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## Potential for using environmental education and practices of K-5 teachers in Marshalltown, Iowa

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## Potential for using environmental education and practices of K-5 teachers in Marshalltown, Iowa

### Abstract

In today's world it's easy to feel like a god. We live in an age of world-wide information gathering and speed-of-light computer processing that gives us the sense of omniscience. Our eye-in-the-sky satellite surveillance systems give us the feeling of omnipresence. The harnessing and development of nuclear power contributes to an all-powerful state of mind which seduces us into believing we are also wise enough to make the best decisions possible concerning our world. However, such does not appear to be the case, if environmental quality, use of world resources, and health of living populations are used as indicators.

**THE POTENTIAL FOR USING  
ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION FIELD TRIPS  
BASED ON THE CURRENT ATTITUDES AND PRACTICES  
OF K-5 TEACHERS IN MARSHALLTOWN, IOWA**

**A Research Paper  
Submitted to the Department of  
Educational Psychology  
of  
The University of Northern Iowa**

**by  
Dennis John Eige**

**In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
for the Degree of  
Master of Arts  
Education Psychology: Teaching**

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This Research Paper by: Dennis Eige

Entitled: The Potential for Using Environmental Education Field Trips Based on the Current Attitudes and Practices of K-5 Teachers in Marshalltown, Iowa

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has been approved as meeting the research paper requirement for the Degree of Master of Arts in Education: Educational Psychology: Teaching

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## Chapter 1

### INTRODUCTION

In today's world it's easy to feel like a god. We live in an age of world-wide information gathering and speed-of-light computer processing that gives us the sense of omniscience. Our eye-in-the-sky satellite surveillance systems give us the feeling of omnipresence. The harnessing and development of nuclear power contributes to an all-powerful state of mind which seduces us into believing we are also wise enough to make the best decisions possible concerning our world. However, such does not appear to be the case, if environmental quality, use of world resources, and health of living populations are used as indicators.

It is the contention of this author that education can be an effective tool in alerting mankind to this present condition and can better prepare him to make the wise decisions necessary to insure the future survivability of life on earth. The branch of education most suited for this task is environmental education.

### PURPOSE OF STUDY

The purpose of this study is to identify the attitudes towards and the extent of use of field trips for outdoor studies by K-5 teachers in the Marshalltown Community School District.

The results of a survey to ascertain these attitudes and practices might then be used to increase the use and benefits of environmental education.



## IMPORTANCE OF STUDY

A review of literature revealed a scarcity of research done regarding the use of field trips both nationally and within the State of Iowa. In 1976 a major assessment of environmental education needs was done (McRae, 1978). Within the study, an assessment of the use of field trips by teachers in Iowa schools, was revealed. At the end of this study a statement advocating future research reads, "Use of field trips and outdoor labs were considered important by most sub-groups but were not being greatly used for teaching environmental education. Further investigation needs to be done into the factors preventing use" (Ibid. p. 200). Since the time this first assessment of environmental education needs was completed, there has not been a follow-up study.

The Marshalltown School District looked into the use of field trips by teachers at about the same time as the Iowa Needs Assessment. However, this informal study was limited in scope to frequency of field trips and was conducted to determine school board policy about funding such excursions (especially beyond county boundaries).

Some nagging questions still go unanswered. What is the present rate of field trip use by teachers? What percentage of teachers use field trips and what percentage do not? What are the major reasons that teachers use field trips? Do teachers perceive field trips as a valuable (worthwhile) teaching technique? Finally, as McRae mentioned -- what are some factors preventing their use?

The answers to these questions could give us foundational knowledge upon which curriculum and support systems might be built.

### ASSUMPTIONS

1. Not all education takes place in formal settings, but happens in many environments throughout one's life.
2. Field trips are a potentially valid strategy for first hand experience with one's environment.
3. The perceptions and use of field trips by K-5 teachers in Marshalltown can be accurately measured by a survey approach.
4. The attitudes teachers have toward field trips can influence their practices.

### LIMITATIONS

1. The definition of field trip in the survey instrument limited these outings to those taken by bus for outdoor instructional experiences.
2. The terms "outdoor instructional experience" has a wide variety of interpretations.
3. The survey focused only on Marshalltown teachers in K-5 classrooms. Special subject areas and secondary grades were not included.
4. The results of this survey will only be reliable for this particular school district at the time it was taken (Summer 1986).
5. Some of the questions on the survey provided limited choices. This element of the questionnaire may have reduced the scope of the study and the applicability of the survey to the larger issue of field trips for environmental education.

## DEFINITION OF TERMS

1. Field Trip - A visit to a place outside the regular classroom designed to achieve certain objectives that cannot be achieved as well by other means. (Muse, Chiarelott, & Davidman, 1982, p. 122).
2. Field Studies - That group of first-hand experiences which are best suited to areas outside the classroom and school. (Hart, 1981-82, p. 15).
3. Excursion - A trip used as a summary device, to the understanding of content material taught in the classroom by a highly illustrative method. (Curtis, 1944, p. 201).
4. Nature Study - This involves learning the various components that comprise the natural environment with an emphasis on awareness, appreciation and a concern for those components. (Clausen and McCalley, 1979, P. 3).
5. Conservation Education - The status and distribution of natural resources used by man, techniques of resources management and the development of public policy regarding natural resource allocation. (Clausen and McCalley, 1979, p. 3).
6. Outdoor Education - A group of instructional methods with a strong emphasis on recreational use of the out-of-doors. (Clausen and McCalley, 1979, p. 3).
7. Environmental Education - The lifelong education process dealing with people's relationship with each other and with their natural and altered surroundings, and includes the relation of population,

pollution, resource allocation and depletion, conservation, transportation, technology and planning to the total human environment. (Clausen and McCalley, 1979, p. 1).

8. Education vs. Schooling - "Education is a lifelong process. We should all probably quickly agree that education begins with birth and continues throughout life. So much of education is informal and incidental. Schooling, however, is direct and limited in ambit". (Power, Philosophy of Education, 1982, p. 226).
9. Sciencing - The skills of science - - including observing, classifying, communicating, measuring, using numbers, establishing time-space relationships, predicting, and experimenting. (Stotler, 1967, p. 40).

## Chapter 2

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The focus of education today seems to be on improving effectiveness. Hours of in-service and numerous workshops have been designed to upgrade teaching techniques. One technique not often mentioned in this training, but one which has for many years offered countless students concrete first-hand experience with their world is the field trip.

The following literature review, regarding use of field trips, focuses on trips taken primarily to the out-of-doors for the purpose of studying the environment.

#### Role of Field Trips in the Study of the Environment

Mason (1980) perceived a need for publishing a literature survey on the subject of field trips, since many authors studying the subject were citing so few references or claiming very few existed. Those citations marked with an asterisk in this section were taken from Mason's bibliography, but primary sources were found.

Taking a field trip to study the environment, is not a particularly new innovation. During the last part of the nineteenth century the field trip, called an excursion, was used a great deal in Europe for completion of one's formal educational experience (Curtis, 1944)\*. Basically this trip had a geographical intent, to widen the student's view of the world.

Curtis cites the writing of Charles McMurry, as early as 1903, detailing excursions as a procedure contributing directly to the teaching of subject matter in the classroom (McMurry, 1903-04)\*.

Curtis explains that in the past the sequence for using trips in a unit has not been uniform. At times trips were used to introduce a unit of study, to expand understanding during the unit, or to summarize material at the end of a unit.

Though not well researched up to 1944, Curtis (p. 202) lists the values claimed for excursions as:

1. They provide for acquisition of accurate first-hand information.
2. They promote more intelligent citizenship.
3. They provide for social training.
4. They broaden and enrich experiences.
5. They develop a love of travel.
6. They create interest.
7. They form a connecting link between school and community.

Curtis (Ibid. p. 210) carried out his own study of the value of excursions and recommended as a result of his study, "That the excursion be used as a major instrument of instruction in cases where illustration of subject matter is readily accessible in the community, and especially in cases where the concrete experiences of the pupils have been limited".

The value of field trips was seen by elementary principals quite some time ago as well. From questionnaires sent to elementary school principals in 45 states, plus the District of Columbia, Price (1934) noted, "That a large majority of principals, from whose schools trips are taken consider them of high value. A few consider trips of medium value, but it is interesting to note that none of the replies rated them of low or no value".

Price summarized five distinct values of trips to elementary schools (Op. cit. p. 304):

1. Trips provide a means of enriching the experiences of the pupils.
2. Trips provide experiences out of which school activities become more meaningful.
3. Trips provide an opportunity for children to explore the world about them and to broaden their interests under expert teacher guidance.
4. Trips are a source of information for children, information directly obtained.
5. In making trips there is always a real opportunity for choosing, purposing, planning, executing, and evaluating on the part of the pupils.

Price also noted that very little scientific data was available to substantiate the value of trips of any sort. For this reason some teachers and principals hesitated to use trips due to perceived negative possibilities, such as danger of accidents, expense, and critical attitudes of some in the community.

Sugarman (1956) describes her experiences with field trips from the perspective of an educator (17 years as a teacher and later a professor). She sees a variety of positive values for field trips (Ibid. p. 4):

1. Field trips are worthwhile if taken for specific purpose.
2. Children get first hand experience with their own environment.
3. They gain experience that cannot be secured from textbooks.
4. Field trips supplement classroom work.

5. If the trip is taken during the completion of a local unit, they gain a better appreciation and understanding of a home area.
6. The preparation for the field trip encourages teacher-pupil planning and greater pupil participation in the activities involved.
7. Group traveling fosters a democratic atmosphere.
8. Children become close observers and begin to see more meaning in commonplace items of the environment.

Sugarman summarizes her list of values by stating, "Not only do children learn facts and gather information on a trip, they also gain in the understandings and attitudes that affect their relationship with others. The field trip is one way of helping to realize educational objectives of schools" (Sugarman, 1956, p. 51).

A declining interest in the use of field trips was noted by Fowler in the late 1950's (Fowler, 1958). At the opening of an article in support of more field experiences in teaching, Fowler states, "Sometime ago a group of science educators from the western states met and all but 'condemned to death' the use of field or outdoor experiences as a teaching device (Ibid. p. 208)\*. The author did not reveal the basis for this statement.

Whatever the reasons for the negative impressions of some educators at that time, Fowler and others still saw a value in using this technique. So, Fowler designed a questionnaire that was handed out at a conservation workshop in New York to a variety of teachers, administrators and professionals. The results of this questionnaire



did indeed point to a decline in use of field trips, but not a decline in interest about the technique. A problem that was perceived by Fowler was that teachers may be hesitant to use this technique due to lack of exposure or training in the methods.

In a study to determine the value of an experimental-field method compared to the traditional classroom method of teaching ecology concepts to seventh graders, Bennett (1965) observed a call for reform in science education. To determine if a field method of study would meet that call, Bennet designed a study. The results indicated that the field method was not a superior method for teaching cognitive and affective objectives to the traditional classroom approach, but that it could be statistically considered just as good. (Ibid. p. 467).

The similarities of an indoor and outdoor approach to education were outlined by Stotler, (1967). In his article on teaching science in an outdoor laboratory setting he lists the following similarities between the methods (Ibid. p. 40):

1. Arouse curiosity concerning natural phenomena.
2. Capitalize upon incidental or unplanned events which arouse interest.
3. Encourage the use of varied materials and approaches.
4. Relate science to humanism.
5. Help students evolve specific investigations of nature.
6. Encourage students to learn science through 'sciencing'. (See definitions).
7. Conduct an ongoing evaluation which considers student ability to use the 'sciencing' behaviors in new contexts.

Stotler goes on to say that there should also be a differentiation. He says, "The outdoor laboratory should generally restrict itself to those experiences which presently cannot be done as well or at all in the regular classroom, since use of the outdoor laboratory often involves additional expenses, such as transportation costs, overnight facilities, and extra personnel" (Stotler, p. 40). Those areas covered by the outdoor parameters would be (Ibid. pp. 40-41):

1. Learning in a natural habitat.
2. Considering nature's balance.
3. Rebalancing nature.
4. Addressing science values.

The specific items that Stotler feels should be assigned to science values would be honest reporting, idea sharing and humaneness. Other areas that could be extended to the outdoor setting would be health and safety education and research activities.

Finally, Stotler gives his support to the outdoor setting by saying, "The outdoor education school has a primary part to play in education as it is now constituted and could very well be the growing tip of the future!" (Ibid. p. 42).

A more recent study by Tanner (1980) describes the contribution outdoor studies might make to the development of aware and activated citizens. In this study Tanner looks at characteristics of historically prominent people in conservation. He contends that the early formative lives of these individuals helped mold their behavior to be environmental activists in their later lives.

After selecting a variety of commonalities, Tanner constructed a questionnaire to be sent to a variety of contemporary professional conservation workers. His aim was to see if early experiences in their lives contributed significantly to their choice of occupation and to their attitudes toward the environment. Tanner found that "Youthful experiences of the outdoors and pristine environments emerges as a dominant influence in these lives" (Op cit. Tanner, p. 23). He also found that having natural habitat nearby to explore was a positively motivating experience.

At the time of this study Tanner observes, "Current practice finds urban and suburban children taking field trips to more or less natural settings on rare occasions and in large groups, at best" (Ibid. p. 23). Tanner feels much more should be done to give students outdoor experiences throughout their schooling, and that these experiences should be solitary or in small groups.

Tanner concludes with this final important challenge for education, "Seventy-five percent of our children are growing up in urban and suburban environments, most of them apparently quite removed from the world of nature. Thus, the implications of this study for further research and for educational practice are not only numerous -- they are urgent" (Ibid. p. 24).

## Attitudes and Practices of Teachers that Contribute to Effective Field Trips

The attitudes and practices of teachers that make them effective on field trips are basically the same as those that make them effective in the classroom. Meeting the needs of students by starting from that which is familiar and proceeding to the unknown is foundational.

Spinelli (1973) states, "What is important is what is happening now to the child — in his neighborhood and on his way to school, as well as at school" (Op. cit. 1973). A good way to start environmental education is where the child is at and move out in ever-widening circles.

The proper handling of environmental learning situations by the teacher is felt to be the key to effectiveness. According to Coble and Hounshell (1975), whatever approach to environmental education a teacher would select, success will be a result of intelligent planning. They go on to suggest activities should focus on the curriculum and have both introductory and follow-up experiences. Activities should have a certain amount of individualization and demand active participation on the part of the learner. The teacher needs to create exciting opportunities, but insure contact with "factual" information through processes of data collection and analysis (Ibid. p. 376). Coble and Hounshell conclude by saying, "The combination of an alert sensitive teacher employing good teaching methods, along with the demand for environmental studies can indeed result in a very exciting and worthwhile teaching-learning situation" (Ibid. p. 376).

Brennan (1971) recommends that teachers not use a fill-them-with-facts approach to environmental education, but a conceptual field trip approach. Brennan states, "A 'conceptual field trip', can be used effectively, lasting 5 to 10 minutes, offering a child acquaintance with a single concept of the environment. In this way, rather than the 'whole load' the teacher can present a sequentially planned series of field experiences which will lead to development of several concepts of the environment" (Ibid. p. 18). This approach puts the student in the center, exploring the unknown environments that the teacher provides. The student will then form his/her own concepts of environment. As students have new experiences their concepts will then be reinforced or modified (Op. cit. Brennan, p. 19).

Along these same lines, Allen (1975) states a case for a "broader context" to field trips than purely fact oriented and teacher dominated. Allen describes a reflective environmental education experience this way, "Successful environmental education should include various systems of making meaning and living life. It should reflect the fact that education in its Latin root means 'to bring forth', to bring forth for analysis and reflection many systems of meaning and diverse value commitments. Students should be allowed to assess the eco-implications of a number of ways of making sense of life and of living life with other human beings and all other living creatures" (Allen, p. 98). In terms of field trips Allen goes on to say, "Environmental Educators about to embark on field trips or any instructional venture have to consider what they teach and how they teach in a broader context. Learning's importance lies not only in what meaning it makes of the

world but also what it makes of the learner. Field trips can be experiences transcending one way of seeing the world so that we all, together, may struggle for a greater, more comprehensive vision of ourselves" (Ibid. p. 99).

Knapp (1970) reviews three instructional patterns teachers can take while on a field trip: 1. Teacher oriented; 2. Modified; 3. Student oriented. Knapp suggests that the resourceful teacher will use one, two, or all three of these approaches during a lesson as the objectives provide the need (Ibid. p. 28). With these tools at hand the teacher need not fear the looks of boredom, the horsing-around or the difficulty managing a large group in an unfamiliar setting (Ibid. p. 26).

In a study of instructional methods which sought to determine their use and effectiveness in environmental education, Schwaab (1982-83) identified field trips as one of the approaches that were frequently used by educators. He states, "Field trips and direct experiences with the environment were extensively used by environmental educators. Most of the trips were of one class period or half a day in duration. According to the effectiveness ratings, as the length of the trip increased, so did the trip's effectiveness as a learning experience. The increased effectiveness of the field trip as the duration increases may be related to the fact that respondents assigned a higher effectiveness rating to field trips outside the community than to those on the school grounds" (Ibid. p. 12). One of the paradoxical findings of this report Schwaab stated, was that teachers "more frequently used less effective methods of teaching such as lectures and

teacher-led discussion, despite the acknowledged higher effectiveness of methods, such as inquiry, demonstration and group projects" (Ibid. p. 12).

A study of teacher-directed outdoor experiences revealed some common characteristics of successful and unsuccessful experiences. Van Koevering and Prell (1980) listed three characteristics that distinguished the successful teachers, and four characteristics exhibited by those that were unsuccessful (Ibid. pp. 9-10):

**Especially effective characteristics --**

1. Students appeared to be most attentive in groups where the teacher was well prepared.
2. Teachers who were flexible and took advantage of the dynamic character of natural areas were better able to excite the interest of the children rather than those teachers who just depend upon the inanimate aspects of the area.
3. The activities that appeared to be of greatest interest to children were those that employed some type of questioning strategy and allowed for open-ended discussion.

Teachers who were ineffective lacked the previous qualities and exhibited the following problem characteristics:

1. Some teachers, in addition to being uninformed about what the possibilities were for effectively utilizing a natural area, were not efficient managers of the student's time.
2. In some instances teachers inadvertently exposed their students to potential hazards from the natural environment, such as collecting water samples in unsuitable areas.

3. On some occasions the students became frustrated when teachers spent far too much time indoors with the students, lecturing to them and showing movies.
4. On some occasions teachers expected behavior patterns from the students that were inconsistent with the surroundings.

A study of elementary students in Jasper County, Iowa done by Gross and Pizzini (1979), reinforces the necessity of good student preparation prior to field experiences. They state, "Teachers should involve the learner in classroom instructional activities designed to facilitate concept formation to be emphasized in a field experience. The field experience should incorporate both cognitive and affective domains with an emphasis on the sensory and affective aspects. The positive results of this study indicate that the combined advance organizers and field experiences may be an effective approach to maximize the limited amount of time students spend in the field" (Op. cit. Gross and Pizzini, p. 330).

One final element that may have potential for problems was studied by Falk and Balling (1979-80) in "The School Field Trip: Where You Go Makes the Difference". Falk and Balling found that the effect of setting, "novelty" of unfamiliar surroundings can temporarily disorient many students. Until the student is able to be comfortable in this new environment not much learning can take place.

Falk sees hope for students and teachers experiencing this problem. He states, "Trips to novel settings need not be a disaster for children - or teachers - if we are aware of their need to explore, and if we adjust our educational goals accordingly. One logical and



successful approach to the problem of novelty effects on learning is to design field trip activities that allow structured exploration" (Ibid. p. 7).

The other generalization that Falk and Balling made from their study was that primary age elementary students learn better in surroundings that are more familiar to them, and that upper elementary students learn better in novel settings (Ibid. p. 8).

Falk and Balling recommend repeated visits to the same setting to get best results for learning. They stated, "The first visit can emphasize familiarization activities while later visits can focus on more conceptual material" (Ibid. p. 8).

#### Models Supporting a Marshalltown Study

Studies in the utilization of field trips as a method for teaching outdoor/environmental education have not been abundant. Mason's review cited earlier, of studies done between 1930 and 1977 revealed forty-three (Op. cit. Mason, 1980). The NAEE Monographs from 1971-80 were reviewed and only four or five studies out of four hundred were devoted to field trips (Iozzi, 1984). In Iowa, an Environmental Education Needs Assessment was conducted in the spring of 1976 by McRae (1978). Within this survey of attitudes and practices of Iowa educators, one component dealt with field trips. In Marshalltown only one study is known to the author concerning field trips. This study dealt with the analysis of purposes for bus transportation in the school district.

Though studies were limited, three models supporting a Marshalltown investigation were found.

Mirka (1973) constructed two surveys to determine factors which influenced elementary teachers' use of outdoor classrooms in the Greater Cleveland area. From this survey teachers who used the out-of-doors said they did so because (Ibid. p. 32):

1. The value of this experience to the children.
2. Recognizing the school site as a teaching area.
3. Their knowledge of the application of subject matter to the out-of-doors.
4. Their knowledge of how to plan and conduct outdoor experiences.
5. Their personal feelings about the out-of-doors.
6. Their ability to accept a change in their daily routine.
7. Favorable results from previous outdoor experiences.
8. Class size.

The respondents' reasons why they did not use outdoor instructional activities were (Ibid. p. 32):

1. An inability to recognize school site as a teaching area.
2. Their knowledge of instructional activities that can be carried on outdoors.
3. The availability of curriculum guides.
4. The availability of resource people.
5. Their knowledge of application of classroom materials to the out-of-doors.
6. Knowledge of natural sciences.
7. Class size.
8. The value of such experiences to children.

From these responses Mirka concluded, "There is a need for improved quality in pre-service elementary education offerings which would emphasize outdoor-education methods. A need also exists for in-service programs conducted by an outdoor education specialist" (Op. cit., Mirka p. 33).

The second model was a questionnaire based on Mirka's work, that surveyed teacher attitudes toward Environmental Education in the Columbus school district (McCaw, 1979-80). The objectives of this study were (Ibid. p. 18):

1. To determine to what extent teachers are currently using the environment to teach -- both by study trips and school site study.
2. To find out what is taught outside.
3. To determine where study trips are taken.
4. To determine teachers' priorities regarding environmental education and other "non-basic parts of the curriculum."
5. To find out what factors inhibit them from conducting environmental education activities.
6. To determine the willingness of teachers to obtain in-service training in the use of the environment to teach.

Some implications for teaching that McCaw made from his study were (Op. Cit. p. 23):

1. That an environment education program which includes study trips will have the highest use from elementary classes, whereas secondary teachers will encounter more problems taking students to an outdoor site.

2. That in the district studied transportation, school finances, and time conflicts remain the leading impediments to such a program.
3. Teachers utilize more indoor than outdoor study sites.
4. An in-service of environmental education program would be attended.
5. The attitude of principals is not likely to be a major impediment to environmental study trips but secondary principals are less likely to be supportive.
6. Environmental Education is considered important but consumer and vocational education are viewed as a higher priority. Try to make connections between environmental education and these other areas.
7. Environmental education must be shown as being relevant to all facets of the curriculum, since environmental education is not considered by some to be as "basic" as math and reading.

Finally, a third model was a joint effort published in 1982 (Muse, Chiarelott and Davidman, 1982). This survey was developed to gather information from a teacher's perspective (in California, Washington, and Ohio) as to what field trips were most popular, what value they had, which content areas tended to use them more, and what problems seemed to be most bothersome.

Several conclusions and recommendations were made in this study. Muse (et. al.) felt that teachers will continue to use the field trip as one of their instructional strategies despite various obstacles. There will be an uneven distribution of usage among teachers, but that

elementary science and social studies teachers will use trips the most (Ibid. p. 124). To make the most educational and effective use of trips the following was recommended (Ibid. p. 125):

1. Field trips should be preceded by a series of activities/experiences that will serve as advance organizers and focus student observations during the trip.
2. Objectives of the field trip should be communicated so the value of out-of-class experience is evident. When possible students should share in the design of objectives and field experiences.
3. Field trips should be utilized primarily for unique outcomes that cannot be attained in the classroom setting or through the use of simulations or media. Dependence on field trips as a diversion or break from instruction will probably not yield significant improvement in the attainment of cognitive or affective outcomes.
4. Finally, based on the results of the survey, it would appear that administrators should:
  - a. Encourage a wider diversity of field trip utilization among content areas other than social studies and science.
  - b. Encourage secondary teachers to utilize field trips as an integral part of their curricula, particularly for attaining application-oriented objectives.
  - c. Evaluate field trip utilization more stringently to determine whether unnecessary duplication of trips is occurring and if the trips are serving to enhance student learning.

The team of authors, (Muse Chiarelott, and Davidman) feel that, "Field trips can be an extremely valuable learning device if used judiciously. For certain learning styles, field trips may prove to be highly productive in terms of achievement, especially for students who are predominantly visual/tactile/kinesthetic learners. The key to effective utilization rests with the teacher's capability in organizing, sequencing, focusing and evaluating the field trip for the needs of each learner and in providing an experience consistent with the outcomes desired. (Op. Cit. Muse, et. al. 1982, p. 125).

The attitudes and practices of Iowa educators regarding field trips was found in a portion of the Environmental Education Needs Assessment conducted in the spring of 1976 (Op. cit. McRae, 1978).

From the list of 14 possible classroom experiences for teaching environmental education the elementary teachers ranked field trips second behind A/V materials in the "is used" category. Comparing this finding to the "should be used" question, field trips came in third behind A/V materials and resource people (Ibid, pp. 95-96).

Using this same list of activities and same questioning format, elementary principals ranked field trips second behind A/V in the "is used" response and first in the "should be used" response (Ibid. pp. 100-101).

Superintendents that were questioned placed field trips second behind A/V in the "is used" ranking, and third behind A/V and resource people in the "should be used" answer (Op. cit. McRae, pp. 126-127).

In general practice, however, the textbook approach was the most often used approach by teachers in environmental education. Teacher-time, money and suitable instructional materials were considered the major problem with using the other possibilities (Ibid. p. 194).

McRae's final conclusion on the field trip was "Use of field and outdoor labs were considered important by most sub-groups but were not being greatly used for teaching environmental education. Further investigation needs to be done into the factors preventing their use" (Ibid. p. 200).

As a final recommendation McRae suggested an environmental education assessment be done in another five years to determine if any progress had been made in environmental education (Ibid. p. 201).

Since the time that this first assessment of environmental education needs was completed, there has not been a follow-up study. Now, ten years later the questions about effective teaching techniques (i.e., use of field trips) being used in environmental education still exist. Therefore, a small scale study on the local level in Marshalltown may be a way of rekindling interest in answering these questions.

### Chapter 3

#### DESIGN OF STUDY

A survey (See Appendix B) was constructed and hand delivered to each of the 81 elementary classroom teachers that comprised the population in the Marshalltown Community School District in June of 1986. A brief cover letter (See Appendix A) accompanied the survey explaining its purpose and potential use of gathered data. The respondents were also provided a stamped envelope for returning the survey. Responses were collected throughout July, and those that did not reply were contacted and reminded by phone. This technique resulted in 79 out of 81 teachers sending back surveys for a 97.5% return.

The purpose of this research instrument was to gather data that could be compared. The data was to identify the attitudes and practices of K-5 teachers with regard to use of extended field trips. Extended field trips were defined as those trips taken by bus for the purpose of conducting outdoor learning experiences for students.

Selection of appropriate questions for the survey instrument was based on advisor guidance and examples found in the literature review. Asking teachers whether they believed that field trips are valuable learning experiences for students, was one deemed important by an advisor. The thought was that teachers may have positive attitudes toward field trips but still not utilize them in actual practice. This paradox of attitude vs. practice was identified earlier by Schwaab (Op. cit. p. 12).



The second question was used to identify the experiences that teachers had with field trips when they were in grades K-5. According to Tanner (Op. cit. p. 21), "Significant life experiences" when young can form positive attitudes and behaviors towards the environment later in life.

A third question was selected to create a major division between teachers who are "users" and those that are "non-users" of field trips. Mirka (Op. cit. p. 31) referred to two divisions of teachers using or not using outdoor experiences as the "haves" and the "have nots".

Once the "user" group was identified, questions needed to be asked about their specific practices. The number of trips taken in a year was also asked on a survey by McCaw (Op. cit. p. 19). The length of a typical field trip was asked in a study by Schwaab (Op. cit. p. 11). The location of field trips was a significant question asked in a study by Falk and Balling (Op. cit. p. 6). The response choices to this question were selected with environmental education in mind.

The attitudes of "users" and "non-users" of field trips was thought to have implications for their practices. Mirka (Op. cit., p. 32) reported in his study reasons that influenced the "haves" and "have nots" for making use of field trips or for not making use of them. The summary of Mirka's findings was a bit confusing to the reader, so the question of reasons for using field trips was only directed to the Marshalltown teachers who used them.

The next question directed at obstacles to field trip use, however, was asked of both the "user" and "non-user" groups. This same type of question appeared in studies by Mirka (Ibid. p. 32) and McCaw

(Ibid. p. 19). Muse, Chiarelott and Davidman (Op. cit. pp. 124-125) used this question in a survey they conducted, also. Their approach to presenting findings in an easy to read table was selected as the presentation technique used in the Marshalltown study, as well.

In Mirka's final recommendations (Ibid. p. 33) the need was perceived for in-service programs conducted by an outdoor education specialist. In Marshalltown such a specialist is called the County Naturalist. A question asked of both "users" and "non-users", then referred to their awareness of this person's help. The expertise that this resource person can offer forms a bridge between field trips and environmental education.

Spinelli (Op. cit. p. 26) suggested that a variety of people may be available to help conduct field trips. A question asked of the "users" then inquired into who these helpers might be. The Soil Conservation Service personnel was included offering another link to environmental education.

Demographic questions were purposefully left until the end of the survey. It was thought that some respondents might be more shy about revealing some personal data than answering questions directed at attitudes and practices. Another way to relieve concerns of these shy respondents was to suggest that the surveys need not be signed at the end.

Important teacher characteristics were considered to be age, teaching experience, grade level and type of assignment. All three model studies reported similar demographic data about their survey respondents.

## Chapter 4

### SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The presentation of the following information reflects the attitudes and practices of elementary (K-5) teachers in Marshalltown, Iowa, regarding the use of extended field trips. This data, however, can only be considered valid for the summer of 1986.

Survey results are presented in three parts: demographics, attitudes and practices. Another major division identified within the study are characteristics of "users" and "non-users" of field trips. These elements are all illustrated with tables and charts where appropriate. Interpretation of the relationships among these characteristics are presented in the next chapter.

#### Demographics

A specific question about sex of the respondents was not asked on the survey. However, data from the teaching roster indicated that of the total population of 81 elementary classroom teachers 12 were male and 69 were female.

It could not be determined whether the two non-respondents were male or female. If both non-respondents had been female the population of respondents would have been represented by 15% males and 85% females.

Another fact that was indirectly obtained from signatures on returned surveys was that 8 out of 9 "non-users" were females. One "non-user" survey was returned unsigned.

The age distribution question was posed to respondents (See Table I) in ten year intervals. The choices were " 21-31, 32-42, 43-53, and 54-65. Within the general population (79), the vast majority (67%) who answered were between the ages of 32-53.

The "non-users" (population 9) had 33% between 32-42, and 33% between 54-65 (See Table Ia). These were followed by 22% between 43-53. The smallest percentage (11%) of "non-users" were in the 21-31 age bracket.

The "users" (population 70) age reflected much more the general population age distribution. This group was represented by 68% between ages 32-53. Only 7% were in the first 10 year increment, while 23% were between 54-65. One teacher chose not to respond to one of the survey choices. Her comment was "plenty-nine".

The years of teaching experience question placed nearly half (48%) of the general population between the ten year interval of 11-20 (See Table II). This was followed by 28% between 21-30. The first ten years included 14% of the teachers' responses and 10% answered in the 31-40 years of experience group. One teacher chose not to answer within the four ten-year intervals and wrote in a 41-42 choice. She was grouped with the 31-40 range.

Almost half of the "non-users" (44%) teachers had between 21 and 30 years of experience (See Table IIa). This was followed by 33% in the 11-20 year bracket, and 22% in the 1-10 year range. None of these teachers had more than thirty years of experience.

The "user" group had exactly half with 11-20 years of experience. This was followed by 26% in the 21-30 year range. The 1-10 choice

Table I

Age Distribution

(N = 79)

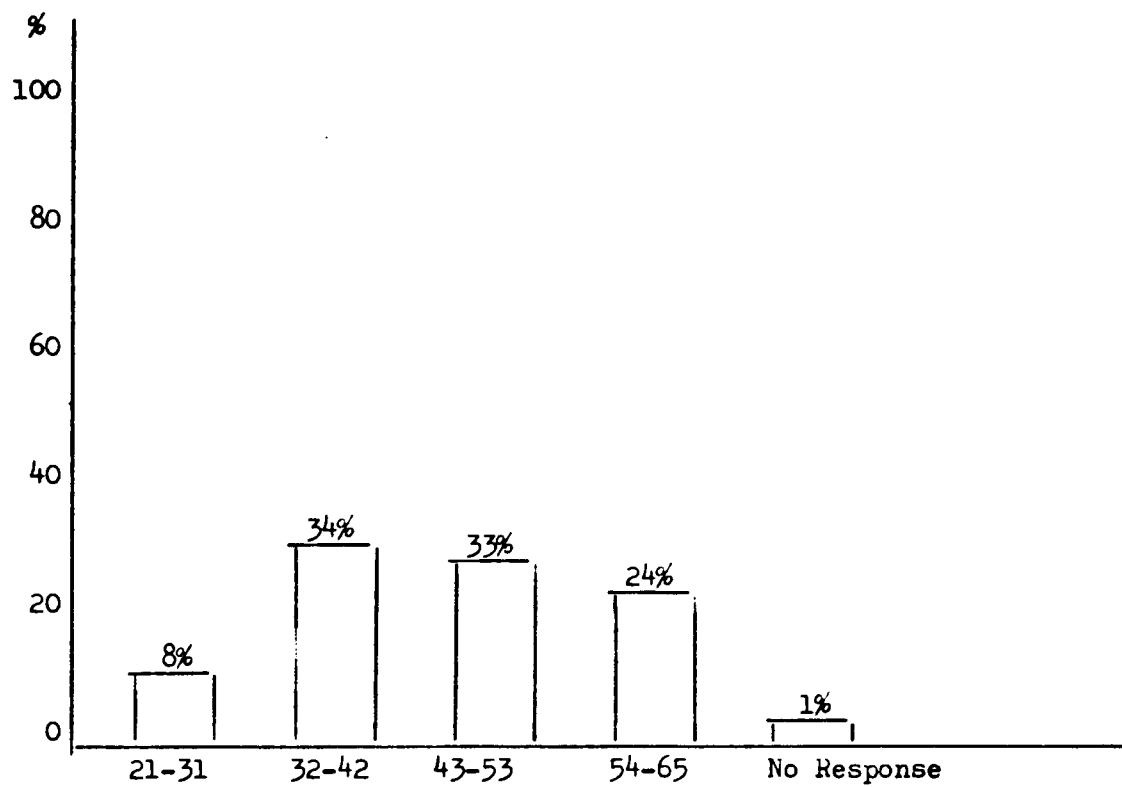


Table Ia

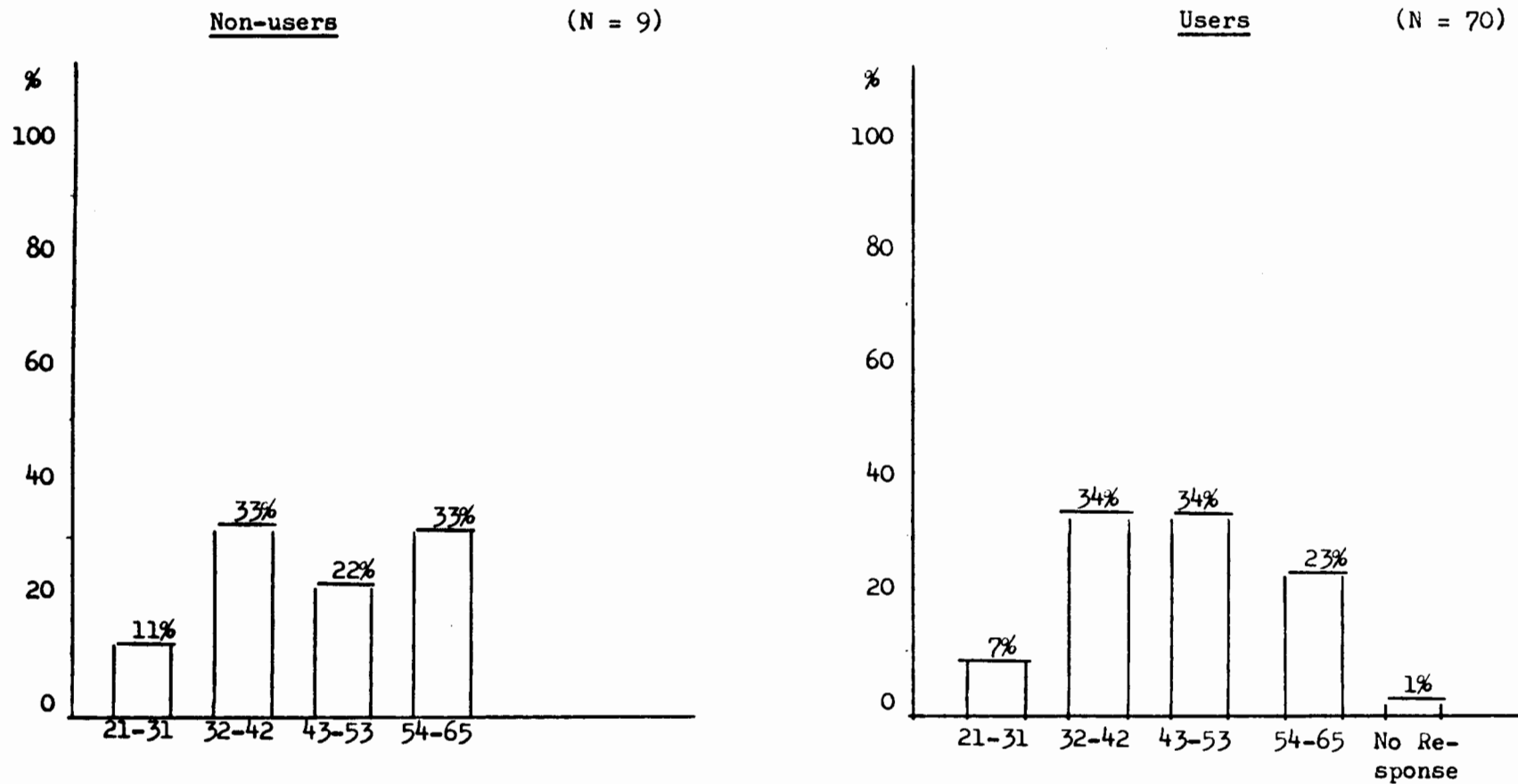
Comparative Age Distribution

Table II

Years of Teaching Experience

(N = 79)

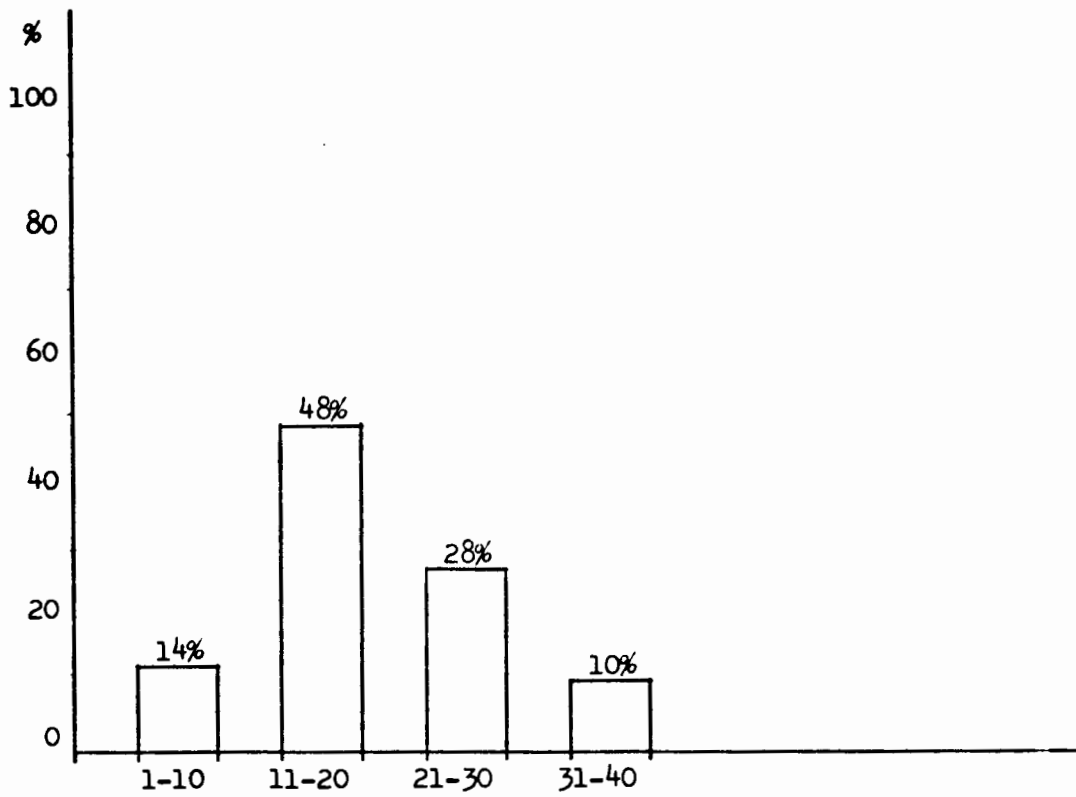
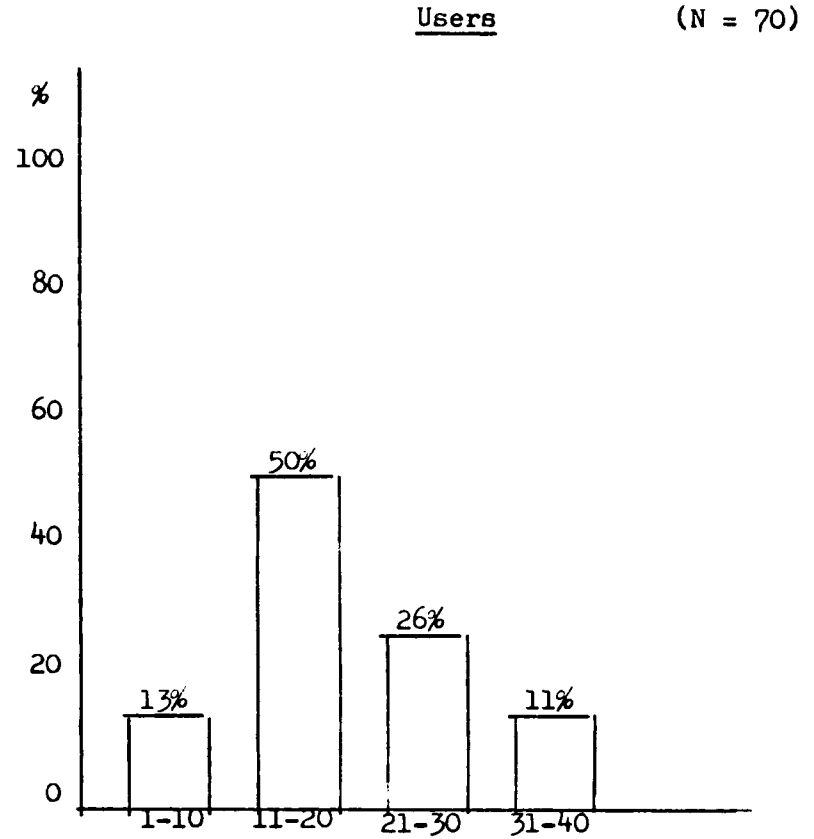
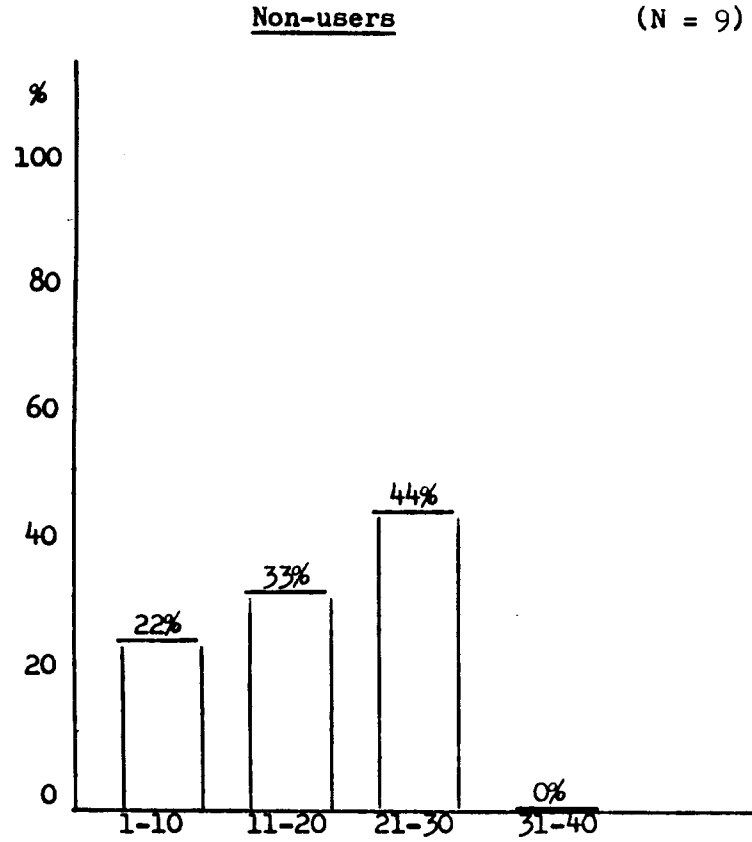


Table IIa

Comparative Years of Teaching Experience



received 13% of the teacher responses, and the 31-40 group got 10%. One teacher in this bracket marked in a 41-42 choice. She was included in the 31-40 category.

The next demographic question asked teachers to identify the grade level in which they taught (Kgt., Primary, or Intermediate). The general population was represented by 56% of the teachers in the Primary (Grades 1, 2, or 3) range. (See Table III). This was followed by 34% in the Intermediate and 10% in Kindergarten. One response was marked K-1 so she was included with the Primary choice.

The "non-user" group was comprised of 56% Primary, 44% Intermediate and 0% Kindergarten. (See Table IIIa).

The "user" group also included 56% in Primary grades, but 33% in Intermediate, and 11% of this group taught at the Kindergarten level.

According to the final demographic question on type of teaching assignment, approximately three fourths (76%) of the teachers were working in a self-contained classroom (See Table IV). In this arrangement teachers are responsible for teaching all subjects. This was followed by a much smaller 13% having departmentalized science (no social studies). The departmentalized social studies choice received 9%, and the remaining group comprised 2% of the population.

The "non-user" classifications put self-contained at 67%, departmentalized social studies at 22% and other at 11% (See Table IVa). The departmentalized science group received no responses.

The breakdown for the "user" group was 77% in self-contained settings, 14% in departmentalized science, and 7% in departmentalized social studies. Only 1% marked the other category.

Table III

Grade Level Taught

(N = 79)

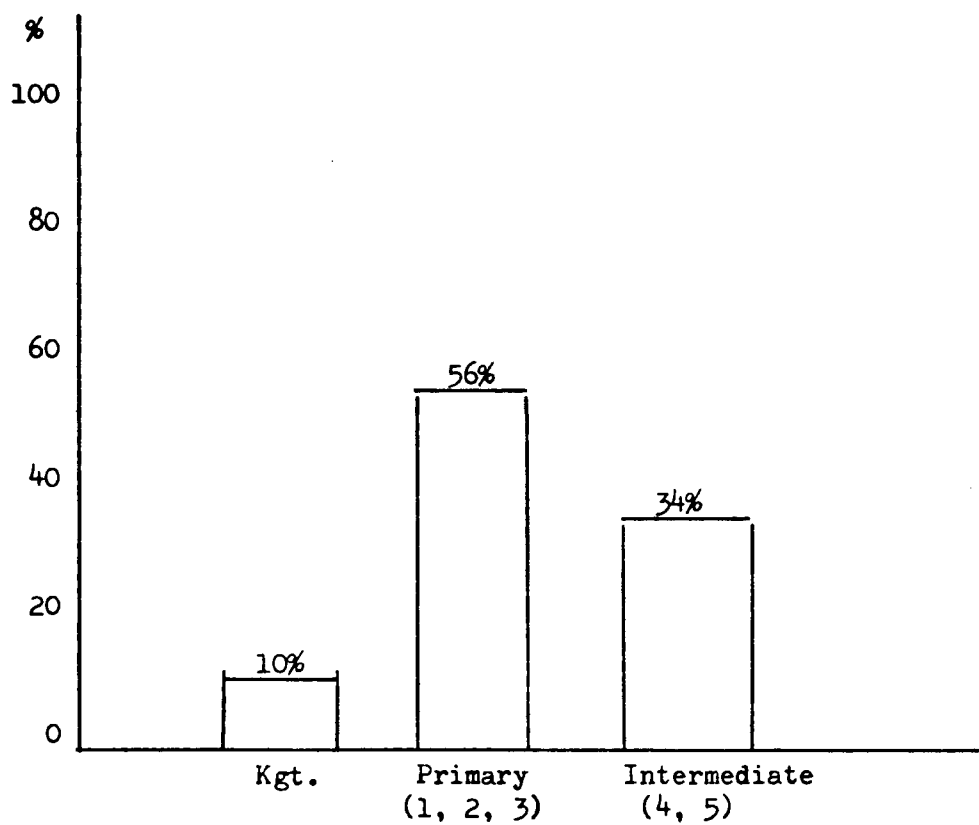
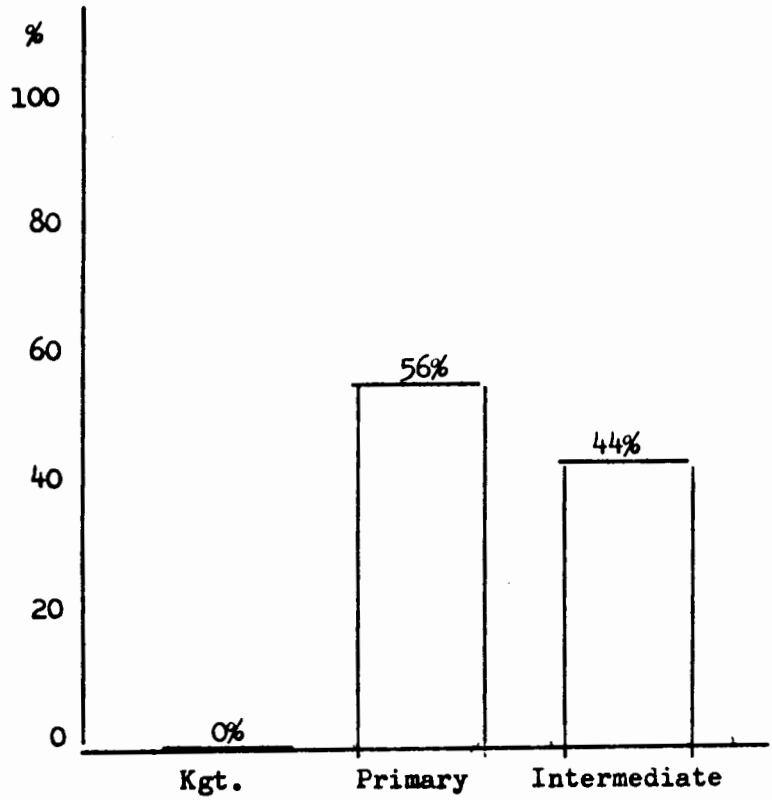


Table IIIa

Comparative Level Taught

Non-users

(N = 9)



Users

(N = 70)

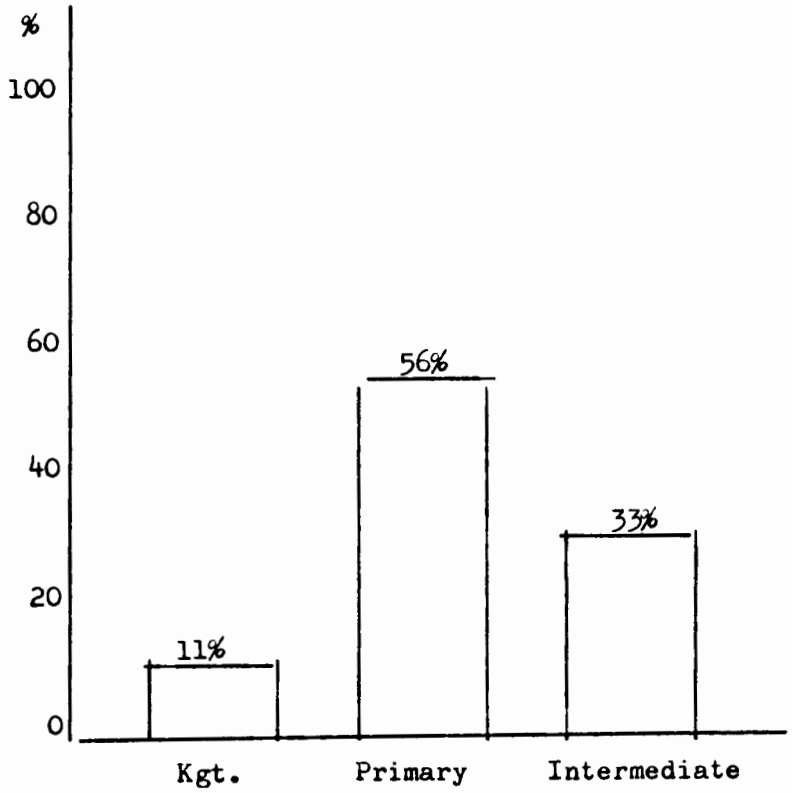


Table IV

Teaching Arrangement

(N = 79)

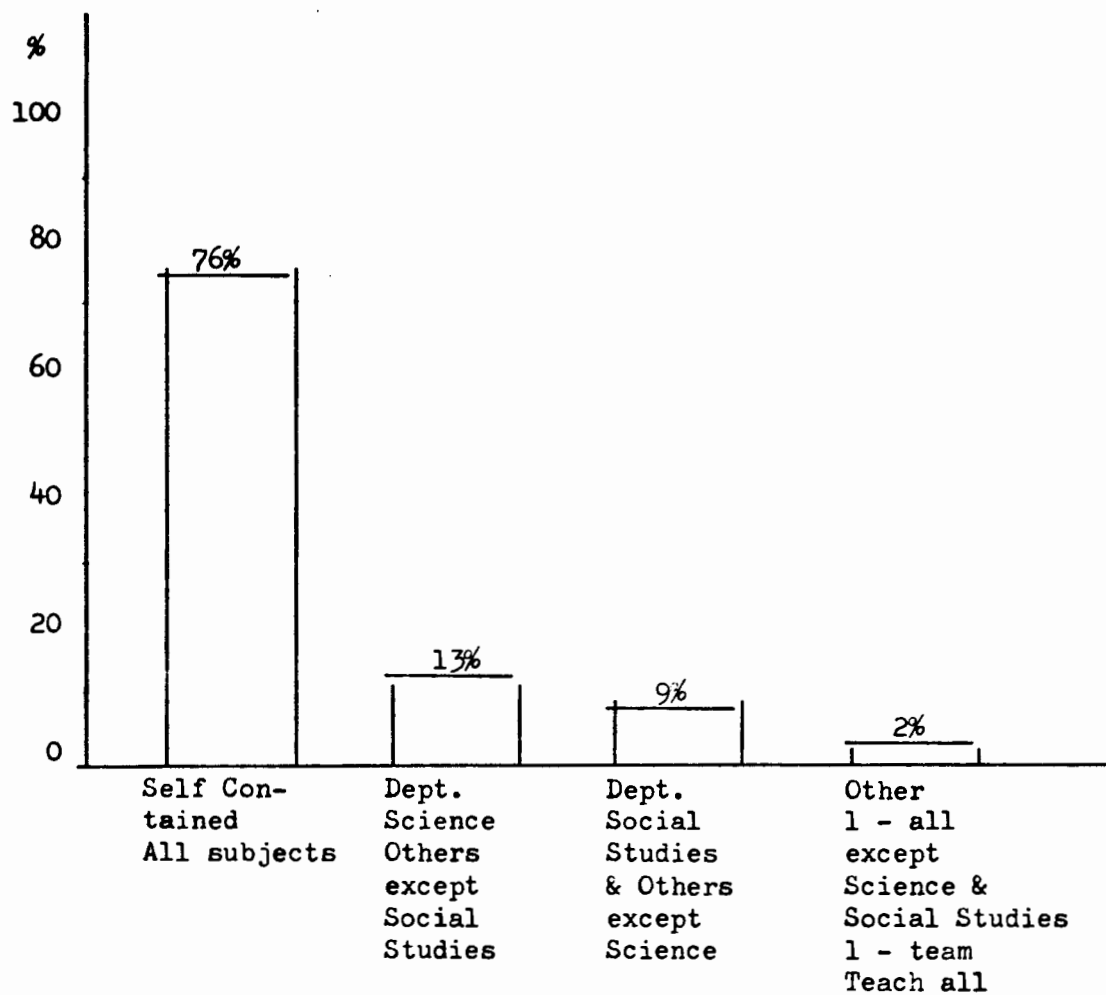
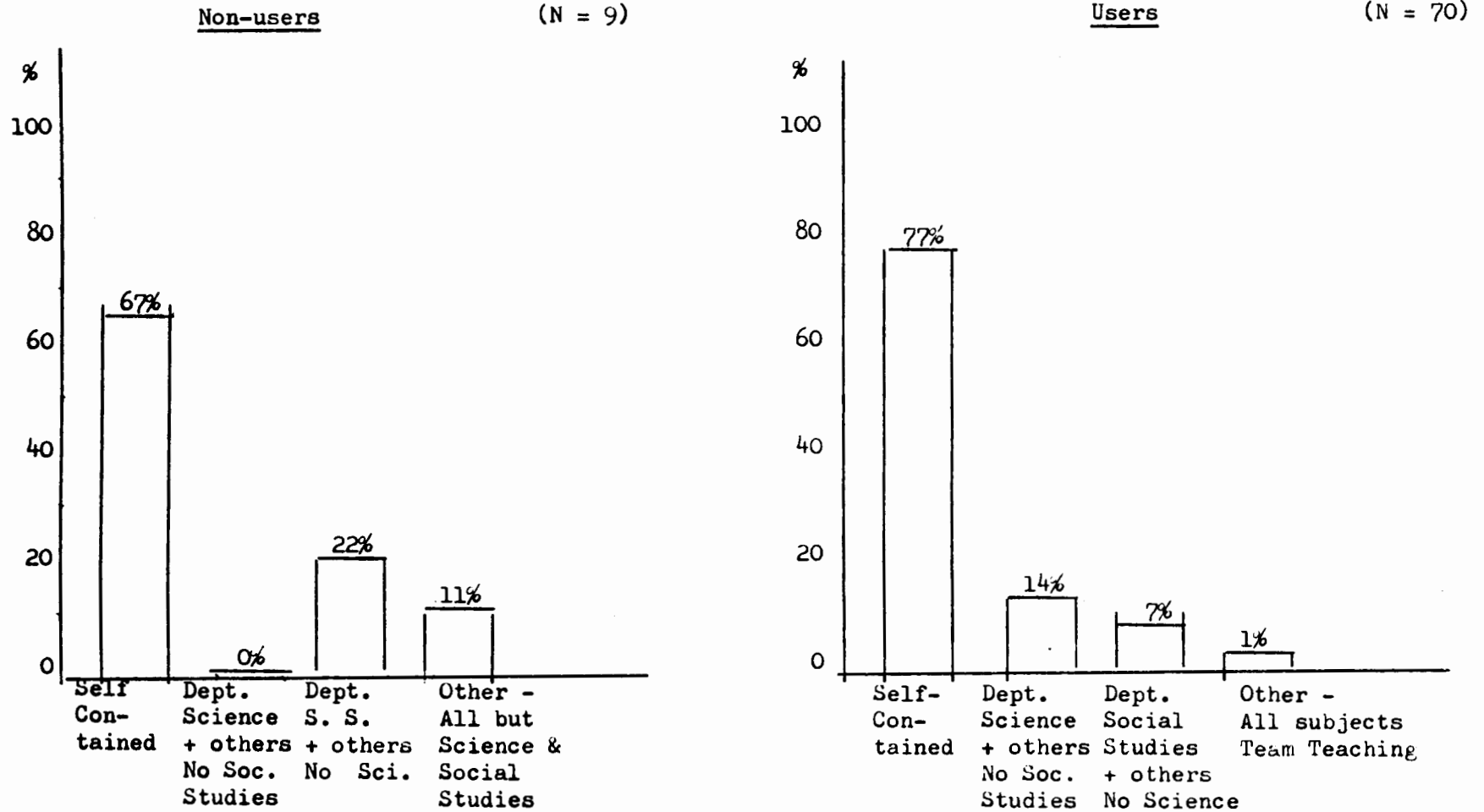


Table IVa

Comparative Teaching Arrangement

## Attitudes

Questions that were designed to elicit attitudinal responses began with teacher beliefs. When asked the question, "Do you believe in the use of field trips as they are defined in this study?" An overwhelming majority (82%) said that they did (See Table V). A smaller group (18%) qualified their positive response with the "sometime" choice. However, none of the teachers answered "no".

The differences between the "non-users" and "users" responses to this question are very evident (See Table Va). The "non-users" gave an unqualified "yes" in 56% of the responses and a "sometimes" received 44%. There weren't any "no" responses.

The "users" on the other hand gave a firm "yes" in 84% of the cases, and only 16% responded with a "sometimes". Here again there weren't any "no" responses.

Another question was directed toward what may have helped to form the attitudes of this teacher population, "Did you experience field trips when you were in grades K-5?" The majority (66%) answered that they had not (See Table VI). Less than one-third (29%) had experienced field trips as a child, and a few (5%) couldn't remember.

A substantial number (78%) of "non-users" indicated that they hadn't had such experiences when younger. This was compared to 22% that said they had, and 0% answered "Can't remember" (See Table VIa).

Though a smaller portion of the "user" group (63%) answered that they hadn't experienced field trips when younger, this amount is still almost two-thirds of the group. A somewhat larger number (31%) of

Table V

Do You Believe In Field Trips?

(N = 79)

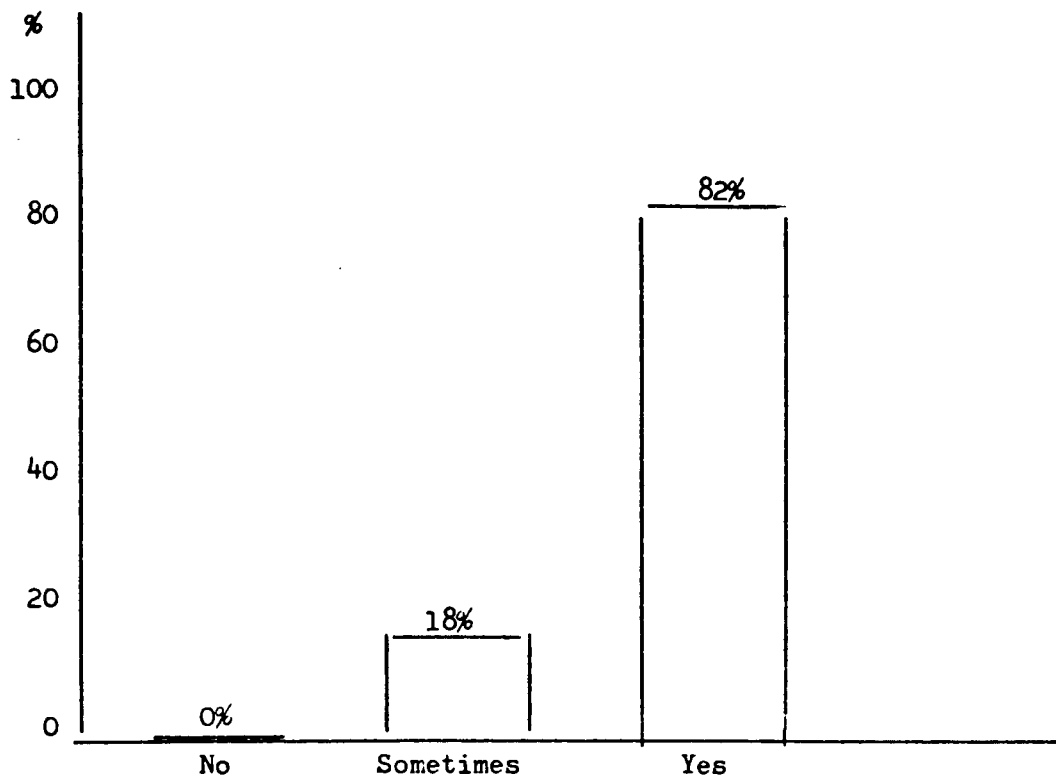


Table Va

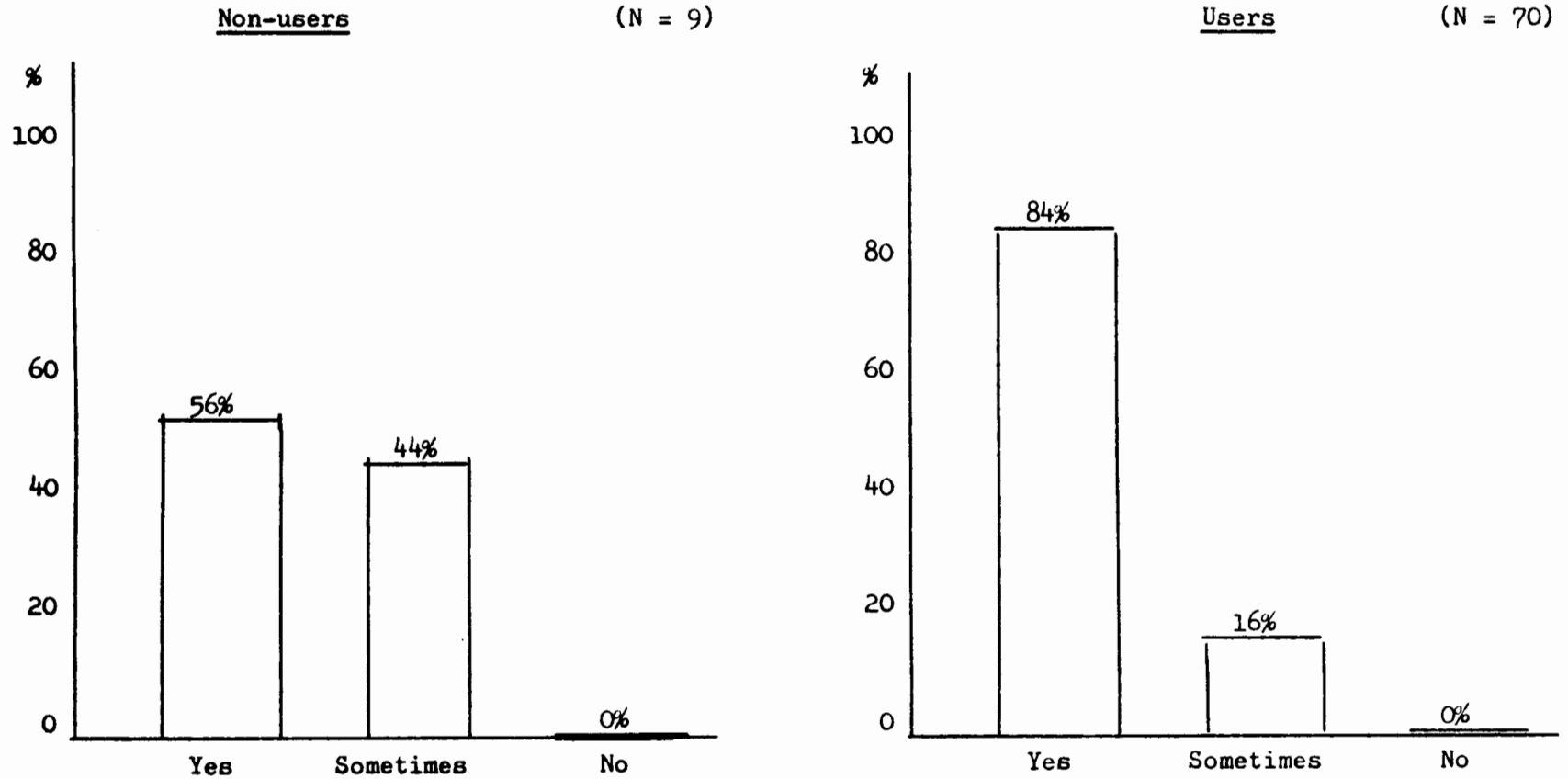
Comparative - Do You Believe In Field Trips?



Table VI

Did You Experience Field Trips in K-5?

(N = 79)

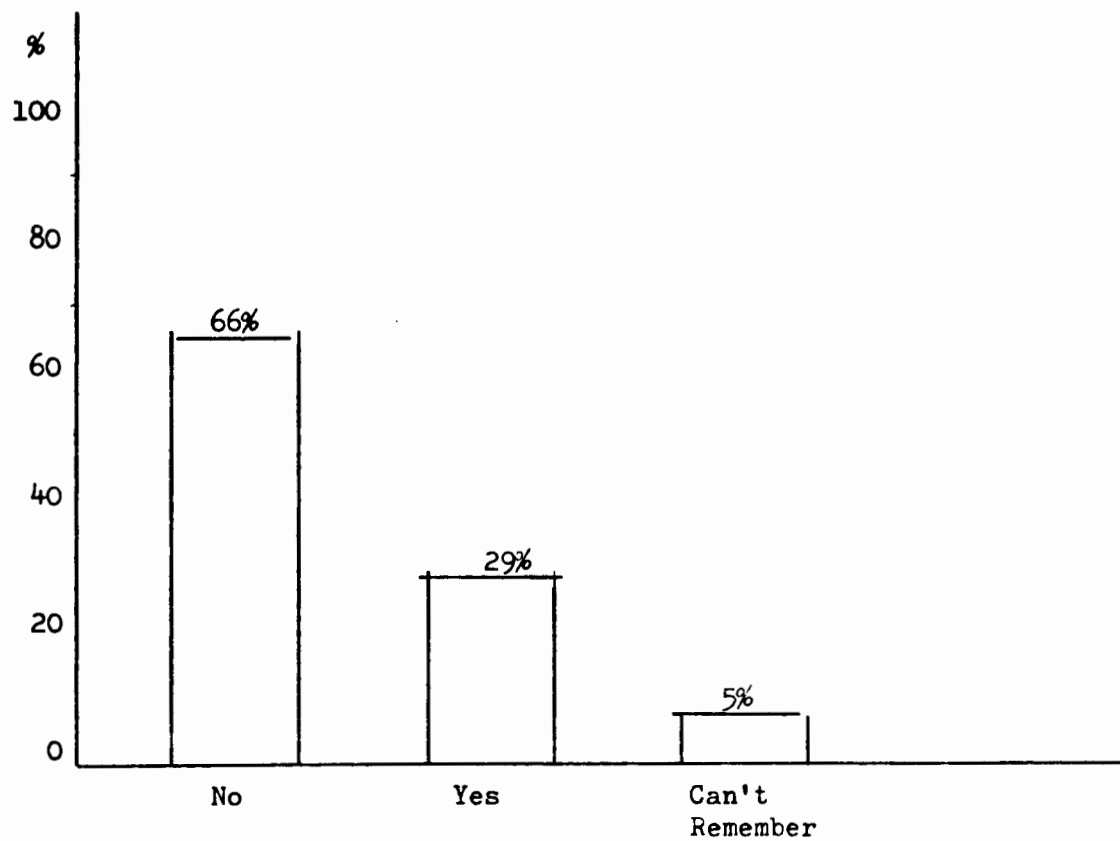


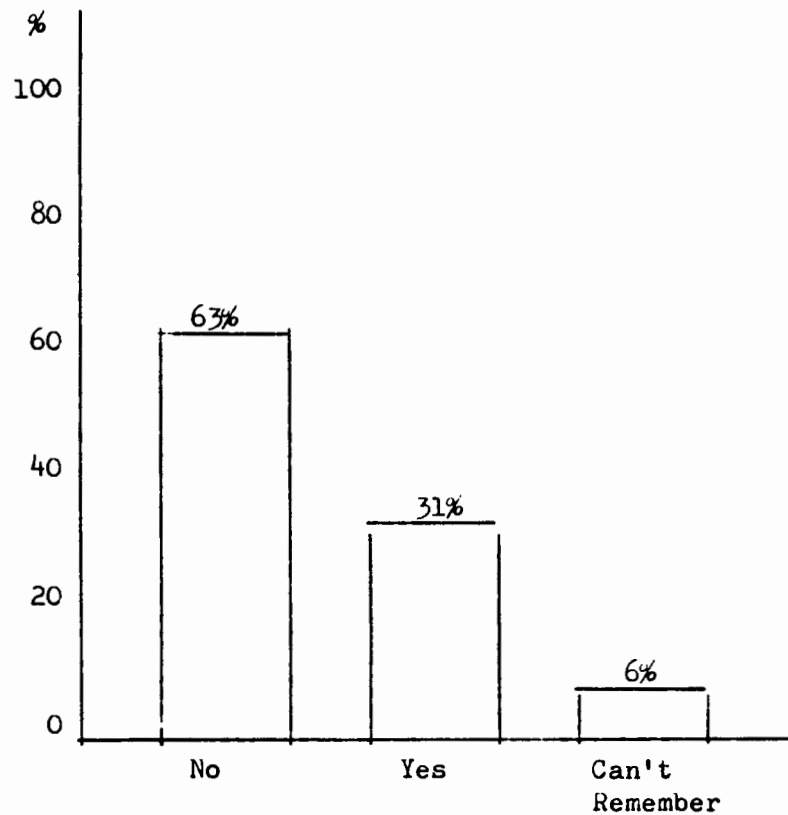
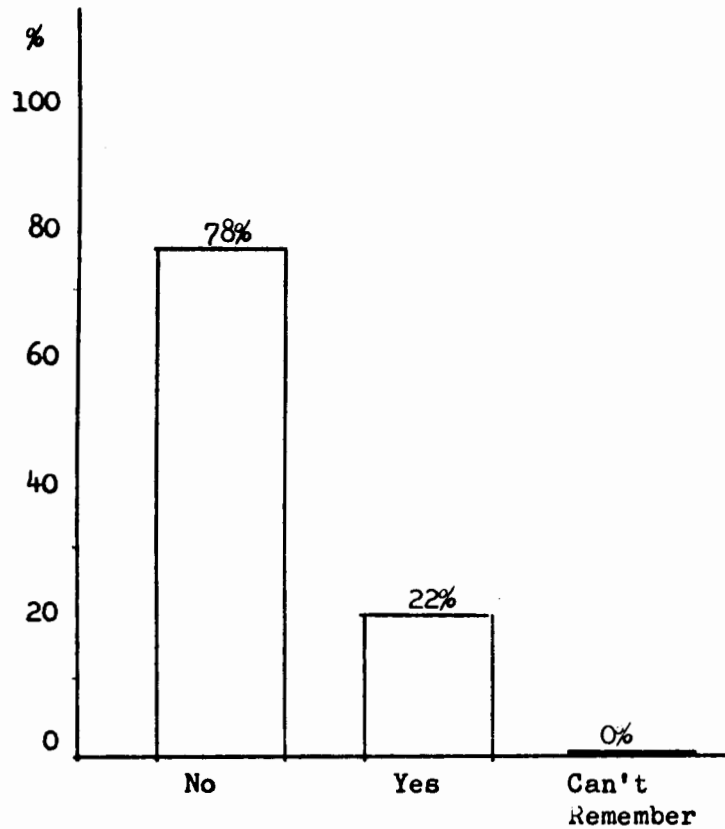
Table VIa

Comparative - Did You Experience Field Trips in K-5?Non-user

(N = 9)

User

(N = 70)



"users" answered that "yes" they had these experiences. A small number of "users" (6%) were the part of the general population that "couldn't remember".

Investigating the reasons that teachers used trips and their perceptions of obstacles that hindered trips, were primary considerations in this study.

The reasons for taking field trips were directed primarily at the "user" group. However, some "non-users" gave indications as to what they thought "should be" the case by answering this question also. Only "user" responses are reported here.

A list of five response choices were given based upon the literature review. The teachers ranked them from the most important reasons for taking trips to the least important (see Table VII).

From the "user" population (70), 44% ranked "in conjunction with a unit of study" as most important. The distribution of other reasons (in rank one) by descending order of percentages read: "for real world experiences" at 40%, "to integrate subjects" at 10%, "for a change of pace" at 6%, and "don't use any" at 0%.

The second rank distributed the reasons as follows: "conjunction with a unit" at 43%, "real world experience" at 33%, "integrate subjects" at 19%, "change of pace" at 4%, and "don't use" at 0%. "No response" was given by 1% of the teachers.

The third rank breakdown showed: 53% "to integrate subjects", 26% "for real world experiences", 10% "for a change of pace", another 10% "in conjunction with a unit of study", and 0% "don't use". "No response" was again given by 1% of the teachers.

Table VII

Reasons for Using Field Trips

(N = 70)

<u>Reasons</u>	<u>User</u>			
	<u>Ranks -</u> 1 Freq. (%)	2 Freq. (%)	3 Freq. (%)	4 Freq. (%)
A. Change of Pace	4 (6%)	3 (4%)	7 (10%)	50 (71%)
B. Real World Experience	28 (40%)	23 (33%)	18 (26%)	1 (1%)
C. Conjunction with Unit	31 (44%)	30 (43%)	7 (10%)	3 (4%)
D. Integrate Subjects	7 (10%)	13 (19%)	37 (53%)	10 (14%)
E. Don't Use	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
No Response	0 (0%)	1 (1%)	1 (1%)	6 (9%)
Totals	70 (100%)	70 (100%)	70 (100%)	70 (99+)

Finally, the fourth rank selections were: "for a change of pace" at 71%, "to integrate subjects" at 14%, "in conjunction with a unit of study" at 4%, "for real world experience" at 1%, and "don't use any" at 0%. "No response" was given by 9% of the teachers.

Obstacles to taking field trips were encountered by both "users" and "non-users". So, "users" were then asked to rank obstacles that were encountered when taking field trips (See Table VIII). Further, "non-users" were asked to rank obstacles that kept them from taking field trips (Table VIIIa).

The "users" responses were sought first on the survey. Within the first rank obstacles identified were: "effort to prepare and conduct" at 41%, "time away from other instruction" at 21%, "cost and transportation" at 14%, "student behavior" at 11%, and "no obstacles were encountered" at 11%.

The second rank of responses placed: "time" at 27%, "effort" at 24%, "cost/transportation" at 17%, "students" at 11%, and "no obstacles" at 9%. "No response" was given by 19% of the teachers.

The third rank revealed: "time" at 23%, "cost/transportation" at 21%, "effort" at 19%, "students" at 16%, and "no obstacles" at 1%. "No response" was given by 19% of the teachers.

The fourth rank identified: "students" at 34%, "cost/transportation" at 26%, "time" at 10%, "effort" at 6%, and "no obstacles" at 1%. "No response" was given by 23% of the teachers.

The fifth rank indicated: "no obstacles" at 47%, "cost/transportation" at 9%, "students" at 4%, "effort" at 1%, and "time" at 0%. "No response" was given by 39% of the teachers.

Table VIII

Rank Obstacles to Taking Trips

(N = 70)

<u>Reasons</u>	<u>Users</u>				
	Ranks - 1 Freq.(%)	2 Freq.(%)	3 Freq.(%)	4 Freq.(%)	5 Freq.(%)
A. Cost/ Transportation	10 (14%)	12 (17%)	15 (21%)	18 (26%)	6 ( 9%)
B. Time	15 (21%)	19 (27%)	16 (23%)	7 (10%)	0 ( 0%)
C. Effort	29 (41%)	17 (24%)	13 (19%)	4 ( 6%)	1 ( 1%)
D. Students	8 (11%)	8 (11%)	11 (16%)	24 (34%)	3 ( 4%)
E. No Obstacles	8 (11%)	6 ( 9%)	2 ( 3%)	1 ( 1%)	33 (47%)
No Response	0 ( 0%)	8 (11%)	13 (19%)	16 (23%)	27 (39%)
Totals	70 (100%)	70 (100%)	70 (100%)	70 (100%)	70 (100%)

Table VIIIa

Rank Obstacles to Taking Trips

(N = 9)

Non-users

<u>Reasons</u>	Ranks -				
	1 Freq.(%)	2 Freq.(%)	3 Freq.(%)	4 Freq.(%)	5 Freq.(%)
A. Cost	1 (11%)	3 (33%)	1 (11%)	1 (11%)	0 (0%)
B. Time	2 (22%)	2 (22%)	3 (33%)	1 (11%)	0 (0%)
C. Effort	2 (22%)	2 (22%)	4 (44%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
D. Students	3 (33%)	1 (11%)	0 (0%)	4 (44%)	0 (0%)
E. No Obstacles	1 (11%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	6 (66%)
No Response	0 (0%)	1 (11%)	1 (11%)	3 (33%)	3 (33%)
Totals	9 (99%)	9 (99%)	9 (99%)	9 (99%)	9 (99%)*

\* Percentages were rounded off so they do not total 100%

The "non-user" reasons for not taking trips, though given the same choices as the "users", were ranked in a different order (See Table VIIIa). The most difficult obstacle perceived by "non-users" was "student behavior" at 33%. "Time away from other instruction" and "effort to prepare and conduct" each received 22% of the responses. Likewise, "cost/transportation" and "no obstacles" each received 11% of the responses.

The second rank "non-user" obstacles identified were: "cost/transportation" at 33%, "time" and "effort" each at 22%, and "students" at 11%. "No response" was given by 11% of the teachers in this group.

At the third rank obstacles revealed were: "effort" at 44%, "time" at 33%, "cost" at 11%, "students" and "no obstacles" each at 0%. "No response" was again given by 11% of the teachers.

The fourth rank showed: "students" at 44%, "cost" and "time" each at 11%, "effort" and "no obstacles" each at 0%. "No response" was given by 33% of the "non-users".

The fifth rank placed: "no obstacles" at 66%, "students" at 0%, "effort" at 0%, "time" at 0%, and "cost/transportation" at 0%. "No response" was given by 33% of the teachers in this group.

A note at the end of Table VIIIa indicates that the rounded off percentages totaled only 99%.

### Practices

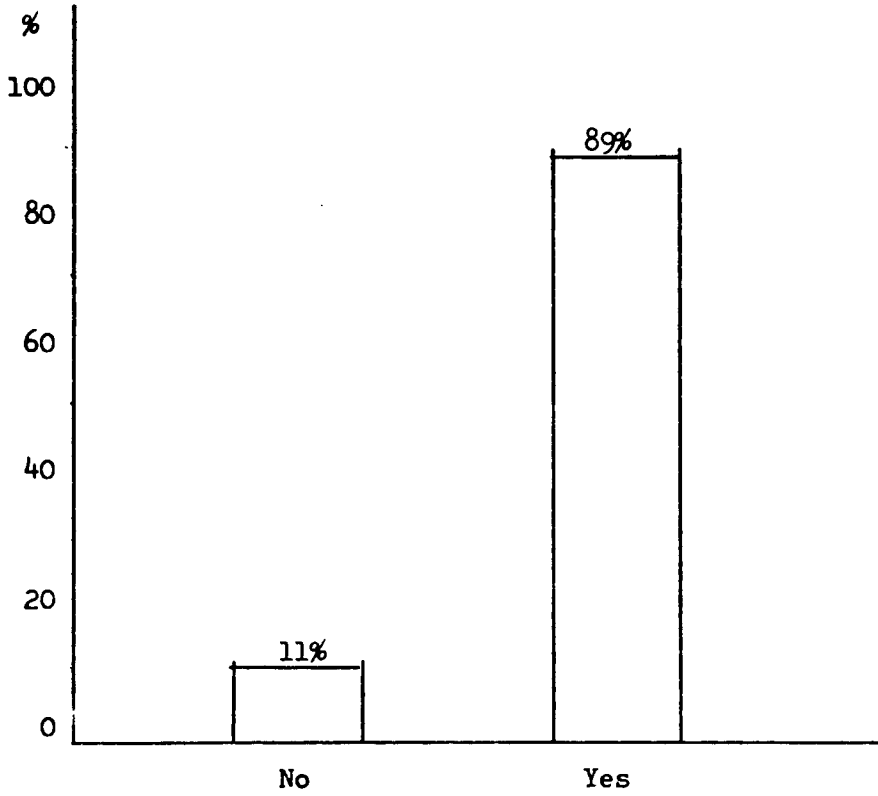
The remaining questions on the survey were selected to collect data about teachers' practices regarding field trip use.



Table IX

Do You Use Field Trips?

(N = 79)



The first logical question then is "Do you use field trips?" Within the total population of respondents (79), 89% answered that they did use field trips and 11% answered that they did not (See Table IX).

The next question asked these "users" (population 70), "About how many trips are averaged per year?" (See Table X). The largest percentage (43%) takes 2 trips per year. The next highest percentage (39%) answer was 1 per year.

A minority (1%) take 3 or more trips per year. One respondent answered 0 trips per year as an average. This answer would appear to exclude this teacher from the "user" group. However, the author is aware this teacher took 2 trips during the school year and prior to the administration of the survey. Previous to that year she had never taken students on field trips.

Information about the length of field trips was the next survey question. Teachers were asked, "How long might a typical field trip last?" The most frequent response (59%) was "1/2 a day" (See Table XI). This was followed by "all day" (29%), and "1 hour" (11%). One teacher did not respond. It should be noted here that several teachers gave combination answers. Multiple answers were handled by equally dividing these respondents among the number of categories that their responses covered.

The location of trips was investigated by asking the question, "Where have the majority of your extended field trips been taken?" The responses provided were: Parks, farms, tours (rolling trips), other, and don't take any (see Table XII).

Table X

How Many Trips Do You Take Per Year?

(N = 70)

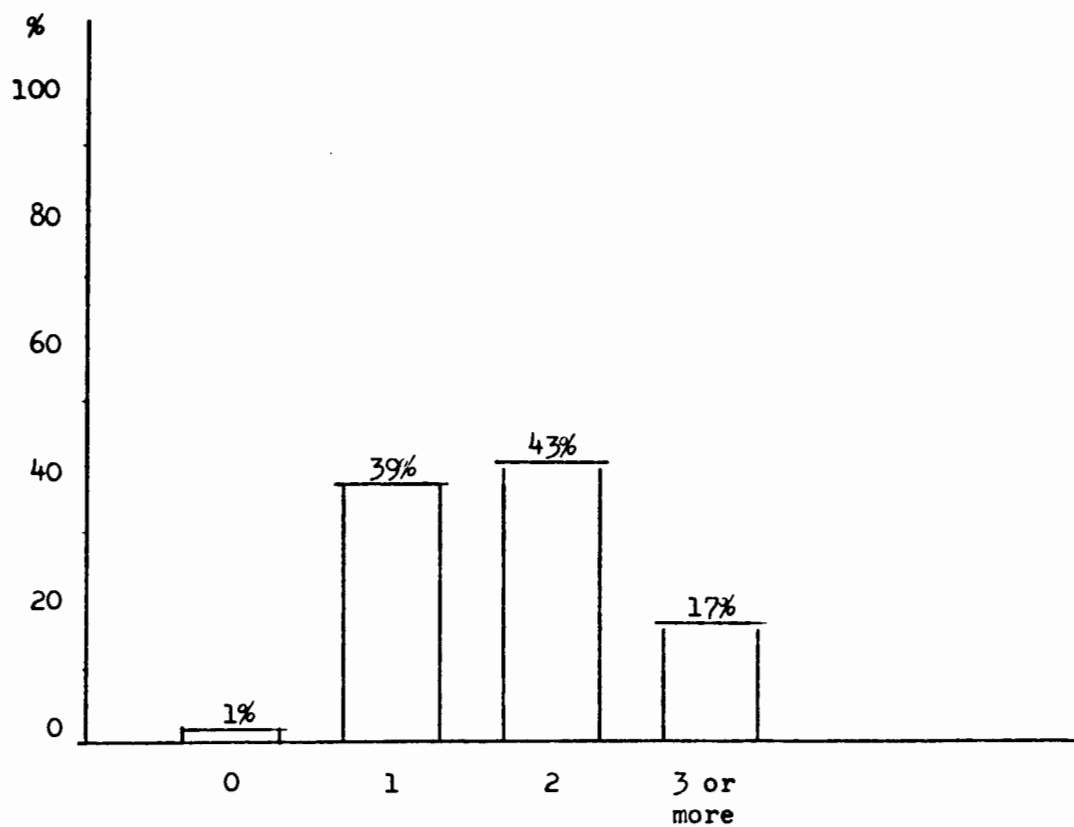
Users

Table XI  
Length of Trip?

(N = 70)

Users

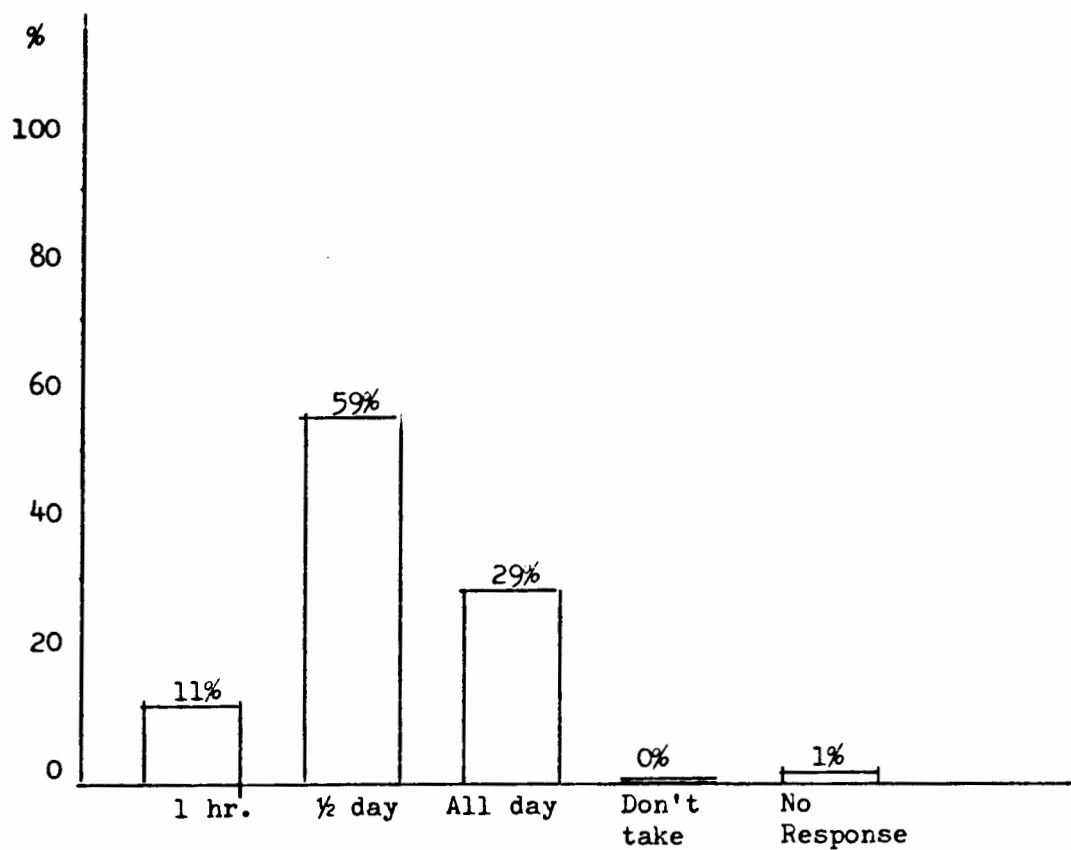
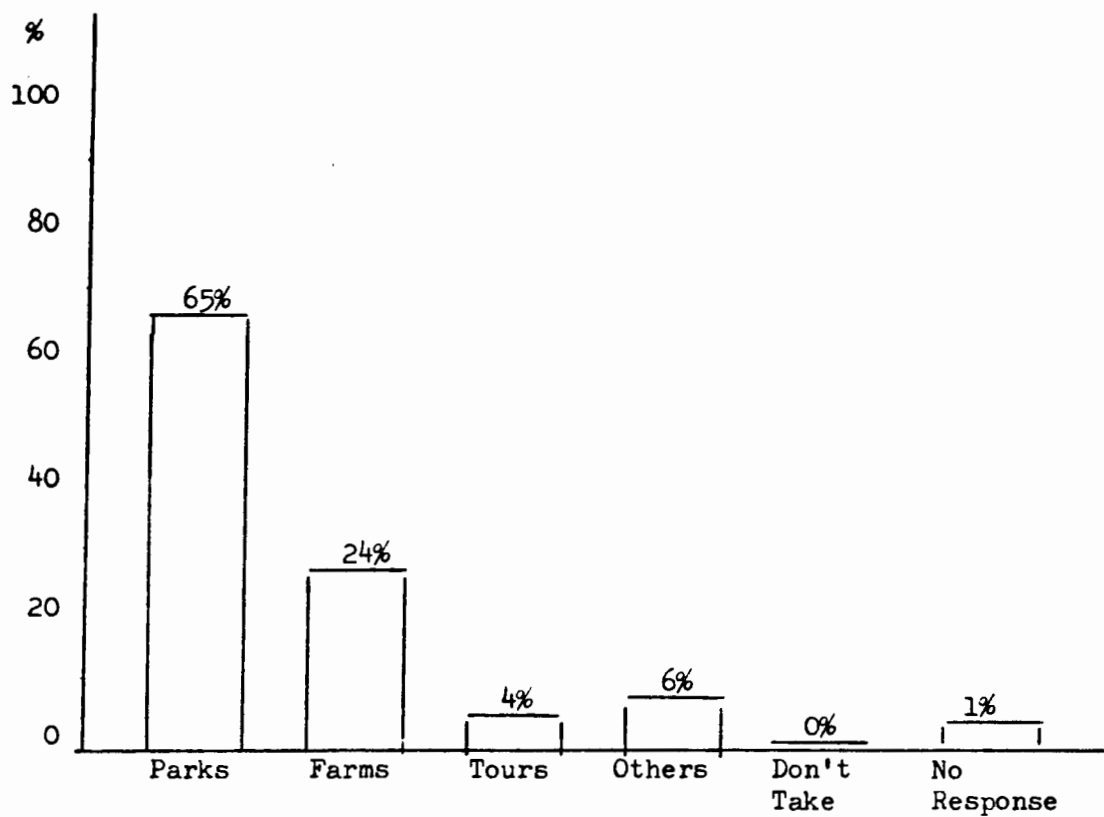


Table XII

Where Have Trips Been Taken?

(N = 70)

Users

The most frequent response was "Parks" (65%). "Farms" received the next highest percentage (24%). "Others" (6%) and "Tours" (4%) completed the response possibilities, with one teacher not responding. Multiple answers were a problem on this question, also. These combined answers were handled in the same way as those given in "length of trip", being divided equally among the categories that they covered.

The list of comments in the "other" category was lengthy. Some indicated trips that were not taken by bus or for outdoor instructional purposes. They were: Botanical Center, Zoo, Science Center, Orchards, Neighborhood Park, Living History Farms, Greenhouse, Private Land (Wildflowers), Animal Rescue League, Hospital, Dentist, Veterinarian, Police Dept., Courthouse, Boone Scenic Train Ride, Veterans' Home, and walks near school or to homes.

Awareness of others that can help plan and conduct field trips might influence the attitudes and practices of teachers. So, one survey question asked, "Are you aware that the Marshall County Conservation Board Naturalist is available to help you plan and lead field trips?"

The responses were overwhelmingly to the affirmative (See Table XIII). The general population answered 97% "yes" and 3% "no". Comparing the "non-users" and "users" (See Table XIIIa), reveals that all of the "non-users" were aware of this resource person, 100% "yes". However, 97% of "users" said "yes" and 3% said "no".

There are others who can help teachers conduct field trips. The question was asked, "If you use resource people to plan and/or lead field trips, who are they?" Six categories of answers were provided on

Table XIII

Are You Aware of Naturalist?

(N = 79)

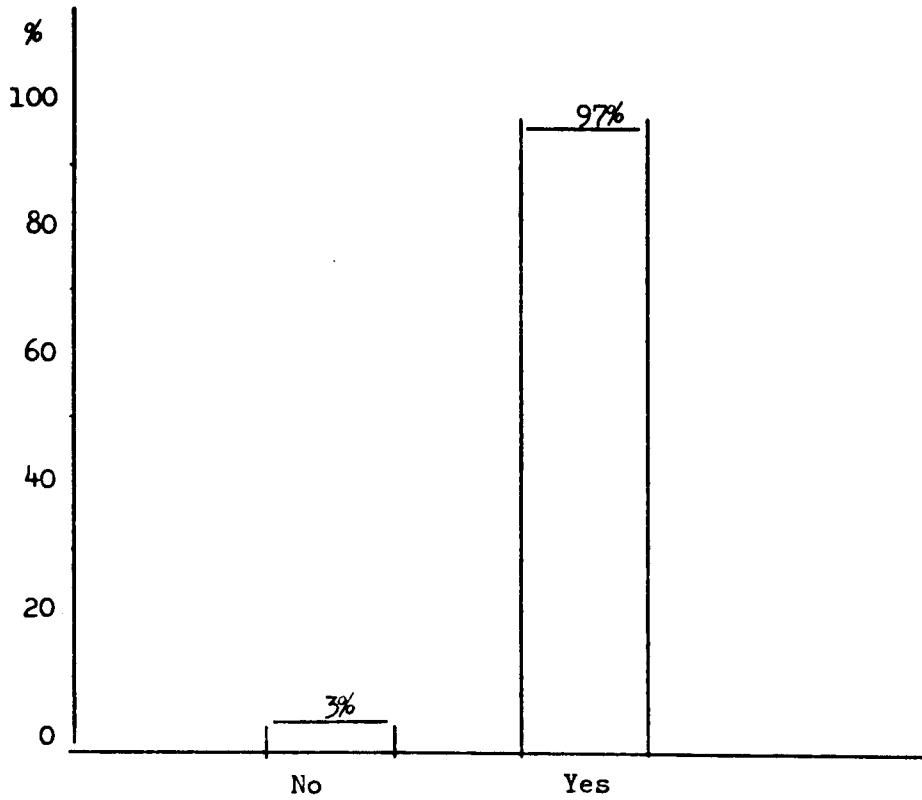


Table XIIIa

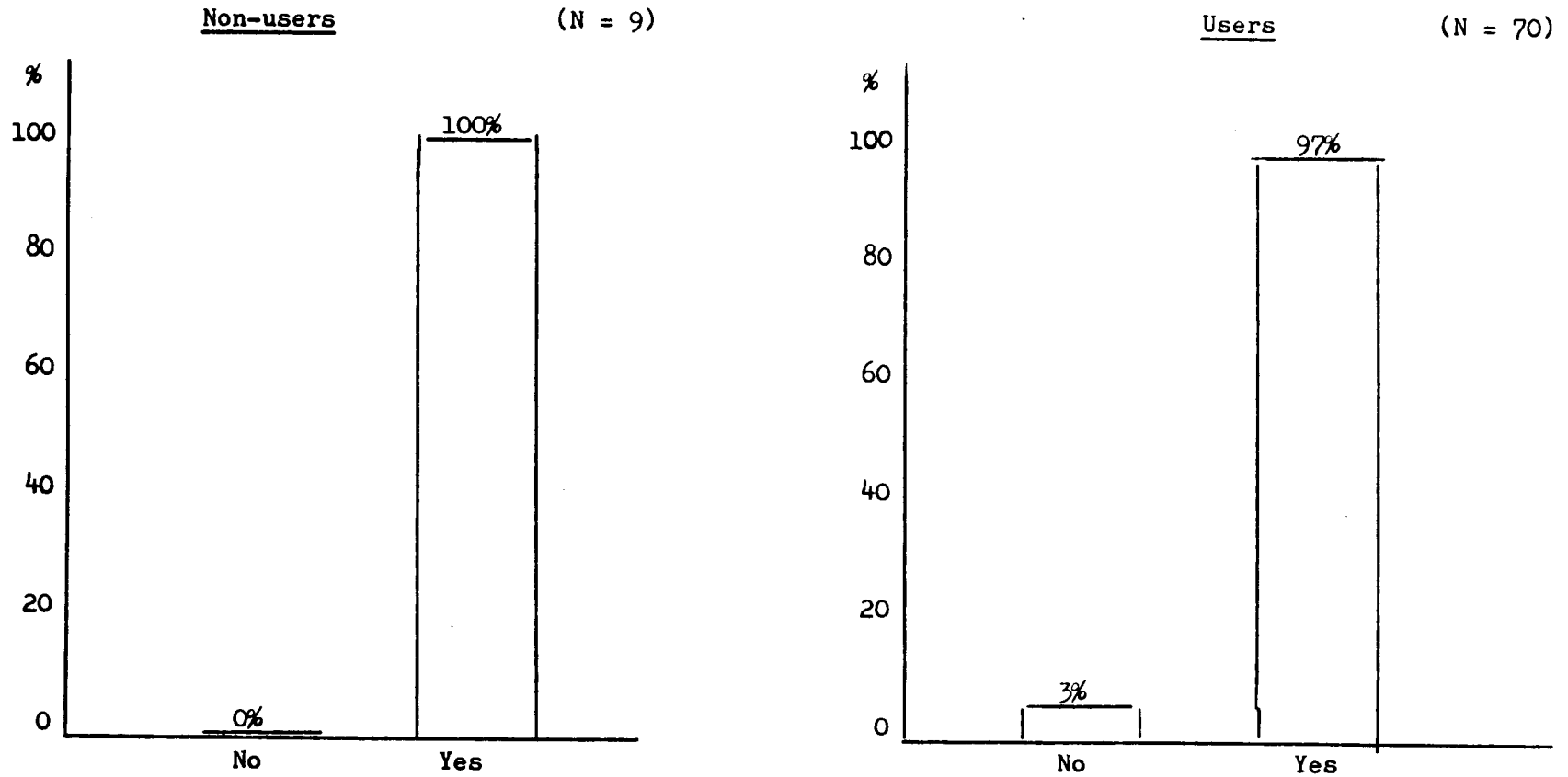
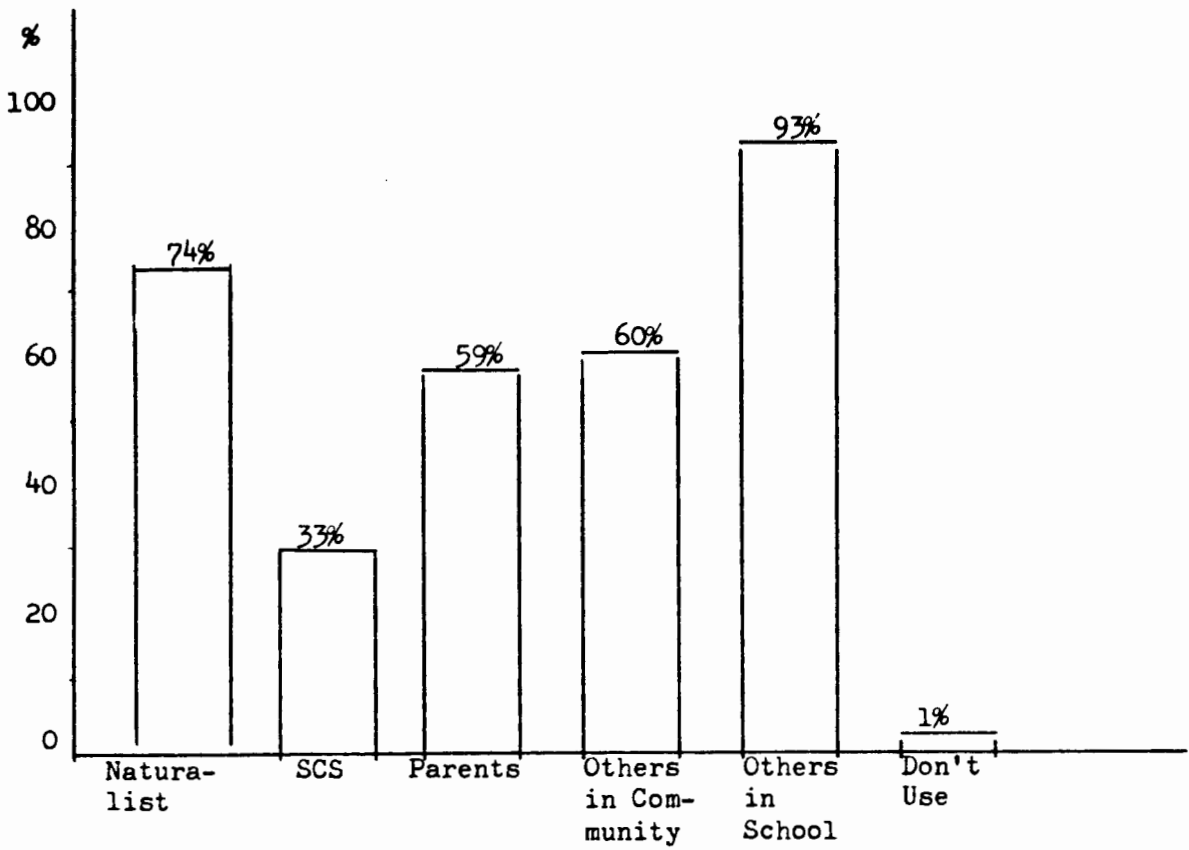
Comparative - Are You Aware of Naturalist?



Table XIV  
Other Helpers  
Users

(N = 70)



the survey (See Table XIV). From these response choices, "Other school personnel" received the highest percentage with 93%. The "Marshall County Naturalist" was used by 73%. "Parents" were used by 60%, and "Others in the Community" were used by 59%. Soil Conservation personnel were used by 33%, and 1% indicated they didn't use helpers. It should be noted that on this question teachers could answer in more than one category.

## Chapter 5

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Seven components in this survey could be considered reflections of attitudes and practices of the elementary teacher population studied in Marshalltown. These components were:

1. The teacher's beliefs regarding value of field trips.
2. The teachers' use or non-use of field trips.
3. The reasons given for taking field trips.
4. The obstacles that were encountered by "users" of field trips and those that prevented "non-users" from using trips.
5. Description of trip utilization characteristics, such as number, length, and location.
6. Awareness of the help that the Naturalist can provide.
7. Extent of which resource helpers are used, such as: Naturalist, SCS personnel, parents, others from the community, others from school, or non-use.

Five possible influences were suggested by the survey as having potential for shaping these attitudes and practices. These influences were:

1. Age of teachers
2. Amount of teaching experience
3. Grade level assignment
4. Instructional arrangement
5. Childhood experiences with trips when in grades K-5.

An exhaustive descriptive statistical analysis could have been done on a number of suspected relationships between current attitudes and practices, and the potential use of field trips for environmental education. It was determined, however, that this approach would be non-productive due to the small population size. The fact that this study was not designed to offer data that would suggest the attitudes and practices of teachers throughout Iowa or the population of elementary teachers in general, was another determining factor.

The interpretations of potentially significant patterns observed within this study, therefore, are not to be considered provable fact. Instead, they are conclusions that reflect the author's best judgment given the data parameters of this study.

#### CONCLUSIONS

It is reasonable to assume that teachers' attitudes toward field trips could influence their practices. The first step was to analyze the survey findings for possible relationships that might exist between teachers' attitudes and practices.

The question in this survey that establishes the primary division of respondents is, "Do you use extended outdoor field trips to provide your students instructional experiences?" An impressive 89% responded that they were "users" and 11% responded that they were "non-users".

Once these two groups are identified an analysis of their demographic characteristics, attitudes and practices, can be compared. The primary attitude question was, "Do you believe extended field trips are valuable opportunities for elementary (K-5) children?" It was

reported in Chapter 4 that the "users" had a high (84%) affirmative response, and a much smaller (16%) qualified affirmative response. Whereas, the "non-users" answered with a much smaller (56) affirmative, and a substantially higher (44%) qualified affirmative response. It was also noted that neither "users" nor "non-users" gave a negative response.

The age distributions of "users" and "non-users" did not appear to show significant differences that would suggest this factor might differentiate between the two groups. Since 77% of the "non-users" had between 11-30 years teaching experience, and "users" in this experience range had 76%, then this influence doesn't vary widely either. The grade levels most taught by "users" (Primary 56%) and "non-users" were the same (Primary 56%). There is no discrimination between the two groups and thus doesn't appear to be significant.

The teaching arrangement might have some influence on beliefs. From a self-contained perspective, "users" (77%) and "non-users" (67%) are somewhat different. However, none of the "non-users" are departmentalized science teachers. Another teacher instructs everything except science and social studies. This might suggest the higher incidence of the "Sometimes" response among "non-users" belief in field trips. Since the value of trips may correspond to their relationship to a current unit of study, those not teaching science might have only regarded trips as valuable when they are associated with subjects they teach.

The final factor may have the potential for the most influence. "Non-users" had a substantially higher (78%) negative response to

having experienced field trips when they were in grades K-5 than did "users" (63%). Teachers who have not experienced trips first hand when young and had no support or training since that time may have less favorable attitudes toward trips and may be less likely to try field trips on their own initiative. Still, with a strong enough belief that field trips are "great for kids" (taken from non-user comment), some may have ventured forth. However, obstacles may have contributed to their lack of field trip use.

Examining the "non-user" surveys stratified by the age group responses, revealed several interesting details. First, the older age (54-65) ranked "student behavior" and "effort to prepare and conduct" as obstacles that kept them from taking field trips. This is quite understandable, since keeping up with 20-30 students in an outdoor setting is challenge enough for young teachers full of strength and zeal. This is not to say that older teachers can't manage. With proper training in environmental education activities and with support personnel along for supervision, young and old teachers both should have successful experiences.

Getting all the resources together to make field trips work requires the support and encouragement from administrators, fellow teachers and often available para-professional supervisory help. Apparently, this encouragement was not given since two of these older age group teachers commented that "principal hassle" and "difficulty getting approval" were reasons they did not take field trips.

The middle aged range (32-53) "non-users" found "time away from other instruction", "cost/transportation", and "effort to prepare and

conduct" were obstacles that kept them from taking trips. Once again a comment that alluded to administrative pressure was made, "with the push to limit the travel by bus for first graders, we have had resource people come to school".

This comment is a bit disturbing in view of the district's position on the use field trips. The application forms (See Appendix C), a memo to elementary principals from the director of elementary education regarding field trips (See Appendix D), and school board policy (See Appendix E), all support the use of field trips. The only limitation of first graders taking field trips would be found in the memo, "Guidelines for Out-of-County Trips". Item one states, "No Out-of-County trips for children in grades kindergarten through grade two". This limitation puts no restriction on the multitude of places first graders can take field trips that are within the County. Therefore, either this teacher is misinformed about policies regarding field trips or her principal has interpreted them incorrectly.

The youngest teacher in the "non-user" group put "I don't encounter any obstacles". This might be explained by her teaching arrangement -- departmentalized social studies and other subjects (no science). Another explanation was her comment, "I've assisted other teachers". A supervisory assistant would not have to put forth as much effort as the teachers responsible for planning and conducting the trips.

The "user" group of teachers did have a higher percentage (31%) that had experienced field trips in K-5 than the "non-user" group (22%). Further study into their backgrounds might reveal some of what

Tanner (1980) called, "significant life experiences" (Op. cit. p. 20), or experiences in youth that establish the basis for belief and actions in later life. Whatever the reasons, the high rate of belief (84%) paralleled the high percentage (89%) that were identified as "users" of field trips.

Although all the influences of "user" attitudes weren't explored, some reasons for taking trips were investigated by the survey. The response "in conjunction with a unit of study" was the reason that "users" gave the highest rank. Classroom arrangements might account for this choice. The combination of self-contained (77%) and departmentalized science (14%) arrangements would add up to 91% of the "user" population that would be responsible for teaching science. This is a much larger percentage than "non-users" (67%) that teach science. Extended field trips for outdoor study would most likely tie into a science unit, but wouldn't necessarily have to be limited to just this subject.

The second ranked reason "users" gave for taking trips was "to give students real world experiences". The fact that such a high percentage (56%) of "users" teach in the primary grade (K-3) might suggest why this answer ranked so high. Primary students are concrete learners. The more first hand, real world experiences they can have, the better the chance for learning objectives of their lessons.

The obstacles that the "user" group encountered did not appear to stop them from using field trips. "Effort to prepare and conduct" was ranked as the most difficult problem to overcome. The comments of one teacher concerning this problem probably reflect many. She said that



to prepare for her own class alone would not be so difficult, but usually two or three classrooms go out together. This creates extra burden, if one teacher is given the task of making preparations for all.

"Time away from other instruction" was ranked second on the "users" obstacle list. This is also understandable when one looks at the high percentage (77%) of self-contained classrooms in which "users" teach. Being responsible for planning, conducting and evaluating multiple subjects, gives the teachers feelings that there just aren't enough hours in the day to accomplish all that is required.

Nonetheless, the "user" group still take field trips. Apparently this group has either found ways to compact their normal schedules and curricula or they have learned to incorporate the field experiences into collateral classroom objectives. The specific techniques would be worthy of future study.

The trips that the majority of "users" took numbered about 2 per year. They lasted from half a day to a full day. The locations were mostly to parks and farms. What was taught on these trips was not asked on this survey, however, this question would be an important one to ask when another study is done.

The park and farm settings would lend themselves well to environmental education activities. It would be interesting to know if any of the "users" group had training in these concepts or skills. If future studies showed that indeed a higher percentage of "users" had been trained in outdoor techniques, this might be an explanation for their willingness to take trips despite obstacles. Iowa has abundant workshops which provide opportunity for teachers that want this type of training.

Locally, the County Naturalist can provide support. Both the "user" group (97%) and the "non-user" group (100%) responded that they were aware of her services. However, the amount of face-to-face contact the "non-user" group has had with her could not be determined by this survey. The answer to such a question would be valuable to know in future support planning.

The "users" on the other hand, responded that many of them (73%) made use of the County Naturalist. Beyond this resource helper, a higher percentage (93%) made use of "others in the school". This group quite typically would be para-professionals, science coordinator, or fellow teachers who are perceived to have training in environmental education processes.

The other resource helpers come from within the community. The "users" indicated that over half (60%) use specialists in the community and about an equal number (59%) use parents. Finally, personnel from such agencies as the Soil Conservation Service have been used by about a third (33%) of the "user" group. These school, home, community links are valuable goals in and of themselves. Field trips offer them as serendipitous by-products.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

This study revealed several perceptions of teachers who do and do not use field trips. These two groups share some similar and dissimilar beliefs about the value of this form of learning experiences for students.

First of all, the older and younger teachers may feel a need for encouragement and support in order to take students on field trips. Principals can play an integral part in offering both. Beyond administrative guidance, fellow teachers who are experienced in planning, conducting and evaluating field trips should support those who need help. Resource helpers from within the school and community, such as the Naturalist, SCS personnel, parents and others, should be called upon to lend their expertise and support. A guidebook of resources giving names, places, and techniques for taking field trips should be made available to every elementary teacher.

Secondly, taking the classroom to an outdoor setting does not have to be a waste of valuable time needed for the more "basic" curriculum. Good planning by the teacher will insure that the field trip is an extension of subject matter already being studied in the classroom. Cooperative development of learning objectives between teachers and students prior to the trip will help give focus and meaning to trips. Shared responsibility is required by both teachers and students while on the trip to allow for the needs of the other to be met. Teachers need to allow for some exploration time by students, but students also should see the trip as fulfilling learning expectations as well as time for fun.

Thirdly, each grade level of each elementary school should have at least one teacher trained in environmental education processes. This person should not be expected to shoulder the entire burden of getting 2 or 3 classrooms out into the field, but instead this in-house outdoor

specialist could offer leadership and encouragement to insure successful and effective learning experiences.

Finally, a re-examination of school district policies should be made by administrators to insure clarity of communication. Teachers should not balk when asked to submit clear objectives for field trips by principals. In addition, principals need to encourage the effective use of field trips for the purpose of first-hand experiences of students with their world.

The care and maintenance of our spaceship earth requires the whole hearted participation of all of us -- principals, teachers, students, parents, and communities. We're all on this ride together, each one depending on the other. We must see the importance that field trips can have in helping us discover this important concept.

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**Appendix A**

Dear Fellow Teacher,

I have long been interested in environmental education. My Master's Degree Program has allowed me to do my graduate studies in this area. As a final project I have chosen to research the attitudes and practices of the (K-5) teachers in the Marshalltown School District towards the use of field trips to conduct outdoor studies.

I am conducting a survey that will provide me with the data needed to compare and contrast the attitudes and practices of teachers. The time required to complete this survey should be less than five minutes. The few minutes you take to complete this and the prompt return will ensure a better presentation of the characteristics, attitudes, and problems of teachers in our district.

It would be very helpful to me to have you sign the survey to account for respondents and non-respondents. I assure you of the confidentiality of your responses. However, if you choose not to sign it at least indicate the school you represent.

Without your help my job would be much more difficult, so I want to thank you now for responding. If you are interested in the results of this survey please mark the box and I will see that you receive a copy.

Thanks again,

Dennis Eige  
Franklin Elementary



**Appendix B**

**A Survey to Compare and Contrast  
the Attitudes and Practices of Elementary Teachers (K-5)  
in the Marshalltown Community School District  
Towards the Use of Extended Field Trips  
(those taken by bus) as Outdoor  
Learning Experiences for Students**

**Definition of Extended Field Trip as used here -- a field trip taken by bus for outdoor instructional experiences not including trips to museums.**

**DIRECTIONS - Circle the number of the response that best describes you.**

- A. Do you believe extended field trips (trips taken by bus for the purpose of providing outdoor instructional experiences for students) are valuable learning opportunities for elementary age (K-5) children?**
1. No
  2. Sometimes
  3. Yes
- B. Did you participate in any extended field trips when you were a child in grades K-5?**
1. No
  2. Yes
  3. Can't Remember
- C. Do you use extended outdoor field trips to provide your students instructional experiences?**
1. No (Continue to respond to rest of items on survey even though you don't use field trips)
  2. Yes
- D. On the average, how many extended field trips do you take your students on per year?**
1. 0
  2. 1
  3. 2
  4. 3 or more

- E. How long would a typical outdoor extended field trip run?**
1. 1 hour
  2. 1/2 day
  3. All day
  4. Don't take any
- F. Where have the majority of your extended field trips been taken?**
1. Parks
  2. Farms
  3. Tours (rolling field trips)
  4. Other (please specify)
  5. Don't take any
- G. Rank the reasons for taking extended outdoor field trips in order of what you consider most important (first) to least (last).**

I take extended outdoor field trips...

- |          |  |
|----------|--|
| 1. _____ | A. for a change of pace                    |
| 2. _____ | B. to give students real world experiences |
| 3. _____ | C. in conjunction with a unit of study     |
| 4. _____ | D. to integrate several subject areas      |
|          | E. I don't use them                        |

Directions - If you use field trips answer H-1 and then proceed to I.  
If you don't use field trips answer H-2 and then complete the survey.

H-1 Rank the obstacles which you encounter in taking extended outdoor field trips in order of most difficult to overcome (first) to least difficult (last).

- |          |                                     |
|----------|-------------------------------------|
| 1. _____ | A. Cost/transportation              |
| 2. _____ | B. Time away from other instruction |
| 3. _____ | C. Effort to prepare and conduct    |
| 4. _____ | D. Student behavior                 |
| 5. _____ | E. I don't encounter any obstacles. |

H-2 Rank the obstacles which keep you from taking extended outdoor field trips in order of most difficult to overcome (first) to least difficult (last).

- |          |                                     |
|----------|-------------------------------------|
| 1. _____ | A. Cost/transportation              |
| 2. _____ | B. Time away from other instruction |
| 3. _____ | C. Effort to prepare and conduct    |
| 4. _____ | D. Student behavior                 |
| 5. _____ | E. I don't encounter any obstacles. |

I. Are you aware that the Marshall County Conservation Board Naturalist is available to help you plan and lead field trips?

1. No
2. Yes

J. If you use resource people to plan and/or lead field trips, who are they? Check all that apply.

- \_\_\_ 1. County Conservation Board Naturalist
- \_\_\_ 2. Soil Conservation Service personnel
- \_\_\_ 3. Parents
- \_\_\_ 4. Others in the community
- \_\_\_ 5. Other school personnel
- \_\_\_ 6. Don't use any

**K. To what age group do you belong?**

1. 21-31
2. 32-42
3. 43-53
4. 54-65

**L. How many years of teaching experience have you?**

1. 1-10
2. 11-20
3. 21-30
4. 31-40

**M. In which grade level group do you teach?**

1. Kindergarten
2. Primary (1, 2, or 3)
3. Intermediate (4 or 5)

**N. In your current teaching assignment for what subjects are you responsible?**

1. Self contained - all subjects
2. Departmentalized - Science and other subjects except Social Studies
3. Departmentalized - Social Studies and other subjects except Science
4. Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

**CHECK HERE IF YOU WANT RESULTS**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

**Additional Comments:**

Appendix C

MARSHALLTOWN COMMUNITY SCHOOL DISTRICT  
317 COLUMBUS DRIVE  
MARSHALLTOWN, IOWA 50158

FIELD AND ACTIVITY BUS TRIPS

\_\_\_\_\_ (date)

SCHOOL \_\_\_\_\_ DATE OF TRIP \_\_\_\_\_  
(Please designate location for pickup)

DESTINATION \_\_\_\_\_

LEAVE SCHOOL AT \_\_\_\_\_ a.m. p.m. LEAVE ACTIVITY SITE AT \_\_\_\_\_ a.m. p.m.

TRIP INITIATED AND APPROVED BY \_\_\_\_\_ APPROVED BY \_\_\_\_\_  
(Principal) (Assistant Superintendent)

PLEASE CIRCLE APPROPRIATE GROUP: Class Band Other \_\_\_\_\_

NUMBER OF PASSENGERS \_\_\_\_\_ TEACHER'S NAME \_\_\_\_\_

JUSTIFICATION FOR TRIP \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

(Transportation Department will complete this section)

DRIVER \_\_\_\_\_ BUS NUMBER \_\_\_\_\_

Hourly Rate: \_\_\_\_\_ Hours on Trip \_\_\_\_\_ Driver Cost \_\_\_\_\_

Odometer reading RETURN \_\_\_\_\_ GALLONS OF FUEL USED (LP) \_\_\_\_\_ @ \_\_\_\_\_ /gal.

(REG) \_\_\_\_\_ @ \_\_\_\_\_ /gal.

Odometer reading LEAVE \_\_\_\_\_ (DIESEL) \_\_\_\_\_ @ \_\_\_\_\_ /gal.

Miles Traveled \_\_\_\_\_ Cost of Fuel \_\_\_\_\_

Total Cost of Trip \_\_\_\_\_

REMARKS \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Please observe the following procedures:

- (1) Principal must initiate request and submit to Assistant Superintendent.
- (2) Requests should be filed in the Director of Transportation's office at least four (4) days in advance of trip.
- (3) Director of Transportation will notify school if trip cannot be scheduled.
- (4) Please observe time schedule indicated for trip.

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Director of Transportation)

Appendix D

MARSHALLTOWN COMMUNITY SCHOOL DISTRICT  
Marshalltown, Iowa

TO: Elementary Principals  
FROM: Richard Doyle  
RE: Guidelines for Out-of-County Trips  
DATE: October 29, 1981

Out-of-county field trips at the elementary level would be subject to the approval of the Assistant Superintendent/Elementary Education within the following guidelines.

- 1) No out-of-county trips for children in grades kindergarten through grade two.
- 2) Children in grades three through six would be allowed one out-of-county trip every other year. (Example - would be one trip in Unit B and one trip in Unit C.)
- 3) Cost of out-of-county trips will not be paid by the district but can be supported by PTA or childrens' fund raising activities.
- 4) Buses used for overnight campouts do not come under the jurisdiction of field trip guidelines but do need the approval of the Assistant Superintendent/Elementary Education.

NOTE: The education committee of the Board of Education has approved the above guidelines to take effect as of 10-28-81.

cc: R.A. McFarland  
Reese Gibbs  
Don Stull

Appendix E

Educational Program

Series 600

Policy Title Field Trips Code No. 603.3

Field trips shall include all organized travel, journeys, and/or excursions by pupils under the direction of school employees away from the regular school attendance site.

The Board of Directors recognizes that a properly planned, well conducted and carefully supervised field trip is a vital part of the curriculum of any school. As such, student trips of significant educational value are to be encouraged. Local community resources should be considered the most important in planning field trips.

Except as provided in the next paragraph, field trips within Marshall County including within the city limits of Marshalltown are subject to the approval of the building principal in advance of the trip, and subject coordinators shall be notified. The Director of Transportation may deny school transportation for such trips if school owned vehicles and/or operators are not available. Private transportation for such trips may be possible under special circumstances with the approval of the building principal.

Trips ordinarily included as a regular part of a school activity, such as athletics, music, drama, debate, speech, and journalism shall be deemed approved when the schedule for the activity is arranged and approved.

Trips within the state involving overnight accommodation for pupils other than their regular residence must receive special attention by the building principal and may require special approval of the Superintendent of Schools or his appointed representative. The Superintendent shall be notified of all trips involving overnight accommodations.

Field trips outside of Marshall County shall have the approval of the Superintendent or his designee. Field trips outside the State of Iowa may

also require approval of the Board of Directors. Approval shall include the itinerary, transportation arrangements, supervisory arrangements and a statement of educational purpose. Applications for such approval shall be in written form including a description of the items above and shall be submitted first to the building principal.

Application for trips outside the United States and Canada must include an estimate of additional liability insurance cost for the school district. This estimate shall be obtained from the district's insurance carrier by the building principal.

Credit towards high school graduation may be approved for some extended trips at the discretion of the building principal with the approval of the Superintendent of Schools. Application for credit shall follow the guidelines of the independent study contract at the Marshalltown Senior High School.

Extended school trips during the regular school term are discouraged except for holiday and vacation time.

School employee sponsors of trips outside the United States and Canada shall use only public transportation or transportation obtained through the approved travel agency. In any case where transportation facilities offer liability insurance coverage which include an option as between primary coverage and coverage which is excess to the coverage carried by the district, no school employee shall have authority to select the latter option.

Consent of the pupil's or guardian is required in advance for field trips whenever the building principal feels it is necessary.

The Board fully recognizes the educational value of student travel to foreign countries and encourages trips that make every attempt to develop complete educational experiences. The Board is concerned about too many trips and would prefer a few well planned trips. Whereas financial support appears