

A PRELIMINARY RE-EXAMINATION OF THE CUMULATIVE RECORD

AS USED IN SCHOOLS

by

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ABSTRACT

The study reflected two concerns of the writer: concern with present-day satisfaction with cumulative records and with types of deficiencies presently existing in cumulative records. The problems under consideration were, firstly, to attempt to discover whether cumulative folders were considered to be satisfactory by Montana educators, and, secondly, to discover what type of deficiencies existed in cumulative records in a specific school situation.

Two methods were utilized. A questionnaire was constructed and distributed to two classes of graduate students in education at Montana State University, and thirteen cumulative folders of students well-known to the writer were examined in the light of two questions: 1) Is awareness of students' problems shown in folders, and 2) what information exists or is lacking in folders to aid in solution of students' problems.

Results indicated that, taken as a group, educators were satisfied with approximately half their school systems' cumulative folders. When asked to consider cumulative folders of transfer students, educators reported that information was even less adequate. The major use of cumulative folder information by these educators was for knowing and understanding pupils and their special problems.

Adequate awareness of students' problems was infrequently revealed through intensive examination of several folders. Complete unawareness of students' problems was, however, also not frequent. Information most often missing was that connected with home background, personalities of parents, and parent-child interactions.

The most important recommendation distilled from the results of the study was that it may be time to study ways of improving transfer of student information from one school to another. Better communication of non-confidential information from counselor to classroom teacher, pooling of educator knowledge about students, and more information about homes, with parental value-judgments clearly labeled as such, is needed in cumulative folders also.

CHAPTER I

NATURE OF THE PROBLEM

The cumulative record folder has been a highly-visible part of the American school scene since the mid-nineteen-thirties (24). From those years to the present, school systems have adopted versions which have been found to be useful for their teachers and administrators. Since World War II, guidance counselors in many schools used the contents of cumulative records in an effort to understand the various problems which have kept students from being successful in school learning.

The widespread use of cumulative records in the past thirty years may have led many educators to use the cumulative folder without question or thought of re-examining it. It would appear, however, that use and form of cumulative records may need and profit from intensive re-examination.

For the past two years, the investigator has been employed as a guidance counselor and teacher at the Bozeman Junior High School, Bozeman, Montana. During this period, the examination of many cumulative folders, both from the counselors' and the teachers' point of view, indicated to the writer that a re-examination of the use of cumulative records might be worthwhile.

Several concerns prompted the present study, the first of which has to do with satisfaction with the cumulative record by educators in the state of Montana, with what type of deficiency may presently exist in the cumulative record, and with possible needs for synchronization of cumulative record information from school to school. Other concerns may also become apparent as intensive study of cumulative record forms progresses.

The central problem examined was to try to discover whether educators around the state of Montana were satisfied with cumulative folders as presently used in their schools. Secondly, an attempt was made to discover what deficiencies appeared when intensive examination of several specific folders was carried out.

The next chapter will be composed of a general presentation of development and use of cumulative folders and a discussion of trends which appeared in the literature for future uses of cumulative folders. Methods and procedures used and findings obtained will be presented in the third chapter.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Origin of Cumulative Records

Mention of cumulative records in the educational literature, according to Traxler (21), was rare before 1925, and it was another five years before the term was frequently used. The real pioneer work in development of cumulative records was done in 1928 by the Committee on Personnel Methods of the American Council on Education (ACE), under the guidance of Wood of Columbia University and Clark of Northwestern University.

The original ACE cumulative record consisted of four cumulative record forms: two folders, one for secondary schools and one for colleges, and two cards, one for elementary schools and one for elementary or secondary schools. The original ACE folder, according to Warters (25), was complex, calling for a great deal of information in a small space, and was difficult to read easily and quickly. Also, those who recorded or interpreted information on the form needed considerable familiarity with graphs, since the data recorded on the form was of a graphic nature.

In 1933, the Educational Record Bureau (ERB) published a simplified adaptation of the ACE form for secondary schools. Besides calling for graphic information, the ERB version also called for tabular information, with additional room for remarks on such factors as discipline, home influences and cooperation, mental and emotional factors, physical health and athletic development, extra-curricular activities and interests, notable accomplishments and experiences, educational plans, and personality ratings. Warters (25) concluded that schools that adopted this model with alterations

in keeping with their local needs undoubtedly had more success with the form than did those who tried to use the form without any type of adaptation.

In the early 1940's the ACE forms were revised again, showing both the influence of the ERB revision and the Eight Year Study of the Progressive Education Association (PEA); the forms were revised under the chairmanship of Smith, who was also the director of the PEA experiment in evaluating and recording student progress. The influence of PEA was to put more emphasis on analysis of the student's development and less upon subjects, credits, and school marks.

World War II brought forth the development of the Educational Experimental Summary by the United States Office of Education in cooperation with various other governmental offices and the National Association of Secondary School Principals; the new form included space for such items as subject preferences, special aptitudes, hobbies, interests, extracurricular activities, and job experience.

Another milestone in the development of the modern cumulative record occurred in 1947 when Traxler aroused further interest in its development and use by planning a simplified form which was published by Science Research Associates.

Warters stressed the fact that various types of cumulative record folders are not copyrighted and are sold at a minimal price, therefore making it easier for present-day schools to examine many types of cumulative record folders and to make those changes which appear desirable for the local school's situation.

Cumulative Record Contents

Warters (25) listed by broad category those items which the National Committee on Cumulative Records recommended in 1944. She concluded, "All writers apparently accept inclusion of [these] items." The list follows:

Personal

- Name
- Date of birth
- Evidence of birth
- Place of birth
- Sex
- Color or race
- Residence of pupil and/or parents

Home and Community

- Names of parents or guardians
- Occupations of parents or guardians
- Are parents alive or deceased
- Ratings of home environment and/or economic status
- With whom does pupil live
- Birthplace of parents
- Language spoken at home
- Marital status
- Number of siblings, older and younger

Scholarship

- School marks by years and subject
- Special reports on failures
- Record of reading
- Rank in graduating class (with number in class)

Test scores and ratings

- General intelligence test scores
- Achievement test scores
- Other test scores
- Personality ratings

School attendance

- Days present or absent each year
- Record of schools attended, with dates

Health

The following types of items are desirable if a school has a health program in which physicians and nurses are a part:

- Complete health record, to be filled in by physician or nurse
- Record of physical disabilities
- Vaccination record
- Disease census

If a physician or nurse is not available for examining school children a rating of the health of pupils may be made by the teachers, the type of

rating depending upon the extent of the education of teachers in health matters.

Anecdotal records

If an anecdotal records system is to be used, a special form should be developed. Anecdotal records may be kept easily if filed in a folding type of cumulative record or where records are kept in envelopes.

Miscellaneous

- Employment record during school years
- Vocational plans
- Counselor's notes
- Extracurricular activities

The list given by Wartens, while specifying what should go into a health record, did not go on to specify what type of material should go into the anecdotal record. Neither did this list mention the value of such details as student's interests or liked and disliked school subjects, which the present writer felt might be useful.

Use of Cumulative Records

A review of guidance literature seemed to indicate that most counselors found the cumulative record to be a valuable aid in their counseling with students. Crow and Crow (5), for example, stated that background information was necessary in order for them to understand some of the statements made by counselees and, that without such understanding, valuable leads might be neglected at a critical point in an interview. Rothney and Roens (18) suggested that the primary duty of well-trained counselors was that of collecting, collating, and interpreting data about, and to, the individual. Tolbert (20) warned that while it is desirable to have as much information as possible about the counselee, it is imperative that this information be evaluated in a professional manner by professionally competent persons.

Traxler (22) had this to say about the same subject discussed above:

Although the best possible cumulative record cannot in itself insure successful guidance in a school, no plan of advising and counseling students can rise to the level of a guidance program unless it includes a cumulative record which is understood and used by counselors and teachers alike. The cumulative record is at once the main technique for the education of the faculty and the strategic organizational device in the whole guidance program.

Warters (25) summed up her conclusions by stating, "Good cumulative records are important to good student personnel work. Most authorities consider them essential."

As for specific uses to which the cumulative folder may be put, Tolbert (20) said that its value lay in 1) saving interview time; 2) studying developmental trends in achievement, interests, activities, ambitions, or social behavior; 3) filling in and locating clues for further investigation; 4) obtaining a description of the counselee's status at the present or at some particular point in the past; and 5) suggesting how to proceed in the counseling situation.

McDaniel (12), in looking at the total school situation, saw the following uses for information in cumulative records: 1) to facilitate early acquaintance between pupil and teacher, 2) to plan courses to fit group needs, 3) to increase individualization of instruction, 4) to develop new courses to meet student needs, 5) to re-structure student-teacher relations, 6) to develop clubs and activities which would serve actual student needs, 7) to improve grade placement and promotion, 8) to better report to parents, 9) to identify students with special problems, 10) to promote mental health, 11) to evaluate students, and 12) to counsel students.

All writers reported some cautions regarding maintenance and/or use

of the cumulative record. Miller (15) said: "... cumulative records must not only be available for each pupil but that there must also be a well-defined plan to utilize the information in the records."

Rothney (17) said that we must work long, hard, and carefully; we must personalize and individualize the processes and continue them over a long time, and learn what the student's activities and conditions mean to the student. "Description of a pupil's home as 'broken' without determination of his attitude toward that condition may have little merit since the pupils' own interpretation of it may vary greatly."

Hatch (8) cautioned that there could be too much information in the folder:

Only the information that tends to identify the characteristics of the pupil should be recorded, and useless trivia and outdated materials removed from the folder. ... Every effort should be made to keep the record objective, easy to complete, and organized logically for interpretation.

The Future of Cumulative Records

One of the most interesting developments for the future appeared to be the possibility that computers will play a large role in organizing and maintaining cumulative records. The proponents of the computerized approach saw many positive values in it. In a report prepared by the Educational Testing Service (19), findings for pilot demonstration projects in the use of computerized cumulative records were listed as being 1) the preparation of student information for assimilation by the computer was found to be not difficult; 2) the clerical calculations used to derive rank in class were reduced 85 per cent; 3) the summary computation related to students'

academic standing and relation between aptitudes and achievements was found to be a welcome addition of useful and useable information; and, 4) the format for the display of information was convenient, complete, and orderly.

Dobbin (6) said that a cooperative effort is needed to build a common language which would contain the following: a standard listing of high school courses, a standard pattern for notation of grades, a standard listing of extra-curricular activities, a standard scale for rating of personal characteristics, a standard list of out-of-school jobs, a standard code for reporting tests taken and scores earned, a standard technique for recording a summary of the student's health history by year, a standard technique for recording his attendance by year, and a standard procedure for recording other schools attended, family status, and other pertinent information.

Walton (23) argued that we will have a much more complete and well-synthesized picture of the individual when we feed all of the isolated facts into the computer:

Data processing of student information by computer makes for a more complete picture of the individual than is available where hand methods are used to compile the story. ... Basic to better guidance is knowledge of a student--his strengths, his weaknesses, his background, his needs and interests, his successes and his failures, his intellectual curiosity, his achievements, motivations, his creative nature. In order to learn to know him, it is necessary for faculty, counselor, administrator, and principal to cooperate in accumulating and recording an ever-increasing amount of information to help in profiling the person. In the typical situation today, much information does not get into the record. Even more should find its way. Some of the most telling characterizations of a person are to come from the synthesis of separate pieces of information into a rational descriptive unit. The computer has the capacity for completing such synthesis.

Coulston (4) told of a computer program which analyzed student cumulative records and printed out comments of the sort that might be made by

a counselor. An example given was, "This student appears to be an over-achiever. He may have serious trouble in some of the more advanced mathematics courses this year."

The report by the Educational Testing Service (19) concluded that the time was ripe for widespread use of a general computerized source of student information:

The major challenge now is to capitalize on our finding that differences among and between secondary schools and the respective states are not so large as to make a universally common language for the communication of student information infeasible or unwieldy. From both educational and technical points of view, it appears now to be feasible to develop a virtually nationwide system for use in describing the experiences of an individual student in an individual school.

Since the present study consists of two methods of attacking the two problems, the next chapter will consist of procedures and findings in the study of how educators reported that they used cumulative records and how well specific information in folders seemed to represent problems or concerns recognized by a counselor.

CHAPTER III

PROCEDURES AND FINDINGS

The first problem in this study was to determine how a sample of Montana educators viewed the usefulness of the cumulative folders found in their schools. A second problem was to ascertain the types of deficiency which may exist in specific folders. The procedures and findings for the first problem are given in the first part of this chapter, and procedures and findings for the second problem follow.

Part One

A General Survey of Attitudes Regarding Cumulative Folders

Participants in Survey

Participants in the survey were graduate students in education at Montana State University during the summer of 1966 in the two classes, Educational and Vocational Guidance, and Investigations in Education. It was felt that summer school graduate students came from a variety of school situations, in both the psychological and physical meaning of the word. The two classes selected were those which ordinarily involve a complete cross-section of graduate students in education.

A breakdown of the number of students in each type of position, average number of years in present position, and range in years of experience for each type of position is shown in Table 1. It should be pointed out

Table 1
Positions Presently Held by Respondents

Number of Students	Position Held	Average Number of Years' Experience in Present Position	Range in Years of Experience
9	Elementary teachers	5 years	1 to 20 years
12	Junior high teachers	2 years	1 to 6 years
17	Senior high teachers	5 years	1 to 11 years
5	All counselors	1 year	1 to 2 years
5	All administrators	5 years	1 to 12 years

that if years of experience in other education positions had been included, the total number of years of experience would be considerably higher. Included among these 48 graduate students were students in various major areas of concentration. Eight people indicated that they were majoring in two areas rather than just one, thus giving a total of 56 majors, as shown in Table 2. The double majors were in such combinations as senior high

Table 2
Distribution of Respondents' Graduate Majors

Major	Number
Elementary teaching	5
Elementary counseling	2
Elementary administration	4
Junior high teaching	5
Junior high counseling	4
Junior high administration	5
Senior high teaching	10
Senior high counseling	12
Senior high administration	8
College teaching	1
	<u>56</u>

teaching and counseling, junior high teaching and counseling, elementary and junior high counseling, junior and senior high counseling, junior and senior high teaching, and junior and senior high administration.

How the Survey Was Conducted

A one-page questionnaire was constructed and distributed to the graduate students with the intention of discovering whether they were satisfied with cumulative folders in use in their school systems.

The questionnaire, reproduced in Appendix A, was given to students as each one entered the classroom. As he was handed the questionnaire, he was asked to please fill it out immediately. He was told only that he would be given the necessary time to complete it. The amount of time actually spent in responding to the one-page questionnaire during the beginning of the class period varied among students from ten to twenty minutes.

Results of the Survey

Each of the questions was treated separately when reporting the results of the study. For each of the first four questions, responses were categorized according to the position presently held by the respondent. For questions (1), (2), and (3), the responses were categorized, tabulated, and an average percentage was calculated for each. Questions (4) and (5) were purposely phrased as open-ended questions so that answers would be less apt to be suggested to the respondents. The treatment of responses to questions (4) and (5), accordingly, was done by putting them into categories according to type of answer given. Findings of the study are reported below.

In response to question (1), "What information in your school's cumulative records do you find useful?" there were some differences in the number of times various folder items were mentioned as being useful (see Table 3) by elementary, junior high, and senior high teachers, administra-

Table 3
Usefulness of Folder Items
(percentage of times used)

Type of Information	Elementary Teachers	Junior High Teachers	Senior High Teachers	Counselors	Administrators
Achievement record	78	92	70	80	100
Past grades	67	67	94	100	80
I.Q./ability test records	78	83	88	100	80
Home background	100	92	65	100	100
Social/emotional descriptions	78	75	53	80	80
Health history	67	67	35	60	100

tors, and counselors. Since fewer administrators and counselors were represented in the classes sampled, all administrators were grouped together, and also, all counselors were grouped together.

While home background was of frequent importance to respondents in other categories, those in the category, senior high teachers, found it useful only 65 per cent of the time. Senior high teachers also found the least use for social/emotional descriptions and health histories. This finding may be evidence for the widespread assumption that senior high school teachers are more interested in teaching their subject matter than they are in teaching "the whole child."

Past grades were most frequently mentioned as being useful by counselors and senior high teachers. This result does not appear too surprising for senior high teachers when one remembers that in many senior high school courses, students are placed in one or another section of a class on the basis of past grades. The fact, however, that counselors were the group finding grades most frequently useful was somewhat surprising to the

investigator. The popular conception--or is it misconception?--of the counselor is that he is a person interested primarily in the growth and development of the individual student, without too great an interest in such seemingly mundane matters as grades. However, this finding could also reflect the counselor's frequent concern with such duties as helping good students find appropriate college scholarships and sectioning students. In any event, a counselor does need to be aware of past grades when he attempts to assess whether a student is currently performing at appropriate levels.

Health history was most often checked as useful by administrators while counselors and teachers checked it as being of less use than would be other items in the cumulative folder. Why administrators should find the health history of such frequent value is purely a matter of conjecture. The interest might perhaps stem from concern with attendance and a need to see that the school is reimbursed by the state for every day that every child is in attendance, or possibly from a wish not to incur parents' wrath by asking too much of a child in a physical education class.

In response to question (2), "How often (approximate percentage of times used) do you find the records of students who have continuously attended your school system to contain too much information, adequate amounts of, or too little needed information?" counselors found too little information twice as often as they found too much information. (see Table 4). Con-

Table 4
Adequacy of Folders of Continuously-Enrolled Students
(percentage of times used)

	Elem. Teachers	Jr. High Teachers	Sr. High Teachers	Coun- selors	Adminis- trators	Entire Group
Too much information	21	30	22	21	40	34
Adequate information	59	54	56	52	61	56
Too little information	32	29	36	51	15	33

versely, administrators found too much information more than twice as often as they found too little. Everyone found adequate amounts of information approximately half the time. Teachers were generally a little more apt to find too little information than too much.

Findings such as these, which show a fair amount of disagreement among teachers, counselors, and administrators as to how often folders have too much or too little information, lead to some interesting speculations. If cumulative folders are in need of some revision, both within specific schools and within an entire state or an even larger area, who would make the decisions as to what should be included within the folder and what should be thrown out? Obviously, if the representation of administrators on the revisions committee were high, counselors especially would perhaps find that much valuable folder information would eventually be missing. Conversely, it appears that if counselor representation on the committee were too high, administrators would find themselves even more out of patience with the new, detailed records. The teachers would not want to find either too many administrators or too many counselors on the committee since the percentage of times teachers found too much or too little information was somewhere in between the percentages reported by administra-

tors and counselors. However, if the teachers were to choose an over-representation of administrators or counselors, it appeared as if they might choose an over-representation of counselors since the results shown in Table 4 indicated that counselors came closer to agreeing with teachers than did administrators.

It might be worthwhile at this point to mention the fact that when the opinions of all 48 respondents were tallied together, it was found that the group as a whole found too much information in the folders one-third of the time, but they also found too little information in the folders one-third of the time. These percentages seemed to indicate that a fairly large amount of dissatisfaction with kind and quantity of information available existed.

In response to question (3), "How often (approximate percentage of times used) do you find the records of transfer students coming into your school to contain too much, adequate amounts of, or too little needed information?" satisfaction with adequacy of transfer students' cumulative folders was considerably less, as shown in Table 5.

Table 5
Adequacy of Folders of Transfer Students
(percentage of times used)

	Elem. Teachers	Jr. High Teachers	Sr. High Teachers	Coun- selors	Adminis- trators	Entire Group
Too much information	12	9	3	0	10	7
Adequate information	46	28	40	23	42	37
Too little information	47	58	69	72	48	60

All groups found few transfer folders with too much information, and

counselors even indicated that they never found too much information. The percentage of times that folders contained adequate information also dropped for all categories. In the light of the above changes, the complementary finding that the percentage of folders considered inadequate rose sharply is not surprising. Teachers and administrators found transfer folders with too little information approximately half the time, while counselors found transfer folders with too little information approximately three-fourths of the time.

Total dissatisfaction per se for both the folders of continuously-enrolled and transfer students remained constant, if the percentages of folders with too much and too little information were added together, 67 per cent for each. The main difference lay in the dramatic shift from folders with too much information for continuously-enrolled students to too little information for transfer students. Thus, where the entire 48 respondents as a group found too much information in 34 per cent of the folders of their continuously-enrolled students, they found too much information in only 7 per cent of the folders of transfer students. Where the group found too little information in only 33 per cent of the folders of continuously-enrolled students, they found too little information in 60 per cent of the folders of transfer students.

Why should educators find so many transfer folders with inadequate amounts of information? One reason may be the obvious fact that all schools do not collect the same information about their students, and thus when folders are transferred, the new school finds too little useable information. However, the literature was studded with lists of essential in-

formation for inclusion in the cumulative folder. One would think that these lists would have been consulted when the individual school decided what should go into its cumulative records. Another reason for transfer folders containing too little information may be the possibility that schools do not send all the information in a cumulative folder when another school asks for it. For example, in the writer's own experience, cumulative folders which come into the school system generally come in without anecdotal records or teacher notations. Could it be that the first school considers this material too subjective a type of information for educators in an unknown school system to read?

It appeared that in the future it might be worthwhile to investigate further the reasons why cumulative folders are so unsatisfactory when they are transferred from one school to another and to find out how much of the information in a cumulative folder is actually sent from one school to another.

Question (4) was, "In what ways do you use the cumulative folder?" To analyze the answers to this question, McDaniel's (12) list of uses for the cumulative folder was referred to, and the answers were tabulated, insofar as possible, to fit into his categories (see Table 6). In addition

Table 6
Ways in Which Cumulative Folder Was Used by School People

Uses	Teach- ers	Coun- selors	Adminis- trators
To facilitate early acquaintance between pupil and teacher	5	0	0
To plan courses to fit group needs	2	0	1
To increase individualization of instruction	4	0	0
To develop new courses to meet student needs	1	0	0
To re-structure student-teacher relations	2	0	0
To develop clubs and activities which will serve actual student needs	0	0	0
To improve grade placement and promotion	1	1	1
To make better reports to parents	0	0	1
To identify students with special problems	4	0	1
To promote mental health	1	1	0
To evaluate students	8	1	1
To counsel students	1	3	1
To know and understand pupil and his special problems better	14	2	2

to his twelve categories of usage, a thirteenth category was found essential, "To know and understand the pupil and his special problems better." One might object and say that these answers could be forcibly stuffed into one of McDaniel's categories, but they appeared rather different. Firstly, they were not to facilitate early acquaintanceship, since the teacher often mentioned that she went to the cumulative records after she was acquainted with the students and knew that they had problems. Secondly, she evidently went to the folder for basic understanding and insight, not for mere acquaintanceship. Therefore, when the actual responses of working educators were categorized, McDaniel's categories seemed deficient. In fact, approximately a third of the uses to which cumulative folders were put by respondents belonged in the added, thirteenth category, "To know and understand

the pupil and his problems better."

Why should such a great interest be expressed in knowing and understanding the student and his problems? First of all, it was possible that a statement of this type appeared to the respondents to fully explain how they might use folders, while each of the other twelve categories would explain only one narrow use. Secondly, the class in Educational and Vocational Guidance had just completed several hours of study on the cumulative record, and their study might have oriented them to how folders might be used. However, this type of answer also was commonly found in responses from students in the Investigations in Education class, where no study of cumulative records had been undertaken. The teacher of both classes, however, was the same person. Thirdly, it is possible that McDaniel, in trying to lay out the anatomy of cumulative folder usage, laid out all the minor bones accurately but neglected to put in the backbone. It appeared to the writer that the educators' major expressed interest, to know and understand the student and his problems, was a laudable interest which should help the educator fulfill his vision of helping each individual student.

In answer to question (5), "Are there any specific changes, omissions, or improvements you would like to see in the cumulative folder?" eight of the 48 persons queried had no specific changes, omissions, or improvements to suggest. Interestingly enough, though, while these eight had answered question (2) in such a way as to indicate that they were somewhat more satisfied with the information found in the folders of students who had always attended their schools, they were less often satisfied

with cumulative folders of transfer students, as shown in their responses to question (3) (Table 7 below):

Table 7
Entire Group's Satisfaction with Folders as Compared to
Satisfaction of Those Without Suggested Changes

	Entire Group	Those Who Men- tioned No Changes
Folders of those who had always been in school system:		
Too much information	34	20
Adequate information	56	76
Too little information	33	24
Folders of transfer students:		
Too much information	6	27
Adequate information	37	41
Too little information	60	67

Why this group of eight (17 per cent of all respondents) were less well-pleased with the folders of transfer students than the group as a whole is difficult to say. One would think that they might have made suggestions for changes in transfer folders since they had expressed a greater dissatisfaction with the folders. Perhaps they felt that suggesting changes for folders made in other schools was a purely academic question. However, if a greater degree of satisfaction with transfer folders is to be obtained in the future, educators will obviously have to be concerned with the folders of other schools as well as their own.

At the present time in the Bozeman Junior High School, it is estimated that between ten and fifteen per cent of the student population has transferred to Bozeman from other school systems within a given year. It is a fact that as the population of the United States becomes ever more

mobile, the transfer student will become ever more numerous, and the problem of incomplete cumulative folders will therefore become more annoying, unless steps are taken to improve the transfer of student information from one school to another.

Responses will be reported below for the 40 respondents who did suggest changes, omissions, or improvements for cumulative records. Changes suggested seemed to fall naturally into certain categories. Each category is discussed below after a listing of the items placed in that category.

Maintenance. Items in this category included proper maintenance, keeping information current and up-to-date, keeping loose papers in chronological order, organizing better, and duplicating less (mentioned twice).

A fair degree of concern was expressed with maintenance of cumulative records. Since teachers are already overworked with clerical duties beyond their teaching load, and since counselors find it is more important for them to spend all possible time with people rather than with paper, the most likely way in which maintenance can be improved appeared to be in the hiring of clerical help who know the value of efficiency and confidentiality.

Mechanical changes. Items in this category included having enough space for each area, having only the information covers of achievement booklets included, having fewer small cards and charts, having simplified health records, having the record reduced to one sheet, making it more concise, and making it more available or accessible (mentioned three times).

Some of these suggestions appeared valuable; certainly, the more accessible, the information, the more useful it will be to the educator. Other suggestions rather contradict each other, such as "have enough space

for each area" and "reduce it to one sheet." In some of these areas, it may be difficult to please everyone. When a move is made to expand information, a parallel move had better be made to keep the information easy to read.

Test information. Items in this category included recommendations that standards of interpretation of test scores should be given, test scores and percentiles should be made more meaningful to teachers.

Unless a psychometrist is employed, it appeared that the counselor would be the next most logical person to make a compact and clear explanation of the meanings of test scores. Since there are so many transfer students who come with results recorded for tests which are not familiar to the new school system, it probably would be useful if the compiled test explanation included other commonly-used tests besides those given in that particular system.

Users and makers. Items in this category included suggestions to have all teachers connected with the student make evaluations, to have more teacher-team discussions as to subjective characteristics of students, and to have more communication of information from teacher to teacher.

These comments went to the heart of one of the basic facts about cumulative records; they can be no better than the people who make and use them. In Part Two of this chapter, the reader will notice that the teacher comments given for one student vary sometimes so much from year to year that it would be easy to think the comments were about several different students. Part of this variation comes about because of the fact that the student has really changed from one year to the next. But another im-

portant reason for the variation is the fact that the comments are inherently subjective: the way a student reacts to one teacher will be different from the way he reacts to another teacher, and the way one teacher perceives a student will be different from the way another teacher perceives that student. Certainly, teacher notations would be more useful if they were made jointly by all teachers who contacted the student every day. This point is of particular importance in junior and senior high school, where the student generally spends a relatively small part of each school day with each teacher.

Omissions. Items in this category included doing away with anecdotal records and autobiography, leaving out emotional and behavior problems as they influence teachers, leaving out teacher comments as after six years of elementary teacher comments there is nothing left for the next teacher to say.

The discussion of these suggested omissions will be carried out after the listing of suggested additions, since the two subjects are complementary.

Additions. Items in this category included a place for notes on parent-teacher conferences; complete health records; I.Q. and ability test results; a profile chart to indicate student progress from grades 1 through 12; expanded folders; good as well as bad comments about students; better folders on transfer students; more teacher opinions on student behavior; explanation on folder front of symbols, abbreviations, and notes; emotional problems stated more often; and more time to study folders.

All suggested omissions fell within the area of omitting subjective

material from the folder; on the other hand, among suggested additions, there were an equal number of suggestions for more subjective material. Two of the three people who suggested leaving out subjective material gave their reasons for doing so. The reasons given were that teachers are apt to be unduly influenced by such comments and that after six years of elementary teacher comments, there is nothing more to say. Are teachers apt to be unduly influenced by such material? Some teachers undoubtedly are, but if this is a case of a good tool being misused by a few people, adequate grounds do not exist for throwing out the tool. Is it true that teacher notations in the first six years of school have said everything that needs to be said about a student? This possibility seems unlikely, since a child changes very much during the adolescent years so that he often appears to be an entirely different person from the one he was at five or ten years of age. Also, the stresses and strains of growing up are often so severe for a young person that problems which may have lain dormant and unnoticed in his early years spring to life with a vengeance when he enters adolescence. Therefore, these two comments appear to be the opinions of two individuals rather than a likely feeling of the group as a whole.

Suggested additions, on the other hand, covered a wide range of items. Besides the requests for more subjective items, there were requests for several items which one would think would already be standard in most cumulative folders, such as complete health records and test results. Evidently some schools do maintain very inadequate records, which, of course, would be passed on if a student transferred to another school. A profile chart to indicate student progress for grades 1 to 12 is an interesting

idea; to make it both simple enough to read and complex enough to show what the student has achieved would be a difficult task.

To sum up what has been learned from the responses to the question, "Are there any specific changes, omissions, or improvements you would like to see in the cumulative folder?" it can be said that there was certainly not a majority consensus on anything which should be added or omitted from the folders. The fact that the responses to questions (2) and (3) showed fairly strong dissatisfaction with cumulative folders does make it rather surprising that more specific changes were not suggested.

Part Two An Analysis of Cumulative Folders To Determine Their Present Value in Understanding Student Problems

The second problem examined was to determine what types of deficiencies existed in the information found in specific cumulative folders. Folders of students who were known by the investigator to have problems were chosen for investigation since it was felt that this knowledge might make an adequate touchstone for determining whether useful information existed or was lacking in the folder.

Selection of Cumulative Folders

The main criterion used in selection of specific folders to be analyzed was that they belonged to students who, through many hours of counseling, were well known to the writer. The idea was that the folder could be better examined in depth if the writer already had an extensive knowledge of the student.

Names of students who met the above selection criterion were obtained

from the P.T.A. list which mentions all students by grade, homeroom, and alphabetically by sex. The lists of names for grades eight and nine were systematically examined while the writer asked herself, "Do I really know this student well enough to discuss the value of the material in his folder?" A name was not selected unless this question could be answered in the affirmative. By this process, the names of many students with known problems were discarded because the writer felt she had too incomplete an understanding or knowledge of the student.

No student chosen was, of course, completely "understood" by the writer. As members of the human race, those chosen were all much more complex than the brief sketch given of them here would or could indicate, and they were undoubtedly more complex than the writer knew.

It should also be mentioned that the sexes were unevenly represented in this sample. The reason for this uneven distribution was that among students who came to the investigator for counseling, the sex ratio ran approximately two girls for every boy.

Folder Analysis

When the list of names was completed, each of the chosen folders was examined in the light of two questions:

1. Is an awareness of the problem shown in the folder?
2. What information exists or is lacking in the folder to aid in the handling of the student or the solution of his problem?

Obviously, the answers to these questions were of a subjective nature. When did complete awareness, partial awareness, or no awareness exist? The

answer depended, to a great extent, on the way the one who answered perceived the information. To make an analogy, if one saw the tail of an animal, would he know what the animal was? He might or he might not, depending on the tail, the animal, and the perception of the observer. The writer has tried to answer the question, "Is an awareness of the problem shown in the folder?" by stating there was partial awareness if some relevant information was given. This procedure was not entirely satisfactory, of course, but it did allow one to go on and ask the more specific question, "What information existed or was lacking in the folder to aid in the handling of the student or the solution of his problem?" From that vantage point, then, one might be able to say what sort of additional information would be useful to have.

The Bozeman school system required homeroom teachers to write notations for students' cumulative folders each spring. For these notations, the teacher usually wrote down the most outstanding, troublesome, or typical problems, characteristics, and behaviorisms of which he was aware. Therefore, if an awareness of the student's problem existed in the school, it would tend to appear in the teacher's notations. These comments generally began in grade four; if a teacher felt a comment was needed earlier, it was put in the medical record.

Every teacher comment for each student has been reproduced in the following pages, with two exceptions: 1) some changes were considered necessary to protect the student's anonymity, and 2) some grade nine comments were omitted since they exactly followed the content of recent teacher-counselor conferences.

Each folder analysis consisted of: 1) an identification of the stu-

dent's problem as the writer saw it (In each case, the information mentioned as being revealed in counseling was known only to the writer, so far as was known); 2) the verbatim teacher comments taken from the student's folder; 3) a statement as to whether the comments appeared to show an awareness of the problem; 4) a brief analysis of pertinent information given or lacking in the folder.

Here, then, are the cases, as seen by the writer:

Ann: An attractive girl who, after doing average work through the first seven grades, started doing D work in grade 8 and F work in grade 9. Counseling had further revealed a strong rebellion against a father who interpreted the family's religion to mean that Ann could not dance, attend movies, be friends with young people outside her own church, and other similar proscriptions.

Teacher comments:

- Grade 4: "Needs help on school work to keep up. Is rather sensitive, but plays well with students and is nice to work with in class."
- Grade 5: "Quiet, sweet girl who works very hard, tries to please, always has a smile."
- Grade 6: "Needs supervised study, does not seem to concentrate very long on the task at hand. Very anxious to do well and tries to co-operate."
- Grade 7: "Real nice personality, well-mannered and cooperative, easily influenced by her fellow classmates, otherwise no problem."
- Grade 8: "Friendly personality and a ready smile but she tends to be quite talkative. Easily influenced. Not a strong student."

Awareness of problem: The problem didn't occur until grade eight and became worse in grade nine. The usual explanation for falling grades for a girl who was beginning to get interested in the opposite sex was that her social interests were taking up too much of her time. The antagonism to parental restrictions which seemed the real base of the problem to the coun-

selor was not revealed in the folder.

Information given or lacking: The growing symptoms, too much talking and becoming weaker in classwork, were duly noted; the fact that Ann wasn't a good student, which certainly exacerbated the problem, was noted early. Lacking was a knowledge of the way the religion was interpreted by the parents and the fact that the father was very authoritarian in administering his perception of his church's rules. Teachers might have worked more successfully with Ann if they knew that authoritarianism tended to make Ann more rebellious and more dependent upon her peers.

Bess: A carelessly-groomed girl, who, while of above-average ability, only sporadically did above-average work. Counseling further revealed that Bess had almost no self-confidence and felt no one liked her.

Teacher comments:

- Grade 1: "Poor lunches, apparent poor home care."
- Grade 4: "Well-adjusted, special interests reading and science."
- Grade 5: "Bess believes she studies, but she has a tendency to dabble, never really works for perfection. She prides herself on reading adult books, but doesn't write a good report on a book of fifth grade level. Appearance often unkempt. I'm sure she's conscious of this, but though old enough to improve it by her own initiative she doesn't correct it."
- Grade 6: "Tries to do something about her appearance, but has no parental help. Older sister helps her at times, and Bess is very proud when she does look well groomed. Has matured a lot this year. Has shown a good deal of responsibility and seems more enthusiastic about school as the year progresses. Very willing and loves to help out."
- Grade 7: "Does better than average work, has a fine science fair project on mathematics. Friendly but hard to understand at times. Appearance needs work."
- Grade 8: "Has above average ability and grades, seems to want a lot of attention and tries to obtain it by unusually loud acts. Also tends to be a leader in her group, for better or worse. Could stand some improvement in her grooming."
- Grade 9: "Not much of a conformist, could be a much better student than she is. Attitude is sometimes revolting. Displays very few social graces."

Awareness of problem: There was an awareness of the symptoms: wanting the attention--if not downright notoriety--that reading adult books in grade five produces, loudness, trying to be a leader in grade eight . It was interesting that in grade eight was the single time she was labeled by a teacher as a leader, and it was a time when the home room's only concerted activity was harrassing their beginning homeroom teacher, who also lacked confidence.

Information given or lacking: Good clues were her above-average ability, the signs of neglect, and the need for attention. Although her school work was often somewhat above average (mostly B's), her test scores indicated that she should have been capable of A-type work without much effort. It would have been helpful if the folder information included the items that the family was all older and wrapped up in its own activities, that they were all apparently brilliant, causing Bess to feel inferior, even though to the school staff she appeared to be above average with B's.

Cindy: Cindy was a shapely girl who, teachers said, was absent from school whenever a test was announced the day before and who often went to the sick room immediately when a quiz was announced for the same day. Cindy and her teachers were also worried because her grades were sinking dangerously low. Counseling revealed that Cindy was much admired by all her adult relatives; she had an uncle who promised to send her to modeling school, no matter what happened in high school. An interview with her mother revealed that the mother could not deny her only child anything. Cindy, in counseling indicated that she was confused because everything went the way she wanted it at home and nothing went right at school.

Teacher comments:

- Grade 4: "Does not work up to capacity, reluctant to do work on time."
- Grade 5: "Has more excuses for frittering away her time than anyone else in class. She wants to do what Cindy wants. She seems to live in a world of her own where clothes, appearance, and material advantages are all that matter. She does not seem to be especially popular but seems satisfied with one friend only. Very exasperating, but is courteous and takes reproof so well that nothing is solved."
- Grade 6: "Very conscious of how she looks at all times, good worker, and made good use of time. Needs a firm hand, wants to please, has been cooperative and willing."
- Grade 7: "Much aware of her physical beauty, constantly plays with her hair. Rather pouty, not particularly popular with other children."
- Grade 8: "Quite reasonable girl, self-conscious, thrives on attention. Not a hard worker, needs much guidance and motivation to get rid of her shallowness."

Awareness of problem: There was no real awareness of what appeared to be the basic problem, that Cindy was spoiled so much at home that she didn't know how to act in school. Many symptoms of the problem were given throughout all the notations: concern with appearance--noted many times, reluctance to work, pouty, shallowness.

Information given or lacking: The characteristics given seemed helpful in understanding Cindy. However, the family's inability to make Cindy work for anything was an unknown quantity. More information on the home and the family's attitude towards Cindy would have been helpful.

Donna: A pretty girl whose ability and I.Q. tests consistently showed her to be at the very top of her classmates in ability, Donna was in constant trouble with teachers, administrators, and parents because of her quietly stubborn insistence in breaking school and home rules. Counseling revealed that Donna had had many experiences, both with adults at home and at school, which caused her to believe that she usually knew better

than adults (and, unfortunately, she often was right). The fact that her intelligence appeared to be higher than most of the people who controlled her life filled her with resentment and a lack of respect for them.

Teacher comments:

- Grade 4: "Very good student, very pleasant, well-mannered little girl, loved by all."
 Grade 5: "Excellent student, willing, helpful."
 Grade 6: "Very good student, responsible and capable, very well liked."
 Grade 7: "Most attractive, quiet with a keen mind, determined, gets her back up and often appears stubborn."
 Grade 8: "Very intelligent, a talented and attractive child but has been a problem this year to parents and teachers. She has used defiance of parental restrictions and school rules to express her independence and feeling of being grown up; seems to have settled down some, and we trust this is a passing phase."
 Grade 9: "Independent! Has all kinds of talent, but to get her to use it?"

Awareness of problem: Donna's conviction that she acted more intelligently than the adults around her and her secret, amused contempt of them, were known to the teachers making comments as "stubbornness, defiance, and independence," which were at least an understatement of the problem.

Information given or lacking: Since Donna's intelligence and ability test scores were given in detail in the folder and since the notations show teacher awareness of Donna's ability, it might have been inferred that an intelligent child required intelligent handling. However, in order to understand the full extent of the contempt Donna had for adults and how it originated, more information on the home and the parents' relationship with Donna would have been of value; independent interviews with her mother and Donna indicated that the parents were very indecisive and unsure of themselves.

Ellen: A short, quiet girl, teachers said Ellen was absent about a

third of the time and appeared to have no friends. Counseling further revealed that her only friend was her older brother, who was a school dropout. She and her brother liked to stay in bed in the morning and listen to their father curse them for not getting up; Ellen said to the counselor that this activity was more fun than going to school. Her further comments indicated that her parents both worked, spent all their leisure time drinking beer, and had no interest in Ellen and her brother.

Teacher comments:

- Grade 1: "Ellen tries hard, needs lots of praise."
- Grade 2: "Needs to be encouraged and drawn out."
- Grade 3: "Could do much better if she put forth some effort."
- Grade 4: "Chief problem now is insecurity caused, it seems to me, by lack of friends. This seems to stem at least in part from plain old dirt, dirty skin, clothes, hair, teeth. Needs a lot of love and understanding. She is a very fine little girl, and the children are sometimes unkind to her because of her own problems."
- Grade 5: "Needs praise. Needs help with personal appearance, etc."
- Grade 6: "Has shown much improvement in personal appearance. Very forgetful and doesn't get her work accomplished."
- Grade 7: "Very poor environment and is absent often, seems to try hard, but doesn't have much to work with."
- Grade 8: "Very little social acceptance in group, a very poor student, absent and tardy a great deal. Doesn't turn in work. Quiet, pleasant girl and a good citizen. Has good manners. Needs encouragement."

Awareness of the problem: The chief problem, Ellen's unhappiness and lack of friends in school, was noticed in grade four; the reasons for it, at least in part, seem pretty well-documented also.

Information given or lacking: The fact that Ellen had several older brothers was mentioned in the folder; her strong attachment to the one brother was nowhere mentioned. Since he was just a couple of years older and since she was so dependent on his opinions, knowledge of this relationship and some work with the brother, might have been of value to Ellen also.

An important reason for Ellen's friendlessness, the uncleanliness, was mentioned. The poor home environment, which increased her diffidence to school, wasn't mentioned specifically until grade seven, although evidence pointing to a poor home environment was mentioned earlier.

Francie: Francie teeter-tottered from one six-weeks period to the next, first with A's, then with F's, and then perhaps back again, but always more down than up. Counseling with Francie and her mother revealed that Francie was the center of her divorced mother's life for the first five years of Francie's life when she was suddenly pitched into a situation with several step-siblings, half-siblings, and hostile step-relatives. Francie in counseling appeared completely purposeless, with few interests, and with strong feelings of worthlessness.

Teacher comments:

- Grade 1: "Francie has eczema caused by nerves. Mom is having trouble with her, said she was going to go to psychiatrist at college, remarried recently, new baby just after school started. Francie is not stable, seems to be trying to get her work satisfactorily. Inclined to sass. Kidney infection may cause crossness."
- Grade 5: "Quiet, friendly, needs encouragement, keep her busy all the time or effort will wander. Likes to read."
- Grade 6: "Same as above, easily distracted, capable of doing better."
- Grade 7: "Extremely restless, negligent and forgetful to the point of being irritating. Only happy when talking to a friend."
- Grade 8: "Has been ill a great deal this year, seems very tired. Lacks in school work, can be pleasant."

Awareness of problem: Awareness of the problem has existed since first grade, although later teachers do not refer to it.

Information given or lacking: Quite enough information seemed to have been given; the lack was in Francie's reaction to the facts. An awareness of how much the mother was wrapped up in Francie for the first

five years of her life might have better explained Francie's extreme personality problems, but might not have helped in solving them. The existence of hostile step-relatives and Francie's feelings of worthlessness would have been useful for the teachers to know; Francie badly needed reassurance of her worth as an individual.

Georgine: Georgine, to her teachers, was merely a quiet, pleasant girl of barely fifteen. In counseling, Georgine said she had had an illegitimate baby and now wanted to marry a high school dropout. Counseling revealed that Georgine was left home alone for weeks on end; she was evidently given much work to do at home but felt no appreciation or understanding in return. The home appeared to be one of cultural deprivation. Many hours of counseling revealed an apparently lively intelligence which belied Georgine's test scores. Her B and C grades appeared very good in light of the fact that she did much of the family housework, sewed all her own clothes very nicely, never studied at home, and never received home encouragement.

Teacher comments:

- Grade 4: "A very quiet and kind girl. She has about average ability. She works hard and does about average work. She needs praise, is very sensitive."
- Grade 5: "...very shy, lacks initiative. Shifts responsibility for not doing work elsewhere. Ability low and so was achievement. Needs much reading help, no comprehension. Not a happy child."
- Grade 6: "Quiet, below average. Study habits have evidently improved over last year. She has worked diligently this year. While her test scores are low, her daily work is usually quite acceptable."
- Grade 7: "Georgine is a very quiet girl who has a number of friends and few problems."
- Grade 8: "Very quiet and shy. Uses study time well, but does not achieve the success in school that she would like. Average student, no problems."
- Grade 9: "Mature beyond her years in attitudes, quiet, but has friends."

Awareness of the problem: No visible awareness of Georgine's un-

happiness and unmotivated background are shown, except in the grade five comment, "Not a happy child." In fact, one wonders if the grade five comment, "Shifts responsibility for not doing work elsewhere," was the outcome of Georgine's attempts to tell her troubles to her teacher.

Information given or lacking: No mention was made of the poor home environment, the lack of supervision, or the heavy load of housework. With a quiet girl like this one, who appeared to give no one trouble, nothing in the folder gave an indication of the problems under the pleasant exterior or of the possibility that this girl might have had more ability than her poor background could reveal.

Harriet: Harriet appeared to be in a panic state several times at school; she had broken down in great weeping spells, and had threatened to commit suicide with a bottle of sleeping pills taken from home, all this activity in grade nine. Counseling revealed that Harriet felt completely unloved by her mother; an interview with her mother, a perfectionist-appearing type of person, seemed to support Harriet's assertions.

Teacher comments:

- Grade 4: "Achievement not commensurate with her ability as indicated by an I.Q. of 124. Special interest, library reading. Has read more books than any other child in the room. Has won several contests at the public library for summer reading."
- Grade 5: "This year's I.Q. test scored 114. Doesn't try too hard. Reads a great deal, but comprehension is not good. Well-behaved and quiet. Likes music."
- Grade 6: "Seems to be capable of producing better work. Reads a great deal. Quiet girl."
- Grade 7: "This has been a hard year for Harriet. She has taken a defeatist attitude in math and geography. Often acts as if she doesn't care. Her mother is very concerned, and I think Harriet likes this. I suspect she is merely having trouble with growing pains."
- Grade 8: "Harriet is a very good student, hard worker, and likable girl. I think a little more academic interest in the rest of her

classmates would challenge her a bit more. Harriet almost always goes way beyond the usual class requirements."
 Grade 9: "Emotional problems, sensitive to people and unsure."

Awareness of the problem: There seemed to be some hints at the trouble, but until grade seven, though, Harriet's feelings of rejection were completely unnoted.

Information given or lacking: The wish to have her mother be concerned in grade seven and the perfectionist tendency in grade eight should be useful in helping to understand Harriet. Since Harriet was like her mother in some ways and since she was trying to win her mother's affection and approval, more comments on the home environment might have been useful.

Inez: Inez was a transfer student who came without a cumulative folder but with a transcript of her past grades, which were mostly C's with a sprinkling of D's and B's among them. Her mother told the homeroom teacher at the beginning of the year that Inez had had a brain injury at age four and consequently Inez was of low-average ability but that she got along well and should be held to the same standards as the other children. The problem arose when Inez couldn't do passing work in most of her classes, violently attacked other students, and cried often at her failures or at real or fancied slights from others. Counseling and a hurried gathering of all obtainable facts indicated that Inez was unable, intellectually, socially, or emotionally, to get along in the average classroom.

Teacher comments: No teacher comments were available.

Awareness of the problem: The school was given no awareness of the problem when Inez enrolled.

Information given or lacking: Inez' past grades were given, but they

were misleading. The mother's statements had been accepted at face value, but they, too, were misleading. Lacking entirely until her new school could collect them gradually, were evaluations of her strengths and weaknesses, interests, past achievements, personality development, ability and I.Q. test scores, and, perhaps, most importantly, her parents' attitudes, which consisted in part of an inability to accept Inez' handicap.

Jim: Jim was a terrible cut-up in one class only, his one class with a woman teacher. His mother had requested interviews with this teacher, during the course of which she indicated that Jim had had three nervous breakdowns (including the one mentioned in the teacher notations) and that she felt Jim was on the verge of a fourth nervous breakdown. The counselee, in this case, was the teacher, really, who feared to interfere with Jim's escapades if he were really about to have a fourth nervous breakdown. Information released by the psychiatrist who had seen Jim a year earlier at the mother's request indicated that Jim had never had a nervous breakdown, was in pretty good mental health, but at times was understandably upset by his mother's bizarre behavior.

Teacher comments:

- Grade 3: "Jim experienced a nervous breakdown while in second grade. He is quite a nervous person. The breakdown was caused by a home situation."
- Grade 4: "Mother is cooperative and is free with the discussion of Jim's home life. He is doing real well and should be admired."
- Grade 5: "A real problem, doesn't get along well with anyone. I feel his mother is the problem. Broken home. He does well in school when he tries."
- Grade 6: "Jim is a good student. Disciplinewise, he can be a real pain, and I feel he will get much worse, as home is not what it should be for any child. He can be rather slow about reciting, but it is not that he does not know it; it is that he has been laughed at so much by fellow students other years."

Grade 7:) No comments available; Jim lived elsewhere and no comments were
 Grade 8:) forwarded.
 Grade 9: "Noisy, seeks attention, but displays ability in right circumstances. Cooperative when assigned a task."

Awareness of the problem: Some of the teachers had appraised the situation quite well; however, with hindsight wisdom it could be said that the mother buffaloed teachers into thinking that the boy was much more nervous than he actually was, according to psychiatric evaluation. Very personal details of the family situation were deleted from the grade three comments for the sake of anonymity; but it appeared that this information had to be hearsay, from the mother's account to the teacher.

Information given or lacking: The ninth grade teacher would not have been so in awe of the possibility of a fourth nervous breakdown if the folder had contained the information that the first three were the products of the mother's imagination. For the third grade notation to repeat the mother's story as fact was misleading to later readers of the folder.

Ken: Ken was a quiet boy whom nobody paid much attention to. Counseling, however, revealed that Ken dreamed night and day of possessing all the great jewels in the world, of marrying a princess, of inheriting all of Hitler's wealth, of having unlimited power. All his fingernails were badly chewed down; two were almost completely chewed off. He seemed to need someone who would let him talk it all out without laughing at him as his classmates did or without getting angry with him as his parents did. His main problem appeared to be a dissatisfaction with his real life and inadequate opportunities to assess his dream life.

Teacher comments:

Grade 4: "Ken could do so much better if he would try harder. There just

doesn't seem to be all the push there should be in this young man. I have tried everything. It almost takes drastic measures to keep him working, and then he will try. He is a pleasant boy, though, and accepts correction."

- Grade 5: "Friendly, much patience is needed to bring out the best in Ken. Encouragement at times will keep his efforts up to his ability. Ignoring his little problems occasionally has shown he does use initiative. Place in 6. Tried parent contact, mother or father not able to come to school."
- Grade 6: "Still needs much patience and encouragement. Social studies seems to be his best subject and he has worked hard in my class. Needs much help in math; he often does not finish his papers."
- Grade 7: "Below average student who could do better if he would apply himself more. Seems to get along with other students, but has few close friends."
- Grade 8: "Still below average in academic rating. This has improved somewhat this year. Ken is quite sensitive about his weight and has many problems with his fellow students as a result."

Awareness of the problem: The alarming extent of the daydreaming or the unhappiness that would push a boy to so much daydreaming were labeled by his teachers as merely being slow to finish his work.

Information given or lacking: Having few friends, being sensitive about his weight, and the fact that the parents couldn't find time to come to school were useful notes. The comment, "Could do better if he would apply himself," was the type of comment frequently read in teacher notations; it did no more than say that a problem of some type existed.

Larry: Larry was a very poor student whose teachers said they didn't expect much from him because all of his test results were on the low side. An interview with and phone call from the mother indicated that the father was very domineering, punitive, and constantly made remarks which made Larry feel like a moron. Since the mother did not agree with the father's actions, there was also a conflict between the parents. An older brother exhibited much the same behavior in junior high school, but after a stretch

in the Army was now a reasonably successful college student, according to the mother.

Teacher comments:

- Grade 4: "Larry is a little shy, not a leader, neat and clean, does average work and has average ability. Very pleasant way, seems well adjusted socially and emotionally."
- Grade 5: "Larry wastes time; his mind doesn't appear to be on school work. Likes attention and wants to be part of the group, which he is not (has few close friends)."
- Grade 6: "Larry is content to sit and dream. Since he is slow in action and thought, he misses much that goes on about him. His mother has kept him home on several occasions to babysit. This is unfortunate because Larry needs any and all help he can get with school subjects. Grades are low--spelling is an Achilles heel."
- Grade 7: "Poor student, but hasn't much to work with. Youngest of five children. Others much older. Sassy, brassy."
- Grade 8: "Apparently a problem to his teachers. Achievement very low, seems quite irresponsible and negligent. But on the other hand, one might think that he is doing his capacity. I believe he needs more attention and closer supervision."

Awareness of the problem: Larry was considered average and well-adjusted in grade four; the fact that he seemed to go downhill after that was noticed. His feelings of inferiority appeared to go unnoticed, and the parental conflict over his treatment seemed unknown.

Information given or lacking: An interesting and useful given fact was his progressively lower I.Q. test scores. The folder had no comments on the home situation or the father's personality. In fact, some of the home information appeared contradictory, since the teacher in grade six said the mother kept him home to babysit, while the teacher in grade seven said he was the youngest of five children.

Marty: Marty was a boy whose I.Q. test results always placed him somewhat above average, but his school work was failing and in grade eight his math teacher said his achievement was at about grade five level. In

counseling he indicated that he had never felt like working since his parents got divorced when he was in the fifth grade. Interviews with the mother and the father separately indicated that they were still battling for custody of the heart and body of Marty; it appeared that the mother, with whom Marty was living, was extremely bitter about the divorce and blamed Marty's school troubles on her ex-husband. Marty felt loyalty to both parents and seemed torn apart by their conflicting demands; the prospect of yet another legal custody fight required all his thought, emotion, and energy.

Teacher comments:

- Grade 1: "Now wearing glasses."
- Grade 2: "Tries very hard, not easily discouraged."
- Grade 3: "Capable student, has a terrific sense of humor, and tries to succeed always."
- Grade 4: "New bifocals, has adjusted very well, reading has improved. Very cooperative, but inclined to be careless in his work and getting it done on time."
- Grade 5: "Marty has been very upset over his parents' divorce. Some days he is very nervous."
- Grade 6: "Marty seems immature, lacks initiative. He has found sixth grade work difficult in some areas. No problems as far as behavior is concerned. Registered for summer school math."
- Grade 7: "Lacks initiative, seems to live in a dream world, does not work up to his abilities. Has had difficulties in math and science this year."
- Grade 8: "Considerable trouble with school work, doesn't seem to care about succeeding. Merely sits and daydreams."

Awareness of problem: The problem was quite specifically stated by the fifth grade teacher, although she didn't tie it to his lower-quality work. The change in his behavior can be clearly traced to the time of the divorce. Later teachers mentioned the continuing symptoms, but didn't seem to know how the divorce issue was being kept alive by the parents.

Information given or lacking: The basic fact of the divorce and its

effect on Marty were well-documented for those who would take the time to read. It might have been helpful if a second comment had been made, saying that Marty didn't attend summer school math class after all because of another disagreement between the parents. The continuing battle over Marty was not mentioned, although it doubtless had much to do with Marty's lack of application to his school work.

Results of Folder Analysis

In summary of the results of examination of information contained in these thirteen students' folders, it appeared that there was fairly adequate awareness of the problem in three cases, those of Donna, Ellen, and, to a lesser extent, Marty. In the cases of Ann, Bess, Cindy, Francie, Harriet, and Jim, there seemed to be partial awareness of the problem, but not a complete enough one for real understanding. In three cases, Georgine, Ken, and Larry, there seemed to be no real awareness of the problem. In the case of the transfer student, no hints appeared that problems would ensue in the future.

Examination of information given or lacking to aid in handling or solution of the problem seemed to reveal that often some information was given, but that further information or interpretation would have been most helpful. There was a good deal of information in the cases of Francie and Marty, but a lesser amount in the cases of Bess, Cindy, Donna, Harriet, Jim, Ken, and Larry. The information given for Ann, Georgine, and Inez seemed unsatisfactory.

The information which appeared to be lacking most often in this small sample of Bozeman Junior High School cumulative folders was that about home

environments, personalities of parents (indecisive, authoritarian, etc.), families' attitudes in areas important to the child, and family relationships. Since two cases occurred (Inez and Jim) in this sample where parents wittingly or unwittingly gave misleading information, information given by parents should perhaps be labeled as such.

CHAPTER IV

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

A preliminary re-examination of the cumulative record as it exists today in Montana schools was undertaken. The investigation was begun with two questions in mind:

1. Are we in Montana presently satisfied with cumulative records?
2. What sort of deficiencies appear to exist in cumulative records?

The investigation was divided into two parts in order to find preliminary answers to the above questions. One approach used was a general "sounding-out" of educators from around the state regarding their opinions on their schools' cumulative folders. The other method used was an intensive look at one school's cumulative folders by means of examination of specific folders of students with known problems to determine whether the folder adequately represented problems identified by a counselor.

Since the sample for the first part of the study was drawn from summertime graduate classes in education at Montana State University, the sample may not, of course, represent thinking of all educators in the state of Montana. For example it was possible that more teachers who lived in the vicinity of Montana State University were in attendance during this academic session. The total number of questionnaires distributed and returned was not a large one; however, a one hundred percent return of completed questionnaires was gained from the sample selected. The results of this study should be considered, perhaps, as a "possible indication" in the

thinking of people working in elementary and secondary schools in Montana.

For the second part of the study, it was possible that an unconscious bias existed in choosing students whose folders were to be examined because choices were made on the consideration that students chosen were highly familiar to the investigator. The folder was not examined, it should be noted, until the student's name had been chosen. The process of determining whether teacher comments showed awareness of the problem and whether the folder contained or lacked information to aid in handling or solving the problem was recognizably subjective. Two procedures were followed in order to partially offset the above concern: Teacher comments were written in their entirety, except insofar as changes had to be made to protect the student's anonymity; and at the end of the statement of cases, summaries were made in order to allow the reader to pit his judgment against that of the writer. The number of folders selected for examination was of a size which would allow convenient or more thorough scrutiny. The number analyzed was much too small, perhaps, to allow statements to be made about the quality of information contained in all folders in the school.

Conclusions

Several conclusions seem warranted from findings in this study:

1. There seemed to be a fair amount of dissatisfaction with cumulative folders of students who had attended schools represented by summer session students at Montana State University and with information recorded in folders which school systems had determined to be adequate for the sys-

tem's purposes.

2. There was a much greater dissatisfaction indicated with cumulative folders of students who had transferred into systems than with cumulative records of students continuously enrolled.

3. Teachers seemed to use cumulative folders as means to know and understand students and their problems, more than for other reasons. From this basic knowledge and understanding seemed to stem other uses to which folders might be put.

4. There were contradictory statements made by teachers, counselors, and administrators on how to expand cumulative folders and to make them more functional. Basically, the contradiction appeared to be resolved in a desire by the majority to have a cumulative folder which contained more information put in such a way that it was both easy to read and easy to understand.

5. The greatest deficiency in information contained in cumulative folders appeared to be in knowledge of the homes and knowledge of the parents which would perhaps be helpful in understanding the child, how the child interpreted experiences he had, and how he reacted to stresses he met.

6. Teacher notations occasionally appeared to be "spotty" in drawing accurate pictures of students from year to year; an example of this was when Georgine's eighth grade home room teacher wrote, "Average student, no problems," but later it was learned that this was a very stormy year for Georgine. When encountering a teacher's comment like that perhaps the reader of the folder would think that the student had no problems.

Recommendations

The findings and conclusions drawn seem to indicate several ways in which use of folders might be improved:

1. In view of dissatisfactions found with cumulative records of transfer students especially, perhaps it is time to consider the possibility of finding a more standardized language for Montana schools to use when devising cumulative folders, so that no matter where a student goes to school, a more adequate representation of his previous school experience will go with him.

2. In most problem cases examined, there seemed to exist some keys to information about some problems as well as a lack of information about other problems. It might be beneficial if counselors, who through their more direct line to students and parents have a greater opportunity to discover missing links of knowledge, would communicate these links to the classroom teacher when that information is not of a confidential nature.

3. Perhaps it would be possible for all teachers who actually instruct a certain homeroom to pool their knowledge when writing notations, since the child sometimes had homeroom teachers who were required to make notations for a folder, although they did not have the child in a class.

4. Information received from parents should be clearly labeled as such, particularly if it is of a value-judgment or emotional-laden nature. However, and at the same time, more information regarding homes and the parents appeared to be essential for more complete understandings of students.

APPENDIX

APPENDIX A

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR A RE-EXAMINATION OF THE CUMULATIVE FOLDER AS IT EXISTS TODAY

Please underline the position from which you presently view the cumulative record, then write years of experience after each type of position you have held.

Elementary teacher _____ Junior high teacher _____ Senior high teacher _____
 " counselor _____ " " counselor _____ " " counselor _____
 " administrator _____ " " administrator _____ " " administrator _____
 Other (specify) _____

What will be your major area of concentration in graduate school? Please check.

Elementary teaching _____ Junior high teaching _____ Senior high teaching _____
 " counseling _____ " " counseling _____ " " counseling _____
 " administration _____ " " administration _____ " " administration _____

1. What information in your school's cumulative records do you find useful? Please check.
 _____ Achievement records _____ I.Q./ability test records _____ social/emotional descriptions
 _____ Past grades _____ Home background _____ Health history
 _____ Other (please specify) _____
2. How often (approximate percentage of times used) do you find the records of students who have continuously attended your school system to contain:
 Too much information to use successfully? _____
 Adequate amounts of information? _____
 Too little needed information? _____
3. How often (approximate percentage of times used) do you find the records of transfer students coming into your school to contain:
 Too much information to use successfully? _____
 Adequate amounts of information? _____
 Too little needed information? _____
4. In what ways do you use the cumulative folder? _____

5. Are there any specific changes, omissions, or improvements you would like to see in the cumulative folder? _____

(You are welcome to use the back side if you need more space. Thank you.)

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