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A study of the influence of alumni contacts upon the educational program of medium-sized California high schools

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College of the Pacific
Stockton, Calif.

A STUDY OF THE INFLUENCE OF ALUMNI CONTACTS UPON THE
EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM OF MEDIUM-SIZED
CALIFORNIA HIGH SCHOOLS

A Thesis
Presented to
the Faculty of the Department of Education
College of the Pacific

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts in Education

by
Arch Alexander Brown, Jr.

June 1951

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Increasingly during the present century, and particularly since the publication of the Cardinal Principles of Secondary Education in 1918, American high schools have been deeply concerned with the total development of each student as an individual. The philosophy of mass education is gone. Curricula have been expanded, new fields explored, new facilities added, all with the purpose of meeting individual, as well as group, needs. With this has come a new emphasis on guidance, and new techniques of evaluation of the school program. Gradually, too, a new importance has been attached to school-community relationships, and perhaps especially to the relationship between the school and its alumni.

The problem. In line with the revised philosophy, objectives, and emphases of the modern secondary school, the problem with which this study is concerned is How do alumni contacts influence the educational program of medium-sized California high schools? The extent to which these schools maintain contact with their alumni, their procedures in maintaining contact, and the objectives and utilization of such contact fall within the scope of the study.

Delimitations. This study is limited to California high schools with an average daily attendance between one thousand and fifteen hundred in 1948-49. There are forty-one such schools. This particular size range was chosen because it covers the schools of a wide variety of communities. Included are schools in such urban areas as San Francisco and Los Angeles, schools of residential communities such as Piedmont and Burlingame, schools in smaller cities, ranging from Santa Maria to Fresno, and schools in such semi-rural communities as Lodi and Turlock. The group includes, also, schools whose students are predominantly college-preparatory, and some whose students are largely terminal.

The study includes the effect of alumni contacts upon curriculum planning, the co-curricular program, and the guidance and counseling program.

Objectives. The objectives of this study are three-fold. First, it will survey the practices in the field in the particular group of schools under investigation, to determine what contact is maintained with alumni, and to what purpose this contact is put in terms of the schools' total educational program. Also, practices elsewhere will be surveyed for purposes of comparison. Second, this study will evaluate current practices in this field, as indicated

by the individual schools. Third, this study will include a recommended procedure for maintaining and utilizing alumni contacts for the improvement of the educational program of California's medium-sized high schools.

Justification. It is assumed that such studies as this are needed in California, as elsewhere, to determine the extent to which this potentially valuable source of constructive criticism is being tapped, and to offer suggestions for means of utilizing the information and ideas thus gathered. Among those best acquainted with any given high school's program are those who have received the preparation offered there, and who, armed with that preparation, have gone forth to a vocation, to college, or to a trade or a vocational school. Their comments relative to what they failed to receive in the high school program, or what they received there for which they find no need, as well as their favorable comments upon the strengths of the school program, might be of considerable value to the curriculum builder, and to those in charge of the co-curricular program. In addition, the success of each student on his job, or in subsequent schooling, and his adjustment in his personal life could be of interest and value to the counselor or director of guidance.

It must be recognized that the data thus gathered concerning the school program are subjective in nature, and

cannot be accepted as having the validity which could be ascribed to data of a more objective type. No school surveyed, however, employs any objective means of gathering data in this area, and in the absence of more objective sources of data, and with full recognition given to the limitations of subjective information, these data could, nevertheless, be of very considerable value to those responsible for the direction of the schools' educational programs.

Alumni contacts are also a great potential source of better school-community relationships, and the value of this, in terms of support of the school program on the part of the public, can hardly be overemphasized.

Sources of data. The data secured was obtained by means of a questionnaire.¹ A copy of this was sent to the administrative head of each of the forty-one California high schools falling within the scope of the survey. Of these, replies were received from thirty-three. These data are summarized and interpreted in Chapter III of this study. Related studies in California and elsewhere were also surveyed, and these are summarized in Chapter II.

¹ Appendix A

Procedure. The problem was attacked by means of descriptive research of the research survey type. Current practices in the field have been surveyed in a general way across the country, and specifically and in detail within the California schools concerned in the study itself. These practices are described in subsequent chapters and evaluated as to their effectiveness in improving the educational program of the schools. Finally, recommendations are made for an effective plan of organization for medium-sized California high schools, the schools with which this study is primarily concerned.

Summary. This study, then, is concerned with the problem How do alumni contacts influence the educational program of medium-sized California high schools? It is limited to schools with an average daily attendance in 1948-49 of from one thousand to fifteen hundred; however, many of the conclusions drawn are applicable to both larger and smaller schools. For purposes of comparison, the surveys of related practices carried on in conjunction with this study, include alumni-contact practices in schools outside the study group, both in California and elsewhere.

CHAPTER II

RELATED STUDIES

In an effort to determine the practices in schools other than those coming directly within the scope of this study in this field, the state department of education of each of the forty-eight states were canvassed, and material has been received from seventeen of them. These seventeen responding states represent all sections of the country, including the Atlantic coast, the deep south, the midwest, northwest, and mountain states, as well as the Pacific coast. The material received from these states is the source of many of the data and summaries contained in this study. Other data were gathered by conference with Mr. William McCreary, of the Bureau of Occupational Information and Guidance, California State Department of Education, Sacramento, and from schools taking part in the California Cooperative Study, now being conducted under the auspices of that bureau.

This chapter will summarize the findings of these investigations.

I. THE CALIFORNIA COOPERATIVE SURVEY

During the school years 1949-50 and 1950-51, a number of California secondary schools, school departments, and interested individuals are participating in "The California Cooperative Study of School Drop-outs and Graduates." A guide prepared by Donald Kitch and William McCreary of the Bureau of Occupational Information and Guidance, lists among the purposes of the study the securing of answers to the following problems:

8. How do school leavers think that the schools might have served them better? In helping them select, prepare for, and enter a suitable field of work? In preparing to meet the responsibilities of citizenship? In preparing them for family life? In preparing them to profit from further education? In helping them to make wise use of leisure time? In helping them to develop sound health practices?

9. Finally, in the light of the findings, what can the schools do to improve their services to young people? How can their instructional programs be geared more closely to the needs of youth? What changes or additions are suggested in the schools' guidance and placement services? Is more vocational education needed? What other phases of the educational program need strengthening?¹

The California Cooperative plan includes the study of current drop-outs, to be studied at the time of leaving

¹ Donald E. Kitch and William H. McCreary, "Guide for Making a Follow-Up Study of School Drop-outs and Graduates." California Guidance Bulletin, No. 13 (Sacramento: California State Department of Education, January, 1950).

school; seventh and eighth grade pupils, in order to cover those drop-outs who never enroll in high school; first-year graduates and drop-outs (those who have been out of school one year or less); third-year school leavers, sixth-year groups, and ten-year groups. Thus a well-rounded viewpoint will be obtained from a fairly large number and variety of former students. So far, thirty-four districts are taking part in the study.

The California Cooperative Survey is an important step toward the acceptance of the practice of schools maintaining contact with their alumni. Worthwhile as it is, however, it is subject to three important limitations:

1. Since most studies are carried out as individual thesis projects, there is no continuity in the practice, and much of the value in follow-up, both to the school and its alumni, is thereby lost.

2. The alumni services, such as extension classes, and testing and counseling services, which should accompany the follow-up survey are, in the great majority of cases, lacking.

3. Since the survey is entirely voluntary, it is taking place in only a limited number of school districts instead of in all of them, which, of course, limits its effectiveness.

Thirteen participants in the California Cooperative Survey responded to a letter inquiring as to the utilization of their studies. The results of this portion of the survey may be summarized as follows:

Modifications covering various fields have actually taken place in the programs of some schools. In curriculum these include: More emphasis upon the "fundamentals"; the formulation of senior problems courses; the addition of a course in business mathematics; more technical courses; courses in consumer education; courses in family living problems; visitations to all phases of community life; and individual instruction based upon the interests and needs of each child.

In the co-curricular field, one school, as the result of its participation in the California Cooperative Survey and the results received therefrom, has stepped up its social program. Two others indicated that they are attempting to provide more opportunities for leadership on the part of students.

In the area of guidance and counseling, changes which have taken place include the lightening of counselors' loads, in order to allow more time for counseling; an attempt to secure better trained counselors; and a decentralized guidance program, with the teachers taking greater part.

In answer to this writer's inquiry, most of the participants in the California Cooperative Survey replied that they felt alumni contacts were of great value with respect to revision and improvement of the educational program of the schools. One went so far as to ask, "How else can you get a valid evaluation?"²

In general, the picture presented by the participants in this study is one of a tremendously valuable, and very interesting endeavor.

II. THE STUDY MADE BY THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SECONDARY SCHOOL PRINCIPALS

In 1940-41, the Implementation Commission of the National Association of Secondary School Principals, under a grant from the General Education Board, set up a program³ to encourage individual schools to make follow-up studies, and to try out in a number of schools the practicability of a particular follow-up plan which had been developed during

² From a letter to the writer by J. William Cunliffe, Coordinator of Secondary Education, Orange County Schools.

³ John R. Beery, Byron C. Hayes, and Edward Landy, The School Follows Through, (Washington, D.C.: The National Association of Secondary School Principals of the National Education Association, No. 101, November, 1941).

the previous year by that same commission.

The outcomes of the follow-up studies in the schools cooperating with the commission may be classified under seven headings, as follows:

Changes in the regular curriculum. In a considerable number of the schools cooperating in the program, new courses were worked out as a result of the follow-up study. These were not necessarily "new" courses in the sense that nothing like them had ever been taught before, but they were new to the particular school inaugurating them. For example, one urban school which had heavily emphasized its college-preparatory program, even though its students were no longer primarily planning on college, developed as a result of this survey, a course called "Problems of Occupational Adjustment." Another school inaugurated a course in retail selling, for which the head of the commercial department had long been pleading to no avail. In one New England school, over half the boys contacted in the survey suggested the addition of an industrial arts program to the curriculum, resulting in at least serious consideration of that problem by the school board.

As a result of this survey, in addition to the inauguration of new courses, in many cases established courses were modified. Of course, the responsibility of

revision of the school curriculum cannot be totally and directly shifted to the shoulders of comparative immature youth just a few years out of school, but their comments were found illuminating, and, in many instances, very constructive. For example, one survey showed nearly half the commercial graduates recommending more training and experience in the use of business machines. This resulted in a generous appropriation of funds by the school board for the purchase of such machines.

In nearly all the schools it was found that one of the most frequent suggestions from former students concerned assistance in developing the ability to converse easily with strangers. In one school, at least, this reaction was responsible for a shift in emphasis in the English department to more training in public speaking.

Still another curricular modification resulting from the study was the provision, in many of the schools, for direct learning experiences. Student participation in the survey itself was found to be an important learning experience, both as to selecting a vocation and becoming better acquainted with the community.

Changes in the counseling program. The results of the follow-up study frequently led to a re-evaluation of the whole guidance program. For example, the principal of one

small high school was surprised to note the number of students suggesting more guidance in the selection of courses and of a subsequent vocation. Because of the comparative intimacy of the small school, it had been tacitly assumed that an abundance of informal guidance was taking place in the home room. The principal and faculty sat down to review the results of the survey, and set about to provide specifically for the guidance they had mistakenly assumed was taking place incidentally.

In another school, as part of the ninth grade orientations course, each student was expected to settle upon a specific occupation as his goal, and to plan the remainder of his high school program accordingly. As a result of the survey, the emphasis was changed so that students chose a "family of occupations," rather than one specific job, because so many former students had found it necessary to change their plans slightly in order to find employment.

The follow-up survey also provided the guidance worker with such information as the kind of jobs which youth are likely to get when they leave school, the sort of wages they may expect, the kind of duties they will be called upon to perform, and other data valuable in vocational counseling.

One school set up an interesting group counseling technique involving the use of home rooms. The senior class

was divided into three groups: Those definitely planning on college, those definitely planning to take a job after leaving high school, and those undecided as to their future plans. In charge of each group was a teacher interested in that particular phase of counseling. The same was done with other classes in the school, and the main emphasis of the home room was upon group vocational counseling.

Changes in placement policy. The follow-up survey was used by the schools in various ways in connection with their placement programs. Sometimes the follow-up was a regular part of the placement program; sometimes the follow-up forms were used in lieu of other placement records; and many times the follow-up indicated the need for the establishment of some sort of placement service. Whether or not the school formally operated a placement service, it was frequently possible to find employment for youth who indicated that they were out of work, and to find better jobs for some who deserved them. Frequently, employers expressed appreciation to the school for the latter's interest in the work their alumni were doing after leaving school and in how to improve the preparation given to youth. As a result, these employers looked with favor upon applicants from the school, and in some cases even asked the school to recommend graduating seniors to fill certain

vacant positions.

The survey also showed the employment opportunities within the area, better acquainting the students and the school staff with this situation, thus making guidance more effective and placement easier in that respect.

The commission felt that, "All the evidence seemed to point toward the advisability of the secondary school setting up some sort of a clearing agency for employers and prospective employees."⁴

Evaluation of practices. Some schools set out very definitely to evaluate certain practices within the school. The acid test of the effectiveness of a course in literature, for example, is not the student's grade in the final examination, but rather whether or not he continues, after leaving school, to be discriminating in his choice of literature. Likewise, the true test of the effectiveness of the vocational courses is whether or not students are able to secure, hold, and advance in jobs requiring the skills which these courses purport to develop.

Improved public relations. In making the survey, some schools had the definite, though not sole, purpose in mind of improving school-community relations. Some of them

⁴ Ibid., p. 22.

found that this purpose was particularly well effected if the teachers made the contacts with the alumni by personal interview. Obviously, however, this is a difficult and time-consuming procedure. The mere fact that the high school indicates a continued interest in its former students assures a continuing interest in the school on the part of most of those students, their parents, and other members of their families.

Professional growth of the faculty. Two rather obvious benefits of the program in terms of professional growth of the faculty are the opportunity to learn good follow-up techniques, and, as far as those actually participating in the interviews are concerned, the gaining of a new insight into the problems of recent school leavers. These should result in a more realistic conception, on the part of the teachers, of the problem of preparing youth for work.

Probably more important, however, in terms of professional development, was the extent to which problems raised by the survey were attacked cooperatively by the principal and his faculty. There is no out-and-dried, ready-made solution to any of the problems which the survey raised. The study, as well as raising the problems and pointing up inadequacies and inconsistencies in the program

furnished partial data for the solution of the problems. The challenge lies with the principal and his faculty to do something about them. Herein lies their opportunity to grow as educators. In one school, for example, the faculty decided to devote a series of its meetings to the problem of providing an adequate program for occupational adjustment with a view to taking specific steps to improve their offerings in this respect. In another school, the commercial teachers met monthly with an office employers' group in the community to discuss with them problems of training and other matters of mutual concern.

Service to former students. The value of the survey to former students is a difficult matter to evaluate. Many have written letters to the schools expressing both surprise and pleasure at the schools' continued interest in them. How many were stimulated to take stock of their occupational situation and give serious consideration to their future, no one can accurately tell. Some came to the schools seeking counsel and advice on the matter, however. And it is known, at least, that as a direct result of the survey, in many localities numbers of youth were actually placed in jobs.

Summary. The Implementation Commission's cooperative study is one of the most ambitious thus far attempted, with an estimated seventy-three thousand students participating.

The results are significant in terms of curriculum development, placement of former students, evaluation of school practices, improved public relations, professional growth of the faculty, and service to former students.

III. STATE-CONDUCTED FOLLOW-UP STUDIES

Several of the states have, through various state agencies, laid plans for the making of follow-up studies. Some (e.g. Virginia) have ambitiously attempted complete statewide studies, while others, like California, have set up the plan and asked for participation in the survey on a voluntary basis. Of those studies which have been made, some have been under official school sponsorship; others, as in the case of California, have been individual studies, undertaken with the schools' approval as thesis projects.

The following section will undertake to summarize the work being done in several of the states in the matter of follow-up surveys and their effect upon the school program.

In 1940, the Education Department of the State of New York, in cooperation with the State Council of School Superintendents, formulated a "plan for the study of the youth who have left school."⁵ The plan was predicated on

⁵ Harry J. Linton (chairman) and others, Youth in Wartime, (Albany: State of New York, Department of Education, March, 1943).

the assumption that schools might promote guidance useful to youth in making the transition from school to life. The schools attempted to contact their former pupils during the first, third, and fifth years out of school. One of the purposes of the study was to "make possible the continuous re-examination of the school's program in the light of the youths' critical appraisal of their school experience."⁶

The Montana State Department of Public Instruction issued, in 1948, a bulletin⁷ by Truman Cheney, State Supervisor of Occupational Information and Guidance, outlining a complete guidance program involving six broad areas. The sixth of these was follow-up.

The Montana plan included the maintenance of a systematic follow-up study of graduates, one, three, and five years after leaving school. The information gathered from the studies was to be made available to school administrators for their study and probable use in curriculum revision. A further purpose was held to be the determination of educational and vocational requirements of jobs, for use in later placement functions.

⁶ Ibid., p. 2.

⁷ Truman Cheney, Guidance Bulletin, (Helena: Montana State Department of Public Instruction, 1948).

The State of Mississippi, in its School Bulletin⁸ deploras the almost total lack of follow-up survey work in that state, and makes certain suggestions regarding the institution of the practice in Mississippi schools. In the first place, the Bulletin says follow-up must be a continuous process. There is little value in taking it up one year, and dropping it for the next ten. Nor can it be successfully undertaken by one individual alone. The suggestion is made that follow-up be done by a cooperative committee of students and teachers, with one student and one teacher acting as co-chairmen of the committee.

The uses to which the information thus gained may be put are listed by the Mississippi Bulletin as follows:

1. To evaluate and improve the guidance program.
2. To evaluate and improve instruction.
3. To determine the effectiveness of the curriculum in the light of the experience of former students.
4. To justify changes in the curriculum as need for change is revealed.
5. To enable the school to keep in touch with former students for the purpose of giving them further assistance when needed.
6. To improve the services of the school and the community.

⁸ "Follow-Up Service," Mississippi School Bulletin, No. 129, (Jackson: Mississippi State Department of Education, September, 1949).

7. To show significant trends in employment.
8. To explain and enliven ideas in the fields of economics, sociology, etc., that might otherwise remain abstract.⁹

The most ambitious statewide attempt so far made in the field of follow-up studies is that of the Commonwealth of Virginia, which undertook shortly after World War II to study all students who graduated from Virginia high schools, or who dropped out of Virginia schools during the school year 1939-40.¹⁰ The forms used in this study are considered good model forms by the U. S. Office of Education, and are the forms which that office sends out when information is requested concerning follow-up studies.

The Virginia forms include a two-page questionnaire for former students asking, among other things, about marital status, reason for leaving school, higher education attained, service during the war, present employment, average wage, how employment was obtained, and to what extent the present job is like what the student planned to do when he left high school. Perhaps the most fruitful questions, so far as this study is concerned, were centered upon how much help the high school had given the student in

⁹ Ibid., pp. 73-4.

¹⁰ State-Wide High School Follow-Up Study, (Richmond: Commonwealth of Virginia, State Board of Education, Date not given).

preparing for his present job, and in developing a satisfactory social life.

The alumnus is asked to list the subjects he would choose if he could repeat his high school education and were free to choose any course he wished. Finally, the alumnus is asked to state whether or not he owns his own home, to what community organizations he belongs, and whether and in what way the school could be of assistance now.

Other forms used in the Virginia study included a questionnaire sent to the colleges attended by the students in the study group, and another questionnaire to be sent to the employers of the group.

It was suggested by the directors of the Virginia survey that the information gathered on these various forms be critically evaluated with the purpose of determining needed revisions and modifications in curriculum, guidance, and school-community relationships.

The Maryland State Department of Education suggests to its high schools that they study all school leavers at intervals of one, three, and five years after the pupils leave school, paying particular attention to the pupils' first jobs. The following are listed as the values accruing from these studies:

1. They extend the bond of interest between the pupil and the school far beyond the span of school attendance.
2. They give the pupil a sense of belonging. . .
3. They give the school a check on how well it is meeting the needs of its pupils.
4. They furnish the school with a realistic basis for making needed changes in its curriculum and other activities.
5. They enhance the position of the school in the minds of parents and employers. . .
6. They serve as an indirect occupational survey. . .
7. They make the participating pupils cognizant of the problems faced by school-leavers. . .¹¹

The Department of Public Instruction of the State of Utah urges Utah high schools to conduct follow-up studies.

There are many purposes which may be served by getting in touch with school leavers. Some of these purposes center directly in the students followed up--discovering their status and personal problems so that the school may extend needed services where possible. Some of the purposes are concerned with an evaluation and improvement of current educational services. And still other purposes of follow-up are directed toward social and economic planning in the community.¹²

It is suggested by the Department that the forms prepared by the Implementation Commission of the National Association of Secondary School Principals be used in making

¹¹ "Securing Data in Schools and Communities," Curriculum Study Guide, Maryland School Bulletin, Vol. XXIII, No. 2, (Baltimore: Maryland State Department of Education, November, 1941), p. 77.

¹² Fred M. Fowler, "Follow-Up Service," Guidance Services Handbook, (Salt Lake City: State of Utah, Department of Public Instruction, 1948), p. 90.

the surveys.

In January of 1948 and January of 1949, the Vermont State Department of Education undertook follow-up surveys of Vermont high school graduates of the classes of 1947¹³ and 1948¹⁴ respectively. Significantly, this study showed well over a third of the graduates (36.7 per cent of the 1947 class, and 37.7 per cent of the 1948 class) to be enrolled in institutions of higher learning. Of these, the majority were attending colleges and universities. A considerable emphasis on an academic curriculum is indicated.

Of those shown by the Vermont studies to be employed, the largest single group, comprising nearly half of the employed members of each class, was engaged in clerical and business occupations. Thus the need for strong commercial departments in Vermont high schools is shown.

The Nevada State Committee for Evaluation and Revision of High School Curricula undertook, in 1948, a follow-up study of all Nevada high school graduates of the

¹³ A Study of Vermont High School Graduates, Class of 1947. (Montpelier: State of Vermont, Department of Education, 1948).

¹⁴ A Study of Vermont High School Graduates, Class of 1948. (Montpelier: State of Vermont, Department of Education, 1949).

years 1944, 1945, and 1946.¹⁵ It was found that history, higher mathematics, sciences, languages, and social science, in that order, were listed by the graduates as the "least helpful." Those subjects selected by the graduates as the "most helpful" included English, typing, mathematics, sciences, and vocational and commercial studies. In addition, there was an overwhelming desire for more vocational training, more guidance courses, and teachings in morals and human relations, including sex education.

A 1939 study of Minnesota's 1938 high school graduates¹⁶ pointed up three glaring defects in the high school programs. The first of these was the fact that entirely too much emphasis was being placed upon academic courses, inasmuch as less than one-fourth of the students entered college. It was also found that the vocational training offered in the schools was, to a great extent, inappropriate to the type of jobs actually obtained by the

¹⁵ Glenn Duncan, "What is the Opinion of Recent High School Graduates Regarding Their High School Education?" Preliminary Report, Nevada State Committee for Evaluation and Revision of High School Curricula, (Carson City: State of Nevada, Department of Public Instruction, December, 1948), pp. 21-22.

¹⁶ G. Lester Anderson and T. J. Berning, "What Happens to Minnesota High School Graduates?" Studies of Higher Education, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1941).

graduates upon leaving school. And finally, it was found that the guidance program needed drastic revision to correct the discrepancies between existing vocational opportunities and the opportunities the youth had been led to expect.

Another significant pre-war study was made in 1940 of Wyoming's 1934 high school graduates.¹⁷ The study was rather closely limited in its objectives and scope, being an attempt to show the employment status of a group of Wyoming high school graduates six years after their graduation, and to discover relationships of the present status with high school curricula and subsequent education.

As a result of the Wyoming study, the following conclusions were drawn:

1. Training in homemaking for all girls is needed, since nearly two-thirds of the girls in the survey group were full-time homemakers with no outside employment.
2. The low correlation between the course taken in high school and the occupation entered indicated inadequate guidance to help students in selecting an occupational field.

¹⁷ Raymond S. Orr, "High School Courses and Occupational Status Six Years After Graduation," Our Schools, Vol. 3, Numbers 2 and 3, (Cheyenne: State of Wyoming, Department of Education, 1941).

3. The high schools were offering insufficient training opportunities to prepare for various occupational fields.

4. More emphasis should be laid upon commercial training for girls, since few girls took that training in school, but a relatively high proportion of them found employment later in that field.

5. A need was definitely shown for exploratory courses, particularly in industrial fields.

6. Occupational information should be made available to the parents and the community at large, in order to facilitate effective vocational guidance.

IV. CITY-WIDE RESEARCH STUDIES

A number of city systems and individual high schools across the country have made interesting and worth-while studies of their former students. A few of them are summarized in this section.

One of the most thorough, as well as interesting, surveys of this type was made by Superior High School, Superior, Wyoming, in 1948, covering all high school leavers (both graduates and drop-outs) during the period 1938-48.¹⁸

¹⁸ A Follow-Up Survey of Superior High School Leavers from 1938-1948, (Superior, Wyoming: Superior High School, 1948).

During this period of time five hundred one young people left Superior High School, three hundred nine as graduates, and one hundred ninety-two as drop-outs. Questionnaires were sent to the three hundred fifteen members of these groups who could be located, and returns were received from 47 per cent of the total of graduates, and 8.3 per cent of the drop-outs. It is worth noting that in virtually all such surveys, the proportion of graduates responding to the questionnaire is much greater than that of the drop-outs.

Certain rather indefinite but noteworthy conclusions were drawn from the findings of the Superior study. The most significant of these are here summarized:

1. More emphasis should be given to family relationships, and more girls should take homemaking.
2. Since a large per cent of the school leavers live in Superior and Wyoming, the school curriculum should be geared to community needs.
3. The school should adjust its curriculum to meet the needs of those who do not attend college, since only 20 per cent go on to school.
4. Something should be done to make history and science more meaningful.
5. Improvement needs to be made in offerings in art, music, and hobby crafts of various sorts.
6. Courses in electricity and auto mechanics should

be added to the curriculum.

7. Emphasis should be placed on mathematics, English, and typing.

8. There appears to be a need for job placement and follow-up services.

9. There appears to be a need to determine how well school leavers are adjusting to social conditions.

It was indicated that the findings of the Superior High School Survey will be used in the following ways: For study by faculty groups; as a source of information in teaching occupations and other subjects; for placement and adjustment services; and as source material for justifying revisions, extensions, or modifications of school plant facilities, programs, and practices.

In 1941 a follow-up study was made by the Rochester, New York, public schools of the graduates of 1940, and those who dropped out during that school year.¹⁹ Among the purposes of the study were the improvement of both curriculum and counseling procedures.

Among the conclusions drawn from the Rochester study were the following:

¹⁹ Howard C. Seymour and Carl E. Tremer, We Left School A Year Ago, (Rochester: Rochester Public Schools, 1941).

1. The schools should strive for greater efficiency in assisting students to make educational plans. More conferences between counselors and parents should be encouraged with this in mind.

2. Counselors need to be better informed regarding the socio-economic conditions of the home.

3. An exhaustive job analysis of the after-school experiences of drop-outs could furnish the basic material of necessary curricular changes; the curriculum must be adjusted to meet the needs of potential drop-outs.

4. There is a need for more practical training, particularly for those students who do not do well with books.

5. There is a need for a course in job guidance, particularly for those who do not plan to continue their education beyond high school.

6. Problems of students planning to go on to college should also receive more consideration. These include instruction in English composition, training in techniques of independent study, and specific information regarding college scholarships.

These suggestions indicate that young people have a great deal to offer in helping to make the curriculum more practical, more realistic, and better suited to their needs.

In September of 1949, a survey was made by the Detroit, Michigan, public schools of high school drop-outs during the year 1948-49.²⁰ The purpose was to discover the reasons, other than graduation or transfer to another school, which the students gave for leaving school. Over half, or 53.1 per cent of the five thousand eighteen drop-outs gave the following three reasons for leaving school: First, lack of interest, 20.5 per cent; second, entered employment, 20.0 per cent; and third, over-age (no other reason given), 12.6 per cent. Although no conclusions were published in the summary of the study, certainly there are implications here in terms of the effectiveness of the high school curriculum.

A recent follow-up survey of the 1949 graduates of the Medford, Massachusetts, high school²¹ brought forth some interesting data. Of the six hundred thirty-six graduates, one hundred fifty, or 23.58 per cent, were employed in clerical and secretarial work; 33.33 per cent were attending institutions of higher learning, the greatest

²⁰ Warren K. Layton, Reasons for Leaving School, Other than Graduation and Transfer to Other High Schools, (Detroit: Detroit Public Schools, 1949).

²¹ Medford High School Follow-Up Study, Class of 1949, (Medford, Massachusetts: Medford Public Schools, 1950).

number of these being enrolled in liberal arts colleges and technical institutes.

At least two conclusions may be drawn from these data: Medford high school has a greater-than-average proportion of college-preparatory students, and should govern its curriculum accordingly; it also has a considerable number of former students engaged in clerical occupations, indicating a need for a strong commercial department.

An earlier study of some interest was conducted in 1942 by the Hinsdale Township High School, in Hinsdale, Illinois, covering its graduates over the period 1937-1941.²² The primary objective of the study was to gather data to be used in increasing the effectiveness of the guidance program. Secondly, comments upon and suggestions for the improvement of the high school curriculum were sought.

The Hinsdale survey showed an unusually high proportion of graduates to have been college-preparatory students. Of the two hundred eighty-nine graduates reporting, one hundred fifteen, or 41 per cent were either enrolled in college or practicing a profession. Second on the list was office and clerical work, with eighty-seven, or

²² Hinsdale Post-Graduate Survey, (Hinsdale, Illinois: Hinsdale Township High School, 1942).

30 per cent of the graduates engaged in this type of occupation. Again, as in the case of the Medford study, strong college-preparatory and commercial departments are indicated.

Alumni comments upon the Hinsdale curriculum were principally that there should be, first, more practical work in the high school (this was suggested by a high proportion of the college students, as well as those employed at the time of the survey), and second, an expanded program of vocational training.

Summary. Follow-up studies have been made on local, state-wide, and interstate levels for at least seventeen years, with certain other states taking the lead over California in this respect. Such studies have been used as a means of evaluating the several aspects of the school program, both on the local level and over a broader scope. In only a few cases, however, is there evidence of actual modifications in curriculum, co-curricular activities, or guidance programs as the result of this evaluation.

CHAPTER III

FOLLOW-UP PROGRAMS IN CERTAIN CALIFORNIA SECONDARY SCHOOLS

To facilitate the accumulation of data upon which to base this study, questionnaires were sent to the administrators of each of the forty-one schools under study. From the thirty-three who replied, there came, as was expected, a variety of reactions and a wide variation in alumni contact practices was expressed.

It has been noted that the forty-one high schools in the survey group included the schools of several types of community. The same may be said for the thirty-three which replied. Large, medium-sized, and small cities were represented in all areas of the state. Some are predominantly residential cities, some agricultural, and some industrial.

This survey showed that most of the schools which maintain contact with their alumni do so by mail, using questionnaires to gather the information they desire. A few used the telephone and personal interviews, and some a combination of two or three techniques. The latter two methods are, of course, laborious and time consuming, and, therefore, expensive; so most schools feel that the questionnaire is the most practicable means of maintaining

contact with their alumni.

In general, it may be added, those few schools which actually practice follow-up in any organized fashion are the same schools which maintain various services, such as counseling, testing, and placement, for their alumni. The two appear to go together.

Of the thirty-three schools replying to the questionnaire, only ten maintain an organized follow-up program. Eight of the remainder, however, attempt to maintain contact, informally, with some of their alumni, and the principals of these schools were, therefore, able to give affirmative replies to some of the questions asked.

Table I, page 36, lists the schools falling within the study group, and shows the 1948-49 A.D.A. of each, in addition to indicating which of these schools responded to the questionnaire, and which of those responding maintain organized follow-up programs and furnish services to the alumni.

The replies to the survey are divided, in this chapter, into six phases of the study, under the following headings:

1. Efforts Made by the Schools to Determine What the Alumni Are Doing.
2. Efforts Made by the Schools to Determine Success and Failure Among the Alumni.

TABLE I

CALIFORNIA HIGH SCHOOLS STUDIED

School	A.D.A.	Responded to survey	Any organ- ized follow- up program	Any pro- gram of services to alumni
Beverly Hills High School, Beverly Hills, California	1048	Yes	Yes	Yes
Burbank Senior High School, Burbank, California	1006	Yes	Yes	Yes
Burlingame High School, Burlingame, California	1015	No		
Canoga Park High School, Canoga Park, California	1413	Yes	Yes	Yes
Colton Union High School, Colton, California	1089	Yes	No	Yes
Mount Diablo High School, Concord, California	1188	Yes	No	No

TABLE I (continued)
CALIFORNIA HIGH SCHOOLS STUDIED

School	A.D.A.	Responded to survey	Any organized follow-up program	Any program of services to alumni
Covina Union High School, Covina, California	1196	Yes	No	Yes
Downey Union Junior-Senior High School, Downey, California	1440	Yes	No	Yes
San Juan High School, Fair Oaks, California	1102	Yes	No	No
Thomas A. Edison Junior-Senior High School, Fresno, California	1418	Yes	No	Yes
Fresno Senior High School, Fresno, California	1252	Yes	No	No
Fullerton Union High School, Fullerton, California	1205	Yes	No	Yes

TABLE I (continued)

CALIFORNIA HIGH SCHOOLS STUDIED

School	A.D.A.	Responded to survey	Any organized follow-up program	Any program of services to alumni
Herbert Hoover Senior High School, Glendale, California	1415	No		
Hanford Joint Union High School, Hanford, California	1067	Yes	No	Yes
La Jolla Junior-Senior High School, La Jolla, California	1064	Yes	No	No
Lodi Union High School, Lodi, California	1353	Yes	No	No
David Starr Jordan Senior High School, Long Beach, California	1440	Yes	No	Yes
Belmont Senior High School, Los Angeles, California	1437	Yes	Yes	Yes

TABLE I (continued)

CALIFORNIA HIGH SCHOOLS STUDIED

School	A.D.A.	Responded to survey	Any organized follow-up program	Any program of services to alumni
Eagle Rock Junior-Senior High School, Los Angeles, California	1382	No		
Benjamin Franklin Senior High School, Los Angeles, California	1364	Yes	No	No
Marysville Union High School, Marysville, California	1011	Yes	No	Yes
Merced Union High School, Merced, California	1338	No		
Montebello Senior High School, Montebello, California	1096	Yes	Yes	Yes
Monterey Union High School, Monterey, California	1019	No		

TABLE I (continued)
CALIFORNIA HIGH SCHOOLS STUDIED

School	A.D.A.	Responded to survey	Any organized follow-up program	Any program of services to alumni
Oxnard Union High School, Oxnard, California	1043	Yes	No	Yes
Piedmont Junior-Senior High School, Piedmont, California	1039	Yes	No	No
Shasta Union High School, Redding, California	1313	Yes	No	Yes
Point Loma High School, San Diego, California	1001	Yes	No	No
Polytechnic High School, San Francisco, California	1500	Yes	(*)	(*)
San Pedro Senior High School, San Pedro, California	1435	No		

* Did not state whether services are maintained.

TABLE I (continued)
CALIFORNIA HIGH SCHOOLS STUDIED

School	A.D.A.	Responded to survey	Any organized follow-up program	Any program of services to alumni
Santa Ana Senior High School, Santa Ana, California	1211	Yes	No	Yes
Santa Barbara Senior High School, Santa Barbara, California	1473	No		
Santa Cruz High School, Santa Cruz, California	1059	Yes	Yes	Yes
Santa Maria Union High School, Santa Maria, California	1096	Yes	No	Yes
Santa Rosa High School, Santa Rosa, California	1364	Yes	Yes	Yes
South Gate Junior High School, South Gate, California	1461	No		

TABLE I (continued)

CALIFORNIA HIGH SCHOOLS STUDIED

School	A.D.A.	Responded to survey	Any organized follow-up program	Any program of services to alumni
South-Pasadena-San Marino Senior High School, South Pasadena, California	1018	Yes	Yes	Yes
Edison High School, Stockton, California	1241	Yes	No	No
Tulare Union High School, Tulare, California	1293	Yes	Yes	Yes
Turlock Union High School, Turlock, California	1018	Yes	No	Yes
Watsonville Joint Union High School, Watsonville, California	1193	Yes	Yes	Yes

3. Attempts to Determine the Appraisal of the Alumni of the School's Educational Program.
4. Participation in the School Program by Alumni.
5. Modifications of the Schools' Educational Programs Made in the Light of Alumni Suggestions.
6. Administrators' Evaluations of the Value of Alumni Contacts.

EFFORTS MADE BY THE SCHOOLS TO DETERMINE
WHAT THEIR ALUMNI ARE DOING

The time-honored function of the high school as essentially a college-preparatory institution is clearly shown by the placement of emphasis in the follow-up studies, upon determining the numbers of graduates enrolled in college, rather than upon a total survey of the activities in which the alumni are engaged.

Eighteen of the schools responding to this survey noted that they keep track of the numbers of alumni who enroll in colleges, universities, and junior colleges, and fifteen survey the numbers of alumni in trade and vocational schools. Only five, however, indicated that they are making any attempt to discover what occupational fields their alumni entered.

The proportion of former students remaining in the community served by the school is determined by only three

GRAPH I

EFFORTS MADE BY THE SCHOOLS
TO DETERMINE WHAT THEIR ALUMNI ARE DOING

33
Thirty-three schools responded to the survey

18
Eighteen schools determine the numbers of their alumni enrolled in colleges, universities, and junior colleges

15
Fifteen schools determine the numbers of their alumni enrolled in trade and vocational schools

8
Eight schools survey the number and causes of drop-outs

5
Five schools survey the occupational fields being entered by their alumni

3
Three schools survey the proportion of former students remaining in the community

2
Two schools investigate the use to which their alumni put their leisure time

of the thirty-three responding schools. Eight survey the number and causes of drop-outs, with another indicating that it plans to do so at some future date.

Apart from the vocational aspects of alumni activities, only two of the schools responding investigate the use to which their alumni put their leisure time.

EFFORTS MADE BY THE SCHOOLS TO DETERMINE SUCCESS AND FAILURE AMONG THEIR ALUMNI

One of the most glaring lacks in follow-up practices among the schools surveyed is in determining the vocational success of their alumni. Here again the emphasis on the college-preparatory function of the high school is brought to light, for, whereas seventeen of the schools investigate the degree of collegiate success of their alumni, only two attempt to determine the degree of success or failure experienced by their alumni in their vocations.

Eleven schools attempt to determine the correlation between high school grades or marks and success or failure in the colleges and universities, and seven between high school success and success in the junior colleges. However, not one school indicated any attempt to correlate high school success or failure with vocational success or failure after leaving school.

GRAPH II

EFFORTS MADE BY THE SCHOOLS TO
DETERMINE SUCCESS AND FAILURE AMONG THEIR ALUMNI

33
Thirty-three schools responded to the survey

19
Nineteen schools contact, at least occasionally, employers of their alumni

17
Seventeen schools investigate the degree of vocational success or failure among their alumni

15
Fifteen schools survey employment opportunities in the communities which they serve

11
Eleven schools survey the correlation between high school grades and success or failure in college or university

11
Eleven schools investigate the proportion of their students of college calibre who are actually enrolled in higher institutions

7
Seven schools survey the correlation between high school grades and success or failure in junior college

2
Two schools investigate the degree of success or failure of their alumni in their vocations

2
Two schools investigate the extent and causes of unemployment among their alumni

0
No school correlates high school grades and vocational success or failure

Eleven schools try to establish what proportion of their former students of college calibre, that is, students whose high school record and test scores indicate that they are capable of college work, are actually enrolled in colleges, universities, or junior colleges.

Employment opportunities in the community served by the school are surveyed in organized fashion by fifteen of the schools, and nineteen schools indicate that they sometimes contact employers of their former students. However, any investigation of the extent and the reasons for unemployment among the alumni is made by only two schools.

ATTEMPTS TO SECURE ALUMNI APPRAISAL OF THE SCHOOLS' EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS

Those ten schools which actually maintain an organized system of contact with their alumni showed a high degree of affirmative response to the phase of the questionnaire dealing with alumni reaction to the school program. All of them ask their alumni for their evaluations of course offerings in the school. All of them ask their alumni to list the courses they look upon, in retrospect, as the most valuable they took in high school, and all ask their alumni to suggest the courses which they did not, or could not take, but which they wish they might have taken.

GRAPH III

ATTEMPTS TO SECURE ALUMNI APPRAISAL OF
THE SCHOOLS' EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS

[redacted] 33
Thirty-three schools responded to the survey

[redacted] 10
Ten schools maintain an organized system of contact with their alumni

[redacted] 10
Ten schools ask their alumni for evaluations of curricular offerings

[redacted] 10
Ten schools ask their alumni to list the most valuable courses taken in high school

[redacted] 10
Ten schools ask their alumni to list the courses they wish they had taken in high school

[redacted] 9
Nine schools ask their alumni to evaluate the effectiveness of instruction in the high school

[redacted] 8
Eight schools ask their alumni to list the courses they took in high school which they feel to have been least valuable

[redacted] 7
Seven schools ask their alumni to evaluate the co-curricular program

[redacted] 7
Seven schools ask their alumni to evaluate the guidance program

Of these ten schools, nine asked their alumni for their evaluation of the effectiveness of instruction in the school; seven asked for their evaluation of the program of co-curricular activities, and seven for their evaluation of the guidance program. A list of the courses which alumni felt the least valuable was asked by eight schools.

In those schools where follow-up is done informally, rather than as an organized endeavor, no attempt has been made to secure the reaction of the alumni to the school's educational program. This would, of course, be a difficult matter to determine to any valid degree without a well organized follow-up program.

PARTICIPATION IN THE SCHOOL PROGRAM BY ALUMNI

The chief service supplied by the responding schools to their alumni is that of extension classes. These are, in all cases, conducted as adult education programs, and are in no sense restricted to the alumni of the school in which they are offered. Eighteen of the schools maintain vocational evening classes, twenty-two have avocational classes in such subjects as arts and crafts, twenty-one have classes of a recreational type, and twenty-two maintain classes of a cultural nature.

Apart from extension class offerings, services of the schools to their alumni are, in most cases, very limited.

GRAPH IV

PARTICIPATION IN THE SCHOOL PROGRAM BY ALUMNI

33
Thirty-three schools responded to the survey

22
Twenty-two schools have avocational extension classes

22
Twenty-two schools have cultural extension classes

21
Twenty-one schools have recreational extension classes

18
Eighteen schools have vocational extension classes

11
Eleven schools supply placement services to their alumni

7
Seven schools supply testing services to their alumni

2
Two schools have a full-time guidance worker for the alumni

2
Two schools have a part-time guidance worker for the alumni

Seven schools maintain testing services which are available to the alumni. Eleven have placement services, although some of these are informally conducted, and could scarcely be termed organized services. Only two schools have a full-time counselor or guidance worker employed for services to the alumni. Two more employ a counselor part-time for the purpose, and the remaining schools have no guidance worker for services to the alumni.

MODIFICATIONS OF THE SCHOOLS' EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS
MADE IN THE LIGHT OF ALUMNI SUGGESTIONS

The survey showed that, among the schools under study, very little change is actually taking place in the educational programs as the result of the reactions received from alumni. There were a few scattered reports of modifications, however. For example, one school indicated that an increase in vocational course offerings had been made as the result of alumni reactions; two indicated an increased emphasis upon counseling services, and one had increased the emphasis upon club activities. One school asserted that more emphasis is being given to the development of personal qualities, such as honesty and punctuality, as the result of their follow-up findings.

One school indicated that more emphasis is being laid upon intramural sports, in response to alumni

GRAPH V

MODIFICATIONS OF THE SCHOOLS' EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS
MADE IN THE LIGHT OF ALUMNI SUGGESTIONS

33
Thirty-three schools responded to the survey

5
Five schools replied that the alumni had no influence in the make-up of the school program

2
Two schools replied that their alumni have had very little influence upon the school program

2
Two schools increased emphasis upon counseling services

1
One school increased its vocational course offerings

1
One school increased its emphasis upon club activities

1
One school increased its emphasis upon the development of personal qualities

1
One school increased its emphasis upon intramural sports

1
One school stepped up the number of noon recreational activities

reaction, and one has stepped up the number of noon activities.

The reaction of some of the schools surveyed was very vague. One school "welcomed" the suggestions of the alumni, and another indicated that "many good suggestions" had been received, but neither of these indicated that they had acted in any way upon the suggestions which had been made to them. Two schools, on the other hand, admitted that their alumni had had "very little" influence upon the school program, either as to curriculum, guidance, or co-curricular activities, and five replied that the alumni had had no influence at all in the make-up of the school's educational program.

ADMINISTRATORS' EVALUATIONS OF THE VALUE OF ALUMNI CONTACTS

The principals of the schools (of the schools studied) were asked for an appraisal of the value to the school of follow-up studies and other alumni contacts. Their reaction was varied and interesting.

In terms of improving school-community relations, sixteen administrators replied that they felt such contacts would be of "much value," ten estimated that they would be of "some value," and only one thought that there would be little or no value in the practice. With increasing

emphasis being laid upon this matter of school-community relations, this overwhelmingly favorable reaction on the part of administrators is of considerable significance.

In terms of improving the school's total educational program, thirteen administrators saw in alumni contacts "much value," twelve saw "some value," and two saw little or no value in the practice.

The principals were asked how long and at what intervals organized contact with alumni should be maintained, and here they showed the greatest diversification of opinion. Three felt that such contacts should be maintained "indefinitely." One, more specific, suggested making contact every year for five years, then every five years (presumably for an indefinite period). Five administrators felt that contact should be maintained for ten years, one suggesting annual surveys, and the others favoring surveys every two or three years. One suggested maintaining contact for a period of nine years after leaving the school, at intervals of three years. Six principals suggested contacting alumni at one, three, and five years after leaving school. One suggested two years, at yearly intervals, and four replied that they did not know for how long a period alumni surveys would be of value. It is interesting to note that these administrators appear to agree that there must be some continuity of contact with

GRAPH VI

ADMINISTRATORS' EVALUATIONS OF THE
VALUE OF ALUMNI CONTACTS

In terms of improving school-community relationships:

16
Sixteen administrators felt such contacts to be of "much" value

10
Ten administrators felt such contacts to be of "some" value

1
One administrator felt such contacts to be of little or no value

In terms of improving the school's educational program:

13
Thirteen administrators felt such contacts to be of "much" value

12
Twelve administrators felt such contacts to be of "some" value

2
Two administrators saw little or no value in such contacts

GRAPH VII

ADMINISTRATORS' REACTIONS AS TO HOW LONG, AND
AT WHAT INTERVALS, ALUMNI CONTACTS SHOULD BE MADE

6

Six administrators suggested intervals of one, three, and five years after leaving school

5

Five administrators suggested periodic surveys for a period of ten years

4

Four administrators were undecided as to how long contact with alumni should be maintained

3

Three administrators felt that alumni contacts should be maintained indefinitely

2

One administrator suggested annual contact for five years, then contact every five years

1

One administrator suggested annual contact for two years

1

One administrator suggested contact over a period of nine years, at intervals of three years

former students, rather than a single survey three years or so after leaving school, as is often done.

Several principals took the time to add brief comments on the study. Most of these were enthusiastic. For example, "Due to our limited finances, we do not have any services as indicated. . . I sure wish we had. . ."1 Another wrote, "Much needs to be done in this area here. Your study is a fascinating one."2 A representative of a large city system wrote,

I regret that we do not keep in touch with the alumni of our high schools. . . We graduate about fifteen thousand boys and girls each year from our high schools, but there is no systematized method for keeping in touch with them. Some of the schools have alumni associations, but these seem to restrict their activities rather largely to an annual reminiscence meeting.

If your investigation brings to light workable plans for a large city system, we would be most interested.3

The principal of a high school in a smaller city commented, "Follow-up is the greatest lack in most schools. . ."4 Another wrote, "I think such contacts. . .

1 William T. Mooney, Principal, San Juan Union High School.

2 H. G. Snyder, Principal, Hanford Union High School.

3 Herbert Popenoe, Supervisor, Administrative Services Branch, Los Angeles City Board of Education.

4 Harry E. Tyler, Principal, Santa Maria High School.

would be most valuable. Present personnel already overburdened. How get additional?"⁵

On the other hand, from the principal of another small city high school came this acid comment, "We have too many problems to go looking for more. . ."⁶

SUMMARY

The survey shows that among the schools falling within the scope of this study, few are carrying on an organized follow-up program. Where follow-up is practiced, it is largely for the purpose of investigating the college records of the alumni, with little attention paid to other phases of the lives of the former students. Despite the fact that the majority of the administrators responding to the questionnaire indicated that they felt alumni reactions to be of value in the evaluation and improvement of the school program, little actual modification has actually taken place in curriculum, co-curricular activities, or guidance programs as the result of alumni comments and suggestions.

⁵ Stuart M. White, Principal, Thomas A. Edison Junior-Senior High School, Fresno.

⁶ John Cleary, Principal, Mount Diablo High School, Concord.

CHAPTER IV

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Summary. Replies from the secondary schools studied show a number of significant facts:

1. In tracing what their alumni are doing, most of those schools maintaining contact with their alumni have been concerned, chiefly, with those who have gone on to further schooling, and their inquiries have largely been concerned with the degree of success experienced by the alumni in advanced educational institutions. Few have attempted to determine the occupational fields being entered by their alumni, or the proportion of the alumni remaining in the community.

2. Investigation of the degree of success or failure experienced by the alumni in their occupational fields is an area almost completely neglected by the schools surveyed. Several, however, attempt to determine the correlation existing between high school grades, or marks, and the grades received in higher educational institutions.

In a few cases, job surveys of the communities they serve have been made by the schools, and many have contacted the employers of their alumni, although not on a regular, systematic basis.

3. Those schools which maintain systematized contact with their alumni all ask their alumni for an evaluation of the curricula of the schools. In addition, most of the schools of this group ask their alumni to evaluate other phases of the school program, such as guidance and co-curricular activities.

An interesting fact in this regard is that where follow-up studies have been made, both in California and elsewhere, very frequently they disclose a desire on the part of alumni for more vocational guidance and more emphasis upon vocational training.

4. In the field of services extended to alumni, the principal offering of the schools studied is that of extension classes. Most of the schools in the study group have such classes. Only a very few maintain, in addition, placement, testing, and guidance services for the benefit of the alumni.

5. As to actual modifications of school programs in the light of evaluations by the alumni, the study shows that in the group of secondary schools under study, little has been done. Only a few scattered reports were received of changes adopted in the areas of curriculum, guidance, and co-curricular activities.

6. The survey shows that the administrators of the schools studied almost universally favor the practice of

keeping in touch with alumni. The problem is one of implementation, with lack of funds, staff, and facilities being the factors which prevent widespread utilization of the practice.

Conclusions. Several conclusions may be drawn from this study.

1. The field of alumni contacts is one in which little is being done. No school surveyed may be said to have a wholly adequate program of maintaining contact with their alumni, or of utilizing the information gathered through such contacts. Many schools, indeed, have almost no such program whatever.

2. While little work is actually being done in this field, it is accepted by authorities as an important part of the school program. Traxler,¹ for example, gives a lengthy list of the values to be derived from alumni contacts.

3. Many school administrators, too, feel that this is a field deserving of more attention than it has thus far received. Of those administrators commenting upon the

¹ Arthur E. Traxler, "Follow-Up of Students and School Leavers," Techniques of Guidance, Chapter XVI, (New York: Harper and Bros., Publishers, 1945), pp. 317-33.

practice in answering the questionnaire, only one failed to indicate that he felt there was great value in maintaining alumni contacts, both in terms of helping the school to improve its total program, and in the rendering of services to the alumni.

4. While there is much to be said for the value of alumni contact practices in the evaluation and improvement of the school program, it must at the same time be recognized that as a critique of school practices, the comments and suggestions of alumni are highly subjective. In the absence of more objective means of evaluation, they may be of great value, but they should be interpreted carefully, in the light of their subjective nature.

5. California appears to be lagging somewhat behind certain other states in instituting alumni contact surveys. Such surveys have been conducted on a state-wide basis in Wyoming, Virginia, and New York, while California has developed a plan for voluntary participation, with the result that coverage of the state is not complete.

6. The California Cooperative Survey, which is the only wide-spread plan as yet adopted in this state, is not a continuous practice; it is a single survey of a single group of alumni. It, therefore, lacks the values to be derived from continuity and from reactions of alumni at various stages of their maturity.

7. Although a number of good plans for establishing and maintaining contact with alumni have been advanced, there is, as yet, no standard practice. The National Association of Secondary School Principals, the Department of Education of the State of Virginia, and the California Cooperative Survey all have excellent plans, complete with questionnaires, and there is much similarity between them. Standardization of practice, however, has not been achieved.

8. Results of the survey indicate that few of the schools employ the services of a trained guidance worker, for the purpose of maintaining and utilizing contact with the alumni, and of directing and coordinating the various alumni services.

9. From the replies of those schools falling within the scope of this study which are carrying on alumni contact programs, it is observed that little emphasis is placed upon those students who do not go on to college, as compared with those who do, reflecting the traditional conception of the high school as a college-preparatory institution.

10. It is apparent that little inquiry is being made into areas of life other than educational and vocational. For example, the study shows that almost no attempt is made to determine the use former students make of their leisure time, an educational objective included in virtually every

legitimate list. Even in the vocational field, seldom is any attempt made to survey the success or failure of the alumnus in his occupation.

In general, then, it may accurately be said that although the value of alumni contacts as an influence upon the total school program is recognized, little real utilization is made of it. Potentially, the influence of their alumni upon the schools they attended is great, but until more schools adopt a program of systematized contact with their alumni, the influence will remain potential, rather than actual.

CHAPTER V

RECOMMENDATIONS

In the light of the evidence found in current practices, in California and elsewhere, it is recommended to administrators of California high schools of from one thousand to fifteen hundred A.D.A.:

1. That a continuous follow-up program be undertaken and maintained. In order for the full benefits of follow-up to be realized, both by the schools and the alumni, continuous contacts are essential. A single survey, as is the practice in the California Cooperative Survey, is insufficient. Alumni reaction, suggestions, viewpoints, and needs change with the passage of time, for no human relationship is static.

2. That the graduates and drop-outs of each school year be contacted at intervals of one, three, and six years after they leave the school. The one year survey is suggested because it is at this time that the alumni will be the closest to the school and the most familiar with its program. This group, therefore, will have the greatest number of suggestions to offer for the improvement of the school program. Admittedly, some of these suggestions will be ill-advised, because in most cases no high degree of maturity has been attained one year after leaving high

school; nevertheless, many valuable suggestions will be received. It is this one-year group, too, which will have the greatest need for services from the school: testing, placement, guidance, and extension courses.

Those surveyed three years after leaving the school will, in many cases, have completed a junior college or trade school course, and will be getting established in their vocations. These people will present a more mature reaction, in retrospect, to their high school program, and many valuable suggestions will result. Some will have completed their junior year in college, and will be able to intelligently evaluate the school's college-preparatory program. Others may not yet have established goals, and may be in need of guidance services from the school; this in itself may be a commentary on the school's guidance program, from which valuable inferences can be drawn.

The group surveyed six years after leaving the school will present a still more mature point of view. Practically all of them will be settled in their life's work. Some will have graduated from college, and some may be taking professional training on the graduate level. Some will have been employed for the full six years since leaving school. Most of them will have had ample opportunity to put their high school preparation to the test of life, and their critique will be of great value to the school which

they attended. A few may still be insecure, and in need of help which can be supplied by the school, and extension courses will still be of value to many.

3. That the follow-up program be supervised and coordinated by the Director of Guidance or Dean of the school. This person has the specialized training necessary to realize maximum benefit from the program, both to the school and to its alumni. He also has a better picture of the total school program than either a classroom teacher or an outside, "extension" person would have, enabling him to better utilize the information received through alumni contacts. It is also felt that unified responsibility is essential to the satisfactory operation of the program. If the survey were conducted under the supervision of one member of the staff, and services to the alumni under the supervision of another, for example, the maximum degree of coordination, and, therefore, of value, might not be realized.

4. That time be allotted in the normal administrative load of the Dean or Director of Guidance for the supervision and coordination of the follow-up activities, and for the supplying of needed services to the alumni. If the program is viewed as something extra, to be fitted into his spare time, it will not be effective, for school personnel normally have no time to spare. In a school the

size of those concerned in this survey, the employment of a full-time person for alumni work should not be necessary, but allowance in the day's program must be made for the time thus consumed.

5. That the surveys be conducted by the Senior Problems, or other senior social studies classes, working under the supervision of the person charged. Recognizing the difficulties inherent in this system, it is, nevertheless, felt to be the most practicable and valuable, for several reasons. Many administrators, in their replies to this study, indicated that follow-up was, to them, an impossibility, because of the expense involved. Having the senior classes conduct the follow-up, therefore, would enable the program to function in many places where by any other means it would be a financial impossibility.

Another value to the school in having the seniors conduct the survey is that in many cases, the students are better able to locate alumni than is the school itself.

From the point of view of the students conducting the survey, it is a tremendously valuable experience. By becoming acquainted with what the alumni are doing, they themselves get a fuller view of the community and the world of work. Through the contacts they make, they often get a more mature point of view, and one which they are more likely to accept than that of a teacher or parent, toward

life, work, and the value of an education. Furthermore, the groundwork is being laid with these students for the follow-up contacts which will later be made with them, and their replies to the later surveys will, therefore, be better motivated.

6. That the survey be conducted by means of questionnaire, using the form prepared by the California State Department of Education for the California Cooperative Survey.¹ The questionnaire is inexpensive, objective, and effective, and is, therefore, preferable to the more expensive and less objective practices of personal or telephone interviews. The California State Department questionnaire form is relatively brief and easy to fill out, yet it embodies quite a complete history of the activities since leaving school, together with the reaction of the respondent to the value and effectiveness of various phases of the high school program, and opportunity for suggestions as to improvements which might be made. The information requested, although it covers what the school needs for an adequate survey, does not contain questions of a character too intimate to be used, as this study recommends, by the senior students who will be conducting

¹ Appendix B.

the survey.

7. That such responses to the survey as are felt by the director to be pertinent to the school program be drawn to the attention of the rest of the administrative staff and faculty of the school. Suggestions will come to light as to new courses which might be offered, courses or requirements which might be eliminated or revised, possible shifts of emphasis in the guidance and co-curricular programs, more effective methods of teaching in certain fields, and so forth. These should be duly considered, for the alumnus is in an excellent position to judge the effectiveness of various phases of the school program.

8. That, as the alumni contacts reveal a need for services to the alumni, steps should be taken to supply these services. The needs will vary from school to school, but in many cases they will include counseling, testing, placement, and evening courses to give the alumnus a more complete preparation for life as he finds it after he leaves the school. Every industry provides for the servicing of its product; so, likewise, must the school provide the further services needed by its alumni, its product, after the formal period of schooling is past.

A program of the type indicated above should be of threefold value: It can increase the value of the school to future generations of students, extend the services of

the school to that critical period of adjustment that comes to its alumni after they leave the school, and pay off enormously in terms of community support, participation, and good will.

9. Finally, that steps be taken to formulate some more objective means by which to evaluate, through the alumni, the effectiveness of the school program.

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APPENDIX

APPENDIX A

TO PRINCIPALS OF SCHOOLS UNDER STUDY

Since this is to be a study of current practices, would you please answer these questions with regard to your graduates and dropouts during the period from 1947 to the present.

1. Does your school maintain any organized contact with its alumni?
Yes _____, No _____
2. If so, how is this contact made? Mail _____, Phone _____,
Personal Interview _____, Other (describe) _____
3. Is any attempt made to get alumni reaction to:
 - a. Course offerings in the school? Yes _____, No _____
 - b. Effectiveness of Instruction? Yes _____, No _____
 - c. Co-curricular activities? Yes _____, No _____
 - d. The guidance program (if any)? Yes _____, No _____
 - e. Courses thought most valuable in high school?
Yes _____, No _____
 - f. Courses thought least valuable in high school?
Yes _____, No _____
 - g. Courses which alumni wish they had taken in high school, but could not or did not do so? Yes _____, No _____
4. Have you surveyed, in organized fashion,
 - a. The number and causes of dropouts? Yes _____, No _____
 - b. The proportion of former students who stay in the community? Yes _____, No _____
 - c. The occupational fields which your alumni enter, and the proportion in each field? Yes _____, No _____
 - d. Employment opportunities in your community? Yes _____, No _____
 - e. The extent of, and the reasons for unemployment among your alumni? Yes _____, No _____
 - f. The proportion of your graduates enrolled in:
 - (1) Colleges and Universities? Yes _____, No _____
 - (2) Junior Colleges? Yes _____, No _____
 - (3) Trade or Vocational Schools? Yes _____, No _____
5. Have you attempted to determine:
 - a. The degree of success or failure experienced by your alumni in their vocations? Yes _____, No _____

11. Would you indicate briefly how your alumni have assisted or influenced your educational program with respect to:

a. Curriculum planning? _____

b. The guidance and counseling program? _____

c. The co-curricular program? _____

12. Any further comments relative to this study would be appreciated.

APPENDIX B

STUDY OF FORMER STUDENTS
(Name of School)

(NOTE: YOUR ANSWERS WILL BE CONSIDERED CONFIDENTIAL. THEY WILL BE USED ONLY FOR STATISTICAL PURPOSES AND FOR THE IMPROVEMENT OF OUR SCHOOL PROGRAM)

Date.....

Your name

*Mr. Present
*Mrs. Address.....
*Miss (*Cross out two)

If Mrs., give maiden name here.....

Course taken Year you Dropped
in school.....graduated....(or)Out.....
(college prep, business, general, etc.)

If you dropped out of school before graduation, please give the following information:

- (1) Your age when you left school:
- (2) What grade were you in when you left?.....
- (3) Did you leave before the end of the year or did you finish the year?
(please check one)
 - 1)Left before the end of the year.
 - 2)Finished the year.

*1. Are you (please check one)

- (1)Single
- (2)Married (If married, how many children do you have?.....)
- (3)Divorced or separated
- (4)Widowed

*2. What are you now doing? (please check one or more)

- (1)Working for pay, full-time
- (2)Working for pay, part-time
- (3)In school, full-time
- (4)In school, part-time
- (5)Housewife
- (6)In business for self
- (7)In armed forces
- (8)Not working but looking for job
- (9)Not working and not looking for job
- (10)Other (please describe).....
.....

*3. Please list below any additional education you have had since leaving this school. Include postgraduate work, correspondence courses, private lessons, trade or business school, apprenticeship, junior college, college, university, and any other types of education. Diploma,

NAME OF SCHOOL	COURSE YOU TOOK	Date Entered	Months Spent	Degree, etc.
.....
.....
.....

(if more space is needed, write "over" and use the back of this page)

4. For what occupation are you now preparing yourself?.....

5. What is your father's regular occupation?.....

*6. Which of the following helped you most in selecting an occupation and in making your educational and vocational plans? (Check one or more)

- (1)Parents
- (2)Other relatives
- (3)Friends
- (4)A teacher
- (5)Principal
- (6)Counselor
- (7)Work experience
- (8)School subjects (name).....
- (9)No help received

*7. THIS IS A VERY IMPORTANT QUESTION FOR THOSE WHO DROPPED OUT OF SCHOOL BEFORE GRADUATION. Will you state very frankly the real reason or reasons why you left school. Your honest answers will help to improve the school. Other studies of drop-outs show that among the reasons why students leave school are financial need, ill health, dislike or school or teachers, failure in courses, desire to go to work, marriage, change of residence. But think through your own experience and give the reasons why you withdrew.

.....
.....
.....

IF YOU HAVE NOT BEEN WORKING SINCE LEAVING SCHOOL OMIT QUESTIONS 8 to 13 AND GO ON TO QUESTION 14.

*8. Please describe below the jobs you have held since leaving school:

EMPLOYER OR FIRM	TITLE OF JOB OR KIND OF WORK	Date you started	Months on job	Weekly Wage
.....
.....
.....

(if more space is needed, write "over" and use the back of this page)

*9. To what extent has your school training helped you on your present job? (Check appropriate blank to the right)

- (1)A great deal
- (2)Some
- (3)Little or none
- (4)I'm not certain about this

*10. In what ways could your experience in this school have been more helpful to you?

.....

.....

.....

*11. Do (did) you like your present (or most recent) job?

- (1)Yes
- (2)No

Why?

.....

*12. Which of the following helped you most in getting your first steady job after leaving school? (Please check one or more)

- (1)Parents or other relatives
- (2)Friends
- (3)School (teacher, counselor or other school person)

- (4)My own efforts
- (5)Newspaper advertisement
- (6)Public employment service (non-fee)
- (7)Private employment agency (fee)
- (8)Other (please explain).....

13. Where was the knowledge or training needed in your present occupation gained?.....

14. What clubs, organizations, and activities did you take part in while in high school?.....

15. What community clubs, organizations, and activities do you now take part in?.....

*16. Please indicate by checking in the proper column how much this school helped you in regard to each of the following:.....

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
	A great deal	Some	Little or none	uncertain
1) Using your spare time.....	:	:	:	:
2) Taking care of your health.....	:	:	:	:
3) Taking part in community and civic affairs.....	:	:	:	:
4) Marriage and family life.....	:	:	:	:
5) Securing a job.....	:	:	:	:
6) Getting along with other people.....	:	:	:	:
7) Preparing for further education.....	:	:	:	:
8) Understanding your abilities and interests.....	:	:	:	:
9) Ability to read well.....	:	:	:	:
10) Using good English.....	:	:	:	:
11) Using basic math skills.....	:	:	:	:
12) Using your money wisely.....	:	:	:	:
13) Conducting your own business affairs.....	:	:	:	:
14) Thinking through problems.....	:	:	:	:

17. If you have further comments or suggestions for improving any part of this school's program, please state them here.

.....
.....
.....
.....

18. Can this school be of further service to you? If so, please explain here or write or phone to the school. (If you phone, call number GI 7-3144)

.....
.....
.....

19. Do you personally feel a need for further education through adult or evening classes? If so, in what fields of courses?

.....
.....

(If you would like to have information concerning present adult and evening courses, call GI 3-4278, Extension 13)

THANK YOU FOR YOUR HELP AND COOPERATION

* All items marked thus are on the minimum list which it is hoped all schools will include in follow-up studies. For further information see the section of this bulletin which discusses the questionnaire.