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A STUDY OF THE SUMMER RECREATION PROGRAM
ADMINISTERED BY THE PORTAGE TOWNSHIP PARK BOARD

A THESIS
SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE
FACULTY OF THE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS

. By .

Nina Piper Boyd
Western Michigan College of Education
July 1954

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Nina Piper Boyd

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CHAPTER I

THE PROBLEM AND ITS BACKGROUND

Introduction

More and more the schools are recognizing that the function and influence of public education should extend beyond the classroom and into every phase of the child's life. There are many reasons for the added responsibilities that are implicit in this recognition. For some years the importance of "developing the whole personality" has been stressed by leaders in education. In adhering to this belief in the education of all facets of an individual the importance of well planned educational and recreational activities for out-of-school hours has become paramount.

The fact that children in city and suburban areas do not have extensive chores to occupy their time and cannot work until they are sixteen even if they are so inclined creates new needs for this generation that were not felt a generation ago. Much of the time thus available can be occupied by a publicly-supported program of out-of-school education and recreation. This program may be operative after school, on weekends, or during the summer.

This study entitled "A Survey of the Portage Summer Recreation Program" is being undertaken for the purpose of determining (1) how well the Portage community is being served by its present recreation program and (2) what improvements may be made to make the future program more effective.

Criteria of a Good Program of Recreation

A good program of recreation should have a dual purpose. First, it must be positive in that it teaches new and interesting skills to each individual that participates. Second, it must fulfill the negative purpose of preventing "bad" or anti-social behavior through its healthful direction of the boundless energies of youth.

Certain criteria for judging a good recreation program are mentioned by Butler.¹ According to this author, the program must measure up to the following standards.

1. Provide equal opportunity for all. Facilities should be equally broad and well distributed to enable all the people to be served.

2. Provide a wide range of choices in different types of activities. It should not be devoted primarily to a single type of activity such as athletic games and sports, to the neglect of other interests, but should include games, music, arts and crafts, nature, drama, social recreation, and other activities.

3. Continue throughout the year. People need recreation 12 months of the year, and a responsibility rests upon the city to provide a year round program.

¹Butler, George D., Introduction to Community Recreation, Second Edition. New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1949. p. 11.

4. Serve all ages. It should provide for children of all ages, young people and adults, including the old folks.

5. Provide equally for both sexes. Until recently men and boys have received the lion's share of consideration in the program; now women and girls are taking advantage of the increasing opportunities which are rightfully being provided for them.

6. Encourage family recreation. Many forms of recreation tend to divide the family. Opportunities should be provided for the family to play together, either as a separate unit or with other family groups.

7. Utilize all existing facilities. Facilities which are idel or restricted to one or two activities when they might afford many types of recreation use represent an economic loss as well as failure to realize their potentialities for service.

8. Include passive as well as active forms of recreation. Programs should include not only vigorous participation but the enjoyment that comes from watching, listening or contemplation.

9. Provide activities for different periods of free time. Noon hours, afterschool periods, weekends, holidays, twilight hours, recess periods, vacations - all afford opportunities for recreation which require consideration in the program.

10. Furnish outlets for the satisfaction of the desire for social relationships. Through the recreation program people should have opportunities to achieve a sense of belonging, to develop the social qualities, and to experience the fellowship which results from participating membership in a group.

11. Place recreation opportunities within the reach of all. Many essential services must be free and easily accessible to all.

12. Afford opportunities for developing good citizenship. There should be in the program activities in which team play is featured rather than individual achievement, where cooperation is stressed rather than competition, and where leadership and service opportunities are presented. Through the program people should learn by experience the values of cooperative effort and community service."

He cites other criteria also that are considered important in judging a good recreation program.¹ Such a program should provide outlets for creative expression, and include activities that will persist at an adult level and assure safe and healthful conditions for recreation. The various activities offered must also take into account the varying taste and capacities of the participating individuals.

Thus it may be seen that a recreation program must be most carefully planned with a full knowledge of the responsibilities and possibilities it presents to the community. The recreation leaders should be well trained in the objectives of recreation so that they will offer the best type of program possible to the communities they serve. The wise and careful spending of the available funds is an important consideration. Funds should not be squandered on some phase of recreation that may not serve the majority of the group.

The aims of recreation are to a considerable extent the same as those of education. This is clear if one compares the aims and criteria just stated with the aims of education listed by Slavson.² He lists these:

¹Loc. cit., p. 231.

²Slavson, S. R., Character Education in a Democracy. New York: Association Press, 1939. p. 72.

1. Personality development.
2. Character development.
3. Social education.
4. Discovery of vocational interests.
5. Vocational guidance.
6. Refining selective capacity.
7. Developing power and creative imagination.
8. Developing leadership.
9. Evolving a guiding philosophy of life.
10. Engendering intellectual hospitality.
11. Developing a sense of reality.

These goals may be a little vague and possibly incomplete. It is interesting to note that in this book (published in 1939), the acquisition of useful knowledge and tools of learning are not mentioned. Neither is the necessity of living in a democratic society stressed. However, if a recreation program could achieve only a few of the goals mentioned, it would be a useful project.

In the Forty-Ninth Yearbook of the National Society for The Study of Education,¹ the aims of education accepted by the Educational Policies' Commission are set forth with one added. These are: (a) self-realization, (b) human relationship, (c) economic efficiency, and (d) civic responsibility. The other aim mentioned is (e) satisfying spiritual experiences. Again

¹The Education of Exceptional Children. Forty-Ninth Yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education, Part II. Chicago: Distributed by the University of Chicago Press, 1950.p.4.

the implications of these are similar to those of recreational programs.

From a study of these several sources it appears that a good recreation program must be planned to meet both recreation and education needs if it is to contribute its share in the development of the "whole personality." This is made clear by Butler¹ when he lists the benefits that often result from playground experiences.

"Fun is uppermost in the minds of participants in recreation. Other benefits are secondary though important. In the long run, enrichment of the personality may constitute the most enduring values."

The part that recreation plays in character and personality development cannot be overlooked. In many respects the playground may exert more influence than the class room because the activities are more stimulating than routine class procedure. With proper supervision a child can learn to play fairly, honestly and with initiative. Recreation tends to develop such personal and moral qualities as courage, ingenuity, self initiative, decision, perseverance, determination, self-reliance, self-control, restraint and ambition.

Recreation and Juvenile Delinquency

With the increase in the amount of leisure time for both adults and children the recreation director cannot help but

¹Op. cit.

wonder just how effective a job he is doing in preventing undesirable activities by presenting positive and worthwhile experiences. One of the prime factors in prompting a community to spend great quantities of money in providing recreational opportunities and the allied programs of scouting or similar youth organizations is the prevention of juvenile delinquency. Quite often a court officer will recommend a scouting program in an area that is having difficulty with its children. There have been many studies about this topic of delinquency and recreation. One of these was made by Shanas,¹ for the Chicago Recreation Commission. She found that of the number of young people studies and interviewed, there seemed to be a definite relationship between an active recreation participation and a lowered incidence of juvenile delinquency. The findings indicated that 1.7% of those that participated in supervised recreation became delinquents, whereas 5.1% of those who did not participate became delinquent. This study seemed to convince the author that there was a definite preventive value in a good recreation program. A similar view is held by Neumeyer and Neumeyer² who state:

¹ Committee of Juvenile Delinquency, (Director, Shanas, Ethel), Recreation and Delinquency. Chicago: Chicago Recreation Commission, 1942. P. 252.

² Neumeyer, Martin N. and Neumeyer, Esther S., Leisure and Recreation, A Study of Leisure and Recreation in their Sociological Aspects. New York: A. S. Barnes and Company, 1949. p. 251.

"It has been assumed that inadequate community recreation or the pressure of undesirable amusements, especially if accompanied by other disintegrating factors, will most likely cause juvenile delinquency. Idleness and unwholesome surroundings provide the occasion for misconduct. While children are kept busy with supervised recreation they have little time or opportunity to get into trouble."

However, the point that recreation alone is not a cure-all is made by Butler¹ when he says:

"Recreation is not to be considered as a prime factor in prevention of delinquency. The individual who has a rich recreation life is more likely to be a healthy, well balanced, law abiding citizen than the one who is deprived of recreation opportunities. Housing, schools, churches and employment conditions are important. Contributions of recreation to other community forces, important as they are, should be considered a by-product. The chief value of recreation lies in its power to enrich the lives of individuals."

Obviously the quality of the program has a great deal to do with its effectiveness.

The Program in Portage Township, Michigan

The summer program in Portage Township is a joint effort of the Portage Township Park Board and the Portage Township Schools and is designed to meet the recreational purposes described earlier in the chapter.

The Portage community is located about five miles south of the city of Kalamazoo. In the last few years it has mushroomed from a small rural community to a huge sprawling residential and commercial area. The development of the Upjohn Company in 1946 has in particular changed the complexion

¹Op. cit., p. 5.

of the locale. Other large and new factories are now locating in this area. The building of many new homes has of course followed the great influx of factory employees.

To meet the needs of this ever-growing community the schools have developed from one small rural school to four large elementary schools, a new junior-high-school and a senior-high-school building. From a class D school it has grown in eight years to a class A. From thirty-one members the faculty has grown to one hundred five teachers and workers. Nine school buses transport the school population. Recently the school opened the largest gym in southern Michigan.

The Portage Township Park Board has felt the increasing need for proper recreation facilities for this huge new school population. Accordingly, they have kept their summer program expanding as the numbers to be served became greater. The board administers the program with the cooperation of the school administration. The bus service is paid for by the school. Two rooms and the playground and the old gym are provided for the participants.

The present school population in the year 1953 and 1954 is two thousand, five hundred and eighty six. The adult population is approximately nine thousand. During the summer of 1953 two thousand child units passed through the recreation program. Of these seven hundred nine were in the

age group of five to twelve. During the eight weeks there was a steady attendance of ninety to one hundred forty. The attendance promises to be even bigger with an initial attendance of three hundred sixty-four on the second day of the program in the summer of 1954.

To care for these large numbers the park board spent a total budget of thirty-five hundred dollars for the eight weeks. Of this amount eight hundred was spent on athletic equipment and arts and craft materials. The balance of twenty-seven hundred dollars was spent for salaries of the five recreation workers.

It is the practice of the board to hire only qualified teachers, preferably those with a background of physical education or art to direct the activities. Thus there is better organization than if either students or workers with no particular training in the directing of children were employed. There is, too, a close accord between the heads of the school and the township park board. The salaries are 10 to 15% higher than in the recreation projects in the neighboring city of Kalamazoo.

The wide variety of activities offered have made the program appealing to all the age groups. Tennis, badminton, ping pong, volley ball, archery, croquet, baseball and softball are offered. Indoor games, clay modeling, painting, are offered to both the young children and those older ones who

are interested in inside activity. There was enthusiastic participation in the arts and crafts program. Such great quantities of arts and craft material were bought at the local art stores that supplies had to be reordered constantly. The art of lacing or "braiding," as the children called it, was very popular. Even the five year olds' became adept at many varieties and patterns in this skill. Bracelets and belts, too, were made that might have competed with Indian craft.

It was noticeable to those working with the crafts how skilled many of the older boys were at making baskets. They seemed to have more patience and ingenuity than the girls of the same age. All the children who made anything seemed to enjoy that thrill of the creative artist when they finished some object. The finished article in some cases might have a very amateurish look, but the child working on it had achieved immediate pleasure and satisfaction.

However, even with all the activities, and with the apparent interest shown the expenditures now being made need to be justified. This is especially necessary with the probable increase. Hence a continuing evaluation, as with all educational enterprise seems desirable.

It was the need for determining the merits and weaknesses of the program that motivated this study.

CHAPTER II

METHODS EMPLOYED

The purpose of this chapter is to (1) explain how the interviews with the children and families, the staff members and the park board were made; and (2) tabulate the data obtained from these interviews.

Interviews With The Children

The families who were selected to be interviewed were chosen by Ernest Kirkman, Director of Athletics of Portage High School and Director of Recreation for the summer program. These families were chosen so that a representative number from each part of the school district would be visited. They were chosen also in hopes that a socio-economic cross section of the school population would be obtained. The ages of the children were from ten to sixteen. There were seven boys and six girls who were specifically questioned as well as any other members of the family who were present. These visits were all made at the homes when both parents and children were present. The information procured from these interviews follows.

Interview With Family A

On June 24 I visited with Family A. The oldest boy Richard had attended the program for the last three summers. He was chiefly interested in the baseball program. He hadn't taken part in the other sports because all his time was taken up with the teams. He had taken no part in the arts and crafts program thinking that it was just for the smaller children. He is not attending this year because he is sixteen.

The two girls and the younger boy had not attended. The mother believed that the association with certain of the girls on the bus was not too good for her own daughters. She believed that the program was good for the children of working mothers. However, when mothers could be home all day she thought the best place for the children was at home.

From the reaction of this family, it would seem that the various aspects of the program should be made known to all participants. Apparently some aspects were not made known to all.

Interview with Student B and Her Parents

Student B is 12. She attended every afternoon last summer. She enjoyed badminton, golf, swimming and lacing. Although there had been no follow-up of her artwork during the winter, she had enjoyed it. Her mother who is also a teacher in the

Portage Schools held the view that her daughter had received art experiences that were very valuable and that she would not have obtained during the regular school year.

The son, John, went all day. He participated in the archery, baseball, ping pong and swimming. He was not interested at all in the arts and crafts program.

Mrs. B. stated that the program might have been more interesting to the young children if more had been made of the story hour. In the Portage community there is no public library. Many of the parents believe that the school library should be open during the summer. Perhaps the use of the library could be initiated under the recreation set up.

Mr. B. was one of the play directors in the program. He considered that a great deal more could be done toward having special activities such as "Hobby Day" or "Pet Day." He also said that more interest could be awakened through tournaments in the various activities.

These children come from one of the better homes both culturally and economically. They have plenty of room in their house and yard for play. Yet these are two of the most enthusiastic and ardent advocates of the summer program. They enter wholeheartedly into all the activities. They enjoy the company and the competition of other children who attend.

Interview With Student C and Her Family

Student C who is fifteen lives very near the school so was able to walk to the playground. She had attended somewhat irregularly because of lack of a vital interest. She said she liked the softball and badminton and wished there had been more fishing. She didn't care for the arts and crafts program. She thought that there should be a division of the older and younger children. She didn't care for so many little children attending the program.

Her mother, who is a widow, said she wished the program was of greater interest to the older girls. She would rather have them attending their own school than to go to Kalamazoo to a tennis club. The trip to town involved transportation and money.

It was Mrs. C's suggestion that the games could be more varied. Instead of offering all of them every day certain games might be featured on particular days. She said most girls of fifteen did not have steady jobs so that a purposeful and interesting recreation program in the community was very important. After about a week at home in the summer boredom set in for there were not enough home tasks to keep the children occupied.

Interview With Student D

Gary lives near the Milham school and is thirteen years old. Last year he attended regularly and was especially interested in the golfing program. Since his lessons in golfing, he has gone golfing with his father several times. This year he is taking part in the morning baseball games at Portage so he will not participate in the Milham program. He had enjoyed the craft work last year. He is not registered for the swimming program nor did he seem informed about it. His younger brother is just beginning to attend the program this year. There is approval for the program in this home. The background of Family D seems superior to many of the families that live near them.

Interview With Student E and Family

Student E is thirteen, and one of a family of five children. His mother has worked with Cub Scouts for a number of years. She considers the recreation program is very desirable for the children in the neighborhood. She discounted the criticism that is sometimes made about any planned entertainment for children, namely, that it is a good excuse for mothers to get rid of their children for a few hours. Mrs. E remarked that while children played "at home" they were often not in their mother's sight or under her supervision. Often

the boys went far from home on their bikes to the creek which entailed their riding on busy U. S. highway 131. Her boys are working now except for Student E. However, they continue their interest in ball both older boys taking part in evening games. Student E is at present in the "Juniors," practicing every morning and playing games once or twice a week. When the summer program is over the diamond in the rear of the family lot is well used by the neighbor boys. This home is very poor and underprivileged at first glance. However, the fine attitude of the mother makes up for any material lacks one might note there.

Interview With Student F

Student F is eleven years old and an only child. His father is a builder and contractor. He builds beautiful homes which his family occupy for the short periods before he sells them. In the last six years the family has moved nine times. The mother works in the supermarket near by. The child, according to his father, is a nervous and restless boy. The parents are glad to have Dick's time and energy taken up, constructively, by the recreation program. Dick is mainly interested in the baseball activity. In fact he is on the diamond as long as there is any playing. His father and mother have little time to do anything with Dick. His present home is located in the country with no near neighbors. Dick

probably takes part in the program not only for the baseball but because of the company of those of his own age. The parents were not even aware of the other aspects of the recreation program.

Interview With Student G and Family

Student G is fifteen and interested mainly in the tennis program. She seldom stays for the whole afternoon, coming home when she gets through playing tennis. She has learned to swim by means of the Red Cross swimming lessons that are made available to the youngsters in the recreation program. Her mother hopes that Daughter II, age thirteen, and Son I, age nine, will take the swimming lessons for she always enjoyed swimming. This family had not had any experience with the arts and crafts program. The mother did appreciate the availability of the playground for some entertainment during the long afternoons.

Interview With Student H and Family

David, age fourteen, had been most active in the program. He had made some most unusual baskets. He liked having many little children about. He was helpful in instructing the younger children in the arts of lacing and basket weaving. He expressed the hope that he would be a camp counselor when he was older.

His mother is a den mother (Cub Scouts) and her younger son is interested in handwork. He did not attend last summer but is looking forward to attending the program this year.

The father is one of the park board members. He believed that the program had been most successful both from his viewpoint as a father and as a park board member. He believed the large amount of money was well spent in providing satisfactory recreational opportunities for the boys and girls of the area.

In this home there was evidence everywhere that there had been definite carry over of the skills in the arts and crafts. There were examples of individual creations all over the house. The mother was painting some little dishes when the interview was made. Apparently she felt that it was more important to exhibit her children's handwork than to maintain a planned form of decoration. Even the father had been trying his hand at painting which the younger boy proudly displayed.

These children are in a comfortable but modest house. It is located on one of the several lake settlements that make up part of the school population. The program does not draw heavily on most of the lake dwellers for they have their own entertainment at their door. But, in this family as in certain others, there is an interest in the arts and crafts program which attracts them.

Interview With Student I

Student I is fifteen and lives in the Long Lake area. Her criticism of the program was that it was not interesting enough to older girls. The long bus ride to and from her home appeared to be a source of annoyance. She said sometimes it took an hour to reach home after three hours of the recreation program. She said also that often the bus traveled a long way around the lakes to pick up very few children.

She did enjoy the tennis but wished more girls and boys would use the courts. She had done some of the handwork but thought there were too large numbers of children to be helped in the crafts. She thought the little children should be definitely separated from the older ones.

Interview with Student J and Family

Student J is twelve and the oldest of five children. They are all bright, intelligent children of Indian background. They live in very poor surroundings. While they seem very happy it is fortunate such children who have so little do have the opportunity of taking part in the many varied sports, games, swimming, golf and crafts. Needless to say they are very skilled in the handicraft arts. The mother believes, and perhaps rightly so, that the children should help her at home instead of always being away at a recreation program. Her

chief complaint was that she had to spend all her time ironing to keep the five children presentable when they were away from home.

Interview With Student K

Student K's parents both work every day until about five-thirty. She is the only child, age eleven. The house is rather small and located quite near the Milham School. She attended regularly last year and is as interested in the current program. Her chief interest was in the golfing project last summer. She became so proficient during the weekly lessons that were given to the group last summer that the golfing instructor offered to give her free private lessons. This year she will have a set of golf clubs loaned to her by her uncle. She is a good music student also and takes part in the excellent band program which is part of the summer program. Cheri enjoyed the handwork too. She did some basket weaving during the winter girl scout meetings. She said her baskets completed during the summer were more successful.

This girl would be very lonely and probably idle if it were not for the recreation program. With both parents away from home for long periods she has to develop her own resources. Her hobby of golf and her ability in handcraft should stand her in good stead.

Interview With Student L

Student L is fourteen and lives in one of the better home situations of those visited. He was very active in all parts of the program last year. He appreciated equally the sports and the arts and crafts. His artistry in the making of baskets was most unusual. He had no fault to find with the program, nor did his mother. The family was new to the district of Portage having moved from Benton Harbor, Michigan. Both the parents and Lee were most favorably disposed to Portage. They considered the summer program outstanding in its service to the community. There had been nothing comparable in their former home community of Benton Harbor.

Interview With Student M

In the interview with Mrs. M several means of improvement were discussed. She suggested that two or three student counselors might be hired to assist the adult workers, especially in the area of the arts and crafts. Thus, more individual attention might be given to the small children. She was of the opinion there was a weakness in the program in that it did not effectively reach the interests and abilities of the five to seven year olds.

The use of another room for the youngest age groups was suggested. Even some shelter away from the actual school building and near the athletic fields was suggested.

While on the whole she felt the program to be most successful she thought that there should be some more strict regulations which would enable the leader to send any child home for a definite period if he was a discipline problem.

The matter of insurance for each child was advanced as a protection to the staff and to the families of the community.

Mrs. M observed that the chief reasons that the program was so well attended was that it was purposeful, zippy and carried out with enthusiasm. The children learned the crafts and did them there. In many programs the children merely buy the craft material to take home. Here there was the interest of doing things in groups.

She conceded, too, that the good planning of the director and the whole hearted support of the staff had done much to create a superior program.

Interviews With The Staff Members

These interviews were made with the different staff members in order to obtain reactions, observations and suggestions from those who actually were directing the recreation program. One member Jack Stearnes was in Mexico, so was not available.

Mr. Vanderberg was interviewed in his capacity as a parent as well as a staff member.

Interview With Mr. Kirkman and Mr. Wilkinson

In the meeting with Mr. Wilkinson, Superintendent of Portage Schools and Mr. Kirkman, head of summer recreation, only general questions on policy and procedures were asked. They both stated that the program of 1953 was the most successful of any since the program had been in effect or since 1950. Mr. Wilkinson believed the success was due to the wide variety of athletic and arts and crafts opportunities offered to the participants. Previous programs he said had centered mainly on baseball and tennis with little effort made to attract the younger children.

Mr. Kirkman wondered if the program hadn't included too many small children who really weren't able to get much benefit from the games or the crafts. Mr. Wilkinson who had two young daughters who came regularly observed that the program was varied enough to satisfy the older child who could compete in the games and enjoy the swimming and golf and participate in the craft work; and also to interest the younger child who was happy learning the craft work and playing freely with others of her age. He mentioned the great benefit it was for some of the five year olds to get away from home for a few hours during the summer. It was a pleasant preview of their first school experience.

Interview With the Portage Township Park Board

The board is composed of five members who believe that they were performing a valuable service to the community and its children when they offered a recreation program. They believed that the program of 1953 had been the most successful in years. They judged its success by the continued high attendance throughout the summer. Usually there had been a decline in the numbers after the first two weeks. This was not the case in '53, for the program ended with the same or greater numbers than its initial enrollment. They believed that children continue to come only when the program holds their interest. They had high praise for the planning and execution of the recreation plans as carried out by the director and his assistants.

The two older members stated that they believed that children in the Kalamazoo area were more cooperative than they had been formerly. They told of the frequent fights that were carried on by different gangs in the various parts of the city. The Burdick Street gang used to go out looking for trouble and usually found it with the East Main or another gang. A policeman was always on the alert looking for fights among boys. He thought that the organized activities that were offered children now had a real deterrent effect on delinquent behavior.

The Portage Township Park Board were convinced that they were justified in having a large budget for recreation purposes.

Money spent on the children of the community was well spent. They had heard many favorable comments from parents during the program and throughout the winter. The stated purpose of the board was the happiness and satisfaction of the children of the community.

In summarizing the information gleaned from these contacts with participants, parents, park board members, and recreation directors one will note there was both favorable and unfavorable criticism. There appeared to be much more favorable opinion than unfavorable. Some satisfactory suggestions were offered to improve the program.

One of the criticisms mentioned in three of the interviews was that the program was weak in appealing to the interest of the older girls. In one home it was thought there was not enough concentration on the games. The mother thought that if particular games were concentrated on special days of the week there would be more interest and more skill in those games. Volley ball was suggested as a game that would interest a large group of girls.

In the case of another student who lives in the Long Lake area the criticism was made of the long bus ride to and from the school. She also thought there were not enough interesting activities for girls to make it worth while to spend a whole afternoon. She believed there were too many young children attending to have a good program for the older ones.

Only one parent mentioned the bus situation but it does seem an important element. Some quarreling goes on because of the forced contact during the long rides. Certain rowdy ones make it unpleasant for those of different character. The younger ones certainly get tired and bored being transported the distances between their homes and the schools. However, this factor does not affect the attendance to any extent. So, either the children don't, on the whole, mind the long stay on the buses or they accept it as worth their while to get to the recreation program.

Two of the girls interviewed thought there should be a definite separation of the older and younger groups. The large numbers of young children made it difficult for the older ones to enjoy the handwork or to play their games in the gym. There were just as many others who liked helping with the young children. Many of the older brothers and sisters bring their young siblings and are charged with their care. A separation of the groups might mean that in some cases the older ones would have to stay home to "watch" the younger members of the family.

The girls in one family thought it was too bad there was not more use of the tennis courts. Often only two played all afternoon when there was room for eight players. Here again is the factor that the older girls do not avail themselves of the facilities offered.

In the interview with another, mention was made that most of the afternoon she and others "just horsed around." This is a serious criticism of the program. While the intention is to have free play with no arbitrary class divisions there is too much of idle walking around with no purpose. Some more encouragement is needed to stimulate everyone to take active part in either games or arts and crafts.

While it seemed to the assistants who were working in the arts and crafts program that every one was making baskets or "wishing wells" or bracelets or lacing, there appeared to be a number of the boys who were not even aware of the arts and crafts program. Of course the baseball program keeps many boys well occupied. There are aspects of the hand work, though, that are suitable for either sex and any age. Perhaps a few introductory meetings when the program is just beginning would help to introduce every phase of the activities to all the children. More publicity sent home to the parents before and during the summer program might acquaint the community with the every part of the recreation plans. Regular planning sessions with all the participants might be helpful too.

More of the comments were favorable than not. In one family the father of which is on the park board, there was a definite carry over from the summer experiences for the oldest boy. Largely because of his arts and crafts participation, the boy

was taking a job as a camp counselor. As was mentioned before, the whole family seemed "craft-minded." They were all very enthusiastic about the benefits of the program. The home is on the lake; but still they felt the activities offered at the school were very worth while.

There were other of the parents who joined in the hand work. Several mothers attended quite regularly bringing small youngsters. They made baskets of their own and seemed to enjoy the lacing as much as did the children. The importance of adult programs in recreation was pointed out by the eager interest in handwork of these mothers. Some of them, it is true, were den mothers (Cub Scouts) and hence on the lookout for any new ideas in hand skills. Others were just anxious to learn something new. One of the problems was in allotting craft materials. All the materials were free, furnished by the board. The people knew it was tax money which supported the program. Then wasn't it the right of any person in the district to receive free materials? With the present extent of the program which is almost double the attendance of the year of 1953 the problem becomes acute. How far can a district, no matter how wealthy, go in supplying free materials?

There were many older boys and girls who became most helpful in aiding the younger children when the assistants were "swamped" with numbers. Ninety children in one room

learning the art of basket weaving are too many. It would have been impossible if it had not been for the cooperative spirit of the older children. The old Lancasterian method of instructing a few older children who in turn teach the others is practical in hand work. Most of the little ones learned from this method.

It was noteworthy during the interviews that the majority of the parents were most enthusiastic about the program. This was the case of both working and non-working mothers. Those who work must find it a very convenient baby sitting arrangement. Many five year olds are taken care of from eight to five if time is allowed for the bus transportation. However, there appeared to be just as many families of the better economic class who believed that their children were profitably and happily employed when they were attending the recreation activities. Among those families were those of the Superintendent of Portage Schools and the Principal of Pershing School.

In journeying about making the interviews the writer was impressed with the marked variation of the economic environment. In one area there would be homes of vastly different surroundings. In one, the interviewer saw almost nothing modern except the television set. In another, a block away were all the most carefully planned decorations and expensive furniture.

Yet these children coming from such widely different situations all seem to be equally served by the recreation facilities. In this general appeal to all children no matter what their economic or cultural background the program appears to be serving the community well.

In interviewing the assistants of the recreation program there was general accord in believing the summer activities had been a success. Several valuable suggestions were made to improve it other years. The suggestion of using part time student assistants was made by one person. Also the use of some shelter away from the actual school building would alleviate some of the friction that now exists between the school office and the recreation workers.

The men assistants felt that if there was any weakness in the program set up it was in the planning for the interest of the older girls. A great deal was made of organizing the different baseball units for the boys. Games were scheduled and played with other groups to insure interest. Nothing similar was tried for the girls. The idea was advanced by one man that the employment of a woman athletic director who would specifically work and plan with the older girls would correct this existing fault in the program.

The park board members were happy with and uncritical of the program. They were sure they were doing the community

a service in preventing juvenile delinquencies by keeping the children well occupied in active and healthful pursuits.

In essence the results of the interviews the writer found that there was approval of the project and the way it was administered. Both parents and park board members were well pleased with results. The criticisms made were most helpful and should be considered in the future planning of other summer recreation programs. The best indication of the children's approval, which in the last analysis is the best criteria of any program's success, is the ever increasing numbers who attend every day.

CHAPTER III

THE DEVELOPMENT AND ADMINISTRATION OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE

The Problem

The purpose of this chapter is to (1) describe the manner in which the questionnaire was developed and the procedures used in administering it, and (2) tabulate the results.

The Questionnaire

After obtaining the information from the families through the method of the personal interview as described in the previous chapter, the writer thought it would be helpful to the study to verify the data thus collected by posing similar questions to a fairly large group of participants. By listing specific activities it was thought that a record of the preferences and the dislikes for the recreation activities could be obtained. The findings were thought to be of possible value to the park board and to the recreation directors, in planning future recreation programs.

The fourteen activities listed were those that are a part of the existing program. The questionnaire was administered to ninety-five boys and girls. Most of these were selected from the older age group because of the necessity of reading

the questions. Also, it was thought interests and abilities of the younger age group were too immature to give a representative picture of the total program. All ninety-five answered the questionnaire because it was presented to them while they were in attendance of the program. A copy of the questionnaire follows.

PORTAGE ~~SUMMER~~ RECREATION PROGRAM

INDIVIDUAL INTEREST CHART

Show which activities you enjoyed in the program last summer by placing the proper number in the blank after the activity. If there were any you did not care for, place a "0" in the blank after that activity.

One you enjoyed most 1

One you enjoyed quite well 2

One you enjoyed a little 3

One you did not care for 0

Archery

Arts and crafts

Badminton

Baseball

Checkers

Croquet

Fishing

Golfing

Picnics

Ping Pong

Softball

Swimming

Tennis

Volleyball

1. Did you attend the program last summer regularly?

Yes No

2. Would you be interested in helping the directors for a small salary? Yes No

3. Are there any changes that you would like to be made in the program? If so please list them below.

The responses of ninety-five participants of the recreation program to the interest chart are found in the following table.

TABLE I
INTEREST RATINGS

Activity	Most		Quite Well		A Little		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Swimming	26	27.3	20	21.0	16	16.8	62	64.9
Baseball	18	18.9	3	3.1	2	2.1	23	23.1
Arts and crafts	17	17.9	11	11.5	12	12.6	40	42.1
Archery	10	11.0	15	15.2	4	4.2	19	20.0
Fishing	10	11.0	2	2.1	8	8.4	20	21.0
Badminton	5	5.2	4	4.2	4	4.2	13	13.8
Golfing	4	4.2	4	4.2	5	5.2	13	13.8
Picnics	3	3.1	14	14.7	12	12.6	29	30.5
Ping Pong	2	2.1	15	15.8	12	12.6	29	30.5
Checkers	1	1.05	5	5.2	4	4.2	10	11.0
Croquet	0	0	4	4.2	4	4.2	8	8.4
Softball	0	0	9	9.5	7	7.4	16	16.8
Tennis	0	0	2	2.1	3	3.1	5	5.2
Volleyball	0	0	0	0	5	5.2	5	5.2
Totals	96		108		98		272	

(The activities are listed in the descending order of their preference.)

The answers to the questions in Table I are revealing. Swimming is by far the most popular sport, being mentioned sixty-two times, with arts and crafts second highest, forty-two. There is a varying degree of interest in all the other activities showing that all the activities are liked by some children.

Perhaps some of the activities would become more popular if and when there is more instruction in them and they are made more available to larger groups. In the case of volleyball there would be greater interest if some games and competition were organized.

The swimming program is well organized and planned for some weeks before the program starts. Slips are sent home for parents' permission. Names of beginners, intermediates, and advanced swimmers are placed on the bulletin board before the first class. The children are taken by buses to Long Lake where they are instructed by Red Cross instructors. They are taken back to the school where they may stay until the end of that day's recreation activity. The variety of the three lessons a week is enjoyable and stimulating.

There is marked interest in the baseball program but this does not affect the large numbers that the swimming program does. It is possible that of the number who took the test there were not a fair sample of the baseball-minded boys present. Perhaps the rating received is somewhat lower than the actual preference.

Picnics and ping pong appeared often in the second and third choices but did not make a showing as first choices. The other activities less frequently mentioned are checkers, croquet, softball and tennis. This bears out several of the statements made of the different preferences or lack of them voiced in the interviews.

A number of the boys and girls did not answer the question about the one activity they did not care for, giving as their reason that they really did not dislike any of the offered activities. From the seventy-two who did answer this question the replies are as follows:

TABLE II
ACTIVITIES NOT LIKED

Activity	Number of Responses	Per Cent
Archery	20	27.7
Volleyball	12	16.6
Arts and crafts	8	11.1
Ping pong	8	11.1
Golfing	7	9.7
Baseball	4	5.5
Fishing	4	5.5
Badminton	3	4.1
Checkers	3	4.1
Croquet	1	1.3
Picnics	1	1.3
Softball	1	1.3

In Table II the least liked activity was archery with volleyball and arts and crafts second. These dislikes may not have been active antipathy so much as indifference or lack of experience. The indications appear to be from the most liked and the least liked choices that certain aspects of the program are not being presented in an appealing enough way to enlist enthusiasm and enjoyment on the part of the children.

Table III contains the responses to the questions 1 and 2.

TABLE III
RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS 1 AND 2

Questions	Yes		No	
	Number	Per Cent	Number	Per Cent
Did you attend the program last summer regularly?	57	60.0	38	40.0
Would you be interested in helping the directors for a small salary?	72	75.8	16	16.8

Table III indicates that sixty percent of the children who answered the questions were regular attendants last summer. Forty percent were new to the program or had attended irregularly last summer. With respect to the second question the answers show that seventy-five and eight-tenths percent of those who replied to the question would be interested in assisting the directors for a small salary. Sixteen and eight-tenths percent were not interested and the remaining seven and four-tenths percent did not respond.

The third question asked for suggestions or changes in the program. This question was not fruitful. Most of the children said they liked it as it was. Two or three gave

"smart" answers such as wanting different teachers. With this exception the questions were answered to the best of their ability and with truthfulness. Some of the changes suggested were: separation of the older and younger groups, more helpers with the activities, more activities for the older ones, more picnics, more basket weaving and lacing, and better care of the equipment. One girl wished they could have the use of the library during the summer. The suggestion made most often was that of separation of the older and younger children.

Summary

In this chapter the development, administration, and tabulation of the questionnaire was described.

CHAPTER IV

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Problem

The purpose of this study was (1) to survey the present Portage Park Board Recreation Program, (2) to note how well the needs of the community were being met, (3) to discover how well the program was achieving both recreational and educational objectives, and (4) to make recommendations for the improvement of the project.

Methods and Procedures

The study herein described evolved from the author's experiences as one of the assistants in the Portage Township Recreation Program. The number of the children served and the ever-increasing school population in this area create a challenging situation. The members of the park board and the administration of the schools are well aware of their tremendous responsibility. It is with the knowledge that they are sincerely trying to serve the children of the community that certain suggestions are offered for improving the present program.

In the spring of 1954 Mr. Kirkman, the director of athletics at Portage High School and Mr. Wilkinson, the superintendent of Portage Schools made a list of the children of varying ages and both sexes who had attended the program regularly in the summer of 1953. These children were a representative sample of the community both geographically and economically.

The author interviewed these children and their parents noting their reactions to and observations of the program. In the main the parents' opinions of the Portage Recreation Program are good. The criticisms they advanced were minor. In general, the criticisms dealt with the inequality between the girls and boys activities. Some of the older girls believed there was not so much planning for them as for the boys groups. Quite a few resented the mingling of age groups. Others believed that there should be more of every activity offered to those participating.

On the positive side the parents believed that a satisfactory job was being done in holding the interest in sports and hand skills among children of varying ages. Both children and adults seemed to feel satisfaction in acquiring some skill in handwork. The parents who worked were grateful for the occupation of children during the summer vacation. The parents of the five year olds believed that the summer program was excellent in preparing the young child for playing with others and in gaining independence. The park board was convinced its efforts

were worthwhile in preventing anti-social behavior by providing healthful outlets for so many children.

In addition to the personal interviews, the author submitted questionnaires to ninety-five of the children who were attending the program this summer. The information gathered from this source showed that almost half or forty percent were new participants. It also indicated that swimming and arts and crafts were the two most popular activities. However there was a wide scattering of choices showing a great variety of interests. There was a marked interest in the question of pupil help for a small salary. Few had any suggestions or criticisms to offer.

Conclusions

In so far as the techniques used in this study may be valid, the following conclusions seem justified.

In arriving at a decision as to whether the Portage Recreation Program meets the objectives of both education and recreation the different aims as stated in the first chapter on pages two and five will be examined in the light of the actual accomplishments of the existing program.

The aim of "free and pleasurable activity" is surely fulfilled as any observer who hears the shouts of the participating children can attest. The lack of arbitrary schedules and age grouping carries out the idea of free activity which is one of the aspects of a good recreation plan.

The training of children for the wise use of their leisure time by instructing them in various skills and crafts is an insurance against unhappy and idle adults.

The training in various sports gives opportunities for "self realization" as does the development of leadership. This occurs on the playground during the sports program and in the craft program where the skilled may receive satisfaction in imparting their skills to others.

The "human relationship" is surely met in the numerous contacts in games and activities that are always available. The lack of the restraint of the classroom makes these contacts of more value than those carried on during the school year. Children must be cooperative and skilled in friendly living or else their experiences on the playground are most disastrous. The advantage the summer worker has in being able to send home any child who is not "cooperative" is an invaluable aid to good citizenship. Most of the children are so eager to continue coming that they do not risk their privileges.

In becoming skilled at different sports there is always the chance that some boys may be receiving their initial training in a professional career. Even if none become professional sportsmen, a skilled athlete has a good chance of earning scholarships later on. While the immediate pleasure is the chief reason for any recreation the end result may be a skill

of monetary value, so the aim of "economic efficiency" is met also.

In achieving the objective of "civic responsibility" the recreation program offers wide opportunities of learning the care of public property. Along this line there could be improvement for there are some who are careless with equipment because it is "free." The attitudes of the park and the school boards certainly reflect their civic responsibility toward the community.

"Satisfying spiritual experiences" are hard to classify and to measure. Certainly if the increasing numbers who come every day are any indication then the program is giving satisfactions to these children who do seem to need their leisure hours filled with more than their homes can offer. While some of the parents in this community are well educated, there are many others who have come from backward areas to work in the nearby factories. These children have need to develop their inner resources. They may have as dull and monotonous jobs as do most of their parents. They will be better and happier citizens if they can employ their off the job hours in various sports and crafts at which they have some skill.

In checking on the relation to the recreation program of the aims of a good recreation project as listed on page five the first criterion of "providing equal opportunity for all"

is met in the most part. There is some need for better organization in the girls activities.

The present program does offer a varied type of activity. However, it does neglect certain areas which might be of great value. These are social recreation in the form of dancing or other entertainment and the use of dramatics. There is a music program under the tutelage of Mr. Russell, but this is not used as a source of audience pleasure as it might easily be.

The providing for passive as well as active participation is met in part in the story hour. This could be improved and made more interesting to the older age group. The playing of intra-mural games could provide the younger and non-participating children with the pleasures of being a spectator.

The program does make use of existing facilities. This is possible because of the good cooperation from the school. In the city recreation programs the instructors do not have the use of any of the facilities except the playground. In Portage there is the use of the school buses, the use of the gym, and several rooms in the building. The shop is open to the making of some of the material needed in the craft work.

At present the Recreation Program is only a summer project. There are plans now for a youth center which would function during the after school hours throughout the school year. A number of the parents attend gym classes at the different school in the evenings.

The recreation program does not aid as much as it could in providing or developing social relationships. There are no general meetings for planning or to give every one the feeling of unity.

In the development of good citizenship the program does accomplish a great deal as indicated in reviewing the objectives of education. Here as in all phases of any activity there is always room for improvement. On the positive side there is a good helpful spirit on the part of the older children in both assisting with the younger children and in caring for the equipment.

Recommendations

The most pressing need at the present time seems to be for more trained workers to care adequately for all the children who come to the program. The size of the groups makes any kind of organization and participation difficult. Sometimes at the Portage school in the afternoon there are a hundred and fifty who want to do craft work at one time. The act of merely passing out the handicraft material takes over an hour's time of two women workers.

As an immediate measure there ought to be a plan of limiting the numbers instructed at one time in handwork. This has been hard to do because what are the other hundred doing while one is helping fifty?

Instead of the present plan of having two recreation centers, one in the morning at Milham School and an all day program at the central school Portage, one all day program at the four schools might be very efficacious in solving the existing problems of congestion. The salaries of eight instructors instead of the present six full-time and one half-time worker would only amount to eighty dollars more. The children would not have to be transported all over the country side to get to the recreation center as is now the case.

In case there should be lacking some sense of unity, the different centers could meet at intervals for special events and intra-mural games. With a smaller number at each school two instructors could do better work than the seven who now attempt to take care of the numbers at Portage.

Although there have been no accidents during the summer sessions and the park board carries playground insurance, there are serious risks to safety in the present arrangement. Large numbers of children go to the nearby store or at times play in areas where they cannot be well supervised. Fewer children in smaller units would be much better served.

This plan would certainly effect a saving in bus expenses. The children in the area of each school could walk or ride bicycles as do the majority of those who attend the Milham morning session. The community shows every indication of

greater growth and development so the recreation program will certainly continue to expand.

Perhaps some better division of age groups could be tried since that was a recommendation made in a number of interviews and in the questionnaires. Also the program for older girls could be given more attention and time.

Regular planning sessions of the recreation workers would be helpful as would some regular meetings of those who attend the program.

While it would involve more work and expense for the school, there should be some arrangement for library services to the community during the summer. Possibly a branch or traveling library could be arranged to serve the children of Portage Schools. There is a great need to bring more reading into the program.

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