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# A Program of County Attendance Improvement

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Edwards,  
Robert Otho

1946

A PROGRAM OF COUNTY ATTENDANCE IMPROVEMENT

BY

ROBERT OTTO EDWARDS

A THESIS

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT  
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF  
MASTER OF ARTS

WESTERN KENTUCKY STATE TEACHERS COLLEGE  
AUGUST, 1946

Approved:-

Major Professor  
and  
Department of Education  
Graduate Committee

*L. Francis Jones*  
*[Signature]*



DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to the under-privileged children and attendance officers of Kentucky.

#### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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CHAPTER I  
INTRODUCTION

The age-old problem of school attendance is still with us today and unsolved.

Attendance officers from a state viewpoint came into existence with the new school code in 1935. Ten years later the attendance problem is still unsolved, progress has been made, but more progress remains to be made.

The title Attendance Officer, and other names applied to the same position, needs to be dignified by the officers themselves, the schools and public alike.

When the average of actual membership is about 77 per cent of the school census, then a serious problem presents itself.

The causes of absence have been ascertained through several surveys by the State Department of Education and by individual county and independent school surveys. No definite county attendance program for the state has been promulgated. Several ideas have been set forth, but always a definite program has been lacking, hence, a need for the study.

What prompted the study.— The writer's observations in many of the counties and independent school systems of the State of Kentucky of a definite need for an adequate program of school attendance.

Statement of problem.— This study deals with a proposed county plan for the improvement of attendance in the State of Kentucky

In the consideration of this problem there are four considerations:

1. A county attendance program with definite objectives



must be set up.

- 2. There must be cooperation between the attendance officer and other school officials.
- 3. An individual school program must be set up.
- 4. Accurate records of school census and attendance are necessary in order that the problem may be solved.

Scope of the study.-- The scope of this study includes Union County Schools, both public and parochial, and the independent system of Uniontown, with the idea of extending to the counties of the State of Kentucky a workable program for improving attendance service and helping to solve the problems involved.

Source of data.-- The source of data for this plan was the Office of the Union County Board of Education, the Department of Census and Attendance, Frankfort, and Records of the Union County Health Department.

Technique of treatment.-- The technique of treatment is observational. The proposals are based upon experiences of the author. The program presents a long-term general plan rather than a short-term specific plan.

This study contains five chapters. The first chapter deals with the introduction. The second chapter presents the county program of attendance service, in outline, which serves as a basis for the study. The third chapter deals with the work of the attendance officer, as set forth by school law, and by the County Superintendent and Board of Education. The fourth chapter deals with the individual school

program centered around the principal and teacher. The fifth chapter gives consideration to the keeping of an accurate school census, conclusion, recommendation, and bibliography.

## CHAPTER III

### THE COUNTY PROGRAM OF ATTENDANCE SERVICE

A county program of attendance service is not simply a matter of depending on the various principals and teachers to carry out the provisions of the school law. An effective program will have to be carefully planned, and this planning will require the participation of many persons over a period of time. The program must be sufficiently comprehensive to give a clear cut picture of all relationships and responsibilities and of the procedures which are to be used in putting the plan into operation.

Union County, Kentucky is located in the western part of the Commonwealth, bordering the Ohio River to the north. It is an agricultural county, but coal mining has been of major importance as an industry, and more recently the discovery of oil has caused the county at this writing to rank first in oil production in the state. While it may not be a typical county, problems and conditions here will be applicable in other counties.

Attendance service is not simply a means of enforcing attendance laws. Instead it is a problem of guidance involving the understanding of child behavior. When a child fails to enroll in school or does not attend regularly there is always a maladjustment which must be located and remedied. The difficulty usually goes beyond the personal whims of the child or his parents. It may arise from the physical or economic condition of the child, from parental indifference, broken homes, either by death or divorce, or work, personality difficulties, curricular maladjustments, unwholesome school environment, or from a



combination of these or other factors.<sup>1</sup> The cause of the difficulty can be located through careful investigation and conferences with parents, pupils, and teachers. It is the responsibility of the schools to provide attendance service which will function successfully in locating the conditions which interfere with regular school attendance, which will solve the problem of irregular attendance and unsatisfactory school work.

A plan for attendance service should be well organized and executed. The problem of non-attendance is a social, an economic, or a guidance problem. If gains are to be made in improving attendance service, the schools must develop a plan which will enlist and use effectively the services of competent persons who are concerned with and who are trained to deal with problems of child adjustment and welfare.<sup>2</sup> Each school and school district should have an organization comprised of the school = people, welfare workers, health officials, county officials, and representatives of other organizations who will work together effectively in improving attendance. This organization should be well planned to prevent overlapping of effort. Definite duties and responsibilities should be formulated, and all efforts coordinated, for the good of the child.

The principal or teacher of the school is responsible for all pupils that attend the school. It is therefore the first concern of the teachers with the help of the principals to attempt to solve the

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<sup>1</sup> Colin English, "School Attendance Service in Florida", Bulletin No. 32, State Department of Education, Tallahassee, Florida, March, 1942.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, p. 7.



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questions of attendance. After these efforts fail the attention of the attendance officer should be called for.

Good attendance is one of the chief factors in determining the success of any school. Quantity of attendance is directly related to the quality of a school system. A poor attendance record represents a laxity at some point of the school organization. A high percentage of attendance within a school system is rapidly becoming a measurement of distinction and efficiency for that system. Attendance is a vital part of the foundation for success in school. This foundation is the keynote to the success of the product that we wish to build -- youth.

The county program of attendance service is, in reality, comprised of a series of closely related programs each of which deals with some specific phase of the project.

The basic steps in developing a county program are:

1. Preparing a list of best practices covering all aspects of the field of attendance service. This list of best practices might be prepared in written form in such a manner that the statement would comprise the objective sought.
2. Carrying on a survey or study to determine: (a) Trends, (b) Attitude, and (c) Present Status. Such a study should be carried on in each school or community and then summarized for the entire county.

The present status must be determined in order to get some idea of how much progress is possible. Monthly percentages of attendance of each school should be kept. Forms should be prepared that will give information as

to the cause of each absence. The teacher's monthly attendance report should have necessary information in connection with attendance.

3. Develop a program progressing from the condition found at the time of the study toward the objective.

The development of a county program of attendance service is a continuing process. The entire program cannot be prepared at one time and then kept in that exact form until it has been attained. The first step toward the preparation of a program should go as far as practicable in the direction of outlining the best program possible. However, further study and new developments will always open the possibility of making improvements in the original plans.

In addition to a general plan of improving attendance service we have specific topics for attention. Some of the specific topics which should be singled out for attention are as follows:

1. School Census, including not only the problem of keeping an accurate census, but plans for using effectively census information.
2. Keeping lists of children that belong in their respective districts up to date.
3. Plans for checking absences in each school, for determining the causes of absence. In this connection the withdrawal notice on page eleven has been used satisfactorily in Union County Schools. The report is self explanatory and is used in checking teacher's monthly report blanks.

# **CORRECTION**



***PRECEDING IMAGE HAS BEEN  
REFILMED  
TO ASSURE LEGIBILITY OR TO  
CORRECT A POSSIBLE ERROR***



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### Definition of Services -

1. Determine the services to be rendered by the County Superintendent, the Attendance Officer and individual schools. There should probably be a written outline setting forth duties, services and means of cooperation.
2. Determine the agencies available in the community that can effectively cooperate in carrying out the attendance program and outline plans for the use and help of each.
3. Determine how the objective and requirements of the attendance program can best be interpreted.
4. Determine in what respects procedures should be uniform and in what respects initiative can be left to the individual schools without having uniform procedure.

No school attendance program can be satisfactorily worked out by the school authorities alone. Regular attendance is dependent upon a variety of factors, some of which can be dealt with satisfactorily by school authorities and others will have to receive the help of other appropriate agencies.

Since health is the first objective of education, it should be carefully considered in school attendance improvement. There is a close relationship between the schools and county health departments. Statistics show that a considerable amount of irregular attendance in practically all counties of Kentucky are due to preventable sickness. In some instances over a short period of time it may be due to epidemics, but in many instances irregular attendance is due to poor health conditions found in the community or in individual homes.

There are still a number of counties in Kentucky that do not have

a county health unit. One of the chief concerns of school authorities in such counties should be to help arrange for the establishment of a health unit. There are any number of health problems that cannot be remedied by individual doctors, or by any private organization for that purpose that they might establish. Again in counties in which there is no county health unit, the schools more than likely are not in a position from a financial standpoint to provide the services of school nurses or other persons who can assist in carrying out an effective health program. In counties that have a county health unit, a cooperative program should be used to the maximum of the facilities and services available. The attendance officers should work with the doctor, nurses, and sanitary inspectors in reporting conditions and families that are in need of attention.

The county health unit should have periodic examinations followed by remedial treatment and effective program of immunization.

An adequate health and physical education program in our schools is always welcomed by attendance officers as a program indirectly solving many attendance problems.

The cooperation of health officials should be sought out and never wait for others to take the initiative.

Many of the problems of attendance are basically economic in nature. In all counties there are parents who cannot provide the clothing which is necessary for the children to attend school, and perhaps more often cannot, or do not, provide the nourishing food and balanced diet needed by the children. The cooperation of civic clubs, and welfare agencies of the county is of basic importance.

Practically every school in the state now has an active parent-



teachers association. If such an organization is not already functioning in the community, the cooperation of teachers and principals may be secured in planning such an organization.

The courts should never be resorted to until all other efforts at securing enrollment or regular attendance have failed, but a satisfactory school attendance program cannot be carried out without the cooperation of the courts. There are some parents who will refuse to cooperate with the attendance officer.

Therefore, it is very necessary that there be a close relationship and understanding between the judge of the juvenile court and school officials. The court should always have advance knowledge of problem cases, so they may deal with parents and children on a constructive basis. The object of the court should be to take such steps that are necessary for a solution to the problem.

If for political reasons the court should refuse to cooperate in cases deserving court action, then a plan for developing public opinion that will have influence must be worked out.

MONTHLY REPORT BLANK

Union County Schools

School.....Teacher.....

Date of Report.....

WITHDRAWAL NOTICE--Fill out the spaces below when child moves or leaves district.

RE-ENTRY NOTICE--Be sure you have an enrollment card properly filled out for each new pupil.

Name of Parent or Guardian.....

| Names of Children | Date of Birth | Gr. | Date of Withdrawal..... |
|-------------------|---------------|-----|-------------------------|
|                   |               |     | Old                     |
|                   |               |     | Address.....            |
|                   |               |     | New                     |
|                   |               |     | Address.....            |
|                   |               |     | School Expected         |
|                   |               |     | To Attend.....          |

Name of Parent or Guardian.....

| Names of Children | Date of Birth | Gr. | Date of Withdrawal..... |
|-------------------|---------------|-----|-------------------------|
|                   |               |     | Old                     |
|                   |               |     | Address.....            |
|                   |               |     | New                     |
|                   |               |     | Address.....            |
|                   |               |     | School Expected         |
|                   |               |     | To Attend.....          |

ABSENCE REPORT

Note: Please check by name of children whose absence needs investigation. Use back of sheet if necessary.

| Name of Child | Name of Parent | Days Absent | Cause of Absence |
|---------------|----------------|-------------|------------------|
|               |                |             |                  |
|               |                |             |                  |
|               |                |             |                  |

This report is due when the regular teachers' monthly report is sent to this office. Send in report even if you do not have a withdrawal in order to complete the records.

\*Records Union County Board of Education.



## CHAPTER III

## THE WORK OF THE ATTENDANCE OFFICER

The Attendance Officer and Census Supervisor is appointed by the County Board of Education upon the recommendation of the County Superintendent. The County Board also fixes the compensation, travel reimbursement, and term of office of the Attendance Officer.

The position of Attendance Officer was created chiefly because of the realization that the County Superintendent would not have sufficient time to devote to attendance work to develop a satisfactory program. If the matter had to be left to the individual principals of the various schools, an effective and coordinated program could hardly be expected. Competent leadership and guidance are essential. For that reason the Attendance Officer is made responsible to the County Superintendent and through him to the County Board for the development of a satisfactory school attendance program. Although the Attendance Officer is authorized by law to undertake prosecution of cases under the compulsory school attendance law, and to inspect establishments where minors may be employed, the work of the Attendance Officer is not entirely legal. In fact, the legal aspects of the work are purposely not emphasized in the Kentucky School Law. The chief emphasis is placed on the responsibility of the Attendance Officer for developing and carrying out a satisfactory attendance program. He is therefore, more of a leader, a counselor and diagnostician in the field of attendance service than an officer of the law. He represents the County Superintendent in carrying out policies in the field of attendance which are approved by the County Board. It is his duty to work with the principals and

teachers of the various schools, with children and parents of children who need attention, and with representatives of the various agencies in the county which may be in position to cooperate in an attendance program.

The new school code adopted in 1934 provided Kentucky's educational district with a new law regarding the enforcing of compulsory school attendance. Each school district shall constitute a separate attendance district unless two or more contiguous school districts, with the approval of the State Board of Education, unite to form one attendance district.<sup>3</sup> Accordingly the Board of Education of Union County and the independent district of Uniontown united and are served by one attendance officer.

The qualifications of Attendance Officers and Assistant Attendance Officers are set by statutes of the state which require that the officers shall be twenty-five years old and shall throughout his tenure of service hold a valid certificate issued in accordance with the rules and regulations of the State Board of Education.

School attendance service has suffered much in the past few years, some of it due to inexperienced officers. This may be traced to the war, but before the war, it should be noted that the qualifications were too low. This coupled with the practice of Superintendents of using the attendance officer as a catch-all prevented needed attendance work.

The present and future legislature can do much to help attendance officers by raising the qualifications, helping to raise salaries, defining duties, and setting forth rules of enforcement.

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<sup>3</sup>

Kentucky Educational Bulletin, Vol. 10, May 1942, Frankfort, Kentucky.



County Boards of Education and County and Independent School Superintendents must be educated to the value and importance of getting qualified, competent, interested, and well paid attendance officers, who should prove, by their efforts, the worth of a good attendance program.

The day of determining the Attendance Officers salary, by the decrease or increase of the census, should be past, and the added duties placed upon him should be decreased to a minimum.

The chief duties of Attendance Officers as defined by Kentucky School Law are:

1. Devote his entire time to the duties of the office.
2. Enforce the compulsory attendance and census laws in the attendance district which he serves.
3. Acquaint the school with the home condition of the child, and the home with the work and advantages of the school.
4. Ascertain the causes of irregular attendance and truancy, and seek the elimination of these causes.
5. Secure the enrollment in school of all children who should be enrolled, and keep all enrolled children in reasonably regular attendance.
6. Visit the homes of children who are absent from school or who are reported to be in need of books, clothing or parental care.
7. Ascertain and report to the Superintendent of schools in the district in which the child resides, the number and cost of books and school supplies needed by any child whose parent, guardian or custodian does not have sufficient income to furnish the child with the necessary books and school supplies.



8. Keep the records and make the reports that are required by law, by regulation of the State Board of Education, by the State Attendance Officer, and by the State Superintendent and Board of Education.
9. Perform any other duties assigned him by the State Board of Education or by his District Board of Education.<sup>4</sup>

The above duties clearly outline the work of the Attendance Officer, and the qualifications outlined by law determine whether one is properly certified.

In addition to the required qualifications based on training, the Attendance Officer should possess certain other qualifications in order to be in a position to carry out his responsibilities successfully.

Among those which are considered desirable are:

1. He should have at least two years of successful teaching experience in order to be familiar with all problems of the classroom and be in a position to see attendance problems from the point of view of the teacher. It probably would be advisable for the teacher to have special training in attendance work, so that better results could be obtained.
2. He should possess a pleasant, forceful and dynamic, but tactful personality. The Attendance Officer will have to deal with the public as well as with school personnel

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<sup>4</sup>  
Op. cit., Kentucky Education Bulletin, p. 87.

and will have to be in position to be firm and yet tactful in carrying out the objective of the program. A tactless officer can harm any program that is initiated; so too much emphasis cannot be placed on tact.

3. He should know school law that pertains to his work, so that costly mistakes in court, or carrying out the enforcement of compulsory attendance laws can be avoided. The County Attorney and Juvenile Judge should at all times be informed of the nature of law violation before any action is begun. Many times, helpful suggestions can solve problems before they get to be habits.
4. He should possess an abundance of patience, sympathy and human understanding. The work of the Attendance Officer will be to a great extent with families of limited education and poor economic means and often with broken families, either by death, divorce, or other reasons. An understanding of these conditions will be needed in order to deal successfully with the problems connected with them.
5. He should have the strength of character to be able to put principles above personalities and politics. Many trying situations will arise and these must be dealt with in terms of fundamental principles involved. Personal issues will have to be kept as much in the background as possible.

According to the State Department of Education's division of attendance and census only a few counties have any semblance of a county



wide attendance program. Every Attendance Officer should be made aware of the fact that he is charged with such a responsibility. He should provide the leadership and guidance of a county plan in advance of all others, but every person in the county should recognize that it is the county program and not the Attendance Officers Program.

It is important that the Attendance Officer establish the right relationships with each school, organization, and individuals that are interested in better school attendance so that no complication will arise because of personal factors. The County Superintendent can help materially in this regard by close cooperation with the newspapers of the county and by sending out letters or otherwise explaining to school personnel and the public alike the functions of the Attendance Officers.

Principals and teachers should understand that the Attendance Officer is to serve as a counselor and diagnostician in the attendance field. They should not expect the Attendance Officer to look up every child who is absent, rather the school should do this, and the Attendance Officer should work with teachers and principals in trying to solve the problems which cannot be solved by the school itself.

The Attendance Officer should keep in mind certain principles in working with the individual school, whether it be a one-room rural or a consolidated one. Among these are the following:

1. All contacts with the school should first be through the principal or head teacher. In case of a problem involving a certain school, an Attendance Officer should first contact the principal, and through him the teacher concerned, or he should establish such a relationship that the principal will understand why and when the Attendance Officer is



working with the school.

2. After having established a satisfactory working relationship with the principal, the Attendance Officer should work with the teacher in whose room the pupil is enrolled, with the classroom teacher in charge of the pupil, and with the pupil and his parents. The results of any study by the Attendance Officer should always be reported back to the teacher so that she will be fully informed. In fact, the teacher should exhaust all personal efforts before calling on the Attendance Officer for help, and then should give all information possible to the Attendance Officer as a basis for his investigation. Thus by a mutual exchange of information, teachers, Attendance Officers and sometimes the principal can each arrive at a better understanding of the entire situation.
3. The Attendance Officer should work with both teachers and principal in developing a school attendance program which will be in harmony with the county attendance program. Insofar as possible, the situation should be such that requests for his assistance will come from teachers and principals and there will be no feeling that the Attendance Officer is trying to force his services on the school. In fact, attendance workers should be as supervisors and visit on call.
4. The Attendance Officer should become familiar with the entire school program including the curriculum of each of the schools. This will help him to determine adjustments

which can and should be made as far as the pupil is concerned and even be able to suggest improvements in the school program, although this should be done tactfully.

5. The Attendance Officer should become acquainted with the entire school community and its background so as to be familiar with the different social, cultural, economic, and racial or other groups in order to be in position to work intelligently with each group.
6. Attendance should never be over-emphasized to the extent that children who should be at home on account of illness are encouraged to go to school.

How to work with non-attendance cases.- In practically all counties there will be some cases of children who will not enroll in school or whose parents will not require them to enroll unless some definite steps are taken by the faculty, or interested groups or Attendance Officers to see that the children are properly entered.

1. The first problem will be that of locating children who have not enrolled in school but should be attending. If the Attendance Officer has prepared in advance of school opening, a list of children in each school district, who should enroll in each school, then the matter will be simple. Others who are not on these lists can be located by the aid of all school officials and school children. In some situations a letter, a visit and informal conference will result in solving a problem. In other cases the problem may be sufficiently serious that a comprehensive case study may be necessary.



How to work with irregular attendance cases.- The Attendance Officer's information relating to pupils whose attendance is irregular and whose absences are not excused or with pupils who have become truants will be received from several sources. The writer's experiences are as follows:

- (a) Visits at the schools - the frequency of such will depend on number of schools, roads, and other work that is required of the Attendance Officer. This is the best.
- (b) Reports submitted by the school principal and teachers.
- (c) People interested are other channels of information.

One of the first steps in attempting to solve irregular attendance or truancy cases is to determine whether the child himself is to a great extent responsible for the situation or whether the blame rests largely with his parents or some other factor. If the parents are responsible, most of the work will have to be done with them. Close cooperation with the county Attorney and Juvenile Judge is a great help to the Attendance Officer in solving such cases, and each Attendance Officer should initiate the cooperation with each.

If the child is staying away from school on his own initiative, it will be necessary to work both with the child and his parents in discovering the factors involved. It may be that the child is seeking to avoid certain problems that he does not like to face and if those problems are recognized and faced, he will be willing to return to school.

Perhaps one of the most difficult situations is likely to arise when there is a personality clash between the child and his teacher. Either one may be responsible for the situation but once it develops it may be particularly difficult to adjust. Extra tact will be required in such



situations.

The following suggestions may be helpful in dealing with cases of irregular attendance or truancy. Of course, they do not cover all cases, but should be used as a guide, as each case usually is different, or has several points to be cleared.

1. Promptness in dealing with any problem is of the greatest importance. Therefore, the Attendance Officer should have sufficient time to be prompt in his visits, investigations, and the teachers should be equally prompt in reporting cases that require the Attendance Officer's attention. It is usually easier to deal with a child who has been out of school only a few days than one who has been out several weeks.
2. The fact that a child has been returned to school does not mean that the problem is solved. Special attention should be given such a pupil until he is happily adjusted to school.
3. In the most difficult cases the combined efforts of teacher, principal, Attendance Officer may not solve the problem, then as Carter County, Kentucky, has done, other agencies may be necessary, such as a county wide organization of attendance promotion, with each school having an interested citizen who will help to solve these problems. Carter County has done much in arousing interest and enthusiasm in promoting a good program of attendance.
4. One should resort to court action only when all other means of solving the problem have failed. Again the writer has observed that a nine months' minimum term, starting at the same time, in September, would be a great help in cases of

transfer. Even the court cases should be dealt with sympathetically and with understanding in order to provide a solution if possible instead of inflicting a penalty. However, some cases will require that the law be enforced fully.

#### How to Work with Parents.--

1. Perhaps the best effort of the Attendance Officer in working with parents is, if possible, to gain their confidence and cooperation. Without this he may be considered an invader and work to no avail.
2. Since the writer adheres to the philosophy that there is no best way of doing anything, it follows that each case must be reviewed upon the conditions present and solved on the merits, whatever they may be.

#### How to Work With Non-Public Schools.--

1. The Attendance Officer should cultivate a very close relationship with the principals of non-public schools, and at all times be ready to give assistance when it is requested.



CHAPTER IV  
AN INDIVIDUAL SCHOOL PROGRAM

The program in the individual school must necessarily be carried out as an integral part of the county school attendance program. The individual school program cannot be identical with the county school program because numerous adjustments are necessary to meet the needs and conditions in the community served by the school. The school may be large or small, urban or rural, one room or a consolidated, and each school must work out problems peculiar to the individual school and community.

Section 161.140 K.R.S. Duties of School Employees Prescribed by Board of Education reads as follows:

"Each board of education shall prescribe the duties to be performed of all persons in public school service in the district."

Thus the principal and teachers of Kentucky schools, according to the school law, must look to the Board of Education for its duties; in practice, however, the principal or head teacher is responsible for the entire school program, including school attendance. If a school is to be properly operated, all of the children who could benefit from its services and facilities should be in attendance, and since the principal is primarily responsible, the degree of success of the attendance program is in the individual school, therefore, is largely by the principal and his teachers.

The school principal and teachers should seek every opportunity to cooperate with the attendance officer in strengthening the county program. A good teacher can eliminate almost entirely, or keep at a minimum, cases of non-attendance.



Harmony - cooperative working in both directions is practically essential to the corrective measures on non-attendance. The tact, approach, and attitude of the attendance officer can easily win the respect of the principal and teachers.

A suggestive individual school program.-- The necessary steps in developing a program of attendance service for an individual school are similar to those taken into consideration in developing the county program. The writer has used successfully the following steps, and believes they will be helpful to the personnel of an individual school:

1. The principal should work out an attendance program and in doing so, should seek the cooperation, not only of teachers but also of pupils in planning the program.
2. The problems which are more or less distinct or acute in a school should be determined from studies of attendance and progress of pupils. These studies should also show which problems are more acute in that school than in some of the other schools of the county.
3. A definite program in terms of steps and procedure will be needed for solving the problems. This program should involve responsibilities for both teachers and pupils.
4. All responsibilities should be carefully defined so that each person knows what he is expected to do and can be prepared to carry out his responsibilities.
5. The individual school program should be broad enough to include plans for cooperation in carrying out the county program by solving within the school those problems which are more or less common to all schools in the county and

by developing procedures which can be used by other schools.

How to keep children in school.— It is usually much easier to get children to enroll in school than it is to keep them in school. As a means of analyzing the school program, the principal and his staff should carry on a series of studies and activities.

1. Community Needs.

A study of the school curriculum should be made in order to determine whether or not it meets the needs of the present day pupils.

2. Study of Children.

An individual child study chart will help understand the differences in intelligence, aptitudes, ambitions, expectations, likes and dislikes, physical and mental traits, thus whether or not the children will stay in the community or move to others.

3. Adjust the School Program.

The adjustments in the school program should be made to adapt the school better to the needs and conditions of the community.

Real life situations cannot be obtained in all situations in the school, but the nearest approach practicable is desirable.

4. The Community Center.

The school should be made to serve as nearly as possible as a community center. People of a community tend to become more interested in those things in which they have



and for which they can share responsibility. Some possibilities for encouraging parent interest are open house days or nights when parents are invited to go to school, periodic assemblies or programs to which parents are invited to see their children perform.

#### 5. The School as a Center of Community Pride.

The school building and premises should be made so attractive that business men and others will point with pride to the school plant as being one of the attractions of the community.

The pupils themselves can participate in many activities which will add to the attractiveness of the school building and premises.

The school principal who has more difficulty with attendance problems is the one who does not have a satisfactory system of determining and working on problems of absences and non-enrollment in their preliminary stages or who lets other matters absorb his attention until problems have drifted on to the place where they have become complicated. A prompt daily determination of absences can be a great help to any school system in solving its problems.

How to work with specific attendance problems.- There is no best formula which will tell a principal or teacher how to solve an attendance problem. Each problem is somewhat different from each of the others and will have to have individual study and diagnosis.

Reasons for non-attendance.- Almost every conceivable reason or excuse for non-attendance of some pupils will be given during the year in the average school. Many reasons for absence are valid and should be recognized as such. Neither pupils nor parents should be permitted to



get an exaggeration of the idea of perfect attendance. Missing a day of school when a child does not feel well will ordinarily not do much harm and may be beneficial. The danger is that the children may form the habit of staying at home on the slightest provocation and then develop a habit of irregular attendance that is certain to handicap both the child and the school.

Some of the reasons for absence that should be considered legitimate are given below. In connection with many of these reasons, however, teachers will have to use good judgment and to know when to demand more of an explanation or better evidence than is expected in ordinary cases.

1. Sickness
2. Quarantine
3. Impossible roads
4. Inclement weather
5. Court summons
6. Death in family
7. Lack of sufficient clothing

Of the above valid excuses, the attendance officer can do much to keep at a minimum the valid excuses of sickness, lack of sufficient clothing, and impossible roads, by keeping in contact with the County Health Department, local agencies for economic assistance, and the County Judge.

In addition to the valid excuses for non-attendance already given, there will be many other legitimate reasons for absence which should be recognized as exceptional or urgent by the principal. The broad common sense judgment of the teachers and principal can do much to understand and help all concerned in the matter of non-attendance.

The question of make-up work.-- The question of make-up work is one which troubles the faculties of many schools. A child who has been absent cannot be counted present if he makes up the work since such a step would be a mockery of the attendance records. If the child is absent, there is no way to count him present unless he has been assigned by the school to carry out some school duty which requires his presence elsewhere than in the classroom.

Teachers should use their own judgment with reference to make-up work. Generally speaking it would probably be a mistake to assign make-up work which may be tedious to children who have been absent for legitimate reasons.

When children have been absent without an excuse, the situation may be somewhat different and again the extent to which make-up work should be expected will depend upon the situation and the possible benefits to the pupils.

Working with community agencies.-- The principal should be familiar with every agency in his community which can render some useful service in regard to various phases of the school program. There should be a particularly close relationship between the health and welfare agencies in the community and personnel of the school because the cooperation of these agencies will be necessary on many occasions and will aid greatly in solving many of the problems.



## CHAPTER V

## HOW TO KEEP THE SCHOOL CENSUS

The school code provides that each board of education shall maintain a permanent and continuing school census of all children between the ages of six and eighteen years that reside in the school district. The responsibility for instituting and maintaining this census is placed upon the attendance officer working under the direction of the superintendent of schools.

There are many reasons for a school district to maintain an accurate school census. From a financial standpoint it should be accurate, as the state per capita is determined by the number of census children who reside in each census district.

In 1944, the writer worked for two months as an assistant to the State Department of Education in the division of Census and Attendance. The primary purpose was to examine reports of County and City Census Supervisors and ascertain their accuracy. Since the state per capita, or money paid for each census child, is determined by the number reported on the Annual Census report, it is very important to every district that accurate reports be made by all.

The State Director and Assistant Director, using information in their office, were able to determine in advance, districts that were "out of line."

This work was very helpful and beneficial to all districts as we found conditions all over the state that had to be corrected. Many errors were found, duplicates within districts and among districts were common, duplicates with others districts, deceased, over age, under age, not in district, and short count were all found in checks. A total of



11,640 void census cards were found.

The reasons for these errors were varied: inexperienced and emergency attendance officers, attendance officers who were kept busy by superintendents doing substitute teaching, janitor work, bus driving, carpentering, trucking and secretarial work. All in all the abuses were many, and both superintendents and attendance officers blamed each other for the census ills. It is, therefore, highly important that the Census Supervisor keep his records in good order.

How to make out Permanent Census Records - (Form CA-2). This form furnished by the State Department of Education is used for the purpose of keeping a continuous census record of each child between the ages of 6 and 18 legally residing in the district. Since the state per capita is determined by the number of these cards, it is highly important that they are properly posted and accurately counted.

Each Census Supervisor should personally or directly supervise the posting and handling of each individual census card, and at no time should the card be taken from the files for use by anyone other than officials of the State Department of Education.

How to Post Data on the Card.-

1. School District - Write the name of the district over which the board of education has supervision (Union County, Uniontown). Do not confuse this with census districts within a school district.
2. Name of Child - Last name, first name, middle name and nickname, if any (Edwards, Robert Harvey, "Bobby").
3. Date of Birth - The Census Supervisor should see that each date of birth is verified by a birth certificate, if

possible. Then there should never be any question as to the accuracy of the census date of birth. No record already recorded should be changed unless by certified proof.

4. Street and number, or road - This is the actual location of the residence of the child. List the street and number, and telephone number, if child lives in urban area; name of road and R.F.D., and name of farm for child living in rural section.
  5. Census District - Give the number of census division as determined by the child's residence in sub-district or in a specific area being served by a school.
  6. Date - Give month, day and year that data in each line were secured and posted.
  7. Grade - Indicate grade classification for current year.
  8. Date Entered - Give month, day, year that the child entered school for the current year.
  9. School Attending - Write name of school. For children not attending school write none in this column indicating reason for non-enrollment.
  10. Name of Person Child Lives With - Fill in if child is residing with some one other than own mother or father.
- The remaining items on card are self explanatory.

How to file Census Cards (CA-2).-- It is suggested that since the area of each school district is divided into census districts, that census cards be filed accordingly and arranged alphabetically. It may be necessary in the county and in the larger independent districts



(census exceeding 1500) to set up a master file to control the active census file. Any change made in the census file necessitates a change in the master file. To keep the permanent census file free from duplication, it is necessary that the master file be posted up to date at all times.

An inactive and pre-census file should be kept, but the procedure for each is different and easily understood.

How to use the School Enrollment Card (Form CA-3).— Enrollment cards are furnished by the State Department of Education and are used by the teachers to report children enrolled in school.

The Census Supervisor should see that each teacher has a sufficient number to report pupils enrolled in school. Two weeks time at the beginning of school should be allowed for the teacher to report to the attendance officer the names of children not enrolled in school. The pupils can furnish this information. Then at the end of the first school month enrollment cards should be sent to the attendance officer along with a record of withdrawals. The writer has used the form on page 11 satisfactorily and recommends its use to others.

The teacher should supervise the correct filling out of all enrollment cards because, when complete, these cards will be the most important source of information in posting permanent census records.

If the attendance officer will check monthly his new enrollments and withdrawals along with the teacher's monthly report, then the mistake can be corrected and much valuable time to all concerned will be saved at the end of school when the time for checking record books comes.

Extreme care must be made regarding children (who live in another census district) attending school. Close cooperation of neighboring



attendance officers is vital to the efficient administration of census and attendance.

### CONCLUSIONS

A program of improvement in the work of census and attendance must be achieved by setting up a long term program of improvement. A short term program should be a part of the long term program, which would provide for immediate use of useful steps suggested in this thesis by present attendance officers.

It follows that in-service training of the present group of attendance officers by conferences, panel discussions, and pamphlets prepared by the State Department of Education should be made available to all attendance officers. Then the suggested program for improving the enrolling and attending of school along with the keeping of the school census can be realized. Only by arousing public opinion through the press and other sources can an attendance officer awaken his county to the need of the children; then with the help of all concerned it is up to the attendance officer to do his job well.

The proposed county attendance program suggested, in order to be useful to all counties, depends upon:

1. An alert, attendance minded county school superintendent and Board of Education.
2. An effective consolidation program with adequate roads and transportation facilities.
3. A school plant designed to take care of all children.
4. A well qualified principal and group of teachers interested in children.

5. A well paid personnel who can live comfortably on school salaries and have adequate funds and time for additional school training.
6. A well qualified, adequately paid attendance officer, with sufficient time and a willingness to do his job.



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