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SUPERVISED STUDY IN HIGH SCHOOL

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At the outset it should be understood that no adequate discussion of the entire field of supervised study can be given in an article such as this must of necessity be. In this paper the subject will be briefly treated under the following heads:

- I. What is Supervised Study?
- II. Needs for Supervised Study
- III. Varying Forms of Organization for Supervised Study
- IV. Advantages of Supervised Study
- V. Disadvantages and Dangers
- VI. The Rating of Supervised Study in the Hibbing (Minnesota) High School
 - a) By Pupils
 - b) By Teachers
- VII. The Greatest Unsolved Problem
- VIII. Bibliography

I

What is supervised study? Hall-Quest defined the term thus: "Supervised study is that plan of school procedure whereby each pupil is so adequately instructed and directed in the methods of studying and thinking that his daily preparation will progress under conditions most favorable to a hygienic, economical, and self-reliant career of intellectual endeavor." In current discussion of the subject there is little attempt made, it seems, to distinguish between (1) the mere giving of general directions for study of any or all subjects, and (2) the definite organization of the school for intensive supervision of the technical study of individual subjects. It seems that the first type should be designated as *directive* rather than as *supervisory*. In this paper the term "supervised study" will refer to the attempt on the part of the individual who supervises, not alone to give directions for study, but also to see that

such directions are specifically applicable to the subject-matter in hand and are followed out by the pupil.

II

The need of supervision of study has been more or less generally recognized by school people and the lay public for years. It has been brought nearer home to us, recently, for a number of reasons:

1. Changes in urban industrial relations have had a mighty influence on the home and civic environment of pupils.

2. The feeling that the high school is for all adolescents, regardless of ability and future vocational and avocational interests, has furnished the high schools with new pupil groups of more widely varying abilities and interests.

3. The enrichment of the course of study has opened many unanswered questions.

4. The feeling among teachers that they are to teach pupils rather than subjects, and therefore that they need to find the pupil's point of difficulty, has probably been most influential in bringing about the demand on the part of progressive teachers that they be given some supervision over the pupil's preparation. These are only a few of the general statements of the need as seen by the writer. Below are given statements by various educators on the subject.

Hall-Quest's statements may be summarized as follows:

1. Modified home conditions:

a) Biological—There are fewer children in the family and the older children do not help the younger.

b) Architectural—The modern city home or flat is not arranged with a view to home study.

c) Industrial—People are drawn to crowded city districts with their many "attractions" as distractions.

d) Social—The intricate social life of the adolescents of today interferes materially with efficient home study.

2. Individual differences in pupils' abilities cannot be dealt with successfully without supervision of their lesson preparation.

Parker says in effect:

1. Poor students fail to profit by recitation and home study.

2. Precisely measured experimental investigations show that supervised study improves the work of students.
3. The physical conditions and routine of study can be regulated.
4. Teachers may develop a special technique in manipulating a study period.

I. M. Allen is of the opinion:

1. That high-school pupils do not on an average devote in and out of school much more than thirty minutes to the preparation of a lesson.
2. That very few high-school pupils preparing lessons at home establish regular and systematic study habits.
3. That pupils who need most to establish proper study habits come largely from homes that fail to encourage, or to make possible, such habits.
4. That the larger percentage of pupils prepare lessons by the "close the book and recall" method.
5. That the slower pupils, in mathematics conducted on the *no-home-study* plan, do better work than in classes conducted on the *home-study* plan.
6. That high schools under the usual form of schedule do not offer instruction on "How to Study."

The statement of John E. Erickson, of Houghton, Michigan, is in summary:

1. It is almost conceded that pupils do not know how to study.
2. No teacher can successfully supervise the study of an assembly made up of pupils from many different classes, studying different subjects.

A. C. Roberts, of Everett, Washington, found:

1. That in the Everett High School over 20 per cent had failed, dropped, or failed to complete, their work during the year preceding the introduction of supervised study.
2. There can be little study in a session-room of two hundred pupils.
3. Home study must be considered inefficient and futile.

F. M. Giles made a study of the De Kalb High School by the questionnaire method and found the following existing conditions:

1. Of the pupils, 25 per cent had no definite time for study.
2. Almost 50 per cent had no separate room for home study.
3. A total of 75 per cent used the evenings for study and hence had conflicts between study hours and evening entertainments, etc.
4. The hardest lessons were prepared at home.
5. The majority of students expressed a preference for studying at school.
6. A larger number studied by the "close the book" method than by any other method.

E. R. Breslich states that:

1. Statistics show that some bright pupils can do four or five times as much as the slower pupils.

Other educators offer about the same reasons when calling for a change. We shall see, however, that the development of specialization of organization and technique to accomplish the desired supervision has taken widely varying forms, depending on the ideas of the administrators and the peculiar situations to be met.

III

An attempt will be made in this part of the article to give a number of the specific plans of administering schools for the purpose of study supervision. Much of the material here given is taken from Hall-Quest's studies.

1. The Pueblo plan was instituted by Preston W. Search. Pupils were grouped together in rooms, but each pupil worked on his individual assignment, with the teacher looking after the individual preparation and individual expression of each pupil. There was no class recitation. This plan has been brought to a high point of efficiency in the San Francisco Normal School, but does not appear to have been adopted by public high schools. Even in the San Francisco Normal School a part of the work is done in class recitation.

2. The Batavia plan was accidentally discovered by Superintendent Kennedy, at Batavia, New York, and has been used there for a number of years. It probably marks the definite beginning

of present ideas on supervised study. It has been applied much more widely to elementary schools than to high schools.

3. The Newark plan, Newark, New Jersey, represents one of the first successful attempts to use a portion of the recitation period for actual reciting and the remaining portion for further study and preparation. At present in Newark the period is fifty minutes long. The first half of the period is given over to recitation and the last half to study of the next day's lesson. Formerly a longer period was tried, but after experimentation fifty minutes has been selected as the most desirable length.

4. The Columbia Plan of the University of Missouri High School has three outstanding characteristics:

- a) There is freedom to move about the room at will, if actually at work. This gives a feeling of naturalness and ease in the room.
- b) Definite rules for conducting the class are furnished the teacher.
- c) The class hour is divided into three distinct parts:
 - (1) The recitation—twenty minutes or less.
 - (2) Class study—twenty-five minutes or more.
 - (3) Assignment—five minutes.

5. The weekly supervised study period has been developed by Principal Giles, at De Kalb, Illinois. By this method one period a week is set aside in each subject for the general supervision of the advance work and for the gathering together of subject-matter already covered that may not be understood. Many modifications of this method have been *incidentally* used by different schools.

6. The daily extra period has been used in a great many schools. Hall-Quest gives special reference to Pottstown, Pennsylvania. This method was in use in the Des Moines schools at least as early as 1906. The period which is chosen as the extra period varies with the high school. Some have the period early in the morning, others at noon, and many have an extra period at the close of a shortened day. The writer had charge of a high school at Albia, Iowa, that had a seventy-minute period of this nature beginning at 2:50 and closing at 4:00 P.M. All pupils doing unsatisfactory work during the day and all pupils who were behind in their work

were required to remain for this period. Any pupils who wished to study under supervision were permitted to remain for the period. Perhaps an average of 20 to 40 per cent of all pupils made daily use of the period through choice or compulsion. Eliminations and losses by failure were reduced more than one-half. Pupils who were doing satisfactory work were "excused" from the period rather than those who were unsatisfactory, being "punished by being kept in," as the school day was supposed to close at 4:00 P.M.

7. Voluntary study hours, conferences, etc. In this plan the teacher is in her room during her vacant periods. Any pupil may go to her room for conference or assistance with the work. In some schools the appointment for the meeting is made by the teacher, in which case, of course, it ceases to be voluntary. Two points of difficulty arise with this plan: first, the pupils most needing help are seldom ready to take the initiative and to make use of the opportunity to get help; secondly, many of the pupils will be unable to meet the teacher during her conference period owing to class conflicts. A third difficulty that often arises is that the teacher is likely to feel that the conference hour should be a rest hour for her, and hence to become prone to discourage pupils from making use of the conference. Pittsburgh has developed this scheme in a rather satisfactory way. Principal Carl N. Nielsen, of Vallejo, California, has originated a rather intricate combination of the conference period and an occasional supervised class study-period. According to his plan any pupil who is falling behind in any particular subject may be required by the teacher of the subject in which he is delinquent to come to her "deficiency period" for help, even if he has to miss another class to do so. Mr. Nielsen claims there is very little confusion as a result of pupils having to miss a class in order to make up a deficiency. The supervision of class study occurs once in a fortnight.

8. The double period. According to Hall-Quest this plan was first originated in Joliet, Illinois, under Principal Stanley Brown. Hall-Quest appears to know of no other place in the country where this plan existed at the time of the publication of his book. However, it was in existence before that time in a number of schools, some of which had developed their own individual forms of the

plan without being aware that such a plan was developing in Joliet. The double period has developed in various schools in accordance with the varying ideals of the administrators and the local conditions. The length of periods in this scheme vary as sixty minutes, seventy minutes, eighty minutes, or ninety minutes. In Joliet the length of the period is ninety minutes, with the first half of the period given over to recitation and the last half to supervised study. Oskaloosa, Iowa; Virginia, Minnesota; and Wichita, Kansas, have the ninety-minute period. Everett, Washington, has a ninety-minute period, but has arranged for part of the classes to recite the first half of the period and part the last half, in order to accommodate pupils carrying five subjects. Wichita does the same thing by having classes recite but four times a week and having one set of classes rotate from day to day and from period to period. Wichita is planning on changing to the Everett scheme. Springfield, Illinois, has a ninety-minute period, but will be discussed separately later. Houghton, Michigan, has a period of eighty minutes equally divided into study and recitation, with the first half devoted to recitation. Seattle, Washington; Kansas City, Kansas; Grand Rapids, Michigan; Hibbing and Grand Rapids, Minnesota, are representative of the various types of schools that are using the sixty-minute period. These schools are all heartily in favor of the sixty-minute period. Wichita, Kansas, however, tried the sixty-minute period and now prefers the ninety-minute period. Newark, New Jersey, shifted back to the fifty-minute period. Anaconda, Montana, is dispensing with supervised study altogether, as not giving the desired results. The length of period appears to depend on a number of factors, noticeable among which may be named the "feelings" of the principal, the sympathy of the teaching force, the arrangements of the building, the equipment for library and laboratories, and finally the social and industrial organization of the community.

9. The Springfield plan, as worked out by Principal I. M. Allen, is a ninety-minute period, and is known as the "Laboratory Recitation Plan." In this plan pupils are grouped into classes as nearly according to abilities as possible. There are several groups, and each group may be a shifting group. The fundamental principle

of the whole plan is that no pupil shall recite until he has made proper preparation of all preceding lessons. This is arranged by having one teacher act as recitation teacher and one as a study or "laboratory" teacher. The pupil prepares under direction of the laboratory teacher whatever lesson exercise he is ready for, and then recites under the recitation teacher with a group that is at the same point in the work. If his work is not satisfactory to the recitation teacher, he returns to the laboratory teacher for further preparation. Very definite lesson assignments have been worked out in most subjects, and pupils must prepare all exercises, whether present every day or not. It is impossible to give more than a brief account of this rather complicated scheme in a paper of this length.

From the foregoing it is seen how varied are the schemes for reaching the desired goal of individual efficiency through supervision of study.

IV

The advantages of supervised study have largely been anticipated in the discussion of the "needs" for supervision. A few statements of advantages are given here as well. Principal Paul Stetson, of Grand Rapids, finds that it:

1. Abolishes all double periods.
2. Gives the individual the attention he needs, especially in the early years of his course.
3. Reduces the number of failures and eliminations.
4. Reduces the amount of home work.
5. Creates a feeling of responsibility in the teacher not otherwise there.
6. Makes a period more than just a recitation.
7. As a result of definite instruction in studying, both the pupil and the teacher use the period to the best advantage.

To these advantages we shall add that it:

1. Makes provision for individual differences in ability.
2. Insures more complete and more definite assignments.
3. Gives the individual pupils help on the point of difficulty at the time of the occurrence of the difficulty.

4. Gives an opportunity for the teacher to observe the methods of study of pupils while studying, and enables her to lead up to desirable habits of study.
5. Gives an opportunity for the teacher to use the entire period to develop some new topic which needs extensive or intensive interpretation.

V

The disadvantages and dangers of supervised study are much the same as those incidental to all educational work, i.e., those due to human frailties.

1. The effective supervision of study is based on the presumption that teachers are versed in the methods of efficient study and have the ability to teach others how to study.
2. The enthusiastic teacher may very easily, with or without conscious interest, usurp the study-period for recitation.
3. There is another type of teacher who likes to consider the study-period as a rest-period for her own personal use.
4. Teachers who are not in sympathy may and usually do fail to make good use of the period. Reports from various schools very definitely indicate that whatever attempts have been made to introduce it in the face of lack of sympathy have been discredited because of the unsympathetic attitude of teachers.
5. Some teachers feel that pupils become too dependent as a result of too much help.

In any school interested in introducing any plan of supervised study a campaign of appreciation should be carried on in advance, and then special attention must be continually directed to developing methods of technique peculiar to the several subjects.

VI

Supervised study has been a feature of the Hibbing high-school work for the past four years. It has been used in the seventh and eighth grades for two years, and in the fourth, fifth, and sixth grades for one and one-half years. Thus all pupils in the six-year high school have had considerable experience with the plan.

During the month of February, 1917, a questionnaire was issued to representative groups of pupils from the seventh to the twelfth grade inclusive. Each pupil was given not more than fifteen minutes to answer the questions. No consultation was allowed. The papers were collected at once, and the data were tabulated in the principal's office. Some of the results are given herewith:

1. Do you prefer the supervised study-period to the period as we had it when you recited in class and studied outside of class?

	Yes	No	Total
High school.	254	15	269
Eighth grade.	96	9	105
Seventh grade.	150	8	158
Total.	500	32	532

No comment is necessary on the foregoing expression of preference.

We were interested in knowing why pupils preferred the one system or the other. Another question inquired why they preferred the one system which they indicated. A random sampling, which by the way covers nearly all the reasons given, is shown here as being of decided psychological value in that it speaks volumes with regard to the advantages and disadvantages of the two types of period.

Favorable:

1. It helps you to understand your work better.
2. We get the principle and hard points of the lesson.
3. It makes the work much easier.
4. Because part of the lesson can be prepared for the next day.
5. Because I can learn more.
6. Questions can be asked in class and you won't have to come after school to have what you want done.
7. It makes pupils study who would loaf otherwise.
8. Because when a teacher helps you, you can learn more in ten minutes than doing it alone in an hour.
9. Because the work is fresh in your mind after the teacher has explained the advance.
10. I wouldn't clearly understand my lessons otherwise.
11. Because when the teacher explains the lesson I get more out of it.

12. Because that way you understand the problems and don't ask some student and then forget the right way.
13. Because I do not have much time to study elsewhere.
14. Because one gets things correctly the first time and does not study a wrong way.
15. Because if something turns up we want to know, we can ask.
16. It gives us some idea of the next day's lesson.
17. You are sure to study there.
18. When the teacher suggests the most important points in the new lesson, studying the lesson immediately helps to fix the points better in mind.
19. Because it is easy to study when you can ask questions.
20. If there wasn't any teacher to explain often you could not go on with your work.
21. There is not so much study at night.
22. Because I'll surely have some of the lesson.
23. Because often you do not understand the assignment.
24. Because you can get more out of it than by studying alone.
25. There is not so much chance for whispering and therefore more can be accomplished.
26. Because the teacher has more time to help each individual.
27. You receive the right assistance.
28. We are in the same room in which the study is taught.
29. There is a good atmosphere for study.

From these citations from pupil statements it would appear that in the opinion of the pupils they are receiving many of the benefits or advantages mentioned earlier in this article. It should be borne in mind that these are representative opinions of all the opinions given by the five hundred pupils who favored supervised study.

We shall now state the reasons given by the thirty-two pupils who opposed the plan or preferred no supervised study.

1. Because it is better to study by yourself.
2. Because the teacher does not help me.
3. It makes me too dependent on the teacher.
4. Only about four or five get help during the period.
5. Because when we are studying we are interrupted by the end of the period before we have finished studying.
6. I think that most people waste this time anyway.
7. Most of the time the help is not needed.
8. Cannot get all my work done during the period.

9. Because the students have become tired of the subject in hand and three-fourths of them do not put this time to good advantage.
10. Because you receive this period from some teachers, but not from others.

Here again we see that most of the reasons stated will group themselves under heads given under disadvantages. An interesting side light on the answers is that of those who feared dependence from getting too much help not a single one could have made a passing grade without the special attention on the part of the teacher. The comment on the class being tired of the subject was made by a girl of the giddy, "butterfly" type who never was able to concentrate on any idea.

Pupils were asked what changes they thought should be made. An overwhelming majority expressed themselves as wanting things left as they were. A total of sixteen pupils favored a longer study-period. The other suggestions were that the teacher be required to see that the study-period was always used for study purposes, that more attention be given to supervised study in certain classes, and that the number in a class be made smaller so that all might receive individual attention.

Pupils were asked in what classes they received the greatest help from supervised study. In the high school proper mathematics was first and algebra led geometry. Foreign language was second; Latin I and Caesar both received high rank. German also was well up. Bookkeeping ranked fairly well. English, history, science, and other commercial subjects ranked low. This corresponds rather closely with the returns reported by Principal Erickson, of Houghton. Science ranked higher at Houghton than at Hibbing. Apparently certain of our subjects have as yet no technique of supervised study. Mathematics can undoubtedly accommodate itself to such treatment, but it is hard to see why foreign language should be more readily adapted to such treatments than history, English, or science.

As a check on the pupils' opinions an attempt was made to secure data from the opinions of the teachers. Teachers were given blanks with the instructions that they were to discuss to the best of their ability the subject of supervised study on certain

stated questions. They were requested to answer without consultation, and were allowed forty-eight hours after receiving the blanks before turning them in answered. We have every reason to believe that the instructions were followed out to the letter. Twenty-nine answered. The first question was, "Does it increase your work?" Seven teachers answered that it did increase their work. Seventeen stated that it did not increase their work. Four were indefinite, and one stated emphatically that it lightened her work. The second question was, "Are you able to have the class more nearly reach the desired proficiency in your subject?" Twenty-two stated emphatically, "Yes," one "Most emphatically yes," one "No," three "No difference," one was indefinite, and one did not answer. The third question was, "What is the greatest difficulty that you meet in the supervised study-period?"

Answers:

1. No difficulties (5).
2. Getting pupils to work (6).
3. Pupils become too dependent (7).
4. Disinclination on the part of the pupil to study similar lessons (8).
5. To help without disturbing others (9).
6. Period too short (1).
7. Some pupils fail to make further preparation (1).
8. What pupil to help (1).
9. To find needs of individual pupils (2).

There were ten questions in all. This paper will not allow of further reference to the opinions of the teachers, as from this point all with the exception of the last dealt with general questions for the purpose of securing helpful, suggestive answers that would not allow of tabulation. The last question asked was the pointed one if the teacher personally favored supervised study as we have it in the school. The reason for the answer was also asked. The only mention here that is necessary is that the teachers of mathematics, foreign languages, and bookkeeping were heartily in favor of the plan, whereas the teachers of other subjects could be arranged in a scale of declining sympathy which had its lower limit at absolute zero. The only purpose in citing the data on this last question is that they show a very positive correlation with the subjects as named by the pupils.

VII

The greatest unsolved problem in supervised study is not how to organize a schedule of classes, how to finance any additional teaching force, how to group pupils as to size of classes, or how long to make the period. It is how to develop a specialized technique for each individual subject, and to train teachers so that they can efficiently administer that technique so as to reach the individual pupils of their classes.

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