

THE STABILITY OF EIGHTH-GRADE STUDENTS' EDUCATIONAL AND OCCUPATIONAL PLANS AND GOALS

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SUMMARY

The Florida State-Wide Eighth Grade Testing Program (8GTP) includes a section entitled "Your Plans and Goals." This section consists of four brief scales which provide the examinee with the opportunity to report on his educational and occupational aspirations and expectations. Stability of test results is reported.

PROBLEM

Because the Plans and Goals section consists of only four single-item scales, evidence concerning the stability of these scales is needed. The objective of this study was to assess the stability of student responses to the four items over an eight month period of time.

A study over an eight month period was undertaken because it could assess jointly the adequacy of the instrument for measuring the occupational and educational plans and goals of eighth graders, and, the long term stability of their responses. Parents, teachers, and counselors should know how stable the reported occupational and educational plans and goals of eighth graders are expected to be, when advising students concerning their high school course of study.

METHOD

The item which indicates the student's educational aspiration level, and the item which indicates the student's educational expectation level ask him to choose a level of formal education from a list of five levels. These levels, shown in Table 1, range from high school dropout through graduate or professional school training.

The item which indicates the student's occupational aspiration level and the item which measures the student's occupational expectation level provide the examinee with five lists of job titles. These lists are shown in Table 2. The examinee's task is to choose the list containing jobs most similar to the kind of work he would most like to do when his education is completed (Occupational Aspiration), and to choose the list of jobs most similar to the kind of work he expects to be doing when he finishes his schooling (Occupational Expectation). Each of the five lists contains six jobs requiring a similar level of educational development.

TABLE 1
Educational Levels Used
in the Scales

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- 5 graduate from a four-year college and take further advanced training
 - 4 graduate from a four-year college
 - 3 graduate from a two-year college or technical school
 - 2 graduate from high school
 - 1 attend school beyond the eighth grade, but not graduate from high school
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TABLE 2
Job Titles Used
in the Scales

(Group 1)	(Group 2)	(Group 3)
registered nurse	fruit picker	medical secretary
television cameraman	deliveryman	welder
food inspector	window cleaner	chief telephone operator
airplane navigator	furniture mover	detective
hospital insurance agent	clock assembler	linen-room supervisor
probation officer	sandwich maker	radio repairman
(Group 4)		(Group 5)
college professor		driver of a large truck
vice-president of a large company		apartment house manager
biologist		automobile body repairman
astronomer		mimeograph machine operator
newspaper editor		ambulance attendant
chemist		cashier in a restaurant

The educational requirements for the five lists of jobs generally correspond to the levels of education used to determine educational aspiration and expectation. The job lists were derived from Appendix C (Training Time - General Educational Development) of Supplement two to the Dictionary of Occupational Titles. Those jobs believed to be most representative of occupations in the State of Florida were chosen for each category. Also, an attempt was made to choose occupations which would appeal to both boys and girls. When this was impossible, an attempt was made to choose an equal number of traditionally male and traditionally female occupations.

The subjects for this study were 432 ninth graders currently enrolled in high schools in Broward, Pinellas, Santa Rosa, and Escambia counties who had scores on the Plans and Goals section of the 8GTP April, 1973, administration. These subjects attended approximately 15 intermediate schools; in almost all cases these schools are located in the same counties as the high schools that the subjects currently attend.

The distribution of scores on Your Plans and Goals for the 432 ninth grade subjects of the study closely resembled the 1973 state-wide distribution for this section.

The Plans and Goals part of the 8GTP was duplicated and forwarded to Broward, Pinellas, Santa Rosa, and Escambia counties, where the Director of Testing arranged testing sessions within a local high school. Instructions to the student followed the Examiner's Manual of the 8GTP, although the examinee was instructed to circle his answers instead of blackening the appropriate box on a separate answer sheet.

After eliminating the small number of ninth grade students who had not participated in the 8GTP as eighth graders, or who had incomplete data, responses for the remaining 432 cases were recorded. Bivariate frequency distributions were constructed for each scale, and a frequency count was made of the number of students at each response level on the eighth grade administration who did not change their response, or who changed their response on the eight month follow-up by one, or more than one level. In addition, separate analyses were performed for males and females.