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GROUPING BY STANDARDIZED TESTS FOR INSTRUCTIONAL PURPOSES

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Scientific diagnosis of educational work and the application of remedies to fit the needs shown by such diagnosis are doing more to improve teaching than any other procedure in the school world. Most teachers work blindly, not knowing whether they are getting the results they should. When they *do* know the nature of their results and realize that the product of their teaching is unsatisfactory they do not know how to diagnose the trouble or what corrective measures to use. Usually if a teacher can diagnose the disease of an educational patient she can find a remedy which at least partially cures. Without a diagnosis, however, she hunts in a helter-skelter way for devices and methods. Having found them, she throws them indiscriminately at all the pupils, hoping that they may hit the individuals who need them.

After scientific tests have been given a class the teacher knows, in about ninety cases out of a hundred, what the trouble is. She should then place children with like needs in groups and apply the remedies which will bring each group up to standard in the point in which it is weak. Grouping children makes teaching easier and more satisfactory.

Of course, it will be argued by some that under the present school organization, this cannot be done; that it will require additions to the teaching force to handle all these groups. We grant that there is some force in such an argument, while insisting at the same time that much can be done without any radical reorganization. I shall give as proof of this an account of the work done in grouping children in reading at the Myrtle Hill School during the fall and winter last year.

We began by giving in the fourth, fifth, and sixth grades a silent reading test of our own making. Of course it was not standardized but it revealed those who read most rapidly and comprehendingly. The fourth grade was divided into two groups.

The group which read most comprehendingly and at a good rate was assigned to the regular room teacher, and I took those who fell low in their speed and in their ability to grasp thought. If there had been four or even three teachers available at that period, the better way would have been to divide the pupils into three or four groups, as follows: (1) those who read very rapidly and comprehendingly; (2) those who read comprehendingly but slowly; (3) those who read rapidly but with little comprehension; and (4) those who read neither rapidly nor comprehendingly. Since but two teachers were free, only two groups were formed. The same idea was carried out in the fifth and sixth grades, except that there we had the four groups since four teachers were available.

We were interested to find that our grouping corresponded very closely to that made after the Denver Department of Measurements and Standards had brought out the results of a city-wide use of Monroe's Silent Reading Test. This test, therefore, was the second given the Myrtle Hill pupils. Using it as a basis and taking class work into account also we redivided the pupils into more or less advanced groups. Large distribution charts were made on sign cloth; one for speed (Figure 1) and one for comprehension (Figure 2).

Each pupil after being told his score in rate and in comprehension was shown how to find his "dot," and to discover his position in regard to the standard for his grade. He was also shown how his work compared with that of his own classmates and with that of members of other classes. After these charts had been left in the classrooms for a short time, they were publicly exhibited, much to the interest of pupils, parents, and teachers.

After about four weeks' work, the Courtis Silent Reading Test was given. We found that in the fifth and sixth grades, where there had been four groups working, only three pupils fell below the standard in rate (Table I). Ten were found to have reached a stage where, according to the test, no more training was needed in either comprehension or rate. They were excused from reading as a formal study. One of the four teachers took charge of this group during the reading period, devoting the time to whatever the individuals needed most. Some worked on arithmetic, some on spelling, etc. At the close of the semester this group was given

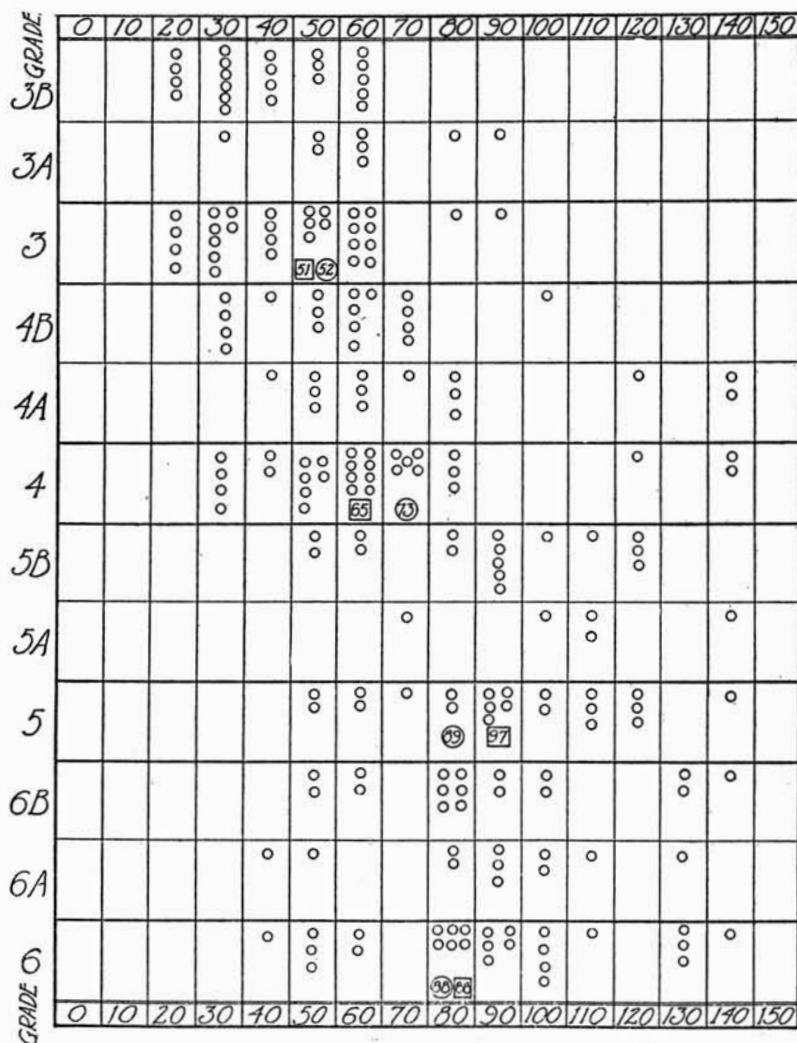


FIGURE 1. SPEED-READING DISTRIBUTION CHART. MONROE
SILENT READING—MYRTLE HILL SCHOOL. STANDARD
MEDIAN: ○ CLASS MEDIAN: □

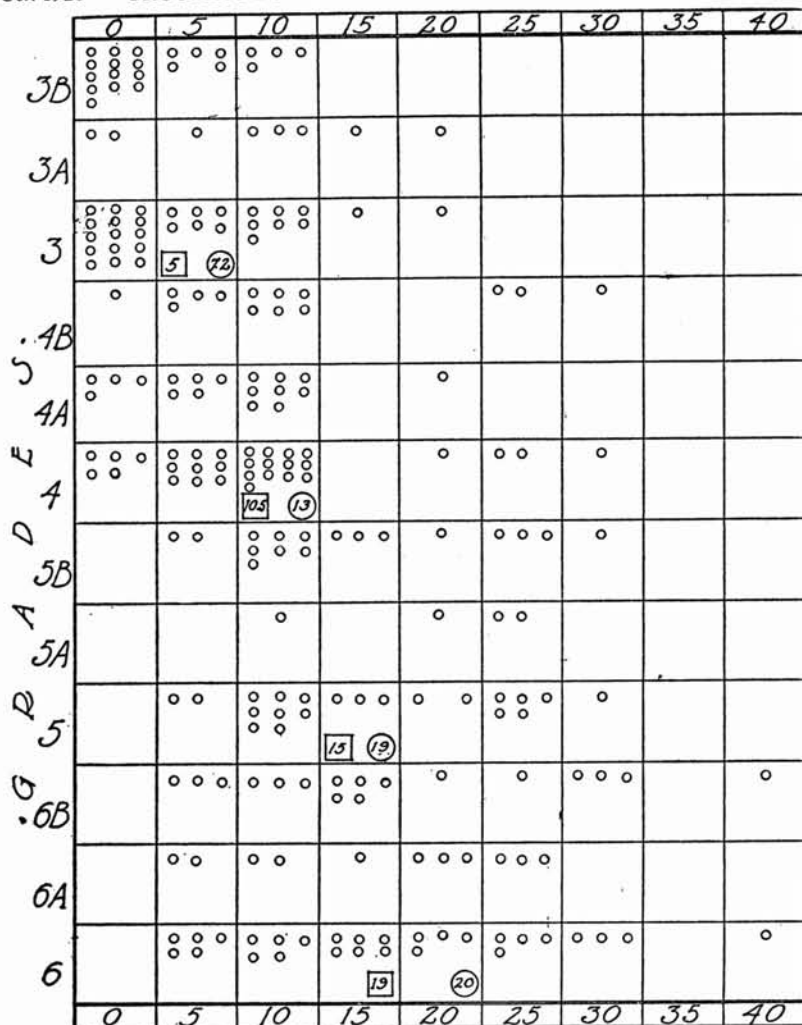


FIGURE 2. COMPREHENSION-READING DISTRIBUTION CHART.

MONROE SILENT READING—MYRTLE HILL SCHOOL.

STANDARD MEDIAN: ○ CLASS MEDIAN: □

Fordyce's Silent Reading Test with the results shown in Table II. Nine of the eleven¹ scored 100 percent in speed and over 75 percent in quality;² one scored 100 percent in speed, but only 65

¹ One pupil had been added to the original ten.

* The proposed standards for the test are 100 percent in speed and at least 70 percent in quality.

TABLE I. DISTRIBUTION OF PUPILS ACCORDING TO INDEX OF COMPREHENSION AND NUMBER OF QUESTIONS ANSWERED (RATE)

Questions Answered	Index of Comprehension										Total	
	Less than -5	-5 to +5	6-39	40-69	70-79	80-84	85-89	90-94	95-99	100		
70												Rate satisfactory
65												
60					1		1	1	1		4	
55					2	1	1	4	4		12	
50					2	3		6	1		12	
45				1	1		2	3			7	
40				1	2	1	2	4	3	1	14	
35								1			1	Rate too slow
30			1				1				2	
25												
20												
15												
10												
5												
0												
Total			1	2	8	5	7	19	9	1	52	
	Guesswork			Comprehension poor				Comprehension satisfactory				

TABLE II. DISTRIBUTION OF THE PUPILS IN THE FIRST GROUP ACCORDING TO SPEED AND QUALITY OF SILENT READING (FORDYCE)

Quality	Speed (percents)				
	85	90	95	100	Total
100				4	4
95					
90	1			3	4
85					
80					
75				2	2
70					
65				1	1
Total	1			10	11

Class Averages: Speed 99%; Quality 89%; Efficiency 82%

percent in quality and another scored 85 percent in speed and 90 percent in quality. From this we are led to believe that it is quite possible that, after having acquired a certain standard, a pupil of a given grade may be excused from reading as a formal subject until he has reached a higher grade, where his reading is below standard for that grade.

In the second group we placed those whose index of comprehension according to the Courtis Silent Reading Test was between 90 and 94; in the third group those whose index of comprehension was between 80 and 89; and in the fourth, all those whose index of comprehension was below 80. We are now hoping that when the next test is given, no one will be below standard in speed and that the majority of each group will be ready to enter the next higher one.

It is too early to make any final deductions but we are watching with interest a number of points. Never have there been as few complaints from parents in regard to children's "marks." This may be a coincidence, but we think not. A child's "marks" when obtained in part from a standardized test, are more satisfying than they are when based on one teacher's judgment.

Though there is much labor connected with giving and following up these tests, the teachers seem to feel them worth while and do not resent them as they did at first. It is not so hard to teach pupils when they are well grouped and each pupil knows his objective. So long as they continue to see marked gain, teachers will welcome the movement and not rebel against the added work.

In my experience I have found no one thing which has done so much to motivate the work as the grouping system based on the standardized test. After we had been working for a few weeks in groups in reading, the city department sent out a test in arithmetic. The pupils asked at once whether groups were to be formed in that subject too. We have carried out the same idea in arithmetic and penmanship and hope soon to do so in other subjects.

At the suggestion of one of the teachers each instructor is going to keep a book, showing each child's score in each test, educational and intelligence, for the year. This book will be passed on with the class to the next higher grade. Every child's record for every year will thus be kept permanently. It cannot fail to be of value to the teacher and to the parent.