

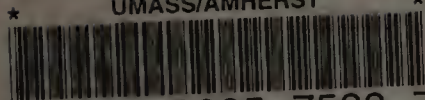


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The problem of the school dropout and the counselor.

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THE PROBLEM OF THE SCHOOL DROPOUT
AND THE COUNSELOR
BY
MICHAEL A. MARTIN

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THE PROBLEM OF THE SCHOOL DROPOUT
AND THE COUNSELOR

by
Michael A. Martin

A Practicum Report Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Education

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PART I

Introduction

Late President Kennedy, in his State of the Union message to Congress on January 14, 1963, stated that today an estimated three out of five students in the fifth grade will not finish high school; a waste that cannot be afforded. The high school dropout has long been a source of grave concern to our public school administrators, and increasingly so today to our economists and our sociologists. Today, our schools are introducing into the classroom new programmed instructions along with the latest teaching machines; all to make the classroom the ideal learning environment to condition and motivate the child toward his academic adjustment and growth. Yet, the problem persists. It seems that the school is still not 'reaching' the potential dropout, but is still 'failing' him.

Keeping each child in school until he graduates from high school involves all those people who are part of his environment, especially those who have direct contact with the child from various aspects. These are his family, the school principal, his teachers, and especially the school counselor. In fact, this problem due to its nature lies fundamentally within the domain of the school counselor. The potential dropout is not a problem child, but a child with a problem, a problem of such a personal nature so that logically the school counselor is the one trained and qualified to help the child solve his problem.

This paper is an attempt to answer questions in three areas as far as the potential dropout is concerned. The first area is the matter of counseling. How does a counselor effectively help a potential dropout on any grade level, whether he is in the fifth or in the ninth grade?

How does a child become a potential or an actual dropout? All writers seem to have some agreement on causal factors, but the question is why are they so? How do they affect personality development and growth of the child? What is happening to this child from one school year to the next until he can be categorized as a potential dropout?

The next point to be considered is the matter of detection. Is it possible to spot a potential dropout in the lower grades? Some people may be of the opinion that it is not possible, but others believe that we can at least recognize the symptoms, and proceed from there. The final and most crucial aspect of this problem is what can the counselor in conjunction with the administration do to keep the potential dropout in school? This is the curriculum problem.

CHAPTER II

Related Literature

As a point of introduction, I would like to reproduce statistical summaries as calculated and reported by the NEA Research Division, and reported in a Research Memo, April 1963 (1).

Table 1. Retention Rates, Public and Nonpublic Schools:
48 States and District of Columbia, 1956 - 1962

Number continuing per 1,000 pupils in the fifth grade

<u>Grade</u>	<u>1948-</u> <u>49</u>	<u>1950-</u> <u>51</u>	<u>1952-</u> <u>53</u>	<u>1953-</u> <u>54</u>	<u>1954-</u> <u>55</u>
Fifth.....	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000
Sixth.....	984	981	974	990	980
Seventh.....	956	968	965	974	979
Eighth.....	929	921	936	943	948
Ninth.....	863	886	904	913	919
Tenth.....	795	809	835	852	855
Eleventh.....	706	709	746	759	764
Twelfth.....	619	632	667	680	684
H.S. Graduates.	581	582	621	632	636
Year of H.S. graduation.....	1956	1958	1960	1961	1962

These retention rates are approximate only because they include an adjustment for nonpublic schools. Nevertheless, this table clearly indicates the trend and percentage of dropouts. Another encouraging trend that is noticeable is the slight decrease of dropouts from year to year. The largest drop seems to occur during the tenth year, the year when a child has presumably reached the chronological age when he can legally leave the high school. The Memo also reports the following figures for the whole nation. The ninth grade enrollment, 1958-1959 was 2,415,309; high school graduates, 1,682,609. percent graduating; 69.7%, percent not graduating; 30.3%. These figures are also broken down by States. Massachusetts has 26.9 not graduating in 1962.

1. NEA Research Memo, Nea Research Division
1201 Sixteenth Street, N.W., Washington 6, D.C.

I have noticed that most studies on the problem of the potential dropout have been conducted on a local basis and that they are factual in content. Thomas (2), in his study of dropouts in the Chicago area, suggests that data be obtained on a group entering high school and graduating four years later, thus following the same students through four years. Snepps (3) suggests a series of questions to find potential dropouts. However, on the question of detecting these pupils, Livingston (4) found that a combination of factors is a better indicator of potential dropout from school than any single factor. He concluded in his study that the greater the number of factors working to the disadvantage of the pupil, the greater the chance of the pupil's dropping out of school.

As far as intelligence is concerned, it would seem that low scholastic aptitude is a contributive factor. However, the U.S. Department of Labor study of dropouts (5) found out some dropouts had IQ's of 110 and over. Investigators are not in agreement about the importance of intelligence as a factor. While we may generalize, we can best observe its influence in specific cases, especially where scholastic aptitude is low.

2. Thomas, R.J. "An Empirical Study of High School Drop-outs in Regard to Ten Possibly Related Factors."
Jr. Educ. Soc. 28: 11-18; 1954
3. Snepps, D.W. "Can We Salvage the Dropouts?"
Clearing House 31: 49-54; 1956
4. Livingston, A.H. "High-School Graduates and Dropouts - A New Look at a Persistent Problem." School Review 66: 195-203; 1958
5. U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Statistics. School and Early Employment of Youth. Bulletin 1277; 1960

The most obvious question concerning this problem is the one concerning the causal factors. Many lists of such factors have been made, and all investigators seem to agree upon most of the factors. Cook (6) in his study of 95 dropouts found that the reasons for leaving school, as given by the dropouts, were: going to work, dislike of school, marriage, failing courses, needed at home, left home. Bowman and Matthews (7) listed these reasons: dislike of school, academic failure, poor social adjustment, need to work, pregnancy, teachers unfair. However, one may question whether all such factors are actually of a causal nature. Here is where the counselor meets his greatest challenge. The factors in a specific case are not difficult to be recognized by both the counselor and the client. But, the question is what to do about them? How to remove them or reconcile them with the school environment is the problem.

The purpose of this part is to indicate some of the areas that studies have covered to some degree. Other studies of importance will be mentioned throughout this paper as points of references. I have not found one good scientific research on this problem that would attempt to offer solutions and recommendations, especially for the counselor. Perhaps this is why the problem is still with us.

6. Cook, E.S., Jr. "An Analysis of Factors Related to Withdrawal From High School Prior to Graduation."
Jr. Educ. Res. 50: 191-196; Nov. 1956

7. Bowman, P.H., Matthews, C.V. Motivations of Youth for Leaving School. U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, Office of Education, Project 200.

CHAPTER III

Counseling a Potential Dropout

Before trying to penetrate the inner world of a potential dropout, in order to help him, we may first ask ourselves what is he like? The element of expectancy is an experience of all counselors prior to an interview. As mentioned above, he is not necessarily less intelligent than his classmates. However, it is true that many dropouts have a history of poor scholastic achievement. Greene(8), in writing about the problem of pupils dropping out of elementary school, states that the dropout is usually below grade level in reading. He is also frequently characterized by a failure to belong to any school group. He usually does not participate in extracurricular activities. He may have poor relations with his teachers. He gradually acquires a poor attendance record, and a form of resistance to authority. Cassel and Coleman (9) in their writing about recurring characteristics among dropouts mention retardation of one or two years is often the case. They also state that they often come from weak or broken homes, and many are of the low-income level of our society. Hence, we have three sources of contributing factors, the school, the home, and the student himself. While writers seem to have been satisfied to simply enumerate factors, it remains to the counselor to search their meanings in the life of a potential dropout, how they affect the growth of a child toward a potential dropout.

8. Greene, B.I. "Dropouts and the Elementary School."
National Elementary Principal 42: 52-54; November 1962
9. Cassel, R.N. & Coleman, J.C. "A Critical Examination of the School Dropout, Reluctance of Learner, and Abler Non-College Student Problem."
Bulletin of the National Association of Secondary Sch. Principal
46: 60-65; Nov. 1962

When Bill Smith during his sophomore has been referred to me by the school principal because he expressed a desire to leave school permanently, I find myself faced with about the most difficult task as the school counselor. Bill states his desire, and his reasons which are usually expressed in form of complaints. In a word, he simply hates school, but no explanations are given. As a counseling principle, I agree with him. But, I want to understand him otherwise we will not be able to communicate in an effective way. I want to understand the reasons for his present behavior and attitudes. I cannot fulfill this role without recourse to his past, present, and possibly his plans for the future, how uncertain and vague they may be. However, this I know; his present decision is the culmination of numerous factors which have operated together through the years, and today present him with seemingly insoluble problems. Bill seems quite convinced that his problems are incompatible with the school, and that he can more easily meet them by withdrawal from school. The school environment has become a situation that threatens his feeling of security.

There are 250 pupils in the sophomore year. Ideally all those children are perceiving the school environment as congenial and satisfying. And presumably that is about the same way they saw the school nine or ten years ago, but allowing for difference in degree of awareness. Yet, today one of them has acquired negative attitudes toward school. Bill perceives this environment as meaningless, and even hostile to him. It has become a life-situation in which his needs are not being satisfied. Out of all the things one perceives in his environment, according to Combs and Snygg (10), he selects what is meaningful to him in terms of his needs and personal development.

10. Combs, A.W. and Snygg, D. Individual Behavior, Chap.2.

Bill seems to be quite convinced at this moment that what will satisfy his needs is not in school, but out there, in the world. This I will understand only if and when I can communicate with him within his field of perception. Writers on counseling describe the process in terms of three steps or stages. This is done for the sake of clarity since an actual process may not necessarily proceed so systematically since man is not always rational in his behavior. The first step is learning or evaluation by the client. The next step, which is the core of counseling, is growth or accepting new attitudes, values which lead to the final step which is a change in behavior or direction.

As far as Bill is concerned, I want to remove his negative attitudes, and replace them with positive ones. I want to rekindle his first school interests, and restore some of his values for education. The only way to accomplish this task is to make him change his field of perception. This is not an impossible goal of a school counselor. After all, about 70% of our school population who graduate every year will say that after all school was a good experience, and a good place to be. Bill thought so way back in his second or third grade. Now, I want him to tell me how did he acquire his present attitudes toward his school. I want him to tell me about those factors mentioned above.

Regardless of how many interviews Bill will need, the initial step is to establish or create a rapport, or a helping relationship in the words of Rogers (11). I respect Bill and I accept him sincerely as a worthy person, free to make his own decisions and accept responsibility. I communicate this to him in a way that he will perceive it, that he will accept me as trustworthy, dependable, and understanding. This may not be an easy task with Bill who seems to have already made his decision about leaving school. His attitude may be one of resistance.

11. Rogers, C.R. "The Characteristics of a Helping Relationship." Pers. & Guid. Jr. 37: 6-16; 1958

Due to the nature of the referral, it may take me more than one interview to establish a sound working relationship. We may discuss or talk about his interests or hobbies, if he has any, or anything in which he is very interested. While the first interview may be all about baseball, for example, the fact is I am gradually making something happen in Bill. He is opening up, and this growing communication is being structured by both of us by mutual experience.

This process of structure is a self-directed change that leads into the exploration stage of counseling. At this stage Tyler (12) tells us that we shall not go wrong if we follow Bill's train of thought and his feelings rather than probe deliberately for hidden meanings. By this time, I have reviewed his cumulative records, and I will suggest to Bill to tell me about his experience in school since his third grade. I selected this year simply because the first three years of school are an experience of play-therapy. May I say here that his IQ is reported as 105. This factor tells me very little as a contributive factor. The validity of an intelligence score is always questionable. Eysenck (13) has good reasons to ask what do intelligence tests really measure on account of the complexity of the problem of defining intelligence. Our intelligence tests, which are actually achievement tests, do not measure all there is to 'intelligence'. Furthermore, prior training and environmental influence as well as emotional factors affect performance, and consequently the measurement of intelligence. The IQ needs the support of other outside data.

12. Tyler, L.E. The Work of the Counselor. Chapter 3

13. Eysenck, H.J. Uses and Abuses of Psychology. Part I

Another school-related factor that is more obvious and serious is reading ability. Bledsoe (14) found in his investigation that dropouts from the ninth and tenth grades had a mean reading comprehension score of 7.9 compared with a score of 8.9 for the rest of the ninth-graders. The first grouping of children in school is based upon reading ability and readiness. The failure of a child to master the skills of reading in the earlier grades magnifies his scholastic difficulties as he progresses from grade to grade, and as his assignments increase in difficulty. Bill's record was a history of low and failing grades, and this difficulty seems to be the key to his present attitude. It was in this area, according to him, that he first encountered any difficulties in class. Needless to say, language as a means of communication is a basic need for all children. All American children want to read as Martin Mayer (15) points out in his book, The Schools. Bill wanted to read as much as his classmates during the reading period, and write during the writing period. However, during the reading period he was placed in a separate group. And while the others read, he selected words. On account of this separation, he gradually became aware that in some way he was different from his classmates, at least his teacher perceived him as such. He was not allowed to do what his friends were doing because he apparently could not do what they did. Here, he experienced a vague sense of Adlerian inferiority.

During the following years, Bill experienced many disappointments and failures in all subjects where reading ability is a sine qua non. It was quite a jolt for him when he was told that he had to repeat the seventh grade. Bill was at the stage of development during which, according to Havighurst, (16) he was in the process of acquiring wholesome

14. Bledsoe, J.C. "An Investigation of Six Correlates of Student Withdrawal from High School."
Jr. Educ. Res. 53: 3-6; Sept. 1959

15. Mayer, M. The Schools Chapter 9

16. Havighurst, R.J. Development Tasks and Education.

attitudes toward himself, and his social group. This was the year, according to Bill, when he began to think how wonderful life would be if he did not have to attend school. Up to this time, he really wanted to succeed, to do as well as his classmates so that they could look up at him, so that his teachers would approve of him. He wanted to feel important and worthy, he wanted to feel that he also belonged here and was wanted. However, his class behavior gradually became a passive role. It seems that he was going in another direction, and he increasingly felt that he had very little in common with his classmates, and that they did not want him.

While it might be quite normal for Bill to acquire negative attitudes toward his courses, and his teachers, it is difficult to imagine any boy, physically strong and healthy, not to have any desire to participate in a sport in school. Bill was such a boy, but he had no interest in sports connected with school. Extracurricular activities can play a major role in holding a potential dropout in school. Despite academic difficulties, one can conceive such activities as the last possible tie between the school and the student. In this area, Bill could have achieved a feeling of importance, of belonging, and of identification through participation with the rest of his classmates.

Up to this point, we have simply observed Bill, or listened to him as in the process of 'opening up' he told us his school experiences since his third or fourth grade. Now, we can explore and look for inherent psychological meanings. We are now interested in his personality development. When a child finds himself in a school environment, a situation that is highly socialized, he soon becomes aware of the adjustive demands imposed upon him. He soon learns that he must make adequate response to these demands in order to satisfy his basic needs for security, belonging, and self-worth. During these difficult and formative years, the personality is developing through interactions

with one's self and with one's environment as perceived. The Freudian (17) ego and super-ego are developing as the child learns to resolve his anxieties and their sources. Maslow's needs to belong, and for self-esteem are predominant drives within the classroom, and the way to achieve such a status, according to Friedenberg (18), is through competence. Adler's drive for superiority to overcome inferiority is equally strong. The self-image is being constructed through the process of self-evaluation in relation to classmates, teachers, and the school in general.

A pupil's need for security is satisfied if his experiences with classmates and teachers are satisfying. He feels secured if he perceives himself as being worthy of attention, and perceives others as wanting him. However, if a pupil experiences frustration, insurmountable difficulties in his attempts to satisfy his needs, he not only develops a sense of inferiority, but also a picture of himself as being in an environment of dangers and threats. Bill's academic difficulties were perceived by him as struggles to satisfy his needs for belonging, for recognition, and for self-esteem. For him, the only way to achieve such satisfaction was to succeed in his school-work, the type of competence he would have in common with his classmates, and by which his teachers would have accepted him for his own personal worth.

Bill felt the need to experience and to accept as his own the approving experiences of his peers and his teachers. However, as his struggles mounted through the years, as he was failing to socialize, to establish a satisfying Freudian identification with his environment, he developed some defense mechanisms as a normal phase of self-preservation. But, more seriously he also simultaneously developed

17. Hall & Lindzey, Theories of Personality Cp. 2.
18. Friedenberg, E.Z. The Vanishing Adolescent

his present negative attitude toward school where his needs were being repressed by his failures. He felt unworthy in class because he was not capable of satisfying his teachers. He felt unwanted because the way he 'rationalized it' his classmates perceived him as inferior to them, and therefore of not belonging in their group. As per Sullivan (19), this period of growth is marked by a strong need for a genuine relationship with a peer or more of the same sex. He states that it is when one fails to socialize that he learns the meaning of ostracism as well as the meaning of group feeling. It is quite a normal experience for Bill today to express a desire to withdraw from such an environment, and seek a more accepting one.

While these school-related factors seem to be pushing Bill out of school, there are other factors that are concomitantly pulling him out of this environment. I am here referring to home-factors. His parents place very little value on education, and have never expressed any interest in his school-work. It is well known that the home is the greatest source of influence as far as the values and attitudes which children accept as their own. Bill's father never went beyond the eighth grade. He is a truckdriver who is making good money. Who needs a high school diploma to make a good living? Bill heard that and sees it, so why should he place a high value on a high school education? On the other hand, if Bill had experienced his parents as placing a high value on his schooling, on his scholastic performance, he might have acquired a positive attitude toward school. If his parents had been interested in his work at school, if they were supporting the school, the teachers, Bill would have made a relationship between his parents and his teachers, in terms of school values.

There are other home factors that are more serious than parent attitude toward education. These are the factors that have direct and lasting influence upon the personality development of a child. No child with personality defects that prevent him from getting along with others, or prevent him from communicating adequately with others can be expected to adjust to the school environment in a satisfying way. His need to belong will never be satisfied for one reason or other. His rapport with his teachers will be poor. He may be a very aggressive child or an extremely shy one. As a child grows, he must learn social skills and attitudes, he must learn to control his behavior in order to gain social approval. In this process, he is also developing evaluations of himself and his environment. His family is the crucial guiding influence, especially during his early years.

Faulty parental or parent-child relations are fertile sources of maladjustment in a child. If a child's home is one where marital discord persists with quarreling and nagging between mother and father, the child feels threatened, and develops a feeling of insecurity because he lacks a sense of belonging. In the process of his natural tendency to identify with his parents, his loyalty becomes divided, and he suffers from the lack of a model to help him to acquire right attitudes and values toward himself and others. In such homes, a child may experience rejection which is a direct attack upon his vital needs for love, for being wanted and accepted. The effects of parental rejection may vary considerably with each child, but many times some good teachers can notice them in the overt behavior of such unfortunate children. According to Coleman (20), such children tend to be fearful, insecure, attention-seeking, jealous, hostile, and lonely. Rebellion

against school by such children is understandable because they perceive the world very much like their homes, as an insecure and dangerous place.

On the other hand, a child may come from a home where he is the victim of overprotection which may take the form of domination or indulgence. Such a child is never taught to stand on his own two feet, to make his own decision and thus accept the responsibility of his own behavior. His security seems to lie in his submissiveness and obedience to his domineering mother so that, once on his own, he lacks self-confidence and ability to cope with his own problems. His solutions tend to take the form of escapism in one way or other. However, if his mother has raised him with undue indulgence, allowing him to have his own way, he will become spoiled, selfish, and demanding. Very often this child is the trouble-maker in a classroom because he has an aggressive and demanding attitude as a result of an over-evaluation of his self-worth. He is all for himself, and perceives himself as more important than his peers.

It is not necessary to exhaust the subject of home factors. However, we must always remember that a child brings to school his home experiences which underly his behavior. The school counselor will face many personal problems of his clients whose solution will involve the home.

Now, I ask the question how can I help Bill? What can I offer that he will freely accept and finish his high school education? An accepting relationship has been established, and Bill has brought finally in the open all his school experiences, and how he has felt or reacted internally to them. According to Rogers (21), Bill has experienced some inner changes, but I need to be concerned now as to the direction in which Bill will move, or choose freely to stay in school.

Can Bill see himself as a worthy student? Can he acquire a sense of achievement in school? Can he develop a sense of belonging by participation in a sport? Can he change his perceptual field so that he will see his classmates and his teachers as respecting and wanting him for his personal worth? If we had the answers to these questions our problems would be solved. But I feel now that I have to assume the role of the counselor-teacher in terms of values. According to Williamson,(22), value conflicts are at the core of Counseling, and the counselor helps the client to accept more positive values about himself and the school. I may also have conferences with Bill's parents on the value of a high school education . If Bill withdraws from school now, he is minimizing his chances for a decent livelihood today. I may be able to make some changes in his environment. I could possibly make changes in his schedule so that he will be taking courses in which he can up his grades. I can ask the head of physical education to encourage Bill to participate in sports. Vocational guidance will be very helpful as well as a part-time job after school. It may be too late to save Bill. Counselors should not wait for him, but they should look for him in the earlier grades before the pattern of such a potential dropout is shaped.

22. Williamson, E.G. "Value Orientation in Counseling"
Pers. & Guid. Jr. 36: 520-528; 1958

CHAPTER IV

Detection of Potential Dropouts

I think that we can all agree that a potential dropout can be detected. In view of the fact that between 30% and 35% of our school children are dropouts, detection should not be an impossible task for those who are in direct contact with pupils. It is a matter of knowing and recognizing the symptoms. A student's academic achievement may suddenly drop below his past performance, especially when he has reached high school. A teacher may be aware of a child in his class who seems to be unable to cope with his situations, and requires an undue amount of attention and reassurance. Another student may not be able to sustain his interest in a class project. He may be a day-dreamer who is much preoccupied with himself, and plays a passive role in class. He may be a very belligerent youngster who likes to start trouble and blame others for his failures. The important point is not so much the act itself, but its recurrence which may denote the formation of an unfavorable attitude toward school. Obviously this task is incumbent upon individual teachers. The importance of teaching guidance skills to teachers is clearly indicated in this area..

It seems that all secondary school counselors work either with junior high school or senior high school students. Where time permits, I believe that a counselor should concern himself with the lower grades. He should have conferences with the teachers about the pupils. Children with problems should be brought to his attention. Those are the years when a potential dropout, once detected, should receive counseling services. A most practical form of assistance to teachers is a list of symptoms which the counselor might make and present to each teacher for his own use. Such a list is presented on the next page.

POTENTIAL DROPOUTS

List of Symptoms of Causes

1. Direction: Checkmark symptoms which characterize pupil.
2. Course and year of pupil.....
3. Name of pupil.....
4. Items or Symptoms.
 1. Rarely participates in class discussions.....
 2. Participates only when asked by teacher.....
 3. Has poor identification with classmates.....
 4. Never seeks help from the teacher.....
 5. Does not participate in extracurricular activity..
 6. Is not popular with his classmates.....
 7. Prefers to work alone.....
 8. Is seclusive and reserve.....
 9. Is shy and timid.....
 10. Does not take advice and criticism favorably.....
 11. Has a moody disposition.....
 12. Is indifferent of high achievement.....
 13. Is easily distracted in class.....
 14. Is very nervous when asked to recite.....
 15. Feels inferior to his classmates.....
 16. Likes to dominate the class discussion.....
 17. Day-dreams in class.....
 18. Easily shows his emotions.....
 19. Has days of quietness and aloofness.....
 20. Keeps in the background.....
 21. Shuns class responsibilities.....
 22. Is a poor loser.....
 23. Likes to have his own way.....
 24. General carelessness in his work.....
 25. Likes to show-off.....

If one reviews the list, he find apparent duplications. This was purposely done because no two teachers perceive the same pupil the same way. Also, a single item alone may not have much meaning, but, combined with other symptoms it will have contributive value as an indication of a personal problem. I believe that it is a practical and useful tool for a counselor's purpose. If a student is performing below his capacity as recorded in his cumulative record, and I ask each one of his teachers to check the symptom list, I may gain some information about what appears to be a personal problem with which this client is struggling. While I constructed that list with a view upon potential dropouts, it can equally be useful for additional information in any counseling case.

I present below a true experience of myself as a classroom teacher. If I had had then any skills in guidance, I could have been of greater assistance to the subject. I do not know what kind of counseling service she received, but she really needed some help to understand herself and resolve her anxieties in a satisfying way. I regret to say that Joan has withdrawn from school. As her teacher, I should have made it a point to consult the guidance counselor, and refer her for much needed help.

A Case of a Potential Drop-out?

When Joan Smith entered my French class in September, 1961, she was not a stranger to me. The Smith's were my neighbor, and I had had many occasions to speak to them. At the beginning of that school-year, Mrs. Smith told me that Joan had had very good marks up to now, and that she wished that she would keep up that performance. She asked me not to be easy with her, but be firm, and not to hesitate to punish her if she misbehaves in class or does not do her homework. Joan was an unusually beautiful girl, and enjoyed considerable popularity in her neighborhood with the girls as well as with the boys. It seems that her parents gave her much freedom of movement. She was very playful and cheerful, and seemed to have a certain amount of initiative and leadership among her friends.

Joan was in one of my top divisions. She was indeed a good student in every respect. She diligently turned in her assignment every day. She was a daily volunteer in oral drills and work on the blackboard. She seemed to be well liked by her group. Of course, during this time I kept hoping that her present attitude would continue. Junior high school years are difficult years for these children. They come in as children but they graduate as adolescents. It is a period of awakening that creates conflicts of interests, and sometimes it is not the most desirable one that predominates. It was during the month of December that I began to notice that Joan was gradually relinquishing her active role in class. More and more I had to ask her to recite or go to the blackboard. That change of class behavior as such may not indicate any unfavorable change. The novelty of the school may have worn off, or it might be a symptom of growth out of childish behavior, typical in grade school. However, one day she came to class without her homework. According to my

policy I kept her after school to do her assignment. The only explanation she had for not doing her homework was that she had forgotten all about it. I took this occasion to talk to her about her passivity in class, and the importance of assignment for good grades.

During the second term, Joan failed many times to bring in a homework. She would either forget or did not have time to do it, and it did not seem to affect her that I always kept her after school to do her assignment. There seemed to be a certain air of "I don't care too much." I questioned her other teachers about her work. It was a general opinion that she was losing interest in schoolwork. It soon became obvious in class and outside of class that she had a particular girlfriend. I often saw them together in the corridors or in a Sweet Shop down Main Street. Her popularity among her peers in class had considerably diminished. Even the boys paid very little attention to her at this stage. One day I constructed and administered a sociogram to the class. For her first choice of friendship, Joan selected her girlfriend, and another girl as her second choice. However, only two out of thirty selected her for a friend, her girlfriend and a boy.

We had the first dance for the seventh graders. The attendance as usual was close to 90%. However, Joan did not attend for some reason or other. She did not either attend the Easter dance. One day I asked her why she did not attend the dances if she likes to dance. Her answer was that she does not like the boys in the seventh grade. They are too childish and silly. She prefers to dance with boys in the ninth grade. This was at the end of April, and I thought then that she was growing up very fast. I also noticed then that she seemed to be more particular about her appearance, which included lipstick. Her social life was developing, and apparently conflicting with her school interests. Here a dropout problem could easily develop.

The following year Joan was in my class again. This was a Latin class. In the eighth grade, students have the privilege of making a choice between French and Latin. I asked why she selected Latin since her work in French was satisfactory. She chose Latin because it was different, and she had heard that it was easier than French. This explanation indicated to me that her interests in school seems to be gradually diminishing so that she would be satisfied with minimum passing marks.

Her attitude in this class was not much different from what it had been in the French class a few months ago. She continued to play a passive role, and very often failed in her assignment. She passed the first quarter, but gradually her marks on the weekly tests were unsatisfactory. Did she care? At the beginning of the second semester, I had a serious talk with her. I discussed with her the importance of study and of success now and later in the Senior High School. She knew all about that. I asked her if she was not interested in good marks now and later so she could have a good chance to attend college or getting a decent job after high school? She was not interested in college, and she said that she might decide to drop out of high school and get married. After all, every year some girls do it. I asked her if she likes school. But, her answer was that she did at first, but now it is more fun to be out of school.

I know that the Guidance Department had spoken to her, but then I noticed no change in her behavior as a result. That year her attendance record was not satisfactory. Her mother spoke to me many times about Joan's general behavior. She was concerned, yet what puzzled me was the fact that Joan had so much freedom. Joan liked to visit her friends, and loiter in her favorite Sweet Shop with high school boys. The payoff this behavior occurred in March when she was caught

unexpectedly with a couple of older boys in a room above that Sweet Shop. She was suspended from school for a number of months . All I know about this incident was that she was in some kind of trouble. She returned to school in May, but without much interest.

In summation, this is what has happened to Joan during her two years in the Junior High School.

1. Her rôle in class became a completely passive one.
2. She had alienated herself from her peers.
3. Her attitude toward success became one of indifference.
4. Her failure to perform her assignments increased in time.
5. Her attendance record was poor during the last semestre.
6. Her interest in older boys.
7. Her lost of school interest in general.
8. Her thought of quitting school before graduation.

CHAPTER V

Approaches to the Problem

After the problem of the potential dropout has been presented, there remains still the most important question; namely, what can be done to help him? We have already mentioned one approach ; detection in the early years of his schooling. For most dropouts the core of the problem is the inadequacy of the curriculum. According to Froehlich (23), the objectives of the curriculum should be the needs of all the pupils. The curriculum should appeal to all children regardless of socioeconomic background, regardless of level of ability provided they are educable. Teaching the three R's to each child must always remain a basic function of the schools. But the pupil needs more, and the present day setup of the curriculum does not meet many important needs of today's pupils. The school program is set, and a child is shaped or conditioned to it when ideally the process should be reversed provided it is in line with the goals and values of education and society. The schools today should provide additional courses which meet more specialized needs of pupils, which cover more pupil interests. If more elective courses in the various interest areas of all pupils are offered, the schools encourage the potential dropout to remain in school, and better prepare him for his future life. The school must realize that each pupil must be given what he needs if it is to have meaning to him. Noone can identify with a meaningless environment.

Curriculum improvement, which is vitally needed to day, should be as much the task of the counselor as the responsibility of the administrators. The basis of any change is the child and his society. Administrators are mainly interested in educational and societal goals. But the counselor is the one who understands what the pupils are interested in, what are their needs, and also what are the trends of

the community and society.

It is not enough, however, to widen the curriculum so that it will appeal to all students, but attention must be given to the instructional aspect of the school. The size of classes should be reduced so that a teacher can individualize her method of teaching, especially with reference to slow learners. A teacher should be provided time for conferences with those pupils who need additional help and encouragement so that they may get a feeling of success, and the feeling that the teacher is interested in them. Many of these conferences should include at least one parent. A teacher's sincere interest in a child certainly helps to stimulate and develop parental attitude toward the school, especially where their child is concerned.

The role of extracurricular activities must not be underestimated. If a boy despite all efforts to interest him in academic pursuit still remain a potential dropout, he can often be helped to be part of the school environment by identifying himself with some extracurricular activity. There are cases where perhaps such an activity is the only tie a potential dropout has with the school, because this is the only area in which he can satisfy his basic needs while in school.

A course in "Human Relations" as suggested by Bullis and O'Malley (24) should be profitable to a potential dropout. A well organized but informal group discussion of behavioral problems in school will encourage many pupils to air out some of their views and feelings about some aspects of the school. When such items as school interests, attitudes, duty, responsibility and authority are freely discussed, learning is taking place, meanings are acquired that should stimulate and reinforce more positive attitudes toward the school in general. Such a program should be conducted by the school counselor, and not a teacher. I believe pupils feel more free to express themselves truly in the presence

of the school counselor.

It cannot be denied that if a pupil felt that the school was giving him something meaningful, he would not be inclined to leave before graduation. Pupils leave because they are not interested in what they are doing, because they see no connection between school, work and life. During these stages of development children are busy 'living', and not 'preparing' for living due to the limitation of their awareness of far-reaching goals. This connection between the school and what they may hope to be doing after graduation can be brought to light by means of a group vocational guidance program. It is here that a meaningful relationship can be expressed clearly to pupils. An information discussion as presented by Hoppock (25) on occupations, on the labor market of today, and their relatedness with school will bring up many questions on the part of the students. Many potential dropouts may conceivably acquire a more positive outlook toward the school. Here he participates and shares, and is exposed to many ideas and attitudes as expressed by their classmates that make school a preparation for a good life. Needless to mention, the private and individual vocational guidance is the best from for the pupil. But the point here is the idea that the potential dropout is experiencing a sense of communality with his classmates, a degree of belonging through identification.

Part-time employment is another approach that is beneficial to a potential dropout. Making money is often a factor that is mentioned by potential dropouts. On such a job, the potential dropout will not only satisfy that need, but he will also experience a sense of achievement. He may well learn through this exposure the value of a high school education to secure a better job in the future.

In brief I have mentioned major areas of the problem, and suggested a number of remedial approaches toward its solution. I have not by any means included all possible types of assistance to a potential dropout. For example, placement in a trade school is a good practise today in many schools. In many systems, direct cooperation of the parents and the community should be part of the program. At any rate it is up to each school system to assess its own problem of dropouts and do something about it for the sake of those children.

CHAPTER VI

Conclusion

It is clear to the reader of this report that every aspect of this crucial problem basically involves the school counselor. Due to its complexity, there is no one overall answer or solution. The way a counselor will attempt to keep a potential dropout in school until graduation will depend very much upon the type of his formal training, his counseling skills, and his ability to win the full cooperation of the faculty members, the administrators, the community and the home.

The counselor's strongest asset is his ability to understand a child's growth and behavior, for, as I was groping for meanings and structuring this report, I was perceiving the counselor as being very much involved in all aspects of a pupil's development during his school career. To face up to this challenge, I am inclined to agree with Wrenn (26), and Mathewson (27) who recommend that the school counselor be well grounded in the psychological and social disciplines, and including personality and learning theories. This is much in line with the suggestions of the APA (28) for the school counselor training. The implication for such a need seems to be well supported in the high percentage of our school population who do not complete their secondary education.

However, no amount of learning as such is sufficient. As pointed out by Callis (29), a counselor needs to organize his learning,

26. Wrenn, C.G. "Status and Role of School Counselors."
Pers. & Guid. Jr. 36: 175-183; 1957
27. Mathewson, R.H. "The General Guidance Counselor."
Pers. & Guid. Jr. 32: 544-547; 1954
28. APA, Div. of Counseling Psych., Subcommittee on Counselor
Selection, Counselor Training.
Jr. Couns. Psych. 1: 174-179; 1954
29. Callis, R. "Toward an Integrated Theory of Counseling."
Counseling - Readings in Theory and Practice; pp 208-215
McGowan - Schmidt

his own set of values, his philosophy into a unified guide. It is a procedural direction toward the achievement of the ultimate objective of counseling, or an organized orientation toward personal growth and development which is a progressive movement toward positive mental health as described by Jahoda (30). This working theory should at all times involve the whole child, but at the same time it must be so flexible and adaptable for each counseling problem is unique.

I believe that if all who are directly concerned with this problem will take a bold and decisive stand and incorporate into the school program some of the approaches stated in this report, they will not only minimize their problem, but will at the same time contribute to the improvement of the standards of their school and community.

30. Jahoda, M. "Current Concepts of Positive Mental Health."

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