education. Unless the school has accurate information about the financial condition of the community it will not be in a position to plan its budget wisely and it will not be able to direct public opinion in the support of the budget.

6. The school should know, appreciate, and recognize the real community leaders—those who control the life of the community—in order to secure their co-operation in school matters and in order to direct their endeavors for school and community co-operation. The school should know who's who in the community and make a determined effort to make friends with these folk to secure their respect, to enlighten them about the program of the school and the needs of the school, and to anticipate their efforts for school improvement.

7. The school should know, appreciate, and recognize the “sore spots” of the community. There are always in every community certain sore spots, certain good folk who do not get along with other good folk, certain families opposed to certain families, and certain jealousies and bickerings that have their roots in the past. The school must know about these things in order not to stir up antagonism and community strife when it formulates its program for school and community co-operation.

8. The school should know, appreciate, and use the publicity elements of the community. There are many agencies of publicity in a community other than the regular channels for dissemination of information. The school should know about these matters, recognize their value, and, as far as possible, make use of them for enlightening the public as to the program of the school, for creating a sentiment for the improvement of the school, and for developing an appreciation of the school and for those who teach in it.

William R. Smithey

CURRENT TRENDS IN GRADING AND REPORTING IN VIRGINIA PUBLIC SCHOOLS

This is a co-operative study made by the Alpha Chi Chapter of Kappa Delta Pi. Miss Cox was assisted in preparing the report by Lois Sloop and Ellen Eastham. Others who aided in collecting and assembling data are: Annie Glenn Darden, Retha Cooper, Ethel Cooper, Evelyn Hughes, Vergilia Pollard, Martha Way, Daisy May Gifford, Margaret Thompson, and Eleanor Bobbitt.

Since the beginnings of formal education, evaluation has been a major problem for both teacher and pupil. The generally accepted procedure of testing, grading, and reporting has loomed so high on the path of learning that it has at times hidden the final goal of growth. The report card, a symbol of achievement or humiliation, as the case may be, has often been the greatest obstacle. Under older educational systems in which stress was placed upon subject matter rather than child development, the report card was a narrow and rigid account of facts learned in the classroom.

Obviously, this means of evaluating and reporting is in direct opposition to a progressive view of education. The concept that the school cannot stand apart from life and that integration of personality is one of the highest aims of the school emphasizes lines of growth overlooked in the more traditional systems.

Consequently, when Virginia launched her new program and adopted a new course of study, she was faced with the problem of changing her plan of evaluation. The following statement of this problem is found in a pamphlet, “Suggestions for Study of Evaluation under the Program for the Improvement of Instruction in Virginia Public Schools”:

“Evaluation has been considered an integral part of the program from its initiation, but it is felt that a vigorous effort should be made at this time to develop adequate procedures and means for measuring and recording pupil growth... The task before the teachers of Virginia is to develop techniques and instruments for determining growth in the intangible values rep-
resented by attitudes and appreciations stated in the aims of education.”

How is Virginia meeting this problem and how are her school divisions responding to the newer thinking about methods of grading and reporting? This is the question Alpha Chi Chapter of Kappa Delta Pi, at Harrisonburg State Teachers College, undertook to investigate.

**QUESTIONNAIRE USED IN SURVEY**

The following questionnaire was sent to the 122 school divisions of the state:

I Are you using in your division the numerical or percentage system of marking pupils? If not, when did you abandon it? If so, what is a passing grade?

II Are you using the literal system A, B, C, etc? If so, when did you begin using it? What is the passing grade? If you use this system, do you require a certain quality of work for completing the elementary school? the high school?

III Have you adopted the simplified form of grading suggested in the recently revised courses of study for Virginia? If not, have you taken any steps looking to its adoption?

IV What do you think are the advantages of your system? Its limitations?

V Do you allow any school in your division to use a different system of marking? If so, what schools use different systems?

VI Do you give standard or uniform examinations for promotion in your division? If so, in the elementary grades? In any part of high school?

VII Are you furnishing the various report cards and direction blanks to use in the matter of grading and marking of pupils?

VIII Would you like a summary of our findings?

IX If you care to write us a letter giving additional information or viewpoints, please feel free to do so.

Of the one hundred and twenty-two school divisions in Virginia 58 replied. The following tabulation shows the two major types of grading systems used within these divisions:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Grading System</th>
<th>Number of Divisions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LITERAL SIMPLIFIED</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number counties</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number cities</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average passing grade</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| LITERAL SYSTEMS IN USE |

The strictly numerical type of grading, formerly prevalent, is no longer in use. In its place twenty-five of the thirty-two counties listed under the literal system use a combination of both literal and numerical methods: $A=95-100$; $B=88-94$; $C=81-87$; $D=75-80$; $E=60-74$; $F=0-59$. The seven divisions which use the typical literal system have the following predominant form of interpretation: $A$—excellent; $B$—good; $C$—satisfactory; $D$—barely passing; $E$—conditional; $F$—failure. However, the two forms are similar enough to be considered together in a discussion of their advantages and limitations. To show more clearly definite trends in the thinking of Virginia school superintendents and supervisors several of their personal comments concerning the literal system of grading are given:

“We think it comes as near indicating the pupil’s knowledge of subjects studied as any system we know.”

“It affords accuracy of estimate on part of person grading; it is more intelligible to parents, and is more easily upheld.”

“Saves argument.” (This was the only comment on one of the questionnaires.)

“The literal system is based upon a percentage plan. It seems necessary to have percentages in high school for college and university admission. It is also necessary for the elementary school as long as the subjective element enters into the question.”

Disadvantages reported were more numerous and more generally agreed upon. Several said ‘none’ or “few, if any” in reply to the question about advantages of
the system, but were very specific with reference to the disadvantages:

"The system presumes an objectivity of evaluation by teacher, which is impossible. Cost of failure is too great where margin is small. There should be no failures."

"All limitations according to modern trends in educational procedure. Like the Little Red School House, it has outlived its day."

"Does not show effort or provide for individual differences. May discourage a worthy but slow pupil."

"We don't feel that the percentage marking is a true evaluation."

According to the statements of county and city superintendents and supervisors, the literal system is then advantageous because it is more definite and easier to discuss with parents. Teachers feel that they are more accurate in their estimates and can justify their grades, or perhaps we should say "defend" them, with less argument. The few counties that attached no numerical value to their literal system pointed out the value of this increased latitude in marking.

In the light of modern education, however, this latitude is negligible. It was pointed out that the literal system does not afford a true evaluation since it fails to indicate all phases of child growth. Grading on a group basis rather than on individual abilities discourages worthy but slow pupils and, far from evaluating growth in appreciations and attitudes, merely measures the success or failure of a pupil in his effort to make a grade.

SIMPLIFIED SYSTEMS IN USE

In contrast to the literal method, there are in use in Virginia other means of evaluation which are classified as simplified or progressive. This type of grading which takes various forms is being used in no less than sixteen counties and two cities. In addition, the large majority of the school divisions using the literal system were revising their procedures. Many superintendents spoke of it as a tentative step toward simplification. Others using the same system had committees composed of high school and grammar school principals and teachers planning a different method of reporting pupil progress to parents. They spoke of the present school year as a transitional one as far as evaluation procedures were concerned. Progress in one school was reported thus:

"Beginning in September, we continued to use the system described (literal system) in our junior and senior high schools, but use a much simplified system in the elementary grades. If our experience with this is satisfactory, we will probably extend it first to the junior high and later to the senior high school."

Still other schools have added lists of character traits to their cards or have sent a separate sheet to the teacher to check. Referring to a list of attitudes recently added to his report card a superintendent says that he values the "right-hand side" of his card most.

In the simplified method of grading where it has already been adopted with the following symbols in use: S—satisfactory; U—unsatisfactory; O—outstanding; E—excellent; or D—doubtful, very favorable comments were received on the simple S and U system. It was praised for its evaluation in terms of the aims of education, its elimination of a too keen sense of rivalry, its indications of the growth of the entire child. Whether or not it made the former A student lazy or indifferent was a question that could not be answered in the beginning stage of the new procedure.

Comments indicate that where O S U or E S U were used results were not as satisfactory as where S and U were the only symbols.

"We cannot justify our O or Outstanding. For a person to be judged S he should be doing his best."
“I don’t believe E should be used. This leads to close competition. I believe U and S will be sufficient. In this same school a note is sent home with each card that has a U. The reason for unsatisfactory work is written on this note. The notes must be signed by the parents and returned to the teacher who files them.”

Although the S and U system is at present the most popular of the progressive forms, four counties and one city have abolished grades on specialized subject matter altogether. In response to criticism that such a system was too indefinite, they reported that significant comments upon attitudes, conduct, health, abilities, and understandings are substituted for subject matter grades and thus do present something tangible.

Each of 85% of the divisions which replied employs the same grading system throughout its schools. However, superintendents seemed willing to let any school under their control use a different system if so desired. In a number of divisions reporting the use of different systems it was found that the Negro schools frequently had a different, generally less progressive, type of marking from the white.

REPORT FORMS USED IN STATE

A wide variety of report forms were received ranging from the form of: English Grammar A—; Spelling B—; History A—, and so forth, to typewritten records sometimes three or four pages long indicating every noticeable habit of the child along with attitudes, special abilities, improvement and appreciations. In between these two extremes there are, of course, numerous types.

The older unrevised forms carry, in addition to literal grades on school subjects, the traditional negative list of items: disrespectful; indolent; copies; gets too much help; discourteous; rude; restless; inattentive; whispers too much; gives up easily; appears not to try; promotion in danger.

The newer and revised cards in other Virginia divisions, many of which are being put out in tentative form, show progressive trends. A typical positive list of traits from one card carries the following: self-control, responsibility, co-operation, industry, and initiative. The stress here is placed upon pupil growth as opposed to subject matter mastery, upon social rather than anti-social traits, upon co-operation rather than upon misconduct. Such report cards and the resulting record forms enable the teacher to record health interests and status, significant use of leisure time activities, and similar broad social goals. Indeed, one of these permanent records lists a number of the aims set down in the Tentative Courses of Study, such as the ability to study, the attitude of good workmanship, the attitude of concentration, and the appreciation of high standards of conduct. At the same time and looking to the same general ends of integrated growth, on the part of the child, these newer reports list all the various subjects of study under a few heads such as language arts, social studies, science, mathematics, and fine arts.

Of course, some of the report cards are extremely simple in form, while others are equally as elaborate. One of the latter type presents an interesting make-up. The first page is devoted to character traits; the second, to the student’s extra-curricular activities and remarks to parents; the third, to a statement of required and completed credits and the names of the child’s teachers; and the last page, to a record of work in specialized classes. Another type of simplified grading is used in this report with Sp representing superior work; G, good; S, satisfactory; and U, unsatisfactory.

Another longer type of report is that in which the child writes a criticism of himself and his work with the group and the type of work which he does. Under this the teacher writes her comments on his
work, abilities, and attitudes, and the parent writes a return comment to the teacher.

The most unusual report is that from the county in which all evaluations are made under four heads: A. Physical and Emotional Status; B. Group Activity; C. Individual Activity; and D. School Citizenship. The teacher comments on these four groups; the child answers the following questions: A. Am I developing good health habits? B. How do I work with the group? C. How do I work as an individual? D. Am I a good school citizen?

Another question, namely, that parents demand to know how pupils are progressing in some tangible way, is refreshingly answered by the following parental notes to the teacher upon receipt of joint pupil-teacher narrative reports:

"I find this type of report very satisfactory. Words mean much more to me than figures or letters. The A's, B's, and C's remind me of the FERA and PWA. I have to sit down and think, 'What do they stand for?'"

And this comment: "I am sure Tom is capable of doing better work. Besides having a lazy streak, he is careless. In his report I found four mistakes which, had he taken time, would not have been made. Otherwise, I am well pleased with his report."

As has been implied, these reports are presented in different forms. The teacher-pupil ones are very informal and remind one more of letters than of report cards. Many reports are mimeographed sheets. This form seems to allow for greater flexibility and therefore is more practicable during a trial period. It is noticeable that only two of the simplified report forms received are of the printed cardboard type.

METHODS OF DETERMINING PROMOTION

From a study of these reports, the question arises as to the method of promotion and as to the work required for these so-called "grades." Seventy-two per cent of the Virginia elementary schools answering the questionnaire reported a definite requirement in quality and quantity of work to be done before the pupil can pass into secondary work. Seventy-six percent of the high schools state definite standards for graduation from secondary work.

In regard to the using standard tests as a method of judging eligibility for promotion, seventy-six per cent of the school divisions give an emphatically negative answer. Only two per cent reply with an unqualified "yes" for all grades. The other systems use standard tests partially as a basis for promotion from grade to grade and from elementary to high school work.

Comments from various superintendents indicate that the lack of flexibility of standard tests is generally realized.

"We give standard exams but promotion does not depend on them."

"No. Standard tests are used but not as the only basis for promotion."

COMPARISON WITH EVALUATION PROGRAMS IN OTHER STATES

Those who had made this survey of the state evaluation program decided that Virginia's progress could be more easily determined if compared with that of other states. Consequently, a questionnaire similar to the one used in the state was submitted to state superintendents throughout the United States. Of the 29 states from which replies were received, 18 used the literal method of grading. The 11 states in which the numerical system still prevailed were, in general, turning toward the literal method.

Comments from several of the state officials where grades are expressed in letters, follow:

Louisiana: "More flexible than the numerical plan formerly used."

Nebraska: "I favor the letter method because I do not believe it is possible for any teacher to make an estimate closer than 5%."
Kentucky: “We are not satisfied with either the numerical or the letter.”

New Jersey: “If education is guidance, we must get away from group norms to a great extent if we are to apply all the implication of the psychology of individual differences.”

Utah: “We don’t like it. State High School Principal’s Association has asked that we discontinue marking systems. A few have done so.”

There is almost a universal tendency among the states to leave the task of determining the passing quality of both elementary and high school work to the individual school administrative boards. These boards then base their opinions on the curriculum studied in that particular school system. From Michigan comes the statement that to control such would be defeating the aims of education in a democracy.

**SUMMARY**

Any survey undertaken during a period of trial and experimentation cannot be very conclusive. Therefore the aim of this investigation made by the Harrisonburg chapter of Kappa Delta Pi has been, not to point the way for future evaluation programs, but rather to sample the means and procedures of evaluation now used in the state. Virginia has made a beginning in this new program and we believe the trend is in keeping with the new course of study. According to the survey, nowhere is the strictly numerical system of grading found; in a very small percentage of divisions are standard tests the basis of promotion; and in an increasing number of places are report forms actually measuring child growth. Whether Virginia will continue her progress in this field depends upon the state-wide acceptance of the progressive principles underlying the “new curriculum,” as the tentative course of study is being called.

**GENERALIZATIONS ARRIVED AT THROUGH THE NEW VIRGINIA COURSE OF STUDY**

It appears that teachers are having difficulty in translating subject matter in terms of generalizations. The writer will, therefore, make an effort to show how he has tried to solve this problem. In order to present some of his experiences in the classroom with a group of third and fourth-year pupils, it will be impossible to go into detail concerning all the work. On the other hand, it seems that we ought to consider one example of how the pupil can be led to see generalizations in terms of the subject matter available. For convenience we may divide our problem as follows: the nature and environment of the class, the aspect of the group culture under consideration, the aims of education under consideration, and an example of how the average pupil arrived at the generalizations which were decided upon by the teacher before the work began in the classroom.

The pupils of this group represent all types of homes in the community. Indeed there are individual differences from almost every point of view. Most of the pupils live in two villages, Exmore and Willis Wharf, while the others live on farms near the school. They are normal children between the ages of fifteen and seventeen. Since 1933 they have been following the new curriculum with respect to classroom procedures.

The aspect of the group culture under consideration was: “How can we plan to advance human welfare and eliminate the defects of the present social order by the spread of scientific modes of thought?”

The aims set up before the unit was introduced in the classroom were as follows:

1. Individuals and powerful minorities have always sought to control and subjugate the masses.