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J. W. Richardson

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THE CAMPAIGN METHOD IN ELEMENTARY EDUCATION¹

J. W. RICHARDSON

Research Director, Hibbing, Minnesota

The value of standardized tests for the purpose of checking up the results of classroom instruction are recognized by all of us. We also recognize that the method of using the tests has become somewhat "standardized." Briefly, supervisors and teachers value them as a basis of judgment respecting the accomplishment of a given task. If test results are high, all are satisfied. If they are low, word is passed to the teachers to emphasize this or that phase of their work a little more; and the teachers follow instructions. Let us not examine the character of this emphasis too closely. We all know what emphasizing a particular phase of a given subject means. Later the test is repeated, each teacher is raised or lowered in rank according to the findings, and the incident is closed.

NATURE OF THE CAMPAIGN METHOD

But what of that other great class of school people? I refer to the pupils themselves. What use do they make of the tests? What do they know of grade standards and the desirability of attaining to them? What would they do about it if they did know? Of course, we attempt to stimulate interest in the immediate test, and I suspect that many a teacher warns her class occasionally that another test may be given sometime and that she wants the class prepared. But however much she may exhort the class group to make a good class score, and however much we may claim that group tests are designed to "measure the efficiency of the entire school, not the individual ability of the few"; yet it is the individual who must take the tests. In the intermediate grades we have the beginnings of group consciousness, but the individual is the dominant factor. Hence, from a theoretical standpoint we should be warranted in considering individual pupils even more than we are warranted in considering individual teachers. From a practical standpoint, we have the

¹ An address delivered before the National Association of Directors of Educational Research at Cleveland, Ohio, February 26, 1920.

evidence of the interest on the part of pupils when handwriting scales are displayed in the school room.

It is to call attention to this individual phase of the work and to report upon one of its possibilities that this paper is written. And it is because of the nature of the administrative details of the plan used to secure evidence, that we have chosen our topic—"The Campaign Method in Elementary Education."

A campaign is characterized: first, by a recognized need or desire on the part of those who organize it; second, by definite time limits, particularly for the close; third, by a definitely organized effort to stimulate and sustain interest. A fourth characteristic rests upon the fact that the success or failure of a campaign is determined by individuals other than those who organize it, whether it be by voters in the political campaign, converts in the religious revival, or subscribers to the fund. Furthermore the campaign has a peculiar value in awakening the individual to the duties and privileges of cooperation whether civic, social, moral, or intellectual.

This report will be concerned with three campaigns carried on in alternate years for the purpose of improving the work in the four fundamental processes in whole numbers, although we have some evidence to warrant the belief that the plan is just as feasible in the formal or mechanical phases of other elementary school work.

THE FIRST CAMPAIGN

When we took charge of educational research in the Hibbing, Minnesota schools in the fall of 1915, one of our first acts was, of course, to give the Courtis Standard Research Tests in Arithmetic, Series B. We found that scores were considerably below standard. Accordingly the teachers were called together and asked to "emphasize" the work in the four fundamental processes with whole numbers. Then we turned our personal attention to other subjects.

In January of that school year, it was decided to introduce the departmental plan at one of our buildings. Ten intermediate-grade classes each having sixty-minute periods for recitation and supervised study were in the departmental group. With the introduction of this plan, another form of the Series B Tests was given. Nine school weeks with "emphasized" work in arith-

metic had elapsed since the first test. The improvement, however, in the use of whole numbers was slight, except that some increase in accuracy had been made in several cases. It was decided that "something must be done." In conference with the two teachers, each of whom had five arithmetic classes daily, it was decided to start work first with the pupils who had made the lowest scores.

On large sheets were placed the names of all the pupils and following each name were the scores made by that pupil in the November and January tests, with blank spaces for another test which was to follow. The date of this third test had not been set. Hence, one of the four chief characteristics of a campaign was lacking. The blank spaces after each name, however, tended to make a personal appeal for preparedness. These name sheets, together with charts showing class medians, were placed on the walls in the arithmetic rooms.

Next, the teachers listed, for their own information, the names of the pupils who had made the lowest scores. These pupils were told that they must do outside work. Thus, in the beginning we overlooked another characteristic of the true campaign. Instead of securing action by stimulating interest we were going to force action.

Then the drive started. The pupils on the low score list were furnished mimeographed sheets of examples to work at home. They also put in extra time before and after school. Pupils who were not required to do this extra work, when they saw other pupils doing so much, became concerned about their own standing. The result was that they, too, asked for drill sheets to take home. Then they commenced coming a little earlier in the morning, and soon they were working as industriously as the others. From this time on the work was largely voluntary on the part of the slower pupils as well. They timed themselves and each other, and estimated, as closely as possible, the improvement due to practice.

The pupils were shown how to make individual charts and these appealed to them even more than did the numbers representing their scores. The standard was represented by a red line and the pupil's performance by a green one. "Raise the green above the red" became the slogan.

The pupils had become so intensely interested in this phase of the work, and the amount of class time given to it was so limited

(five to eight minutes daily), that we saw no reason for stopping it. But at the end of eleven weeks the test was repeated.

In this discussion we shall not give detailed figures. Briefly, however, it may be stated that the improvement in rate of working represented a gain of at least a year and a half and in several cases two years or more, if we consider a gain of two examples as a normal year's progress. But a still greater gain was made in accuracy. In January, at the beginning of the campaign, out of four chances (one in each fundamental operation) for each of ten classes, or out of forty chances in all, only two class medians for accuracy reached or exceeded 90 percent, while fifteen were below 70 percent. But in April at the end of the campaign, sixteen or 40 percent of the cases were above 90 percent in accuracy and none were below 70 percent. The amount of improvement in the fifth and sixth grades for both rate and accuracy is graphically shown in Figures 1 and 2.

The campaign results fell short of the original plans in one particular. We expected to boost the makers of low scores up to the class median, or up to the standard for the grade if the class median was too low, and let the rest of the pupils alone. In that way we would secure closely graded, homogeneous groups in respect to the four fundamental processes in whole numbers. But class variation increased rather than decreased. That is, there was a greater difference in the number of examples worked by the highest and the lowest pupils at the end of the intensive period than there had been at the beginning. The point is that while the low score makers were advanced the original high score makers refused to "stay put." Truly, it has been said: "The brightest pupils are the most retarded."

THE SECOND CAMPAIGN

The next school year the tests were not used. But in the fall of 1917 we organized our second campaign. This time all four of the characteristics of a true campaign were observed. First, in order that the regular work might proceed under the most favorable conditions, we felt the desirability of bringing the work of the intermediate grades to a relatively high degree of excellence as early in the year as possible. Second, definite time limits were set. The campaign was to start just one month after school

FIGURE 1. DEVELOPMENT OF FOUR SIXTH GRADE CLASSES

• NINE SCHOOL WEEKS BETWEEN NOV. AND JAN. TESTS •

• ELEVEN SCHOOL WEEKS BETWEEN JAN. AND APR. TESTS •

opened and was to close in exactly six weeks, finishing, therefore, just before Thanksgiving. Third, we made an organized effort to stimulate and sustain interest throughout the period; and fourth, of course, success or failure would depend upon pupil performance, i.e., would depend upon individuals other than the organizers.

In planning the second campaign so many factors were found to need study that we arbitrarily selected some and discarded others. For example, we knew that wide variation existed in each class and we knew that the plan followed in the first study

FIGURE 2. DEVELOPMENT OF FIVE FIFTH GRADE CLASSES.

•NINE SCHOOL WEEKS BETWEEN NOV. AND JAN TESTS•

•ELEVEN SCHOOL WEEKS BETWEEN JAN. AND APR. TESTS•

would increase variability. But rather than discard the plan altogether it was decided to overlook this defect, since overtraining would not handicap a pupil in his work and since the period of such overtraining was to be short. Indeed, the only alternative would have been to discard the plan entirely, since the success of any campaign depends upon "boosters" among the people campaigned. Witness the preponderance of Democrats at a democratic rally or of Christian people at a religious revival. We determined, however, to obtain some check upon this phase of

the problem by observing the amount of voluntary work done by each pupil.

This time the work extended from the fourth to the eighth grades inclusive and in all schools where these grades were found. This included some fifteen schools, several of them one- or two-teacher schools. The number of pupils in each grade ranged in round numbers from 250 in the fourth grade to 150 in the eighth.

The amount of class time given to drill work was limited to ten minutes daily except in the case of the fourth grade in long division. The same general plans were followed as before. Lists of pupils' scores and class charts were displayed. Pupils were furnished all the examples they wanted for outside work, except that each teacher was asked to use her judgment in limiting the number given to individuals whom she considered physically unfit for outside work. But this time pupils were allowed to record the number of examples which they turned in for correction. For the most part these examples were never corrected. This matter will be touched upon again in connection with the third campaign.

The results of the second campaign were clear cut and decisive. The first test (the one given at the beginning of the second campaign) revealed the fact that the pupils were well graded in respect to ability in fundamental operations with integers, since there was, in general, a difference of one to two examples between each two successive grades and since in only one case did one grade median equal that of the next higher grade in any of the four operations. Furthermore, each grade median in rate with the exception of those of the fourth grade in subtraction and multiplication, was within one example of the Curtis standard for the grade. The second test given at the end of the six-week period, showed that, with but one exception, each grade median was above that which the next higher grade had earned at the beginning of the period. The one exception was the fifth grade in addition. At the beginning of the campaign the median of all median accuracies for all five grades in the four operations was 70 percent; at the end it was 78 percent with only two cases below 70 percent, these being in the sixties. At the end of the period, each grade, judged by the performance of its median pupil, was better prepared to deal with integers than the grade above had

been at the beginning of the campaign. These facts are shown in Figure 3. In terms of their own performance, all grades combined in all operations combined, improved the rate of work one-fourth and worked one-third more examples correctly.

FIGURE 3—RESULTS OF SECOND CAMPAIGN—SHOWING HOW EACH GRADE SURPASSED THE INITIAL RECORD OF THE NEXT HIGHER GRADE.

As stated before, the pupils kept records of the number of examples worked outside of class. The pupils of each grade were grouped on this basis. For each process, Group I was made up of pupils who reported that they worked less than one hundred examples; Group II reported 100 to 199 examples; Group III, 200 to 299 examples; and Group IV, 300 or more examples. The group medians in each grade and process were found for the tests given at the beginning and at the end of the six weeks' campaign. There were four groups for each grade, and each group had four medians, one in each process, except the fourth grade in division. Thus there were nineteen medians for Group I—three for the fourth grade, and four each for the succeeding grades. Similarly there were nineteen medians for Group II, nineteen for Group III, and nineteen for Group IV. Taking the median of these medians for each group, figures are obtained that represent respectively the performances of pupils who worked less than 100 examples, 100 to 199 examples, 200 to 299 examples, and 300 or more examples.

These figures reveal a high positive correlation between the number of examples worked and progress. In rate of working, the first group of pupils (who worked less than one hundred examples) gained less than two examples; the second group gained a little more than two, the third three, and the fourth four and one-half, or two years' growth in the six weeks. In the number of examples worked correctly, the gains were 1.2 for Group I; 2.7 for Group II; 3.5 for Group III; and 4.5 for Group IV.

Compared with Group I, the most industrious group not only made more than twice the gain in rate, and almost four times the gain in number worked correctly, but these gains were also made on the basis of a higher initial score. In the beginning there was a difference of approximately two examples in rate and one example in number correct between Groups I and IV.

THE THIRD CAMPAIGN

We intended to use this information in the third campaign to be conducted in the fall of 1919. We were going to give each pupil, immediately following the initial test, a personal folder containing the number of examples in each process which he should work to bring his score up to the grade standard. This could be so handled that it would prove an additional incentive to work.

But as the time for the third campaign approached, a large part of the writer's time was taken up somewhat unexpectedly with administrative details in connection with our outlying schools. It was found impossible to give even the usual amount of attention to the campaign just at that time. Hence, it was decided to proceed with a very simple form of organization. The teachers gave the tests. Clerks scored the papers and made out individual score lists which were displayed in the arithmetic rooms. Announcement was made to the teachers that the campaign would close in six weeks, and they were asked to encourage the pupils to practice for the purpose of raising their scores. They were also asked to limit class-time drill to ten minutes daily. They were furnished with self-keyed drill cards for the outside work; and by a judicious distribution of these, overtraining was partially eliminated. Clerical help was provided to correct part of the papers. The amount of work turned in had made correction of papers impossible in the second campaign, but this time with

the help of self-keyed examples and some clerks, it was done. After correction, the papers were returned to the pupils who recorded the number worked correctly.

The initial and final tests were given to grades IV to VIII but the campaign was confined to the fourth, fifth, and sixth grades. The seventh and eighth grades served as controls.

The value of the plan, even when thus hastily and imperfectly organized, was apparent when the second test papers were scored. In the fourth, fifth, and sixth grades the median of all the gains made by all grades in all processes was 1.7 examples both in number worked and in number worked correctly. This indicates a gain in percent of accuracy. In the seventh and eighth grades, on the other hand, the gain was one-half of one example both in number worked and in number worked correctly. Furthermore, at the beginning of the campaign in the fourth, fifth, and sixth grades, no grade median in any process was equal to the Courtis standard for the grade except the fifth-grade medians in subtraction and division which exceeded it by one-tenth and two-tenths of one example respectively. But at the end of the campaign each grade median equaled or exceeded the standard in each process except the fourth grade in multiplication which missed it by one-tenth of one example. We are unable to report evidence of any value in having the pupils count only the examples they had correct, rather than having them count all examples worked. Using the same method of computing gain as that used for the second campaign, the gain in accuracy was only one-half as great as in the second campaign. This feature of the work should not be discarded, however, without further study because in the second campaign all pupils had been campaigned indiscriminately, while in the third campaign the subject was not emphasized as much in the better classes as in the poorer ones.

PERMANENCY OF ACQUISITION

The second campaign was conducted between October 3, 1917 and November 15, 1917. In June of that year a third form of the Courtis test was given. The object was to find out how much of the gain made during the second campaign had proved to be permanent. Only the scores of pupils who took all the tests were considered. Approximately the same results were obtained as at the end of the campaign in November. Slight additional

gains were made in the lower grades, while small losses were sustained in the upper grades. It will be recalled that in the six weeks of the second campaign pupils had in general improved one-fourth in rate of work and one-third in accuracy. The June test showed that the effect had lasted seven months.

The third campaign, which was conducted in the fall of 1919, afforded an opportunity to estimate the permanency of these gains over a still longer period. Two years had elapsed. The fourth, fifth, and sixth grades had now become the sixth, seventh, and eighth respectively. The first test in the third campaign showed in these grades the effects of the training two years before. In but three cases were these grades below the present grade standards as much as one example, even within a month after the beginning of the school year. In another month, without any attention to the subject in the seventh and eighth grades, except the giving of the tests, no grade median in any process was found to be below the present standard as much as one example.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

To summarize, the first campaign with ten classes showed us the possibilities of the plan, but eleven weeks' work resulted in overtraining for most of the pupils. The second campaign, carefully organized and administered, caused each grade to attain a performance in excess of that of the next higher grade at the beginning of the campaign. This campaign also proved the positive correlation between amount of work and progress. The third campaign, hastily organized, and administered wholly by teachers, resulted in a gain of almost two examples. And from the first test of this campaign was obtained some evidence of the permanent value of the previous one.

In discussing the characteristics of a campaign, we mentioned its value as a means of awakening individuals to the duties and privileges of cooperation. It is impossible to gauge this value exactly any more than we can calculate the degree of national awakening due to the Liberty Loan campaigns or the broadening of human sympathies due to the great war-relief drives. Yet it is certain that these school campaigns were valuable in fostering the spirit of cooperation. Pupils sought aid of each other, and in turn, offered help; parents were asked by their children to time and examine the home work; and the schools themselves came in

for their share of parental attention. If you doubt this, start a campaign in your school in arithmetic or geography or spelling or oral English. But allow me to suggest the inadvisability of starting more than one at a time, or of following one too closely by another.

Any one who has ever seen pupils of the intermediate and grammar grades gathered around a chart dealing with any aspect of their school work ranging from school attendance to classroom performance will not deny the possibilities of a further use of such charts. Children, like the rest of us, want to know just what their task is, and particularly what the limits are. Moreover, they work best when they know that their own performance rather than some teacher's judgment will decide the success or failure of their efforts. We have tended too much, in school work, to emphasize the lower limit—the passing mark—and to refuse to acknowledge the possibility of any pupils reaching the upper limit—100 percent. Children refuse to accept this view of their own limitations, but what can they do about it? Even when the teacher knows exactly what she wants, the pupils seldom know. Their task is to keep busy and avoid making trouble. Their problem is analogous to what ours would be if we were sent to a machine shop or a prescription counter or a lawyer's office and told to keep busy, to learn as much as possible about mechanics or drugs or the law, and, above all, not to disturb anyone else. But how different the pupil's problem becomes when he knows exactly what he can do now, and what he is challenged to be able to do at a given time; and when he knows that the success or failure of his efforts will be determined by his own performance at that time.

Allow me to say in conclusion that although we do not yet know the limitations of the plan, we do know that we can cause a grade to make a year's normal progress in the use of whole numbers in six weeks. And although we do not hail it as a panacea for all the ills of elementary education, we are firmly convinced of the value of the campaign plan in all aspects of school work which depend upon the memorizing process or the acquisition of skill, or in any field where definite standards can be established and reliable measures of attainment are available.