentality.

Granting that the teachers of Marion High School are overworked, there appears to be more stress on subject matter than on human needs. It is recommended that emphasis be placed on the individual and his needs, and that the

curriculum be expanded to take care of the individual differences of the pupils.

At present, the teaching is directed toward the average student and the poorer-than-average student as well as the better-than-average student are neglected. The poor student is lost in a maze of confusion, doubt, and frustration, and the best students are bored by the necessary repetitions and are induced to become lazy and lackadaisical in their work. Each child should be tested and his ability and grade level determined. Then it is recommended that each child be assigned work according to his ability. Only in this manner can each child realize the full benefits of his school experience.

All children who left school had a reason sufficient unto themselves, at least, for leaving. The majority of the students could have stayed in school, and all should have been able to stay. Absences from school played a part in the eliminations from school. Very few students with a perfect or near-perfect attendance record dropped out. Continued absences caused the student to get behind with his assignments, to lose interest in his work, to become discouraged, and finally, to drop out.

There should be a guidance director in the school and an attendance officer. Then, whenever an absence occurs, an investigation should be made at once and a remedy sought to

prevent a recurrence of the absence.

This investigation showed that the greater percentage of the parents tried to keep the children in school. The fact that they failed to cause the children to remain in school is an indictment of parental authority. About one-fourth of the students replying said that their parents did not care if they left school. This, too, is a deplorable condition, and is one which only time and general educational enlightenment can remedy. A closer relationship of parents and teachers through visitation and parent teacher work will help toward parent education.

The greatest number of drop-outs had received more help toward selection of a life work from sources outside the school. This fact again points toward the need of a counselling service. Most teachers, if they had the time, are totally unprepared for this important task.

"What will I be able to do when I finish high school?" This question was answered in the minds of many students, "Not a thing I can't do now! Why waste my time in school?" A good counselor would have been able to show the student where it would be advantageous for him to remain in school. Most teachers were not capable of doing this.

Only a few of the students had taken part in extra-curricular activities. It is recommended that the curriculum be expanded to include a full program of extra-class activities

that will involve every student. A sense of belonging and contributing will help the student to take pride in his accomplishments, give him a sense of "belonging," and will engender a better school spirit generally.

The curriculum of Marion High School is designed primarily for the student who plans to enter college. Since only about twenty per cent of the students actually go to college, the remaining eighty per cent (with the exception of the commercial students) are not being prepared for what they will encounter upon graduation. It is recommended that the school provide courses in manual arts, such as wood-working, cabinet making, machine shop practices, blue-printing, draftsmanship, carpentry, weaving, typesetting, and distributive education to meet the needs of those who will enter upon life's work instead of going on to college.

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APPENDIX

LETTER ACCOMPANYING QUESTIONNAIRES SENT TO DROP-OUTS

Dear

I am sending out some questionnaires to a few of the pupils who have dropped out of school the past four years. From the information secured in this way we hope to make some changes in our school program. We hope to make changes that will better adapt the offerings of the school to the needs of those who are dropping out.

You will be doing us a great favor if you will carefully fill out the questionnaire and return it to me as soon as possible. If you will be frank and honest in your answers it will help us to build a better school. All your answers will be kept absolutely confidential. If there are some questions which you do not understand or if you would like to discuss something more in detail, I will be glad for you to use the back of the questionnaire or write me a letter. It is not necessary for you to sign this questionnaire.

I would like to see you sometime soon and talk over some of the points more in detail. I can see you outside of teaching hours at your home or in school whenever it will be convenient with you.

I am enclosing a stamped, self-addressed envelope for your convenience.

Thanking you very much for your kindness, I am

Very truly yours,

Charles C. Elledge, Principal
Marion High School

Enclosure

PUPIL QUESTIONNAIRE

Name _____ Age _____ Grade _____

Post Office _____ St. or R. F. D. _____

Birth Date _____ Father's Name _____

(1) I have lived in the community where I am now living:

- less than 1 year
 1 to 2 years
 3 to 5 years
 Over 5 years
 All my life

(2) During my life I have moved _____ times. I have lived in the following communities: _____

I have attended _____ (number) schools. Those schools were as follows: _____

(3) My father's educational training was as follows: (check)

- never went to school
 3rd grade
 5th grade
 7th grade
 part of high school
 completed high school
 took business training
 went to trade school
 went to college

(4) My father's occupation is or was as follows: (Please indicate exactly the work he does.) Example: "loom fixer," "sweeper in textile mill."

(5) My mother's educational training is or was as follows: (check)

- never went to school
 3rd grade
 5th grade
 7th grade
 part of high school
 completed high school
 took business training
 went to trade school
 went to college

(6) My mother's occupation is or was as follows:

(7) The total number of children in my family including myself, is _____. I have _____ brothers older than I am. Of my older brothers _____ have finished high school, and of my older sisters _____ have finished high school.

(8) I left school because:

- I was tired of school
 I was getting married
 I was needed at home
 I had trouble with teachers
 I was suspended
 I believe that I have received all the education I need
 I want to be financially independent
 The school does not teach the subjects I wanted

- I was failing and discouraged
 I had to earn money to help support my family
 I wanted more leisure time
 I felt I was getting too old to go to school
 I didn't feel a high school education was worth the effort
 There was illness in my family
 I had been ill
 _____ (Other)

- (9) My father:
 Tried to keep me in school
 Is not living
 Didn't care if I left school
 Was not living with my mother
 Was not living at home

- (10) My mother:
 Tried to keep me in school
 Didn't care if I left school
 Wanted me to leave school
 Is not living
 Is not living at my home

(11) While in school, I worked _____ hours for pay each week. My weekly earnings were \$_____. The type of work that I did is as follows: _____

I have been doing this work to (check)

- Help with family expenses
 Learn a vocation
 Get spending money
 Get money which I can save
 _____ (Others)

I usually work at home about _____ hours per week.

- (12) When I left school, I (check)
 Definitely had a regular job
 Thought I had a job
 Expected to try to get a job
 Did not expect to work
 The type of work that I have been doing is as follows:

I (have, have not) worked at this job before. (Underline correct words)

- (13) I (have, have not) decided upon the vocation which I would like best to follow. The work I would prefer or I would rather do is as follows: _____

I (do, do not) feel that my educational training has been sufficient to enable me to do this work.

- (14) I have received the most help and information concerning the possible selection of a life work from: (Check not more than three: double check the one you consider to have given the most information.)
 Members of my family
 Other relatives or friends
 School superintendent or principal
 High school teachers
 Books I have read
 Business men or workers who were familiar with the work
 No one

(15) I (have, have not) dropped out of school before. (If you have dropped out before indicate what grade you were in at that time.) _____

(16) I (would, would not) stay in school to secure special training in a vocational course. The vocational course that I am most interested in is _____

I (would, would not) be interested in attending evening classes. I (would, would not) be interested in going to school part time and working part time. (Underline the correct word or words.)

(17) While in high school, I took part in the following activities. (Check)

- Basketball
- Baseball
- Dramatic Club
- Photography Club
- Debating
- Library Club
- Music Club
- F. F. A.
- None
- _____ (others)

The activities that I would have liked to have taken part in, if they had been promoted by the school, are _____.

(18) I (have, have not) found the high school teachers interested in my home and home life. (If you have, indicate how this interest has been shown.)

- Teachers visited my home in time of sickness
- Teachers visited my home to check on absences.
- Teachers visited my home to inform my parents of the type of work I was doing.

_____ Teachers made friendly visits.

_____ Teachers inquired about my parents and home.

_____ Teachers carried me home when I was sick.

_____ (others)

(19) I (did, did not) think the teachers were really interested in my welfare while I was in school. I (did, did not) have teachers to whom I could go, as I would to a pal, to talk over problems which were worrying me. Among the personal problems that I discussed with my teachers were:

- _____ Problems about my home life
- _____ Problems about my health
- _____ Troubles I had with my girl friends (boy friends if you are a girl)
- _____ My life work or vocation
- _____ Advisability of leaving school
- _____ Elective courses I was planning to take in high school
- _____ Hobbies in which I was interested.

(20) In elementary school I failed _____ (number) grades. These were as follows: _____
In high school I failed _____ (number) courses. These were as follows: _____

I (do, do not) feel that the courses I have taken in high school have been of a definite value to me (Underline the correct word or words.)

If you feel that the courses have been valuable indicate the one that you think has been the most valuable and tell why you think it has been. _____
has been the most valuable because _____

(21) The courses that I found to be the most interesting are listed below. (If you have found no courses interesting, leave the spaces blank) _____ was the most interesting. Other interesting courses were _____

(22) I (do, do not) intend to return to school next year.

(23) Use the back of this letter for any comments which you would like to make about the school.

TEACHER QUESTIONNAIRE

Information concerning _____

Subject or home room teacher _____

1. What subject was the student taking under you? _____
 What kind of work was he doing? _____
 If the student was failing, do you think he was capable
 of doing the standard of work that is required in your
 class? _____ Do you think the
 course was adapted to the student's needs? _____
2. What do you think was the real reason for the student's
 stopping school? _____
 Had he talked with you about his intention of leaving
 school? _____ List below any significant facts that
 you happen to know about the student's home life or
 personality that might have contributed to his failure
 to succeed in high school.
3. Do you think the student would have profited by staying
 in school the rest of this year? _____ By staying in
 school until he graduated? _____
4. In your opinion, what courses that are now being offered
 are best suited to the needs of this student? _____
 If he has already taken these courses, do you know
 whether he was interested in taking them? _____
5. In your opinion, what courses that are not being offered
 should be introduced for such a student as this? _____
6. Into what vocation do you think this student would best
 fit? _____ Do you know whether or not he is
 interested in this vocation? _____ If you happen to
 know any other vocation in which the student is interested
 please list. _____
7. What leisure activities seemed to interest the student?

8. Have you had talks with the student in which you attempted
 to offer any form of guidance? _____
9. What do you think the school could have done to have been
 of more service to the pupil? _____

10. What was the pupil's intelligence quotient? _____
11. What was the pupil's grade level? _____
12. What physical handicaps did the pupil have? _____

SCHOOL RECORD

Name _____ Age _____

Birthplace _____ Parent's Name _____

Residence _____ Parent's Occupation _____

Subject	1st Term Grade	2nd Term Grade	Yr. Ave. Grade	Days Absent
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Ninth Grade:

_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

Tenth Grade:

_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

Eleventh Grade:

_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

Twelfth Grade:

_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____