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# A review of the literature on the subject of why students leave school before graduation.

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BOSTON UNIVERSITY  
SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

Thesis

A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE ON THE SUBJECT OF WHY  
STUDENTS LEAVE SCHOOL BEFORE GRADUATION

Submitted by

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(B.S. in Ed., Bridgewater State Teachers College, 1949)

In Partial Fulfillment of Requirements for  
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## CHAPTER I

### PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

#### 1. Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this study is to review and analyze the literature on the subject of why students leave school before graduation and to propose methods which could be used to induce students to remain in school until graduation.

#### 2. Scope of the Problem

In Chapter II of this paper the writer has presented reviews of objective studies and articles which show that the problem of students leaving school before graduation has, and is, affecting secondary schools serving large and small communities in widely scattered areas. To illustrate this, the writer has included studies composed of both large and small numbers of students, studies completed as early as 1930 and as recently as 1951; studies made in schools serving urban communities and rural communities and studies made in many widely separated parts of the United States.

#### 3. Solution of the Problem

Research methods used.-- To obtain the viewpoints of leaders in the field regarding the problem, the writer first read books written by educational authorities.

On the subject of elimination from school, Billett <sup>1/</sup> 2.  
says in part, "...half the pupils who are to be future  
citizens are lost somewhere between the beginning of the ninth  
and the end of the twelfth grade...."

According to Lambert, <sup>2/</sup> "...at the present rate, non-  
graduates will outnumber the graduates in many of our states...."

Having completed the preliminary reading, the writer next  
consulted the card index files of the Boston University School  
of Education Library and the Boston Public Library for literature  
pertaining to the problem. Periodical literature was located in  
the Education Index, Bibliography of Research Studies in  
Education and Research Bulletins, National Education Association.  
Additional literature was obtained by writing to the United  
States Office of Education, Washington, D.C.. The information  
obtained from the card index files and the library reference  
books was copied on 3 by 5 inch filing cards. The information  
included the call number of the book, author's name, title of  
the book, publisher, address of the publishing company, and  
date of publication. When reference books were used as a source,  
the title of the article, the author's name, the volume and  
page numbers and the month and year were written on 3 by 5 inch  
filing cards. The cards were then used to locate the material

1/Roy O. Billett, Fundamentals of Secondary-School Teaching,  
Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston, 1940, p. 12.

2/S.M. Lambert, "Increasing Education's Holding Power," National  
Education Association Journal (December, 1950), 39:665.

to be reviewed and analyzed.

Method of choosing material.-- Literature pertaining to the topic was reviewed very critically to be certain that it was pertinent to the stated purpose of this study.

Because books treated the problem merely as one area in the overall picture of education, devoting few pages to the subject of why pupils leave school before graduation, the writer did not include any reviews of books in Chapter II of this paper. The writer has included only reviews of objective studies and magazine articles.

Objective studies were summarized as follows:

1. The problem which was to be solved.
2. The methods used in solving the problem.
3. The results which were obtained.
4. The conclusions which were reached.
5. The writer's evaluation of the study.

Magazine articles were summarized as follows:

1. The author's purpose in writing the article.
2. The main points stated by the author.
3. The writer's evaluation of the article.

Care was taken by the writer to select studies and articles which presented a large variety of viewpoints. Literature which was not objective in its findings or repeated that which had previously been reviewed was rejected. In the final analysis, reviews of nine objective studies and eight magazine articles were chosen.

While reviewing the literature, the writer noticed that many different names were used by authors to refer to students who leave school before graduation. Among the most common were drop-outs, early school leavers, eliminations, withdrawals and non-graduates. In this study, the writer refers to them as individuals who do not remain in school until graduation.

The word author as used in this paper refers to the actual writer of the study or article and should not be confused with the word writer which refers to the writer of this paper.

## CHAPTER II

### LITERATURE REVIEWED: Summaries of Magazine Articles and Objective Studies

#### 1. Early School Leavers <sup>1/</sup>

Author's problem.-- The main objective of this study was to obtain evidence which would assist in determining the measures that a school might take to induce students to remain in school until graduation. One thousand, three hundred sixty school leavers were selected from Jackson County and Lansing, Michigan; Indianapolis, Indiana; Cleveland and Cincinnati, Ohio, in an attempt to get a good cross-section of the population in respect to social, economic and educational backgrounds.

Author's methods.-- The steps taken to obtain information on each former pupil were as follows:

1. School records were examined for all objective data.
2. Teachers who knew the student when he was in school were asked for their opinions.
3. The former student was given a personal interview.

Author's results.-- The author's results are listed as follows:

1/Harold J. Dillon, Early School Leavers, National Child Labor Committee, 419 Fourth Avenue, New York, 1949.

P35  
135

1. Fairly consistent regression in scholarship from elementary to junior to senior high school.
2. Frequent grade failures in the elementary school.
3. High frequency of grade or subject failure in the junior to senior high school.
4. Marked regression in attendance from elementary to junior to senior high school.
5. Frequent transfers from one school to another.
6. Evidence of a feeling of insecurity or "lack of belonging" in school.
7. Marked lack of interest in school work.

Author's conclusions.-- Dillon's conclusions are as follows:

1. Know the student as an individual.
2. Obtain the student's confidence.
3. Provide an educational program wherein the students can experience achievement.
4. Give grade repeaters something new.
5. Demonstrate relationship between education and life.
6. Provide occupational information.
7. Extend social experiences.
8. Give some personal recognition.
9. Recognize signs of trouble.
10. Provide for above-average students.
11. Establish a good record system.
12. Make use of the records.
13. Help students select the right courses.
14. Begin counselling early.
15. Allow time for home visits.
16. Secure parent interest and cooperation.
17. Secure public support.

Writer's evaluation.-- The writer feels that Dillon's study is a valuable contribution to the field of literature on the subject of why students leave school before graduation because (1) it contains a much larger number of cases than do most follow-up studies, (2) it comprises both large and small communities, and (3) it includes students from different social, economic and educational levels.

2. A Study of Pupil Elimination in  
the New Haven High School <sup>1/</sup>

Author's problem.-- This study is concerned with those pupils who were eliminated from the New Haven High School before graduation in an attempt to answer the question: Why do pupils leave before graduation?

Author's methods.-- The author studied the records of a random sampling of the pupils entering the school during the years 1923-1927 who left before completion of their courses. This represented a total of 1,091 pupils. The author was not concerned with pupils who left during those years to attend other schools, but only with pupils who did not wish to remain in school. The latter group totaled 801 pupils.

Of this number 196 individuals were chosen at random to be interviewed. They were asked these questions:

1. Why did you leave school?
2. Were you dissatisfied with the school?
3. Have you attended any other school or taken any correspondence course since leaving New Haven High School?
4. What language is spoken in your home?

Author's results.-- The following nineteen reasons are listed in the order of frequency given by the 196 students who left school before graduation:

- |  |    |
|--|----|
| 1. Wanted to go to work  | 45 |
| 2. Family need financial help                                  | 39 |
| 3. Not interested in school and study                          | 34 |
| 4. Discouraged by low marks; did not get along well in studies | 27 |

1/M.A. Buckner, "A Study of Elimination in New Haven High School," School Review (September, 1931), 393:532-541.

5. Had ill health	10
6. Individual could give no reason for leaving	10
7. Played truant; did not study; got behind in work	10
8. Was absent; could not make up work	5
9. Had trouble with teacher	4
10. Lost interest in school because of interest in girl	3
11. Did not realize the value of school	2
12. Left to marry	2
13. Wanted to study nursing	2
14. Was suspended; did not wish to return	2
15. Left home because of trouble there; then had to pay board	1
16. Joined army	1
17. Worked mornings; could not get to school on time	1
18. Father insisted that individual go to work	1
19. Teacher did not like individual; hence he did not get along well	1

Author's conclusions.-- The author considered subject failures and concluded that a pupil's scholastic record was important in determining how long he would remain in school. He states: "While failure is not necessarily the cause of leaving, there is a high correlation between the number of failures and the number of pupils leaving."<sup>1/</sup>

Ages of the individuals at the time of their elimination was considered by the author to be important. "The older the pupils become, the stronger are the economic and social forces which draw him away from school."<sup>2/</sup>

<sup>1/</sup>M.A. Buckner, op.cit., p. 532

<sup>2/</sup>Op.cit., p. 535

The author considered teachers' ratings of personality characteristics of the eliminated individuals. The following characteristics were chosen:

1. Initiative
2. Industry
3. Dependability
4. Integrity
5. Personality
6. Courtesy
7. Leadership
8. Conduct

"Initiative, industry and leadership were the weakest points of the eliminated group as a whole, while graduates scored very high in these traits."<sup>1/</sup>

Attitude of individuals toward school was rated by the author to be as important a factor determining elimination from school as the pupil's scholastic record.

The author states, "When the individuals were asked whether they had been dissatisfied with the high school, all but two answered negatively."<sup>2/</sup>

Author's recommendations.-- Buckner's recommendations are as follows:

1. Schools should make an effort to secure a better understanding of the pupils themselves.
2. Endeavor should be made to secure a less wasteful adjustment between the school and the entering pupils through the use of advisory systems and through the securing of information from the elementary schools from which the pupils come.
3. Greater endeavor should be made to cope with the problem of retardation; such endeavors involve a more nearly complete recognition of individual differences.

<sup>1/</sup>M.A. Buckner, op.cit., p. 537.

<sup>2/</sup>Op.cit., p. 538.

4. The curriculum should be reorganized in order to provide a more effective form of education for pupils who must leave school before completing their high school courses and in order to provide manual work for those interested in it.
5. Efforts should be made to improve the study habits of children through supervised study and conference hours.

Writer's evaluation.-- The New Haven Study considered certain aspects which many other studies do not take into account, namely, the individuals' attitude toward the school and teachers' character of pupils. The writer feels that these are very important. Teacher ratings, however subjective they may be, are noteworthy.

The author's first recommendation is very general, but the writer believes that her last four, if put into practice, would tend to increase the schools' holding power on its students.

3. Factors Associated with the School Persistence of High-School Pupils and their Later Life Adjustment <sup>1/</sup>

Author's problem.-- The objective of this study was "to ascertain the factors which cause the comparatively high rate of withdrawals among the senior high school pupils in the area served by the Roosevelt Junior High School."<sup>2/</sup>

1/Mary Harmoney Tripp, Factors Associated with the School Persistence of High-School Pupils and their later Life Adjustment. Master's thesis, Boston University, 1930.

2/M.H. Tripp, op.cit., p.2/

Author's methods.-- Data for the study were obtained from the case histories of 75 girls who graduated from the Roosevelt Junior High School. Added information was obtained from inquiry sheets, personal interviews and home visits.

The author chose these 75 girls for no special reason "other than the fact that as high school graduates they would have had one year since graduation from senior high school in which to make some sort of occupational adjustment."<sup>1/</sup>

The author attempted to solve her problem by finding the answers to the following questions:

1. What factors caused 50 per cent of these girls to withdraw before senior high school graduation?
2. What factors influenced 50 per cent of these girls to persist?
3. Were factors present which influenced the schooling of these girls?
4. Were factors found in the school situation which influenced persistence or withdrawal?
5. Were certain factors present in the home environment of the group which caused a withdrawing among so many of the girls?
6. Did job placement among the withdrawals and the graduates depend upon any factors found in studying the pupil, the school, or the environment?

Author's results.--

1. Girls who are of above average chronological age tend to leave school before graduation.
2. Girls with below average mental ages tend to leave school before graduation.
3. Girls who are the oldest in the family or the only child tend to remain in school and graduate.
4. Girls' marks become steadily worse from junior to senior high school causing discouragement and early withdrawal.
5. Girls with a desire for self-improvement remain in school.

6. A feeling of financial need or a dislike for school results in withdrawal.
7. The more education received by an older member of the family, the better chance for the younger to remain in school.
8. High school graduates remain for a long period in the same type of employment, while withdrawals experience irregular employment.
9. Graduates obtain better types of employment than do non-graduates.
10. Girls with better marks find less difficulty in obtaining employment than do those in the lower distributions.

Author's conclusions.--

1. More active cooperation with social agencies is needed.
2. Home visits should be made when both the parents and students are present to discuss the educational opportunities offered by the school.
3. Schools must offer not only a greater variety of subject matter, but also greater freedom in their selection.
4. Educational guidance classes are needed to combat the growing indifference to school continuance.
5. Home room teachers can do much to foster school persistence. She should take time to know her pupils, knowing their limitations and prescribing courses in which they can succeed.

Writer's evaluation.-- The writer feels that the questions listed by the author as part of her method seem very repetitious.

The writer has included the Roosevelt Junior High School Study, though small in scope, because for almost every case of a student leaving school before graduation, it offers a constructive plan to induce the student to remain and graduate which is not true of many larger studies. The author gave the impression of knowing her subjects very well and perhaps that accounts for her objective results and conclusions.

#### 4. Half Our Audience is Walking Out <sup>1/</sup>

Author's purpose.-- Mr. Shiebler wrote the article to bring to the attention of the people of the United States that our secondary schools are graduating about one-half of the students who enter as freshmen.

He states reasons, taken from various surveys, why students leave school and offers some constructive suggestions for inducing them to remain until graduation.

Author's main points.-- Mr. Shiebler's main points are as follows:

1. Schools must have more effective guidance programs.
2. Expand the work experience program in which the children attend school and hold jobs during alternate weeks throughout the school year.
3. Extend the industrial arts and home economics programs.
4. Improve vocational education.
5. Make wider use of community resources.
6. Increased teaching and supervisory personnel is needed in almost every community.
7. Counseling should start earlier in the child's school life.
8. High school course of study must be made to coincide with students' interests, needs, and abilities.

Writer's evaluation.-- The author accomplished what he set out to do--to inform the American public of the high "mortality" rate of our public secondary schools. His main points are more of a summation of current educational trends to restrain students from leaving school than original proposals on the author's part.

1/H.A. Shiebler, "Half Our Audience is Walking Out," School Executive, (June, 1951), 70: 39-40

## 5. Why High-School Pupils Leave School <sup>1/</sup>

Author's problem.-- In a study made by George Melcher, superintendent emeritus of schools in Kansas City, Missouri, and published in the monthly publication of the Curriculum Council and the Division of Instruction of the Kansas City public schools, it was found that for the school year, 1943-44 one out of every three pupils entering the Kansas City high schools dropped out before graduation. The purpose of the study was to find out what the "drop-outs" were doing a year or more after withdrawing from school and how they were getting along.

Author's methods.-- By means of a questionnaire, the author obtained his information.

Author's results.-- The report states not only were these young people working, most of them were happy in their work. They mentioned "promotions, pay increases, added responsibilities, and increased opportunities." Many of them said that one thing they particularly liked about their work was, "a chance to learn."

These same boys and girls had run away from a chance to learn in the schoolroom. Why?

Only ten gave failing marks as the chief cause of withdrawal. Twenty left school to go to work; nine because of a desire to work to make money and be independent; eight because

<sup>1/</sup>George Melcher, Why High-School Pupils Leave School, School Review, (May, 1946), 54: 255-256.

their work was needed to support the family, three left because their work was needed in the home on account of illness; four left on account of snobbish and unfriendly students; three on account of home problems; two because of bad eyesight; twenty-four boys left due to the war; thirteen left on account of poor health; twenty-five attributed their withdrawals directly to the teachers of the school administration.

Author's conclusions.-- The author <sup>1/</sup> asks:

"Is it not possible that the teacher, the method of teaching, and the organization of teaching materials has much to do with those twenty-five?"

The twenty-four pupils who left for military service and thirteen who left on account of poor health are not the responsibility of the school. The other, pupils who left because of teachers, failing grades, dislike of school and various miscellaneous reasons are the responsibility of the school. Smaller classes, more counseling, better teaching techniques and more interested and sympathetic teachers would probably have saved the major part of these pupils."

Writer's evaluation.-- The writer has included the Kansas City Study because the author's conclusions are objective. The writer feels that, "... smaller classes, more counseling and interested teachers" <sup>2/</sup> are excellent methods of inducing students to remain in school and graduate.

## 6. Why Farm Children Leave School <sup>3/</sup>

Author's problem.-- This study was undertaken at the University of Minnesota to determine why boys and girls who

<sup>1/</sup>George Melcher, op.cit., p. 255.

<sup>2/</sup>Ibid., p. 256.

<sup>3/</sup>G.F. Elkstrom, "Why Farm Children Leave School," School Review, (April, 1946), 54: 231-237.

graduated from Grade III during the four years 1941-44, inclusive, were not in school in 1944-45.

"The study was confined to two counties in the state, namely, Sibley and Morrison, which had the lowest percentages of all sixteen and seventeen year-olds in school in 1940."<sup>1/</sup>

Author's methods.-- the author obtained his information through the use of inquiry forms, personal interviews, school records and from school administrators in the two counties.

Author's results.-- the author's results are listed as follows:

1. In Morrison County 877 of the farm boys and girls who completed Grade VIII entered high school or some other form of secondary education.
2. By January, 1945, 205 or 23.4 per cent of this number had withdrawn from school.
3. Among the withdrawals, 59.5 per cent were boys and 40.5 per cent were girls.
4. A majority of the drop-outs left school in Grade IX.
5. 48 per cent of the drop-outs ranked in the third quarter or their classes with 29 per cent falling in the lowest quarter.
6. Little relationship appeared between the intelligence quotient of the drop-outs and the school marks that they received.
7. Failures in English were most frequent for the boys and in mathematics for the girls.
8. More than half of the boys and approximately one-third of the girls were absent 10 per cent of the time or more.
9. Pupils who left high school did not participate to any large degree in athletics or other activities.
10. A lack of social adjustability was characteristic of more than half of those who withdrew.

<sup>1/</sup>Education of the Farm Population in Minnesota, Bulletin 377  
St. Paul, Minnesota: Minnesota Agricultural Experiment Station,  
1944.

11. Poor study habits were placed before lack of application as a reason for unsatisfactory school work.
12. The cultural influences in half the homes of the pupils were thought to be poor.
13. Parental attitude toward continued education was definitely not one of strong encouragement.
14. The percentage of pupils who enter high school after completing the grades in rural elementary or elementary parochial schools is lower than the percentage who enter from towns or districts maintaining high schools.
15. The pupils who continue through high school are more capable scholastically, as a group than those who do not continue in high school.
16. The principal reasons why more farm boys and girls do not continue in high school are (a) lack of encouragement on the part of parents and other adults in the community, (b) inaccessibility to high school because of distance or lack of transportation, (c) lack of school prestige, and (d) lack of an orientation program in the elementary school.

Author's conclusions.--

1. The prestige of the high school in the community must be raised to the point where graduation from the secondary school is held as a minimum educational standard.
2. A program for acquainting children with the nature of secondary education should be projected in the upper grades of the elementary school.
3. There is a need for articulating the training received in detached rural elementary and elementary parochial schools with the program of the high school.
4. All pupils removed at some distance from high school should be provided with transportation.
5. State aids are essential for equalizing transportation charges and for helping provide facilities and services where assistance is needed.
6. More attention must be directed to helping pupils in the high school make satisfactory adjustments and realistic future plans.
7. The offerings of the high school should be such as to meet the farm boys and girls included in the total enrollment.

8. The public high school has an obligation to provide a program of part-time instruction for persons who do not register as full-time students.

Writer's evaluation.-- The writer feels that the Minnesota study presents a fairly clear picture of why boys and girls leave school before graduation. The author's conclusions, are definite, though not always pertaining exclusively to a rural population.

The writer has included the study to show that leaving school before graduation is not confined to urban areas alone.

#### 7. Pupils' Objections to School <sup>1/</sup>

Author's purpose.-- The purpose of the article was to present the pupils' objections to schools. The author's remarks are based upon, "... interviews with young people who left school to go to work, those who were working and those who worked in the summer of 1944 and did not return to school."<sup>2/</sup>

Author's main points.-- The author's main points are as follows:

1. A great deal of what we teach boys and girls has no bearing on what they will be required to do as workers in business and industry.
2. Many young people today find that they are treated as immature adolescents and are grossly underestimated as pupils.
3. Our attitude must be on a man-to-man basis.
4. In many high schools today only a book education is available and this method is unsatisfactory to many students so they stop going to school.

<sup>1/</sup>D.T. Armstrong, "Pupils' Objections to School," Nations Schools, (March, 1945), 35:51.

<sup>2/</sup>Ibid., p. 51.

5. 5366 boys and girls failed to return to school in 1943 because they found it dull.
6. We must segregate book learners from non-book learners.
7. More evening schools should be established for those who work, or build up a work-school plan.
8. Offering in manual skills and trades should be expanded.
9. Regional technical institutes should be established.

Writer's evaluation.-- The writer feels that the author's main points, for the most part, are very general. Many of his suggestions are realities in many schools and students continue to leave school. The article is included because it does show more of the students' points of views as opposed to why administrators think students leave school before graduation.

#### 8. A Drop-Out or a High-School Graduate?<sup>1/</sup>

Author's purpose.-- After reading a great deal of literature on the subject: Why youths leave school before they graduate, the author decided that, "... the approach must shift from the traditional one of endeavoring to isolate causes of drop-outs to that of seeking factors in the total situation which are most closely associated with the problem."<sup>2/</sup> This was the objective pursued by the writer in studying the drop-out situation in two communities: Ithaca, New York, and New Haven, Connecticut.

Author's methods.-- The author employed the objective approach relying upon school records and case studies because

<sup>1/</sup>William L. Gragg, "A Drop-Out or a High-School Graduate?" Education Digest, (September, 1949), 15: 30-31.

<sup>2/</sup>Ibid., p. 30.

he questioned the wisdom of relying on the responses of school-leavers. All drop-outs were investigated in both communities. A like number of students who graduated from school the same year were selected to provide comparable data.

Author's results.--

1. Twenty items were considered, but not once did a factor operate to the extent that all the drop-outs fell on one side and all the graduates on the other.
2. The most significant factor in both communities was those retarded a grade or more were far more likely to leave school than those who made normal progress.
3. The ratio of boys to girls among drop-outs was about two to one.
4. Membership in broken homes was more prevalent among the drop-outs than among the graduates.
5. Pupils whose parents pursue managerial, clerical, professional, and semi-professional occupations were much more likely to graduate than pupils whose parents are engaged in unskilled labor and certain service occupations.
6. Non-significant factors were as follows: racial stock, health status, school attendance and tardiness records, personality ratings by homeroom teachers, tenure of residence, size of family, and academic grades in major subjects.

Author's conclusions.--

1. A challenge lies in the endeavor to understand more fully the problem of school mortality.
2. If one wishes to work on the problem of drop-outs, he must work on the problem well in advance of the time the pupil leaves school. Indeed, the problem should be attacked at the early elementary school level.

Writer's evaluation.-- The writer feels that Gragg's approach is unique in that it does not place any weight on the pupils' reasons for leaving school. The author believes that such reasons may be interpreted in many different ways.

The author offers no solution to the problem, but his results are more objective than most studies due to the fact that students' replies to questionnaires were not included in his technique.

### 9. Seven Ways to Help Drop-Outs <sup>1/</sup>

Author's purpose.-- Results of an eight year study showed that 45.5 per cent of the students in Passaic High School left school before graduation from 1938 to 1946. (With the results of the study and interviews in mind, the author proposed seven ways to induce students to remain in school and graduate.)

One hundred fifty students, randomly selected, who failed to complete high school were interviewed. They gave the following reasons for dropping out of school:

1. Wanted to go to work	32
2. Not interested in school work	21
3. Had to help support the family	17
4. Went to vocational school	15
5. Failed in their subjects	14
6. High school subjects were not helpful to them	11
7. School didn't give them what they wanted	10
8. Not encouraged to remain in school	10
9. School work was too hard	6
10. Entered the service	5
11. Disliked their teachers	4
12. Illness	2
13. Moved out of city	1
14. Not certain	1

Author's main points.-- Mr. Holbeck's main points are

1/E.S. Holbeck, "Seven Ways to Help Prevent Drop-Outs," Nations Schools (May, 1950), 45: 35-36.

as follows:

1. The purposes and functions of secondary education must be redefined and reexamined.
2. A plan based upon the needs of youth must be put into operation.
3. The problem must be studied and attacked cooperatively by everyone dealing with secondary education.
4. Experiences suggestions and ideas must be pooled in an effort to devise ways to improve our holding power.
5. Individual and group guidance must be extended to include counselors, teachers, principals and directors.
6. An attempt should be made to improve the physical plant, to include modern equipment, materials and training aids.
7. Improved home-school relationships.

Writer's evaluation.-- The writer feels that the author's first three main points are very general and not as objective as his next three main points.

Item four is a new approach to the problem. It has never been encountered by the writer in any of the literature. The writer believes that a measure meeting with success in one school system might very well be tried in another. Pooling these solutions would make it possible for a large number of school systems to make use of them.

10. How Can the School Reduce the Number of  
Early School Leavers <sup>1/</sup>

Author's purpose.-- The author wrote the article to bring to the reader's attention the very small number of pupils who graduate from high school out of the very large number who enter

1/J.E. Nancarrow, "How Can the School Reduce the Number of Early School Leavers," National Association of Secondary School Principals (March, 1951), 35: 304-307.

the first grade.

He refers to this large number of non-graduates as a "waste"<sup>1/</sup> which no industry could afford and still survive "... in this world of efficiency and competition."<sup>2/</sup>

The author reviewed causes of drop-outs and then proposed remedies to counteract these causes.

Author's main points.--- J.E. Nancarrow offered the following proposals:

1. After consulting the Federal Aid Series No. 3, March, 1948, the author found that the average expenditure for public education was \$125.41 in 1944-45. The sixteen states having the highest survival rate expended \$168.46 per pupil whereas the sixteen states having the lowest survival rate expended but \$82.16. To the author these figures show a relationship between holding power and expenditures, therefore he believes that principals 'must work toward an upgrading in expenditures.'
2. The type of family from which a child comes conditions the child's mind. Boys and girls whose parents have professional backgrounds remain in school longer than do children of unskilled parents. To overcome this 'the school must get out and sell its goods' to show parents that an education is very necessary.
3. The author lists retardation as a third factor. To overcome this schools need to reappraise admission requirements. Instead of basing admission upon any one chronological age, schools should 'consider results of reading readiness tests and other scientific measurements.' He feels that such results would give a clearer picture as to when the child will be ready to learn and do away with 'frustration and lack of interest which seem to reflect later all along the line.'

1/Op.cit., p. 305

2/Ibid., p. 306.

4. Nancarrow believes that our curricula will have to be more flexible. As a solution, he states, 'consolidation of the smaller schools in order to have a wider program of offerings in our secondary school.'

Writer's evaluation.-- Nancarrow's main points are objective. His first point showing the relationship between school holding power and pupil expenditures is very uncommon in the literature on the subject, but is an interesting addition to the writings on why students leave school before graduation.

#### 11. School-Leaving Problem <sup>1/</sup>

Author's purpose.-- The author's purpose was to comment on the Annual Report for 1950 on Education in Scotland. The report indicated that "... at the 32 senior secondary schools in Glasgow there were last session almost 11,500 pupils in the first year, but only 5,200 in the third year, 1500 in the fifth and 480 in the sixth."<sup>2/</sup>

Author's main points.-- The Association of Head Masters of Senior Secondary Schools investigated the Annual report and the author reports their findings and views below. They are:

1. The numbers of students leaving are both substantial and significant. An average of 800 pupils have left in the last three sessions.
2. Most of the schools effected by the early leavers are located in the larger urban and industrial areas.
3. Few pupils left prematurely from schools situated in rural or non-industrial areas.

<sup>1/</sup>Journal of Education, School Leaving Problem, (August, 1951), 83: 444.

<sup>2/</sup>Journal of Education, op.cit., p. 444.

4. The students wish to become wage earners as soon as the law allows.
5. The curriculum by its severely academic nature fails to hold the interest even of pupils of ability.
6. Parents have apparently a complete lack of conviction of the worthwhileness of higher education.

Writer's evaluation.-- The writer read this article with a great deal of interest and had included it in order that the reader might make comparisons between why students leave school prematurely both in Scotland and in the United States.

## 12. Why Young People Leave School <sup>1/</sup>

Author's problem.-- The purpose of this study was to gather data on the employment problems of youth. The authors hoped that the information collected would be of assistance to school administrators, counselors and other officials and would "... promote understanding of the problems and conditions of young people."<sup>2/</sup>

Author's methods.-- In the spring of 1947 the Staff of the U.S. Department of Labor interviewed a sample of young people in Louisville, Kentucky:--524 boys and girls out of school and in the labor market, of whom 440 had not completed high school.

Author's results.-- The authors' results are as follows:

1. Dissatisfaction with school was the reason most often given, contrary to the results of most other studies.

1/E.S. Johnson and C.E. Legg, "Why Young People Leave School," National Association of Secondary School Principals Bulletin, (November, 1948), 32: 14-24.

2/E.S. Johnson and C.E. Legg, op.cit., p. 17.

2. Value placed by parents upon having a high school education was found to have great influence upon the students.
3. Economic aid which usually places first in most studies was the second most dominant cause for leaving school before graduation.
4. The attractiveness of work over and above school was given as the third principal reason for leaving school.
5. Pregnancy or marriage accounted for seven per cent of the non-graduates to leave school early.
6. Illness in the family, physical defects such as stammering or nervous disorders accounted for the remaining fourteen per cent dropping out of school.
7. In very few instances did parents discuss any matters with the school officials.

Author's conclusions.-- The authors concluded from their results that:

1. The problems of youth in connection with school leaving are varied and complex.
2. Taken as a whole the problem of early school leaving seems unsolvable, but sifted down to the individual boy or girl, problems seem clearer.
3. Enriched and more flexible curricula would be of great help.
4. Relief of the financial burden on many parents and children is needed.
5. Strengthened guidance services and more integration between school and community would help.

Writer's evaluation.-- The writer feels the conclusions reached in this study are not very objective. "Relief of the financial burden"<sup>1/</sup> is an excellent thought, but very idealistic.

The writer was interested to note that pregnancy was listed as a reason for school leaving. Such a reason, although accounting for a very small percentage, is not very common in the literature on this subject.

1/E.S. Johnson and C.E. Legg, op.cit., p. 20.

The Legg and Johnson Study is more evidence that school leaving is rapidly becoming a real challenge to secondary education.

### 13. The Problem of Drop-Outs <sup>1/</sup>

Author's purpose.-- This article appeared as an editorial in the American School Board Journal. After reviewing a recent study made by the Junior Placement Office of the Providence School System in The American Child, house organ of the National Child Labor Committee, editors, William G. Bruce and William C. Bruce blamed the high schools for the current losses of pupils who leave before graduation.

Author's main points.-- The editors Bruce state that:

1. The school executives and teachers have most frequently placed the blame on (a) parental and child lack of interest in education, (b) on economic necessity and (c) on low mental ability.
2. Only rarely have school authorities been willing to seek the immediate causes in (a) the quality or the kind of offerings and (b) in the lack of total attraction exercised by instructors and school activities.
3. Stronger counseling is needed in the junior high school.
4. Attention should be given to a well-balanced, cooperative work-and-study program.

Writer's evaluation.-- The writer, having read the Junior Placement Office report, is inclined to agree with the editors Bruce. The report showed that for the two terms from September, 1945 to June, 1946 when war jobs were a thing of the past, 1,028

<sup>1/</sup>William G. Bruce and William C. Bruce, "The Problem of Drop-Outs," American School Board Journal (January, 1947), 115: 47.

pupils left school. This is only 53 less than the number who left school during the two terms of 1944 when wartime employment was at its peak.

These results would suggest that many of the causes of students' prematurely leaving from school lie within the school itself.

The writer disagrees with the authors' first two main points. These reasons have been listed by the students themselves in all studies read by the writer. Placing the blame wholly on the schools would contradict all the evidence now in the literature.

14. A Study of Pupils Dropping Out of a  
Midwestern High School <sup>1/</sup>

Author's problem.-- The author <sup>2/</sup> states his problem as follows:

"This study of pupils dropping out of high school was made during the school year of 1942-43 in an attempt to determine the causes for such action on the part of the pupils, to discover the types of pupils who dropped out, and to compare the numbers who dropped out in that year with the numbers in previous years."

Author's methods.-- All possible sources of information were used including:

1. Regular school records.
2. Personal interviews.
3. Parental interviews when possible.

All pupils were given the Money Problem Check List and

<sup>1/</sup>C.B. Smith, "Study of Pupils Dropping Out of a Midwestern High School," School Review (March 1944), 52: 151-156.

<sup>2/</sup>C.B. Smith, op.cit., p. 151.

the Interest Index 8.2 a. Pupils who dropped out had been given the Otis Group Intelligence Scale excepting those students who entered in 1942-43 from other districts.

Author's results.-- The author's results were as follows:

1. The average intelligence quotient for the drop-outs was 105; for all the high-school pupils, 107.
2. Most students left so that they could earn some money.
3. Comparison of subject interests between the twenty-six pupils who left school and the student body showed no significant difference.
4. Relatively more of the children from the lower socio-economic groups were among the pupils who left school.

Author's conclusions.--

1. Rearrange the school program in such a way that a pupil might earn money while he is going to school.
2. Allow pupils who are poor scholars to achieve success in activities and courses in which scholastic ability is not of paramount importance.

Writer's evaluation.-- The writer is of the opinion that the author accomplished what he set out to do. However, the author's conclusions, are very limited in scope. In this study, there seems to be little difference between a pupil who remains in school and one who leaves before graduation.

15. Increasing Education's Holding Power<sup>1/</sup>

Author's problem.-- West Virginia educators, having learned the ".... simple, yet shocking fact that almost two-thirds of the boys and girls quit school before finishing the twelfth grade,"<sup>2/</sup>

1/S.M. Lambert, "Increasing Education's Holding Power," National Education Association Journal, (December, 1950), 39:664-666.

2/S.M. Lambert, op.cit., p. 665.

decided to discover, if possible, the causes.

Author's methods.-- Conference groups were organized in 1947, 1948, and 1949.

The preliminary study in 1947 was divided into six discussion groups and assigned to areas as follows:

Group I---Reasons for drop-outs in the Junior High School

Group II--Reasons for drop-outs in the High School

Group III-Reasons for drop-outs at college level

Group IV--Study of one-room school houses of which West Virginia still has 2500

Group V---Study of primary kindagarten

Group VI--Study of intermediate grades

During 1948 special committees were formed to plan research studies.

Visits were made to the homes of boys and girls who left school during the year.

Case studies were made throughout the year, interviews were conducted.

The third conference formed in 1949 summarized all that had been learned about the drop-out problem, published the findings in a report entitled, "Improving the Holding Power of the Public Schools."

Author's results.-- The author's results were as follows:

1. Health was found to be a critical factor accounting for 15 per cent of the students who left school.

2. Case study reports on over 1000 pupils who quit over a two year period showed that "a surprisingly small percentage' were mentally unalbe to cope with the school work.
3. Two counties reported that fully 50 per cent of the drop-outs had little or no interest in school work.
4. Only 9 per cent of those who left were discipline problems.
5. Seventy per cent of the families of boys and girls leaving school in one county enjoyed a financial status that was completely satisfactory.
6. The attitude of parents was found to be very important.
7. Marriage was an important escape route for many.
8. Fifty-three per cent of all pupils who left school did so at age 16.
9. Too many changes from one school to another accounted for 10 per cent of the pupils who left.

Author's conclusions.--- All conclusions have not been reached because the study has not been completed, but the West Virginia Education Association is sure of the following correlations:

1. The per cent of the pupils finishing the twelfth grades in the various counties and the number of years the average adult went to school.
2. The high holding power of a school and the highly qualified teachers.
3. The subject-centered philosophy of the school system and the number of drop-outs.

Writer's evaluation.--- The writer has included the West Virginia study even though incomplete because of the very systematic way in which it was organized. This is a state-wide approach to the problem of early school leaving. It readily illustrates what a challenge the problem is. These educators know ".... that at the present rate non-graduates will out number the graduates in many of our states, they will be elected to boards of education, they will increase or decrease school

support and they will have children who will be tempted to follow their parents' examples."<sup>1/</sup>

16. Stay in School until Called <sup>2/</sup>

Author's purpose.-- The author knowing that many students are "on the fence"<sup>3/</sup> in regard to staying in school, wrote this article in the form of a letter to all high-school pupils in the Parma, Ohio High School. His purpose was to deter as many as possible from leaving school to enter the armed services or to take a job.

Author's main points.-- The main points of this letter are as follows:

1. A weekly pay check may look more attractive and seem more appealing than a high-school program.
2. When the present conflict ends and we enter another reconversion period you'll find yourself in a glutted labor market without the training required, technically or vocationally.
3. You can't afford to let a blurred future in a war-riddled world throw you for a loss.
4. National leaders have said time after time that young people make their greatest contribution to the national welfare by continuing their planned school program.
5. While you are young you must take advantage of the best training and educational opportunities available.
6. No one can live your life for you, and no one has lived the life that you are going to live. Prepare yourself today. Stay in school while you can.

Writer's evaluation.-- A very sincere attempt on the part of the author to arouse young people to come to their senses and

<sup>1/</sup>S.M. Lambert, "Increasing Education's Holding Power", National Education Association Journal, (December, 1950), 39:664-666

<sup>2/</sup>Carl C. Byers, "Stay in School until Called," American School Board Journal, (March 1951) 122:71.

<sup>3/</sup> Op.cit. p. 71.

see the folly of their ways. The author used plain language and spoke directly to his readers. The writer has included it in this survey for the aforementioned reasons.

17. How Can the School Reduce the Number  
of Early School Leavers <sup>1/</sup>

Author's purpose.-- The author reviews what is being done by schools in order to induce students to remain in school. He refers to it as a "... timely topic" <sup>2/</sup> and says in effect, that because so many schools are carrying on studies at the present time that "... it may well be that in the near future a high school will be out-of-step with accepted practice if it does not have data on its own holding power." <sup>3/</sup>

In his article, the author takes into account the number of youth not in school; why more boys than girls leave school; the effect of compulsory attendance laws on holding power and measures that teachers and principals might take induce students to remain and graduate.

Author's main points.--

1. Secondary schools are gradually moving toward education for all youth and the author offers, as proof, that in 1890 only 7 per cent of the high-school age youth were enrolled in high-school and in 1950 the number of high-school age youth in school had risen to 75 per cent.

1/E.E. Tomkins, "How Can the School Reduce the Number of Early School Leavers, National Association Secondary School Principals Bulletin, (March, 1951), 35:307-310

2/E.E. Tomkins, op.cit., p. 309.

3/Ibid., p. 310.

2. In general, youth leave school after having reached school-leaving age as determined by compulsory laws.
3. High school serve a greater percentage of girls than boys, probably because the holding powers of schools is more effective with girls than boys.
4. The actual step of leaving school is the culmination of many incidences greater than any one reason usually given by pupils as answers to questionnaires. The author believes that pupil attitudes are 'conditioned at the start by undesirable or poor teacher-pupil relationships or school-pupil relationships.
5. Liking school is so frequently a matter of liking the people connected with the school. Pupils will like or dislike their teachers long before they might be aware that the curriculum does not serve their needs.
6. School principals set the tone of their schools and can exert a direct professional impact on the holding power of the high school.

Writer's evaluation.-- The writer has included this article because it deals with the relationship between human or personal traits and the holding power of the school. The writer agrees with the author when he states that pupils judge a school mainly by the people in it. More sympathetic feeling on the part of teachers would be reassuring to students, ultimately inducing them to remain in school.

CHAPTER III  
SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

1. Factors Associated with Leaving School  
before Graduation

Primary factors.-- Of the seventeen authors whose studies and articles are reviewed in Chapter II of this paper, all but two included the following five factors as being the most important reasons which influence students to leave school before graduation.

1. A desire to earn money
2. A lack of interest for school and study
3. Parental attitude toward education
4. Poor teacher-pupil relationship
5. A lack of correlation between subject matter and life

Discussion of primary factors.-- Concerning parental attitude toward education the Journal of Education <sup>1/</sup> reports "Parents have apparently a complete lack of conviction of the worthwhileness of higher education." In his study concerning farm children, G.F. Elkstrom <sup>2/</sup> states: "Parental attitude toward continued education was definitely not one of strong encouragement."

1/Op. cit., p. 22.

2/Op. cit., p. 14.

In reference to the fourth primary factor Dillen <sup>1/</sup> says, "There is considerable evidence which indicates that teachers, meeting with students every day, know very little about their family background, previous school record, interests, abilities, and extra-curricular activities."

Four authors felt that pupils' attitudes concerning school were conditioned in the home.

Secondary factors.-- The following sixteen factors were considered by the authors to be contributory to the problem of leaving school before graduation. The writer has listed them in order of their importance.

1. Financial support needed by family
2. Frequent subject failures
3. Above age for grade
4. Poor attendance
5. A feeling of "not belonging"
6. Parental occupations
7. Lack of adequate counseling
8. Fees charged for participation in school activities
9. Membership in broken homes
10. Inability to get along with classmates
11. Poor health
12. Poor study habits
13. Frequent transfers from school to school

1/Op. cit., p. 4.

14. Mental aptitude

15. Marriage

16. A desire to enter the armed services

Discussion of the secondary factors.-- Students whose parents pursued managerial or professional occupations were more likely to remain in school and graduate. Students whose parents were engaged in unskilled labor were likely to leave school early according to authors Nancarrow<sup>1/</sup> and Gragg.<sup>2/</sup>

In his study, Smith<sup>3/</sup> found that there was no appreciable difference between the intelligence quotients of students who left school and students who remained and graduated. Lambert further substantiates this in his study. Lambert<sup>4/</sup> also considered marriage an escape route for many.

Membership in broken homes was found by Gragg<sup>5/</sup> to be more prevalent among the drop-outs than among the graduates.

Tripp<sup>6/</sup> found that students of above chronological age tend to leave school before graduation.

Most authors considered poor health as a reason for leaving school to be insignificant.

## 2. Recommendations Suggested by Authors for

### Inducing Students to remain in School

1/Op. cit., p. 21.

2/Op. cit., p. 17.

3/Op. cit., p. 26.

4/Op. cit., p. 28.

5/Op. cit., p. 17.

6/Op. cit., p. 9.

Method used to prepare list of recommendations.-- The writer first prepared a table which contained the names of the seventeen authors written along the top. Recommendations offered by them which might be used to induce students to remain in school were listed down the left hand side of the table. As a new recommendation was found, it was added to the list. If a suggestion was a repetition of one already listed a check was placed after the proper one under the author's name who offered it. The following nineteen recommendations are the result.

- ✓ 1. Know the student as an individual
- ✓ 2. Obtain the students' confidence
- ✓ 3. Demonstrate the relationship between school and life
- ✓ 4. Recognize signs of trouble
- ✓ 5. Provide for individual differences
- ✓ 6. Establish a good record system
- ✓ 7. Begin counseling early
8. Secure parent interest
9. Secure public support
10. Improve articulation between elementary and secondary school
11. Extend vocational education
- ✓ 12. Improve study habits
- ✓ 13. Provide for home visits
- ✓ 14. Make the curriculum more flexible
- ✓ 15. Improve the guidance program

16. Expand the work-school experience
17. Increase teaching and supervisory personnel
18. Pool workable ideas
19. Improve the school plant

Discussion of the recommendations.-- Seven of the seventeen authors stressed that teachers must know their pupils well. This includes knowing the pupils' aptitude, family background and interests.

On the subject of obtaining the student's confidence Dillon <sup>1/</sup> says, "The evidence shows that a very small percentage of the school leavers discussed their intention of leaving school with any teacher or counselor."

Authors Dillon, <sup>2/</sup> Shiebler, <sup>3/</sup> Armstrong, <sup>4/</sup> Holbeck <sup>5/</sup> and Lambert <sup>6/</sup> recommended that schools "... show the relationship between what the youth is doing in school and the process of learning to live and learning to make a living."

Buckner and Dillon felt that a program must be provided wherein a child can experience success. Courses must be organized on a differentiated basis.

Four authors felt that counseling was not begun early enough in the child's school life.

1/Op. cit., p. 4.

2/Ibid., p. 4.

3/Op. cit., p. 11.

4/Op. cit., p. 16.

5/Op. cit., p. 19.

6/Op. cit., p. 28

Concerning parental interests, J.E. Nancarrow <sup>1/</sup> says, ".... the school must get out and sell its goods to show parents that an education is necessary." Five other authors believed parental concern to be very important.

Buckner, Shiebler, Armstrong, Holbeck and Smith stressed the need for expanding the vocational school. They felt that this was one good way to induce non-book learners to remain in school.

Allowing students a greater choice of courses was recommended by six authors, namely, Tripp, Elkstrom, Armstrong, Nancarrow, Johnson and Legg, and the authors Bruce.

Five authors were in favor of a work-study program wherein a student could earn money and continue his education simultaneously.

3. Insignificant factors

Racial stock, tardiness records, personality ratings by teachers, tenure of residence and size of family were considered by Gragg to have no bearing on the problem of why students leave school before graduation.

1/Op. cit., p. 21.

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