Graduation exercises as practiced and preferred in the major accredited high schools of North Dakota

John J. Seher
GRADUATION EXERCISES AS PRACTICED AND PREFERRED IN THE MAJOR ACCREDITED HIGH SCHOOLS OF N. DAK.

A Thesis
Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the University of North Dakota

By
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In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Science in Education

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This thesis, offered by John J. Seher in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science in Education in the University of North Dakota, is hereby approved by the Committee of Instruction in charge of his work.

Chairman
Sam Hagen

Director of the Graduate Division
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The high school commencement program, one of our American institutions, is a satisfying event in the life of the community. The student who has completed his high school work has achieved a first major accomplishment and as many of our high school graduates do not go to college; the high school graduation exercises should be, in the opinion of most school officials, a dignified and worthy ceremonial. McKown expresses this very ably when he says:

From time immemorial with all peoples the conclusion of the education of youth and their initiation into adult life as fully trained, accredited, and accepted members, have been accompanied by ritual and ceremony. Today this initiation ceremony of youth into full community membership is symbolized by the school commencement. At a special ceremony schools bestow diplomas upon those students who have fulfilled the requirements for graduation—the last honor the high school has to confer on its students. This celebration of graduation has been called "The great American folk festival."

Volumes of literature in the field of education have been written concerning definite trends in the organization and development of our educational system. A very small percentage of this written material is confined to the organization and development of the commencement program. The commencement program is one activity of the school that attracts a very large number of persons, persons who never attend a school program throughout the year make an effort to be present at the program in which

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the graduates receive their diplomas. As stated by Reeder:

"Commencement is probably the most important event in the school year and probably no school event has greater potentialities as a public relations agency than it. By careful planning for it and by conducting it, commencement can be made to give information about the school and to inspire all school and community groups to greater educational efforts and accomplishments." 2

The purpose of graduation exercises is considered to be recognition, retrospection and inspiration. This is expressed by J. E. Morgan, who relates:

"Could we give but one gift to every youth it would be the torch of inspiration—the ambition to dream and to do and to be according to his talents. This is the gift eternal. The worth of a school and the passing on of this torch measure the strength of a teacher more than the mastery of petty accuracies and technics. Inspiration is the soul of great teaching. Real teachers are always alert to discover and quicken the interests of a child. The commencement season affords an unusual opportunity to bring inspiration to a point of high effectiveness." 3

There are many details in the planning and developing of a program for graduation exercises which must be handled in an efficient manner if the school is to receive the respect of those who form the audience. A creditable program is one that is not just put together rather aimlessly, but one that is well planned, organized and executed.

As Cubberly says: "The superintendent must make a more or less definite educational plan to be followed in the administration and develop-


opment of his school. The superintendent is the master at the helm. His organization, his practices and policies are the factors which make for the success of the school.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this thesis was:

1. To make a survey of the practices and preferences in planning graduation exercises.
2. To discover what degree of conformity exists in the state.
3. To formulate from the questionnaire returns, an outline of the best methods and practices.

Scope of the Subject

According to Ethel A. Kaump, the commencement program is divided into a number of events and usually tradition is followed rather closely. Perhaps the most important of these events are the baccalaureate, class day, class night, Senior dinner dance, and the graduation service. According to the reference just cited commencement connotes a series of events or programs which may be spread over a week or two of entertainment and ceremonials. A school, for instance, which holds its banquet and promenade on Friday, baccalaureate on Sunday, class night on Wednesday, and graduation exercises on the following Thursday or Friday should term this series of events or programs as commencement activities or, perhaps,

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simply as commencement week.

The Administrative Manual for North Dakota High Schools states that high school graduation exercises usually number three—a sermon or address to the graduating class, usually delivered on the Sunday preceding the graduation exercises proper, at the night—or class day—entertainment, organized and presented largely by the members of the graduating class; and the graduating exercises proper, at which time diplomas are conferred.\(^6\)

This study is concerned only with those exercises at which the diplomas are presented. In this paper the term "Graduating Exercises" or "Graduation Exercises" will refer to those exercises at which the student receives his diploma.

**Procedure**

The questionnaire, a copy of which will be found in Appendix A, asked eighty-two questions regarding the commencement program. The items covered the topics of organization, student participation, decorations at the exercises, principal speaker at the exercises, ceremony at the exercises, and music at the exercises. The questions were of the objective type and in only a few instances were opinions requested. In some instances questions were asked regarding problems prior to and leading up to the graduation exercises proper.

The North Dakota Educational Directory of 1941-1942 lists 183

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\(^6\) Administrative Manual for North Dakota High Schools, Department of Public Instruction, Bismarck, North Dakota, 1938, p. 39.
major accredited High Schools in the state. Of this number, 165 are public major accredited high schools, thirteen are major accredited parochial high schools, three are major accredited high schools connected with State Teacher's Colleges, and two are major accredited Indian Agency High Schools. Questionnaires for this survey were mailed in April, 1942, to the superintendents of the 165 major accredited public high schools. No follow-up letters were sent.

Out of the total of 165 questionnaires sent, 130, or approximately 80 per cent, were returned. The names of the towns and the cities from which questionnaires were returned are given in Appendix B.

Limitations of Questionnaire

This survey includes returns only from the public major accredited high schools of North Dakota. The parochial high schools, the State Teacher's College high schools organized similar to the college plan, and the Indian Agency High Schools though major accredited high schools, were not included in this survey. It was thought that the practices of those schools excluded from this survey would be materially different from those included in this survey. The minor accredited, graded and consolidated schools of the state also were not included in this survey. It is possible, of course, that the practices and procedures of the major accredited schools could be applied to the minor accredited,

7North Dakota Educational Directory, Department of Public Instruction, Bismarck, North Dakota, 1941-42.
graded and consolidated schools.
CHAPTER II
ORGANIZATION

The Organization of the Program for Graduation

Every organization has its head, somebody to direct and execute the functions of that organization and so it is with organizing the program for graduation exercises. Some person or committee is held responsible for the planning, organizing and executing of the commencement program. The figures presented in Table I show upon whom that responsibility falls.

TABLE I

The Organization of Program for Graduation Exercises

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Persons Responsible for Program Organization</th>
<th>Number of Schools</th>
<th>Percentage of Schools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Superintendent</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>57.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class Advisor</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students, Supt., Prin., Class Advisor</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students &amp; Superintendent</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>11.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Superintendent &amp; Principal</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Superintendent &amp; Class Advisor</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students, Supt., &amp; Class Advisor</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>130</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As shown by Table I, the superintendent alone is held responsible in 57.8 per cent of the schools. In approximately 30 per cent of the schools the responsibility was vested in a committee which included the superintendent. This makes the superintendent either solely, or in
conjunction with others, responsible in about 90 per cent of the schools for the organization of the program for graduating exercises.

Types of Programs

Programs for high school graduation ceremonies are of two general types—one featuring a guest speaker and the other emphasizing student-participation. For many years the typical program for high school graduation ceremonies was patterned after the formal type used by colleges and included music, invocation, salutatory and valedictory speeches by students, an address by a guest speaker as the main feature of the ceremonies, distribution of diplomas, and benediction. This type of program is referred to throughout this study as the "old" type of graduation exercises. The type of program which does not make use of an outside speaker and is planned by and for the graduates is termed in this study as the "new" type of graduation exercises.

Question two in the questionnaire was: Which type of program, "old" or "new", was used at your last graduation exercises? Out of the 130 superintendents replying to the questionnaire, 113, or 86.9 per cent, reported using the "old" type. Only seventeen, or 13.1 per cent, used the "new" type.

The research division of the National Education Association sent a comprehensive inquiry to the high school principals in cities over 5000 population regarding their commencement activities, the findings of which were presented in Circular Number Three of the Educational Re-
The tabulation on the national question on the type of program presented at graduation exercises is in direct contrast with the North Dakota survey. In the national inquiry a greater percentage of schools used the student-participation, or "new" type, than the guest speaker, or "old" type of program. Although the 13.1 per cent of North Dakota schools which used the "new" type of program at their 1941 graduating exercises may indicate a trend in that direction, nevertheless, the "new" type is not new and has passed well beyond the stage of experimentation for one of the superintendents replied that the "new" type had been in use in his school for the past twenty-five years.

The previous question referred to practices in type. The next question referred to preference for type. Ninety, or 69.2 per cent, of the superintendents replied they favored the "old" type; twenty-nine, or 22.3 per cent, preferred the "new" type; six, or 4.1 per cent, expressed themselves indifferent; while five, or 3.9 per cent, didn't care to commit themselves on this question. By comparing the answers to the last two questions, it will be noticed that there is little difference between practices and preferences in type of program.

To find out whether the "new" type had been given a trial, the question was asked: Have you given the "new" type a trial? Thirty-nine,
or 30 per cent, of the superintendents replied they had given the "new" type a trial; eighty-six or 66.1 per cent, had not tried the "new" type; five, or 3.9 per cent, failed to reply to the question.

As previously mentioned, 13.1 per cent of the schools used the "new" type at their last graduation program, comparing this with the replies to the above question in which 30 per cent replied that they had given the "new" type a trial, it will be noticed that there is a dropping off of 16.9 per cent from those who had given the "new" type a trial to those who used the "new" type at their last exercises. There is, as shown, a decided tendency to continue, or return to, the "old" type of graduation exercises.

In order to ascertain whether the type used proved satisfactory, the question was asked: Was type used satisfactory? Ninety-four, or 72.3 per cent, answered "yes"; four, or 3.1 per cent, answered "no"; while thirty-two, or 24.6 per cent, failed to commit themselves by not answering the question. Two of the four schools reporting dissatisfaction with the type used were dissatisfied with the "new" type, the other two were not satisfied with the "old" type. The preceding answers were clarified with reasons. The reasons submitted are tabulated for or against the "new" type and for or against the "old" type. A summary of the reasons given for or against each type follows:

For New Type

Pupil-participation comes first on list of patron interest.
Public seems to prefer student-participation
Strong public school relations.
More interest by class members.
We have used the new for twenty-five years.
More pupil participation
Instructive to community

Against New Type

Saw a new one but not satisfactory
New type resolves into teacher activity.
Student speakers to not impress themselves.
Students sometimes don't do a very good job.

For Old Type

Outside speaker more forceful.
It was what people expected.
It's really only public all community address of year.
People prefer outside speaker along with students.
Generally have a good speaker.
Students need the outside influence and inspiration.
Suited needs and abilities of graduating class.
Only opportunity of year to get dynamic speaker.
Because of tradition.
Inspiration brought by outside speaker.
What the community wants.
Community likes to hear a good speaker now and then.
Traditional and simplicity.
Public seems to like outside speaker once in a while.
Had very good speaker--knew young people.
Timely topic--well delivered address.
In a community where an outside speaker is heard so seldom, we
like to bring one in for graduation.

Against Old Type

Depends much on speaker obtained.
Many commencement talks have little in them.

Theme as Central Idea in New Type

Student-participation programs usually are characterized by unified
themes which may take many forms such as pageants, dramatics, exhibitions, demonstrations, music, surveys, and student speakers. Out of the thirty-nine schools which had given the "new" type a trial, thirty-three, or 84.8 per cent, reported using a unified central theme around which the program was planned; six, or 15.2 per cent reported using no central
A glance at the titles submitted in reply to the question on themes used shows both a forward and a backward look; for some reveal the impression the school has made upon students, while others deal with the challenge of the future. Often retrospection and inspiration are combined.

What Characterizes an Educated Person.
We Do Our Part.
Challenges to Seniors.
Student Activities in Our School
Theme Followed Class Motto.
"Old" versus "new"—An Educational Theme (Dramatized).
Your School as a Citizenship Builder.
Education in Our Time.
The Changing High School Curriculum.
Activity Program.
Youth in the Modern World.
What the School Does for the Student.
Our School.
Education for Democratic Living.
The Cardinal Principles of Education.
Americanism Themes:
   Education and Democracy
   Education and Defense
   The Struggle of Liberty
   Patriotism
   The Schools and Democracy
   Education in the Emergency

Preferences for Time of Holding Graduation Exercises

Questions eight and nine were used to ask the superintendents for their preference for day in week and time of day to hold their exercises. The answers are tabulated in Table II.
### TABLE II

Preference for Day and Time of Day to Hold Exercises

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day of Week</th>
<th>Number of Schools</th>
<th>Percentage of Schools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wednesday</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thursday</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>36.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friday</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>35.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thursday or Friday</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Preference</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unanswered</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>11.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>130</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time of Day</th>
<th>Number of Schools</th>
<th>Percentage of Schools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Morning</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Afternoon</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evening</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>96.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unanswered</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>130</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

By far the greater preferences for holding the exercises are for Thursday and Friday with the demand for one about equally as great as for the other. Forty-seven, or 36.2 per cent, of the superintendents preferred Thursday; forty-six, or 35.4 per cent, of the schools preferred Friday; while ten, or 7.7 per cent, preferred either Thursday or Friday. Six, or 4.6 per cent preferred Wednesday; only one school reported Tuesday as the preferable day; five, or 3.8 per cent, had no preference; while fifteen, or 11.5 per cent, of the schools left the question unanswered.

As for the time of the day to hold the exercises, the evening is decisively the time as reported by 125, or 96.2 per cent, of the schools;
two, or 1.5 per cent, favored the afternoon; while only one school preferred
the morning. This is very closely in line with the national survey made in
March, 1942, by the Educational Research Bureau in which 750, or 91 per cent
of the 820 schools reported favoring the evening; in the other 9 per cent
the preferences were divided about equally between morning and afternoon.

Very likely the reason why most of the schools of North Dakota prefer
the evening for holding their graduation exercises is that the evening is
the most convenient time for the people of an agricultural area.

Master of Ceremonies at Graduation Program

In the discussion of the organization of the program, it was found that
the superintendent was responsible in approximately 90 per cent of the
schools for organizing the program for graduation exercises. About the
same situation is found regarding the presiding officer at the exercises.
One hundred twenty-one, or 93 per cent, of the superintendents reported that
they, themselves, presided at the graduation program. The principal pre­
sided in three, or 2.4, per cent of the school; while two schools, or 1.5
per cent reported that the program was self-announced through the use of house
programs. The interpretation is that these two schools evidently used the
"new" type of program in which no guest speaker is used. Three of the
schools, or 2.4 per cent, reported that a student, usually the class presi­
dent, presided at the graduation program. These three schools very likely,
also used the "new" type of program.

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2Educational Research Service, American Association of School
Administrators, Washington, D.C.
Selection of Honor Students

Most schools name the traditional honor students of valedictorian and salutatorian. Out of the 130 schools, 115, or 88.5 per cent, name valedictorians; one hundred-eleven, or 85.4 per cent, named salutatorians. Four schools modified their procedure by stating that two honor students are selected; three honor students are named; five honor students are chosen; class selects high ranking boy and girl. One superintendent wrote, "The fraction of a percentage that separates the upper two or three students is infinitesimal when marks of A, B, C, etc., are given; and the whole base is poorly founded. -- yet we do it." The 11.5 per cent of the schools which do not name honor students may indicate a trend in the direction of not having honor students.

At that time of the year when honor students are usually announced quite frequently, local or daily papers carry an announcement to the effect that a certain school named two persons as valedictorians or two persons as salutatorians. To determine to what extent such practices are carried out in selecting co-valedictorians or co-salutatorians, the question was included in the questionnaire. One hundred one, or 87.8 per cent of the schools reported that such double honors were not used unless in case of ties. Eleven, or 9.5 per cent, reported that they do name double honor students in one case or the other.

Some superintendents maintain that "marks" should not be the only criterion but that other criteria should be taken into consideration for selecting honor students. One hundred, or 86.9 per cent of the superintendents, stated that the honor students in their school are selected accord-
ing to scholastic standings only. Fifteen, or 13.1 per cent reported that other criteria are taken into consideration in addition to marks. The following are the criteria used in addition to marks for selecting honor students in twelve of the schools.

- Citizenship and achievement in extra-curricular.
- Loyalty, honesty, attitude.
- Citizenship.
- Not desirable in society.
- Achievement, leadership, citizenship.
- Personality and civic accomplishment.
- Activities, attitudes.
- Deportment and honesty.
- Any type of achievement.
- Activities.
- Personality.
- Total school experience of individual.

**Residence Requirements for Selection of Honor Students**

The number of years a student is required to live in residence to receive consideration for the honor rating of valedictorian or salutatorian will be noted in Table 3.
TABLE 3
Residence requirements as Qualifications for Selecting Honor Students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years</th>
<th>Number of Schools</th>
<th>Percentage of Schools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>One</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>24.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>30.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>17.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Four</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>17.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unanswered</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As shown by the table the residence requirements range from four years to none as a consideration for the selection of honor students. Two years seems the most popular as reported by forty, or 30.8 per cent of the schools.

Time of Announcement of Honor Students

In order that honor students may have sufficient time to prepare their speeches for graduation, they ought to be given timely notice weeks in advance; just how many weeks in advance of the graduation program this announcement is made is summarized in Table 4.

TABLE 4
Time of Announcement of Honor Students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Weeks Before Graduation</th>
<th>Number of Schools</th>
<th>Percentage of Schools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Two</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Four</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>24.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Six</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>46.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eight</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ten</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twelve</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As noted from Table 4, the time of announcement of honor students varies from none to twelve weeks before graduation. Six weeks appears to be sufficient time as indicated by sixty-one of the schools. Ethel A. Kaump states: "At least six weeks of actual preparation is necessary for a perfected presentation". The six schools reporting no announcement, or none, are a part of that group of schools which do not name honor students.

The Ranking of Seniors

Sixty, or 46.2 per cent of the schools reported that three and a half years of the students grades were used in their tabulation of the seniors rank in his class. Sixty-five, or 50 per cent of the schools, take into consideration all of the students grades up to the time of announcing the honor students. Only one school used the first three years of the pupil's grades, while two schools reported no ranking of seniors.

The Graduation of Seniors Lacking Credits

The problem confronting many superintendents whether or not to let those seniors appear for graduation who are deficient in credits is a perplexing one. Sixty-eight, or 52.3 per cent of the superintendents let those seniors who are a trifle short of the necessary credit requirement appear with the rest of the class for their diplomas. Sixty-two, or 47.6 per cent, do not permit credit deficient seniors to graduate. It will be noted that the superintendents are about equally divided regarding the problem whether to graduate or not to graduate a student. Just where those superintendents draw the line who allow seniors deficient in credits to

Of the sixty-eight schools reporting that they graduated seniors even though they were short of the necessary credit requirements, twenty-nine, or 42.7 per cent, permitted a deficiency of one-half credit only; twenty-four, or 35.4 per cent, allowed a deficiency of one credit; one school permitted graduation with one and one-half credits short; while six, or 8.8 per cent, reported that the problem never confronted them or was never put to a test. Six superintendents overlooked the question. Many of the superintendents reported that even though they permitted graduation of students deficient in credits they required the work to be made up during the summer by correspondence or at institutions of higher learning. Some superintendents also reported that their credit deficient graduates had been enrolled in some correspondence work which was not completed at the date of graduation but which would have to be completed soon thereafter. One superintendent writes as follows:

"We give all students who are within reasonable credits of graduating a chance to act as full seniors on the ground that this is their last and only
chance. This assumes they fail or are short in only a half credit or a full credit, and assuming also that the credit they lack is of the type they can secure by attendance at the local College Summer School.

We give them a completed but unsigned diploma; and then take it up again at the close of the exercises; then give it to them "for keeps" when they have completed their credits. If they do not go to summer school, and do not complete their needed credits and deficiencies, they never get their diplomas.

We are not entirely satisfied with this procedure but in many respects it is "humane". With the war situation coming on and labor needed, we shall probably yield to still further leniencies with regard to graduation requirements."

The twenty-first question asked the superintendents was: Do you present these credit deficient seniors a signed diploma?, a blank diploma?, or no diploma?

Of the sixty-eight schools reporting that they graduated seniors deficient in credits; sixty-four, or 94.2 per cent replied that a blank or unsigned diplomas was issued; two schools, or 2.9 per cent conferred signed diplomas; while two schools issued certificates of completion instead of diplomas.

Questions twenty-two and twenty-three, the last under the heading of "organization" dealt with eighth or ninth grade graduation in connection with senior graduation exercises. Question twenty-two was: Do you present eighth grade diplomas? -- ninth grade diplomas? -- in connection with the senior graduating exercises. The purpose was not to find out how many schools presented eighth and ninth grade diplomas, but how many presented these diplomas at the same program in which the seniors received their diplomas. Seventy-eight, or 60 per cent, of the 130 schools reported that they presented eighth grade diplomas at the same time the senior diplomas were distributed; six schools, or 4.6 per cent presented ninth grade diplomas at the senior exercises; forty-six, or 35.4 per cent of the schools do not pre-
sent eighth or ninth grade diplomas in connection with the senior program. Some superintendents stated that their eighth grade graduates attended county graduating exercises and received their diplomas at those exercises.

The answers to this problem reveal the fact that not many schools have as yet adopted the 6-3-3 plan of organization, an organization having a junior high and a senior high. Of the eighty-four schools reporting eighth and ninth grade graduation in connection with the senior graduation, only six schools presented ninth grade diplomas, all the rest were still presenting eighth grade diplomas conveying the fact that they were operating on the 8-4 plan of organization.

The last question in this paragraph was: If in connection with the senior program do the eighth or ninth grade graduates participate in the senior program? Fifty-eight, or 69 per cent answered "no"; eighteen, or 21.4 per cent answered "yes"; eight schools failed to answer the question. Nothing was further asked just to what extent the eighth or ninth grade graduates participated in the senior program. One superintendent stated that only participation was one musical selection by the grades. Another reported the grades as part of the processional as the only participation.
CHAPTER III

Student Participation at Exercises

In many schools it is customary to have a valedictory speech at the graduation exercises. This speech is usually made by the student having the highest average during his high school career. Valedictory comes from the word vale, which means bidding good-bye. The theme of this speech should deal with vital current issues of life that are directly affecting the lives of parents and graduates. The speech should grow out of the pupil's own experiences and the theme of the speech should be specifically fitted to the times, class and community — it is a time for analysis and appreciation.

The answer to one of the questions asked showed that ninety-five, or 92.6 per cent, of the 115 schools have the valedictorian speak at the graduating exercises. Some stated that the valedictorian spoke at the class night exercises. One superintendent reported that the valedictorian, if musically inclined, may sing instead of making the traditional speech. This is a rather unusual procedure which has much merit.

The salutatory address is another honor speech. This speech is usually given by the student who makes the second highest average during his high school years. It is a speech of greeting and an expression of appreciation for the education the community has provided. Salutatory means "We salute you". This, too, must be a speech the material of which is familiar to the student. It must be rich in content, alive in thought and inspirational in the ideals and hopes.

1 Kaump, Ethel A., op. cit., p. 74.
Out of the 115 schools selecting salutatorians, eighty-eight, or 76.6 per cent stated that the salutatorian spoke at the graduation exercises while twenty-six schools, or 22.6 per cent did not. A comparison of answers shows that seven school have the valedictorian speak at the graduating exercises while the salutatorian does not.

Since valedictory means bidding "good bye" this speech should be placed as near to the close of the graduation program as possible; but, as one of the superintendents replied, "any speech after the main address can hardly be other than a significant anticlimax". Another question was: Does the valedictorian speak before or after the principal speaker? Out of the ninety-five schools where the valedictorian speaks, sixty-two schools, or 65.3 per cent have the valedictorians appear before the principal speaker; while thirty-three, or 34.7 per cent have them speak after the principal speaker. It is the opinion of the author of this study that the valedictorian should speak before the principal speaker, thus relieving the student scheduled to make this speech from much nervous tension caused by the prolonged wait until the principal speaker finishes.

Another question asked dealt with the class history, will, prophecy, and oration. The purpose of this question was to discover material leading up to the next problem which aimed to reveal the number of schools using the above speeches or papers at their graduating exercises. Out of the 130 schools included in this survey, one hundred have class histories; ninety-seven have class wills; ninety-seven have class prophecies; twenty-one have class orations. Ninety-five, or 95 per cent, reported that these speeches or papers are given at class night exercises; four, or 4 per cent have these speeches or papers given at the graduating exercises, although
one of the four reported that only the class history is given at the graduation exercises. One school reported using these speeches at the junior-senior banquet.

It is to be noted from these answers that there is a definite transition away from student speakers at the graduation program.

The next problem was solved by answers to the question: Does your school have a separate class night program? Ninety-five, or 73 per cent answered that they do have class night exercises while thirty-five, or 37 per cent do not. Some of the schools that do not have class night exercises have their class histories, prophecies, wills, and orations published in the school paper or the school annual.

The next question was prompted by an authority in the field of correct ceremonials used at the graduation exercises. The supposedly correct procedure is to present the graduating class to the president of the board of education, who, in turn distributes the diplomas and makes a brief talk to the class, followed with a brief talk of appreciation by the class president. Just to what extent the latter part of this three-point ceremonial is carried out in the schools of North Dakota will be found in the answers to the question: Does the class president make a speech after the diplomas are presented? Only two schools, or 1.5 per cent, reported such a procedure. These two schools have their class president appear to present the class gift to the school.

The state administrative manual summarizes very ably the importance and amount of student participation appropriate for the graduation exercises and that part largely reserved for class night exercises:

The class day exercises offer the social feature of the graduating week.
The organization and conduct of these exercises should be in the hands of the students, subject, of course, to faculty supervision. Class night is the graduates' night. It is the time for their stunts, their jokes, their music, and their class songs. The traditional class will, prophecy, etc., can well be replaced by other types of entertainment but if they are used during graduation week the class day program is the place for them. The occasion should be rather informal, as jolly as good taste permits, and of interest primarily to the graduates themselves. Class day exercises may be held as a public performance or as an exclusive class or school function. The graduation exercises proper should be dignified but not stiff — if the "valedictory" and "salutatory" are used they should be short (about 3 minutes in length) and should be concerned primarily with some phase of the modern high school in which the public would be interested and which the pupil can be expected to discuss effectively and intelligently.

A very fitting and proper conclusion to this chapter on student participation is embodied in the words of one of the superintendents who writes:

"We develop class night so it is as largely attended as graduation night. This is student's night; the entire program put on and developed by the seniors, under faculty leadership, i.e. with their class advisor. Sometimes they use the traditional set speeches. The best exercises come when they develop a unique setting and let the wills and prophecies and the like come in incidentally to the general program. Honors are announced at class night and the valedictory and salutatory given then. These two latter items are hackneyed, badly outworn, and probably should be dispensed with as a poorly based part of the "honor system". The fraction of a percentage that separates the upper five students in a class of 200 is infinitesimal when marks of A, B, C, etc., are given; and the whole base is poorly founded. Yet we do it. I feel we do not make as much of class night as we should. Six weeks or more is usually taken in preparation for a play, when the script is all prepared; sometimes we try to make up the script and present class night exercises in just a week or two."

Administrative Manual for North Dakota, Department of Public Instruction, Bismarck, N. Dak., 1938, p. 40.
CHAPTER IV
DECORATIONS AND MUSIC AT THE EXERCISES

Decorations

For general effectiveness the decorating of the stage for graduation exercises is almost a universal procedure as will be noted from Table 6. Only two schools reported no decorations. It may be assumed that the three schools using drapery only do not go to any extra expense in decorating, but rather use the drapery which is a part of their regular stage equipment and setting. Table 6 denotes the various types of decorations used at the graduation exercises.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types</th>
<th>Number of Schools</th>
<th>Percentage of Schools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crepe Paper</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foliage</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drapery</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plants and Flowers</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>20.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crepe Paper and Foliage</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crepe Paper, foliage, plants &amp; flowers</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>26.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crepe Paper, plants and flowers</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>26.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foliage, plants and flowers</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From Table 6 it is noted that plants and flowers are the most popular type of decorations at the graduation exercises. They are being used in 80 per cent of the schools, either alone or along with other types of decorations. Crepe paper is next on the list of popular decorations; although not used extensively as a decoration in itself, it is very popular when used in conjunc-
tion with other types. One superintendent writes regarding decorations at the exercises: "A few palms from the undertakers; a few flowers; a flag or two -- that is all we have needed".

As a last tribute to the seniors, most schools consider it the duty of the juniors to decorate the stage for the graduating exercises. One hundred-sixteen schools, or 89.3 per cent have the juniors do the decorating; in eleven, or 8.5 per cent of the schools the seniors put up their own decorations; while one school has the sophomores attend to this function.

The amount of money spent for decoration is presented in Table 7.

TABLE 7
Cost of Decorations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cost</th>
<th>Number of Schools</th>
<th>Percentage of Schools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>36.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very little</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$1.00 - $3.00</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>27.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$4.00 - $6.00</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>18.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$7.00 - $9.00</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$10.00 - $12.00</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$13.00 - $15.00</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unanswered</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As shown by Table 7, there are 36.2 per cent of the schools that spent nothing for decorations; 6.1 per cent didn't present any figures but stated "very little" was spent; from one to three dollars was spent in 27.7 per cent of the schools; four to six dollars was used in 18.5 per cent of the schools; four to six dollars was used in 18.5 per cent of the schools; one school spent from seven to nine dollars; 6.9 per cent of the schools used from ten to twelve dollars; while one school
reported the cost of decorating as fifteen dollars. One superintendent who reported spending nothing for decorations at the exercises qualified his answer by stating that the decorations used at the junior-senior banquet were salvaged and used at the exercises with the cost thus being charged against the banquet account.

The last question asked in this grouping was: Do the seniors wear their chosen class flower at the graduation exercises? Out of the 130 schools, ninety-one, or 70 per cent, answered "yes"; thirty-five, or 26.9 per cent answered "no"; while four, or 3.1 per cent overlooked the question. One superintendent said, "we use flowers when gowns aren't used". Another stated, "depends upon funds".

Music

In the first chapter an opinion was expressed to the effect that the graduation service should be dignified and worthy ceremonial. Much can add to or detract from the dignity or worth of this ceremonial by the quality of music rendered. Twenty-seven, or 20.8 per cent of the schools prefer vocal music at the graduation exercises; while six schools, or 4.6 per cent prefer instrumental music. However, the greater part, or 74.6 per cent of the schools prefer both types.

Usually the band, the orchestra, or a pianist furnished the music for those marching in the processional. Ninety, or 69.2 per cent of the schools prefer piano music for the processional. Next in importance or choice is the band which is preferred in thirty schools, or 23.1 per cent; while an orchestra has preference in eight schools, or 6.2 per cent. One superintendent expressed his preference for an instrumental solo; another, the pipe organ. A plausible reason for not having more bands, orchestras, or pipe organs furnish the music
for the processional may be the absence of such in many schools.

Regarding the class of music preferred at the graduation program, seventy or 53.8 per cent of the superintendents, prefer secular music. Thirty-three superintendents, or 25.4 per cent, expressed their desire for sacred music while 27, or 20.8 per cent answered as "both" or "either".

The type of program, "old" or "new", used at the program, has some bearing on the number of musical selections presented. Regardless of the type of program used the number of musical selections preferred at the exercises as expressed by the superintendents are as follows: thirty-one, or 23.8 per cent, preferred two selections; seventy-one, or 54.6 per cent, preferred three selections; twenty, or 15.5 per cent preferred four selections; six, or 4.6 per cent preferred five selections; while two, or 1.5 per cent preferred six selections.

Superintendents often experience the desirability in some of their seniors as not wishing to take part in the musical selections presented at the graduation program even though these seniors are members of some musical organization such as glee clubs or choruses. The glee clubs or choruses scheduled to take part in the graduation program would be materially crippled in their presentations without the aid of the senior members should they be permitted to drop out.

The answers to the next question revealed the extent of senior participation in musical selections rendered at the graduation program. One hundred nineteen, or 91.6 per cent of the schools have the seniors take part in the music presented provided they are members of regular organized groups such as glee clubs, choruses, etc.

As a group by themselves, the seniors usually do not present a musical
selection at the graduation program. One hundred twenty-four, or 95.4 percent of the schools, do not have the seniors sing a class song at the exercises. Some of the superintendents remarked that a senior class song was a function at class night exercises.

Regardless of the type or class of music preferred, the music presented at the graduation program should be sterling in quality, adapted to the occasion, and representative of the best the school can do.
CHAPTER V

PRINCIPAL SPEAKER AT THE EXERCISES

It was shown in the first chapter that by far the greater number of the major accredited high school of North Dakota preferred and practiced the "old" or "guest speaker" type of graduation exercises. It was also noted that the chief reason for having an outside speaker was for the inspiration brought in from the outside. The success of this type of graduation exercises depends much upon the type of speaker obtained. Whoever assumes the responsibility of singling out and employing this "outside talent" has undertaken a task which may become the target of many criticisms; as the person selected for the occasion by the one responsible for the selection may not, in the opinion of the seniors and those making up the audience, be as desirable as in the opinion of the one making the selection. In seventy, or 61.9 per cent of the schools, the superintendent assumes this responsibility; while in twenty-one, or 18.8 per cent of the schools, the superintendent suggests the speaker and the school board approves or acts upon the suggestion. This then places the responsibility in 80 per cent of the schools directly upon the shoulders of the superintendent. In four schools, or 3.5 per cent, the school board takes the full responsibility; while in seven, or 6.2 per cent of the schools, the seniors assume full responsibility. In six schools, or 5.4 per cent, this responsibility is carried jointly by the superintendent and the seniors, while in the remaining five schools the principal joins the superintendent in making this selection.

Many of the schools put a limit on the time allotted to the principal speaker in delivering his address. Forty-eight, or 42.5 per cent of the
schools reported as limiting their speakers to time; however, in the majority or 57.5 per cent of the schools the speaker is not notified of any time limit.

Although not all schools limit the speaker's time, nevertheless, the superintendents of the 113 schools which employed outside speakers had a desired length of address in mind. The responses to the length of the time of addresses desired are presented in Table 8.

**TABLE 8**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Length of Address Desired</th>
<th>Number of Schools</th>
<th>Percentage of Schools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>20-30</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>38.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-40</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>53.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-50</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-60</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unanswered</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>113</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As will be seen from Table 8 the most desirable length of address is from thirty to forty minutes. This time limit is desired in over 50 per cent of the schools. Next in importance is the twenty to thirty minute time limit which is desired in 38 per cent of the school.

A possible reason why some schools are dissatisfied with the type of address delivered at the graduation exercises may be that the fee offered is too small to attract the better speakers. The fees paid for outside speakers vary from no honorarium paid to forty dollars. The fees paid, as shown in the tabulation in Table 9, include the necessary expenses of the speaker, such as transportation, meals and lodging.
TABLE 9
Fees Paid To Outside Speakers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Amount</th>
<th>Number of Schools</th>
<th>Percentage of Schools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No Honorarium Paid</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$5.00 to $10.00</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$10.00 to $15.00</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>15.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$15.00 to $20.00</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>37.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$20.00 to $25.00</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>8.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$25.00 to $30.00</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>27.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$30.00 to $35.00</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$35.00 to $40.00</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$40.00 to $45.00</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From Table 9 it will be noted that the interval of $15.00 to $20.00 is the most frequent fee interval used. The next fee interval most frequently used is the $25.00 to $30.00 interval. It is to be realized, however, that the fee paid is not a reasonable compensation for the services rendered, for often the fee received by the speaker is almost wholly paid out for transportation to and from the place at which the exercises are held, depending upon the distance travelled.

Sometimes a saving can be made in expenses by having several schools in a certain vicinity use the same speaker on successive days. However, only fifteen schools reported following that procedure. Six of the schools indicated no saving in fee but a better speaker was thus acquired; seven reported a saving of five dollars each; while two schools saved ten dollars each. This procedure deserves more investigation and practice, particularly in these days of rubber shortage and a possibility of gasoline rationing.

Another rather unusual practice is for one of the former graduates to
come back to his alma mater to deliver the graduation address. This was found to be the practice in six of the 113 schools at the 1941 graduating exercises. Although a rather unusual practice, it has much merit, if the graduate has the ability to give a good talk.

Almost nine-tenths of the schools, or 101, indicated that the board of education paid the speaker's fee. Eleven schools, or 9.7 per cent, pay the speaker's fee from the senior class fund; while one school reported a fifty-fifty proposition -- one-half from the board of education and one-half from the senior class treasury.

Approximately 86 per cent, or 101, of the schools prefer to have the principal speaker give his address without the use of manuscript or notes, although fifteen per cent, or eighteen, of the schools indicated indifference. Some speeches are better received when read from manuscript, others receive more undivided attention when delivered without reference to notes. Much depends upon the type of speaker and the method of presentation.

Most superintendents feel that they do not care to suggest the speech topic to the person scheduled to give the principal address. One hundred, or 86.3 per cent of the superintendents expressed their desire to reserve that function to the speaker. If a certain theme is to be carried out throughout the exercises it may be worthwhile to suggest a speech topic, which would be fitting to the theme. In some known instances, speakers have requested previously the motto of the graduating class so as to build a speech fitting to the motto.

The conversationalist type of speaker is in much more demand than the dynamic type. Eighty-nine schools, or 78.7 per cent, expressed a desire for the speaker with a conversational tone; twenty-three, or 20.4 per cent, de-
sired the dynamic or elocutionary type; one superintendent felt unbiased to either type.

The last question in this chapter to the superintendents was: Who introduces the guest speaker to the audience? In 111, or 98.2 per cent of the schools the superintendent, himself, makes this introduction. In one school a member of the board of education introduced the guest speaker to the audience; while another school has no oral introduction, the speaker is self-announced through the use of house programs.

Conclusion

The commencement speaker should be selected with some care. He should be an interesting and inspirational speaker with some breadth, a person in touch with school and economic trends, somewhat acquainted with conditions in the community in which he is to speak, who is able to bring to the local audience a sound, pleasing, and applicable presentation of thought preferably related to education. The commencement address should be reasonably short. A well organized twenty minute address is much more effective than an hour of speaking. Not over thirty minutes should be used at the most. The commencement speaker should be secured early and informed, when engaged, of the length of time he is expected to speak.

1Administrative Manual for North Dakota, Department of Public Instruction, Bismarck, N. Dak., 1938, p. 40.
CHAPTER VI
CEREMONY AT THE EXERCISES

In practically all of the schools included in this survey the class members march into the auditorium after the program starts. This is one of the high points in the pageant of graduation and anything that can be done to make the class members stand out in the midst and eyes of their parents and friends is good practice. The processional and recessional do this well. One hundred twenty-eight, or 98.5 per cent of the schools, have a processional. Only two schools have their graduates seated when the program starts. Seventy-two, or 55.4 per cent of the schools have a recessional. The reason that only about half of the schools do not hold a recessional is that the stage in the auditorium is the most practical place in such schools where the parents and friends may conveniently go to congratulate the seniors. The schools that do have a recessional may have an ante room or large hall which may be more convenient than the auditorium stage for congratulatory purposes.

It usually is considered an honor to be a leader. In view of that fact the most logical person to lead in the processional or recessional would be the honor student. A summary of those who lead in the processional and recessional is given in Table 10.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 10</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Processional and Recessional Leaders</th>
<th>Number of Schools</th>
<th>Percentage of Schools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Processional:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valedictorian</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>32.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valedictorian and Salutatorian</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As indicated in Table 10, the valedictorian is cited most frequently as the person taking the lead in the processional and recessional. In those schools in which the valedictorian and salutatorian, or the class president and the vice-president lead, no doubt, the processional consists of two rows of seniors. The fourteen schools listed in the unclassified section of the tabulation reported leaders of the processional as follows: superintendent and president of board, speaker and superintendent, speaker, speaker and president of board, speaker and faculty, board of education, class advisor, and the principal. As will be noted under recessional in Table 10, no double sets of leaders are given. This may indicate that most, or all, of the re-
essionals are conducted in single file. However, the question whether the recessional was conducted in single or double file was not asked in the questionnaire.

Two-thirds, or 86 schools, conduct their processional in double file, while forty-three, or 33.5 per cent have the graduating class march in single file. One of the superintendents wrote regarding the procedure in his school as: "We march in our class of about 200 in alphabetical order coming from two stairways at opposite sides of the parquet floor, where the seniors are formally ushered by junior class girls dressed in their finest formal gowns. Musicians who take part in the orchestra cannot march, of course, but they later retire to their places with their classmates."

In approximately 85 per cent, or 107 schools, the audience rises to the occasion as the seniors file into the auditorium in their "little journey" to the stage in the front of the auditorium.

Another question asked was concerned with the opening and closing of the graduation program with a prayer. Approximately 95 per cent of the schools have an invocation. Nine schools reported as not having an opening prayer.

One hundred nineteen, or 91.5 per cent of the schools, have a benediction, while eleven schools do not include a closing prayer in their program.

Ninety per cent of the superintendents prefer to have the benediction and invocation pronounced by the same person. How the person is selected and who does the selecting was revealed from the answers to the next two questions.

In eighty-one schools, or 65.9 per cent, the superintendent of the school has the honor or obligation of selecting the person to give the invocation and benediction at the graduation program. Some member of the graduating class is assigned to this detail in twenty-six, or 21.5 per cent, of the
schools; while in seven of the schools the superintendent and the class
members share this responsibility together. In the remaining seven, or
5.8 per cent of the schools, the principal assumes this assignment.

Ninety-nine, or 61.8 per cent of the schools reported a "round robin"
method among the resident ministers in their selection of the person to
give the invocation and benediction. However, sixteen, or 13.3 per cent of
the schools reported no particular procedure. Four schools have the same
minister who delivered the baccalaureate sermon also officiate at the gra-
duation exercises. Two schools reported as having only one minister in
town which, of course, simplified the method of selection. One superinten-
dent wrote: "We ask the most recent arrival, among the ministers; possibly
because he is least known and may be more of an innovation."

A familiar practice is for the superintendent or the principal of the
high school to present the graduating class to the president of the board
of education who then presents the diplomas. In nineteen, or 11.8, of the
schools, a school board member, usually the president of the school board,
presents the diplomas to the candidates of the graduating class. The
superintendent of school presents the diplomas in the other twelve schools.
One superintendent replied, "I try to get a board member to present the
diplomas but have had little success."

The superintendent presents the graduating class to a board member in
eighty-one, or 62.3 per cent of the schools. In forty-six schools, or 35.4
per cent, the principal has this assignment, while in three schools the
class advisor makes this presentation. One superintendent wrote regarding
the practice in his school as follows: "This we feel is and ought to be the
climax of the service. As much 'pageantry' as is possible seems good. The
superintendent presents the class to the board president indicating that the class members are ready for their diplomas, as the class rises; then the superintendent reads their names one by one, allowing ample time for each to have his 'moment' as he passes across the stage to receive a handshake of congratulation and the diplomas from the president of the school board, after which the graduate returns to his former place, but the line both going and coming is continuous, the second one starting at the moment the first returns. Class members leave their position in one aisle and return in the other, hence no confusion."

The nature of the program as well as the resources of the auditorium or other place of assemblage determine the plan of seating individual members of the graduating class. One hundred twelve, or 86.2 per cent of the schools, have the seniors seated on the stage. The eighteen schools that do not have their seniors seated on the stage may very likely be the extremely large and the extremely small high schools. There is the possibility that the stage is not large enough to accommodate the graduates in the larger schools while in the smaller high schools an auditorium with an elevated stage may not be available.

The most common method in arranging the seating of the seniors is by alternating the boys and girls. Table II indicates that another common method is by height, this being especially important when a procesional and recessional is included as part of the program. Some schools reported no definite plan, except for honor graduates, class officers, and program participants who may sit along the aisles or on front rows.

Table II gives a summary of the senior seating arrangement.
The six schools listed as unclassified in Table II reported the seating of the seniors at the graduation exercises as follows: rows of all boys and rows of all girls, honor students and officers in front row, by appearance, program participants in front row.

Two principal methods are used in the presentation of the diplomas. In one method they are presented in alphabetical order, in the other according to the seating arrangement of the seniors. Fifty-one, or 39.2 per cent of the schools, make use of the former plan while sixty-eight, or 52.3 per cent, reported using the latter type. Eleven, or 8.5 per cent of the schools, have the diplomas presented at random.

In approximately one-third of the schools, the person who presents the diplomas has the assistance of another person who pronounces the candidates names at the time the diplomas are presented. The personnel of the members of the board of education may be such that the person selected to present the diplomas may have difficulty in reading or pronouncing the names of the individual graduates. Should this situation exist in those schools where a board member presents the diplomas, it would be advisable for the person who...
presents the graduating class to also read the names of the candidates for diplomas.

The person who presents the diplomas usually makes a few brief remarks addressed to the members of the graduating class. This was reported to be the practice in one hundred eighteen, or 90.8 per cent of the schools; but in eighteen schools the person presenting the diplomas does not address the graduating class. One superintendent expressed his choice in this matter as he wrote: "We have been fortunate; our school board presidents rarely make any remarks at all, and never have made 'speeches'. Long speeches by either the superintendent or school board member can hardly be other than a significant anticlimax."

Approximately 75 per cent of the superintendents indicated that it was their preference to have the entire graduating class stand during the presentation of diplomas. Some of those in the group who do not have the entire class stand during this ceremonial reported that one row at a time stood up.

Another ceremonial included in some of the graduating programs is the presentation of college scholarships. Ninety-three, or 71.5 per cent of the schools, disclosed this function as being on their programs. Other awards frequently mentioned as being awarded at the graduation exercises were: Forty-one schools present citizenship awards; thirty-nine, perfect attendance awards; twenty-one schools present American Legion awards. Other awards presented although not frequently mentioned are: Athletics, Reader's Digest subscription, band, activity letters, honor students, dramatics, Business and Professional Men's Award, and literary society awards.

Many of these awards could be presented at the class night exercises as
some of the graduation exercises are rather lengthy if many of the above presentations are made at the graduation program. Several schools indicated as making presentations otherwise than the diplomas at the class night exercises. Of course, as earlier noted, some schools do not have class night exercises.

These special awards are presented at the graduation exercises by the superintendent in 71.2 per cent of the schools. The principal of the high school makes these awards in 26.9 per cent of the schools; while the coach, in two schools, was mentioned as the person presenting awards. Evidently these were the athletic awards.

The majority of the high schools reporting have found it advisable to adopt the use of caps and gowns to assure "democracy in dress" and reduce expense to a minimum. Some oppose this practice as "aping a college custom" which has no significance to high schools. This criticism is obviated in part by selecting colored gowns. Seventy-five, or 57.7 per cent of the schools, made use of caps and gowns at their 1941 graduating exercises. Approximately the same figures hold true for the use of caps and gowns at the baccalaureate program, while only twelve schools, or 9.2 per cent, use caps and gowns at the class night program.

Some schools allow each graduating class to vote on the issue of caps and gowns. Although this question was not included in the questionnaire, replies from schools volunteered the information that students had voted for caps and gowns.

Most schools rent caps and gowns from outside agencies. A number of schools own their own. Of the seventy-five schools reporting the use of caps and gowns, sixty, or 80 per cent, rent the caps and gowns from outside
agencies, while in fifteen, or twenty per cent of the schools, the caps and gowns are owned by the school. Several schools reported that they charge fees although the caps and gowns are owned by the school. Some schools charge fees only until the gowns are paid for; other schools charge a maintenance fee. In a few schools a regular fee is paid, presumably as a means of financing the graduation ceremonies.

In 65 per cent of these schools which rent their caps and gowns, the individual graduate pays the rent. In 10 per cent of the schools, the rent is paid out of the senior class fund. In one school, the graduates paid half the rent and the school district the other half. Another school reported that the gowns were owned by the school but the caps were rented.

The Department of Public Instruction has this to say regarding suitable dress for graduation:

Uniformity should be the keynote of graduation dress. Suitable graduation dress for boys is dark clothing; even the occasional white or light duck trousers jar upon the occasion, though perfectly proper for class night exercises. In the case of schools where sufficient instruction in home economics is given, the girl graduates ought to appear at the graduation exercises in dresses made by themselves as part of their school work. What they wear at the class night exercises is a matter for the class as a whole to decide. If the school does not offer home economics work, or enough of it to enable them to make their graduation dresses, they should wear white dresses - to correspond to the dark clothing of their boy classmates- of uniform cost, which is not so great as to embarrass any graduate. The underlying reason for these convictions is that the graduation exercises proper, constitute a public school function, and not a social function; and that, in a public school function, organized and conducted by the school authorities, every precaution should be taken to avoid embarrassment to a graduate who may not be able to appear in expensive clothing but who may be an outstanding student in scholarship and character.

1 Administrative Manual for North Dakota High Schools, Department of Public Instruction, Bismarck, N. Dak., 1938, p. 41.
Capes and gowns are becoming popular for high school graduation and solve many difficult problems. If the school owns them they will pay for themselves in a few years time. In addition to their being used at commencement, they may be very effectively used by the high school glee clubs and choruses at their public appearances during the year.

In Chapter I it was stated that eighty-four of the schools included in this survey presented eighth or ninth grade diplomas at the senior graduation exercises. The superintendent presented these diplomas in thirty of the eighty-four schools, while in twenty-eight schools a school board member, usually the president, made this presentation. Others mentioned were the principal of the high school, the County Superintendent, and the teacher or advisor of the class.

In approximately 50 per cent of the schools the eighth or ninth grade graduates received no formal presentation to the person who presented their diplomas. In the schools in which a formal presentation was made the class was usually presented by the teacher who had charge of the grade during the school year.

Over 90 per cent of the schools reported that the eighth or ninth grade graduates are not seated on the stage with the senior class. One school indicated that a special stage was constructed for this group, while the rest of the schools have this body seated on the auditorium floor level facing the stage.

The eighty-four schools which present eighth or ninth grade diplomas were equally divided regarding the problem of having this group of graduates included in the processional.

Ninety-three per cent of the schools in this survey made a special effort to reserve seats for the parents of the senior graduates, while fifty-two per cent of the schools also reserved seats for the parents of the
eighth or ninth grade graduates. Sixty per cent of the schools reserved seats at the graduation program for the members of the school board, while approximately forty per cent of the schools also include the wives of the board members.

The last question asked regarding ceremonials at the graduation program concerned itself with opportunities given for the parents and friends to congratulate the seniors. Ninety-six per cent of the schools reported that such opportunities were provided for. In 78.5 per cent of the schools, the congratulation of the seniors takes place after the recessional and off the stage, while in the rest of the schools congratulations take place on the stage. One superintendent remarked that the seniors in his school are congratulated provided that those who wish to offer congratulations find the graduates.
CHAP*SE Til
SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

In depression and boom periods, in war and peace, the graduation exercises remain an important event in the lives of boys and girls. It marks completion of a stage of development and a transition between school life and the outside world. Arthur B. Moehlman writes in the Nation's Schools:

Commencement is the ritual symbolizing the fact that the institution's work has been completed and that youth's participation in the real world is starting. It is an important event for the boys and girls as well as for the parents. To the youth it offers an opportunity to prove to the world their readiness to take their normal place and responsibilities in life; to the parents, an opportunity to see the work of their children as symbolized by this terminal appearance. Commencement time should have a great interpretive significance.

Those who object to a formal procedure at graduation urge a graduate-centered program which will interpret the schools and its achievements. This emphasis on activity programs indicates a return to the original theory of "commencement" as a time for youth to prove itself.

Successful activity programs are spectacular and somewhat of a novelty, with highly competent and enthusiastic teachers to stimulate and guide pupils in their preparation. This takes time, effort, and careful thought, even year-round planning. The results, however, have value for the pupils who develop individual talents; for the public as an opportunity for school visitation and an evening's entertainment; and for the school, as a means of demonstrating its educational product.

Occasionally the community may prefer a more formal type of program. Sometimes the activity program demands of teachers an undue amount of work.

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1 Moehlman, Arthur B., Nation's Schools, April, 1939, p. 34.
while in some graduating classes there is a dearth of student talent. Blind adherence to any one type of program is likely to result in stereotyped performance and in demand for change.

Whatever type of program is presented, the details of program planning should be so well cared for as to contribute to a dignified and memorable occasion. Well planned graduation ceremonies capitalize on student and community interest and present a central theme or speaker's topic as a stimulating contribution.

One item not always emphasized in discussing student-participation programs is that faculty participation is almost invariably greater in this kind of program than in the older type. The chief responsibility usually falls on the speech and dramatics teacher.

Some of the arguments submitted in the National Survey on types of programs used at graduation exercises are reproduced herewith: Usually praise is given activity programs as a change from conventional presentations, and also because of community and family interest in the students. Schools capitalize on this interest as these statements indicate:

Our programs prove an attraction for about 4000 citizens. Our themes are given much thought and speakers well trained. Topics are used to arouse interest of public in some phase of public school education. Several improvements in the school program have been started through interest aroused at a commencement program. The fact that students do all the work of planning and presentation adds to the program - A well planned commencement program can do much in reviving public school education to our citizens.

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It has always proved a fitting climax to the school year. The exercises as we conduct them - cement the citizens in a very close relationship to the schools.

Even the novelty of student participation programs may wear off and their presentation become stereotyped after a number of years as will be noted in the following comments:

It is rather interesting to me to note the desire on the part of both teachers and pupils to have an old-fashioned type of commencement after thirty years of a pupil inspired program. Consequently we . . . will have our graduation speaker. I sometimes think the only permanent thing left is the desire to change! In spite of my own liking for our dramatic type of program, I permitted the change because our programs were getting stereotyped.

We have heard and seen many so called educational commencements and recognize the values claimed but we believe that there are 364 other nights in the year when school accomplishments may be exhibited and demonstrated. In our humble opinion commencement centers around the fact that the school course has been completed and that the board of education makes use of the time and ceremonial to present the diplomas to the graduates.

We consider class night the seniors' program but the graduation night is the school board's affair and the class has nothing to say about the program.

The party is for the graduates and not by them. It is no time for demonstrating of skills. For the majority of those involved it is the one graduation in a lifetime and should be dignified and meaningful. Why not have a bride bake a cake at a wedding ceremony.

Replies in this survey indicated that the graduation ceremonies featured both an outside speaker and also some student activity. This student activity amounted to little more than the music and the conventional student speeches of the valedictorian and salutatorian. Examples of this dual type of program are described in the following comments:

We have always had the highest-rating boy and girl graduate speak on a topic of their own choosing concerning current problems. The addresses by the outstanding two seniors have been more vital than many of the addresses by the guest speakers.

We attempt to have as much student participation as possible and make
less important the outside speaker. However, we attempt to secure an outstanding educational speaker.

From replies received from the 130 schools it is possible to single out the practices and preferences of an "average" high school with respect to graduation ceremonies. There is a striking similarity of practices and preferences indicated by the replies from schools of all sizes. The outline given is based on these answers.

Organization of graduation program:

BY THE SUPERINTENDENT

Type of program practiced and preferred:
CONVENTIONAL, FEATURING GUEST SPEAKER

Time of holding program:
THURSDAY OR FRIDAY EVENING

Presiding officer at graduation program:
The SUPERINTENDENT

Honor students selected:
VALEDICTORIAN AND SALUTATORIAN

Honor students chosen according to:
SCHOLASTIC STANDING ONLY

Residence requirements as qualifications for honor students:
TWO YEARS

Time of announcement of honor students:
SIX WEEKS IN ADVANCE OF GRADUATION PROGRAM

Seniors included in graduating class:
ALL THOSE WHO MEET REQUIREMENTS

Enrichment speeches to supplement guest speaker:
BY VALEDICTORIAN AND SALUTATORIAN

Order of valedictory address:
BEFORE GUEST SPEAKER

Class history, will, prophecy, and oration:
PRESENTED AT CLASS NIGHT EXERCISES
Decorations used at the exercises:
PLANTS AND FLOWERS

Decorating done by:
JUNIORS

Cost of decorations:
NONE

Selection of the guest speaker by:
THE SUPERINTENDENT

Time allotted to principal speaker:
30-40 MINUTES

Average fee paid to guest speaker:
$20.00

Speaker reimbursed from funds of:
SCHOOL DISTRICT

Speech of principal speaker preferred given:
WITHOUT NOTES

Type of guest speaker preferred:
CONVERSATIONALIST

Introduction of guest speaker to audience:
BY SUPERINTENDENT

Assembling of graduates:
CLASS MEMBERS MARCH IN AFTER PROGRAM STARTS

Processional and recessional lead by:
HONOR STUDENTS

Processional conducted:
DOUBLE FILE

Audience position during processional:
STANDING

Program opened and closed by:
INVOCATION AND BENEDICTION

Invocation and benediction by:
SAME PERSON

Minister to offer prayers notified as selected:
BY SUPERINTENDENT
Method of selection of minister:
   ROTATION AMONG COMMUNITY MINISTERS

Presentation of diplomas:
To seniors:
   BY PRESIDENT OR MEMBER OF BOARD OF EDUCATION
To eighth or ninth grade:
   BY SUPERINTENDENT

Class presented by:
Seniors:
   THE SUPERINTENDENT
Eighth or Ninth grade:
   THE TEACHER

Seating plan:
   SENIORS SEATED ON STAGE
   EIGHTH OR NINTH GRADE SEATED OFF-STAGE

Seating arrangement of individual seniors:
   ALTERNATE BOY, GIRL

Method of distributing diplomas:
   DIPLOMAS ARRANGED ACCORDING TO SEATING ARRANGEMENT

Position of class during presentation of diplomas:
   STANDING, ENTIRE CLASS

Presentation of diplomas followed by:
   BRIEF TALK TO CLASS BY PRESENTER

Awards presented:
   COLLEGE SCHOLARSHIPS

Awards presented by:
   THE SUPERINTENDENT

Graduation dress:
   CAPS AND GOWNS - CLASS FLOWER

Caps and gowns:
   RENTED FROM OUTSIDE AGENCIES

Payment of rental fees for caps and gowns:
   BY INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS OF GRADUATING CLASS

Auditorium program seats reserved for:
   PARENTS OF GRADUATES
   MEMBERS OF BOARD OF EDUCATION
Opportunities to congratulate class members:
MADE AVAILABLE --OFF STAGE

Type of music preferred:
BOTH, VOCAL AND INSTRUMENTAL

Music furnished for processional:
PIANO

Class of music preferred:
SECULAR

Number of musical selections:
THREE

Senior participation in music presented:
AS MEMBERS OF ORGANIZED GROUPS, Such as glee
clubs and choruses.
BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. Administrative Manual for North Dakota High Schools, Department of Public Instruction, Bismarck, North Dakota, 1938.


8. North Dakota Educational Directory, Department of Public Instruction, Bismarck, North Dakota, 1941-42.

APPENDIX A

GRADUATING EXERCISES AS PRACTICED AND PREFERRED
IN THE MAJOR ACCREDITED HIGH SCHOOLS OF NORTH DAKOTA

This questionnaire study is being sent to the major accredited schools of North Dakota by the approval of the Department of Public Instruction, Bismarck, and Professor Selke of the University of North Dakota. A 100% return would be highly desirable.

PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY:
1. To make a survey of the practices and preferences used in planning graduation exercises.
2. To discover what degree of conformity there is in the state.
3. To formulate from the questionnaire returns, an outline of the best methods.

DIRECTIONS:
Most questions can be answered by a check mark. Thus (1/)
If extra space is needed, use back of sheet numbering the item there.
Many questions refer to your last year's practices whether in your present school or the school you served last year. Others call for your preferences.
A self-addressed envelope is enclosed.

Organization:
1. Who took charge of organizing the graduation program?
   Students _____, Supt. _____, Prin. _____, Class Advisor _____ Other.
2. Which type of program was used? Old _____, New _____
   (In the new type no outside principal speaker is used.)
3. Which type of program do you prefer? Old _____, New _____
4. Have you given the new type a trial? Yes _____, No _____
5. Was type used satisfactory? Yes _____, No _____
   Reason __________________________
6. Was new type planned around some central theme? Yes _____, No _____
7. What theme was used? Name __________________________
8. Your preference for day of week to hold exercises __________________________
9. Your preference for time of day A.M. _____, P.M. _____, evening _____
10. Who presided at the graduation program? Supt. _____, Prin. _____
    Other (Name) __________________________
11. Does your school name a valedictorian? Yes _____, No _____
12. Does your school name a salutatorian? Yes _____, No _____
13. Do you name co-valedictorians and co-salutatorians only in case of ties? Yes _____, No _____
14. Are honor students chosen according to scholastic standings only? Yes _____, No _____
15. What other criteria are used? Name __________________________
16. What are your residence requirements as qualifications for selecting honor students? 1 yr. _____, 2 yrs. _____, 3 yrs. _____, 4 yrs. _____
17. How many weeks in advance of graduation do you announce the honor students? 2 wks. _____, 4 _____, 6 _____, 8 _____, 10 _____, 12 _____.
18. In averaging marks to determine the seniors rank in class, how many years of student's grades do you use in your tabulation?
3 yrs. ______ 3½ yrs. ______ up to the time of announcing.

19. Do you permit seniors to appear on platform even though they are a trifle short of the necessary credits for graduation? yes ______ no ______.

20. Where do you draw the line? ⅓ cr. short ______ 1 cr. ______ 1 ½ crs. ______ 2 crs. ______

21. Do you present these credit deficient seniors with a signed diploma? ______ no diploma? ______.

22. Do you present eighth grade diplomas? ______ ninth grade diplomas? ______ in connection with the senior program? yes ______ no ______.

23. If in connection with the senior program, do the eighth or ninth grade graduates participate in the program? yes ______ no ______.

STUDENT PARTICIPATION:

1. Does valedictorian speak at exercises? yes ______ no ______; Salutatorian? yes ______ no ______

2. Does valedictorian appear before______ or after______ principal speaker?

3. Do you have a class history? will? prophecy? oration?

4. Are these given at graduating exercises? or class night?

5. Does your school have a separate class day program? yes ______ no ______.

6. Does the class president make a speech after diplomas have been presented? yes ______ no ______

DECORATIONS AT THE EXERCISES:

1. Decorations used: crepe paper ______ foliage ______ drapery ______ plants ______ other ______ (Name).

2. Who does the decorating? seniors ______ juniors ______ Soph. ______ other ______ (Name).

3. What was the cost of decorating? $ ______

4. Do the seniors wear their chosen class flower at the exercises? yes ______ no ______

PRINCIPAL SPEAKER AT EXERCISES:

1. Who selects the speaker? Supt. ______ Prin. ______ School Board ______ Graduates ______ Other ______ (Name).

2. Do you limit speaker in time to deliver address? yes ______ no ______

3. Length of address desired, in min. 20-30 ______ 30-40 ______ 40-50 ______ 50-60 ______

4. What was the speaker's fee? $ ______ other speaker's expense $ ______

5. Total fee and other expenses? $ ______

6. Did several schools in your vicinity use the same speaker on successive dates to reduce cost of speaker? yes ______ no ______

7. What was your saving in question five over question four? $ ______

8. Was principal speaker a former graduate of your school? yes ______ no ______

9. From what fund was speaker paid? school dist. ______ senior class ______ Other ______ (Name).

10. Do you prefer speech given without notes? yes ______ no ______ indifferent ______

11. Do you prefer to suggest speech topic to speaker? yes ______ no ______

12. Type of speaker preferred? Dynamic ______ conversationalist ______.
12. Who introduces speaker to audience? Supt. ___ Prin. ____ other _________

CEREMONY AT THE EXERCISES:

1. Do you have a processional? yes no; recessional? yes no

2. Who leads the processional? valedictorian ______ salutatorian ______
   Supt. ___ prin. ___ class advisor ______ other _______ (Name)

3. Who leads the recessional? valedictorian ______ salutatorian ______
   Supt. ___ prin. ___ class advisor ______ other _______ (Name)

4. Do you conduct processional single file double file other _______

5. Does audience stand during processional? yes no

6. Do you have invocation? yes no; benediction? yes no

7. Do you prefer to have the same person give both invocation and
   benediction? yes no

8. Who selects person(s) to give invocation and benediction?
   graduating class ______ prin. ______ other _______ (Name)

9. What procedure is used in selecting the above? Rotation among
   community ministers ______, the person who delivered the baccalaureate
   sermon ______, no particular order ______, other order _______ (Name)

10. Who presents the senior diplomas? supt. ______ board member _______
    other _______ (Name).

11. Who presents senior class? supt. ___ prin. ___ class advisor ______
    other _______ (Name).

12. Were seniors seated on stage? off stage

13. Are seniors seated alphabetically? by height alternate boy
    and girl? Other method (Name)

14. Are diplomas presented in alphabetical order? ______ seating order?
    other order (Name)

15. Does the person who presents the diplomas have the assistance of
    another who pronounces the names of the individuals? yes no

16. Does the person who presents the diplomas give a short talk to
    the class? yes no

17. Do you prefer to have the entire class stand during presentation of
    diplomas? yes no

18. Do you present college scholarships at these exercises? yes no

19. Other awards such as citizenship ______, perfect attendance ______,
    American Legion Award ______, Other (Name)

20. Who presents these awards? Supt. ___ prin. ___ other _______ (Name)

21. Were caps and gowns used at graduating exercises? yes no
    at baccalaureate? yes no; at class day or night? yes no

22. Are caps and gowns school owned? rented ______

23. If rented who pays the rent? Graduates ______, class treasury ______,
    district funds ______

24. Who presented the eighth or ninth grade diplomas? (answer only if
    these appeared at the senior program) supt. ____ prin. ____ School board
    member ______, other ________

25. Who presents this class? prin. of grades ______ instructor ______,
    H.S. prin. ____ supt. ___ other (Name) ______

26. Are the eighth or ninth grade graduates seated on stage? ______
    off stage ________
27. Are the eighth or ninth grade graduates made a part of the processional? yes no
28. Do you reserve seats for parents of senior graduates? yes no
29. Do you reserve seats for parents of eighth or ninth grade graduates (answer only if part of senior program) yes no
30. Do you reserve seats for school board members? yes no their wives yes no
31. Were opportunities given to congratulate graduates? yes no on stage? off stage?

MUSIC AT EXERCISES:

1. Type of music preferred at exercises? instrumental vocal both
   2. For processional? band orchestra piano other
   3. Class of music preferred: sacred secular
   4. How many musical selections do you prefer at exercises?
   5. Do your seniors take part in musical selections rendered at the exercises? yes no
APPENDIX B

SCHOOLS FROM WHICH QUESTIONNAIRES WERE RETURNED

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<th>Alexander</th>
<th>Edgeley</th>
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