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A SURVEY OF FORMER OAKLAND HIGH SCHOOL
STUDENTS AS AN AID IN CURRICULUM PLANNING
(TITLE)

BY

Julius F. Wiese

PLAN B PAPER

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR
THE DEGREE MASTER OF SCIENCE IN EDUCATION
AND PREPARED IN COURSE

Education 490

IN THE GRADUATE SCHOOL, EASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY,
CHARLESTON, ILLINOIS

1964
YEAR

I HEREBY RECOMMEND THIS PLAN B PAPER BE ACCEPTED AS
FULFILLING THIS PART OF THE DEGREE, M.S. IN ED.

5-8-64

DATE

[REDACTED]

ADVISER

5-11-64

DATE

[REDACTED]

DEPARTMENT HEAD

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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He is indebted also to Mr. John Barger, Superintendent of the school district at the time the research was initiated, and to Mr. Charles Joley, present Superintendent of the Oakland School District, for his cooperation in making available the material used in this study.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In August, 1962, the Oakland Board of Education appointed members of a Citizens' Committee, whose responsibility would be to conduct a study of the Oakland High School curriculum and, if possible, to formulate goals for curriculum improvement.

The original committee consisted of sixteen members, of which number thirteen were able to continue work on the committee to the completion of the projected study. During the course of the study, an additional twenty-six citizens of the community were asked to serve as consultants and assistants to the committee on a short-time basis. Therefore, a total of forty-two residents of the community were involved in arriving at the recommendations made.

Superintendent John Barger of the Oakland School District assisted members of the committee in outlining the general purpose and scope of their work. Dr. G. C. Matzner of Eastern Illinois University was obtained as a professional consultant to meet with the committee and advise and assist them in working toward their goal.

CHAPTER I

A STUDY OF THE SURVEY MADE BY THE CITIZENS' COMMITTEE

The Purpose of This Study

The purpose of this paper is to tabulate and summarize the information obtained by this Citizens' Committee in its more than one year of study of the curriculum of the Oakland High School and its suggested goals for curriculum improvement. For the purpose of completing this work, the writer attended the meetings of the Advisory Committee during the progress of the survey.

It is the hope of the writer that a study and summary of the information obtained by the committee, from responses of former high school students, will aid in appraising the value of the present curriculum. Their evaluation of the courses now offered and their suggestions for changes may be of some assistance to those planning the future of the school program.

METHODS AND MATERIALS USED IN MAKING THE SURVEY

Committee Procedures

The committee, after several discussion meetings, agreed that the problem of determining goals for the school curriculum would be difficult for them to achieve. After considerable discussion, the members agreed that they would be better able to determine curriculum needs, if any, after securing information regarding the effectiveness of the present curriculum in the opinion of former students of the high school.

This decision led to a questionnaire survey of former students, the results of which will be presented in this study. This survey was conducted among the students who either were graduated or dropped out of school from the years 1952 through 1962.

Sources of Information

The list of names of the former students to be contacted was obtained from the office of the Superintendent of Schools. A part of the addresses of persons on this list was obtained from the high school office. In some

cases addresses were obtained from committee members or helpers who had this information, and some information was obtained from parents or other relatives of the former students.

Materials Used in the Survey

A two-page information sheet was developed by members of the committee to gather information which they felt would be helpful in determining the value of the present curriculum, as viewed by former students of the school. This sheet was used as a questionnaire to be mailed to former students where necessary, or to be used in a personal interview by members of the committee where possible.

A letter was drafted to be sent with the questionnaire in those cases where it was necessary to conduct the survey by mail. (Copies of the letter and the questionnaire are included as Appendixes A and B.)

Percentage of Usable Returns

Of approximately three hundred survey forms made up, there were one hundred twenty-five (forty-two percent) usable returns available to the committee.

One reason for the low percentage of returns was inability to locate a number of the former students. In other cases those contacted refused to give information to the committee. Response was better from the graduates than from those who had dropped out before finishing high school.

In addition to the returns secured by this committee, the high school superintendent made available to the writer thirty-seven additional returned survey forms which had been secured by the guidance counselor of the high school some time earlier. These involved the same information as that requested by the current forms. There were no duplications in the two groups of returns. Thus one hundred sixty-two completed survey forms were available for purposes of this study.

Only nineteen of the returns were from students who had dropped out of high school before graduation. Sixteen of these were in the semi-skilled category, and of these twelve were housewives. One drop-out was in the skilled group and two were listed as unskilled.

CHAPTER II

INFORMATION GAINED FROM THE SURVEY

Occupations Represented by the Returns

The one hundred sixty-two survey forms used in this study represented forty different occupations. Of this number fourteen were classified as skilled occupations, thirteen as semi-skilled, and thirteen as unskilled.

In classifying the various occupations for the purposes of this study, the following procedure was used.

All former students whose work required specialized training beyond high school were included in the skilled category.

In the semi-skilled group were listed those whose work made use of their high school or other equivalent training, and involved some degree of supervisory or managerial ability. Housewives and farm operators were included in this group.

Classified as unskilled are those in routine work, under the supervision of another person or persons, and requiring neither high school graduation or any specialized skill.

In the group of skilled workers, thirteen of the forty-nine were business machine operators and ten were teachers.

Of the ninety-one persons classed as semi-skilled, forty-two were housewives, thirteen were farm operators and thirteen were technicians in chemical or electrical plants.

Among the unskilled persons, five of the twenty-two were farm laborers and four were listed simply as laborers.

Subject Considered Most Helpful

The first question asked of the respondents was: What courses or activities have helped you most since leaving school?

Those classified as skilled workers listed English, Mathematics, Bookkeeping and Typing in the greatest numbers. These four subjects accounted for sixty-nine percent of the entries, with the remaining thirty-one percent divided among fourteen other subjects.

In the replies from semi-skilled workers, sixty-eight percent of the subjects listed were English, Home Economics, Mathematics, Bookkeeping and Typing. Thirty-two percent of the replies were divided among thirteen other subjects.

The five subjects listed most frequently by the unskilled workers were Mathematics, Bookkeeping, Agriculture, English and Industrial Arts, in that order. These five subjects accounted for eighty-two percent of the replies from this group.

TABLE I

SUBJECT CONSIDERED MOST HELPFUL

<u>Subject</u>	<u>Replies of Skilled Respondents</u>		<u>Replies of Semi-skilled Respondents</u>		<u>Replies of Unskilled Respondents</u>	
	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>
English	24	18.9	33	18.4	8	16
Mathematics	24	18.9	27	15	10	20
Bookkeeping	20	15.5	18	10	9	18
Typing	20	15.5	18	10	4	8
Science	9	7	9	5	3	6
Office Practice	0	0	13	7.2	0	0
Home Economics	7	5	26	15	1	2
Industrial Arts	5	3.9	9	5	6	12
Chemistry	3	2	3	1.7	0	0
Agriculture	3	2	7	4	8	16
Latin	3	2	0	0	0	0
Music	2	1.5	0	0	0	0
Physics	2	1.5	2	1	0	0
Yearbook	2	1.5	0	0	0	0
Foreign Language	1	.7	4	2	0	0
Social Studies	1	.7	1	.5	0	0
Student Council	1	.7	1	.5	0	0
World History	1	.7	1	.5	0	0
Athletics	0	0	4	2	0	0
Biology	0	0	3	1.7	1	2
Band	0	0	1	.5	0	0
Totals	128	100	180	100	50	100

The entire group of respondents listed English most frequently as the subject considered most helpful, with a total of eighteen percent. Mathematics, Bookkeeping and Typing followed in that order, with percentages slightly less than that for English. These four subjects accounted for sixty-two percent of the subjects listed as having been the most helpful to the respondents.

Subject Considered Least Helpful

Table II concerns replies to the question: What courses or activities have helped you least since leaving school?

The respondents classified as skilled workers listed a total of seventy-three subjects. Of these, Social Studies and Science accounted for thirty-two percent. Mathematics, athletics, Foreign Language and Home Economics together made up another thirty-seven percent.

Of the one hundred subjects listed by the semi-skilled respondents, History was listed most often, with twenty-two percent. Science, Mathematics and Foreign Language made up another thirty-seven percent. Of the ninety-one persons in this group, forty-two are housewives and thirteen are farm operators. Their replies indicate that it might have been helpful had they been counseled toward more vocational subjects.

TABLE II

SUBJECT CONSIDERED LEAST HELPFUL

<u>Subject</u>	<u>Replies of Skilled Respondents</u>		<u>Replies of Semi-skilled Respondents</u>		<u>Replies of Unskilled Respondents</u>	
	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>
History	0	00	22	22	4	14.6
Social Studies	12	17	0	0	0	0
Science	11	15	12	12	3	11
Mathematics	8	11	12	12	1	3.6
Athletics	7	10	3	3	2	7
Foreign Language	6	8	13	13	2	7
Home Economics	6	8	6	6	0	0
Agriculture	5	7	1	1	0	0
English	0	0	4	4	2	7
Band	4	5	1	1	1	3.6
Business	3	4	7	7	3	11
Industrial Arts	3	4	2	2	2	7
Typing	3	4	4	4	2	7
Biology	2	3	1	1	2	7
Physics	2	3	0	0	0	0
Chemistry	1	1	1	1	1	3.6
Geography	0	0	1	1	2	7
Totals	73	100	100	100	28	100

The greatest number of the unskilled workers felt that History, Science and Business were of the least help to them. These three subjects accounted for thirty-six percent of the subjects listed. Because of the limited number of returns in this group, it is doubtful if any definite conclusions can be drawn in regard to them.

Courses or Activities Which Would Have Helped

The third question asked of the former students was: What courses or activities would have helped you had they been offered?

The skilled respondents listed the greatest number of courses in relation to the size of the group. Their replies were more evenly divided among the subjects than in the preceding questions; however, Foreign Language, Advanced Mathematics and Industrial Arts each represented ten percent of the total.

The replies of the semi-skilled persons to this question were quite similar to those of the skilled group. The greatest percentage in this group listed Foreign Language, though it is difficult to see how this would have helped in the occupations listed on the replies in this group.

The unskilled group listed a total of only ten subjects, and each of these was listed by only one person.

TABLE III
COURSES OR ACTIVITIES WHICH WOULD
HAVE HELPED

<u>Subject</u>	<u>Replies of Skilled Respondents</u>		<u>Replies of Semi-skilled Respondents</u>		<u>Replies of Unskilled Respondents</u>	
	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Foreign Language	7	10	9	9.9	0	0
Advanced Math.	7	10	5	5.5	0	0
Industrial Arts	7	10	5	5.5	0	0
Speech	6	8.5	7	7.7	1	10
Typing	5	7.1	2	2.2	0	0
Science	4	5.6	0	0	0	0
Shorthand	4	5.6	3	3.3	0	0
Social Studies	4	5.6	0	0	0	0
Art	3	4.3	3	3.3	0	0
Business Machines	3	4.3	6	6.6	0	0
Business Admin.	3	4.3	0	0	1	10
Counseling	3	4.3	3	3.3	1	10
English	3	4.3	2	2.2	0	0
Psychology	3	4.3	3	3.3	0	0
Accounting (Adv.)	1	1.4	3	3.3	0	0
Chemistry	2	2.8	0	0	0	0
Civics	1	1.4	3	3.3	0	0
Economics	1	1.4	0	0	0	0
History	1	1.4	0	0	0	0

Table III continued on the next page.

TABLE III
(Continued)

<u>Subject</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Home Economics	1	1.4	3	3.3	1	10
Physics	1	1.4	0	0	0	0
Physical Education	1	1.4	0	0	0	00
Health Education	0	0	8	8.8	0	0
Mechanics	0	0	7	7.7	0	0
Science	0	0	4	4.4	0	0
Agriculture for Girls	0	0	2	2.2	0	0
Electronics	0	0	2	2.2	0	0
Home Finance	0	0	2	2.2	0	0
Business Law	0	0	2	2.2	0	0
Drafting (Adv.)	0	0	1	1.1	1	10
Driver Training	0	0	1	1.1	0	0
Girls' Athletics	0	0	1	1.1	0	0
Journalism	0	0	1	1.1	0	0
Library Science	0	0	1	1.1	0	0
Music	0	0	1	1.1	0	0
Salesmanship	0	0	1	1.1	0	0
Occupational Training	0	0	0	0	2	20
Spelling	0	0	0	0	2	20
Penmanship	0	0	0	0	1	10
Totals	71	100	91	100	10	100

Of the thirty-nine subjects listed in Table III, it is interesting to note that thirty-three of them are offered in the curriculum of Oakland High School at the present time. Since these respondents attended school rather recently, this would indicate that most or all of these subjects were available to them when they were in high school.

This situation might indicate that the question was misunderstood or carelessly answered, or it might mean that at the time they were in high school they were not aware of the subject matter offered in some of the courses available at the school. It does seem that more adequate counseling could have helped at least a part of these students to plan high school curricula better suited to their needs and abilities.

Recommendations for Improvement

The question asked was: What recommendations for improving Oakland High School would you make to the Board of Education?

Only six of the skilled respondents answered this question, and all six of them suggested improving Athletics, though they did not give any specific constructive suggestions.

The semi-skilled workers averaged nearly one response per questionnaire, with a total of eighty-four suggestions. English and Foreign Language were listed most often, with a total of thirty percent. Required courses comprised thirteen percent, with no indication as to just what was meant by this category. The remaining suggestions were divided among eleven other subjects, with no particular pattern emerging from the responses. However, these replies should be seriously considered in any study of anticipated curriculum changes, with a more detailed follow-up of these suggestions.

The responses of the unskilled group differed sharply from those of the other two groups. Sixty-one percent recommended improvement in teaching personnel, and twenty-three percent improvement in administration. Even with the smaller

number of respondents in this group, this evidence of discontent with the school itself indicates that more and better planning might be done for this group. Better counseling and a greater understanding of the needs of this group present a challenge to the school, as indicated by this group of responses.

TABLE IV
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT

<u>Subject</u>	<u>Replies of Skilled Respondents</u>		<u>Replies of Semi-skilled Respondents</u>		<u>Replies of Unskilled Respondents</u>	
	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Athletics	6	100	00	0	0	0
Administration	0	0	0	0	6	23.4
Bookkeeping	0	0	8	9.6	0	0
Counseling	0	0	0	0	1	3.9
English	0	0	15	18	0	0
Food	0	0	2	2.3	0	0
Foreign Language	0	0	10	12	0	0
History	0	0	2	2.3	0	0
Industrial Arts	0	0	3	3.5	0	0
Library	0	0	5	6	0	0
Mathematics	0	0	9	10.8	0	0
More Courses	0	0	5	6	2	7.8
Psychology	0	0	2	2.3	0	0
Science	0	0	5	6	0	0
Required Courses	0	0	11	13	0	0
Student Council	0	0	0	0	1	3.9
Teaching Personnel	0	0	0	0	16	61
Typing, Shorthand	0	0	4	4.7	0	0
Vocational Edu.	0	0	3	3.5	0	0
Totals	6	100	84	100	26	100

Desire For Further Training

The final question asked was: If the opportunity for further training were offered you, would you take advantage of it? If the answer to the above is yes, what type of training?

Table V includes replies from all one hundred sixty-two returns included in this study. Of these forty-five answered "No" to the first question. Those answering in the affirmative listed a total of one hundred suggestions. Business was listed thirty-four times, college preparatory nineteen, and Industrial Arts ten. The remaining thirty-seven suggestions were divided among twelve subjects.

The fact that business training led the list of subjects in which further training was desired points to the fact that this type of vocational training would fill a need for more students than are taking advantage of the courses given in the high school. It might also indicate that an enlargement of this area of training has a place in the needs of students of Oakland High School. Another possible indication is that more students should be counseled regarding the future value of the business training courses now offered.

TABLE V
DESIRE FOR FURTHER TRAINING

<u>Subject</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Business	34	34
College Preparatory	19	19
Industrial Arts	10	10
Home Economics	7	7
Mathematics	6	6
Electronics	4	4
Foreign Language	4	4
Agriculture	3	3
English	3	3
Mathematics	3	3
Science	2	2
Social Studies	2	2
Business	1	1
Music	1	1
Psychology	1	1
Totals	100	100

CHAPTER III

SUMMARY

The forty different occupations represented in the survey were a good cross-section of the jobs characteristic of the area in which the survey was completed.

In the replies to the question regarding courses or activities that helped most after leaving school, it was interesting to note that the two subjects chosen most frequently were traditional subjects and were subjects involving skills. As these were selected in approximately the same order by respondents in all three classifications, their choice would appear to indicate the importance of these subjects in the curriculum.

There was more variation, particularly in the skilled and semi-skilled categories, in listing the courses and activities least useful after leaving school. Some members of these two groups listed as least helpful many of the courses that other members of the groups listed as most helpful. This appears to reflect a greater difference in individual needs among workers in semi-skilled and skilled occupations than among members of the unskilled group, who did not have so many of the same subjects listed in both the most helpful and least helpful categories.

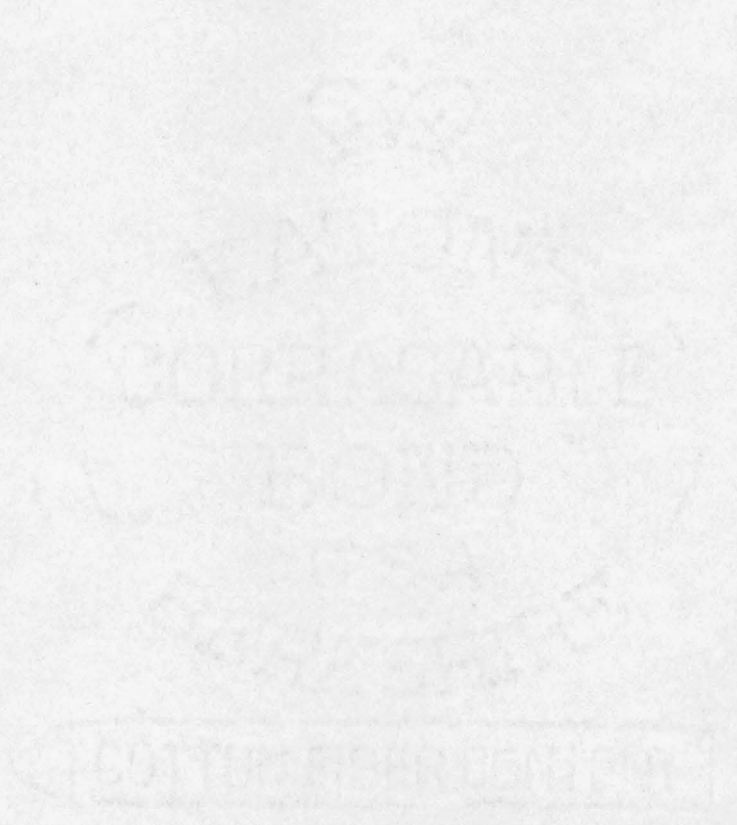
Within the skilled and semi-skilled groups there was also more agreement on the courses which would have helped had they been offered, while the unskilled group listed a different group of subjects. As was noted previously in this paper, many of the subjects listed in this group were in fact offered at the time the respondents were in high school.

This might indicate that the question was not correctly interpreted when these replies were made. It might also reveal a need for more comprehensive guidance in helping each student plan his high school curriculum, or an informational program to acquaint parents and students with the wide diversity of courses offered to incoming high school students. Continuous counseling during the student's high school career might indicate curriculum changes in some cases, where changes in interests and aptitudes become apparent as the student progresses through high school.

Answers to the question of recommendations for improving Oakland High School reflected a high degree of satisfaction within the skilled group. Members of the semi-skilled group reflected dissatisfaction to some extent in fourteen subject areas. Further follow-up on these replies might be of value in the continuing evaluation and change necessary in curriculum planning.

The replies of respondents in the unskilled group reveal their dissatisfaction with their high school careers. Of the twenty-two who replied, sixteen recommended improvement in the teaching personnel, and six suggested improved administration. This, together with the small number of returns from those who did not finish high school, suggests an area where better planning for this group and more helpful counseling may be indicated.

Ninety-three of the former students indicated an interest in further training. The three predominate choices: Business, college preparatory work, and Industrial Arts emphasize a possible need for greater emphasis or expansion of these areas in the high school curriculum.



APPENDIX A

SURVEY OF FORMER STUDENTS

Oakland High School

SURVEY OF FORMER STUDENTS
Oakland High School

Name _____

Address _____

Date of Birth _____

Highest grade enrollment in high school:
(please circle) 9th, 10th, 11th, 12th.

Year of graduation _____

Name of Father _____

Father's Occupation _____

Name of Mother _____

Mother's Occupation _____

Parents are: Married _____ Separated _____ Divorced _____ Widowed _____ Deceased _____

Other _____

Occupation of former student: _____

Source of Information:
Former Student _____
Parent..... _____
Brother or Sister _____
Other..... _____
Information collected
by _____

1. What courses or activities have helped you most since your leaving school?

2. What courses or activities have helped you least since your leaving school?

3. What courses or activities would have helped you had they been offered?

4. What recommendations for improving Oakland High School would you make to the Board of Education at this time?

5. If the opportunity for further training were offered you, would you take advantage of it? _____

6. If answer to above is yes, what type of training? _____

High school average _____
Number of units taken in:
social studies _____
English _____
Science _____
Mathematics _____
Foreign language _____
Business _____
Home Economics _____
Industrial Arts _____
Agriculture _____

Activities
List:
Band _____
Chorus _____
Football _____
Basketball _____
Track _____
Dramatics _____
Annual _____
Newspaper _____
Other _____

For dropouts only:

1. Why did you quit school before graduation?

2. What might the school have done to have encouraged you to finish high school?

Other comments:

APPENDIX B

LETTER TO ACCOMPANY
SURVEY BLANK

Dear

The Board of Education has asked a group of citizens of the Oakland District to make recommendations to it for the improvement of the schools. This citizens' committee of 16 members has agreed to do this after careful study and needs your help in the undertaking. Will you, therefore, fill out the enclosed short questionnaire and return it to me? To do so will require only a few minutes of your time, but the information which you, along with other graduates of the school, will supply will do much to help us in our job.

Some of you may have been contacted by Mr. Ernest Lankey last year. Please help us by filling this one out also, because the two questionnaires have different purposes. We are working toward the specific goal of helping the Board of Education provide a better school for our community, and your efforts will be important in this total endeavor.

Yours truly,