The Effect of Anxiety and Motivation on a Subject's Performance When Subjected to a Stress Condition of Delayed Auditory Feedback

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A STUDY OF NONPROMOTION RELATIVE TO NORMAL GRADE EXPECTANCY IN SELECTED CATHOLIC ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS IN ILLINOIS

by

Sister M. Caritas Archer

A Dissertation Submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of Loyola University in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Education

June 1967
LIFE

The birthplace of Sister M. Caritas Archer was New Orleans, Louisiana; the date, May, 1918.

Her educational background included St. Henry Elementary School, St. Stephen High School, and the New Orleans Public School Teacher Training College, the Margaret C. Hanson Normal School, from which she graduated in June, 1937, with certification from the Louisiana State Board of Education. After a brief period of experience in the public school system of New Orleans, the writer entered the novitiate of the Sisters of Christian Charity in Wilmette, Illinois, where she pursued studies in the Motherhouse Mallinckrodt College until 1941.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This work was accomplished through the gracious assistance and cooperation of many generous persons.

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The author is also appreciative of the guidance services rendered by Mr. Douglas Van Bramer, Dr. Arthur O'Mara, and Dr. John Wozniak.

To relatives who followed from afar with interest and prayer—and especially to Dorothy who offered her secretarial assistance—the writer is deeply grateful.

All have a share in whatever good may accrue to teachers and students through the use of information on the nonpromotion problem contained within this volume.
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CHAPTER I

THE NONPROMOTION PROBLEM: A SELECTED PHASE

Introductory Background

Shall I promote this pupil? His intelligence quotient indicates average ability—but he has failed in major subjects. Another year in the same grade would be to his advantage in attaining at least average achievement—but he will be a year older than the other children. How will he adjust socially? How will his new classmates accept him? What would really be the better decision in regard to his academic, social—even spiritual—progress, since religion lessons also are planned with reflection on the age level of the class group? Such reasoning, deliberation, uncertainty, indecision are typical of the inward conflicts, the mental debates in which conscientious teachers become involved as promotion time approaches at the end of each school session. This is the problem posed for consideration in the present investigation. It exists as one among many aspects that could be considered under the general problem of nonpromotion. In order to understand the specific phase selected for examination in this dissertation, it will be necessary to obtain a preliminary view of the historical background in education underlying promotional theory. The
following pages supply a brief introduction; more detailed analyses will be presented later in Chapter II. As a point of origin, the frame of reference must be in relation to promotional decisions in general.

Immeasurable at the moment of determination— but far-reaching in terms of scholastic achievement, interpersonal relations, and personality development— are the consequences of the resolution of this problem—to promote or not to promote—irrespective of either direction chosen. This statement must be qualified by contributing the explanation—as long as the American traditional pattern of elementary school organization is retained.

From decade to decade in the history of American educational progress—like a reverberated theme echoing through the records of research literature relative to the subject of nonpromotion—recur the words "persistent" and "dilemma." Both terms, when combined, imply a predicament, a perplexing situation, which continues to baffle professional personnel dedicated to the pursuit of educational ideals and practices designed to achieve the greatest good for students enrolled in the elementary schools of our nation. Though an abundance of research material reflecting various facets of the nonpromotion problem is available to the interested investigator, the very fact of the "persistence" of this "dilemma" evokes a challenge to pursue further inquiries and present contributory conclusions that may in some measure advance the issue to a proximate degree of resolution.

How persistent is the problem? In one of the most comprehensive studies appearing in the field, involving about two and one-half million pupils, and covering the years from 1908 to 1928, Cooke reported 31 per
cent retardation in the schools under investigation.\(^1\) As early as 1931, in the Ninth Yearbook of the National Education Association, the Department of Superintendents listed the pupil promotion issue as one of the foremost requiring attention.\(^2\) Thirty years later, though the effects of nonpromotion had been carefully studied through the decades, a writer commented that educational leaders continued to confront the problem which still presented such a magnitude of breadth that more scientific analyses both horizontal and vertical in nature were definitely required to arrive at ever clearer, more sharply focused inferences.\(^3\)

In what does the "dilemma" consist? The answer to this inquiry resides within the framework of the grade-standard theory under which the majority of American schools have been operating since the decade following the year 1860. According to this plan of procedure, a definite body of knowledge and skills was assigned in the curriculum to each "grade," and mastery was demanded before promotion to the next higher school level could be achieved. Underlying the theory was the assumption that all could acquire the same knowledge and skills at the same rate of speed. The results proved contradictory; some had to repeat the grade—of this


\(^3\) Ibid.
group, a number achieved standard performance after the second year, the remaining needed a third trial and still did not succeed. Overageness became the ensuing general problem; discontentment, bitterness, dissatisfaction with school life often led to behavior disturbances, truancy, dropouts before termination of elementary school education.¹

In an attempt to remedy apparent failures of the grade-standard theory, a distinctly different plan of pupil progress was formulated. This scheme favored the division of the school population into groups with chronological age as the criterion for classification and progression. However, the new organizational arrangement was not generally adopted. It, too, presented problems, the most significant residing in the heterogeneous ability group populating each of the classrooms. Encumbent upon this administrative device was the need for an understanding of individual differences, newer methods of teaching, creative designs of school planning and organization for more effective instruction.

Thus from the above consideration of the cumulative effect produced by adherence to either a policy of excessive retardation or total grade promotion the situation presents a dilemma with a choice between equally unsatisfactory alternatives. Nor is the problem less significant with reference to the individual student whose presence contributes to the composition of the class unit to which he is assigned after the promotional

¹Calvin H. Reed, "Promotions--Automatic or Earned?" National Parent Teacher, LIV (November 1959), 13.
decision has been reached. Many thoughts engendering further reflection on the results of nonpromotion or trial promotion in reference to the individual are awakened by the perusal of pertinent research literature. Valuable findings from various experiments will be cited in Chapter II. It will become evident to the reader that through the years leaders in the educational field have tried to formulate theories and practices which would intercept the two general alternatives present in the promotion dilemma set forth thus far in this dissertation, and have attempted to suggest possible solutions to the quandary.

Another view of the "persistent dilemma" can be further considered. While searching through literature in the field, the writer's interest was attracted by the statement: "An enigmatic phenomenon with which all teachers and many perplexed parents are familiar is the child who manifests an inability to learn in school in spite of test indications of normal or superior ability." 5 A trend of thought pursuing a hypothetical promotional decision in such cases arose:

1. Do not students in this category occasion a specific type of dilemma?

2. Are these normal or above average ability students retained in their respective classes if they fail to reach a standard level of performance?

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5 Henri Van De Riet, "Effects of Praise and Reproof on Paired-Associate Learning in Educationally Retarded Children," Journal of Educational Psychology, LV (June 1964), 139.
3. Do they reach this level the following year—or some time in the future?

4. Has research been done in this field?

5. Would findings on this problem be of value to teachers and administrators?

6. How would the writer delimit this broad topic in order to do justice to the subject?

7. How much statistical data would be necessary to arrive at a general estimate of the truth underlying the results of promotion decisions in this area?

8. From what school population would the author select subjects for the study?

9. Would enough subjects be available to support the initial hypothesis that nonpromotion of average and above average ability students exists?

10. Would a comparison of academic and social performance with that of students of similar mental ability yield a measure of contrast?

A preliminary survey of schools in Illinois under the supervision of the Sisters of Christian Charity revealed the presence of such students in every grade. Further research indicated a scarcity of material in this field. These conditions, in addition to the challenging questions listed above, motivated the undertaking of this dissertation.
Statement of the Problem

The thesis presents a search for the effects of nonpromotion on the academic achievement and social-personal development of average and above average ability students in elementary schools under the administration of the Sisters of Christian Charity in Illinois. The field of inquiry focused on a comparison of achievement with normal grade expectancy levels and that of regularly promoted students of similar mental ability and grade classification.

More specifically, the research endeavored to provide answers for the following questions:

1. Does nonpromotion seem to be an effective means of bringing average and above average ability students up to standard academic performance?

2. How near to the year of retention does performance seem to approach or excel the norm—when it does tend in this direction?

3. Among which category of students—primary, intermediate, or upper elementary—does nonpromotion seem to effect greater scholastic progress or regression?

4. From the statistical manipulation of scholastic test results, does a pattern seem to emerge whereby an educator can observe a significant difference between performance of nonpromoted and regularly promoted students of similar mental ability and grade classification?
5. In what direction does this difference tend?

6. Is there a significant difference between the behavior of promoted and nonpromoted students as evidenced in a comparison of their social-personal traits?

7. Are teachers of the various elementary school grade levels in favor of nonpromotion as an effective technique?

8. What does related literature reveal concerning trends in promotional policies and practices?

9. Have effective policies been discovered?

10. How do policies and practices in the schools under consideration compare in reference to research findings and conclusions on the subject on nonpromotion?

The pursuit of answers to these questions presented a project that would seem to yield valuable educational insights not only for the schools concerned but also for other teachers experiencing similar problems. Wherever average and above average ability students are identified as retainers there would seem to be need of an explanation for this apparent contradiction. Why should students who are capable of learning, whose mental ability indicates an inherent quality suggestive of normal grade progress, be retarded academically and relocated with younger classmates for the remainder of their educational careers? Does this affect their personalities? What purposes do teachers seem to have in retaining these students? How successful are they in reaching standard performance and how soon is this
accomplished?

In all probability this type of student can be found in many schools. The fact that pupils are not listed according to IQ classifications when statistics on nonpromotion are gathered disguises the true number of average and above average ability actually among the group. Literature pertaining to under-achievers in specific subject fields, revealed their presence. Many experiments have been attempted in these areas to locate ways and means of assisting the academically retarded. Various methods of teaching, newer approaches in content and audio-visual aids have claimed the attention of interested educators. Yet, with all these advancements, a proportion of the school population of average and above average ability continues to fail.

The initial considerations above led to further inquiries. On what are the failures based? Research indicated the general purpose or intention underlying professional decisions determining nonpromotion. In a recent national school survey on trends in public education, the United States Office of Education concluded that the general pattern in promotional policy was based on academic factors; only a small percentage of United States schools operated on social or group policies. Thus it seems evident that American educators continue to uphold academic achievement as the criterion. This, in turn, has its basis on classroom stand-

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ards, and on general norms or typical performance of children at each grade level. The former are peculiar to individual teachers; the latter relies upon measures sought through the medium of standard test scores.

Many points could be considered in reference to classroom standards of academic performance which teachers demand or expect of their pupils. This project, however, is limited to a consideration of achievement assessed by formal standardized tests. The question rises: How have norms or typical performance at grade level been determined? Through highly technical procedures of standardisation after administration of the tests to thousands of pupils chosen as a stratified sample of those who would in future take them, norms of the better known tests of mental ability and achievement have been produced. As a result, these have been generally accepted by teachers and administrators as valuable, dependable aids in the study of student performance and have in many cases been significant in determining decisions on nonpromotion.

If, then, promotion is based on achievement primarily, how wide or how narrow is the range within which an average student might hope to progress with his classmates? Research in the area of achievement has disclosed a consensus of opinion on the existence of a wide range of achievement in each subject in each class. Goodlad reported the class range to be about as much as the grade level, that is, four grades in the fourth year of elementary school, five in the fifth, and continuing in this pattern. He further stated that less than 15 per cent of the children in a fourth grade class normally are at grade level by the middle of
the year; the other 85 per cent are ranging up and down by several grades. 7

Not only in achievement but also in mental ability, the range is wide. An investigation by Cook supplied a generalization in reference to the range of mental ability in all classes. The study pointed out the following probable situation existing in elementary schools. Children of normal age—six-year-olds—who enter Grade One each September include: (1) about 2 per cent who are below average in mental development and would be classified at the four-year-old level, and (2) another 2 per cent who would be grouped with eight-year-old children; by removing the 1 per cent from the extremes, the remaining 96 per cent of six-year-olds display a range of four years in general intelligence. By the time these students reach the age of twelve in the seventh grade, the range will have increased to almost eight years. Cook projected the further probability that a slow eighth grade learner demoted to Grade Four would still be a slow learner and achieve below the level of the average fourth grade student. 8

Another interesting study pertaining to an overview on the promotion problem was that recounted by Derby. He described the results of a standardized achievement test administered to a group of thirty children in Grade Three. The highest score attained in any subject was 8.4; the lowest, 2.1; the norm was 3.9; the greatest range in scores for any one sub-


ject was 5.8. To answer questions which possibly might rise in the reader's mind concerning the teachers and type of student, Derby reported necessary information: (1) the situation involved a practice school of a teachers' college in a suburban area; (2) the building was supplied with modern facilities and equipment; (3) the pupils were from a predominantly middle socio-economic class; (4) teachers held Master of Arts Degrees and had been chosen as "master" educators because of outstanding ability in the classroom. There were no IQ scores available for eight children; of the remaining twenty-two, ten were average or below; twelve were above. In deciding who among the thirty should be promoted, it was demonstrated that the following facts would have been considered: (1) if promotion depended on being up to grade level in every subject—fifteen would fail; (2) if promotion were based on reading—six would fail; (3) if on arithmetic—two; (4) on language—fourteen; (5) if the average of all subjects—five would fail (though this concealed the hidden failures of ten students in one or more subjects). 9

Through the process of reasoning—by combining Goodlad's 10 report of seven years' range in achievement in Grade Seven and Cook's 11 prediction of eight years' range of mental ability in Grade Seven—then Derby's 12

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9 Orlo L. Derby, "Toward a Rational View of Promotion," Understanding the Child, XXIII (April 1954), 44.

10 Goodlad, p. 29.


12 Derby, p. 44.
group of heterogeneous levels would seem to represent the typical American classroom setting. If promotion to the next grade is based on achievement, and there is such a variety of levels in each grade, it may be questioned whether the name "grade" itself as applied to any group of children is a misnomer; and if the evident range in each grade and each subject is so wide, it would seem strange that average and above average ability students should fall so far below standards as to be classified as failures and not qualified for membership in the next higher group.

Besides academic results, some students of the nonpromotion problem have attempted to focus attention on the social personal effects attendant upon retention in elementary school grades. From available resources, it would appear that symptoms of maladjustment are more evident among pupils who have experienced failure in schools than among those who have progressed from grade to grade normally each year. However, here again, individual differences in character development and social background operate to prevent statistics from favoring either total promotion or nonpromotion of underachievers. If, however, as Anderson states, nonpromotion often results in emotional depression and discouragement, loss of self-confidence, aggressive and attention-getting behavior; if it causes unwholesome attitudes, undermines self-respect, deadens initiative, destroys the sense of security in the family, and promotes truancy and de-

linquency; if, as reported by Morse from a research project conducted
through a United States Office of Education Research Grant on children's
social and psychological development related to school achievement: "What-
ever else we have done, we have communicated a sense of personal failure
to many of our pupils. . . . Much of their energy is now being devoted
to struggling with their sense of failure, energy which could better be
devoted to school work"; 15 if Jersild concludes that the school to many
children is a source of self-disparagement, unfavorable comparisons, a
reminder of failure and rejection because of prevailing policies 16 --then
it seemed to the writer that additional research focused not only on the
academic aspects of nonpromotion but also on the social-personal phases
concomitant with retention, and directed to a closer study of nonpromoted
pupils of average ability, would be of professional value.

Moreover, serious reflection on the vast divergence apparently exist-
ing between accumulated research findings on the general subject of nonpro-
motion and educational practices operating in many school systems, on the
controversial nature of the promotion problem even in our modern era, led
to the hypothesis that there must be some evidence of significant benefits

14 Robert H. Anderson, "Ungraded Primary Classes--an Administrative
Contribution to Mental Health," Understanding the Child, XXIV (June 1955), 66.

15 William C. Morse, "Self-Concept in the School Setting," Childhood
Education, XLI (December 1964), 198.

derived from a practice which has been adhered to so tenaciously over the decades. The writer's interest was attracted by the apparent challenge of a closer scrutiny of this educational enigma with the hope of detecting possible academic or social bases which would justify loyalty to a policy repeatedly disclaimed by research evidence.

Purpose of the Study

The investigation was planned to attain the following goals:

1. Through an intense study of related literature:
   a) to search for the results of nonpromotion in general, and wherever possible in reference to average and above average ability students;
   b) to identify promotion policies and practices that seem to offer a measure of success;

2. Through the use of data-gathering instruments:
   a) to obtain achievement scores of nonpromoted pupils of average and above average ability, and of regularly promoted students of similar mental age and grade level;
   b) to obtain information on social-personal traits of these subjects;

3. Through statistical procedure:
   a) to test the significance of the difference in performance of nonpromoted students and normal grade expectancy; also to test the difference between nonpromoted subjects and matched part-
b) to determine significant differences, if any, between trait attributes of nonpromoted and matched partners;

4. Through data collected from questionnaires sent to principals and teachers:
   a) to summarize and analyze teachers' opinions on nonpromotion practices;
   b) to examine existing policies and principals' suggestions on promotion practices;

5. Through comparison of research findings with results of this investigation:
   a) to arrive at a synthesis which might prove useful to personnel involved in making annual decisions on promotion—especially where cases of average and above average ability students are concerned;
   b) to contribute, as the highest goal, research findings which may be of value in the field of Catholic education.

It was hoped that this study would shed light on the moot question as to whether or not average and above average ability students have benefited from nonpromotion.

**Significance of the Study**

Recorded on pages of literature pertaining to the subject was found convincing evidence of the importance and need for further research on
this topic. Myers states: "Every year there seem to be one to two million elementary school children who are retained." Some teachers claim they fail only two or three students. If this is 10 per cent of their class, then according to Goodlad, the total amounts to two and one-half million children in all our United States schools; however the overall picture is reduced to about one million students, since there are schools which promote all or nearly all. Following these serious considerations, the writer's interest was claimed by Durrell's statement to the effect that 25 per cent of the children who make slow progress in school are of normal or superior intelligence. Concern for such a large segment of the school population who may be affected by promotional decisions—expressed in the form of a research study—indicated a possibility of offering a contribution of value to the educational field.

Wise, who completed a study of the literature of elementary school promotion-retention practices in 1964, recommended that a similar study be made in the future so that educators could have available in a consolidated form the literature and practices in a particular state. The

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18 John I. Goodlad, "To Promote or not to Promote," Childhood Education, XXX (January 1954), 212.
writer hoped to be of service in a somewhat similar aspect to the Sisters and lay teachers employed in selected Catholic elementary schools in Illinois. Results of the investigation with its emphasis on the nonpromotion of average and above average ability students would also be made available to all teachers in the thirty-five Catholic schools in the United States under the supervision of the Sisters of Christian Charity—for comparisons and generalizations. The significance of the study here would seem to reside in possible services rendered to teachers in time of decisions—when in doubt as to the advisability of promoting capable students who are failing in scholastic attainment. Since at the pivotal point of the nonpromotion issue stands the significant figure of the teacher whose judgment bears weight in affecting the lives of numerous children throughout the years of her professional career—the results of this investigation were estimated to be of professional worth to her, as an individual.

The most significant contribution in the scale of values which the author sought to achieve was in the form of social service, of Christian charity, rendered to the individual students whose educational destinies might in future be affected by any truths presented in this research project—either from the evidence compiled from related literature or in the findings set forth in the conclusions. Each Christian student has a destiny in common with others—to attain the status of sainthood—yet each one's path to the goal is a unique venture. The individual is equipped by God to stand in his humanity with a particular parentage, racial and geographical background; personal physical, mental, and spiritual gifts—
all to be used in his progress toward his eternal destiny. Whatever happens to each student in the elementary period of his educational formation is important, because of the personal social, psychological effects which result. In this respect, teachers and administrators, through their policies, affect the lives of their students and influence their attitudes toward life, people, and events in general. Catholic school pupils of average and above average ability who experience educational nonpromotion are destined in future to take their places in society as celebrities in art, music, letters; as military, political, or religious leaders—and if not renowned—at least as men and women, fathers and mothers of families, leaders in their own homes where their children will inherit their ideas, attitudes, values. To a proportionate degree, these values have been shaped in the years of elementary school education. The constant endeavor during the pursuit of an answer to the promotion dilemma, as recorded in the pages of this dissertation, has been to search for that solution which will most benefit the individual children concerned.

A master's thesis on nonpromotion contained the following statement: "To date, no specific study of the effects of nonpromotion has been conducted in a Catholic school system."21 There seems to be no such work available at this date (with the exception of the thesis from which the statement was taken). Thus in this area of Catholic education, the dis-

sertation seemed to contain within its scope a worthwhile presentation.

Viewed from another standpoint, the presence of nonpromoted students of average and above average ability in the classrooms of Catholic schools is a matter deserving studious reflection. Today, especially, when school enrollments are in excess of physical capacity and Catholic parents are confronted with the difficulty of securing admittance for their children, it seems timely to focus attention on this promotional problem which detains students in their educational progress and thus places additional financial burdens on parents.

In summary, it can be stated that the writer envisioned this educational undertaking as meeting a need and rendering a social service of Christian charity to administrators, teachers, parents—and most especially, to Catholic students in parochial schools.

**Preliminary Survey**

For the purpose of ascertaining whether or not enough cases among the student body attending parochial schools conducted by the Sisters of Christian Charity in Illinois would be available for the study, the investigator personally contacted the principals of these schools by telephone. Six of the schools are located in Chicago and seven in suburban areas. A brief description of the general nature of the project was made known; cooperation was sought in supplying preliminary statistics; and a promise of participation in the project (should the initial available data warrant its undertaking) was solicited. Since the principals are members of the
religious congregation of which the writer is a member, wholehearted support was pledged and assured. In order to avoid unnecessary waste of time, effort, and good will on the part of the teachers (in the event that the project would not be pursued through lack of a representative number of desirable subjects), the principals were requested to obtain from the staff only the most necessary and fundamental data. This consisted in each teacher’s recourse to the pupils’ cumulative forms and a recording of: (1) the number in the class enrollment, (2) the number who were over age for the grade, (3) of the latter overage category—the number who had IQ's of ninety-four and below, and the number of foreign-speaking students who had come into the school as immigrants. Subjects for the study were to include only children who had attended parochial schools in Illinois in their academic life. Since the Otis-Quick-Scoring Mental Ability Tests and Stanford Achievement Tests had been taken in the schools, it would be possible to obtain scores of mental ability and scholastic achievement based on these tests. It was hoped that the broad estimate of the number of nonpromoted students available as subjects could be ascertained in this general overview. Principals were requested to submit the data personally by means of the telephone in order to clear any difficulties that might have arisen.

Required data was loyally reported within a short time. After the number of students below ninety-four IQ and the number of foreign-speaking children had been subtracted from the number of overaged children, the resulting figures indicated the possible number with IQ’s of ninety-five
and above who might have been retained somewhere in their educational background. This very general estimate of the number that might actually be available after certain specific limitations would be placed on the selection of subjects was deemed satisfactory, since the addition of an equal number of regularly promoted students to match the nonpromoted group would be requested in the collection of required data. With great confidence in the cooperation of the Sisters and lay teachers, it was finally decided to launch forth on the project.

**Limitations of the Study**

While the nonpromotion problem is very broad and includes numerous phases, this dissertation was focused on one particular aspect only—the results of nonpromotion of average and above average ability students. Geographically, these individuals are located in every state; they are represented in every school and in every classroom. This investigation has been delimited to a selection of subjects from thirteen Catholic elementary schools—six city schools and seven suburban—under the administration of the Sisters of Christian Charity in Illinois. Research has revealed the fact that this particular category of students has seldom been the subject of specific investigation in the area of nonpromotion. Therefore, in presenting the historical background and previous research on this topic, the approach was through the study of the general nonpromotion problem, since the category of students under consideration has often been grouped within the framework of experimental studies of nonpromotion.
Generalizations and conclusions flowing from this study were formulated on the basis of a small population of nonpromoted students from each of the eight grades of elementary school, but the subjects were believed to be representative of nonpromotion cases of this type in other Catholic schools. Findings, therefore, were expected to be especially applicable to the remaining twenty-two elementary schools in other states where the members of this religious order are teaching.

Continually, throughout the various stages of progress in the writing of the dissertation, one quest was kept clearly in mind: "To promote—or not to promote? Which decision is most beneficial for this type of student?"

**Definition of Terms**

In order to clarify the meaning of educational terms appearing on the pages of this dissertation, the following explanations are offered to the reader:

**Ability, academic**—Ability of the sort measured by tests of abstract intelligence as distinguished from mechanical or social intelligence. 22

**Ability, average**—Synonymous (in this dissertation) with average intelligence or academic ability, as above.

**Achievement, academic**—Knowledge attained or skills developed in the school

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subjects, designated by test scores. 23

Achievement, pupil—Status of a pupil with respect to attained skills or knowledge as compared with other pupils. 24

Adjustment, personality—The act or process of harmonizing the personality with the demands of one's environment or with the behavior of one's associates or others. 25

Adjustment, social—The process whereby the individual attempts to maintain or further his security, comfort, status, or creative inclinations in the face of ever-changing conditions and pressures of his social environment, or the state or condition attained through such efforts. 26

Age-at-grade—Standards differ; in this study, all pupils six years of age by December 31 of the current school year were considered of normal age for first grade; one year was added for each succeeding school year.

Deviation IQ, (Otis IQ)—A measure of brightness expressed in terms of the deviation (distance) of a pupil's score from the norm score for persons of his chronological age.

23 Ibid., p. 7.
24 Ibid.
25 Ibid., p. 12.
26 Ibid.
Expectancy—A term descriptive of a predicted level of success, such as an expectancy level of performance in arithmetic as predicted from a pupil's mental age.

Hypothesis—A guiding idea, tentative explanation, or statement of probabilities, serving to indicate and guide observation and the search for relevant data and other considerations, and to predict certain results or consequences.

Intelligence—A degree of ability represented by performance on a group of tests selected because they have proved their practical value in the prediction of success in academic work.

Intelligence, average—The mean or median intelligence in terms of the brightness or mental maturity of any group of persons. (IQ of 100 is generally accepted as average brightness; the range extends from 90-109.)

MA—Mental age or the level of a person's mental ability expressed in terms of norms based on the median mental age of a group of persons having the same CA (chronological age)—thus, if a child's mental ability is that

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27 Ibid., p. 213.
28 Ibid., p. 276.
29 Ibid., p. 293.
30 Ibid.
of an average nine-year-old, he has the mental age of nine years, regardless of his actual chronological age. 31

Mental grade—The mental age of a pupil expressed in terms of its equivalence in school grades and determined by subtracting five years from the mental age—thus, a pupil of normal intelligence has a mental grade of one in Grade One; brighter and duller children have different mental grades than the school grade in which they are placed. 32

MGE—Mental grade expectancy or the level of performance predicted from a person's mental grade.

Nonpromoted students—Any student (in this study) who had experienced academic failure by retention in any elementary school grade at any time in his school history since entering Grade One.

Nonpromotion—Failure of a pupil to be promoted to the next higher grade at a regular promotion period. 33

Norm—A standard or criterion for judgment. 34

31 Ibid., p. 20.
33 Good, p. 367.
34 Ibid.
Norm, grade—Median achievement of pupils in a given school grade on a
given standard test. 35

Overage—All (in this study) who are seven years of age or over in Grade
One by December 31 of the current school year; one year was added for each
succeeding school year.

Promotion, academic—A process by which a student is passed on to the next
school grade or academic level. 36

Retention—Used in the same context as the word "nonpromotion."

Summary

Characterized as "persistent" and a "dilemma," the promotion problem
in the elementary schools of the nation is one of long standing. The
"dilemma" has appeared in the promotional decision based on one of two
general alternatives: (1) to demand a definite standard of scholastic
achievement before advancement to the next grade, or (2) to permit progress
within the social environment of age groups. Since neither theory in its
total acceptance meets the general approval of educational personnel and
the public, the search has continued for more satisfactory promotional
policies. A specific facet of the dilemma, selected for the theme of this
investigation, is reflected in promotional decisions relative to average

35 Ibid.
36 Ibid., p. 423.
and above average ability students who fail to learn in the classroom situation.

This dissertation presents a study of nonpromoted students of average and above average ability with relevance to their achievement and social conduct as compared with normal grade expectancy and with regularly promoted students of similar mental ability and grade level. The purpose of the investigation is to appraise the results of nonpromotion in thirteen Catholic elementary schools in Illinois and to make inferences in respect to other elementary schools under the supervision of the same religious congregation of teachers.

The study has hopeful possibilities of serving a professional need in rendering an educational offering of value to administrators, teachers, parents, and Catholic students classified in the category of "nonpromoted--average ability" under consideration.

After a preliminary search for the availability of cases, the project was finally launched into six city and seven suburban Catholic elementary schools under the administration of the Sisters of Christian Charity in Illinois.

Geographical and numerical limitations were placed upon the selection of subjects; the broad background of the nonpromotion problem in general was examined for an initial historical contribution; one particular facet of the problem, that pertaining to the retention of average and above average ability students who fail to meet scholastic standards, was determined for further intense examination. Educational terms appearing
throughout the study were defined.

Chapter II will present the related research background and history
of the nonpromotion problem.
CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Basic Sources of Research Data

An endeavor was made to acquire a broad knowledge and understanding, a familiarity with the background, history, and current trends relative to the problem of nonpromotion in elementary schools. In pursuance of the preceding objectives reference materials of various types were consulted and utilized.

The Education Index providing entries under various captions ("Promotions," "Failures," "Policies," "Research"—from 1929 to 1966) furnished a valuable source of references from which a discriminative choice could be made. A constant decline through the years in the number of articles relative to this topic was noted. From 1932 to 1935 approximately fifty-nine articles were cited; during the years 1941 to 1944, forty-three; from 1950 to 1953, twenty-four; and from 1964 to 1965, seven. Apparently the problem was slipping from public view—possibly in the process of solution or through decadence of interest. From general reference books, educational periodicals, journals, and yearbooks a selective bibliography representative of various periods of time was compiled. A further exhaustive search through titles of dissertation abstracts revealed topics centering on different phases of the nonpromotion problem. Through interlibrary loans a
number of these scholarly studies was secured in order to obtain insights into phases of the problem already scrutinized and decisions reached through previous endeavors. Selected masters' theses also contributed to the compilation of background information. In addition, professional books in the field of educational administration, tests and measurements, and statistics were consulted as a preparation for an exposition of the nonpromotion problem in its proper historical setting, within its experimental and research frame of reference, illumined by its interested theorists and vigilant schoolmen. Resulting from this careful consideration of the related literature, in addition to a further original endeavor reported by the writer, it was hoped that corollaries in the form of findings and recommendations to the field of education might be contributed.

The continuing sections of this chapter attempt to explain the problem in its stages of evolution as it has been depicted in pages of previous research and literary publications.

Relevant Background of American Public Education

The very terms "promotion" and "nonpromotion," in reference to elementary school administration, connote a process by which students are passed on to the next school "grade" or fail to advance at the regular transitional period. Concurrently appearing in the same mental context are the theories, standards, and norms upon which the policies and practices of academic promotion rest. Relevant positions held firmly by some in the field of education and rejected by others have evolved over the decades and are the result of experimentation, successes and failures in the
gigantic task of educating "all the children of all the people" in the New World where colonization was initiated less than four centuries ago.

In retrospect, the history of American elementary education reflects a concerned, constant effort to achieve an ever-broadening, better academic preparation for the generations of children that have succeeded one another in the schools.

The tutorial plan appeared first. It was replaced by the graded system, as more pupils presented themselves for education. New ideas effecting a deeper understanding of early childhood were stimulated by the theories of Pestalozzi and Froebel. Curriculum and methods of teaching were influenced by the dynamic discoveries of Herbert; Francis Parker and John Dewey were received as benefactors by some who welcomed their offerings of the new philosophy of pragmatism as a foundation for teaching; the child study movement under the leadership of G. Stanley Hall brought forth many new theories on child growth and development. From a predominantly subject-centered curriculum, the school in the American scene gradually began to display facets in varying degrees of child-centered practices, a growing social sensitiveness to broader contacts and deeper interests in the neighborhood community and its problems, and finally a widening cultural perspective on space ventures and world problems. The children in the American schools, their teachers and parents were surrounded on all sides through the decades by changing social forces, differing cultural patterns and trends. Thus it can be readily understood that the education offered the colonial
child—in the framework of its seventeenth-century buildings, organization, methods, textbooks—could not be tendered with profit to the modern child of the twentieth century. Many unique adaptations to developing American democratic ideas and ideals had to be considered for implementation in the school programs where the highest goal had changed from a religious one to that of preparation for a loyal and patriotic dedication to the American way of life. The graded school system, with its accompanying functions of promotion and non-promotion, was one of the features of school organization which gradually came into existence and continued with much popular approval amid the changing conditions of time for more than a hundred years. It is not surprising that it should have been challenged along the way as having failed to symbolize the perfect administrative device for the optimum education of all the children of all the people—especially in the light of more recent discoveries in the field of child psychology and learning theory.

Antecedent to the graded system were many earlier forms of elementary schools, simple in organization and conducted amid crude surroundings. In its colonial stage, education took place in homes under the guidance of parents and tutors. By 1650 groups of families had organized to hire a woman in the neighborhood to instruct the children. Here the bare rudiments of reading, writing, spelling, and catechism lessons were taught to an enrollment of not exceeding thirty—boys from four to seven, and girls of all ages, from "four
An innovation of short duration in this era was the writing school in which writing and the elements of arithmetic were taught. Because of the clamor of parents for better education, the next widely accepted organizational pattern was adopted. This was a combination of the dame school and writing school to form the "Three R's" school of reading, writing and arithmetic which, in turn, became the foundation upon which the modern elementary school eventually was structured.

Otto describes the early New England schools as having a pleasant environment—a family atmosphere, the teacher at the cook stove, food at noon or recess, cracked nuts, old-fashioned games, sand on the floor in which arithmetic was taught—simple and direct in organization, in a home or one-room building of the crudest sort. Some towns built schoolhouses (around 1649), or opened classes in a church, vacant carpenter's shop, in spare rooms of old dwellings, unoccupied barns, basement rooms; if constructed, logs were used and paper greased with lard for windows.

Social endeavors arose to meet human needs on the educational frontier and continued to improve conditions in each succeeding era. Toward the close of the seventeenth century the combined dame (reading)

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and writing schools presented a new type of organized effort—a departmen
tal school with vertical divisions of the course into two sub-
jects. Children attended each department alternately. They changed
from one school to another at the end of a half-day or the day's
session. Each division had one large room to accommodate an enrollment
numbering to about 180. A later plan provided for the annexation of
a few small recitation rooms adjacent to the large hall. In these
small rooms the teachers "heard the lessons." In some towns, the
reading and writing schools were in the same building, one on the
first floor, the other above. 3

The traditional Latin Grammar School which offered classical
learnings in Greek and Latin to boys who had their foundational studi-
ies in the dame school and was college preparatory was well attended
from 1650 to 1800 and is ranked third in attempts at establishing
schools.

Commercial interests prompted the evolution of the English Gram-
mar School of the 1800's. Here more practical courses could be pur-
sued. Before 1800, admittance was based on basic knowledge attained
in the dame school. However, after 1800, due to public demand for
universal education, the dame schools could no longer fulfill the
need—and Boston moved in 1818 to create twenty primary schools to
insure the teaching of the essentials in reading, writing, and arith-

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3 Ibid., p. 9.
metric. This prepared children for the English Grammar School and became very popular. By 1855 Boston had established 193 primary schools which were considered community buildings and were located near to the children's homes. Each provided one teacher for thirty to forty pupils who ranged from four to seven years of age. 4

From 1815 to 1830 another organizational plan had its time of trial in the United States. In many of the rising eastern cities, Lancastrian Schools were introduced to offer instruction to the increasing number of children of primary school age. It seemed for a time that this might be the ideal plan since the system provided education at so low a cost as to make learning available to all. The organizational genius of the plan, Joseph Lancaster, who had originated the use of monitors for large numbers of students when he was no longer able to pay for teachers in his school in England came to America in 1818 after financial reverses and introduced the system in various cities, especially in Philadelphia, Baltimore, and New York.

The plan utilized one teacher, assisted by a number of the more intelligent students, "monitors," who could teach from two hundred to a thousand pupils in one room in one school. At the end of such a classroom was a platform for the teacher's desk, flanked on each side by a small desk for the principal monitors. Two rows of benches with aisles on both sides and center extended from front to rear of the

4 Jarvis, pp. 10-11.
room. Each bench was long enough to seat nine or ten pupils and at the end of each bench was a seat for the monitor. The teacher instructed the monitors from a printed card; then each took his group of ten from his row to a "station" or space along the side of the room where a semicircle was drawn on the floor. With toes to the semicircle, the students stood at attention and learned from the monitor's card which was suspended on the wall.

Mechanical as these schools were, they showed a great improvement over existing methods by substituting activity, emulation, order, and a semblance of military discipline in place of idleness, inattention, and disorder. The system was so thoroughly organized that the teacher had only to plan, oversee, reward, punish, and inspire. "When a child was admitted a monitor assigned him his class; while he remained, a monitor taught him (with nine other pupils); when he was absent, one monitor ascertained the fact, and another found out the reason; a monitor examined him periodically, and, when he made progress, a monitor promoted him; a monitor ruled the writing paper; a monitor had charge of slates and books; and a monitor-general looked after all the other monitors. Every monitor wore a leather ticket, gilded and lettered, 'Monitor of the First Class,' 'Reading Monitor of the Second Class,' etc."  

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Edwards and Richey attribute beneficial results to this system in
the obedience engendered and the prevailing air of militarism in a day
when three hundred schools were closed in one state in a single year
due to the inability of teachers to manage the students. The same
authors explain the failure of the system in that it came to be recog-
nized for what it was worth—the conferring of a very limited degree
of instruction, at the least possible expense, to those entirely igno-
rant. The enthusiasm with which the method was received was due in
large measure to the hope that the system would make education so
cheap that it could be supported wholly through philanthropic agencies.

Because the Lancastrian Schools were not adapted to the mental or
cultural needs of the children, educators strove for a more beneficial
system. These highly organized institutions had brought numbers into
the schools—and this made for complexity. It fostered the idea that
it was possible for people to go to school in large numbers; the man-
uals implied teacher preparation; the entire scheme furthered the idea
of a large school. To proceed from the idea of one teacher with ten,
twenty, thirty monitors in one room to the dream of a school with a
principal and many teachers, each separated from one another with her
own respective group by wall partitions—required no great feat of the
imagination. By 1840 the Lancastrian system had generally declined

6 Newton Edwards and Herman G. Rickey, The School in the American

7 Raymond F. McCoy, American School Administration (New York: McGraw-
except in New York City where it continued in some districts until 1853.

Between 1820 and 1860 there gradually developed in the United States the eight-graded elementary school. Two theories are projected concerning its appearance on the educational scene. The first and more patriotic reason attributes the new system to the genius of the American people and accepts a normal process evolving out of the combination of the colonial dame school (intended for ages five to seven and a half) and the writing school (for ages seven and a half to ten) with the grammar school (for ages ten to fourteen).

Thus, over the years, two or three distinct units, one more advanced than the other, had developed—in Boston, the primary and grammar schools; in Connecticut, primary, intermediate, and grammar. Other New England towns established similar units. The next step entailed the combination of two or more of these broad units with the provision of one building for the group. In Boston, the primary unit was housed in the basement of the grammar school. In some districts, the intermediate and grammar units were in the same building while the primary schools were established elsewhere in small units. Gradually there evolved a unified system.

The sorting of pupils had existed to some extent from the earliest educational endeavors. Social classification was determined by the future careers of the students and this rested on family background or exceptional intellectual ability. The Latin schools demanded a certain amount of education before students were accepted; the mon-
itorial schools grouped into rows of ten according to ability and ad-
vancement. Primary schools in New England had four or six classes
depending on progress; even the reading schools by 1823 had divided
the work of seven years into four divisions and were operating four
classes. Students were screened for the professions and sent to tutors
or given the rudiments of education if destined for manual labor.

To cope with larger enrollments contained in combined groups, a
change was definitely needed in building construction. Originally the
reading and writing departments each occupied one large room or hall
where the teacher and assistants instructed and heard recitations.
Gradually, small rooms were added for recitations. The final step
came in the dissolution of the departmental system and the use of many
smaller rooms. Students were classified and one teacher assigned to
each small room where she taught all the subjects. 8

The second theory proposed concerning the evolution of the eight-
graded elementary school rests on the premise of a visit by Horace Mann
to Europe where he was greatly impressed by the schools of Prussia.
Upon his return in 1844 he extolled their system of education. Not
long after, in 1847, an enthusiastic follower of Mann, Philbrick, es-
tablished the first graded elementary school in Boston. It was similar
in organization to the German Gymnasium. 9 Between 1835 and 1870 most

8 Otto, pp. 9-12.
of the public elementary schools were reorganized into eight-grade units and the pupils were sorted to meet grade expectations. By the early twentieth century the prevailing plan in the United States was the eight-year grammar and four-year high pattern. Later the kindergarten gained recognition as a worthy contribution to academic formation and variations appeared in the grade school in the form of organizational divisions combined with the general high school administration. These were built on 6-3-3 or 6-2-4 units.

Not without much innovation and many forms of experimentation has the graded school remained to the present decade. The early traditional elementary school had been established for the children of the poor who were expected to be satisfied with a low level of literacy. With the breaking of the aristocratic social structure of the colonial era and the emergence of the national period, the general acceptance of the ideal that education is the birthright of every American influenced the administration and curriculum content of the schools. Political, economic, and social factors entered into the deliberations concerning the educational program. Where the early instructions and learning had been a private matter between tutor and pupil, these schools had functioned for almost two centuries without scientific classification, promotions, or nonpromotions of children. Students were accepted as they were, aided as well as could be managed under the circumstances, and remained in the schools as long as they felt they could profit from instruction. The growing ideal of equal educational opportunity,
discoveries of new knowledge in many fields, demands for vocational education as the result of technological changes, the rise of urbanization especially after the Civil War, the growing population of immigrants and increasing need of the national spirit of democratic citizenship necessitated a homogeneous grouping of children for instruction.

The graded system presented certain advantages: (1) it economized the labor of teaching; (2) reduced the cost of education; (3) made instruction more effective since the teacher could "hear" the lessons of all as a group under a variety of plans—rather than listen to each one separately; (4) effected good government and discipline since all were always under the control of the teacher and kept busy; (5) encouraged children to learn through competition with one another. One great disadvantage (among other objections to the graded schools) has been alleged: the sacrifice of the individual to the group. In a paper read by E. E. White before the National Education Association in 1874, the following appraisement was made:

As a mechanism . . . it (the graded system) demands that pupils of the same grade attend school with regularity, and that they possess equal attainments, equal mental capacity, equal vigor, equal home assistance and opportunity, and that they be instructed by teachers possessing equal ability and skill. But this uniformity does not exist. Teachers possess unequal skill and power. Pupils do not enter school at the same age; some attend only a portion of each year; others attend irregularly; and the

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members of the same class possess unequal ability, and have unequal assistance and opportunity. This want of uniformity in conditions makes the mechanical operation of the system imperfect, and hence, its tendency is to force uniformity, thus sacrificing its true function as a means of education to its perfect action as a mechanism. 

The grading of schools, while a necessary innovation of the times, involved numerous and continuing problems. Rigid application of the graded-school theory resulted in many failures of students and consequent overcrowding of lower grades, with dropouts in upper grades. Educators sought for answers to counteract these weaknesses by introducing various measures of flexibility into the system. Where promotion had been an annual administrative device, semiannual promotions were tried. This plan doubled the number of groups in the schools and effected a greater economy for pupils who would only have to repeat the half year of work—but teachers were more inclined to retain students for this very reason. Still greater flexibility was observed in St. Louis in 1862 when the quarter system allowing ten-week terms or twenty-four grade groups was temporarily in vogue. Between 1870 and 1885 much concerted effort was expended in careful analyses of the optimum number of promotion periods and the type of examinations used to qualify students for promotion.

Pioneers in the field introduced modifications in curriculum and teaching methods. Grouping within class provided a situation for improving classification and learning. Tripartite grouping—as the Detroit XYZ—with the bright, normal, and slow became popular. All groups were expected to com-
plete the essentials of each grade during the same period of one year; but enriched material was provided for better groups.

Another scheme was the Parallel Course Plan of Grading. Here two groups, fast and slow, covered the same material but at different rates, and finished in six, seven, or eight years. Examples of these are the Cambridge and Portland Plans. In 1923 schools of Norfolk, Virginia, began a pattern of parallel tracks for three types of students.

Still another administrative device to break the conventional lock-step system of classification concentrated on the provision of an extra teacher to assist slow pupils (Batavia Plan in New York).

Preston W. Search is credited with being the first in America to condemn the class lock-step method of teaching and to urge a program of total individual progress for each student as outlined in the Pueblo Plan he put into practice in 1888. Public attention was thus focused on individualization in education. Thoughtful consideration of historical development revealed the earliest instruction to have been individualized under the guidance of tutors or in small colonial schools. Even the combined reading and writing units and the monitorial system had reached the individual to a noticeable degree. It was only after 1850 when the schools had become rigidly graded to care for the increasing enrollments that the individual

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13 Ibid., p. 130.

14 Ibid., p. 131.
was "lost." With characteristic energy, American educators again strove for more satisfactory means of educating the individual. The Pueblo Plan, and others mentioned above, attempted to do more than just classify the individual; they experimented with an adjustment of the curriculum and time limits.

Among the first of the twentieth century to strive for greater individualization, the Platoon School\textsuperscript{15} emphasized social living rather than subject matter; the Winnetka and McDade Plans\textsuperscript{16} provided two main divisions: one-half of the day for individual work in the common essentials, and the other half for group and creative work; the Dalton Plan\textsuperscript{17} allowed the individuals to progress through completion of contracts or units of work.

Departmentalization, in a more specific arrangement, appeared again in an endeavor to provide individualization for teachers and subject specialists for students. The nongraded plan, introduced in Milwaukee in 1942, became popular for primary divisions of graded schools and gradually gained some attention as a scheme for total school organization; the Teacher Team Plan whereby large groups are instructed together and then divide into small units for drill, discussion, individual assignments came into being as a device for capturing the academic strengths of individual teachers while reaching students on an individual basis.

\textsuperscript{15}Jarvis, pp. 23-24.

\textsuperscript{16}Ibid., pp. 24-26.

\textsuperscript{17}Ibid., pp. 32-34.
Shane mentions thirty-two types of groupings which over a century of United States education have arisen, been modified, disappeared after a while, or are still used in modern classrooms. As group instructions in one form or another gradually pervaded the elementary school system, classification became very necessary and rested on various bases: 

(1) chronological age was the most simple for placement in grades;
(2) mental capacity created problems in the social adjustment of pupils, in the range of classroom equipment, in furnishing explanations to parents, in obtaining teachers suited in background and temperament for handling the slow and the accelerated; (3) social age as a basis caused a feeling of insecurity and embarrassment for some. As decade followed decade, from the colonial period onward, no single method was found to be acceptable as a typically satisfactory one for classification according to the American ideal of equal educational opportunity.

Many students continued to fail at promotion periods. Evidently, the individual was not being reached. Remedies were applied in summer schools for the slow and failing pupils; in special and ungraded rooms. Along with all these innovations, promotion itself became qualified in many instances under the terminology of "special promotion," "trial promotion," "subject promotion"—in an effort to reach the individual.

This brief synopsis has traced the origin and development of the graded public elementary school with its attendant problems of classification of

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students and its struggle to reach the individual in the midst of strong organizational patterns of administration. Not without similar problems did the Catholic elementary school system in America rise and gradually emerge in the graded form it maintains to the present day.

Correlative History of American Catholic Education

Beautiful in modern architectural design, well equipped with educational materials and facilities, efficiently organised and administered, staffed by dedicated religious men and women—the most recent Catholic elementary schools of the United States in this latter half of the twentieth century stand as monuments to religious pursuits and ideals whose currents stream from ancient Christian, European, colonial American, and early national sources.

Unaware of their great contribution to an organised system of Catholic education, pioneer Franciscans and Jesuit missionaries and subsequent small groups of nuns affiliated with organised sisterhoods in Europe traveled to the shores of the New World to do God's work—as they viewed the situation. Through the medium of works of mercy in the field of education, these early teachers first reached the hearts of the savage Indians and later, the children of pioneer settlers in colonial America. Crude though the early shelters for educational pursuits proved to be, these dauntless educators grouped children of all ages together and began humbly to launch a great work for a new civilization. Adults, too, were invited to a program of instruction in religion and rudimentary subjects, in addition to an "enriched curriculum" of vocational occupations. Many
of these original teachers were highly educated persons who had graduated from well-known universities in Europe. They possessed a deep faith in God and a spirit of generosity which enabled them to cross an ocean amid uncomfortable and perilous conditions to share their learning and talents with less fortunate human beings. Their highest goal was to bring the Word of God to their fellow men—the method they employed being education, accompanied by corporal works of mercy. They responded to the needs of the times and the abilities of their students, and consequently required from them as much in the way of unmeasured progress as each could accomplish.

The basic Christian approach through love and understanding achieved results that were far-reaching in molding better social, economic, and spiritual conditions in the New World. Thus within the area of present United States boundaries, particularly in the early mission territories of New Mexico, Texas, Florida, California; and in the colonial settlements of the French in New Orleans, St. Louis, Kaskaskia, Mackinaw, Detroit, Vincennes, and Maine; in the English settlements in Maryland and the German in Pennsylvania, semblances of Catholic schools, unpolished and unorganized, appeared wherever Catholic life had reached a degree of maturity amid the groups that professed the ancient Faith in the New World. The religious principles and goals were the same which had permeated the Catholic schools of the earliest periods of Christendom, of the medieval, and later modern eras throughout Europe. They remained the nucleus around which evolved the curriculum of every new school established by the Padres and Fathers who came to the New World.

Much has been lost concerning the details of early schools, but some
information has been preserved. In the decades following Columbus' discovery of America in 1492, in the wake of Spanish legislation which provided a missionary with every group of explorers, the Padres fulfilled their commission by initiating a school next to every new church which they constructed. The sacristan was to help in teaching the natives to read, and especially in the use of the Spanish language. The parish priest, in addition to teaching religion, was to guide the development of the capacities of each student. After the age of nine, students were instructed in industrial occupations; schools for girls were also founded. The natives learned to build their own churches, and so great was the success of this plan of colonization and organization that by 1630 there were about fifty Franciscans in New Mexico, serving over sixty thousand Christian natives, in ninety pueblos, grouped in twenty-five missions, each pueblo having its own church.

It was interesting to note the importance attached to education in effecting the desired results in converting and civilizing the natives. Thus the teacher followed in the path of the explorer and missionary, and in most instances, the earliest teachers were the Padres themselves. In the name of God and for His love they helped their red-skinned brothers and later the colonists to rise to a better way of life—through the process of education.

The early Jesuits also relied on schools in their conquest of souls for

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the kingdom of heaven as they founded one mission after the other in Lower California. Two schools, one for boys and one for girls, were usually established in each mission. Students were educated from six to twelve years of age in religion, the rudimentary subjects, and trades taught by the priests. In addition, the most intelligent boys were gathered from each mission to form a unique type of normal school, for they were educated here to later go forth as teachers and assistants to the Jesuits in extending the missions.  

One of the first undertakings of Governor Bienville after founding the city of New Orleans in 1718 was to invite priests to care for the religious welfare of souls in this French settlement. The Jesuits were asked to establish a school for the education of boys of the wealthy colonists. They responded by founding a mission station, since they lacked funds for the school. The King of France refused to assist with this project. Through the services of the Jesuits, however, Bienville obtained a group of trained teachers, Ursuline nuns, members of one of the most outstanding teaching orders in France. Arriving in New Orleans in 1727, they were the first religious organisation to take their place in the history of American education and were probably the first group of professional elementary school teachers to staff an institution on United States soil. Their ideals and principles were representative of those of all religious orders

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20 Ibid., p. 53.
21 Ibid., p. 68-69.
who were later to emigrate to the United States to establish elementary schools. Having left all things to engage more freely in spreading the Word of God, they came in obedience, for love of God and neighbor, to teach the Christian social principles of living—through organised educational activities. Thus, before the days of the American Revolution, a definite program of elementary school subjects and time schedules was in existence in the Ursuline schools. From the archives preserved in the New Orleans convent, details of the program reveal surprisingly modern features. The Sisters taught only the girls of wealthy colonists in a boarding school. Those who could not afford to pay tuition were invited to send their children to the day-school, free of charge. The Sisters employed pupil-teachers from the most promising students to assist in the teaching and maintenance of discipline. The honor was bestowed for three or four months during which time the student supervised a group of about ten, admonished their faults though did not report them to the teacher unless they showed no signs of improvement, distributed textbooks, taught prayers to beginners, and heard some of the recitations. This practice resembled the Lancastrian monitorial system which was introduced almost a hundred years later into the United States. Another interesting feature was the use of specialist teachers each of whom went from class to class to teach her particular subject. The public was invited to view the

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22 Ibid., p. 71.
23 Ibid., p. 78.
children's industrial work three times a year and prizes were bestowed. Mention was not made of the standards regulating the promotion of students.

In the territory of the English colonies, the beginning of Catholic education dates back to the Maryland settlers. More than to any other source, credit is given to the work of the Jesuits in Maryland as the foundation from which the present system of Catholic schools in the United States originated. Long before the first bishop of the United States was appointed, before the Ecclesiastical Councils of Baltimore which made schools obligatory in every Catholic parish of the United States—the Jesuits had opened the first Catholic elementary school at St. Marys (later transferred to Newton), established other elementary schools and made them a function of organized parish work. The Jesuit pastors and missionaries molded the schools into a kind of system. Because of religious persecution in the colony and the subsequent secrecy in maintaining schools, little can be found of their educational activities from 1700 to the time of the Revolution.

In Pennsylvania where it became the common pattern for various religious denominations to open their own schools, the Jesuits found a field for work and established elementary schools where the rudimentary subjects were taught to an ever-increasing number of emigrant children. These German schools were modeled after the "Volks-schulen" of Germany, though conditions in the New World caused a marked difference in many aspects of

\footnote{Ibid., p. 89.}
During the colonial period, the number of Catholic schools exceeded seventy. Their characteristics displayed the influence of elementary schools conducted by Jesuits in Europe, the Virginia popular private schools, and existing denominational schools in Pennsylvania. Catholics labored under lack of financial resources; the first schools were often held in the room of the home where the priest resided; and the priest was the teacher. In time, a church was built; sometimes a converted farmhouse served this purpose and became a school during the weekdays. Separate buildings appeared many years later, and with them came longer class hours, greater continuity in work, and teachers who devoted their whole time to the task.

The curriculum and methods in Catholic schools did not differ greatly from those in other colonial schools. All were religious schools. Accounts of early experiences sent by Jesuit missionaries to their superiors can be read in publications of the American Catholic Historical Society.

After the Revolution, attracted by the treasures of political and religious freedom, in addition to prospects for economic advancement, many immigrants swelled the numbers in the new states and were often among the adventurers who pushed westward to settle in new regions of the New World. They carried with them the ideals of education which had been acquired both in the Old and New World—and these were to influence the type of schools

\[25\text{Ibid., p. 157.}\]
they desired for their children.

What had characterized the typical colonial schools set up as ideal institutions by the early settlers in America? Religion. "Not a man who signed the Declaration of Independence, or who sat at Philadelphia in 1787, to draw up a Constitution for the new Republic, had been trained in a school from which the teaching of religion and of morals was excluded. The schools of our American forefathers were, essentially, religious schools."26

In the early days of the Republic, the state schools had not yet appeared. Children continued to attend private institutions or schools controlled and supported by various religious denominations. In 1784, when Reverend John Carroll was appointed Prefect Apostolic of what is now Eastern United States, there were only a few scattered Catholic schools across the vast stretches of the new states. At first he was intent on establishing a seminary for the training of priests and hoped that Catholic and Protestant groups would unite in a harmonious establishment of schools for all denominations in a spirit of equality for all. Soon he realized that the school problem was pressing, since the regular schools of the country were very anti-Catholic and could not be attended without danger to the Faith. At once he attempted to build, but could not accomplish much through his own efforts. After his consecration as Bishop of Balti-

more in 1790, five American religious communities for women were founded and others were invited from Europe to staff a steadily growing number of Catholic schools. 27

Gradually, over the period of time between the Revolution and 1820, education came to have a mission other than religious. The idea that the needs of a democracy could only be served by a literate citizenry gained a stronghold in the minds of the leading educators—who happened to be likewise the leading churchmen of denominational schools. To educate all meant common schools—and these would require public support, supervision, and neutrality of religious belief. There were no alternatives for clergy-men who wished common schools supported by public funds. In 1827, Massachusetts took the lead in passing a law excluding denominational teaching from the school syllabuses in the common schools. Neither God nor religion was expelled—but distinct teachings of sects. Horace Mann, a leading educator of Massachusetts, who served as secretary to the State Board of Education from 1837 to 1849, undertook to reduce the teaching of religion to such a minimum that it could be refused by no denomination. Bible selections without interpretation might be read and the principles of piety and morality common to all sects might be taught. This left the common schools in effect parochial schools of Unitarianism, Mann's pro-fessed religion. The decision on what was common to all was difficult to

reach, and gradually, later educators excluded all religion from the cur-
riculum.

The Catholics among the United States citizens of this period were
likewise ready for an educational awakening and with their neighbors were
looking forward to better educational opportunities in return for taxes
paid into the common fund. They desired the finer social and economic
benefits which education would bring to them and to their children. How-
ever, they were spurred on to build their own schools by a sharp awareness
of the steady trend toward nonsectarianism in the common schools. More-
over, before the entire exclusion of religion from the schools had taken
place, many programs were socially unacceptable to the Catholics because
they were still entirely under Protestant control and engaged in certain
religious activities, as readings from the King James Version of the
Bible and others objectionable to the Catholic Church. In the mentality
and conscience of the American Catholics—schools with opposing ideals
and ideas or with the absence of religious conviction could not be attended
by their children. Until 1840 assignments from the public funds had been
commonly shared with the Catholics, but thereafter, church-related schools
were denied appropriations.28 Archbishop Hughes of New York was a leading
Catholic educator in the battle for school funds and when the cause was
lost turned his energy to the building of parish schools. The denial of
public funds for religious purposes came into effect in one state after

28 Ibid., p. 467.
another. Then it was that the parish priest gave of his financial genius in wise use of church funds and of his physical strength—often in overalls, side by side with his parishioners who saved money through donation of personal labor. His own meager salary and hope of social security in old age were often sacrificed in the cause of an extra classroom to care for the school children. 29

Meanwhile, two years after the Massachusetts legislation on nonsectarianism in the schools, in 1829, the Provincial Council of Baltimore expressed concern for the erection of Catholic schools. In 1852 when the first compulsory school law in Massachusetts was passed, the Plenary Council of Baltimore exhorted the bishops to build and to pay teachers from parish funds. In 1866 the Second Plenary Council urged the erection of schools and the employment of teachers belonging to religious congregations; and finally, in the Third Plenary Council in 1884, Catholic schools were declared absolutely necessary; pastors were obliged to build in every parish, and Catholic parents obliged to send Catholic children to the parish schools.

It was during this period of influx in school enrollment, due to compulsory school laws for public school pupils and compulsory attendance at parochial institutions for Catholics, in addition to a great tide of immigration between 1840 to 1860, that existing elementary schools underwent a

change in curriculum offerings. Before 1850, the basic subjects of reading, writing, arithmetic, history, grammar, and spelling—plus religion—were included in the program. Grading of children went into effect when populations moved to cities. Up to 1840, twelve out of every thirteen inhabitants of the United States lived in the country. There were only forty-four cities with eight thousand or more inhabitants. With the development of manufacturing and the large immigration group settling in cities, the voice of Horace Mann arose to plead for the consolidation of the numerous weak and struggling single-teacher schools which had been established throughout the land in convenient locations to serve country children who had to walk to school for an education. Mann advocated a grouping of schools and teachers with separation of younger pupils from older. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, the gradation has been traced from two to three large groupings to a continual subdividing into small units, since the addition of a room from time to time provided a cheaper solution to overcrowded conditions than the construction of another school building. Some ended with seven, eight, or nine divisions—but eight seemed to be the most prevalent. Related literature in the field provided a reason for this number of grades. With the rise of the free public school system around 1850, public opinion expected the elementary school to furnish education for all, since it was supported by all and open to

all. However, the children of "all the people" could be kept in school only a limited number of years as parents relied upon them to assist with the financial support of the family as soon as possible. From the dawn of the powers of reasoning to the age of development of physical strength—that is, from about seven to nine years of age until about fourteen to sixteen—they were regarded as of "educable age." Therefore, classrooms fell into a common pattern of eight, with subjects arranged accordingly, and students separated by age levels. In addition, the public looked to the popular elementary school to give to the masses as thorough and complete an education as the traditional "grammar" school had offered to the social classes preparing for the professions. Part of the "grammar" school curriculum was selected for the upper grades of the elementary school and attached to the course of study of existing primary schools. Many children were unable to master the academic work of every or all the grades and ensuing failures, nonpromotions, dropouts initiated serious problems for educational administration.

Catholic schools existing amid identical political, social, and economic conditions—and likewise serving the children of the United States Republic—experienced the same influences and reflected similar trends in educational policies. In 1840, there were about two hundred parish schools in the United States. During the great immigration period of 1840-1860, almost twice as many dioceses were organized as had been in existence in

31 Ibid., p. 24.
1840. The respective bishops, greatly disturbed by the lack of teachers to supply school staffs in the many new parishes, turned hopefully to the Old World to which they personally traveled to seek aid. In response to the great need of the Christian community in the United States, many religious Sisterhoods, loyal Daughters of the Church, followed the "mission call" to a new land—to serve a new people. Catholic schools were fortunate thus to obtain the professional aid of trained teachers for their initial staffs. In many respects, the early Catholic schools were replicas of European institutions, since the teachers were products of European culture and education.

Accounts of their first experiences in the parish schools of America were kept by many religious orders and are now in the archives of their respective communities. Such a chronicle of the initial endeavors of the Sisters of Christian Charity, dating from May 3, 1873, when the first Sisters arrived in New Orleans, Louisiana, from Paderborn, Germany, to undertake the administration of an elementary school, is filed in the archives of the Motherhouse in Wilmette, Illinois. Since this group of Sisters was typical of any other religious band which immigrated from Europe in the latter part of the nineteenth century to begin teaching in parish schools in America, a few relevant details from the records have been selected for background information on Catholic school history.

The Sisters whose educational preparation had equipped them with French as a second language were unfamiliar with the English language. The parish to which they came was predominantly German; therefore the language
mention is made of promotion possibilities. After four years, a kindergarten
classroom range from I through VI, with double grouping at the top. No
about 1908, the records show the reversed method in numbering and the
class as Class I, Class II, Class III, and an "underclass" are recorded.
Children, three classes are mentioned in the first years. Later in the first
classroom, the children were grouped beginning with the oldest at the front
6:30 in the morning until 3:00 in the afternoon. Polling the European
those green in England. In Regular Seminary. The school day lasted from
those scheduled, classes taught in German are written in German script.
On the schedule, classes taught in German are written in German script.
and nature study. need work classes were arranged for the choice of the day.
cooking, Bible, history, reading, grammar, spelling, composition, social
met with the others taught in the morning and afternoon in German--
teaching in English--reading, grammar, spelling, geography, and arithmetic
remained with them for four years was employed to conduct certain classes
understanding from the very infancy of a woman who subsequently
classes are preserved. This presence in educational work of a thorough
school schedule, neatly ruled and blocked, interesting time, subjects, and
year and throughout a number of succeeding years, daily careful planning
year and throughout a number of succeeding years, daily careful planning
August was the sole month of vacation. From this time
end of July during which month exhibits of the children's industrial work
school year. In new classrooms lasted from the early part of December to the
the end of May until the end of July. It was interesting to note that the
arrived for the study of English, then began to teach in classrooms from
barracks were not too great a handicap. They reserved two weeks after their
was opened; the enrollment numbered fifty, and the recorder of the chronicle apologized for the fact that each child was charged fifty cents per month—as the tuition was needed to defray the salary of the Sisters and the expenses of the school.

In this typical parish under consideration, it was interesting to observe the emergence of a purely American people from an emigrant background—in so short a period of time. Evolving from the status of a "mission" under the administration of a neighboring "mother church" in 1855, to that of a German National Parish serving only German speaking people of the area in 1868, it was ready to be incorporated as a regular territorial parish administering to the needs of a mixed group whose complexion and character had completely changed by 1911. The first generation of Germans had died; the second could speak German, but preferred English, the third knew no German at all. It was felt that German in church and school was being forced on them to keep up a German parish (which status was necessary to maintain until formally recognized as a territorial parish). The pastor when petitioning for the change declared it was difficult to teach religion to the children in a language which they couldn't understand. The school was now forty years old and was staffed by German men who had become American citizens and were well conversant in the English language. Gradually all subjects were taught in the English language. In the decades that followed their arrival in America, this religious order gained no small recognition for its thorough, professional work in the field of education in New Orleans.
Similar origins welded many parochial schools throughout the nation. It is not surprising that national differences which at first affected separations even among Catholic parishes—in addition to religious differences—kept the parochial and public school institutions apart, even while coexisting and serving, in many respects, the same neighborhood. Often strangers to each other, as the decades progressed from 1850 on into the twentieth century, their eight-graded elementary structures were being formed and shaped by common influences, to the extent that their schools and curricular offerings became very similar. Problems of nonpromotion and other professional pressures appearing in the related literature were typical of both types of schools. Influences bearing upon the systematizing of professional services were traced initially to the office of superintendent emerging in both Catholic and public school systems. Under strong leadership schools were organized, classes graded, curricular content and texts supervised, promotion policies formulated, attendance regulated. When labor unions agitated against child labor, compulsory attendance to age fourteen was demanded; when normal schools were established and the teacher gained recognition as a professional person, his work hours had to be extended through more than the winter months to give him a living wage. Schools were opened for nearly the whole year; graded programs and definite teaching methods were visible. However, no uniformity in standards appeared. Children were promoted annually, semianually, or when their talents and application fitted them for the next grade. The theories of Pestalozzi and Herbart effected a change of content and se-
quence in programs, which influenced the eight grades of both systems. Monsignor George Johnson, a great leader in Catholic education during the twenties and thirties, spread his theory of permeation of the school curriculum with the religious ideal. This was demonstrated in the new curriculum series, *Guiding Growth in Christian Social Living*, which was published in 1944. The city normal schools affected structures in Catholic schools in an indirect manner. Records reveal the names of many Catholic school graduates who enrolled in public normal schools to acquire training for a position which was regarded with honor and respect and which offered an opportunity for rendering social service to the youth of the nation. Pastors and teaching nuns realized their elementary school programs would have to correspond to that of the public schools in order to assure the eighth grade graduates a successful academic career in public high or in the Catholic high leading to the public normal college. The difference between the two systems came to be recognized as one of purpose and point of view, in perspectives on life ideals. With the exception of religion, the content was basically the same. Catholic schools generally aligned themselves with the state schools in organization to assist students to climb

32 Brother John Waldron, "Influences that Have Helped to Form and Shape the Eight Grade Elementary System," Catholic Educational Association Bulletin, IX (November 1912), 365-361.


34 Waldron, pp. 381-382.
the one American ladder—especially in times of transfer from school to school.

In the development of the elementary school system, often the interests of the children and of correct pedagogy had to bend under weightier pressures. Programs were set up by specialists who were far removed from experiences in teaching the elementary school children; laws were framed according to economic needs; graduation and promotions were based on calendar requirements—beginning in September and covering all material by June—for eight years; some were intentionally kept back to prevent attendance of one year only in a high school which had become a burden and source of contention to many taxpayers. 35

Thus history reveals the fact that the American eight-grade system arose in response to popular demands and ideals reflecting the conditions of the age. The system was not planned as such on any psychological or educational principles or experiences. The curriculum was enriched to supersede the former primary school subjects by including part of the grammar school program. This resulted in a distinctive system of education. In Europe the elementary and grammar schools were parallel to some extent to accommodate the streaming of social classes; children of the poor attended one school only; the wealthy entered a different school which from the beginning prepared for further educational opportunities. In America, there was to be only one ladder—one elementary school, followed by the

high or academy for those who desired or could afford further education. The Catholic school system cooperated in building this same American educational ladder: (1) in the desire to have its parochial schools fully abreast of the public schools, (2) so that parents would be satisfied, (3) because the same general background and environmental conditions that operated to bring about changes in the public school curriculum have also influenced the changes in Catholic school courses of study. In the process of organizing, of settling school problems, of becoming more alike in structure, educators in both systems have learned to recognize each other, to associate on more friendly terms, to open a dialogue. This American basis of equality and recognition of individual worth, of mutual respect was reflected in two recent speeches delivered at a conference of top-ranking Illinois educators. Archbishop John P. Cody, leading prelate of the Archdiocese of Chicago, gave public endorsement to the twenty-five million dollar school construction bond issue that would face Chicago voters in the next month and urged Catholics "who understandably might be inclined to preoccupation with the pressing needs of their parochial schools, to extend their sights to the critical needs of public education."\(^\text{36}\) He also recommended participation in community discussions; attendance at public school board meetings, and an effort to become informed on public school questions, from the viewpoint of a citizen of Chicago. A request for all that could be given to nonpublic school chil-

children, under the law, was directed to public school administrators. In effect, the archbishop proposed a united effort to improve all Illinois schools.

Dr. James F. Redmond, Chicago's new superintendent of public schools, at the same meeting expressed a desire to maintain friendly relations with the Catholic school system through the channels of communication and cooperation for the concern of both systems. Their aim would be directed to the welfare of all children who in life would be classified alike as citizens of the state and the nation.

In marked contrast to the attitudes of previous decades in the history of American education when cooperation was a concept alien to both, public and nonpublic school administrators in some localities are now moved by a spirit of beneficence. Together they hope to accomplish a great task for the good of society as a whole. Regularly they meet to discuss school problems which they have come to realize are common issues in both systems. Among these could be classified the nonpromotion problem which has a common origin in the graded elementary structure of both systems, as described in the foregoing sections of this chapter, and a common history, as will be reviewed on the following pages.

**Brief Account of Scholastic Nonpromotions**

Prior to 1850 progress had been an individual matter-of-fact advancement from one page to the next of a text, with continuation on the following page to mark the beginning of a new term. With the graded system gaining prevalence between 1850 and 1860, with children of approximately
equal age and grade grouped, content divided and proportioned for the work
of each grade, the phenomena of individual differences became apparent in
the unequal progress of the students. Research in the area of school pro-
gress was not begun, however, until early in the twentieth century. The
first statistical report on academic retardation or nonpromotion was pre-
pared by Dr. H. Maxwell, Superintendent of New York City Schools, in 1904.
He drew public attention to the large number of overage children in the
elementary schools of that city. No focus was placed on the causes. Many
early articles displaying an awareness of the situation were contributed to
the periodical, The Psychological Clinic, which began publication in 1907.
In 1909 Leonard P. Ayres in a report, "Laggards in Our Schools," attempted
the first comprehensive analysis of progress of children from grade to
grade. From this date onward, the literature was proportionately representa-
tive of reports on investigations directed toward an interpretation of
nonpromotion status, analyses of causes and results, suggestions of
remedies. 37

During the early years of awakening interest, attention was focused on
the development of standards and forms which would enable research workers
to collect, analyze, and compare data on pupil progress. The theory that
all should reach standards before being promoted was unquestioned; new
practices were sought in the field of administration and teaching proce-
dures to bring pupils up to the required levels.

37 Henry J. Otto and Dwain M. Estes, "Accelerated and Retarded Pro-
gress," Encyclopedia of Educational Research, ed. Chester H. Harris
From 1910-1920 the growing American ideal of equality of educational opportunity had gained momentum. Toward the end of the decade, a newer theory of pupil progress was being advanced to the effect that every student should be judged by the best that he could do. The logical conclusion was the necessity of preparing an adjustable curriculum through which each could progress regularly for the length of time that opportunity was to be equalized for all—if a twelve graded system, then twelve years. The application of this theory assured promotion to all, regardless of the level of achievement. It became the responsibility of the school to adjust to the needs of the child. However, this theory was not supported by a majority of school systems, as subsequent surveys revealed a continuing amount of nonpromotions.

The depression of the 1930's in America, with the federal support of education for programs for out-of-school youths and the financial burden to parents in incidence of failure, increased the awareness of preventing nonpromotion and dropouts as much as possible. Many studies comparing the development of regularly promoted and nonpromoted children were undertaken.

In the field of psychology, discoveries of principles of child growth and development created a renewed interest in individual differences. Descriptive and evaluative studies to provide greater adjustment for individual differences were pursued.

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A decrease in educational research was observed during World War II. Investigations were later resumed with continuing interest in individual differences, causes and results of nonpromotion—both academic and social consequences—with a shift in concentration on promotion according to bases other than academic, which represents only one phase of the total development of the child.

It was hoped that a knowledge of this general background of research would provide the reader with a climate of mental readiness, the better to approach a closer examination of various studies which follow. Reports centering around similar topics appeared in the literature during a particular decade, then reappeared from time to time; also a few summaries of previous endeavors occurred at convenient interludes. These incidents provided a means of unifying trends and identifying transitions in theory and practice from decade to decade.

Much has been written on various phases of the topic. To understand the nature and persistence of the nonpromotion problem, the most relevant findings have been selected for serious reflection.

After the earliest comprehensive investigation during the years 1907 to 1908, Ayres concluded: (1) the rate of nonpromotion varied from 10 per cent to 3½ per cent; (2) the average rate for all grades was 16 per cent; (3) the rate was significantly higher in the first grade than in any others; (4) the rate was significantly higher for boys than for girls. 39

39 Ibid., p. 344.
In 1915 to 1916, a similar study was made by Berry in Michigan with similar findings, excepting the rate of nonpromotion for the state. This was lower—a variation from 9 per cent to 14 per cent.  

In 1929 Arch O. Heck reported the rate of nonpromotion as 9.1 per cent in twenty-five cities. Mort and Featherstone, in 1932, reached conclusions on the following: (1) there was a tendency to fail more boys than girls; (2) the percentage of nonpromotion in general was highest in first grade and diminished in upper grades; (3) midyear entrance classes showed a constantly high rate of repeaters.

Caswell summarized data from seven states and thirty-seven cities in 1933: (1) the rate of nonpromotion differed from 2 per cent to 20 per cent, with an average of 10 per cent; (2) there appeared to be a regional difference in the use of nonpromotion; (3) schools in the same system differed widely, with the difference ranging as high as 30 per cent; (4) the first grade, and boys, in general experienced higher rates of nonpromotion.

In 1941 Saunders reported the data from five states and seven cities. He indicated in the comparison of six school systems that the promotion problem was still persisting, though over a period of twenty-four years the rates had decreased.

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\[\text{Ibid.}, \text{p. 345.}\]
\[\text{Ibid.}\]
\[\text{Ibid.}, \text{p. 346.}\]
\[\text{Ibid.}, \text{p. 347.}\]
That there was no consistent, generally acceptable basis for nonpromotion was revealed by the fact that schools which observed the same policies in a school system had extremely different rates of nonpromotion—varying from 12.11 per cent to 36.61 per cent, as stated in the Forty-Second Annual Report of the Superintendent of Schools of the city of New York in 1939-1940.

The rates of nonpromotion varied not only among schools but also among grades. Statistics were available for a number of states. In Montclair, New Jersey (1948) the percentage of pupils repeating the grade ranged from 17.7 in one grade to 0.0 in another.

Caswell decries this variation as being hard to justify, as indicating inadequacy of effort in trying to solve the problem on a city-wide basis, as denoting the probability that nonpromotion was left to the beliefs of individual principals and teachers. In such instances, this important issue would be dependent on the whims or caprice of these individuals; on which school a student attended; on the particular teacher to whom he was assigned.

Bernert and Ypsilantis used age and grade information which had been collected from the 1950 United States Census as a means to measure school progress. Students from eight to eighteen were studied. The investigators

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44 Ibid., p. 348.
45 Ibid.
46 Ibid.
reported 74.1 per cent to be in expected grades, 11.5 per cent retarded one grade, 7.6 per cent retarded two or more grades, 4.7 per cent accelerated, 2.1 per cent grade placement not reported.\textsuperscript{47}

The best view of nonpromotion trends was obtained from the analysis of Lennon and Mitchell (1955) in which the data from five surveys reported between 1918 and 1952 was used. The steady decline in average age of children, grade by grade, was depicted. There was evident implication that more pupils were making normal time progress in school than in earlier decades.\textsuperscript{48}

A final report (1959) selected for this section of the research background presented the conclusions that boys were still being retained at a higher rate than girls and that more than 90 per cent of the pupils in each of the first three grades were promoted at the end of each grade, the rate for first grade being lower in many schools.\textsuperscript{49}

To digress--far back in the year 1910, when much argumentation was persisting on the relative merits of various indices of progress, Blan challenged the educators of his day with the statement that it was more important to know what the pupil was doing when he was performing below his chronological age level than his rate of progress through the school.\textsuperscript{50}

\textsuperscript{47} Otto and Estes, p. 5.
\textsuperscript{48} Ibid., p. 7.
\textsuperscript{49} "On What is Promotion Based?" National Education Association Research Bulletin, XXXVII (December 1960), 126.
\textsuperscript{50} Otto and Estes, p. 9.
Therefore, following in this trend of thought, findings reflecting research endeavors focused upon causes and results of nonpromotion, policies and remedies offered in the solution of the problem will be cited in the remaining sections of the chapter.

**Alleged Causes of Retention**

Periodically in the literature there appeared summaries of investigations on causes of nonpromotion. The general goal of research in this area was directed toward answering the question: "Why do children fail in school?" There seemed to be no single cause to which nonpromotion could be traced, but a consensus of opinion that failure was the result of a number of causes.

In 1910 the earliest investigation by eight committees including forty elementary school principals in New York proposed the following twelve causes: (1) irregular attendance, (2) truancy, (3) late entrance to school, (4) ignorance of the English language, (5) transfer from school to school, (6) physical defects, (7) sluggish mentality, (8) prolonged absence of teachers, (9) excessive size of classes, (10) varying standards of rating pupils, (11) inefficient teaching, (12) improper methods of promotion. 51

Brother Philip (1928) observed that there were no survey records available at the time on Catholic school retardation rates. From a study of

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the general literature in the field, he placed causes in three main divisions: (1) in reference to the subject: delayed admission, irregular attendance, changing of schools, ill health, lack of adjustment, lack of personal ambition, nationality, home environment, lack of parental control and cooperation; (2) in reference to the school: overcrowding, two grades or more in one room, classroom environment (locality, orientation, sanitation); (3) in reference to the teacher: lack of teacher training, of sympathy, of personal touch and of interest in the child, in his work, in his personal activities.  

Saunders, in 1941, made a thorough study of the causes of nonpromotion as reported in previous investigations, and to substantiate the findings, conducted a personal investigation in six elementary schools of four city school systems in New York City. He analyzed the causes and grouped them under seven headings: (1) insufficient achievement, (2) inadequate mentality, (3) insufficient attendance, (4) imperfect health, (5) out-of-school causes, (6) lack of emotional stability, (7) inappropriate administration practices. Saunders then evaluated these causes gathered from many statistics and from his own project in the light of corresponding studies collected from the literature. The thesis proposed here reflected the following reasoning: (1) given the causes of failure; (2) apply the remedy of nonpromotion; (3) examine the results to determine

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whether the causes were removed. From the many investigations cited in Saunders' scholarly project, only key studies within his categorical divisions have been selected for this report. They have been arranged with the application of his theory in the following groups:

1. Insufficient achievement (cause of nonpromotion):
   a) In 1911 Keyes reported a study covering seven years: 20 per cent did better; 39 per cent showed no change; 40 per cent did worse.
   b) Buckingham (1926) experimented with several thousand Illinois elementary school children—and reported one-third improved after nonpromotion; two-thirds showed no improvement; and many did poor work.
   c) Klein and Branson, 1927-28, concluded from an experiment: children of normal ability gained more from trial promotion than children of equal ability who repeated the grade; children of less than average ability gained a little more by repeating the grade than by trial promotion.

53 Carleton Saunders, Promotion or Failure for the Elementary School Pupil (New York: Bureau of Publications, Teachers College, Columbia University, 1941), p. 16.
55 Ibid.
56 Saunders, p. 27.
d) In grades above the first, McKinney (1928) reported 35 per cent of nonpromoted students did better; 53 per cent did not improve; 12 per cent became poorer after a year of retention. 57

e) Arthur (1936) discovered the average repeater in the first grade did not learn more in two years than the average nonrepeater with the same mental age (regular progress—not retained) learned in his first year in first grade. 58

In the cases cited above—when the remedy, nonpromotion, was applied to the cause, insufficient achievement, it was evident that the objective, mastery of subject matter, was not accomplished.

2. Inadequate mentality (cause of nonpromotion):

Farley, Frey, and Garland (1933) demonstrated the fact that children with low IQ's who had repeated the grade several times were not doing as well as children of the same ability who had moved forward with classmates of their own age.

When the remedy, nonpromotion, was applied, it seemed to be more of a deterrent than a contribution to achievement. 59

3. Insufficient attendance (cause of nonpromotion):

a) Keyes (1911) found that pupils who missed up to twenty-five
days made up for the loss and maintained class status in 60 per cent of the cases; within twenty-five to forty-five days of absence—as many succeeded in keeping up with the class as fell behind; with large periods of absence, as fifty days, there was one chance in four of succeeding. 60

b) In 1932 Robinson indicated that children of average or better intelligence, if given the opportunity, made up as much as 50 per cent of the year's work. 61

c) McElwee (1931) found that of 110 truants, 97 were retarded in school progress because of reading and had escaped an embarrassing situation. 62

d) In another study of 500 truants, Farley (1933) reported the fact that most cases were due to work expectations in class which were beyond the students' ability. 63

In considering the findings of the above mentioned studies, there seemed to be no valid reason for even selecting nonpromotion as a remedy for school absence.

4. Imperfect health (cause of nonpromotion):

Ayer (1925) found that children who suffered from physical defects

60 Ibid., p. 32.
61 Ibid.
62 Ibid.
63 Ibid., p. 33.
made about 9 per cent less progress than normal. Nonpromotion, in itself, did not remove what was considered a physical cause.  

5. Out-of-school causes (cause of nonpromotion):  
These were many and varied. Since their origin was not in the school, nonpromotion did not remove the causes.

6. Lack of emotional stability (cause of nonpromotion):  
In this category, the apparent "causes" were actually effects of other causes. The school witnessed the results in the maladjustment of students. Nonpromotion did not remove the source of the trouble.

7. Inappropriate administration practices (cause of nonpromotion):  
In Ayer's conclusion, this category of causes was responsible for the greatest number of failures in the nonpromotion of 3,715 children in Grades Four, Five and Six of Seattle schools (1922-23). "Low mentality, school study habits, previous preparation, indifference towards school, size of classes, courses too heavy, unsatisfactory texts, double promotions" were causes of 63.9 per cent of the failures. Proper administration practices could have eliminated them.  

Possible remedies other than nonpromotion suggested by Saunders to be applied in the above mentioned categories of causes will be included in a  

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6\textsuperscript{4} Ibid., p. 34.  
65 Ibid., p. 42.
Saunders' study of the causes of nonpromotion was classic. Other investigations, less broad, more specific, appeared continually in the literature. A very practical, organizational viewpoint was demonstrated by a contribution from Mateer in 1942. He emphasized: (1) school entrance policies—when admittance is based on chronological age alone, immature children are doomed from the start; (2) confused promotion policies—in kindergarten, teaching is child-centered with no formal methods and content, and promotion based on chronological age; once in first grade, the organizational system begins to operate and promotion to second grade is based on reading; in fourth grade, a sudden shift of emphasis causes many failures as in first grade—reading ability and skills, once goals, are now tools in learning new subject matter on a higher plane; in fifth and sixth grades, promotion is based mainly on study and work habits. 

An article by Howell in 1946, presented an additional grouping of causes in the related literature. Howell supplied categories according to: mental factors, volitional factors, physical factors, social factors, absence, pedagogical factors, emotional factors, moral factors, study habits—and suggested an attack on a number of these to improve pupil progress.

66 Kenneth Mateer, "Whose the Failure?" School Executive, LXI (July 1942), 32-33.

In 1948 Lafferty conducted an investigation on the causes of failure. He made a comparison of the twelve most frequently mentioned reasons appearing in sixteen studies between 1925 and 1935, and in eleven states from 1935 to 1945. The results displayed practically the same array as in categories of reports cited in this dissertation thus far. The only item not listed but contained in earlier summaries was in reference to teacher deficiency and dislike of teachers.

A direct attack on the personal causes of nonpromotion was stressed by Ayer in 1953. He placed causes under two groupings: (1) predominantly personal—physical, mental, scholastic, social, attitudes; (2) essentially environmental—school conditions and home situations.

A more specific approach was detected in Grieg's report (1937). He contributed the fact of emotional conflict as the cause of failure in some cases of children with above average intelligence. When forced to greater effort than they were capable of making, these children became afflicted with fear and anxiety, a kind of mental paralysis, which prevented progress and destroyed creativity. These cases were destined for nonpromotion.

Findings in research reports conflicted on school entrance age as a cause of later nonpromotion, since young, bright children were observed to

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68 Otto and Estes, p. 8.
70 Saunders, p. 41.
do as well or better than others of normal age—provided general physical, social, and emotional maturity was also present.

In general, the achievement or ability of a student seemed not to be a basic cause of nonpromotion. There was considerable evidence in almost all surveys which revealed that children of low achievement were promoted, while children of higher achievement failed; also, schools which maintained a higher average achievement often failed more children than schools with lower average achievement. Promotion then depended upon which school a student attended, and promotion policies appeared as one of the many causes of nonpromotion.

**Apparent Results of Retardation**

This area in the literature was replete with a successive panorama of experiments conducted by interested investigators throughout the decades of expanding ideas, ideals, and opportunities in American education—studies varying in scope and in length, but focusing on the main objective: "Does nonpromotion effect desired results?"

In the previous section of this chapter, under the discussion of insufficient achievement as a cause of nonpromotion, some of the earlier findings from research projects were reported. These pioneer investigators: Keyes (1911), Buckingham (1926), Klene and Branson (1927-28), McKinney (1928), Farley (1933), Arthur (1936) demonstrated the fact that the average repeater did not profit by nonpromotion and that potential repeaters (children of normal ability) gained more by being advanced on a trial
promotion basis than children of equal ability who repeated the grade. Findings from a similar experiment reported by the State of Ohio Department of Education (1925) indicated that potential repeaters retained in the higher grade after the trial was over—succeeded in the class work as well as the pupils who were regularly promoted. 71

Caswell (1933) observed that children of less than average ability gained little more by repeating a grade than by trial promotion—and in Grades Four, Five, and Six profited more from trial promotion than in Grades Two and Three. He labeled nonpromotion a deterrent instead of an impetus to acceptable achievement and concluded there was no definite tendency toward homogeneity or heterogeneity in class groups as nonpromotion increased or decreased. 72

Robinson (1936) conveyed the theory that in most cities 60 per cent of the truancy was due to schools not meeting the needs of the pupils. Some children were unhappy, bored; and most could not comprehend in the classroom environment. 73

About this time the attention of research scholars turned toward the study of habits, attitudes, characteristics, and personality traits which may be affected as a result of nonpromotion. Farley (1933) contributed

72 Saunders, p. 30.
73 Ibid., p. 34.
the following impressions: the school forces the child to undertake an
impossible task (in the case of the low achiever), then brands him as a
failure on his report card and before his friends and relatives because
he does not achieve the impossible. If docile, he will bear the insult;
if more spirited, he will revolt, and problems of discipline and truancy
will increase. 74

Reported clinical studies of nonpromoted children who showed loss of
self-confidence, self-respect; who displayed a weak sense of security, and
a general feeling of disgrace were contributed to research by Robinson
(1936). All of these personality reactions resulted in a disturbed social
life, separated from playmates and friends; a lost interest in school
work, a feeling of resentment toward school authorities—which in turn
accounted for aggressive or restrained behavior; classmates looked down
on them because they were nonpromoted; parents were disappointed; brothers
and sisters teased; a family problem was created.75

Contrary to the findings reported from most studies on this subject,
Worth (1960) found that nonpromotion did not seem to have undesirable
effects on the social-personal development of low achievers; they rated
higher on personality traits and were given better sociometric status
than regularly promoted children. Worth offered a possible explanation
in that the grade level of students may account for differences in person-

74 Ibid., p. 42.
75 Ibid.
ality reactions. The children in this experiment were retained in third grade. More research was needed in this area. 76

Nonpromotion, contrary to the opinion of many, does not reduce the range and ability of students as a group. Van Wagenen (1928) reported the experience of an elementary school principal who after twenty years of rigid promotion policies thought he had succeeded in securing a definite degree of uniformity in his school. After administering a standardised reading test, he realised there was a range of five years of achievement in the third grade and a range of nine years in the eighth. He concluded it was impossible to secure through nonpromotion uniformity of achievement in several subjects, or even in a single subject in a large group. 77

Failure to be promoted results often in loss of interest (even in first grade). The child feels out of place because he is too large and overage. He often becomes a problem because for many weeks and often for months his knowledge far surpasses that of the newcomers. Some do benefit, more specifically, the smallest who acquire confidence and a desire to learn, and are delighted over the new successes in reading during the second year. Meek (1915) was convinced, however, that the majority of repeaters began the new year in a spirit of disappointment and often with


77 Saunders, p. 43.
grievous feelings against the teacher and school.

Nonpromotion is claimed to decrease achievement for a psychological reason. The learner, in order to perform at the optimum level, should have a purpose, believe he can achieve, and have an opportunity to observe the success or failure of his action. Nonpromotion violates these principles. The learner is too far removed from the original source of his failures, has little or no enthusiasm in his new surroundings, and is hardly able to measure the success of his new efforts in comparison with those of the previous year. Argo (1950) cited a dropout study report of the Committee on Education of the Chamber of Commerce in Washington, District of Columbia. Of 2,000 children who entered first grade, 643 dropped out before finishing high school, and of these—all but 5 had failed first grade. They had failed a total of more than eighteen hundred grades in the first six years of school. In a psychological sense, by constant failure, they had learned to fail.

In 1925, Peters described the substitutes the child makes for failure. Humiliated, or callously indifferent, he listlessly attacks the same old problems which caused his failure. Uncertain, he plods on—or wastes time—and soon begins to lag behind the present class. Often he becomes sullen, indifferent, rebellious, or unhappy—depending on his temperament.

78 Kitch, p. 19.
79 Ibid., pp. 20-21.
Sandin reported the conduct of nonpromoted children to be less often conformed with acceptable standards and more likely to receive criticism, reproof, and punishment. 81 Similarly, Olson described slow progress children as having greater tendencies to being unhappy, grouchy, quarrelsome, rude, and selfish. 82

In the general review thus far, literature revealed a progressive study of the problem of nonpromotion. Research students first sought the degree and extent to which the practice actually existed in the school systems. Later, causes were examined. This led to an interest in the results of nonpromotion, insofar as this administrative device was effective in removing the causes. Reports presented data that was enigmatic. Nonpromotion was not the solution to academic underachievement, as was generally believed by teachers and administrators—in fact, evidence was produced which bore witness to the fact that the majority of nonpromoted students did not reach standard performance after the year of retention; moreover, professional appeal was made to observe the personality damage that often resulted in cases of nonpromotion, and the dropouts that could be traced in many instances to this type of academic and social failure. Educators then turned toward an examination of policies that might seem


effective in preventing the high incidence of nonpromotion itself.

Trends in promotion policies will be considered in the following section of this chapter.

**Current Trends in Promotion Practices**

Annually, decisions on the promotion of millions of pupils confront thousands of elementary school teachers, and results of these judgments reflect trends in promotion policies, in the philosophy which guided the thinking processes. Theories have changed from time to time over the decades and it is to research that educators turn for enlightenment in understanding administrative techniques that evolved for the purpose of handling various types of school problems—among them, in this thesis, the problem of nonpromotion. Trends could be recognized and analyzed from the accumulation of investigations and articles related to this topic. The rate of nonpromotion, the causes, the asserted values revealed the theory or point of view sustained at the time. From among many investigations, the following have been selected to reflect the trends as they progressed in educational history nearer and nearer to the present era.

With the grading of elementary schools toward the middle of the nineteenth century, there entered an arrangement for divisions of periods of time which marked the advancement of students for a span of eight years. Pupils were assigned to grades above the one in which they met the estimated standards and progress depended upon satisfactory completion of required content that gradually developed as fixed patterns of the curricu-
Teacher judgments were all-important. Failure to reach academic expectations resulted in nonpromotion and retention in the same grade for another year. As previously reported, Maxwell blazed the trail in age-grade surveys in 1904; Ayres (1909) published the first historical account of school progress from grade to grade in the study entitled *Laggards in Our Schools*; and in 1918 Strayer and Englehardt established standards and forms for uniform collection of data. As investigations accumulated, gradually there developed a change in theory in reference to nonpromotion. Whereas high rates of retardation had previously been considered an indication of quality education, there now arose differing opinions on this matter. Leading among many sources was the influence of psychology which placed before the minds of educators an abundance of newer postulates in the field of individual differences, learning theories, and mental hygiene. Certain school practices, among them nonpromotion, were shown to have an adverse effect on children. Pioneer administrators and teachers introduced diverse principles and methods into the field of school progress.

For many educators and research students, theories and practices of pupil progress became the center of interest. Through their endeavors, two irreconcilable trends discernable in operation were brought to public attention.

Before 1911, the predominating theory was that of the grade standard

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83 Otto and Estes, p. 6.
where regulation was accomplished through rigid school administration practices, and solutions to problems were sought in teaching procedures that would bring students up to the fixed standards. Reforms had been gradually introduced in many areas: semianual promotions to reduce by half the amount of work to be repeated, emphasis on regular attendance, reduction or lengthening of number of years to complete the expected curricular program. All was based on the principle of a given amount of work to be attained in a satisfactory type of performance.

During the years 1910-20 the democratic ideal of equality of educational opportunity pervaded the school philosophy to the extent that a second theory of pupil progress gradually evolved. This required the adjustment of the standards to the ability of the pupils—each to be judged by the best of which he was capable and to be assured of regular promotion provided he exerted effort. Where this philosophy was maintained, it became the responsibility of the school to provide for the needs of each child through curricular adjustments at each grade level. This practice did not prove to be totally satisfactory. Varying stages of immaturity in intellectual and social development of low achieving children necessitated a re-evaluation of the continual promotion policy.

In 1931 a poll published by the National Education Association Department of Superintendents revealed the fact that 50 per cent favored the theory of educational equality but few schools had actually reduced the nonpromotion rate to the extent that the theory was operating in prac-
Caswell obtained definite statements of policies from thirty-eight cities in 1933; the majority were based on grade standards. This theory supported the principle of acceleration of bright students, whereas the theory of equal educational opportunity was expected to contain within the curriculum the type of enrichment needed by each pupil.

Educators recognized in the grade standard theory a sense of defeat in its very inception regulated by school entrance laws. Children were admitted according to chronological age levels—the logical policy to follow here would be the continual promotion theory. Conversely, the grade standard theory would demand equal mental age as a basis for entering school; yet, even if this were the accepted practice for school entrance, progression would never occur at equal rates, since students of equal mental level but differing chronological ages would, in the course of time, perform and achieve at different rates of mental development. It would be impossible to ever maintain an even pace of progress for all students in a class; the nearest a school could reach such a goal would be in the case of a hypothetical group of students of the same chronological age and equal mental level—and even in this situation, talents would differ—some students would perform better in certain subjects than in others, and would excel among classmates in some areas while achieving lower in remaining fields of study. Diversity in chronological age, mental ability,
and achievement would be acceptable in the theory of equal educational opportunity and continuous promotion which would allow entrance to formal schooling as soon as children could profit from it.

The question of advisability of early entrance age has been investigated from time to time—with similar findings. One of the later reports was submitted by Weiss (1960). The writer concluded: (1) early age children of above average IQ entering kindergarten perform on average class level; (2) they achieve and adjust better than children of normal age and below average IQ; (3) they achieve below the level of children of comparative IQ who enter kindergarten as the oldest group; (4) if they had entered kindergarten a year later, they would have achieved on a higher level. 86

Since, in practice, most school children do begin with like chronological ages and different mental ages, it is impossible to maneuver all intellectual activities and scholastic achievement into one great classroom mass of average quality and expectation. There will always be differential scholastic performance. Teachers have recognized this phenomenon through the decades; some have been challenged, others, frustrated in coping with it. Once students are in the schools, the status of nonpromotion becomes the center of the progress problem.

Whatever the prevalent philosophy underlying promotional decisions in the past, the rate of nonpromotion has steadily declined since 1900. Rates

have differed from state to state, city to city, system to system, school to school, from grade to grade within the same school. The trends steadily turned away from the practice of failing pupils in order to adjust them to the curriculum; an endeavor was made to adjust the curriculum to the children and in striving for this goal educators found it necessary to first study the individual needs of the students as a basic step.

More recent investigations in the field of nonpromotion practices were made by Coffield in 1956 and Clark (1962). Coffield reported a trend toward more promotions and from his own study concluded that failure did appear justifiable for mastery of elementary school subjects, since the nonpromoted students gained six months in repeating the grade. However, they did not reach the norm of the grade and in the next grade again made about the same progress. Appearance of achievement was actually deceiving; in the final analysis, little was actually gained by nonpromotion. The doctoral dissertation undertaken by Clark contained a report on a survey of North Carolina public schools. There was a statement on the increasing percentage of promotions in United States schools. Two-thirds of the North Carolina superintendents who were questioned believed that retention was of major significance in early school-leaving; 36 per cent of the schools and systems had written promotion policies; individual schools usually had much autonomy in deciding the matter and academic achievement was still the

basis in settling nonpromotion cases in North Carolina as well as in the United States at large. Principals and superintendents gave evidence of a growing concern in making promotion an individual matter. 88

Thus research students and educators responsible for designing promotional policies have displayed professional awareness of practices which resulted in a large percentage of average students and dropouts, and those which were harmful to child development and personal-social adjustment. The recognition of a third theory of nonpromotion was evident in the presentations of major research studies appearing in the literature since 1930. The oldest theory, that of the grade standard, a fixed type based on academic achievement, was followed by an opposing theory, one of continuous promotion, based on chronological age and acceptance of a wide variety of differences. The third and newer theory is a guidance promotion policy whose foundation rests on a careful study and analysis of all that seems best for each individual. An outgrowth of the second policy, it seeks continuous progress—but not continuous promotion—for all, since in a small percentage of cases, continual promotion would be harmful. Research studies which influenced the favorable acceptance of this viewpoint have suggested that each individual has his own growth pattern, and scholastic achievement is associated with this; therefore, varying rates from slow to average to fast exist among students. When the most extreme cases

are withdrawn, then exact grade placement has little bearing on educational development. Retention offers no special educational advantage since research on nonpromoted students has demonstrated the fact that scholastic gains attained by nonpromoted children are smaller than those achieved by potential retainers who were sent on to the next grade. 89

Points of view on both sides of the nonpromotion problem have been established by educators, parents, and interested persons of the general public. Values attendant upon the practice of nonpromotion as cited by those in favor of this administrative device have been gathered from the literature and listed as follows:

1. Nonpromotion assures mastery of subject matter, disciplines lazy children, adjusts immature children, helps retrieve losses due to illness, gives slow children more time, maintains standards, attains homogeneity in grades.

2. Nonpromotion affords an opportunity for children to learn the fundamentals better and thus prepares them better for the next grade.

3. Nonpromotion is necessary since children cannot be expected to achieve in the next higher grade what they cannot accomplish in the present grade; the experience would prove frustrating.

4. Nonpromotion provides an opportunity for immature children to find more suitable work and play companions.

5. Nonpromotion supplies an educational experience to cope with fail-

89 Otto and Estes, p. 8.
ure which is a normal expectancy in varying degrees and situations in life.

6. Without the threat of nonpromotion children would not be motivated to do their best—their attitudes and work habits would be below capability; the bright would resent the equal reward of promotion bestowed on all.

7. Without nonpromotion as a stratified measure, groups in the upper grades would become too heterogeneous to be taught by group methods.

8. Without nonpromotion as an administrative device, students would be thrust on from year to year and finish high school with the attainment of an elementary school pupil.

9. Without a certain standard of readiness which nonpromotion assures and high school staffs expect, sending schools would be criticized. 90

Directly opposing views maintain:

1. Students do not learn more by repeating the grade.

2. They are prepared just as well as can be for high school without retention.

3. Failure itself is more frustrating and conducive to poor adjust-

ment in school.

4. The elementary school was started without any relation to a higher institution of learning; there was no intention nor duty to prepare students for high school—but for living a better life; therefore it is a question whether they should now focus on a direct preparation for high school.

5. Society is worse for having to accept dropouts who are frustrated by academic failure and unequal to the task of securing for themselves a wage-earning position or leading a satisfied social life. 91

6. Nonpromotion causes children to be placed with classmates who are younger, smaller, physically less mature—this influences attitudes of social acceptance or rejection.

7. Children learn more if they advance to newer, interesting material rather than being exposed to a dull repetition of the old.

8. There is no connection in the child's mind between the academic failure of the past term and the present failure to be in a learning situation surrounded by familiar classmates—the punishment is delayed and too far removed from the cause; therefore, confusion and lack of comprehension for the reason of the present grade placement (retention) can not effect advanced efforts to improve academically.

91 Ibid., pp. 199-201.
9. Academic standards are intangibles—to locate exact separation points for children destined for promotion and nonpromotion requires such precise judgment as humans do not possess.

10. Homogeneous grouping is not attained by means of an accumulation of older, nonpromoted students.

11. Children learn to distrust themselves when others consider them failures.

12. Overage children become behavior problems.

13. Parents (in general) desire the regular promotion of their children.

14. The nature of the American school makes the maintenance of uniform standards unreasonable.

15. The preservation of individual differences (even in academic pursuits) is of value in the United States; retention conflicts with the development of differences.

16. Emphasis on subject matter and fear of nonpromotion is a policy which sacrifices mental health.

17. The practice of nonpromotion is undemocratic; in our society, in all walks of life, persons of varying abilities mingle as citizens—they learn from one another and how to respect others.

Research students have supplied the following conclusions which correspond to more specific viewpoints referred to in preceding paragraphs:

1. Children do not learn more after retention than children of like
ability who are promoted. (Coffield, Saunders)

2. Nonpromotion does not effect homogeneous grouping nor decrease the range of ability in classes. (Caswell)

3. Reproof has less value than promise as an incentive; the nonpromoted acquire a distaste for school. (Otto, Sandin)

4. More troublesome behavior often results from nonpromotion. (Sandin)

5. The personality adjustment of low achievers is not satisfactory. (Goodlad)

6. Slow progress children show greater tendencies to being unhappy, grouchy, quarrelsome, rude, selfish. (Olson)²

7. There is little or no relation between high standards of a school and the rate of nonpromotion—usually the level of achievement is higher where there is less nonpromotion, since the accumulation of overage, mental and academic retardation lowers each grade standard.³

Both groups—in favor of and against nonpromotion—in general agreed on the following basic considerations:

1. While promotion is desirable, it is not the perfect remedy for all academic ills.

2. At times, it may be best to keep a student with the same teacher

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²Ibid., p. 200-201.

³Otto, p. 269.
for an additional year--or allow a teacher to move up with the same class.

3. What happens to a student after retention is of great importance--it takes precedence over the use of nonpromotion policies as an attempt to cover individual differences; the latter will always be present. 94

An indication of recent thinking on the problem was ascertained from the returns on a teachers' opinion poll conducted by the Research Division of the National Education Association. An opinion was solicited concerning the best promotion policy for slow achieving pupils in elementary schools. Returns from the teachers indicated no support of automatic (2 per cent of the votes) nor of rigid (3 per cent of the votes) standards of promotion. The majority (79 per cent) voted for promotion in the light of a careful study of the individual, and 15 per cent additional voters in this group favored one or two years of retention. 95

Wise, in a master's thesis, has summarized more recent trends in policies and practices as follows:

1. Emphasis is now placed on annual promotion policies.

2. More retention continues to occur in Grade One than in Grades Two and Three.

94Spain, p. 201.

3. About 90 per cent in the first three grades are promoted at the end of each year.

4. The number favoring automatic or rigid policies is small.

5. Promotion on academic criteria alone has all but disappeared from administration principles.

6. Most nonpromotion policies are based on individual considerations.

7. Most school personnel place a limit on the number of years of retention assigned to an individual.

8. Nonpromotion continues to be present as an administration technique, but the policies directing the practice have changed; they are now based on guidance principles—a concern for all factors that will work for the child's best interests.

9. The rate of nonpromotion continues to decrease.  

When the book of policies for the elementary schools of the Archdiocese of Chicago was consulted, it was found that the Catholic schools are recommended to promote pupils to the next grade "when they have completed a grade's work to the extent of their ability." Nonpromotion is not advocated unless there is evidence that the child will benefit academically and will be able to withstand the resulting emotional strain. If retention is necessary in some cases, it is preferably used in first or second grade, and rarely in the other grades—no longer than two years in one grade—once in the eight grades, and both parents and pastor are to be notified

96 Wise, p. 30.
at the beginning of the second session of the school year. The social maturity of the child is to be seriously considered.

The Archdiocese of Chicago School Board, then, displays evidence that it desires the promotional policy of its schools to be operated under the third type of theory—that imbued with the guidance viewpoint.

A number of points have been selected from Wise's collection of suggestions gathered from the literature on nonpromotion. The following are areas to be considered when the question of nonpromotion arises in schools that profess a reverence for the worth of the individual and an interest in all circumstances that affect the life of the school child: (1) chronological age; (2) social development in comparison with future classmates; (3) physical maturity in comparison with future classmates; (4) educational development proper for grade placement; (5) educational development compared with mental age; (6) consideration of past yearly achievement; (7) influence of the home on the child's attitudes and learning; (8) the child's present attitude toward self, others, school; (9) the school's offering in the next year—in terms of teacher and class placement; (10) the effect of breaking his social peer groups; (11) the teacher's motive in wanting to retain him; (12) the parents' reaction to retention; (13) the effect of general health on his achievement; (14) mental health and effect on his learning endeavors; (15) factors available in terms of future improvement; (16) the effect of retention on future desire to remain in school; (17) his ability to function with the next higher grade; (18) retention: will he be more or less ready to learn; (19) past
promotion-retention record considered; (20) if retention in the past, its effect on him; (21) opinions of child psychologists and educators considered. 97

Suggested Measures for Guarding Against Retention

While analyzing and reflecting on the serious facets of the nonpromotion problem as revealed through the pages of research literature, the writer was pleased to locate a number of remedies suggested by educators and students of the problem. These remedies could be grouped into two divisions: (1) general organization, and (2) classroom measures. The first area to be considered will be that of school organization.

A school's entrance policy is related to its promotion policy—to prevent excessive failures, early entrance is discouraged by many principals and teachers, though some research studies indicate that the bright, mature child may do well through all the grades. The conclusion from a recent cooperative research project supported the opinion that success in reading seems to be positively associated with older entrance in Grade One. The solution indicated the alternative between a flexible primary curriculum (ungraded) with flexible entrance age, or, if rigid standards of promotion, an entrance age of six or more. 98

The next remedy apparently to be applied is in the first grade

97 Ibid., pp. 51-54.
expectancy standard. Pugsley demonstrated the fact that failure in first grade is preventive. His experiment showed that 33 per cent more of the children who had attended kindergarten completed first grade in one year than those who had no kindergarten training. 99 Morrison's data indicated that kindergarten reduces first grade failures: cities with kindergartens had 6 per cent of their first graders failing as compared with 20 per cent in cities having no kindergartens. 100

The ungraded primary offers an opportunity to spread the time for "covering" required work over a three-year period without artificial cut-off points each June. Slow first graders (especially the culturally deprived) can remain with the reading readiness work for a greater length of time before attempting to read--and still not be failed in June for inability to "cover" all prescribed material. Recently a writer pointed to the fact that one out of fifty children spends four years in the nongraded primary while one out of ten spends two years in Grade One alone. When the nongraded pupil repeats, there is no frustration nor embarrassment--no "failure." At the same time, the plan does not retard the fast learner. 101

Goodlad projects this idea further in his proposed theory of ungraded elementary school organization which provides continuous progress for all

99 Saunders, p. 29.

100 Ibid.

in each facet of their development. He maintains the position that grade barriers are as unreasonable above the third grade as below. The non-graded school program allows no skipping nor failures, but encourages continual educational progress. It puts into effect a democratic philosophy—implying the value of the individual. Special features of this plan include: (1) no grade levels—nor grade labels, (2) curriculum in sequential units, (3) abandonment of formal age groups throughout, (4) pupils' readiness for learning experiences used as basis for grouping, (5) promotion on individual progress, (6) intra-class grouping, (7) moving between classes, (8) satisfactory home-school relations.

There are three possible plans for organization of the nongraded school. The first approaches a departmental system and calls for specialists to teach the different areas. This has advantages, but it seems impractical in consideration of the psychology of elementary school children. The second is similar to traditional organization—it uses a different teacher every year—but the teacher does not aim to meet grade standards; she guides the children where they are in different achievement areas. The disadvantage is in waste of so many teachers' time for learning the strengths and weaknesses of each child. The third plan advocates one teacher to continue with her group over a three-year period. This allows

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The gradeless system was first tried in the 1920's. Few schools experimented with the ungraded primary until this became a major movement around 1942 when the plan was introduced into Milwaukee's public schools. Otto reported about 17 per cent of 1598 school systems by 1948 to be operating with an ungraded primary unit. In the 1950's there were several hundred nongraded primary units. By 1962 Milwaukee's 124 public elementary schools were organized into a gradeless system and Philadelphia's public schools (197) had also adopted the plan. The National Education Association statistics for 1962 reported 12 per cent of the nation's 85,000 public elementary schools having adopted the organization, at least in the early grades.

An outstanding experiment in this type of administration has been conducted in Christ the King Catholic School on the south side of Chicago since 1955. Students have been grouped in three divisions: (1) primary, (2) intermediate, and (3) junior high. They proceed at their own rate of ability. The third plan of organization mentioned previously (one teacher with the group for the duration of the unit) has been in operation. The

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10h Sister Mary Alice and Adma d'Heurle, "New Ventures in School Organization—the Ungraded School and Use of Teacher Aides," *Elementary School Journal*, LVII (February 1957), 260.


faculty and administrators are still very enthusiastic about the venture but counsel the need for much understanding among teachers, parents, and children before embarking on this type of educational structure. Success depends principally on the cooperation of staff members.

Some educators have been skeptical about nongraded school organization because of the limited amount of research available. From 1959 to 1965, eight research reports appeared. In four out of six in reference to reading, the performance of nongraded children was superior; of five reports demonstrating arithmetic achievement, four showed significant attainment by nongraded students; of three reports on spelling, all favored the nongraded system.

In 1960 the following evaluation appeared. "So far, results of the Saint Xavier Study clearly indicate that many slow learners who are allowed to progress at their own rate, particularly during the early years of school, accelerate during subsequent years, regaining time lost in the early stages." The pastor of Christ the King Parish, Monsignor Gleeson, reported on the progress of their school experiment in 1965. He observed that the slow ones usually caught up with their age group once they had mastered their fundamental skills. The bright had been advanced only if they had been judged socially adaptable. In the recent graduating class

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107 DiLorenzo, pp. 273-274.

108 Sister Mary Alice, "Administration of the Non-graded School," Elementary School Journal, LXI (December 1960), 149.
of 88 students, 8 were finishing grade school in seven years, the rest in eight years, and none needed nine years. In a comparison of reading achievement with a graded school—there was no significant difference in achievement between average groups, but the slower and brighter groups of Christ the King School were more advanced.109

Another type of administrative organization recommended as a remedy in preventing nonpromotion is that offered by Monsignor Elwell of Cleveland in 1944. This plan favored a regular eight-graded school for most students, with permission to "skip" grades for the gifted. He called for a revision of difficult textbooks for first, second, and third grades. The last six weeks of Grade Three and Grade Six were used in preparation for Grade Five and Grade Eight, respectively. A combined review and thorough preparation program was prepared for Grades Four and Seven and could be "skipped" by the bright children who were assisted in bridging the gap by a complete reteaching of basic fourth and seventh grade material in the beginning weeks of Grade Five and Grade Eight. Certain precautions were taken. Usually only students with 125 IQ and above, with social and emotional stability were eligible to "skip" the respective grade. Monsignor Elwell extended the same opportunities to the high school where teachers could not detect the accelerated from the average grade school student. Heavier or lighter programs could be scheduled by students according to their choice. In 1955 when the plan had been in operation for

ten years in Cleveland, seventy schools accelerated 515 pupils, of whom 19 wished to return to former classes and were allowed to do so. Monsi-
gnor Elwell claimed that this Two-Way System saves the bright and gives the average an opportunity to excel in their groups and become leaders.

A recommendation advocating the reduction of promotions by one-half to assist the slow achieving students was proposed by some. This Cycle Plan would utilize two-year periods: Grades One and Two would form the first cycle, after which there would be promotions to Cycle Two (Grades Three and Four), and thus the scheme would continue through a fourth cycle. The teacher would remain with her group for two years; thus there was hope for better guidance of the low achiever and a possibility that he might perform satisfactorily as the longer unit of schooling progressed.

Elsbree has offered the following suggestions to assist in endeavors to prevent failures among elementary school children:

1. Study the fundamental causes of nonpromotion at all levels. Analyze these. If teachers in upper grades are not included in this study or do not cooperate, it will never succeed. They will resent having low achieving students promoted.

2. Make case studies of pupils who failed the preceding semester and list devices that may have prevented the final failure.

3. Have each teacher prepare a written statement for failures of

the past years: causes and steps taken to prevent nonpromotion before it occurred.

4. Become thoroughly acquainted with pupils early in the school year.

5. As the school year progresses, note and analyze the individual inadequacies of the pupils.

6. If home conditions seem to be causing emotional conflicts in the child, consult the parents.

Among other suggestions, Burr pointed out the necessity of emphasis on readiness at all elementary school levels. Readiness is not to be sought as much as to be developed. To this end he recommended staff studies of age-grade and grade-progress, incidents of retardation, child development theory.

Failures are often based on the evidence of school marks. However, teachers do not always have the same standards in judging pupils' progress. Cooperation among staff members is necessary to attain some semblance of unity in marking and failing students. Suggested marking practices included symbols to express work done in relation to mental age and potential—and not in relation to other members in the particular class; that promotion be based more on daily class work and not weighted by final


test marks, that misconduct be eliminated as a cause for retention.

Students of the nonpromotion problem ask for teacher awareness of the grade levels immediately preceding and following the pupils' assigned class; for consideration of retention only in cases where students achieve two grade levels below normal; for psychological insight into the significance of incentives, rewards, punishment, and praise in all aspects of learning; for ingenuity in awakening interest in low achieving students--either through encouragement of talent or provision in the routine grading of papers for the best that the student can produce.

Of more serious moment was the undertone of great concern detected in the literature of the past three decades for the psychological effects of failure on the student. In 1937 an article related to the problem of nonpromotion carried a suggestion to eliminate the words "failure" and "promotion" by substituting a system of credits to be earned at various testings in units or phases of the subject. Either a student would receive credits and proceed to the next section or obtain no credits and try again. All students would move forward according to different pacings in each subject. Thus a slow student would "learn", although he would not attain mastery on the first trial. The situation would not connote "failure." Extra time, guidance, and remedial work would be supplied, and students would leave school with a warm, friendly attitude for help rendered along the way.

As pointed out in the literature, the real remedy in dealing with so-called "failures" is a preventive one. It consists in the ability of teachers to diagnose student abilities, apply remedial instructions in effective methods of teaching which reach each student, and in a more refined technique of evaluating student progress. Anderson (1939) reported the information that teachers who used diagnostic tests, then taught, retested, and retaught promoted 80 per cent of the children who ordinarily would have failed at the end of the year. 114

In the area of classroom remedies for the prevention of nonpromotion, the literature dwells on the importance of mental health. Mental problems of adults are often rooted in childhood. Of deep significance in the life of most human beings is the desire for personal success, for the opportunity to assert one's self, to give and share with others. Normal desires which seek to be met in the classroom are: love, a sense of security, a feeling of belonging to the group, a normal amount of activity, a certain degree of independence. 115 Some teachers create the atmosphere of mental anxiety which in the final analysis may prevent learning and cause failure. They expect too much, too fast, or too complex responses from their students; or they fail to orient new learnings sufficiently, or to apply sufficient drill to facilitate the development of fundamental skills. The

114 Saunders, p. 28.
115 Franciscan Sisters, "Fostering Mental Health," Catholic School Journal, LV (June 1955), 18h.
result is confusion, overstimulation, perplexity, or loneliness. Students may lapse into daydreaming and lose their hold on reality. Remedies would be in the area of child study, endeavors to awaken creativity and interest in school work, provision for an environment of confidence, of availability of aid for pupils when and where it is needed. 116

Fleege answers the question of which is of greater importance—the facts the child absorbs, or the mental attitudes and habits teachers forge into his character. It is better to readjust his mental attitudes by allowing a measure of success—even if teachers must lower requirements to a level within his reach. Psychologists, psychiatrists, neurologists recognize the power of suggestion in changing mental outlooks of psychotics. Applied to the school situation, there is nothing more powerful than success to succeed—a daily atmosphere of encouragement which may well orient the students toward a happier manner of Christian living in general. 117

The mental health of pupils is of inestimable importance in considering the total development of the child. Underlying many failures in academic areas are the broad problems of mental conflicts, neuroses, insecurities, anxieties experienced by children, as educational research has disclosed. While the school cannot remedy all these conditions, it


can alleviate to some extent by supplying preventive measures through care in providing a wholesome classroom environment, as free as possible from mental strain and anxiety. Satisfying teacher-pupil relationships are the keynote to happy daily living in the school. This can be achieved through Christian love, tact, and understanding of the child-nature at its varying levels of growth.

There is need for adapting the curriculum to the different levels of mental ability in the class, so that all can hope to attain a degree of success. The development of esteemed moral and spiritual values which form essential objectives in the Catholic system of education has been highly recommended as a worthy measure in fostering mental health in school children relative to the ultimate prevention of nonpromotion in elementary schools.

Teachers generally expect the quality of maturity in students as a basic qualification for promotion with their age groups. Dr. William W. Wattenberg, professor of educational psychology, has presented the following signs indicative of stability in children:

1. They are usually happy.
2. Their worries do not last long.
3. When they do wrong, they try to make up for it.
4. They display strong, appropriate emotions.

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5. Much of the time they appear relaxed.
6. They are constantly getting new ideas.
7. They act their age most of the time.

Suggestions have been offered to assist children in the acquisition of emotional maturity. Recommended to teachers are: (1) respect for individual differences, (2) enjoyment of the children's society, (3) emotional serenity, (4) permissiveness in allowing children to do things for themselves and others, (5) encouragement of children's curiosity and originality.\(^{119}\)

In bringing this section of the dissertation to a close, a final recommendation is presented from Whipple's research—to the effect that a good policy of promotion and nonpromotion would contain very general perspectives or principles to insure children leaving elementary school broadly literate, intellectually alert, well informed—with personal values—and emotionally well-balanced.\(^{120}\)

**Summary**

A thorough review of related literature was undertaken to acquire an understanding of the problem of nonpromotion in its historic and contemporary setting. The background of both public and Catholic school


systems was examined in the context of the historical development of the
eight-graded elementary structure as it affects the promotion and nonpro-
motion of students.

Origins, aims, and evolutionary patterns of grouping, classification of students, and school structures were investigated.

A brief account of the progress of research as it advanced through the phases of examining the status, causes and results of nonpromotion, trends in policies and suggested remedies—was depicted.

The writer's project and contribution to the field of research is presented in the remaining chapters of this book.
CHAPTER III

DESIGN OF THE STUDY

Plan of Procedure

The type of research designed for this project was a descriptive survey based on the results of data gathered from selected Catholic elementary schools in Illinois. With broadened concepts and insights awakened through the perusal and thorough investigation of the historical background, previous research, and pertinent professional literature pertaining to the subject of nonpromotion in elementary schools—guiding lines of thought were directed toward a procedure and method whereby data on available nonpromoted students could be secured for statistical treatment, analysis, and serious reflection. The problem was restated to clearly emphasize its basic issue: "How does nonpromotion affect the academic and social-personal development of students of average and above average intellectual ability?" Hypotheses were formulated as points of reference in steering the selection of appropriate statistical techniques for treatment of data. These hypotheses—or assumed theories—tentatively accepted until disproved and utilized to advance the issue to a degree of settlement, were stated in the following terms:

1. There is no difference between the mean mental ages of the non-
promoted and matched partners selected for the study.

2. There is no difference between the academic achievement of nonpromoted students and normal grade expectancy.

3. There is no difference between the academic achievement of nonpromoted students and that of students of similar mental ability and grade level who have experienced no previous record of nonpromotion.

4. There is no difference between the academic achievement of nonpromoted students in the year of retention and normal grade expectancy.

5. There is no difference between selected social-personal characteristics of nonpromoted students and normal trait expectancy.

6. There is no difference between selected social-personal characteristics of nonpromoted students and that of students of similar mental ability and grade level with no previous record of nonpromotion.

To obtain data necessary for the investigation, the type of subjects for study and the sources upon which the data would be based had to be determined; the design or instruments for gathering data had to be created; techniques for statistical manipulation had to be clearly defined. These relevant procedures were planned with precision and in orderly sequence to adhere to the total design of the investigation and effect the contribution of possible answers to the basic inquiries rising from the testing
of the hypotheses. The manner in which these progressive measures were accomplished is described in detail in the remaining sections of this chapter.

Selection of Subjects

As a preliminary phase it was necessary to appraise the population from which the sampling was to be drawn. Accordingly, a faculty member from each of the thirteen Illinois schools involved in the study was requested to submit a general description of the physical background of her respective school. This included statements sketching the type of neighborhood, style of homes, nationality and occupation of the children's parents. The account also required information concerning the following matters: whether the children were bilingual, whether or not they were serious about home study, parents' ambitions for their children; whether the school maintained a stable enrollment, and any other factors which characterized the particular school involved. Information secured from these short reports was to furnish the data upon which decisions would be reached concerning the similarity or dissimilarity of general background structures of the thirteen schools as compared with twenty-two remaining elementary schools under the administration of the Sisters of Christian Charity in various states. To the extent that the background of the former was representative, inferences could be drawn from the resulting research in reference to the nonpromotion of students in all of these thirty-five elementary schools.
It was from a varied environmental background that nonpromoted students for the study were finally selected in the following manner. At a general meeting including representation from the teaching personnel of all thirteen schools in the Illinois study, specific directions for identifying subjects were given, questions answered, and data-gathering forms distributed. Faculty members of the schools were aware of the forthcoming project since they had contributed to the preliminary survey which had attempted to estimate the number of nonpromoted cases available for the study and had indicated a willingness to cooperate in this educational venture.

The term "nonpromoted" was defined to include any student who had experienced academic failure by retention in any elementary school grade at any time in his school history since entering Grade One. Only those with an IQ of ninety-five or above were to be selected as possible subjects. All nonpromoted students and partners from the same grade were to be matched as closely as possible on the following points: sex, mental age, and socio-economic background. Immigrants and other pupils who were experiencing difficulty with the bilingual problem were not to be considered as subjects for the study. All matched partners were students who had successfully passed from one elementary grade to another in their school career.

Sources of Data

Form letters explaining the purpose of the project and extending an
invitation to the teachers to have a share in this educational endeavor by supplying the necessary information were forwarded to principals and teachers. The data for this investigation were based on sources which were common and available for most of the students. In their annual testing program the parochial schools of the Archdiocese of Chicago include Otis Quick-Scoring Mental Ability Tests at various grade levels and Stanford Achievement Tests at all but first grade level, where the testing is optional. Results of the testing are recorded on cumulative records which are kept in the school files and to which teachers have access (in the schools under consideration). When the students transfer from one parochial school to another in the archdiocese, it has been the policy to send the cumulatives by mail to the receiving school. Because of this practice it was possible to obtain data for transfer students also.

The purpose of the Otis tests, as described in the manual, is to measure mental ability, thinking power or degree of maturity of the mind. Mental ability cannot be measured directly; however, the effect it has in enabling pupils to attain knowledge and mental skills can be assessed indirectly through certain types of questions. Otis attempted to incorporate in his tests those items which depend more on thinking than on schooling. Correct responses to the test items require a variety of mental operations—and the amount of ability of the student is reflected in his test score. The child who scores high demonstrates superior ability and will probably be capable of learning more material and at a rate above average in the future. The low scorer, however, must be judged also in
terms of his environment, school adjustment, or other factors connected with school.

One of the main reasons for using an intelligence test is to provide a gauge for judging ability to handle school work successfully. The validity of an intelligence test indicates the extent to which its results can be used to predict scholastic achievement. Evidence is sought and presented by the test constructors in the form of correlations between the intelligence test and the subtests of specific achievement tests. In this investigation, Otis Intelligence Tests and Stanford Achievement Tests have been selected as main sources of data. The following information on the correlations of Otis tests and Stanford subtests has been obtained from the publishing company. These data represent results of the recent 1963 Stanford Achievement Test Standardization Program. A short summarization is presented here. Correlations between Otis Quick-Scoring Mental Ability Tests and Stanford subtests are as follows: Grade One (Primary I Battery)--range from .36 to .51; Grade Two (Primary II Battery)--from .33 to .53; Grade Three (Primary II Battery)--from .46 to .65; Grade Four (Intermediate I Battery)--from .51 to .73; Grade Five (Intermediate II Battery)--from .45 to .70; Grade Six (Intermediate II Battery)--from .55 to .75; Grade Seven (Advanced Battery)--from .57 to .77; Grade Eight (Advanced Battery)--from .59 to .78.

The above correlations of the Otis tests with Stanford subtests were derived through a program of testing and item analysis during which typical test items were selected on the basis of comparison with intelligence test scores on general ability levels. Since both tests were administered at the same time in the standardization program, the validity described here would be a "status" validity; however, as the only difference between this and a predictive validity is the matter of the time element, it would seem the test has predictive validity as well—excluding, of course, the unusual cases of serious or functional changes in pupils.\(^2\)

The reliability or consistency with which the tests measure mental ability on repeated performance is attested by high coefficients of correlation between Beta Test Form A and B taken in Grades Four to Nine (average of coefficients being .79, and combined coefficients stated at .96).\(^3\) The correlation between odd and even items, coefficients corrected by Spearman-Brown formula for the Beta Test Form \(C_m\) is reported at .86 (average of six correlated coefficients). The difference of seven points in the corrected coefficients of the Beta Tests is explained by the fact that the pupils fluctuate in ability to some extent from day to day. The corrected coefficients for the Alpha Form \(AS\) (through the use of two samplings) is reported at .87 and .88.

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\(^2\)Ibid., p. 13.

The standard error of the measurement on both Alpha and Beta Tests is four. This indicates the probability that two-thirds of the group taking the test would obtain scores that would not differ from their true (unknown) scores by more than four points; restated, a pupil's score will be in error not more than four points in 66 2/3 per cent of the cases. \(^1\)

Research on material received from the test department of Harcourt, Brace and World, Incorporated, yielded relevant information on the deviation IQ which the Otis tests employ. In 1937 Dr. Otis had suggested this deviation method—an expression of the pupil's score as a distance from the norm score for persons of his chronological age. By setting up a scaling system the IQ can be kept the same from year to year if the student increases his score by the normal amount each year. This type of IQ, referred to as the "deviation IQ," avoids the complications due to uncertainty of the exact age in which mental growth slows down and finally ceases—leaving the line to continue as a plateau, and the problem of what chronological age to use as a divisor for individuals beyond this age. The expression, "IQ," still retains its original meaning—"measure or degree of brightness"—though some would wish to abolish the term, due to the strong emphasis and often erroneous views maintained in the constancy of the original ratio IQ. The deviation IQ represents a comparison of the child's score with the average score of a great many children of his own age. It indicates his differences, or deviation, from the norm— the

\(^1\) Ibid.
population mean being considered as one hundred and the standard deviation as twelve.

In comparing nonpromoted students with students who had never been retained, mental age was chosen as a significant basis since the concept presents itself as an index of mental level or amount of intelligence. Because the mental age is no more than the chronological age for which the pupil's obtained score is the average or norm, it would seem to be a common measure for comparing the achievement of two students having different chronological ages, but similar mental ages. Cronbach states: "In making decisions within a group of varied age (e.g., in sectioning of classes) the mental age rather than the IQ gives the most relevant information. In research also, if it is desired to equate groups, to separate groups of unequal ability, the mental age should be used rather than the IQ. This principle is often violated. The correlation of IQ with another variable is lower than that of mental age with the same variable in a group of mixed age." It would seem, then, that a student who was retained in a grade and subsequently moved on with the new set of classmates from year to year would be expected to perform in a manner indicative of his level of mental maturity, or mental age. In seeking to compare his achievement with another in the same class, mental age would seem to be the most significant means to use as a basis, since all students would be expected

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to perform academically in relation to their respective levels of mental maturity. Sex, socio-economic and educational background—in addition to mental age—were other criterion taken into consideration in matching partners for this investigation.

The second source from which data was derived appeared in the form of scores resulting from the administration of Stanford Achievement Tests in spring in the Archdiocese of Chicago. Only three of the schools in the study were not located in this archdiocese, but two of these schools (in the Joliet Diocese) had also taken the tests; the teachers in the third school (in Peoria Diocese) and first grade teachers in all other schools obligingly complied with the request to administer them to all students included in the study.

Characteristics of the Stanford Achievement Tests were observed and recorded from descriptions contained in the "Directions for Administering" which accompany each package of tests, and from duplicated materials obtained from the publishers for reference purposes. This series of tests is organized into levels or batteries with the intention of measuring a wide range of achievement at each grade level. In the 1963 standardization program, validity of content was sought through sequential procedural measures. To attain the goal of presenting test items that would be in harmony with modern objectives—a measurement of actual content taught in the schools of today—a thorough analysis of the most widely used series of texts, courses of study, and research literature was made. Outlines were constructed and submitted to the judgment of subject-matter special-
ists; all test material was placed on trial through pre-publication experimentation. The selected content of the final form underwent a standardization process in which 264 school systems drawn from 50 states participated, and over 850,000 pupils were tested. The Otis Quick-Scoring Mental Ability Tests were administered at the same time to all pupils; norms for Grades One through Three were based on random samples of approximately 10,000 pupils per grade; in Grades Four through Nine all pupils were included. A small percent (between 1 per cent and 2 per cent at each grade level) of pupils extremely atypical as to age was eliminated.

Intercorrelations of all subtests were derived by using correlations obtained at each grade level. The four equivalent forms, $W$, $X$, $Y$, and $Z$, of the test yield comparable results and data obtained from Form $X$ used in the standardization program are generally applicable to the other forms.

Reliability data for the tests have been considered. These measurements are supplied in the booklets containing directions for administration of the tests and in supplementary material directly available from the publishers. The data pertaining to the estimation of reliability for the subtests by the odd-even split-half method corrected by the Spearman-Brown Prophecy Formula, and standard errors of measurement in terms of grade scores for each subject for a random sample of 1,000 pupils from each grade in the 1963 standardization group, are presented in tables for teachers' use.

This thorough study of the Otis and Stanford testing material, as described in the preceding paragraphs, renewed confidence in the use of this equipment as sources of data.
In addition to test data, teachers were asked to check social-personal characteristics of nonpromoted students and pupils of similar mental age, and to supply opinions on the benefits of nonpromotion. Principals were requested to offer suggestions on effective practices in retention policies.

Sources of data thus included scores on mental ability and scholastic achievement which were secured from cumulatives in the school files, teachers' judgments on character traits, and principals' opinions on nonpromotion practices.

Description of Data-Gathering Instruments

Form sheets for academic data, a student trait list, teacher's opinionnaire, and principal's questionnaire relative to promotion practices were employed as data-gathering instruments.

The information requested on the academic form sheet included the following specifics: grade, sex, socio-economic level (upper-middle-lower), grade in which retained, Form of Otis Test, date given, chronological age, mental age, IQ, Form of Stanford Test, date given, grade equivalent scores for each subject, and the grade norm. Data were supplied for the nonpromoted student and a student with similar mental ability but having no retention background.

In order to obtain an estimate of characteristics of nonpromoted students and matched groups, a social-personal trait list was constructed. The set of characteristics was selected by the author as being representa-
tive of qualities discussed in the research on nonpromoted students and also descriptive of traits which generally appear on students' report cards as measures of appraisal of school behavior. This list consisted of the following items: satisfaction in belonging to the present group of students, ability to socialize, obedience, self-confidence, emotional stability, attention in class, interest in school work, effort, perseverance, school spirit, condition of health. The description of each trait was worded in such a manner that the degree of its presence which characterized the student's behavior could be checked in one of three categories: constantly - usually - seldom. An evaluation of both nonpromoted and promoted students of similar mental age was made by the teacher, and registered in the respective categories on the social-personal trait list. Throughout this study no comparisons were made by teachers. They were asked to record academic scores and to make individual appraisals of subjects on the social-personal trait list.

Since future results of nonpromotion cannot be foreseen, but can in a measure be predicted from observation and study of nonpromoted students, a response from the teachers was requested in reference to what procedure would have most benefited each nonpromoted subject in the investigation if his present scholastic success or failure had been known when the decision on promotion had to be made in the past. The opinionnaire form offered a choice among four possible decisions: (1) retention, (2) promotion, (3) promotion with programming to the previous grade for subjects in which the student had failed, (4) part-time retention with programming
to the next grade. Opinions on promotion policies that seemed effective on their grade level were also requested of the teachers through a question to be answered on the opinionnaire form sheet.

To obtain an insight into the promotion practices and policies existing in the thirteen schools involved in the study a questionnaire directed to principals was composed. Answers to questions pertaining to school-wide policies on nonpromotion, persons sharing in decision-making, and suggestions for effective practices were sought.

The data-gathering instruments used in this investigation thus included: (1) a form sheet for academic scores, (2) a social-personal trait list, (3) a teacher's opinionnaire, (4) a principal's questionnaire.

**Techniques for Analysis of Data**

For effective analysis of data, the information collected through the medium of the academic form sheets was assembled, tabulated, and prepared for statistical treatment and presentation.

The reasoning underlying the specific techniques selected to translate the accumulated data into meaningful terms suggestive of awakening new insights into the results of nonpromotion is presented in the following brief explanation.

Apparently teachers expect retainers to perform academically as well as the average children of the grade in which they are retained, and to continue with at least average achievement for the remainder of their elementary school education. It was decided, then, to compare the achievement of nonpromoted subjects with normal grade expectancy as depicted in
the tables of norms accompanying the Stanford Achievement Tests.

In the course of the research the following statement claimed recognition: "A student's mental age is probably the best single basis for estimating the educational level at which he should be able to achieve . . . at which a student can work with profit." This opinion coincides with that of other writers and educators and indicates the further probability that some teachers may expect nonpromoted students' achievement to reach not the average level, but one consistent with their mental ability. Since the subjects selected for this study were of average or above average ability—but in most cases approximately a year older than their classmates who had no history of nonpromotion in their background—they would be expected by teachers holding this theory to achieve at an academic level higher than the normal grade expectancy of the average student who had no record of nonpromotion in this grade. Therefore, in addition to comparing the achievement of nonpromoted students with normal grade expectancy scores, a further attempt was made to compare the pupils with classmates of similar mental ability. A third comparison was planned in reference to nonpromoted students and normal grade expectancy—in consideration of years removed from the grade of retention.

The first statistical procedure was to establish the basis that the two groups of nonpromoted and matched subjects were of similar mental ages. For this the mean mental ages of both groups were calculated. The prin-

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ciple of the null hypothesis was employed to test the difference between the means of the mental ages of both groups at each grade level. This statistical technique postulates the theory that there is no difference between the means of the two groups unless the t-test of the difference between the means would result in a size far beyond the possibility of acceptance of the discrepancy as a result of chance. The t in the latter situation would thus approach significance and indicate the possibility of a significant difference between the mental ages of the two groups. Should the matching of students have been successful and the t-test indicative of no significant difference between the mental ages of the two groups, further chi square and sign-rank tests of the significance of the difference in performance were to be made in the following comparisons: (1) between the achievement of nonpromoted subjects and normal grade expectancy scores, (2) between achievement of students in the present year of retention and normal grade expectancy scores, (3) between academic scores of nonpromoted pupils and students of similar mental ability with no retention background, (4) between achievement at various time units removed from retention and normal grade expectancy.

Since the data on the social-personal characteristics were to be classified into categories representing the degree of the presence of the trait, the operation of the laws of chance might account for some of the cases falling into each category. To discern whether the proportions merely reflected the operation of the laws of chance or probably resulted from a significant controlling factor—in this instance, nonpromotion—
the chi square test was selected as a statistical technique. The chi square test provides a method for comparing observed frequencies with theoretical frequencies that might be expected. In the present study, the chi square technique would test the null hypothesis of no difference: (1) between characteristics of nonpromoted students and normal trait expectancy, and (2) between characteristics of nonpromoted pupils and students of similar mental ability and having no retention background.

In all statistical tests—sign-rank, t-test of the difference between the means, and the chi square test of the null hypothesis—employed as techniques in this investigation, the probability of accepting the hypothesis of no difference was set at the conventional 5 per cent level of confidence. This indicated the willingness of the writer to accept the probability of being wrong in inferences or conclusions based upon results of this study 5 per cent of the times due to chance fluctuations in the sampling.

It was decided to report teachers’ opinions on nonpromotion at various grade levels in frequencies and percentages, and to summarize principals’ and teachers’ suggestions on promotion policies. No precise statistical treatment was selected for the presentation of these general observations.

Summary

The design of the study was descriptive survey. It was built upon the basis of data to be collected from certain Catholic elementary schools in

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Illinois.

After a thorough review of the literature pertaining to the subject of nonpromotion in elementary schools, the problem was restated: "How does nonpromotion affect the academic and social-personal development of students of average and above average ability?" Hypotheses were formulated to guide the various steps involved in the search for answers.

An appraisal of the physical background of the thirteen schools cooperating in the project was made to ascertain whether or not inferences from the dissertation might be drawn for other schools under the administration of the Sisters of Christian Charity in various states, and for elementary schools in general.

The next phase of the study required a meeting with faculty representatives of the schools, explanation of the purpose of the investigation, directions for the selection of subjects, and distribution of form sheets for recording of data.

Sources of data included scores on mental ability and scholastic achievement derived from Otis Mental Ability and Stanford Achievement Tests, teachers' judgments on character traits, and principals' opinions on nonpromotion policies.

Data-gathering instruments were designed. Form sheets for collecting academic data, a check list for indicating social-personal traits, a teacher's opinionnaire consisting of a choice of four items and one question to be answered, a principal's questionnaire containing four inquiries were used.
Techniques for analysis of data were selected. The t-test of the significance of the difference between the means was employed to establish the basis of similarity or dissimilarity of mental ages of matched partners; both the sign-rank and chi square techniques to test significant differences in achievement of both groups. The chi square test of the null hypothesis was used to indicate the probability of differences in social-personal characteristics of the two groups.

After the necessary data had been gathered and techniques for statistical treatment clearly defined, tables were drafted for the recording of items and the facilitation of mathematical computations and explanations. Chapter IV presents a detailed report on the investigation.
CHAPTER IV

REPORT ON THE INVESTIGATION

Description of Background Data

The purpose of this investigation was to obtain information in reference to students who had experienced scholastic nonpromotion at some period in their educational background. The elementary schools which supplied the subjects for this study were located in Illinois, six in the city of Chicago and seven in suburban areas. Of the thirteen schools, ten formed part of the Catholic Archdiocesan System of Chicago, two of the Joliet Diocese, and one of the Peoria Diocese. These thirteen schools constitute the total number of institutions under the administration of the Sisters of Christian Charity in Illinois.

The general descriptions of neighborhood background, occupations of parents, types of homes, attitude toward home study, attendance--information supplied by a staff member of each school included in the study--were accounts of typical American city and suburban districts. Three of the ten city schools were classified as inner-city. Relative to these items of information it was hoped that any conclusions drawn from an analysis of data pertaining to subjects selected from these schools would be meaningful to principals and teachers of the same religious congregation who staff
twenty-two institutions of similar background in other states.

To obtain an estimate of the nonpromotion rate in the Catholic elementary school systems of the three respective dioceses where the thirteen schools are located, statistics were requested from the respective school boards. However, only the Archdiocesan School Board of Chicago responded. Statistics from this Board are presented in Table I. Since the board col-

TABLE I

NONPROMOTION STATISTICS OF CHICAGO ARCHDIOCESAN ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS FOR THE SCHOLASTIC YEAR 1964-65

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Enrollment</th>
<th>Nonpromoted</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>37,189</td>
<td>2,927</td>
<td>7.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>36,896</td>
<td>932</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>35,643</td>
<td>497</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>35,276</td>
<td>365</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>34,882</td>
<td>265</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>33,036</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>32,968</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>31,685</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>277,575</td>
<td>5,322</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

lects data from the largest archdiocesan school system in the United States, and since ten of the thirteen schools in the survey form part of this system, the available statistics were considered of sufficient import to be utilized as a point of reference in estimating percentages of nonpromotion in Catholic schools. A general pattern of nonpromotion can be observed,
the greatest frequencies occurring in the first grade and steadily declining throughout the eight grades.

It was also considered beneficial to the study to obtain information concerning the amount of nonpromotion existing in the thirteen schools under the direction of this specific religious congregation cooperating in the survey. Table II presents the data which were obtained from the

TABLE II

NONPROMOTION STATISTICS OF THIRTEEN ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS ADMINISTERED BY THE SISTERS OF CHRISTIAN CHARITY IN ILLINOIS AND CHICAGO ARCHDIOCESAN PERCENTAGES FOR SCHOLASTIC YEAR 1964-65

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Total Data of 13 Schools</th>
<th>Archdiocese Percentages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Enrollment</td>
<td>Nonpromoted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1,148</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>1,165</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>1,138</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>1,045</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>1,079</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>946</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>907</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>837</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>8,265</td>
<td>182</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

principals who were asked to supply statistics describing total enrollments and nonpromotions occurring at the termination of the scholastic year 1964-65. By inspection of the data, it is clear that the pattern of nonpromotion appearing through the grades in the combined grade totals of the
thirteen schools is similar to that of the archdiocesan school system. However, by comparison, the data for the thirteen schools reveals a tendency on the part of these school staffs to retain a smaller number of pupils in Grade One and a greater percentage in all other grades except eighth, than the archdiocesan teachers in general. The total percentage of nonpromoted in the thirteen schools is slightly higher than that in the archdiocese as a whole.

According to the design of the investigation, as explained in Chapter III, only a segment of the nonpromoted population of the thirteen schools included in Table II was the object of this research endeavor. Those students who had been retained once in their elementary school background, who were educated in the parochial schools, had no bilingual difficulty, and whose IQ was ninety-five or above were selected as subjects. Among the group, therefore, were incorporated many students not listed in the total nonpromotion population of the scholastic year 1964-65, since their retention experience occurred in a previous year. The distribution of students in the project includes 32 first-grade pupils who are all in the grade of retention at present and 269 subjects either repeating the grade or removed a year or more from the year of retention. When considering the nonpromotion background of these 301 students, it is of interest to note the general pattern of greater percentages occurring in lower grades with decreasing amounts in later years, as can be inferred by reverting to the rows and columns contain-
ing grade locations, retention background, and total number of subjects by grades as presented in Table III.

### Table III
GRADE AND RETENTION BACKGROUND DATA OF NONPROMOTED SUBJECTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Present Grade</th>
<th>Number of Subjects</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>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>32</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>17</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>301</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Each row distributes the grade group according to the year in which the students experienced academic failure. A typical example of the cumulative effect of retention practices can be detected by referring to the row for Grade Five. Here it is observed that four years ago, only 13 of the 46 fifth-grade subjects were experiencing failure in Grade One. As the next year drew to a close, an additional 14 somewhere in the schools were retained in Grade Two; the second grade now numbered 27 nonpromoted students of this range of ability. The following year,
7 more were retained in Grade Three; this brought the number meeting failure to 34. Last year, 10 more students shared the same nonpromotion background, contributing to a total of 44. This year, with the addition of 2 retained in Grade Five, the final summation of students in the study for this grade is 46. The reader will recall that these children are of average and above average ability, and though a cumulation of this magnitude does not occur in any one school, it does exist among the thirteen schools, as revealed in the data. The fifth grade was used as a typical example; each of the grades, excepting the first, produced an aggregate—the grand total amounting to 301 nonpromoted students of average ability attending thirteen schools. When an approximate calculation of this type is extended to include all schools—public and private—in the United States, the figures become staggering.

Hypotheses were projected to test achievement of these students—to ascertain whether or not the practice of nonpromotion had succeeded in bringing them up to normal grade expectancy levels. Hypotheses to be tested assumed no difference between present achievement and normal grade expectancy, between mental ages of nonpromoted and matched partners selected for the study, between academic achievement of both groups, between designated social-personal characteristics of the two groups. Therefore, for each nonpromoted subject already chosen, a partner was matched as closely as possible on the following variables: grade, sex, mental age (derived from Otis Quick-Scoring Mental Ability Tests), socio-economic background (determined by teacher judgment). Immigrants and others ex-
periencing difficulty with a bilingual problem were not considered as subjects. All matched partners were students who had no experience of nonpromotion in their school history.

Data obtained from the schools were tabulated on separate tables for each grade. After the statistics for all nonpromoted subjects and partners had been recorded in their respective categories, some obvious facts were evident. There were not enough returns to warrant a separation of boys and girls in the statistical treatment of data for each grade, as would undoubtedly have afforded additional insights into the problem. Of the total 301 pairs, 197 were boys and 104 were girls—a situation analogous to the findings in research literature relative to nonpromotion of students in general. Also, it was noted that the socio-economic status of subjects and partners was predominantly that of the middle class. Of the 301 nonpromoted students and 301 matched partners, 552 were children from middle class homes, 10 from lower-upper, and 40 from upper-lower backgrounds. There were additional subjects of average ability and above that might have been included in the study—but were lost through lack of success in matching partners. Subjects finally selected in the non-promotion category ranged in IQ from 95–129.

The first statistical procedures to be employed involved the calculation of mean chronological ages, intelligence quotients, and mental ages for the eight groups. To test the hypothesis of similarity between mental ages of groups of nonpromoted and partners in sixth and seventh grades, the t-test of the significance of the difference between means
was utilized. The resulting t-values were below those required to indicate a significant difference at either the 5 per cent or 1 per cent level of confidence; therefore the null hypothesis of no difference between the means of mental ages of the respective groups in each grade was accepted. It is apparent from an inspection of Table IV that when mental ages are controlled and one group is chronologically a year older than the other, as in this project, then the mean intelligence quotients of the younger groups will be higher. From this it follows that expectancy built on the basis of mental ability results in comparison of non-promoted students with younger, bright classmates. A comparison of this type will be described in the next section of the dissertation. However,
in most of the following analyses of data, scores of the nonpromoted
groups will be considered in relation to normal grade expectancy on
national and local levels.

Returns on Academic Data

The focal point of interest in this area was centered on the achieve­
ment of a specific type of nonpromoted pupil, the average and above aver­
age student. A number of hypotheses in reference to the academic progress
of these individuals was postulated in Chapters I and III. To test the
reliability of these theoretical probabilities, selected statistical pro­
cedures were employed. Data in the form of Stanford Achievement grade
equivalent scores, gathered from cumulative records in the files of the
thirteen elementary schools and forwarded by respective principals, were
tabulated. Medians for each grade group of nonpromoted students were
calculated. These statistics, and also the grade equivalent norms repre­
sentative of the time of testing, were arranged in three divisions—
primary, intermediate, and upper grades—to facilitate future comparisons,
in addition to individual grade analysis, of performance of these organ­
izational units of the elementary school. Word meaning and paragraph
meaning grade equivalent scores were averaged under the area of reading;
and the grade equivalent scores from the three subtests, arithmetic compu­
tation, concepts, and application, were averaged under the area of arith­
metic. Social studies and science subtests were not included for analysis
in this investigation, as these subjects were not incorporated in the
batteries for all eight grades. Table V presents the medians and norms of the eight grade groups.

The first hypothesis of no difference between academic achievement of nonpromoted students and normal grade expectancy scores was tested by means of the chi square technique in a two-cell table arrangement. Each grade from first to eighth was treated separately. Within each grade the achievement of students in each subject area was studied. Those nonpromoted students who had achieved at or above the normal grade expectancy score, the national norm in this test, were counted and the frequencies placed in one cell; those who achieved below were counted and the sum recorded in the second cell. The question as to whether these frequencies
could have arisen by chance in a group of average ability students, of whom half could be expected to achieve at the norm level and above, while half would be expected to achieve below the norm, was posed. Did the obtained frequencies vary significantly from the expected proportion? The probability of accepting the hypothesis of no difference was set at the 5 per cent level of confidence. With the 50-50 hypothesis chosen and the application of Yates's correction for continuity wherever any cell frequency was less than ten throughout all two-cell tables, the computation of chi squares yielded the results as shown in Table VI on the following page. Here the achievement of the primary grades can be observed. In all subject areas, the number of first grade nonpromoted students who reached expectancy grade norms and those who failed to do so is very significant at the .01 per cent level of confidence. As a group, it would seem these students have not reached the goal, if the aim of retention had been to achieve at normal grade expectancy.

From the data presented in this table, the achievement of second grade nonpromoted students can also be noted. Some of these had been retained in Grade One, others in Grade Two. The chi square test indicates the probability that these children are not significantly different in performance from average children in Grade Two who had been promoted at the regular times—-with the exception of achievement in spelling in which a very significant number are finding much difficulty.

Information on third grade nonpromoted children in reference to
TABLE VI

COMPARISON OF ACHIEVEMENT OF PRIMARY GRADE NONPROMOTED SUBJECTS WITH NATIONAL GRADE EQUIVALENT NORMS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>At or Above Norm</th>
<th>Below Norm</th>
<th>Sum</th>
<th>x²</th>
<th>Signif.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>9.031</td>
<td>**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>.105</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>6.095</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spelling</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>11.281</td>
<td>**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>9.500</td>
<td>**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>12.600</td>
<td>**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>.421</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>4.666</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arithmetic</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>9.031</td>
<td>**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>.105</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>.095</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Significant at the .05 level of confidence.
** Significant at the .01 level of confidence.
school achievement can be examined in the table. In reading and language, a significant number—in spelling, a very significant number—of these pupils are below normal grade expectancy.

In general, results of the chi square tests for the primary grades indicate that reading achievement of first and third grade nonpromoted students is low; spelling performance in the three grades, and arithmetic in Grade One. In other areas—reading in Grade Two, language and arithmetic in second and third grades—the discrepancies between expected and observed frequencies are not significant. As a group, the second grade seems to have profited by retention, but the first and third are still significantly low in the number of nonpromoted who are achieving at normal grade expectancy level in reading, the basic subject of the primary curriculum. However, the correlations of the Otis Mental Ability tests and Stanford Achievement subtests for the primary grades were low. A less formal comparison between capability and achievement has been recommended for these young children. Additional criteria, besides test scores, would certainly be necessary when weighing promotional decisions.

Chi square tests for intermediate grades were calculated next. Fourth and fifth grade students were found to be performing according to normal grade expectancy in all areas except spelling. When sixth grade data were examined, the frequencies for nonpromoted students in reading and spelling were significantly low. These results can be observed in Table VII which follows.

In summarizing intermediate grade academic returns, it appears that
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>At or Above Norm</th>
<th>Below Norm</th>
<th>Sum</th>
<th>$\chi^2$</th>
<th>X</th>
<th>Signif.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>35</td>
<td>9.257</td>
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<td>16</td>
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<td>18</td>
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<td>46</td>
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<td>18</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>1.454</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*S Significant at the .05 level of confidence.

**S Significant at the .01 level of confidence.
in most areas nonpromoted students are achieving according to grade expectancy, except in fourth and sixth grade spelling and sixth grade reading.

Grade equivalent scores for seventh and eighth grade nonpromoted students are indicated in Table VIII. Here it can be observed that pupils

**Table VIII**

**Comparison of Achievement of Upper Grade Nonpromoted Subjects with National Grade Equivalent Norms**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>At or Above Norm</th>
<th>Below Norm</th>
<th>Sum</th>
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<th>Signif.</th>
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</thead>
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</tr>
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<tr>
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<td>18</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>.806</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spelling</td>
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<td>14</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>.758</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>8</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>.032</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language</td>
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<td>17</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>.030</td>
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</table>

**Significant at the .01 level of confidence.**

seem to be responding according to normal grade expectancy levels in all areas except seventh grade spelling where a very significant number of these nonpromoted students scored below the national grade norm on the Stanford Achievement Tests.

After data were considered according to separate grades and then in
groups of primary, intermediate, and upper divisions, a summary chart containing only the results indicating significant grade achievement was prepared in order to locate outstanding strengths and weaknesses in pupil performance. This summary appears in Table IX. It seems that the number

TABLE IX

SUMMARY OF STATISTICALLY SIGNIFICANT GRADE ACHIEVEMENT OF NONPROMOTED SUBJECTS IN RELATION TO NATIONAL GRADE EQUIVALENT NORMS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
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<tbody>
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<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spelling</td>
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<tr>
<td>Language</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arithmetic</td>
<td>**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Significant at the .05 level of confidence.
**Significant at the .01 level of confidence.

of nonpromoted students was noticeable in consistency of failure to reach national grade norms in spelling, as indicated in all grades except eighth; failure was also noted in first grade reading and arithmetic; a significant number failed to reach norms in third and sixth grade reading. The first graders showed the greatest lack of progress in that the discrepancies between expected and observed frequencies in attaining national grade norms in reading, spelling, and arithmetic were very significant. Before
reaching any conclusions, however, other tests were selected by which to examine performance of these average and above average nonpromoted subjects gathered from thirteen schools.

The second type of examination to determine significance of differences between academic achievement of nonpromoted students and normal grade expectancy was based on a consideration of the pupil's level of achievement in relation to intelligence quotient derived from Otis Quick-Scoring Mental Ability Tests. Achievement and mental capacity in the primary grades are not highly correlated; therefore precise comparisons were not encouraged. For Grades Four through Eight, the Stanford Achievement Tests supply tables of expected deviations from grade norms at nine levels of mental ability. These statistics have been based on the median grade scores obtained by pupils of specific intelligence quotient levels in the 1963 standardization program. The Otis IQ's of the nonpromoted students in the present investigation ranged from 95 to 129, which placed them within Otis Stanines 3 through 9. Students' scores were compared with expected deviations from grade norms in respect to their own level of ability. The chi square test of discrepancy between observed and expected frequencies was again employed. Table X, on the following page, was prepared to indicate the number of intermediate grade pupils, as well as the number from the upper grades, who achieved at expected levels, and those achieving below. Results reflected a direction toward normal grade performance in all subject areas in the intermediate grades. Data revealed a differing pattern of achievement in the upper grades. Seventh grade
**TABLE X**

COMPARISON OF ACHIEVEMENT OF NONPROMOTED SUBJECTS WITH EXPECTED DEVIATION FROM GRADE NORMS IN RELATION TO MENTAL ABILITY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Grade</th>
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<th>Below Norm</th>
<th>Sum</th>
<th>$\chi^2$</th>
<th>Signif.</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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</tr>
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<td></td>
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<td>16</td>
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<td>29</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>46</td>
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</tr>
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</tr>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>.783</td>
<td></td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>4.455</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>5.121</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>8</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>1.580</td>
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</tr>
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<td>15</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>.714</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
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<td>23</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
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<td>14</td>
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<td>8</td>
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<td>12</td>
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<td>1.580</td>
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<td>46</td>
<td>.783</td>
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<td>15</td>
<td>44</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>33</td>
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<td>23</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>8.828</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Significant at the .05 level of confidence.
**Significant at the .01 level of confidence.
students attained a significantly high frequency in reaching grade expectation in arithmetic, while eight grade nonpromoted pupils achieved above expectation in reading and arithmetic. All indications of significance in this table refer to a greater number of students achieving at or above their expected deviations from the grade norm than would occur by chance.

A third comparison of scores was made with the Chicago Archdiocesan class averages achieved by students in the spring testing of 1965. All tests were taken in the seventh scholastic month. Archdiocesan averages were above national norms in every subject except Grade Two spelling (2.6). The chi square technique was employed to ascertain the significance of the discrepancies between observed and expected frequencies of nonpromoted students performing at or above archdiocesan norm levels, and those failing to reach these scores. Recorded in tables on the following pages are the data and resulting chi square values pertinent to the primary, intermediate, and upper grade divisions, respectively.

Table XII presents information obtained in reference to primary grade achievement. First grade averages were not recorded in the school board office, due to the fact that this test is optional in the first grade of the archdiocese. Second grade nonpromoted children achieved at the norm levels in significantly low frequencies in spelling and language; the third grade pupils performed with low frequencies in reading, spelling, and language.

Table XII contains the data resulting from an examination of intermediate grade scores. When these were analyzed, it was discovered that
### TABLE XI

COMPARISON OF ACHIEVEMENT OF PRIMARY GRADE NONPROMOTED SUBJECTS WITH CHICAGO ARCHDIOCESAN CLASS AVERAGES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Grade</th>
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<th>Below Norm</th>
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<td>21</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>.421</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>42</td>
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</table>

*Significant at the .05 level of confidence.

**Significant at the .01 level of confidence.
TABLE XII

COMPARISON OF ACHIEVEMENT OF INTERMEDIATE GRADE NONPROMOTED SUBJECTS WITH CHICAGO ARCHDIOCESAN CLASS AVERAGES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
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<th>Below</th>
<th>Sum</th>
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<th>Signif.</th>
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<td>37</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>19.114</td>
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<td>46</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>9.091</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Significant at the .05 level of confidence.
**Significant at the .01 level of confidence.
**TABLE XIII**

**COMPARISON OF ACHIEVEMENT OF UPPER GRADE NONPROMOTED SUBJECTS WITH CHICAGO ARCHDIOCESAN CLASS AVERAGES**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>At or Above Norm</th>
<th>Below Norm</th>
<th>Sum</th>
<th>$X^2$</th>
<th>Signif.</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>19</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>1.580</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spelling</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>23.758</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>3.903</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arithmetic</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>5.121</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>3.448</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Significant at the .05 level of confidence.

**Significant at the .01 level of confidence.
achievement was low in practically every area. All three grade groups showed low frequencies in reading and spelling; the fifth and sixth were low in language, the sixth grade in arithmetic.

Information in Table XIII, on the preceding page, refers to seventh and eighth grade groups which were studied in the same manner. Here it was of interest to note that seventh graders performed below expectancy in all areas while eighth grade students maintained an achievement level comparable to archdiocesan norms only in language and arithmetic.

A summary chart was designed to present a review of the significant achievement of nonpromoted students in relation to Chicago Archdiocesan norms. Since local norms claim the advantage of having been derived from performances of students with similar educational experiences and social backgrounds, they are considered more logical standards for measurement and comparison. In this instance, the local norms were higher than the national norms; therefore, when compared with the local norms, some of the nonpromoted groups seemed to be having more difficulty in reaching expected levels of performance. All statistical symbols of significance in the summary table refer to lower frequencies of nonpromoted students achieving at local levels than would be expected from groups of average ability children. Table XIV, on the following page, describes the general performance of the grade groups in relation to archdiocesan norms.

Attention was next centered on grade scores in reference to the number of years the students were removed from the year of retention. There were no present retainers in the eighth grade; but from first to
### TABLE XIV

SUMMARY OF STATISTICALLY SIGNIFICANT GRADE ACHIEVEMENT OF NONPROMOTED SUBJECTS IN RELATION TO CHICAGO ARCHDIOCESAN AVERAGES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Significance in Grade&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spelling</td>
<td>**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language</td>
<td>**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arithmetic</td>
<td>**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>a</sup>All symbols indicate low performance.

*Significant at the .05 level of confidence.

**Significant at the .01 level of confidence.
seventh grades the groups contained seventy-seven who were repeating the work of the respective grades. Some of these had reached the national norm in some areas, but not in all; some had not reached the norms in any subject. Beginning with the present year of retention, and then forming groups according to their distance from the year of retention, the students' scores were examined and percentages calculated to derive a very general understanding of the amount of success that might be apparent as the nonpromoted pupils moved progressively away from the administrative device that had been used to aid their academic advancement. Table XV, on the next page, contains the general characteristics of the achievement of all 301 nonpromoted students. There was no language subtest for first grade; therefore these children were excluded when calculating that percentage. Though included in the chart, the number of pupils six and seven years removed from retention was too small to claim much consideration. An inspection of the percentages in the table reveals no marked pattern of steady progress from one year to the next. The percentages of students attaining or surpassing national norms fluctuate from year to year and from one subject area to another. Beginning with the first year removed from retention, the number of students achieving success in reading seems to rise in constant progression. The arithmetic scores indicate a greater percentage of achievement, though no design suggestive of continual improvement from year to year. As recorded, rarely does 50 per cent of a group reach success in any subject, and nowhere do they reach this attainment in all four major subjects.
TABLE XV

DISTRIBUTION OF NONPROMOTED STUDENTS ATTAINING OR SURPASSING NATIONAL NORMS IN RELATION TO DISTANCE FROM YEAR OF RETENTION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Distance from Retention</th>
<th>Number of Pupils</th>
<th>Present Grade Location</th>
<th>Read.</th>
<th>Percentage At or Above National Norms</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In year</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>1-7</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 year</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>2-8</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 years</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>3-8</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 years</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>4-8</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 years</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>5-8</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 years</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>6-8</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 years</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7-8</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 years</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>a</sup>Grade One (45 pupils) excluded.
Were these grade scores compared with local archdiocesan norms, the percentages would be lower; should they be compared with expected deviations from national norms with respect to individual IQ's, the percentages would be higher.

A closer study of the scores revealed that only 4 students of the 77 in the present year of retention had reached national norms in all four major areas; 4 from 45 (Grade One students were not included) had attained local norms. Among the group that was one year removed from retention, 3 (of 74) were successful on all levels according to national norms and 2 on the local level; when two years removed, 5 on national norms, 2 on local; three years removed, 3 on national level; when four years away, 1 on national norms; five years away, 1 on national; when 7 years away, 2 on national and 1 on archdiocesan norms. A total, then, of 19 from the entire group of 301 students had reached or exceeded national norms; a total of 9 from the group of 269 (first grade excluded) had been successful according to local standards.

Another group of chi square tests was made in respect to the number of students expected to achieve at national levels and the observed number. Data used included the grade scores of all the children, 77 in number, who were in their present year of retention. Observation of the results suggested the probability that the students were apparently performing as well as might be expected, with the exception of their achievement in spelling, where many were below the norm. However, inspection of the two columns indicating achievement at or above norm and below
norm, brings to light the fact that the actual count of students achieving below norm is greater in frequencies in every area, with the exception of language. This implies a lower level of performance generally, even though significant differences were not revealed by the chi square computations, excepting in the region of spelling. Table XVI presents this information.

**TABLE XVI**

**COMPARISON OF ACHIEVEMENT OF NONPROMOTED SUBJECTS IN THE YEAR OF RETENTION WITH NATIONAL GRADE EQUIVALENT NORMS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>At or Above</th>
<th>Below</th>
<th>Sum</th>
<th>( \chi^2 )</th>
<th>Signif.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>1-7</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>2.922</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spelling</td>
<td>1-7</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>17.779</td>
<td>**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language</td>
<td>2-7</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>.022</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arithmetic</td>
<td>1-7</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>2.194</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\( \text{a Grade One had no language subtest.} \)

relative to students in the year of retention.

The scores of nonpromoted students in the year of retention were not compared with the local archdiocesan norms, since national norms were not supplied for Grade One where standardized testing is optional. Therefore, first grade scores from this project would have to be excluded, should the comparison be made. However, due to the fact that the local norms are somewhat higher, the number of students reaching the norms in
all grades would obviously be less frequent on these local norms.

Since students who have been retained, and subsequently progress from one grade to the next in the company of younger pupils, are expected by some teachers to achieve not only in respect to normal grade expectancy, but also according to the degree of their mental maturity, data in the form of grade equivalent scores were collected for pupils matched with nonpromoted students on the basis of mental age, sex, grade, and socio-economic background. These pupils had no record of nonpromotion. Scores of both groups were listed, and differences with algebraic signs recorded. Wilcoxon's sign-rank test of differences for paired observations was employed to study the differences in performance of the two groups. The hypothesis tested proposed that the differences were symmetrically distributed about a mean of differences of zero with the assumption, if this were true, that there was no difference between the performance of nonpromoted students and other pupils (with no record of retention)—matched according to mental ages. The probability that the nonpromoted group would excel in achievement was equal to the probability that the matched partners would excel.

Each of the eight grades was studied separately. Each contained its own number (N) of pairs for observation. Depending on this number of differences, the sums of ranks of the minority sign (T), in addition to the mean of the ranks (\( \bar{T} \)), and the standard deviation of the distribution of the ranks (\( \sigma_i \)), a standard score (\( z \)), was calculated. The acceptance or rejection of the null hypothesis was set at the .05 per cent level of
confidence. Data were arranged in tables according to primary, intermediate, and upper grade units. For reference purposes, these three tables occur on the following pages.

The results of the sign-rank test used in the treatment of the scores achieved by primary grade children were considered first. The findings are presented in Table XVII, page 166. Here it can be observed that in every area except first grade reading and third grade arithmetic there is a statistical significance in the measure of differences between the non-promoted and promoted groups. In every case the nonpromoted had achieved lower than other students of similar mental age who were approximately a year younger and had never been retained.

A tabulation of the results of the sign-rank test of observed differences was next made in respect to the scores of intermediate grade children. Table XVIII (page 167) contains these statistics. There the signs of difference indicate the pattern of academic achievement displayed by nonpromoted and promoted students of similar mental ages. In all areas the nonpromoted have not performed as well scholastically as younger, bright children who have never been retained. The mean of the difference in achievement in years and months is higher in a number of areas within this group than was noticeable with the primary grade children's scores.

The last set of comparisons was that between the upper divisions, seventh and eighth grades. Their achievement is recorded in Table XIX, page 168. Results indicate a somewhat higher level of performance by the nonpromoted group in a few areas. There was no significant differ-
TABLE XVII
SIGN-RANK TEST OF DIFFERENCES BETWEEN ACHIEVEMENT OF PROMOTED AND NONPROMOTED PUPILS IN PRIMARY GRADES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Signs of Diff.</th>
<th>$M_d$ (Yrs.-Mos.)</th>
<th>$\bar{z}$</th>
<th>Signif.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>$+$</td>
<td>$-$</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>-.1</td>
<td>.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>-.7</td>
<td>3.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>-.5</td>
<td>2.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spelling</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>-.3</td>
<td>3.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>-.9</td>
<td>4.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>-.5</td>
<td>3.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>-.4</td>
<td>3.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>-.4</td>
<td>1.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arithmetic</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>-.3</td>
<td>3.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>23</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>-.2</td>
<td>1.57</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Ssigns indicate the number of pairs where nonpromoted students scored higher and the number where they scored lower than promoted matched partners.

*Significant at the .05 per cent level of confidence.

**Significant at the .01 per cent level of confidence.
TABLE XVIII

SIGN-RANK TEST OF DIFFERENCES BETWEEN ACHIEVEMENT OF PROMOTED AND NONPROMOTED PUPILS IN INTERMEDIATE GRADES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Signs of Diff.</th>
<th>Md   (Yrs.-Mos.)</th>
<th>Z</th>
<th>Signif.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>+</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>-1.0</td>
<td>2.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>-1.0</td>
<td>3.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>-0.7</td>
<td>2.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spelling</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>-1.1</td>
<td>3.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>-1.5</td>
<td>4.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>-0.9</td>
<td>2.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>-1.3</td>
<td>3.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>-1.4</td>
<td>3.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>-1.2</td>
<td>3.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arithmetic</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>-0.4</td>
<td>1.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>-0.5</td>
<td>2.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>-1.0</td>
<td>3.43</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*aSigns indicate the number of pairs where nonpromoted students scored higher and the number where they scored lower than promoted matched partners.*

*Significant at the .05 per cent level of confidence.

**Significant at the .01 per cent level of confidence.*
TABLE XIX

SIGN-RANK TEST OF DIFFERENCES BETWEEN ACHIEVEMENT OF PROMOTED AND NONPROMOTED PUPILS IN UPPER GRADES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Signs of Diff.(^a)</th>
<th>(M_d) (Yrs.-Mos.)</th>
<th>(z)</th>
<th>Signif.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>+</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>-0.3</td>
<td>1.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>-0.9</td>
<td>4.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spelling</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>-1.1</td>
<td>2.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>-1.8</td>
<td>3.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>-0.8</td>
<td>2.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>-1.4</td>
<td>3.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arithmetic</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>-0.5</td>
<td>.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>-1.0</td>
<td>2.39</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^a\)Signs indicate the number of pairs where nonpromoted students scored higher and the number where they scored lower than promoted matched partners.

*Significant at the .05 per cent level of confidence.

**Significant at the .01 per cent level of confidence.
ence in seventh grade reading and arithmetic; but eighth grade reading, language, and spelling scores of nonpromoted students revealed a much lower level of performance.

Thus far, in this section, details of the data and statistical techniques employed in the analysis of the academic progress of nonpromoted students have been reported. Following is a short summary of the results derived from this area of the study.

There were 77 pupils distributed in Grades One through Eight who were in the seventh month of their retention year when the standardized tests were administered. Of these, the number who had achieved grade equivalent scores comparable to the national norms corresponding to the time of testing was no different statistically from the expected percentage in reading, language, and arithmetic. In spelling, a very significant number had not reached the norm. Though the above mentioned areas were not statistically significant, yet in every case, many of these average ability students scored below the national level.

The progress of the entire group of 301 nonpromoted subjects was studied in relation to the number of years each student was removed from the year of retention. Groups were formed and percentages derived to approximate the degree of success that could possibly be detected from year to year, as the students moved forward after their one term of nonpromotion. However, no clearly discernable trend could be noted. The record of achievement described the entire group located at various time distances from the year of nonpromotion; all had a common background of
scholastic failure; all were of average or above average ability. The very few areas in which 50 per cent or more of the students were at or above the national norms were: (1) reading—in the year of retention, 51 per cent; four years away, 50 per cent; (2) language—in the year of retention, 51 per cent; four years away, 50 per cent; (3) arithmetic—two years removed, 53 per cent; three years away, 61 per cent; six years from retention, 67 per cent; seven years away, 50 per cent. It was clear that there was no predominantly successful record in all four major subjects at any time span removed from the year of retention. The highest percentages of successful achievement were in arithmetic and these reached 61 per cent after three years and 67 per cent after six years away from the time of nonpromotion. Percentages in other areas were lower than 50.

Progress was also examined in relation to grade groups containing nonpromoted students, irrespective of the number of years removed from the retention year. The purpose here was to survey the grade and subject areas where nonpromoted students were possibly achieving with a degree of success. Their grade equivalent scores were first compared with national norms. Half of the respective groups were achieving at the average level, according to the medians obtained from the distribution of scores. Norms were located at the seventh scholastic month. Medians near or at this level were attained in the areas of: (1) reading—fourth grade, 4.6; seventh grade, 7.6; eighth grade, 9.4; (2) language—second grade, 2.6; third, 3.6; fourth, 4.6; seventh, 7.6; (3) arithmetic—second, 2.7; third,
3.6; fourth, 4.6; fifth, 5.6; sixth, 6.8; seventh, 7.8; and eighth grade, 8.9. However, to achieve statistically significant progress and to represent meaningful group attainment, more than 50 per cent of the students would have to score above or below the expected level. When the statistical formulas were employed on the data, the results indicated significantly low achievement in spelling in all grades except the eighth; in first, third, and sixth grade reading; third grade language, and first grade arithmetic. There was no statistically significant group success in all four major subjects at any grade level.

When scores were compared with expected deviations from national norms relative to specific levels of IQ's, for which a table of adjusted norms had been prepared by the test company—the students' performance appeared more successful in many areas—though not to the extent that the scores were of statistical significance. In most areas the scores displayed average achievement; statistically significant performance was noted in eighth grade reading, and in fourth, sixth, seventh, and eighth grade arithmetic, where more were above the norm than below; but statistically low achievement appeared in the area of sixth and seventh grade spelling.

Local archdiocesan norms were high; therefore, the number of non-promoted students reaching these levels was lower than in the case of national norms or deviations based on IQ levels. In no case was high achievement noted, and in most subjects, a statistically significant number of students achieved below the local norms.

Students' scores were also compared with partners of similar mental
ability who had never been retained. In practically every area, the non-promoted achieved statistically lower scores.

The next phase of the problem proposed for investigation lies within the region of social personal characteristics. Statistical analysis of pertinent data is contained in the following section of this chapter.

**Returns on Social-Personal Assessment**

A total of 29 subjects were rated on the following eleven traits gathered from report card listings and relevant literature: (1) adjustment in the group, (2) compatibility with other children, (3) obedience, (4) self-confidence, (5) emotional stability, (6) attention in class, (7) interest, (8) effort, (9) perseverance, (10) school spirit, and (11) health. Next to each trait, three categories—constantly, usually, seldom—were provided. Teachers checked each nonpromoted student in one category pertaining to each trait. The same procedure was followed for matched subjects in the study. Students were judged independently; no attempt was made to compare them when checking the characteristics.

Responses on the lists for nonpromoted subjects were treated first by grade distributions. Frequencies were tabulated and totals for the three categories—constantly, usually, seldom—aligned with each trait. Since many opinions and arguments concerning the adverse effects of non-promotion on the social-personal development of children have been reported in professional periodicals and texts, in addition to opinions to the contrary found in the literature—an initial inspection was made
of the frequencies obtained in the third category, entitled "Seldom." Normally, two-thirds of a group would be expected to be checked in the center category, "Usually," and one-sixth in each of the two extremes, "Constantly," and "Seldom." This distribution would be expected in a population of children who had no retention background. A general comparison was made here with respect to the nonpromoted students and normal expectancy. Frequencies from this column, "Seldom," were totaled, changed to percentages, and then recorded according to grade levels. This made it possible to observe the spread of characteristics which were checked unfavorably for students throughout the eight grades. In the first three traits--adjustment in the group, compatibility with other children, and obedience--there were no marked deviations from expected behavior norms, as can be noted in Table XX, on the following page. When the fourth trait, self-confidence, was considered--nonpromoted students in Grades One, Four, Five, Six, and Seven seemed to be lacking to a considerable degree. In emotional stability, the fourth and fifth grade groups had percentages beyond expectancy. Inattention in class was displayed to a marked degree from third grade up; lack of interest in class work appeared in all grades except second; insufficient effort in all grades except seventh; inadequate attempt at perseverance in school tasks in every grade; and lack of school spirit in Grade Four.

When the frequencies for grades were combined, and percentages for groups determined, the results, as shown in Table XXI on page 175 were evident. The intermediate grades shared low ratings in emotional sta-
TABLE XX

PERCENTAGES OF NONPROMOTED STUDENTS RATED UNFAVORABLY ON A SOCIAL-
PERSONAL TRAIT LIST WHERE EXPECTED PERCENTAGE WAS 16 2/3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Traits</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>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Adjustment in group</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Compatibility with peers</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Obedience in school</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Confidence in self</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Stability of emotions</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Attention in class</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Interest in work</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Effort in achievement</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Perseverance in tasks</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>19</td>
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<tr>
<td>10. Loyalty to school</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Appearance in health</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traits</td>
<td>Percentages by Groups</td>
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<tr>
<td>---------------------------------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>Intermediate</td>
<td>Upper</td>
<td>Total</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjustments in group</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compatibility with peers</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obedience in school</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confidence in self</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>23</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stability of emotions</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attention in class</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>24</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Interest in work</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>26</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effort in achievement</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>29</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perseverance in tasks</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>30</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Loyalty to school</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>14</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appearance in health</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
bility; all nonpromoted groups failed to reach normal expectancy percentages in self-confidence, adequate class attention, interest, effort, and perseverance in school work.

Traits had also been checked by teachers for regularly promoted children who were matched according to mental ability with nonpromoted subjects. Chi square computations were employed for each grade group to test the null hypothesis of no difference in behavior between nonpromoted and promoted groups. It was expected that in each category—"Constantly," "Usually," and "Seldom,"—the same proportion of nonpromoted and promoted children could be found, since the same teachers checked characteristics for both groups, and thus the results of tendencies they may have had toward rating too generously would be balanced. After the chi square calculations had been completed, it was observed that ratings on certain traits in specific grade groups were statistically significant beyond expectation, indicating a large discrepancy between expected and observed frequencies. These results can be examined in two related presentations, Table XXII and Table XXIII, on the following pages. The latter table contains a clearer array of the specific areas which resulted in significant chi square values. A further study of these areas was conducted in the procedure described below.

Reversion was made to the original frequency scores; these were changed to percentages which indicated the general source of the large chi square values. Percentages in the three categories—"Constantly," "Usually," and "Seldom"—appearing next to each trait were carefully
TABLE XXII
COMPARISON OF NONPROMOTED AND MATCHED SUBJECTS ON SOCIAL-PERSONAL TRAITS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Traits</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>Chi Square Results by Grades</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>h</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Adjustment in group</td>
<td>1.28</td>
<td>.75</td>
<td>.46</td>
<td>2.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Compatibility with peers</td>
<td>.78</td>
<td>1.15</td>
<td>1.56</td>
<td>7.47*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Obedience in school</td>
<td>1.40</td>
<td>8.06*</td>
<td>4.12</td>
<td>7.38*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Stability of emotions</td>
<td>1.42</td>
<td>7.03*</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td>2.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Attention in class</td>
<td>1.24</td>
<td>8.05*</td>
<td>4.96</td>
<td>11.40**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Interest in work</td>
<td>1.24</td>
<td>12.64**</td>
<td>4.16</td>
<td>13.75**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Effort in achievement</td>
<td>1.38</td>
<td>8.19*</td>
<td>5.92</td>
<td>12.55**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Perseverance in tasks</td>
<td>3.58</td>
<td>7.96*</td>
<td>5.92</td>
<td>11.21**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Loyalty to school</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>4.68</td>
<td>2.76</td>
<td>14.66**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Appearance in health</td>
<td>2.26</td>
<td>4.24</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>2.12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Significant at the .05 level of confidence.
**Significant at the .01 level of confidence.
### TABLE XXIII
WEIGHT OF DISCREPANCIES IN CHI SQUARE VALUES WHERE NULL HYPOTHESIS WAS REJECTED IN COMPARISON OF NONPROMOTED AND PROMOTED SUBJECTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Traits</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Adjustment in group</td>
<td></td>
<td>29 - 54^a</td>
<td></td>
<td>29 - 46^a</td>
<td></td>
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<td>2. Compatibility with peers</td>
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<td>37 - 68^a</td>
<td></td>
<td>29 - 46^a</td>
<td></td>
<td>30 - 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Obedience in school</td>
<td></td>
<td>32 - 6</td>
<td></td>
<td>18 - 58^a</td>
<td></td>
<td>30 - 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Attention in class</td>
<td></td>
<td>18 - 58^a</td>
<td></td>
<td>19 - 14</td>
<td></td>
<td>32 - 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Interest in work</td>
<td></td>
<td>18 - 58^a</td>
<td></td>
<td>19 - 14</td>
<td></td>
<td>32 - 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Effort in achievement</td>
<td></td>
<td>18 - 47^a</td>
<td></td>
<td>51 - 17</td>
<td></td>
<td>36 - 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Perseverance in tasks</td>
<td></td>
<td>32 - 11</td>
<td></td>
<td>51 - 20</td>
<td></td>
<td>27 - 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Loyalty to school</td>
<td></td>
<td>40 - 3</td>
<td></td>
<td>29 - 59^a</td>
<td></td>
<td>36 - 52^a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Appearance in health</td>
<td></td>
<td>40 - 3</td>
<td></td>
<td>29 - 59^a</td>
<td></td>
<td>36 - 52^a</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

^a These percentages fell within the category "Constantly"; all others were in the category "Seldom".
observed and the pairs of percentages representing ratings of nonpromoted and matched subjects which contained the greatest amount of difference were withdrawn and placed in Table XXIII on the preceding page. This furnishes an explanatory measure for the large chi square values resulting from the comparison of the nonpromoted and matched groups. As can be observed, most of these significant percentages are derived from the "Seldom" category, where the nonpromoted rated more frequencies than the matched group. Remaining percentages are taken from the other extreme category, "Constantly." In Grade One—32 per cent of the nonpromoted and only 6 per cent of the regularly promoted students gave evidence of a lack of self-confidence; in Grade Two—18 per cent of the nonpromoted and 58 per cent of the promoted displayed self-confidence constantly; in Grade Six, the ratings were 30 per cent nonpromoted and 9 per cent promoted who seldom seemed to have self-confidence. A similar pattern emerged wherever chi square values indicated a significant difference—percentages favored the promoted groups when ratings were checked "Constantly"; percentages were higher for the nonpromoted students when the evaluations were in the "Seldom" category.

Evidence for the data examined for this section of the study seems to point to the fact that nonpromoted students do not reach normal expectancy levels where self-confidence, attention, interest, effort, and perseverance in school work are at issue. Moreover, the matched groups of regularly promoted students of similar mental ability received much higher ratings than the nonpromoted in every area of the
social-personal assessment where statistical significance was noted:
(1) Grade Four--compatibility with peers; (2) Grades Two and Four--
obedience in school; (3) Grades One, Two, and Six--confidence in self;
(4) Grades Two, Six, and Seven--stability of emotions; (5) Grades Two,
Four, and Six--attention in class; (6) Grades Two, Four, Five, Six, and
Seven--interest in work; (7) Grades Two, Four, and Six--effort in achieve-
ment; (8) Grades Two, Four, Five, Six, and Seven--perseverance in tasks;
and (9) Grades Four, Five, and Six--loyalty to school.

Responses on Teacher Opinionnaire

Teachers had been asked to make one choice among four in reference
to each nonpromoted subject in the investigation. The question was posed:

After having worked with your nonpromoted students during the
past year, what do you think would have been the most benefi-
cial decision for each student at the time (last year or in
some previous year) when promotion or nonpromotion was dis-
cussed and settled?

a) Retention in the grade? ______
b) Promotion to the next grade? ______
c) Retention part of the time in the same grade, with pro-
gramming to the next grade for subjects in which he had
made satisfactory achievement? ______
d) Promotion to the next grade, with programming to the
previous grade for subjects in which he had failed? ______

While the past year's experience was not possible at the time when
the original decision was made, it contributed weight to the present
choice in the matter and to future judgments teachers would have to make
on nonpromoted pupils. It was hoped that answers to this question would indicate in some manner the general scholastic and social adjustment manifested by these students at the present time.

Returns on the opinionnaires were tabulated according to grades. While each grade unit lacked a few responses which failed to be included in teachers' returns, the numerical total of the missing data was inconsequential. Teachers' evaluations of the nonpromotion decisions, as presented in Table XXIV on the following page, indicate that the majority considered the complete retention technique most beneficial for the respective students. Of the entire group of nonpromoted, 78 per cent seemed to have profited by the additional year of schooling—according to the responses on the opinionnaire. The next favored device which gained 14 per cent of the judgments was that of promotion of the average ability child, with programming to a lower grade for subjects in which he was failing. This practice was especially acceptable to sixth and seventh grade teachers. Total promotion, in reference to these 280 children, was the decision of only a few teachers—in particular, that of eighth grade teachers. An extremely low percentage of the faculty members would have selected a program of retention with programming to a higher grade for subjects in which the student had been successful.

The frequencies and percentages were then regrouped according to primary, intermediate, and upper grade divisions where a clear pattern of teachers' evaluations on the nonpromotion decisions seemed to emerge. The majority of teachers in each group thought retention was the correct
## TABLE XXIV

TEACHERS' EVALUATIONS OF NONPROMOTION DECISIONS BY GRADES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Number of Students</th>
<th>Number of Responses</th>
<th>(a)</th>
<th>(b)</th>
<th>(c)</th>
<th>(d)</th>
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<td>No.</td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>No.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
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<td>31</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
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<td>6</td>
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<td>41</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>24</td>
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<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>4</td>
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<td>4</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>70</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
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<td>280</td>
<td>217</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* (a) Retention in grade; (b) promotion to next grade; (c) retention with programming; (d) promotion with programming.
practice in reference to these subjects; others would have preferred promotion with programming, as indicated by responses in each division; a very small number of teachers made decisions for total promotion, and retention with programming. The report on these evaluations is contained in Table XXV.

TABLE XXV

TEACHERS' EVALUATIONS OF NONPROMOTION DECISIONS BY GROUPS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Groups</th>
<th>Number of Students</th>
<th>Number of Responses</th>
<th>(a)</th>
<th>(b)</th>
<th>(c)</th>
<th>(d)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
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<td>Intermediate</td>
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<td>115</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
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<td>Upper</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>6</td>
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<td>Total</td>
<td>301</td>
<td>280</td>
<td>217</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*(a) Retention in grade; (b) promotion to next grade; (c) retention with programming; (d) promotion with programming.

Teachers were also requested to submit opinions on promotion policies and practices that seem most effective on their grade levels. The general opinions of the respective groups are given below:

1. In Grade One--13 of the 15 responses indicated a preference for retention of students at this level. Some stipulations in this respect were as follows: (a) provided the child is
immature, (b) if unsuccessful in reading and arithmetic, 
(c) if slow (which was taken as a condition of immaturity), 
(d) if the student were poor in every respect, (e) if the possibility of having a different teacher were present. Recommentation was given for promotion in cases where children have the ability but have been lazy scholastically during the year;

2. In Grade Two--9 out of 10 recommended retention for reasons of: (a) immaturity, (b) lack of success in reading which affects all other subjects, (c) gaining self-confidence and pleasure through an opportunity to experience success, (d) a year behind grade level in basic readers and poor achievement in arithmetic, (e) if the child can be provided with a different teacher;

3. In Grade Three--teachers (10 out of 11) were of the opinion that retention was profitable under the following conditions: 
(a) if the child were immature, (b) if the IQ were not too low, (c) on the basis of unsuccessful performance in reading and arithmetic, (d) if reading achievement were very low;

4. In Grade Four--7 out of 10 preferred retention if the child were: (a) immature (shown at times by lack of success in all subjects), (b) not too low in IQ rating, (c) extremely deficient in all areas, (d) of average ability and slow (to awaken confidence), (e) a year below standard in reading;
5. In Grade Five—7 (all responses) suggested promotion, especially in cases where children do not work up to capacity; retention was recommended only if students were generally low in achievement;

6. In Grade Six—teachers (10 out of 12) recommended promotion for social-personal reasons, and especially if students were very low in achievement;

7. In Grade Seven—all 13 responses favored promotion because of physical and social aspects, boredom, dislike for school, unhappiness, and possible behavior problems that might result from retention which, at this level, would not correct basic academic losses;

8. In Grade Eight—8 out of 9 teachers preferred a policy of promotion, even though the prospect of high school examinations looms for poor students. However, it was stated that high schools attempt to provide for various ability groups.

When the returns on the opinionnaires were separated by grade divisions, the total in each group was small. However, when all data were combined, some general patterns of thought appeared. First, second, third, and fourth grade teachers favored retention; while teachers in other grades preferred a policy of promotion. Throughout the 90 responses, recommendations at all grade levels were offered for assisting poor students after they have been allowed to progress to the next class.
Following are a number of such suggestions: (1) aid outside of school time, (2) a private tutor, (3) information of possible failure given to parents by February, to encourage their assistance, (4) use of teacher aids, (5) grouping in reading and arithmetic, (6) summer school, and (7) trial promotion.

The final set of data to be analyzed included responses from principals in reference to nonpromotion policies. These are considered in the next section of the chapter.

Responses on Principals' Questionnaire

The thirteen principals from the 13 schools providing pupils for this investigation returned answers to four questions which had been sent to them. These responses were collected and summarized. A short presentation of each question with corresponding replies will serve as a report on the data for this section.

Question 1

Do you have a school-wide policy on nonpromotions, which the faculty has had a share in compiling? Please describe.

The schools in general follow the Chicago Archdiocesan policies on promotion and retention. These advise promotion for pupils completing a grade's work to the extent of their ability. Double promotion is cautiously granted with specific regulations surrounding the policy.

Retention is inadvisable unless teachers have some assurance children will benefit scholastically and be able to sustain the emotional
stress of failure. Social maturity is a factor that must be considered.

Retention is preferable in Grade One or Two, is rarely to be used in intermediate or upper grades. No child is to remain longer than two years in any grade, nor to be retained more than once in eight years.

Parents and the pastor are to be kept informed of unsatisfactory progress of children.

Notification to parents and pastor must be given at the beginning of the second semester.

The regulations mentioned above were summarized from the Archdiocesan Book of Policies and were often referred to by principals in responding to the question.

In addition to these regulations, others particular to the individual schools were cited. Pupils must have a failing average to be retained; in Grades One and Two, retention is based on ability to read; in other grades, on failure in two major subjects. Some schools never allow two retentions during the 8 years; an absence of 6 succeeding weeks results in automatic failure. Ordinarily, trial promotion was not recommended, but attendance at summer school was favored in cases of pending failure.

In general, the faculty members have not contributed to the formulation of the diocesan policies, but they have an individual share in promotional decisions when their students' cases are discussed with the principal.

One school was able to refer children for psychological testing, and could send students to special schools for specialized aid.
Question 2

Who has a share in deciding on the nonpromotion of a student?

In 9 of the 13 responses, the teacher, principal, and parents discuss the matter. In addition, at times the pastor or reading supervisor is also called into consultation. In other cases, the principal and teacher discuss the situation, or the teacher and parents meet for this purpose.

Question 3

Who makes the final decision?

Returns on data indicated the following arrangements for making the final decisions: (1) principals in 5 schools, (2) individual teachers in 4, (3) parents in 2, (4) teacher and principal in 1, (5) principal and pastor in 1. In all schools, before final decisions are made—discussions are scheduled with pastor, parents, principal attending, or principal with teacher—as mentioned in answers to the previous question.

Question 4

What further suggestions can you offer as effective in retention policies and practices?

Few recommendations in addition to regular policies stated as answers to Question 1 were forwarded. The responses included: (1) Caution in marking practices to avoid misunderstandings at time of nonpromotion decisions; (2) request of parents to make the final decision and to sign
papers accordingly, in order to bring parents to a responsible attitude in regard to success or failure in the ensuing year; (3) formulation of definite policies, where possible, to meet individual needs of pupils; (4) trial promotion (for all students) with the period definitely terminating at the time of issuance of the first report cards in fall—to encourage children to do some studying during the summer and to put forth their best effort in the new term; and (5) a definite set of criteria including homework assignments, class participation, completion of class work, performance according to ability—to be incorporated in a handbook for teacher use in formulating decisions on promotion and non-promotion; and (6) ungraded classes.

Summary

This chapter narrated a detailed account of the author's project. A description of the background of the study—including choice of schools, selection and retention history of subjects, variables for matching non-promoted and regularly promoted students, statistical techniques for testing hypotheses—was presented.

Returns on academic data were analyzed and discussed in relation to hypotheses previously formulated. Comparisons of achievement of non-promoted students with: (1) national grade equivalent norms, (2) expected deviations relative to mental ability levels, (3) local archdiocesan class averages, (4) national norms in relation to distance from year of retention, and (5) with regularly promoted pupils of similar mental ability and grade level were completed.
The assessment of social-personal traits checked by teachers was appraised. Comparisons were made of nonpromoted subjects with: (1) normal expectancy attainment, and (2) matched groups of regularly promoted students of similar mental ability and grade level.

Teachers' judgments on the success of the promotion decisions rendered in the past in respect to the nonpromoted subjects were presented. Their opinions on promotion policies and practices effective on their grade levels were summarized.

The last set of data to be organized and reported was in the form of a compilation of responses to four questions concerning nonpromotion which principals had been asked to contribute.

The following chapter contains a general summary of the investigation including its purpose, research background, design of the author's project, and findings.
CHAPTER V

SUMMARY OF THE INVESTIGATION

Restatement of the Problem

Annually teachers are confronted with a perplexing situation concerning the scholastic progress of students who are intellectually capable but have failed to achieve according to expected academic standards. A promotion decision must be reached. The problem inheres in the proper choice of an educational plan that will prove most beneficial to the pupil.

This is a study of the effects of nonpromotion on the academic achievement and social-personal development of average and above average ability students in elementary schools under the administration of the Sisters of Christian Charity in Illinois.

Purpose of the Project

The investigation was planned to pursue the following purposes:

1. Through an intensive study of related literature, to acquire an understanding of the historical and professional background of the nonpromotion problem;

2. To appraise the educational achievement and social progress of students of average and above average ability who have a record of nonpromotion somewhere in their background;
3. Through comparison of research findings with results of the investigation, to formulate conclusions that might prove useful to staff members of schools conducted by the Sisters of Christian Charity—at times of annual promotion when decisions relating to students who are intellectually capable but underachieving must be reached.

Limitations of the Study

The investigation was confined geographically to one state, Illinois; categorically, to one system—Catholic elementary schools; specifically, to Catholic schools under the administration of one religious congregation; definitively, to one aspect of the nonpromotion problem—results of nonpromotion in respect to average and above average ability students; numerically, to a relatively small group of subjects.

Background of the Topic

A review of related literature revealed the crux of the nonpromotion problem to exist within the structure of the graded school system where this administrative device arose and attained the degree of significance which has claimed such academic support throughout the decades of American education.

To consider the origin of the problem it was necessary to trace the historical development of the eight-graded structure through the early colonial stages of the "Three R's", innovations in curricula, buildings, and teaching methods created to provide for increasing enrollments;
through the periods of social and economic pressures from the growing attraction to urban location, from the surging waves of immigration, rise of the free public school system and compulsory school attendance laws.

The backgrounds of both public and Catholic school systems were examined in relation to the rise of the eight-graded elementary school. The two systems experienced the mid-nineteenth century phases of sorting of children, dividing of curricula, establishment of standards, and initiation of promotion practices based on mastery of requisite subject matter. Underachievers of average or above average ability were included among the general numbers who failed, due to mental retardation and various other reasons.

Effects of the practice of nonpromotion were noticeable in high rates occurring in lower grades and the accumulation of older pupils in upper grades; in the spirit of discontentment, number of behavior problems and dropouts among older students. Serious investigations of the problem of nonpromotion were launched in the early part of the twentieth century. Attempts to remedy the situation resulted in the introduction of various types of innovations in grouping, length of school sessions, times and bases of promotion. The general pattern in the United States settled into the eight-graded system, with entrance based on chronological age, annual or semianurnal promotions, and nonpromotion resulting from failure to reach standards at each grade level.

In the twentieth century, continual research on the nonpromotion problem—extent of the practice, causes, results, changes in policies—
in addition to newer theories in the field of child development and psychology—contributed to a modern trend toward promotion policies based on individual analysis and guidance principles. This current theory was reflected in the promotion policies of the Archdiocese of Chicago.

Recent surveys and practices have demonstrated the fact that the rate of nonpromotion has decreased over the past three decades—but the administrational device is still employed to bring students up to standard. Underachievers of average and above average ability claimed very little identification and notice among the general population of nonpromoted students whose progress was studied by experimentation and research, though more recently the gifted have been segmented for special examination.

A personal endeavor was made to add to reasearch findings on the topic of scholastic nonpromotions through the project which is explained in the following section.

**Design of the Project**

Of the thirty-five elementary schools conducted by the Sisters of Christian Charity in the United States, thirteen located in Illinois were selected for the investigation. Six were city schools, seven suburban; ten were located within the Archdiocese of Chicago, two in the Diocese of Joliet, and one in the Diocese of Peoria. From these thirteen schools, 602 subjects for the project were chosen. Of this total, 301 were students who had been nonpromoted at some grade level in their academic background, had an IQ of ninety-five or above, and were not
handicapped by a bilingual problem. The other 301 subjects were pupils of normal grade progress who had been matched with the nonpromoted on the bases of mental age, sex, socio-economic background, and grade level.

Data from Otis Quick-Scoring Mental Ability and Stanford Achievement Tests were obtained from cumulatives in the school files and forwarded by principals. Since Grade One had no such records, the schools obligingly administered these tests which were sent to them by the investigator.

Social-personal characteristics of nonpromoted and regularly promoted subjects were checked by teachers and responses to an opinionnaire relative to the benefits of nonpromotion at the respective grade levels were also requested from them.

Principals were asked to suggest effective policies in retention practices. Returns were gathered from all the teachers and forwarded by respective principals of the thirteen schools.

Academic data were tabulated first. After grade groups were formed, differences between the means of mental ages of nonpromoted and regularly promoted students were tested for significance, and the null hypothesis of no difference was accepted; grade medians in each of the four major subject areas were calculated. The chi square technique was employed to test the significance of the discrepancies between expected and observed frequencies of nonpromoted students in relation to: (1) national grade equivalent norms, (2) expected deviations from the norm in respect to various IQ levels, (3) archdiocesan local norms, and (4) national norms (while in the year of retention). A sign-rank test of differences was
chosen as a technique to compare achievement of nonpromoted and normal progress students of similar mental age.

Frequencies of ratings in the three categories of the social-personal assessment of nonpromoted subjects were changed to percentages and an appraisement made of the unfavorable valuations noted in certain traits attributable to specific grade groups. Chi square computations were also employed to test the hypothesis of no difference between social-personal traits of nonpromoted and normal progress pupils of similar mental ability.

Teachers' opinions on the best techniques that might have aided the nonpromoted students if the cases had to be decided with knowledge of the students' present progress and adjustment were presented in percentages.

Suggestions of effective promotion policies on respective grade levels were submitted by teachers and were summarized according to grades.

The last set of four questions in reference to nonpromotion policies was addressed to principals, and responses to each question were summarized.

Findings resulting from the procedures mentioned above are recorded in the following section of this chapter.

**Findings of the Investigation**

Grade equivalent scores for 301 students of average and above average ability, all of whom had the incident of nonpromotion somewhere in their scholastic background, were used in testing the hypothesis of no difference between present performance and normal grade expectancy scores. An additional set of scores for 301 normal progress pupils
matched according to mental ability, sex, grade, and socio-economic factors was utilized in certain comparisons of nonpromoted and normal progress groups. Findings are recorded below.

1. In comparisons with national grade equivalent scores, the null hypothesis was rejected in:
   a) Reading: Grades 1, 3, 6;
   b) Spelling: Grades 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7;
   c) Language: Grade 3;
   d) Arithmetic: Grade 1.

   The null hypothesis was accepted in all other areas. Whenever the null hypothesis was rejected, the students showed significantly low performance. Whenever accepted—though not statistically significant—there was low performance, except in arithmetic.

2. In comparisons of achievement with expected deviations from grade norms in relation to mental ability, the null hypothesis was rejected in:
   a) Reading: Grade 8;
   b) Spelling: Grades 6, 7;
   c) Arithmetic: Grades 1, 6, 7, 8.

   The null hypothesis was accepted in all other areas. Whenever the null hypothesis was rejected, the students showed higher performance than expected in reading and arithmetic, but lower performance in spelling. Where the null hypothesis was
accepted, in all but three subjects the students' performance was higher than expected, though the scores were not statistically significant.

3. In comparison of achievement with Chicago Archdiocesan class averages, the null hypothesis was accepted in:
   a) Reading: Grades 2, 8;
   b) Language: Grade 6;
   c) Arithmetic: Grades 2, 3, 4, 5, 6.

   The null hypothesis was rejected in all other areas. Wherever rejected, indication of low performance was evident. Where accepted, the majority were performing below the norms—though values were not statistically significant.

4. In comparison of achievement of students (Grades 1-7) in their present year of retention—with normal grade expectancy on the national standards, the null hypothesis was rejected in spelling, but accepted in all other areas. Performance, though not significant in these areas, was generally lower than expected.

5. In comparison of achievement at various distances from the year of retention, no discernable pattern of progress appeared in the percentages which fluctuated considerably in each subject from year to year. A slight trend, rising to 50 per cent, of the students reaching national grade norms in the seventh year removed from retention was noted in the area of reading.

6. In comparison of differences between achievement of nonpromoted
and normal progress pupils of similar mental ability, the null hypothesis was accepted in:

a) Reading: Grades 1, 7;
b) Arithmetic: Grades 3, 4, 7;

In all other areas, the hypothesis was rejected, indicating a significantly lower level of achievement on the part of the nonpromoted students.

Tabulations were made on returns of the social-personal assessment, containing eleven characteristics, which was employed by teachers in rating 294 nonpromoted and 294 normal progress subjects of similar mental ability and grade levels. Findings are listed as follows:

1. In comparison with normal expectancy in behavior manifestation, percentages in the third, or unfavorable category, indicated:
   a) Social adjustment in present class situations,
   b) A gradual lack of self-confidence; loss of interest, attention in class, effort, and perseverance—becoming noticeable in middle grades, and continuing.

2. In comparison with normal progress students of similar mental ability, the nonpromoted received:
   a) Unfavorable ratings checked in the category "Seldom," in:
      (1) Confidence in self: Grades 1, 6;
      (2) Attention in class: Grades 4, 6;
      (3) Interest in school: Grades 4, 5, 6;
(4) Effort in achievement: Grades 4, 6;
(5) Perseverance in tasks: Grades 2, 4, 5, 6, 7;
(6) Loyalty to school: Grade 1;

b) Favorable ratings checked in the category "Constantly"—but much lower for the nonpromoted pupils than for the normal progress students, in:

(1) Compatibility with peers: Grade 4;
(2) Obedience in school: Grades 2, 4;
(3) Confidence in self: Grade 2;
(4) Stability of emotions: Grades 2, 6, 7;
(5) Attention in class: Grade 2;
(6) Interest in work: Grades 2, 7;
(7) Effort in achievement: Grade 2;
(8) Loyalty to school: Grades 5, 6.

3. All ratings on the 588 nonpromoted and normal progress students indicated good health, contentment and compatibility as members of their respective class groups. Emotional stability and school spirit were also rated high.

When teachers were asked to theoretically remake the promotional decision once made in the past for each nonpromoted subject in this study—with the additional knowledge of the student's present academic progress and social-personal adjustment—the responses indicated:

1. Choice of:

a) Retention: 78 per cent of the cases;
b) Promotion with programming to a lower grade for subjects in which the students were not successful: 14 per cent of the cases;

2. No selection of:
   a) Retention with programming to a higher grade for subjects in which students had been successful;
   b) Total promotion.

Teachers' opinions concerning policies that seemed effective on their grade levels were summarized. The following general concensus of opinions was determined:

1. In the first four grades, retention was preferred in cases of: immaturity, failure in reading, average IQ;

2. In grades Five to Eight, promotion was favored in consideration of social-personal aspects and classroom behavior problems which might result from retention; if students were underachieving in all subjects, nonpromotion would be acceptable.

3. Recommended aid for underachievers would include teacher help, teacher aids, private tutors, informed parents, summer school, homogeneous grouping in the classroom--especially in reading and arithmetic.

Responses to the four questions addressed to principals in reference to nonpromotion policies revealed the following conditions:

1. Catholic elementary schools follow archdiocesan or diocesan
policies.

2. Chicago archdiocesan policies favor:
   a) Promotion in cases where children are working to the extent of their ability;
   b) Academic, social, emotional factors to be considered in making retention decisions;
   c) Nonpromotion, as a technique, preferable in Grades One and Two; not more than two years in one grade, nor more than one retention in the eight grades;
   d) Parents and pastors to be kept informed in cases of possible nonpromotion.

3. Additional practices in the schools include a predominant basis for retention in Grades One and Two—reading; in other grades—failure in two major subjects.

4. Teachers, principals, and parents have a share in deciding on retention or promotion of students in the majority of the thirteen schools under consideration.

5. In general, principals or teachers—or both—make the final decision.

Further suggestions regarding effective practices and policies in regard to the nonpromotion of students included:

1. Care in marking practices;
2. Grant of final decision on promotion to parents;
3. Revision of policies to meet individual needs;
4. Trial promotion for all students;
5. A handbook of criteria for teacher aid in making decisions on nonpromotion;
6. Ungraded classes.

Thus far, in this section, a detailed account of the results of statistical calculations of data and mathematical tabulation of responses to questions has been recorded. The following summary presents a brief resume of the findings.

**Generalization of the Findings**

Answers to the particular phase of the nonpromotion problem under consideration were sought in three areas: (1) academic achievement, (2) social-personal assessment, and (3) teacher-principal judgments. An attempt has been made to organize the resume in the form of brief statements corresponding to hypotheses and questions which arose during the progress of the investigation.

1. In comparison with national grade equivalent scores, a statistically significant number of nonpromoted students failed to reach national norms in 12 out of 32 tests for the eight grades; in other tests where no statistically significant number was evident, more pupils scored below standard than above, except in arithmetic.

2. In comparison of achievement with expected deviations from grade norms in relation to mental ability, 5 of the 20 tests for the eight grades revealed a statistically significant number of
nonpromoted students scoring higher in reading and arithmetic; in
the other areas, while not statistically significant, a greater
number scored beyond the expected norm.

3. In comparison with Chicago archdiocesan class averages, five­
sevenths of the tests of all eight grades showed a statistically
significant number of students scoring below norms; in the other
tests where results were not statistically significant, more
students were below the norms than above.

4. In comparisons of achievement at various distances from the year
of retention, no distinct pattern of progress appeared; those in
the year of retention were achieving at normal grade expectancy,
though the majority were below the national norms.

5. In relation to normal progress students of similar mental age,
there was a statistically significant difference in achievement
in favor of the normal progress pupils.

6. The results of the social-personal assessment in relation to
normal expectancy in behavior revealed a condition of social ad­
justment, but a lack of self-confidence in Grades One, Four, Five,
Six, and Seven—and a gradual loss of interest and effort beginning
with the middle grades and continuing.

7. In comparison with normal progress pupils of similar mental age,
wherever statistically significant differences occurred on the
trait list ratings, percentages favored the normal progress
students.
8. Teachers' responses in reference to opinions on nonpromotion indicated an agreement on retention in respect to the subjects under consideration; a preference for this technique in Grades One through Four; a choice of promotion whenever possible in Grades Five through Eight.

9. Returns on principals' questionnaires revealed the fact that teachers, principals, and pastors usually have a share in decisions on retention or promotion of students; that the faculty members are trying to follow the guidance theory principles underlying the archdiocesan policy on promotion; that care should be exercised in the regular marking practices of teachers.

The final chapter of the dissertation will present the conclusions resulting from this investigation.
CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions of the Investigation

That educators have been interested in the nonpromotion problem since its effects were first noted around 1900 is certain. Progressive steps in studying its various phases are clearly evident from a perusal of research literature pertaining to the subject. The compilation and gradual concensus of opinions derived from findings resulting from surveys and experimentation reveal the two-fold fact that administrators and teachers in general uphold certain grade standards as a basis for promotion, while, at the same time, the weight of research findings leans heavily toward promotion, and discourages the nonpromotion technique as a solution for failure to reach these academic expectations.

Since nonpromotion practices continue in effect in many schools today, it would seem that principals and teachers are not aware of the consistency and concurrence of opinion in research findings in this area; or they lack confidence in these scholarly endeavors which have often consumed months and years of serious concentration and mental effort and have incorporated objective data on hundreds of school children—in sincere inquiry for the truth. While no one promotion policy has been promulgated as a standard for all students, the bulk of the research
conclusions pertaining to retention practices in general presents a
treasury of professional wisdom at the disposal of the objectively inter­
ested educator. Findings almost unanimously favor promotion in practi­
cally all cases and circumstances.

To contribute a measure, however small it might prove to be and in
whatsoever direction it might tend, to the field of educational research
was the sincere intention of the writer in attempting a solution to the
problem: "Should the underachiever of average and above average ability
be promoted or retained?"

On the basis of findings resulting from the present investigation of
the effects of nonpromotion on the academic achievement and social-personal
development of average and above average ability students, certain
conclusions have been reached:

1. In respect to academic achievement, there is some evidence, based
on standardized test data, that nonpromoted students of this type
may be performing on low average levels comparable to national
norms, in the year of retention and in subsequent elementary
school grades.

2. In reference to achievement comparable to expected deviations from
grade norms in relation to mental ability, these students may
perform at average or slightly above average levels.

3. There is no convincing evidence of successful achievement relative
to local archdiocesan norms.

4. There is no convincing evidence that the year of retention or any
year following is predictive of certain or total success in relation to average achievement in all major school areas.

5. Nonpromoted students of average and above average ability do not seem to achieve scholastically as well as normal progress pupils of similar mental ability.

6. Contrary to the findings of some research scholars, but not adverse to conclusions from a minority of such studies centered on the social-personal aspects of nonpromotion, the student of average and above average ability seems to be adjusted in the class atmosphere and among peers.

7. In agreement with previous findings relative to nonpromotion in general, this type of student, too, reveals a gradual loss of self-confidence, interest, effort, and perseverance in class work after experiencing the incidence of retention.

8. Nonpromoted students of average and above average ability and normal progress children, of similar mental ages, differ in certain general characteristics—in self-confidence; in class attention, interest, and effort in some grades; perseverance in school tasks in most grades—with statistics favoring the normal progress pupils.

9. Teachers (in this study) seem willing to accept the incidence of nonpromotion in the background of these students; in general—they favor the technique in reference to low and slow achievers in the first four grades of elementary school.
The conclusions just reached are, to a degree, in harmony with previous research findings relative to academic achievement of nonpromoted students in general, since this particular type of student selected for examination was found to be achieving within the normal range—many located below, and none outstandingly above the norm. However, the findings do not agree with the majority, but with a minority, of conclusions resulting from studies regarding the effect of nonpromotion on social-personal characteristics. These subjects were judged by teachers to be accepted by peers and adjusted in their changed classroom situation; the incidence of nonpromotion seemed not to have affected their relations with teachers and younger classmates. Yet, in agreement with other findings, the students did manifest a continual loss of interest in school work, class attention, effort, perseverance, and self-confidence.

The condition of cumulated nonpromotion cases, similar to that in most elementary schools of the nation, was found to exist in the thirteen schools under investigation. Attention is drawn to the fact that teachers who favor the technique of nonpromotion in the first four grades of elementary education contribute directly or indirectly to the annually increasing number of such students progressing to the higher grades. From among the entire group of nonpromoted in the thirteen schools, the underachiever of average and above average ability was selected for study. In the light of the conclusions derived thus far from the investigation, certain further considerations and generalizations ensue.

The performance of the nonpromoted student has been compared to that
of the normal progress pupil of regular school age and to the norms proper to students of similar mental age, since his retention has reclassified him among members of a new peer group. The true identity of the nonpromoted student, however, parallels that of a pupil of average or above average IQ, a year older chronologically than his peers, and characterized by an additional year of educational background. Therefore, such students should be expected to perform at a higher level than the pupils of the new class group. The conclusions from the present investigation indicated a performance fluctuating around the norm, and personal characteristics suggestive of loss of confidence, of interest and endeavor in school work. After continuing year by year in such a social, psychological, and educational environment, it is fairly predictive that initiative will be dulled and capabilities unchallenged unless special interest and effort are manifested on the part of teachers. However, amid the general enthusiasm and energy of classroom enterprise, nothing over and above the average is usually expected of these older students. Consequently, they tend to exert a meager degree of effort and continue to advance from year to year with personal performance below capability.

On the basis of past research findings and the data from this investigation, it seems probable that these students could have been located in the next higher grade, since the range of intellect and capability is so wide in each classroom, and there is much overlapping of ability from one grade to the next. They would probably have continued for some time with achievement in the lower division of the class group, but, sur-
rounded by peers of their own age and degree of maturity, there exists the possibility that they may have experienced, amid such comradeship and academic climate, the encouragement needed to reach higher goals, and might in time have been classified as average achievers in the group where their chronological age and intellectual qualifications indicate they belong.

Depending, then, upon educational values prized by administrators, teachers, and parents—the promotion decision affecting underachievers of average and above average ability could be stated to exist between a choice of mediocre performance, with the possibility of attaining standards placed always a grade below expectancy proper to chronological age, mental age, and IQ of the student—or the challenge of possible performance matching capability, on proper grade level. Not without special attention and assistance from teachers can the latter contingency be actualized.

The final conclusions from the investigation could be stated as follows:

1. Nonpromotion of underachievers of average or above average ability may seem to be an effective technique to a degree, in that it may assist pupils in achieving near or slightly above average performance relative to national achievement test norms; however, there is no indication that nonpromotion is an aid in reaching local norms.

2. Nonpromotion, in the case of this type of student, seems not to have an adverse effect on social-personal relations with teachers
and peers; but does seem to result in loss of interest, effort, and perseverance in academic pursuits.

3. In consideration of the three following conditions:
   a) The academic ability and capability implied in the possession of an average or above average IQ;
   b) Average performance among a younger peer group, which nonpromotion may effect;
   c) Continued loss of interest, effort, and perseverance in academic tasks throughout the years of elementary education—which nonpromotion may also effect—

   it would seem that promotion of underachievers of average and above average ability—to a social and academic climate amid members of a peer group of corresponding chronological age—would be more effective in encouraging students to an academic performance consonant with their own unique intellectual talents.

4. Promotion of underachievers of average and above average ability is highly recommended—at every grade level and in every circumstance—with the exception of extreme physical and social immaturity.

While the conclusions from this investigation are certainly limited by the relatively small number of schools participating in the project and the subsequent amount of data collected from them, in addition to the use of only one form of achievement test in the search for solutions to the problem, it is sincerely believed that these findings representative
of an intensive research endeavor in the direction of aid to teachers in arriving at a just decision with regard to the promotion or nonpromotion of the underachiever of average and above average ability may be of considerable value.

**Recommendations for Practical Consideration**

Careful analysis of the findings and conclusions of the study resulted in a number of recommendations which presented themselves for further consideration.

**Administration.** A realistic attitude adopted toward individual differences would aid in the solution of the dilemma involving the underachiever of average or above average ability. If initial admittance to the formal educational process were based on mental age, then content in grades might be scientifically divided and standards firmly established at measured heights; but even with this practice, students would soon advance at different rates of mental development; goals would not be attained; differences would soon be manifest.

When admission is based on chronological age, differences are present from the beginning, and failure to grasp a uniform amount of content is normal for the low achievers.

A perfectly homogeneous group is not normal--but the ideal is sought by administrative devices. Within each class section of the elementary schools, there is a sufficient range of differences to assemble homogeneous groupings for teaching purposes--and within the various groups, indi-
individuals themselves differ within themselves in personal array of talents and deficiencies; so that they often require placement—and can find a niche—in one of the neighboring groups which surround them.

1. It is highly recommended that attention be focused on differences from the initial stages of the educational process. For this reason, the best teachers, preferably volunteers who understand and enjoy working with these age groups, should be placed in first grades, especially, and in other primary divisions—to insure a firm foundation and pleasant, happy adjustment to school life for each "different" child.

2. Larger blocks of time—at least two years—would be desirable for greater academic achievement and better understanding of pupils. A wise administrative plan would include provisions for employing the same teacher for the two-year term. If the goal is to secure only efficient primary grade teachers, then children would not suffer undue losses, but acquire greater academic and social-personal gains, through such an arrangement.

3. Nongraded organization is suggested for primary, intermediate, and advanced classes. This newer development, though lacking in abundance of research findings to contribute to its support, seems to be the answer to the problem of nonpromotion and individual differences. It attempts to provide for all ranges, to adapt the school to the child's needs; and its principles are in harmony with recent findings in child psychology and guidance.
Where the traditional graded plan is in operation, one of two classroom situations inevitably occurs: (a) the presence of older nonpromoted—often underachieving—students whose number cumulates from year to year; or (b) the presence of normal progress underachievers—in schools where the promotion policy is more lenient. In either case, teachers are confronted with problems of differences—but in the latter situation, the normal chronological age is a favorable factor for both child and teacher, though it does not eliminate the possibility of behavior issues which are likely to occur in both situations. Regular promotion, even in cases of doubt, is recommended in view of this dilemma.

5. Serious reflection on the rise and fall of school standards is suggested. At any time of the year, after test scores and class averages have been recorded, a teacher can—by simply removing the scores of the underachievers—cause the average to rise. Does this mean that the children in the class automatically have reached a higher level of achievement? It is clear that it does not; no change transpired in any individual's score. Then what really is important in a class—the average—or the level of accomplishment of each member? By elimination of underachievers, class averages and school standards may rise—but what is to be done with the underachievers? They must be placed somewhere—either in their original grade group, or in the class below. In
the latter case, they rarely contribute to a rise in class standards. In view of the results of the present investigation, it seems more beneficial to have these children placed with their original peer group--through regular promotion.

6. Apparently, it would contribute to the esprit de corps of faculty and student body in schools where teachers are concentrating on the positive factor of aiding underachievers of average and above average ability to reach standards particular to their own age and intellectual capability--than on the negative factor of coping with older, detained students in their attempts at becoming successful in the lower division.

7. Where nonpromotion techniques are employed, it would be profitable for principals to keep on file in the office specific data on nonpromoted cases. Follow-up records on achievement, cumulated from year to year, would lend themselves to case studies.

8. Cooperative endeavor with teachers and parents in immediate attention to absentee cases is suggested.

9. A needed corporal work of mercy, to be performed in the spirit of Christian Charity, appears in the instruction of these underachievers of average and above average ability who cannot always be reached in the busy, crowded classrooms. After school classes, Saturday meetings, summer school teaching is recommended.

Supervision. Aid could profitably be extended in the solution of this problem under consideration to principals, teachers, and students
through: (1) stimulating experimentation in nongraded organization; (2) conducting follow-up studies of doubtful cases where children have been advanced to the next grade; (3) encouraging new methods of teaching spelling, since in these schools in the survey, the majority of nonpromoted pupils of all grades were below norm in this subject; and (4) awakening the interest of teachers in studying research on this problem.

Teaching. Normal classes will always contain some underachievers—regular progress or nonpromoted slow learners; attention to their differences will be the only way to aid them, since they cannot, on their own initiative, keep pace with the others. Neither nonpromotion nor promotion extends any benefit to them if special attention and assistance is not forthcoming from the teacher. An entirely new approach in teaching method and plan is urged for retainers assigned to the same teacher in the regular graded schools. Following are recommendations derived from research on this topic of nonpromotion:

1. Teacher training institutions could give much support to the underachiever by guiding new teachers in methods of group teaching as adjustment devices to aid individual learners.

2. Location of older, nonpromoted students through age-grade charts is suggested as a practice to be used early in the year.

3. First grade teachers could give serious thought to the apparent contradiction of admitting children at a specified chronological age—but failing more pupils than any other teacher feels is neces-
sary in all other grades; also, to the noticeably larger number of boys among the nonpromoted—which factor even appeared in the present investigation where only a segment of the entire group of retained students in the schools was selected for study. Attention is called to curriculum and content which should be matched to first grade children's capabilities and interests, to the allotment of more time to underachievers for development at their own rate—without fear of failure.

4. Due to trends in promotion theory, there have been constantly more children promoted in the past fifty years, with the result that the median age of class groups throughout the nation has dropped and grade groups are now considerably younger; consequently, children in each grade can be expected to be less mature, on the average.

5. Because of the more modern promotion policies based on guidance principles, more children are promoted; therefore, no longer are the primary grade teachers solely responsible for working with underachievers until they are ready to enter higher grades. All teachers are asked to have a share in this task of sympathy, understanding, service.

6. Advocated for intermediate and advanced grades, especially, is the attitude that, under good teachers, the spread of differences increases as children advance in the grades.

7. Since readiness is necessary for all learning at all levels,
teachers could assist children to achieve at a smoother, more peaceful, more successful rate by: (a) being well prepared for all classes, (b) making aims and goals explicit, (c) developing in class discussions new words and concepts contained in content subjects, (d) encouraging thought questions, (e) teaching reading as a content subject in all grades, and (f) using audio-visual aids.

8. It would be profitable to students if they were taught how to study.

9. A general review of subjects in September would be helpful.

10. Diagnostic tests, purchased or developed by groups of teachers, and administered early in the school year, are suggested; the earlier weaknesses are located, the greater is the opportunity to prevent further failure.

11. Remedial measures following the diagnostic tests would insure a degree of individual aid; allowing children to keep their own progress charts would be an incentive toward greater achievement.

12. Definite teacher plans for child study are recommended. The search for strengths is as valuable as the scrutiny of weaknesses --to encourage the development of balanced personalities.

13. Cooperation with principals in immediate notification of absentees and in supplying data on nonpromoted students is suggested.

14. A plan to discover and encourage children's interests in music, art, languages, mathematics, reading, science, and other subjects
would awaken enthusiasm in the school environment and stimulate ambition in academic pursuits—a measure toward prevention of failure.

15. Use of findings from psychological investigations on the impact of motivation, rewards, fears, threats, incentives—on learning—is recommended, especially in working with underachievers of average and above average ability.

16. Formation of groups in teaching the major subjects in all grades is a measure toward aiding the individual. This technique would presumably include an adjustment of method, subject matter, and text.

17. As marks are influential in determining promotion, care in their use is urged. A child's achievement on his true grade level and not in relation to others in the class—-in addition to an indication describing his degree of effort in attainment—would be a fair record of his performance. It is recommended that his best efforts be of considerable importance in weighing decisions on promotion. To demand more than a pupil can give is asking for the impossible.

Faculty Meetings. Following are subjects recommended for discussions at faculty meetings: (1) topics on child growth and development, (2) on child psychology and learning theory, (3) motivation, (4) diagnostic and remedial measures, (5) marking practices, (6) concept of the maturity to be expected at various grade levels, (7) continuity of content from one
grade to the next, (8) causes and results of nonpromotion, (9) remedies
to guard against nonpromotion, (10) promotion policies, and (11) nongraded
organization. All of these topics have some relation to the problem of
the underachiever of average and above average ability.

Promotion Decisions. In arriving at promotion decisions in respect
to the type of pupil under examination in this investigation, the follow­
ing suggestions derived from the conclusions of the study are offered:

1. Use daily marks, as well as test scores and report card grades
   in judging progress;

2. Be convinced that one year is a long span of time in a child's
   life—and nonpromotion can mean a personal loss to the child, as
   well as a financial loss to the parents;

3. Consider that the child would probably be more like the members of
   his regular class in most respects and would adjust better with
   them than in the younger group;

4. Be assured that neither 100 per cent progress nor nonpromotion is
   the answer, if no hope of an adjusted curriculum is in view;

5. Realize that the nonpromotion problem is very subjective, and the
   key to its solution rests in the hands of patient, understanding,
   self-sacrificing teachers;

6. Be cognizant of the one persuasive factor that might have power
   to overrule all other considerations in this matter—extreme
   physical or social immaturity.
**Suggestions for Further Study**

It is strongly recommended that research conducted in this area of the underachiever of average and above average ability be pursued in greater depth and breadth. Suggestions include:

1. A study of students on a specific grade level in all Catholic schools situated in suburbs of a specific city;
2. A study of students on a specific grade level in Catholic schools located in inner-city districts of a particular city;
3. A study of students on a specific grade level in Catholic schools of typical city neighborhoods of a certain city;
4. A study employing data from a varied number of scholastic and achievement tests;
5. A follow-up study of nonpromoted students in the first grades of all schools of a city—to be continued through the eighth grade—suggested for supervisors, especially;
6. A study of a large number of average ability students of one grade—children who might have been retained, but were allowed to move to the next grade as a contribution to the educational experiment;
7. Further research on the potential of nongraded organization—as it affects the underachiever of average ability;
8. Evaluative research on various tests and techniques relative to screening measures of knowledge in academic fields;
9. Research on remedial methods of teaching in various subject areas.
Since this present investigation focused on the underachiever of average and above average ability, the suggestions for further research were meant to likewise project an interest in this type of pupil, lest the average children who constitute the largest population in any grade, regular elementary school, or nation as a whole—be forgotten in the more general but recognizably important quest to aid the atypical.

Hidden among the ranks of underachievers of average and above average ability can be found potential intellectual giants. These students are not dull, but require additional time to develop. Many a genius was not understood in his early life—among them the great Thomas Aquinas, referred to by classmates as "the dumb ox"—who was, in his own measured time, to produce the *Summa*. 
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APPROVAL SHEET

The dissertation submitted by Sister M. Caritas Archer has been read and approved by members of the Department of Education.

The final copies have been examined by the director of the dissertation and the signature which appears below verifies the fact that any necessary changes have been incorporated and that the dissertation is now given final approval with reference to content and form.

The dissertation is therefore accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education.

May 31, 1967

Date

Signature of Adviser