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SOME METHODS OF IMPROVING ATTENDANCE IN THE
NEGRO PUBLIC SCHOOLS OF BOWIE COUNTY



POLLARD

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SOME METHODS OF IMPROVING ATTENDANCE IN THE NEGRO PUBLIC
SCHOOLS OF BOWIE COUNTY

By

John A. Pollard

A Thesis in Educational Administration and Supervision
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirement
for the Degree of

Master of Science

in the

Graduate Division

of

Prairie View Agricultural and Mechanical College

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APPROVED BY:

Date _____

BIOGRAPHY

The writer, J. A. Pollard, the eleventh child of HESSIE POLLARD and FANNIE ISABELL POLLARD was born in Rusk County, February 22, 1904. His childhood days were spent on his parents' farm. He did his elementary work in a one-teacher school in Rusk County. He did his high school work at East Texas Academy at Tyler, Texas and Prairie View State Normal and Industrial College, Prairie View, Texas. He completed his high school work in 1926. At this time he received a two year certificate that enabled him to teach. He was elected to serve as principal of a two teacher school in Rusk County. His college work was done through summer school at Prairie View Agricultural and Mechanical College while teaching during the winter terms. Three years were completed at Prairie View Agricultural and Mechanical College but the last year of undergraduate work was completed in Wiley College 1936.

He was married to Ethel Blakey of Nacogdoches, Texas, December 22, 1929. He served as principal of the Tatum Negro High School for 19 years. In 1949 he was elected as School Counselor of Bowie County and is yet serving in that capacity.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The writer wishes to express his appreciation to his advisor and committee chairman, Dr. J. M. Drew, for his advice and guidance during the preparation of this study.

DEDICATION

— To my wife, my mother and to all the members of our immediate families for their assistance in making this study possible.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

According to statistics of the United States Office of Education, in each 100 pupils enrolled in the elementary and secondary school, approximately 15 are absent daily; that is, the percentage of average daily attendance is approximately 85, and the percentage of non-attendance is approximately 15.¹

Without the combined efforts of parents, teachers, and other members of the community, it is agreed among educators that irregular attendance will continue to grow.

"Changing state aid from a population to attendance basis causes schools to pay more attention to slow and problem pupils," said Sturgeon, who is on leave as superintendent of New Boston Schools. "These often were discouraged from coming to school."²

"Now a child is worth 90¢ to the school every day he comes to class," said Sturgeon. "Principals no longer jump for joy when the problem child quits school. They're trying to help them along."

Prior to the enactment of the Gilmer-Aiken laws in

¹See Statistics of State School System, (Published bi-annually by the United States Office of Education).

²"Gilmer-Aiken Head Urges Waiting for Trained Staffs," The Dallas Morning News, Dallas, Texas, October 11, 1949.

Texas, emphasis was placed on census enumeration, as census enumeration was the basis for the allocation of money and teachers in the public schools of Texas. Since the enactment of the Gilmer-Aiken laws, more emphasis is being placed on attendance, as attendance is being used as the chief basis for allocation of money and teachers in the public schools of Texas.

Statement of Problem

This study grew out of:

- (1) A consideration of the formula for the employment of teachers and the allocation of money for the schools of Texas under the Gilmer-Aiken Laws.³
- (2) The irregular attendance of Negro students in the public schools of Bowie County.
- (3) The presence of plantations in Bowie County.
- (4) The demand of student labor during the harvesting season in the months of September, October, and November.

The problem in this study is to provide the answer

³Public School Laws of Texas, Bulletin No. 506. Publication of State Department of Education. Austin, Texas, 1949.

to the question:

(1) What is the status of attendance in the Negro public schools in Bowie County?

(2) What methods are used for improving students' attendance in the Negro public schools in Bowie County?

(3) Who is responsible for students' attendance in the Negro public schools in Bowie County?

According to reports that have been examined by the writer in the offices of the principals, superintendents, and teachers, there is a definite need shown for improving students' attendance in the Bowie County Negro Public Schools.

Significance of Problem

This study attempts to locate some of the underlying causes of irregular attendance in the Negro Public Schools of Bowie County and certain other selected counties, in order to ascertain the pattern, and to interpret the results so that the average teacher may be able to use the results in improving student attendance in his school. Information from this study may be used as a guide for individuals who are making similar studies, and may be used as a basis for making recommendations

based upon attendance. Information from this study may also be used for allocation of money and teachers in the public schools of Bowie County.

Limitations of Problem

This study does not attempt to present a historical account of methods of improving attendance in schools of Bowie County nor does it attempt to give a comparison of the methods of improving attendance used in Negro and white schools of Bowie County. This study limits itself to those methods, techniques, and procedures pertinent to improving students attendance in Bowie County Negro Schools, even though some of them may be pertinent to other counties.

Similar Studies

According to a study made by Sears⁴ there are three types of attendance problems, viz:

1. The child who is rarely or never at school.
2. The child who is irregular in attendance.
3. The child who is frequently late to school.

⁴Jesse B. Sears, Classroom Organization and Control, pp. 57-64.

He indicated that the big problem of the school is in the second type, because the states' compulsory laws are supposed to take care of the first, while the child can be taken care of by the parents.

Sutton⁵ made a similar study in the Fort Worth Public Schools for Negroes in which he pointed out that the chief causes of non attendance in the Negro Public Schools of Fort Worth, Texas was illness.

Caldwell⁶ pointed out the chief cause for irregular attendance in the Texarkana Schools was illness.

Reavis, Pierce, Stullken⁷ gave illness, work, home conditions, school conditions, the weather, and truancy as the causes of irregular attendance. They found that the personal illness of the pupils and the illness of members of their families accounted for more pupils' absences than any other cause. They found that respiratory diseases and epidemics led all other diseases in causing irregular attendance.

⁵George W. Sutton, "A Study of the Causes of Irregular Attendance in the Negro Public School in Fort Worth, Texas," Master's Thesis, Prairie View College, Prairie View, Texas.

⁶Herman A. Caldwell, "Some Causes of Irregular Attendance in the Negro Public Schools of Texarkana, Arkansas," Master's Thesis, Prairie View College, Prairie View, Texas.

⁷William C Reavis, Paul R. Pierce, Edward H. Stullken, The Elementary School Its Organization and Administration, pp. 108-115.

Methods Used

A review of similar studies was made in order to benefit by the thinking and findings of other investigators interested in problems similar in nature to the present study. Records from the office of the County Superintendent of Bowie County were taken in an effort to trace the attendance pattern over a period of time. Tables are given in this study to give at a glance the pattern of attendance. A critical study was made of selected general educational literature bearing on the problem of school attendance. The points of view of outstanding educational writers were noted and recorded. As a basis for the studying of the issues involved in this particular study, such educational literature included textbooks, periodicals, masters' theses, educational journals, and magazines. The questionnaire method and personal interviews were used also in making the findings of this thesis possible.

CHAPTER II

STATUS OF ATTENDANCE IN THE NEGRO PUBLIC SCHOOL
OF BOWIE COUNTY

Bowie County is located in the northeast corner of the state. It was created from Red River County in 1840, organized the following year, and named for James Bowie, an Alamo hero. Bowie County has a population of 60,000 of which 30 per cent is Negroes and 70 per cent is white. Its population is 54.5 persons per square mile.¹

The principal towns and their populations and industries are as follows: (1) Boston, the county seat, has a population of 100. The principal occupation is office work. (2) Texarkana has a population of 30,000. This is an important city, since it is a retail lumber manufacturing center for northeast Texas. Its growth has been stimulated in recent years by great Red River Arsenal and repair plant, a wartime ordnance plant, which covers a large area west of Texarkana. It has more than 100 manufacturing operations including foods, caskets, furniture, vegetable crates, mattresses, clay tile products, timber mills, cotton seed mills, creosoted timbers, rail

¹Texas Almanac, 1949-50 Edition.

tank cars, concrete blocks, toys, trailers, pottery, and structural timber. It is served by eleven motor freight lines, four railroads, and it has four hospitals and one junior college. (3) New Boston has a population of three hundred. Its growth is stimulated by the Red River Arsenal and repair plant of United States Government.

(4) DeKalb has a population of 1,287. It is a farm market and shipping town in the western part of the county.

(5) Hooks has a population of 1,358. Its growth is stimulated by the Red River Arsenal and repair plant.

The land is rolling to hilly; it is sloping to the Red River on the north, and to the Sulphur River on the south which makes it favorable for a timbered county spotted with farm clearings. Much game is found in the forest, and fishes are found in the lakes and rivers. There is a large Texarkana Reservoir Project built by the United States Government on Sulphur River in the southern part. The soil is sandy and clay on up land, and it is rich alluvial in the bottom. Commercial timber comes from pines, white oaks, and gums. Oil and lignite are found in this county.

From the above description of the county with its natural resources and its diversified occupations, one can readily see that there is a great possibility of its interfering with student attendance.

Information from principals and teachers reveals that students are absent from school at different intervals due to employment at these different plants.

Bowie County, due to its geographical location and the types of industries carried on, has a very irregular attendance in its Negro Public Schools. The presence of large plantations which are used in the cultivation of cotton, corn, sweet potatoes, alfalfa, spinach, and many other crops is considered by school officials of Bowie County as having much bearing on student attendance. Livestock is also raised in abundance such as beef cattle, dairy cattle, hogs, and many types of poultry. Bowie County is considered by many as a federal project county due to the many federal projects carried on, namely: The Red River Arsenal, The Lone Star Ammunition Plant, The Federal Correctional Institution, and The Sulphur River Dam. Information received through interviews from principals, teachers and parents reveals that student attendance is affected through the shifting of home chores from parents to pupils as a result of parents being employed at these federal plants.

On plantations where the demand for student labor is great during the harvesting season, student attendance has been affected to the extent that a split session for many of the schools has been instituted and in operation

for a number of years, according to a statement made by County Superintendent Ben Fort. The advantage of the split session is found in that it provides an opportunity for students to attend school during the idle months of summer and help harvest the crops during harvesting season without losing time from school.

In order to get a clear picture of attendance of Bowie County Negro Public Schools, questionnaires were sent to twenty Negro schools of Bowie County. Sixteen out of twenty questionnaires were returned. The results are presented in Table I below. The school year of 1946-47 with the smallest enrollment has the highest percentage of attendance. The school year 1949-50 with the highest enrollment has the percentage that ranks third in order. It can be seen that there is not too much variation in the total enrollment of the schools from year to year over a period of five years; yet, there is a considerable difference in the percentage of attendance.

In order to see how the status of attendance of Bowie County compares with the status of attendance with some other counties of the state, schools from counties that had no plantations, no federal projects, as Bowie does, were selected and sent questionnaires. Out of twenty questionnaires sent to schools in three different

TABLE I. ENROLLMENT AND PERCENTAGE OF ATTENDANCE IN SIXTEEN NEGRO PUBLIC SCHOOLS OF BOWIE COUNTY FOR THE YEARS, 1945-1950

Year	Enrollment	Percentage of Attendance
1945-1946	2257	89
1946-1947	2146	93
1947-1948	2370	86
1948-1949	2167	85
1949-1950	2265	88
Average	2241	88

counties, six were returned. The data are presented in Table II.

In Table II, one can see at a glance that even though a very irregular pattern of attendance is found, a higher percentage of attendance is maintained. The percentage of attendance is lower in the other selected counties than in Bowie.

Table II shows that during the school year of 1948-1949, the highest enrollment of schools had the second highest percentage of attendance. During the year, 1945-1946, the lowest enrollment had the third highest percentage of attendance. It also can be seen that there is a wider variation of enrollment between Bowie County in

Table I than is in three other selected counties, but the percentage is very close.

TABLE II. ENROLLMENT AND PERCENTAGE OF ATTENDANCE IN THREE OTHER SELECTED COUNTIES

Year	Enrollment	Percentage of Attendance
1945-1946	1379	86
1946-1947	1420	83
1947-1948	1407	86
1948-1949	1518	88
1949-1950	1423	90
Average	1429	87

To clarify the status of attendance, questionnaires were sent to the principals in Bowie County requesting information as to reasons of irregular attendance. Sixteen out of twenty principals of Bowie County responded. The data are presented in Table II. One can see that on the basis of information in the questionnaire that sickness is the chief cause of irregular attendance in Bowie County Negro Public Schools.

To further clarify the status of attendance questionnaires were sent to twenty schools and principals of

TABLE III. REASONS FOR IRREGULAR ATTENDANCE IN SIXTEEN
NEGRO PUBLIC SCHOOLS IN BOWIE COUNTY

Reasons for Irregular Attendance	Number of Schools
1. Sickness	16
2. Work at Home	8
3. Work Away from Home	10
4. Lack of Interest on the Part of the Student	1
5. Lack of Interest on the Part of the Parents	2
6. Distant Factor (Too far from School)	1

other selected counties requesting information as to reason of irregular attendance. Of the twenty questionnaires sent out, six of them were returned. On the basis of the information in the questionnaires from Cass, Marion, and Rusk Counties, sickness is the chief cause of irregular attendance.

In Cass, Marion, and Rusk Counties the questionnaires reveal that one school has a visiting teacher, one has a nurse, none has a physician, two have attendance officer, and two have itinerant music teachers. It was requested in the questionnaire which special service workers were considered to be of the greatest help in

TABLE IV. REASONS FOR IRREGULAR ATTENDANCE IN SIX SELECTED OTHER NEGRO SCHOOLS

Reasons for Irregular Attendance	Number of Schools
1. Sickness	5
2. Work at Home	3
3. Work Away from Home	1
4. Lack of Interest on the Part of the Student	1
5. Lack of Interest on the Part of the Parents	1
6. Distant Factor (Too far from school	1

improving attendance. Sixteen schools of Bowie County stated, the counselor. Two schools of certain other selected counties stated attendance officer, one stated visiting teacher, one stated school nurse, and two stated itinerant teacher. However, it can be seen that the special service workers are so limited in the schools that

TABLE V. NAMES OF SPECIAL PERSONNEL WORKERS CHARGED WITH IMPROVING ATTENDANCE IN BOWIE COUNTY

Names	Number
Visiting Teacher	
School Nurse	
School Physician	
Attendance Officer	
Others (Specify) Counselor	16
Music	
Totals	16

the schools have no choice to vote other than for the one that is employed. It should be noted that each school does not have a separate special worker; they have only the service of a special worker, that is one visiting teacher who is employed for all schools of the county rather than for one school. Questionnaires reveal information from sixteen schools of Bowie County in Table V. One can see at a glance that all schools that reported had the services of a counselor.

TABLE VI. NAMES OF SPECIAL PERSONELL WORKER CHARGED WITH IMPROVING ATTENDANCE IN OTHER SCHOOLS OF SELECTED COUNTIES

Names	Number
Visiting Teacher	1
School Nurse	1
School Physician	
Attendance Officer	2
Others (Specify) Counselor	
Itinerant Music	2
Total	6

CHAPTER III

METHODS OF IMPROVING ATTENDANCE

Irregular attendance, according to statement made by County Superintendent Ben Fort, became so prevalent that it was necessary to make a study to ascertain the causes. A study was made, and it revealed the following causes: (1) sickness, (2) great distances from school, (3) work at home, (4) slow progress through school, (5) lack of clothing, and (6) lack of supervision. In order to remove these causes, the following methods were used: (1) Sanitary water fountains were installed to replace the old rope and bucket. Pit type toilets were installed to replace the surface type. Better heating system, even though not adequate as yet, were installed in many of the schools. (2) A system of transportation was set up on a countywide base, and to date 99 per cent of the schools have adequate transportation for all eligible students. The county unit system of transportation is used. (3) Welfare agencies and other charitable institutions were encouraged to help indigent families by supplying need so that pupils could stay in school. (4) Realizing that slow progress and low marks constitute a major cause of irregular attendance, teachers were encouraged to do everything possible to help pupils to succeed. Promotions on condition or probation were

encouraged on the basis that several studies have shown that a large percentage of pupils, who were promoted on condition or probation, do the work of the next grade very acceptably.¹

Realizing that the curriculum of any school will determine to a large extent the type of attendance a school will be able to maintain, the writer will devote this part of the chapter to a discussion of the curriculum of the Negro Public schools in Bowie County. Laws enacted by legislature have had a direct influence upon the school curriculum of Bowie County as well as it has other counties and states. It must be borne in mind that some laws have been passed for the purpose of perpetuating certain ideals regarded as essential to citizenship in a democracy; others are the products of pressure groups interested in having their own ideas made a part of public thinking. As a consequence, all states have statutes prescribing certain subjects that must be taught in the public schools.² The following is a list of subjects required by law to be taught in the Texas schools: Spelling, reading, English language and grammar, geography, arithmetic, physiology, hygiene, civil government, vocal music, histories of Texas, U. S., and Texas agriculture. There is no redress from those require-

¹Public School Laws of Texas. pp. 235-236.

²Ward G. Reeder, The Fundamentals of Public School Administration, p. 479.

ments unless the law is declared invalid by the courts or it is repealed by the legislature. It is very necessary that administrators and teachers know the laws that they are expected to carry out and, at the same time, to bring to the public's attention proposals for the incorporation of new subjects in the curriculum. Every effort should be made by administrators and teachers to influence public opinion so that the enactment of undesirable legislation related to the curriculum may be reduced to a minimum.

Very often one can hear the expression in Bowie County that there is a need for the revision of the curriculum, but when one considers the procedure that must be undertaken as stated above, it can be easily seen that it is not an easy task to revise or get the curriculum revised. In the schools of Bowie County the subjects that are required by law are taught, and have been supplemented by many cocurricular activities. The curricular has been supplemented in order to help make school attractive and interesting. It must be borne in mind that maintaining interest in school has much bearing on attendance. It furnishes the holding power for the school.

~~Cocurricula~~ activities consists of varied activities that make many of the student rather be in school than to be away. Yet, the curriculum shows a need for revision. There are 327 students enrolled in six of the

seven high schools of Bowie County. The curriculum provides for vocational instruction for only 230. The vocational training is agriculture for boys and home economics for girls. There are three out of six schools doing high school work in Bowie County; the high school in Texarkana is omitted as there is no return from questionnaire, and only three have vocational work. One gives instruction in typing on a small scale.

There is not much provision for athletic activities. For example, there is but one gymnasium in the county for Negroes. The fact that there is but one gymnasium in the county makes it difficult to operate at seasonal activities. Many of the basketball games which come in the winter must either be played outdoors or abandoned. If the weather is favorable, they can be played, but if it is unfavorable, they must be eliminated.

The writer feels that the curriculum should be enriched through provisions, by the school boards for more gymnasiums, parks, and playground equipment. Courses in band music, shorthand and typing, art, dramatics, engineering, and manual arts. It has been observed by the writer that the schools that have the best co-curriculum activity program are the schools that have the best attendance. The curriculum should be interpreted to the parents and all who are concerned. Parents should be well informed

as to the provisions of the curriculum, and be asked suggestions about how it may be improved in order to meet the needs of the students.

A school counselor was employed to work along with principals, teachers, and parents to help improvement attendance.

Principals, teachers, and parents realizing the importance of co-curricula activities are placing much emphasis on them. Choral groups are being organized, and some of the principals have employed well trained musicians, and allowing the musicians sufficient time for the fullest development of the groups. For example in the New Boston Negro High School, the music instructor devotes full time to music after having taught one class or subject. She begins music in the class of the beginners and gives instructions in music throughout the grades in school. The choral group is given an opportunity to sing for such organizations as chamber of commerce, Lions Club, churches, and other special groups. The method of having students to train and appear before special groups has proved very successful in improving attendance. Some schools are employing athletic coaches. These coaches give special training to students in such games as basketball, track, softball, and baseball. One school plays football.

It should be kept in mind that the enforcement of attendance at school carries with it an obligation to provide something of **value** and interest to every individual. This must mean effective differentiation of instruction. As long as the course of study and teaching procedures are dictated wholly by the needs of the mythical average child, there will be some to whom the offering will possess little attraction. Irregular attendance is a natural consequence in such cases.

Examination of the methods for improving attendance in Bowie County and from the reports of studies mentioned above, can be summed up in the following manner: (1) ascertain the cause, (2) get the pupil in school, and (3) have something of value and interest to offer.

Information is given in Table III to show other methods used by schools in Bowie County for improving attendance and in Table IV to show methods used in other schools for improving attendance. One can see at a glance how the schools use different methods to improve attendance. **More schools** in Bowie County report adequate transportation than any other method. Fifteen of the sixteen schools of Bowie County report adequate transportation. Six report that the grade is raised as a reward for perfect attendance. Six report that they work with welfare agencies to assist indigent families, and five

report other methods. Out of six other selected schools five report adequate transportation. Four reported the raising of grades as a reward for perfect attendance. Four report that they take interest in public welfare program to assist indigent families. One reports having a

TABLE VII. METHODS USED IN SIXTEEN NEGRO PUBLIC SCHOOLS IN BOWIE COUNTY FOR IMPROVING STUDENT ATTENDANCE

Methods	Number of Schools
Plan of Supervised Health Program	2
Adequate Transportation for Pupils	15
Award Grade Points for Attendance	6
Work with Welfare Agencies	6
Others: Talk with Parents	5
Parent Teachers Association	
Home Visits	
Teachers Award	

plan of supervised health, and one reports other methods. It can be seen that there is no uniformity of methods used in schools. The writer sees no justification for uniformity, but the methods should be used that are applicable to the situation.

TABLE VIII. METHODS USED BY SIX OTHER SCHOOLS IN
IMPROVING ATTENDANCE

Methods	Number of Schools
Plan of Supervised Health Program	1
Providing adequate Transportation	5
Awarding Grade Points for Attendance	4
Take Interest in Public Welfare Program	4
Others: Talk with Parents	1
Parent Teachers Association	
Home visits	
Teachers Award	

Many efforts have been made to ascertain the status of attendance in Bowie County and place the responsibility of improving attendance in the hands of competent agencies. Census takers, who in most cases are principals and teachers, are urged to use all precautions in taking census in order that no eligible student be missed. After the census takers complete their work, they turn it into the county superintendent's office. The office force rechecks every blank to be sure that no one is left off the roll. Principals and teachers are urged to enroll all students who enter school, and check against the census roll in order to see that every pupil who is on the census

roll enters school. After all methods by principal and teachers are exhausted, the names of those who do not enter are turned over to the counselor who is charged with attendance duty.

In the schools of Bowie County all precautionary measures are used to employ competent teachers, as much of the responsibility of attendance is entrusted to them. It is pointed out to teachers, by the counselor, that regular attendance is encouraged by a winning personality combined with good teaching. Children are impressed by a teacher's voice and conduct. He further points out that on the basis of his experiences, that likes and dislikes are easily formed. A teacher who would win the confidence and good will of her children must be master of her subjects and have ability to guide children pleasingly in gaining experiences. She must provide a well balanced program of appropriate activities and endeavor in every way to emphasize the importance of "never missing a day."

Parent-teacher associations are beginning to take increased interests in working with many of the schools in Bowie County to improve attendance. Within their groups, divisions are formed to look after attendance. Many instances have been reported, wherein representatives of the parent-teachers association made visits to the home, at the request of the principal, to determine the cause of

pupil absence. They have supplied clothing, food, and in some cases, money to assist indignant families to keep their children in school.

In the city schools of Texarkana, Texas, which is in Bowie County, the responsibility of attendance is delegated to an attendance officer who makes regular checks on schools and reports directly to the principal.

The writer has pointed out in Chapter I the forces that are responsible for attendance, and he feels that it has much bearing on the status of student attendance.

Having checked studies and recorded results, the writer reports below what has been done in schools of other cities concerning the responsibility of attendance, in order that the reader may get a comparative method of securing attendance and make the results accessible to any school concerned.

Many school systems are delegating to the school nurse or visiting teacher, the function of performing the duties of attendance officer. Otto points out that "the scope of the work of the visiting teacher is almost as broad as the entire educational environment of the child."¹ He further states that

¹Henry J. Otto, Elementary School Organization and Administration, p. 64.

For cases referred to her, she attempts to discover and to effect a correction of the factors in the child's make-up, in his school environment, in his home life and in his community contacts which are contributing to, or actually causing his maladjustment.²

Culbert presented statistical data showing the nature of the referred cases and the measures that visiting teachers have found helpful.³ Reeder states that "during recent years, all states have established some kind of machinery for the administration and enforcement of school attendance."⁴ He further relates that

Many states have enacted laws which provide for the purchasing, by the public, of text-books for children of indignant parents. Many have also enacted compulsory school laws requiring pupils to attend school a certain number of days, during certain ages, which is, in reality placing the responsibility of attendance upon the state to provide the best building, equipment, supplies, and teachers available.⁵

It is pointed out in the public school laws of Texas that school superintendents of any county, or independent district where there is no attendance officer, shall be

²Ibid., p. 65.

³June F. Culbert, "The Visiting Teacher at Work," (New York Commonwealth Fund, 1929).

⁴Ward G. Reeder, The Fundamentals of Public School Administration, p. 483.

⁵Ibid., p. 484.

responsible.⁶ "It is also pointed out that the compulsory attendance laws which generally require attendance through the eighth grade, or the age of fourteen and qualification for a working certificate in lieu of school attendance between fourteen and sixteen years of age, are usually enforced through the central office of the superintendent."⁷

A study of responsibilities in Bowie County and methods of other similar studies reveal many similarities and differences, yet their purposes are about the same in dealing with problems of attendance.

On the basis of these studies and methods and procedures, the writer wishes to suggest, what he considers, a workable program for dealing with attendance in Bowie County:

1. Each school should devote at least one day or whatever time is necessary to what is called a parent-teachers association workshop.

This may be done at night if parents can not meet during the day on account of work.

Efforts should be made on the part of

all school officials to get all parents and

⁶Public School Laws of Texas, Bulletin No. 506.
Publication of State Department of Education, 1949. p. 297.

⁷Ibid., p. 297.

friends to attend. The purpose of the workshop is to inform parents concerning the operation of the school, emphasizing the necessity for regular attendance. Concrete examples can be shown as to the results of loss of time, money, and effort through irregular attendance. Plans should be worked out in the meeting by all concerned under the guidance of a trained person; it may be the superintendent, principals, attendance officer or visiting teacher. Goals should be set up for standards of attendance to be maintained. Recognition should be given for pupils and parents who maintain the standards. It may be through scholarship, names published in local newspapers, trips to appropriate meetings or even sometimes cash or certificate awards. Recognition should be given to irregular attendance to the extent that both parents and students will be affected, by being penalized as prescribed by the organization. In this workshop parents can be informed what help could be expected from charitable institutions, such as welfare agencies.

2. Parents acquaint themselves with the provisions of the compulsory school laws. It should be thoroughly understood that these provisions will be enforced

to the letter.

3. Efforts should be made to secure the signature of all parents or guardians of pupils emphasizing the necessity of signed excuses by them after absence on the part of the pupil, to assure that parents will know when pupils are out of school rather than the excuses be signed by the pupil on reentering.
4. It should be fully explained by school officials that time lost by pupils must be made up and no pupil be re-admitted to school without having a signed statement by them, (the parent). Forms for excuses should be agreed on by both parents and teachers, also of what they consist of for legitimate reasons for absence.
5. Meetings should be called as often as necessary to interpret and re-interpret the philosophy of the school, bearing in mind, in most cases that the best informed parents are the most co-operative.
6. A careful study should be made and analyzed of all occupations, where pupils are concerned, such as seasonal farming to determine the justification of the split sessions of school. If found to be justifiable, then a uniform system could be

instituted for all schools concerned. Recognition should be given to those teachers who are involved as they are being penalized as to attending summer schools, workshops and travel that are necessary for their professional growth. The method of recognition should be agreed on by the superintendent, teachers involved, and members of the school board.

7. The writer feels that a visiting teacher who is well trained and who can devote full time to attendance should be employed and charged with attendance responsibilities, assisted by other school officials.
8. An enrichment of the curriculum is necessary for many of the schools. A form of industrial education is needed, such as typing, shorthand, accounting, etc.
9. More consolidation of schools is necessary to offer more vocational educational opportunities to the pupils of this county. A study of sixteen schools which comprise a total enrollment of 2265 pupils for the school year, 1949-50, shows that only 230 received any type of vocational education, and it was limited to vocational agriculture for boys and home economics for girls, leaving 2035 without any industrial training.

CHAPTER IV

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

A study of attendance in the Negro public schools of Bowie County revealed an irregular pattern. The geographical location and various occupations determine, to a great extent the pattern of attendance.

Table I in Chapter II shows the irregular pattern of attendance in the Negro public schools of Bowie County. Table II in Chapter II shows the irregular pattern of attendance in certain other selected counties. A comparison shows that the schools of Bowie County maintained an attendance that is one per cent higher than ~~three other~~ selected counties.

Table III in Chapter II shows reasons for irregular attendance in the Negro public schools of Bowie County. Table IV shows reasons for irregular attendance in certain other selected counties. A comparison of the table shows some similarities and differences.

Specific methods are suggested in Chapter III for improving attendance in Bowie County. Such suggestions are continued program of consolidation and an enrichment of the curriculum.

Conclusion

From the study of "Some Methods of Improving Attendance in the Negro Public School of Bowie County" one can reach the following conclusions:

1. Attendance is definitely a problem in Bowie County.
2. Methods used for improving have not kept pace with the time.
3. The schools of Bowie County are not meeting the needs of a large mass of students and have not adapted their curricula to meet the needs of the students that they are set up to serve.
4. The data of the study off tentative answers to questions in Chapter I.

Recommendations

The writer wishes to make the following recommendations on the bases of the pattern:

1. That there be special grants made to provide more money for transportation in the sparsely populated areas.
2. That there be a definite number of days required of every student before a grade can be completed.

Sickness or accidents should be the only bases for excuses and work missed during absence for sickness or accidents should be made up.

3. That there be a stronger enforcement of child-labor law.
4. That there be adequate playground equipment provided for all schools.
5. That there be more gymnasium floor space provided.
6. That there be a stronger enforcement of the compulsory school laws.

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APPENDIX

QUESTIONNAIRE

Investigation for Student Attendance

Your cooperation in filling in this questionnaire and returning it to me will be highly appreciated.

Place a check mark () in the square or squares that are applicable to your situation.

- I. What are the reasons or reason for irregular attendance in your school?
- 1. Sickness
 - 2. Work at home
 - 3. Work away from home
 - 4. Lack of interest on the part of the student
 - 5. Lack of interest on the part of parent or guardian
 - 6. Distant factor (Too far from school)
 - 7. Others (Specify)
- II. What method or methods do you use to improve attendance?
- 1. Health Supervision Plan
 - 2. Providing adequate transportation for all eligible students
 - 3. Awarding grade points for attendance
 - 4. Take interest in public welfare program to see that indigent families get help to prevent irregular attendance
 - 5. Others (Specify)
- III. What method or methods do you use to admit students back to school after having been absent?
- 1. Signed statement from parents or guardian
 - 2. Signed statement from school nurse or physician
(If answer is yes underscore the proper one)
 - 3. No requirements
 - 4. Others (Specify)
- IV. From your records for the past five years fill in the following blanks giving the enrollment

of your school:

1949-50 _____, 1948-49 _____, 1947-48 _____,
1946-47 _____, 1945-46 _____.

- V. From your records for the past five years fill in the following blanks giving the percentage of attendance:

1949-50 _____%, 1948-49 _____%, 1947-48 _____%,
1946-47 _____%, 1945-46 _____%.

- VI. If you have the following personnel worker or workers please check in the square or squares that are applicable to your situation:

1. Visiting teacher
 2. School physician
 3. School nurse
 4. Attendance officer
 5. Others (Specify)

- VII. On the basis of your past experience please list below the one that you checked in question VI that you consider the greatest help in improving attendance.

REMARKS:

Date _____ 1951

Filled in by _____

(Name of Respondent)

(Address of Respondent)

INFORMATION FURNISHED UPON THIS RECORD WILL BE CONSIDERED CONFIDENTIAL.