Guarding the Sacred Fires: Elizabeth E. Farrell's Contributions to the Creation of Special Education in New York City

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ELIZABETH E. FARRELL'S CONTRIBUTIONS

TO THE CREATION OF SPECIAL EDUCATION

IN NEW YORK CITY

by

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CHAPTER ONE

A PLACE IN HISTORY

Background to the Question

> History balances the frustration of "how far we have to go" with the satisfaction of "how far we have come." It teaches tolerance for the human shortcomings and imperfections, which are not uniquely of our generation, but of all time.
>
> Lewis F. Powell, Jr.[1]

Looking back over the history of education, and more specifically, the history of special education, it is easy to feel self-satisfied with the improvements in the treatment and education of the disabled made over the last thirty years. During that time, Public Law 94-142, the Education of All Handicapped Children Act, along with its reauthorization, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, were passed. Those laws, combined with the power of Public Law 101-336, the Americans with Disabilities Act, served to focus the country and its citizens on the rights and needs of the disabled. Indeed, legislation and litigation over the past thirty years have done much to ensure that disabled people are treated with dignity and respect.

However, an examination of these improvements reveals that the groundwork for them was laid years before, often by educators whose names remain anonymous. In fact, this progress that we in the early twenty-first century are so eager to take credit for, grew

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[1] Laurence J. Peter, *Peter's Quotations: Ideas for Our Time* (New York: Quill, 1977), 247.

out of social and scientific factors that influenced education in America more than a century ago.

New York City's public school system was a forerunner in the education of the disabled, and at its helm was Elizabeth E. Farrell, a first-generation Welsh-Irish American and schoolteacher. Even today, when so much of school reform originates at the administrative or university level and trickles down to the classroom, New York City is distinct in that its special education program began instead with one classroom in one school taught by Elizabeth E. Farrell.

Shaped by her experiences teaching in a one-room schoolhouse in rural New York State, as well as her devotion to the underclass, Farrell created an ungraded class based on a program of individualized instruction. By no means a unique concept, its originality lay in applying the idea to the education of underachieving children in the public schools. Farrell was optimistic enough to believe that:

> the largest and most complex school system in the country—perhaps the world—with its hundreds of thousands of children, its rigid curriculum, its mass methods, could be modified to meet the needs of the atypical—often the least lovely and most troublesome of its pupils.[2]

That one ungraded classroom she created led to many others, building a network of teachers taking up the same cause, and to the establishment of a Department of Ungraded Classes in 1906 with Farrell as its director. As head of this department, Farrell

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[2] Lillian D. Wald, *Windows on Henry Street* (Boston: Little Brown and Co., 1941), 134-35.

used her influence to change the paradigm of the city school system and its methods, establishing policy and working to professionalize the role of the ungraded teacher.

This investigation explores Elizabeth E. Farrell's contribution to special education in the City of New York. Additionally, this research examines some of the social and scientific factors that influenced Farrell as she sought to develop and implement a plan of education for atypical children in New York City. An extensive review of the *Annual Reports of the City Superintendent of Schools to the New York City Board of Education* will provide a historical perspective of these issues.

Statement of the Question

This research focuses on the question: "What were the contributions of Elizabeth E. Farrell on the creation and development of special education in the New York City public school system?"

Purpose of the Study

The department Farrell founded became a model for those that followed, causing a ripple effect in the practice of teaching and the organization of school systems across the United States. Further, Farrell's involvement in professional organizations such as the Council for Exceptional Children and the New York State Psychological Association established the basis for a special education professional network, still in existence—and thriving—today.

Although a few short biographical pieces on Farrell are available, and she is referenced in numerous journal articles in the area of special education history, there has been no detailed account of Farrell's life and accomplishments. Relying on archival materials from the Council for Exceptional Children and Teachers College, as well as information provided by family members, universities, and colleagues, this investigation details Farrell's personal history and work in the area of special needs. It is hoped that this work contributes to that knowledge base.

Research Questions

I. What was Elizabeth E. Farrell's role in the evolution of special education in the New York City public school system?

   A. What were the factors that led to its creation?

   B. What were the social and scientific factors that influenced the growth and development of special education in New York City?

   C. What challenges had to be addressed as the program of special education developed?

Significance

Although for centuries, the disabled were shunned, abandoned, and mistreated, in the late 18th and early 19th centuries progress began to be made. The first recorded attempt to teach a severely retarded child focused on a boy who had been seen running

naked through the woods in France. Called the "Wild Boy of Aveyron," in 1798 he was caught, brought to Paris, and placed under the care of Dr. Jean Itard, the chief medical officer for the National Institute for the Deaf and Dumb. Dr. Itard, believing the boy's condition was curable, worked with him on reading and speaking. After five years, the boy, whom Dr. Itard named Victor, was only able to read and understand a few words, and Dr. Itard reluctantly ceased his work with him.[3]

Other scientists of the time were also becoming interested in the treatment of the disabled. One of them, Dr. Edouard Seguin, was associated with Dr. Itard and later immigrated to the United States. Working with Dr. Samuel Howe, another pioneer in the education of the disabled, Drs. Seguin and Howe sought to initiate institutional care for the disabled, and together, organized institutional facilities in Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Connecticut, and New York.[4]

However, attitudes in the United States regarding the treatment of the disabled were changing. In the midst of the era of Reconstruction following the Civil War, studies published by Richard Dugdale (1877) and Reverend Oscar McCulloch (1888) associated disabled people with crime and poverty,[5] and the role of institutions shifted from "sheltering the deviant from society" to the "protection of society from the deviant."[6]

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[3] Curtis H. Krishef, *An Introduction to Mental Retardation* (Springfield: Charles C. Thomas, 1983), 21.

[4] Ibid., 24.

[5] Ibid., 25-26.

[6] Philip L. Safford and Elizabeth J. Safford, "Visions of the Special Class," *Remedial and Special Education* 19 n.4 (July/August 1998): 230.

Indeed, one of America's most esteemed scientists, Dr. Henry Herbert Goddard, a leader at the Vineland Training School for Feebleminded Boys and Girls in New Jersey, furthered this notion by concluding that retardation was genetically transmitted and perpetuated in families because of "bad blood." Scientists and governments alike called for "eugenics," a term coined by Sir Francis Galton in 1883 referring to a science that dealt with factors to improve the quality of the human race. Since retardation was thought to produce retardation, the fear was that evil, crime, and disease would spread if the disabled were allowed to procreate. In 1911 a group known as the Research Committee of the Eugenics Section of the American Breeder's Association recommended lifelong segregation and sterilization so that the disabled could not reproduce and pass on undesirable traits. Within fifty years, nearly 30,000 disabled citizens in the United States were sterilized.[7]

Throughout this period, the United States was undergoing significant change. With previous calls for "manifest destiny" fulfilled, America began to move toward its urban and industrial future, and in the period following the Civil War, cities grew rapidly. Developments in banking, railroads, and manufacturing allowed new industrialists like Morgan, Vanderbilt, Rockefeller, Carnegie, and others to amass untold amounts of wealth while the working class fell deeper into poverty. By 1860, it was estimated that the wealthiest ten percent in America owned 70% of its wealth.[8]

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[7] Krishef, 26-28.

[8] William O. Kellogg, *American History The Easy Way,* 2nd ed. (Hauppauge: Barron's Educational Series, Inc., 1995), 121.

As manufacturing increased, the division of labor between the rich and poor widened in many urban areas. Business leaders of the time were more concerned about profits than the needs of their workers, often immigrants.

Political chaos on the European continent, combined with the potato famine in Ireland, drove huge waves of desperate people to America.[9] Initially, these immigrants were mostly from western and northern European countries, with significant numbers of English, Irish, Germans, and Norwegians. Later, people from Eastern European countries—Hungary, Poland, and Czechoslovakia—as well as from Italy and Greece joined these, making urban areas such as New York City great melting pots. In fact, by the time the first decade of the twentieth century had passed, nearly one-seventh of New York City's population was foreign-born.[10]

While some of these immigrants simply passed through New York to settle elsewhere, many were forced to remain. Lacking in both language and disposable income, a great number found themselves setting up new lives in the shantytowns and slums that mushroomed in various parts of the city. These immigrants, who had sought hope and fortune in America, merely shifted their living quarters from the ghettos in their home country to similar areas of poverty in urban New York City.

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[9] Michael and Ariane Batterberry, *On the Town in New York: A History of Eating, Drinking, and Entertainments from 1776 to the Present* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1973), 55-56.

[10] Stephen Longstreet, *City on Two Rivers: Profiles on New York—Yesterday and Today* (New York: Hawthorn Books, Inc., 1975), 135.

The most notorious slum area in the city was that of Manhattan's Lower East Side. Millions of people made that corner of New York their first—and sometimes last—stop. This land, located between the Hudson and East Rivers, became one of the most densely populated regions in the United States.[11] Progressive reformer and founder of the Visiting Nurses Service, Lillian Wald described the conditions there:

> They were packed into dank, airless tenement rooms like ramshackle pieces of furniture in a warehouse. These firetraps they called homes had broken-down stairs, evil-smelling outdoor toilets, rarely a bathtub, and often no running water. The streets...were crammed with shops, pushcarts, and peddlers hawking ...bargains...The hectic commerce was interlaced with piles of rotting garbage, horsedrawn wagons, and fire escapes strewn with household possessions.[12]

For those in New York lucky enough to live elsewhere, the Lower East Side represented an alarming, dark side of the city that they chose not to acknowledge. It was a foreign city within their city, and were it not for opportunities to exploit it, politically and economically, most New Yorkers seemed indifferent to it.[13]

The same could not be said for Lillian Wald, however. Working with Mary Brewster, a like-minded classmate from New York Hospital's School of Nursing, Wald founded one of the first settlement houses in American history, the Henry Street Settlement. Built on the belief that living and working in the community was the most

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[11] Beatrice Siegel, *Lillian Wald of Henry Street* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc.,1983), 25.

[12] Ibid.

[13] Lillian D. Wald, *The House on Henry Street* (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1915), 2.

effective way to improve social conditions, Wald and her colleagues at the Henry Street Settlement dealt with the Lower East Side immigrant population daily.[14]

One of Wald's main concerns was the education of the children there, and in 1899 she began to hear of a teacher's work at one of the area's schools, Public School Number 1, the Henry Street School. This teacher, as it was reported to Wald by a settlement resident, had "ideas."[15] Intrigued, Wald sought an acquaintance with the teacher, Elizabeth E. Farrell, and those "ideas," combined with the support of Wald and the Henry Street Settlement, developed into the first coordinated attempt to educate atypical children.

This ungraded class system that Farrell created became the model for similar educational programs throughout the United States and later, the basis for our current system of special education. While most with a background in special education are familiar with the contributions of men like Goddard, Seguin, Itard, and Howe, with the exception of Montessori, few women's names are well known. It is most certainly not for a lack of involvement of women in the field of education.

Perhaps Farrell's name was overlooked because of her gender. She may also have been overlooked because William H. Maxwell, the superintendent of New York City Schools during the program's development and editor of the *Educational Review,* was much more widely known.

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[14] Siegel, 25.

[15] Wald, *The House on Henry Street*, 117.

Regardless, due to the enormity of her impact on special education development and programming, Elizabeth E. Farrell cannot be overlooked. An examination of Farrell's accomplishments provides insight into the growth and development of special education and its practices in the United States.

Methodology

The methodology used to conduct this study is that of historical research. The purposes of history are varied, but perhaps its greatest function is its ability to create an appreciation of the past, providing those writing or reading it with a sense of identity, a sense of where they came from.[16] This appreciation for the past is at its most effective when it is set in context through the use of narration.

History, as a field of study, has over time developed a set of methods by which evidence of past events is collected and evaluated and a meaningful discussion of the subject is presented.[17] A major part of historical method relates to efforts to find corroborative evidence and weigh its quality, or to resolve problems arising from contradictory evidence, with objectivity the goal at which the scholar aims.[18] Historians try to give a well-rounded account that includes all the significant and relevant

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[16] Peter Burke (ed.), *New Perspectives on Historical Writing* (University Park, Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1991), 36.

[17] R. J. Shafer. *A Guide to Historical Method,* revised ed. (Homewood, Illinois: The Dorsey Press, 1974), 3.

[18] Ibid., 158.

information, although frequently they are forced to select both the facts that will be included and the causes that will be assigned to events.

Seeking to create a record of the past and explain what occurred, historians rely on the careful research and analysis of information. While some researchers contend that the historical method "ascertains the truth by means of common sense,"[19] there is, in fact, a systematic process in place to obtain this "truth": "(1) the collection of the surviving objects and of the printed, written, and oral materials that may be relevant, (2) the exclusion of those materials (or parts thereof) that are unauthentic, (3) the extraction from the authentic material of testimony that is credible, and (4) the organization of that reliable testimony into a meaningful narrative or exposition."[20]

The emphasis of historical study is on the meticulous research into source materials, and it is the process of critically examining and analyzing the records of the past that guards both external and internal validity. External validity establishes the authenticity of the documents, including letters, manuscripts, and meeting reports. Internal validity establishes the reliability of the information contained within that document.

This research will rely extensively on both primary and secondary documents. Farrell's voice is found in a variety of primary documents, most notably the *Annual*

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[19] Jacques Barzun and Henry F. Graff, *The Modern Researcher*, 5th ed. (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1992), 159.

[20] Louis Gottschalk, *Understanding History: A Primer of Historical Method* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1964), 28.

Reports of the City Superintendent of Schools to the New York City Board of Education from 1906 to 1932. During Farrell's tenure as Inspector of Ungraded Classes in the New York City School District, she had the responsibility of submitting yearly reports regarding the status of her department. Through these reports, it is possible to follow the growth and development of her work in the area of New York City special education.

Other primary documents include personal correspondence as well as excerpts from the journal *Ungraded*, published by the Ungraded Classroom Teachers Association in New York. Although published for only 11 years, Farrell served as editor and member of its advisory board, contributing articles about her department's work with atypical children. Farrell also published her work in other professional journals of that time and gave speeches to secure the future of the special class.

Secondary sources include biographical and autobiographical works on Lillian D. Wald and the Henry Street Settlement, documenting Farrell's involvement in the progressive reform movement; records from New York University, Teachers College at Columbia University, and the State University of New York at Oswego, documenting her own school experiences and her tenure in teacher training; publications from the Council for Exceptional Children, telling of its history and that of Farrell's involvement; unpublished manuscripts detailing the founding of the Association for Consulting Psychologists; city census records and historical texts relating to the history of her family in rural New York State; newspaper accounts of family history and the evolution of her work in New York City; as well as information related to the history of special education.

Definition of Terms

"Atypical" or "atypical children" refers to children who have educational needs that differ or are beyond what is usual for a child in school.[21]

"Defective," "mental defective," or "mentally deficient" refers to children who, for a variety of reasons, are unable to succeed in the traditional classes in the public school. The term defective is used "in lieu of 'ungraded' in some localities because of its vagueness."[22] Further, it is a general term used to describe students with "varying degree of mental defect."[23]

"Feebleminded" or "Feeblemindedness" comprises "all degrees of mental defectives due to arrested or imperfect mental development as a result of which the person affected is incapable of competing on equal terms with his normal fellows, or of managing himself or his affairs with ordinary prudence."[24]

"Laggard" refers to "the slow child, the child whose development is sluggish, one who, with other things equal, is overage for his grade."[25]

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[21] Frequently, terms used in literature of the time were not defined; it appears their meanings were "understood." Often these terms are used interchangeably. Whenever possible, documents were cited. However, in some instances, when no definition could be located, this author created a working definition as best as could be determined by the available literature.

[22] "Teachers Council Report of Committee on Special Schools and Classes. Re: Place of Ungraded Child in the Public School System," 5 November 1920. Farrell Papers, Special Collections, Milbank Memorial Library, Teachers College, New York.

[23] Andrew W. Edson, "Subject: Report of Teachers' Council on Ungraded Classes," 1 April 1921. Farrell Papers, Special Collections, Milbank Memorial Library, Teachers College, New York.

[24] "Teachers Council Report of Committee on Special Schools and Classes. Re: Place of Ungraded Child in the Public School System," 5 November 1920.

[25] Elizabeth E. Farrell, "The Backward Child," *Ungraded* 1 n.1 (May 1915): 4.

"Retarded" refers to the number of years a child is behind in his or her education. For example, a twelve-year old student in the fourth grade would be two years retarded. It can also describe a student who is not progressing through the grades.

"Ungraded" is used to describe "one who presents a problem of special education which cannot be more adequately met elsewhere."[26]

"Ungraded class" or "ungraded classes" refers to "a class of several grades composed of children of low mentality."[27] It describes the organizational structure of special education classes in the New York City public school system. These classes contrast the traditional, age-related graded system employed in school systems.

"Special class" or "special classes" refer also to this nontraditional system of organization.

Dissertation Narrative

The study is divided into four additional chapters. Chapter two includes a brief biography of Elizabeth E. Farrell's personal life, focusing on her family background, her early life, education, and professional work prior to her arrival in New York City. Census records from central New York State, family interviews, documents from the State University of New York at Oswego, and newspaper accounts provided the bulk of the sources relied upon to document Farrell's life and her early professional work. This

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[26] Edson, "Subject: Report of Teachers' Council on Ungraded Classes," 1 April 1921.

[27] Ibid.

second chapter also focuses on the growth and development of the ungraded classes, examining the first ungraded class taught by Farrell, Lillian Wald's influence on the ungraded class program, and the rationale for the creation of such a class design. Documents written by and about Lillian Wald, *Annual Reports to the Board of Education* authored by Farrell and Superintendent William H. Maxwell, and articles written by Farrell and published in various professional journals of the time provided key information.

Chapter three discusses the challenges Elizabeth E. Farrell dealt with as the system of ungraded classes evolved, including the influences of eugenics and intelligence testing. It further details several issues Farrell had to resolve early in the program's development. *Annual Reports to the Board of Education* and journal articles authored by Farrell and others helped accurately describe that period in the program's development as well as the social and scientific factors of the time.

Chapter four gives special attention to Farrell's work in the area of teacher training and professional development and the formation of the Council for Exceptional Children, as well as details the end of her career and her life. Archival information from the Council for Exceptional Children, *Annual Reports to the Board of Education*, various university documents, and newspaper accounts provided key data for this chapter. The last chapter, a conclusion, synthesizes Farrell's educational contributions in the area of special education as well as makes several recommendations for further study.

CHAPTER TWO

FROM UTICA TO NEW YORK CITY

The Farrell-Smith Family

Over two-and-a-half million immigrants arrived in America between 1840 and 1850, and Elizabeth Farrell's parents were among them.[1] Unlike many immigrants of the time, however, Elizabeth's parents had a head start on their future. Skilled in the textile industry, the Farrell family was able to overcome many of the difficulties they faced as strangers in a foreign land and achieve financial security and economic success. Despite these achievements, they could not have foreseen the impact their daughter would later have on the education of millions of children throughout the United States.

Michael Farrell, Elizabeth's father, arrived in America from Kilkenny, Ireland, in 1848 when he was only thirteen years old.[2] The Farrell family settled in Catskill, New York, at the foot of the Catskill Mountains, a village made famous in 1800 by Washington Irving as the scene of Rip Van Winkle's legendary nap.

Although what led the Farrell family to settle in Catskill is largely unknown, travel to that region was fairly easy, made so by the establishment of a regular steamboat route in 1838 that traveled the one hundred fifteen miles up the Hudson River from New York City. Further, the water power of the Hudson River combined with the completion

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[1] Niles N. Carpenter, "Immigrants and Their Children," *U.S. Bureau of the Census*, Monograph No.7 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1927), 324-325 in Virginia Yans-McLaughlin and Marjorie Lightman, *Ellis Island and the Peopling of America: The Official Guide* (New York: The New Press, 1997), Document 19.

[2] "Michael Farrel(l)," *Utica (New York) Daily Press*, 5 December 1910, p. 9; Utica, New York. *Utica, Oneida County 4th Ward Census.* 1900.

of the Susquehanna Turnpike in 1800 led to the development of a variety of industries in the area: tanneries, gristmills, sawmills, papermills, and woolen mills.[3] It is easy to speculate then that it was the possibility of employment in one of these industries that led the Farrell family out of the City of New York.

Elizabeth Farrell's mother, Mary Smith, also immigrated to the United States as a child. Born in Wales in 1838, she was the second oldest of six children, with her two youngest siblings born after the family arrived in the U.S. The Smith family settled in Marcellus, New York, a small village in central New York State that served as home to several different woolen mills. Mary's father, David Smith, took a job as a spinner in the Marcellus Woolen Mill, and later Mary was trained as a weaver.[4]

It was probably the mill industry that brought Michael Farrell and Mary Smith together. Census records indicate that by 1863 they had married and were living in Marcellus, and Michael Farrell was working in one of the local mills as a wool carder. That same year their first child, Elizabeth E. Farrell's eldest brother, George, was born.[5]

The Farrell family moved throughout central New York State as Michael Farrell took positions of increasing responsibility and pay at area mills. By 1867 they had moved to Seneca Falls, New York, and that year their second son, David, was born.[6]

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[3] Arthur G. Adams, *The Catskills: An Illustrated Historical Guide with Gazetteer* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1990), 15.

[4] Marcellus, New York. *Town of Marcellus Census.* 1860.

[5] Marcellus, New York. *Town of Marcellus Census.* 1865.

[6] "David M. Farrell Dies at Age of 78," *Booneville (New York) Herald,* 14 June 1945.

Offered another opportunity to move up in the ranks of the mill industry, Michael Farrell again moved his growing family, this time to Utica, New York. Located on the Mohawk River, Utica's growth as both an industrial and commercial center is attributed to the completion of the Erie Canal in 1825. Thanks to the canal, by 1850 the first large textile steam mill in operation in the United States was in Utica, and good paying mill jobs were available.[7]

During those early years in Utica, Michael and Mary Smith Farrell had four more children. Elizabeth, the subject of this study, was born in 1870, and her younger sisters, Mary, Ida, and Agnes Irene were born in 1872, 1875, and 1877, respectively. The family moved several times while living in Utica as their numbers grew and as Michael got better paying mill jobs. The years were prosperous ones for the Farrell family as Michael moved away from manual labor mill jobs into white-collar management positions.[8]

While growing up in Utica, Elizabeth was enrolled first at the Hamilton Street School, a primary school, and later at Utica Catholic Academy. An all-girl school founded in 1834, Utica Catholic Academy, located next to St. John's Roman Catholic Church where the Farrell family worshiped, was run by the Sisters of Charity, a religious order dedicated to nursing the sick, helping the needy, and educating children. Originally

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[7] John H. Thomson, ed., *Geography of New York State* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1966), 484.

[8] Utica, New York. *Utica City Directory,* 1870. Utica, New York. *Utica City Directory,* 1872; Utica, New York. *Census for Utica, Oneida County, 9th Ward,* 1870; Utica, New York. *Census for Utica, Oneida County,* 1880.

known as St. John's Select and Free School, the Academy became tuition free in 1876.[9]

In 1885, when Elizabeth was fifteen, tragedy struck when Elizabeth's mother, Mary Smith Farrell, died at the age of 46.[10] The next year Michael Farrell gathered his children and moved them west of Utica to Oneida, New York. There, Michael and his oldest son George, a recent graduate of Cornell, established their own knit mill, M. Farrell and Son.[11] Years later after George moved on to other enterprises and their operation was dissolved, Michael moved his daughters back to Utica and became president of Central Mills Manufacturing, another knit mill.[12]

Influential Education

With increasing wealth and newfound affluence, Michael Farrell could afford to send Elizabeth to college. After her graduation from Utica Catholic Academy, Elizabeth enrolled at the Oswego Normal and Training School (now the State University of New York at Oswego) to study teaching. Created in 1861 by Edward Austin Sheldon, the superintendent of city schools in Oswego, its curriculum was based on Pestalozzi's "object" method. Sheldon had become "dissatisfied with the results" of the teacher training schools and sought a practical way to change the traditional book or lecture

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[9] Audrey Lewis, "Catholic Education Since 1834: 140 Years of UCA Tribute to Service," *Utica (New York) Observer-Dispatch*, 28 April 1974, p. 1C.

[10] "Mary Smith Farrell," *Utica (New York) Observer*, 23 January 1885, p. 1.

[11] "George Farrell," *Utica (New York) Observer Dispatch*, 29 July 1943, p. 4A.

[12] Oneida, New York. *Oneida City Directory*, 1887-1888.

method to one where real objects are studied and the connections between school and life are explored. Sheldon's program became known as the "Oswego Movement," and Elizabeth graduated from the English degree program in 1895.[13]

The Pestalozzian teaching philosophy at Oswego Normal and Training School would later prove to be the first of many important influences in her professional life. Years later Farrell discussed how she reflected on such ideas when creating the curriculum of the ungraded class:

> to Pestalozzi we go to learn that our aim is not that the child should know what he does not know but that he should behave as he does not behave, and the road to right action is right feeling. And again he says: 'I have proved that it is not regular work that stops the development of so many poor children but the turmoil and irregularity of their lives, the privations they endure, the excesses they indulge in when opportunity offers; the wild rebellious passions so seldom restrained; and the hopelessness to which they are so often prey.'[14]

With the Farrell family back in Utica, Elizabeth decided to join them, taking a position as one of four teachers at the Blandina Street Training School. Blandina's purpose was to train teachers for the State of New York, and its course of instruction was a combination of theory, with classes in educational psychology, school management,

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[13] State University College of Education (Oswego, New York), *History of the First Half-Century of Oswego State Normal and Training School, Oswego, New York, 1861-1911* (Oswego: State University College of Education, 1911), 21-22.

[14] Elizabeth E. Farrell, "The Problems of the Special Class," *National Education Association Journal of Proceedings and Addresses of the 46th Annual Meeting* (1908): 1131-1136, in Seymour B. Sarason and John Doris, *Educational Handicap, Public Policy and Social History* (New York: The Free Press, 1979), 304-305.

and education history, and practice, requiring its teacher candidates to substitute teach and have their teaching observed.[15]

After two years working in teacher training, Elizabeth accepted a position as a teacher in a small community near Utica known as Oneida Castle with a population of only 291 at the time of the 1900 census.[16] Elizabeth taught in a one-room schoolhouse, leaving after only one year to accept a teaching position in New York City.

What compelled Elizabeth to leave the protective enclave her family created in central New York State and move to New York City is unclear. The conditions in the Lower East Side of Manhattan where she accepted her teaching position were certainly a radical departure from the environment in which she grew up. To speculate on Elizabeth's reasons it is necessary to examine the motivations of others involved in the progressive reform movement. One theory, known as the Hofstadter or status thesis, suggests that Elizabeth's generation was the first sizable generation of American college graduates to come to maturity without clearly defined roles:

> This was especially true for many young women who, if they wished to embark on a career, had few other useful activities open to them...As a result, America had a sizable group of educated women searching for self-satisfaction and a way to play a more important role in society than custom permitted...The complexity and challenge of the large city, however, offered them opportunities to create meaningful careers for themselves and at the same time rescue society from the social ills resulting from rapid industrialization and urban change.[17]

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[15] Utica, New York. *Annual Report of the Superintendent of Schools of the City of Utica,* 1895-1897.

[16] Thomson, ed., 512-524.

[17] Walter I. Trattner, *From Poor Law to Welfare State: A History of Social Welfare in America,* 6th ed. (New York: The Free Press, 1999), 171-172.

A similar explanation is offered by Arthur S. Link and Richard L. McCormick in their book, *Progressivism*. Link and McCormick submit that:

> Early 20th century social reform flowed from three wellsprings of thought and motivation. One was the urge felt by certain middle and upper-class men and women to help make urban life more just, tolerable, and decent. The second motivation was the drive of trained professionals to apply their knowledge and skills to social problems. The third motivation was the desire of many native-born Americans to use social institutions and the law to restrain and direct the unruly masses, many of whom were foreign-born or black.[18]

Regardless of the motive behind Elizabeth's decision, after leaving Oneida Castle she found herself in a city in the midst of dramatic change.

The Influence of Lillian Wald and the Henry Street Settlement

She arrived in New York City in 1899, a pivotal time in the city's history. On January 1, 1898, the city had been restructured to create a metropolitan area of approximately 306 square miles. It included the boroughs of Manhattan, the Bronx, Brooklyn, Richmond County, and Long Island, as well as the cities of Newtown, Flushing, Jamaica, and Hempstead in the county of Queens.[19] As a result of this restructuring there was a net increase of approximately 5% of the city's student population, making the City of New York now responsible for the education of almost half a million pupils.[20]

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[18] Arthur S. Link and Richard L. McCormick, *Progressivism* (Arlington Heights, IL: Harlan Davidson, Inc., 1983), 72.

[19] William H. Maxwell, *First Annual Report of the City Superintendent of Schools to the Board of Education* (New York: New York City Board of Education, 1899), 11.

[20] Ibid., 34; Sarason and Doris, 295.

This new district saw a need for teachers in parts both comparatively sparse and densely populated, and there was no part of New York City more densely populated than Manhattan's Lower East Side. By 1893, 1.5 million human beings lived in the congested neighborhood of the Lower East Side, "huddled together in cramped tenements" in an area described by observers as "the home of pushcarts, paupers, and consumptives."[21]

At the center of the Lower East Side neighborhood was Henry Street and at its core was the Henry Street Settlement. Founded by Lillian Wald and her classmate from New York Hospital's School of Nursing, Mary Brewster, the settlement reflected the guiding philosophy behind the progressive reform movement—that the most effective way to improve social conditions and public health would come from a social reformer's living and working in the community.[22]

Working from a background in nursing, the main focus for Wald and Brewster was the prevention and treatment of health problems, but when increasing numbers of neighborhood children were being kept out of school due to ill health, their interest in education grew. Thus, it was inevitable that they "... should take a vital interest in the education offered the children of the city throughout the public schools..."[23] and their involvement in Public School Number One, the Henry Street School, became an increasing focus.

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[21] Trattner, 164.

[22] United Neighborhood Houses of New York, *Henry Street Settlement*; available from http://www.unhny.org/unh/mem_henry.html; Internet; accessed 23 February 1999.

[23] Wald, *Windows on Henry Street*, 133.

Founded by the women of the Society of Friends in 1802, the Henry Street School faced a multitude of challenges.[24] In 1899 the Compulsory Education Provision had passed, stating that all children between the ages of eight and twelve must attend school from October to June and that children between the ages of twelve and fourteen could work only if they attended school at least eighty days.[25] This new provision meant that those children, who earlier had spent their time working or on the streets, would now be forced to attend school. Many schools were not equipped to handle such a large number of students, and by June of that year, there were over 2,200 pupils at the Henry Street School, making it so overcrowded that many students were only able to attend part-time.[26]

Further, with a student enrollment largely made up of those children that lived within the immediate neighborhood, teachers faced a student population with a variety of needs, many of which were beyond the scope of what they had been trained to deal with. Often these children had several strikes against them before they ever entered the school doors: some spoke little or no English, some had physical or mental problems that interfered with their learning, and some had only attended school erratically. Unable to meet the instructional and behavioral needs of many of these students, teachers throughout New York City struggled to find a means of coping.

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[24] "Our First Free School Keeps Its Centenary," *New York Times,* 8 May 1906, p. 9.

[25] Maxwell, *First Annual Report*, 135.

[26] Ibid., 309; William H. Maxwell, *Sixth Annual Report of the City Superintendent of Schools to the Board of Education* (New York: New York City Board of Education, 1904), 100.

Farrell's situation was no different. Her first class under principal William L. Ettinger of the Henry Street School "grew out of conditions in a neighborhood furnished in many serious problems in truancy and discipline."[27] Comprised only of boys between the ages of eight and sixteen years old, most had been unsuccessful in the regular education classes where they had encountered "ordinary means of teaching...where intellect is appealed to directly requiring of the child the ability to think in the abstract."[28] Some were considered "incorrigible" and unwilling to follow school rules; others were frequently truant; some could neither read nor count; others were several years retarded in their grades, and many had health problems that interfered with their school attendance and ability to learn. As Farrell noted in her article, "Special Classes in the New York City Schools,"(1906, 1907) "...school, as they found it, had little or nothing for them."[29] They had "set themselves against what society had organized for their welfare, the educational system."[30]

Indeed, the paradigm in use in the schools of New York City did little to address students' individual differences or learning problems. In J. M. Rice's *The Public School System of the United States* (1893), he observed the teaching of over 1,200 teachers in the

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[27] Elizabeth E. Farrell, "Special Classes in the New York City Schools," *Journal of Psycho-Asthenics* 11, no. 1-4 (September and December 1906, March and June 1907): 91.

[28] Elias G. Brown, *Seventh Annual Report of the City Superintendent of Schools to the Board of Education, Appendix K: A Report on Special Classes for Defective Children* (New York: New York City Board of Education, 1905), 431.

[29] Elizabeth E. Farrell, "What New York City Does for its Problem Children," *Ungraded* XI (October 1925): 10.

[30] Ibid.

schools of 36 cities and noted that schools "...aim to do little, if anything beyond crowding the memory of the child with a certain number of cut-and-dried facts..."[31] Rice further observed that:

> The typical New York City primary school...is nevertheless a hard, unsympathetic, mechanical-drudgery school, a school in which the light of science has not yet entered. Its characteristic features lie in the severity of discipline, a discipline of enforced silence, immobility, and mental passivity. [32]

Maintaining that education should be based on providing "...the child the right education—the kind of training which he needs, therefore which he accepts,"[33] Farrell had some ideas as to how the curriculum could be organized to keep her students interested in school while more fully addressing their needs. Prior to asking the School Board to fund any special instruction district wide, however, she wanted to develop and monitor the success of one class based on her curricular suppositions. Thus, she began to experiment with the structure and dynamics of her own class.

During this critical period of development, Farrell sought guidance and support from several different sources: her principal, William L. Ettinger; Superintendent William H. Maxwell; Charles Burlingham, president of the Board of Education; and Felix Warburg, a member of both the Boards of Education and the Henry Street Settlement. It

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[31] J. M. Rice, *The Public School System of the United States* (New York: Century, 1893), 38-39, in Sarason and Doris, 289.

[32] Ibid., 291.

[33] Elizabeth E. Farrell, *Fifteenth Annual Report of the City Superintendent of Schools to the Board of Education: An Analysis of Dr. Goddard's School Inquiry Report in Ungraded Classes* (New York: New York City Board of Education, 1913-1914), 65.

was under their watchful eyes that Farrell was given the freedom to examine various methods of teaching and make decisions regarding what worked best in her classroom with her pupils. [34]

Not the result of any theory on learning or retardation, her curricular model was completely individualized and pragmatic, with complete "freedom from the prescribed course of study."[35] Indeed, she believed in the strength of a curriculum based on the varying needs of each one of her students. Farrell noted she looked forward to the time:

> when every teacher will know what the ability of the child is, and the child's burden as it is represented by the course of study he undertakes. That burden will be trimmed to his ability. It will not be the same burden for every child, but it will be a burden for every child commensurate with his ability to bear.[36]

Intended to exploit the potential of multi-age grouping that she had witnessed while teaching in rural Oneida Castle, Farrell wanted to treat learning in a holistic manner, building on each individual students' experiences. She felt that the students "...had to be shown that school could be more than mere study of books in which they had no interest. They had to be convinced that to attend school was a privilege not a punishment."[37]

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[34] Sarason and Doris, 299.

[35] Edward L. Stevens, *Fifth Annual Report of the City Superintendent of Schools to the Board of Education* (New York: New York City Board of Education, 1903), 116.

[36] Farrell, "What New York City Does for its Problem Children,": 17.

[37] Farrell, "Special Classes in the New York City Schools,": 91.

To change this perception, Farrell used a variety of nontraditional supplies to teach the boys in her class:

> ...instead of books, they had tin cans; instead of spellers, they had picture puzzles to solve; instead of penmanship lessons, they had watercolor paints and brushes; instead of arithmetic and multiplication tables, they had wood and tools, and things with which to build and make.[38]

She believed the ungraded classes needed to "...appeal to the constructive, the acquisitive, the imitative instincts in the child..." and be "...full of things to do, full of interesting activities to pursue, full of constructive activity..."[39]

Lydia Chace, in her 1904 report to the National Conference of Charities and Corrections, observed this while visiting Farrell's classroom:

> The class has been a difficult one to teach; in the first place, it has usually numbered eighteen or twenty; then the boys have been very ungraded, at times, some more wayward than backward. At present, there are nineteen in the class, twelve of whom are mentally deficient. The youngest is six and a half years of age and the oldest seventeen. In work they range from "sub-kindergarten" to the second year of the grammar school. Notwithstanding these difficulties, each child is studied individually and his education is fitted to his needs.
>
> The chief aim is to create in the boys a love of work so that when they go out into the world, they will not join the ranks of the criminal class. For this reason, everything is related to manual training and made subordinate to it. They always have some subject as a center; at present it is the farm. In woodwork, they are making a house and barn, fences, furniture, and flower-boxes. They are weaving the rugs for the floor, making a hammock, doing raffia work and basketry. They went to the country for the soil to plant their miniature fields, and sent to Washington for seeds. In painting, their subjects have been apple blossoms and violets with an illustrated trip to Bronx Park. In picture study, they have taken "Oxen Plowing," "The Angelus," etc. In arithmetic, the older boys measure in a concrete way, the rooms of the house and the fields. In their written work in English, they are having stories of farm life, and reports of personal

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[38] Farrell, "What New York City Does for its Problem Children,": 11.

[39] Elizabeth E. Farrell, *Ninth Annual Report of the City Superintendent of Schools to the Board of Education, Appendix V: Report on Education of Mentally Defective Children* (New York: New York City Board of Education, 1907), 616; Farrell, "What New York City Does for its Problem Children,": 11.

observation; in reading, stories of dogs, horses, making hay, and so on; in spelling, words relating to manual occupations, e.g., "soil, seeds, leaves, barn." In nature work, they are studying soils, the earthworm, buds and seeds. This is simply suggestive of the excellent work that the boys are taking up at present. The subjects are chosen and the different studies related to the center with the purpose of developing the social instincts in the boys.[40]

Years later when speaking to a summer school class at the University of Pennsylvania, Farrell explained her rationale in designing such an unusual curriculum:

The school now more than ever must compete with its only real competitor, the street. To fail would be to acknowledge that the fortuitous education of the street must always and ever count for more in a child's life than the well-ordered, logical, and psychologically adapted regime of formal education. The problem thus becomes analytic. What is the attraction of the streets? First and foremost is the constantly changing activity. The boy is never bored by street life. When one thing ceases to attract, it is pushed aside and he attends to the new and interesting. The activity goes from hanging onto wagons with its consequent danger and interest, to listening to street musicians with their bright, catchy tunes.[41]

Word of Farrell's classroom successes quickly spread throughout the Lower East Side, and Lillian Wald at the Henry Street Settlement began to hear the enthusiastic rumors. Wald sought Farrell's acquaintance, and it wasn't long before Farrell moved into the Settlement House, becoming a trusted friend and ally to Wald for the next twenty-five years.

At the House, Wald surrounded herself with middle-class women with no ties to husbands or children who could fully devote their energies to their work within the Henry

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[40] Lydia G. Chace, "Public School Classes for Mentally Deficient Children," *Proceedings of the National Conference of Charities and Correction* at the thirty-first annual session held in the city of Portland, Maine (June 15-22, 1904), 390-401, in Sarason and Doris, 301.

[41] "Elizabeth E. Farrell," *Exceptional Children* 1, n.3 (February 1935): 72-76.

Street community, and Farrell fit right in. Years later Wald described the importance the Settlement House and community had on Farrell's visions for education: "...Farrell insisted she found in the House a living spring of inspiration..." that "...the Settlement's rich understanding of people, life, events, its multicolored and changing activities, provided her with a background which helped keep her own thought and emotion fresh and vital."[42]

Wald encouraged Farrell's work with children and assisted her in refining her theory of special instruction. She helped provide equipment not yet on the School Board's requisition list and is credited with persuading the New York City School Board in 1902 to hire the first school nurse.[43] Most importantly, however, Wald worked to interest School Board members and others in Farrell's work.

With Wald as her mentor, members of the Board of Superintendents began to take a particular interest in Farrell's program. Before recommending any general rule to establish special instruction for similar atypical children throughout the district, however, the Board thought it best to "experiment in several schools with classes affording various courses of study or other special features."[44] Maxwell agreed, recommending that "no very extensive schema be adopted" since "mistakes will certainly be made in any attempt

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[42] Wald, *Windows on Henry Street*, 138.

[43] Clare Coss, *Lillian D. Wald: Progressive Activist.* (New York: The Feminist Press at the City University of New York, 1989), xv.

[44] William H. Maxwell, *Fourth Annual Report of the City Superintendent of Schools to the Board of Education* (New York: New York City Board of Education, 1902), 109.

to solve the extremely delicate problem before us, and that mistakes are much more easily corrected when the field of experiment is small than when it is large."[45]

Thus, several classes modeled after Farrell's design were established in Manhattan at Public Schools Numbers 40, 77, 113, 111, and 180, and all were studied closely.[46] By 1903 there were ten such classes in both Manhattan and the Bronx, and the number of classes looked to further increase.[47]

The rationale used by the Board for establishing such a program district-wide was largely monetary. Farrell noted that:

> ten percent of the school budgets of this country are spent in re-teaching children that which they have once been taught but have failed to learn. The educational budget for this country is four hundred millions of dollars. Forty millions of it is spent each year in re-teaching retarded children.[48]

Further, numerous children were dropping out of school without learning a trade, and it was believed that the majority of criminals and victims of crime were recruited from this group. With the goal of preventing a large population of unskilled labor being forced into a criminal class, it was necessary to sustain children's interest in school. Maxwell summed up the objective clearly when stating "the best of all ways to abolish truancy is to make schools so attractive that children will not willingly be absent."[49]

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[45] Maxwell, *First Annual Report*, 132.

[46] Maxwell, *Fourth Annual Report*, 109.

[47] William H. Maxwell, *Fifth Annual Report of the City Superintendent of Schools to the Board of Education* (New York: New York City Board of Education, 1903), 117.

[48] Elizabeth E. Farrell, "The Unclassified Child," *Ungraded* VIII n.5 (February 1923): 104.

[49] Maxwell, *Fourth Annual Report*, 91.

Therefore, the impetus for classes such as Farrell's wasn't entirely altruistic. With exceptional children present in the already large classes, many felt that not only did the atypical child degenerate, but that the class was hindered as well, and the teacher's work was made harder and less effective. A 1918 *New York Times* article summarized the thoughts of the time by stating:

> Besides getting nothing in the way of educational training themselves, these children have served as a drawback to the work of the rest of the class. It is an unfortunate phase of almost every school system that the class goes ahead only as fast as the slowest.[50]

Even Farrell's mentor in the Henry Street Settlement, Lillian Wald, in her book, *The House on Henry Street*, confirmed as much, noting that "the settlement gladly helped her develop her theory of separate classes and special instruction for the defectives, not alone for their sakes, but to relieve the normal classes which their presence retarded."[51]

Studying Special Classes Abroad

By 1903, there were at least ten special classes modeled after Farrell's, and the number looked to increase exponentially. As the unofficial expert regarding these classes, Farrell continued to seek additional information so as to allow her to further refine her

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[50] "Backward Child Has a New Chance," *New York Times*, 29 December 1918, sec.III, pg. 5.

[51] Wald, *The House on Henry Street*, 117.

practices. To that end, she requested a leave of absence for the month of June 1903 "to investigate special teaching of backward and deficient children abroad."[52]

Supporting her in her efforts to better educate herself regarding the special class, Superintendent Maxwell urged the Board of Education to grant her request and provide her with letters of introduction. To comply with the Board of Education by-laws, however, either the Board of Education or the Board of Superintendents had to make a formal request of Farrell. The Chairman of the Committee on Elementary Schools, J. W. Mack, therefore, made a formal request that she visit schools abroad for the "purpose of examining into the instruction of deficients and atypicals..."[53] and submit a report to the Committee on Elementary Schools upon her return.

In 1891 the School Board of London, England, had adopted a resolution stating "special schools for those children who, by reason of physical or metal defect, cannot be properly taught in the ordinary standards or by ordinary methods, be established..."[54] and an inspector was appointed by the national government to oversee this work. Ten years later in 1899, the National Board of Education investigated the special school program, the result of which was an amendment to the Elementary School Law of 1870 which provided national recognition and help for certified schools for such children. By 1903,

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[52] William H. Maxwell to Jacob W. Mack, 12 May 1903, Farrell Papers, Special Collections, Milbank Memorial Library, Teachers College, New York.

[53] Jacob W. Mack to Elizabeth E. Farrell, 20 May 1903, Farrell Papers, Special Collections, Milbank Memorial Library, Teachers College, New York.

[54] Maxwell, *First Annual Report*, 130.

the year Farrell traveled there, Great Britain had ten years of experience working with these special classes and schools.

Systematic inspection revealed that 1% of the children attending school were considered physically or mentally defective, and Farrell found how children were identified and assigned to these schools to be extremely methodical.[55] Teachers, working under the supervision of a superintendent of special schools, first inspected all school children to determine if any appeared to suffer from physical or mental defects. The findings were then reported to the Superintendent of the Instruction of Physically and Mentally Defective Children who, along with a medical officer, examined the child. If the report was found to be correct, the child was sent to one of the centers for the instruction of defective children. In completely separate programs with separate facilities, doctors regularly examined these children, and extensive records were kept.

The idea of a completely separate educational program proved unsettling for Farrell, however, and the experience made her question "what particular kind of child could be educated only in a special class."[56] Upon her return to New York, Farrell submitted, as was requested, her "Report on the Treatment of Defective Children in Great Britain" published in the Board of Education's *Fifth Annual Report* in 1903. Aware that in the initial stages, the London public had been opposed to offering these kinds of

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[55] Ibid.

[56] Elizabeth E. Farrell, *Fifth Annual Report of the City Superintendent of Schools to the Board of Education, Appendix F: Report on Treatment of Defective Children in Great Britain* (New York: New York City Board of Education, 1903), 244.

educational programs, she wrote that "...It is the boast of Americans that every child has the opportunity of school education but it is true that many children—through no fault of their own—get nothing from education. Not education but the right education should be our boast."[57]

Her experiences in Great Britain became the foundation for many of her future decisions regarding the ungraded classes. In fact, her decision to turn away from the concept of special schools and instead embrace the notion of classes within the public schools may have been cemented by what she observed in Great Britain. Further, observing the large number of mentally defective children suffering from "most positive and pronounced" physical problems may have planted the idea for the creation of the Psycho-Educational Clinic.[58] Capitalizing the insight gained from her study of Great Britain's system, Farrell continued her work in the ungraded class on Henry Street, further refining her ideas and putting them into practice in her own classroom. As a result, her name would become synonymous with this type of special instruction.

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[57] Ibid., 259.

[58] Ibid., 246.

CHAPTER THREE

CHALLENGES AND CHANGE IN THE UNGRADED CLASS

Formal Ungraded Department Organized

In his 1905 *Seventh Annual Report to the Board of Education*, Superintendent William H. Maxwell declared: "The time of experiment is now ended—the ungraded classes have fully justified their existence—and for the future there remains...the wide extension of this system."[1] Thus, the Board of Education, with Superintendent Maxwell as its driving force, officially sanctioned the ungraded class program on February 14, 1906, and appointed Farrell Inspector of the Ungraded Class Department. With that designation, New York City became the first American city where this type of program was one person's sole responsibility. Ordered to report directly to the Board of Superintendents, Farrell had an extensive list of duties, including supervising the existing ungraded classes, aiding in the formation of new classes, cooperating in the examinations of children proposed for admittance to or removal from ungraded classes, assigning pupils, training teachers for these classes, and recommending teachers for three-months leave of absence to study the training of mental defectives.[2]

To provide both Farrell and school principals a framework from which to operate, Maxwell issued several instructions regarding the special classes. While leaving the exact

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[1] William H. Maxwell, *Seventh Annual Report of the City Superintendent of Schools to the Board of Education* (New York: New York City Board of Education, 1905), 113.

[2] Ibid.; *Seventeenth Annual Report of the City Superintendent of Schools to the Board of Education* (New York: New York City Board of Education, 1915), 24.

subject matter largely up to the school principals, Maxwell stated that "under no circumstances are drawing and physical training to be eliminated," further advising that girls 12 years of age or older should have instruction in sewing and cooking, and boys 12 years of age or older should be taught woodworking and the use of tools."[3] Further, Maxwell encouraged principals to obtain qualified individuals to lead these unique classes:

> The teacher who is to take up this work should be peculiarly adapted to it by nature. She should have insight into child nature, affection for children, and ability for leadership. She should be resourceful and inventive, reaching and quickening the spirit of those who suffer. She should be wise and tactful, not only with children but with adults, for if she is to succeed, she must become the friend and adviser of the family, in order to get the co-operation so necessary to the best work of the child. She must be sanguine, cheerful, optimistic, patient, and have infinite capacity for taking pains.[4]

This framework aside, Farrell's new position forced her to make many immediate decisions about the structure and future role of the ungraded class, not the least of which was determining whether or not to follow Great Britain's lead in creating completely separate classes in separate schools. Noting that the special school's focus was on "preventing the association in school of the mentally defective and the so-called normal child,"[5] Farrell decided to continue establishing special classes within existing schools, concluding that:

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[3] "Superintendent Maxwell Plans More School Novelties," *New York Times*, 4 March 1906, 20.

[4] William H. Maxwell, *Eighth Annual Report of the City Superintendent of Schools to the Board of Education* (New York: New York City Board of Education, 1906), 112.

[5] Elizabeth E. Farrell, *Fourteenth Annual Report of the City Superintendent of Schools to the Board of Education, Reports on Defective Children: Ungraded Classes* (New York: New York City Board of Education, 1911-1912), 13.

> The special school with its 'separateness' emphasized in its construction, in its administration, differentiates, sets aside, classifies, and of necessity stigmatizes the pupils whom it receives. How could it be otherwise? Mental subnormality is so often associated with lack of beauty, proportion, and grace in the physical body of the child, the way we say mental subnormality and physical anomalies go hand-in-hand. Now bring together a rather large group—a hundred such children—and there assembled countless degrees of awkwardness and of slovenliness; infinite variations in overdevelopment or in arrested development and a dozen other mute witnesses of a mind infantile or warped. It would be next to impossible to save these helpless ones from the jibes of a not too kind world. The school which is to serve best must conserve the moral as well as the mental, the spiritual as well as the physical nature of the pupil.[6]

In fact, Farrell wanted the ungraded pupils to have the best of both worlds: "the opportunity for individual instruction while it presents to him, when he is able to grasp it, the chance of doing class work." To make her intentions in this regard clear, Farrell provided an illustration of how such an arrangement would work, foreshadowing the delivery of special education services to thousands of American schoolchildren years later:

> A child, hopelessly unable to comprehend even the simplest truths of arithmetic and further handicapped by a speech defect, which prohibited his taking part in a recitation period requiring spoken language, was found to have more than ordinary ability and interest in reading. The ungraded teacher was able to help him along the line of his interests. When he was able to write his answers he could attend a sixth-year class for those studies in which he could excel. His own self-respect and the increased prestige of the ungraded class were the result of his excellent work. In many schools the upper grade children are invited to visit the ungraded classroom to see the manual training exhibit. The children who were in danger of being pseudo-intellectual snobs because of scholastic achievements, realized when viewing the excellence of work identical with their own shopwork exercises, that to each has been given a talent, and that this group of "different" children have contributions to make to the life of the school no less valuable because they are unlike.[7]

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[6] "Elizabeth E. Farrell," *Exceptional Children*: 74.

[7] Farrell, *Fourteenth Annual Report*, 15.

Children in Need

With the ungraded class program now an official part of the educational system in the City of New York, Farrell faced an increasing number of children being referred for special class placement, and she struggled to determine exactly which children might benefit from this kind of individualized instruction. Referrals came from a variety of sources: teachers and principals, physicians, the Bureau of Attendance, the Department of Physical Training, the Red Cross, and Children's Court, as well as the city's Department of Health. Those recommended for inclusion suffered from a wide variety of behavioral, academic, physical, or psychological problems and included nervous children who cried easily, were easily frightened, constantly moved, had unusual anxieties, or were epileptics; psychopathic children who did not play or played with children much younger than themselves; over-conscientious children who exhibited irritability or a marked change in disposition; children with gross conduct disorders, including the truant, the incorrigible, and those who had "tantrums"; morally defective children who exhibited criminal tendencies; and those children whose progress in school was considered unsatisfactory or retarded.[8]

Further compounding the problem, in 1903 an additional component of the Compulsory Education Provision was passed, requiring all children to attend school until fourteen years of age. The law further required all children between the ages of fourteen

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[8] Elizabeth E. Farrell, *Annual Report of the Superintendent of Schools to the Board of Education, Reports on Special Classes: Ungraded Classes* (New York: New York City Board of Education, 1918-1920), 20-21.

and sixteen to attend school unless employed, and all boys between the ages of fourteen and sixteen who leave school for employment prior to completing the elementary school course attend sixteen weeks of evening school. Those in violation could be sent to truant/probationary schools for up to two years or until age sixteen, and their parents could be fined for failure to keep them in school. Although this law was not consistently enforced, it served to further increase the number of students referred to Farrell's program.

Originally concerned with children who didn't seem to "fit," irrespective of the cause, Farrell and the Board of Education began to focus more and more on those children whose low mentality, measured on intelligence tests between 50 and 75, prevented them from benefiting from any type of regular class instruction.[9] Relying on estimates that anywhere between 1-10% of the population were of low mentality, Farrell and others calculated that between 5-10,000 children in New York City would then be eligible for ungraded classes.[10] By 1905 those estimates changed, and it was theorized that between 6-12,000 children in New York City schools were "exceptional to such a degree as to be unable to do the normal work" required of them in the regular classes.[11]

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[9]James E. Ysseldyke and Bob Algozzine, *Critical Issues in Special and Remedial Education* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1982) in Phillip L. Safford and Elizabeth J. Safford, *A History of Childhood and Disability* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1996), 181; O'Shea, William J., *Thirty-first Annual Report of the Superintendent of Schools to the Board of Education* (New York: New York City Board of Education, 1929), 27; William J. O'Shea, *Thirty-third Annual Report of the Superintendent of Schools to the Board of Education* (New York: New York City Board of Education, 1931), 118.

[10] Maxwell, *Fifth Annual Report*, 111.

[11] Brown, *Seventh Annual Report*, 426.

In a manner that seems reflective of the kinds of self-contained special education classes offered today, Farrell refined the ungraded classes even further, designing different classes to more appropriately meet the needs of the students:

> Ungraded classes differ in type. They are organized on the basis of chronological age as well as of mental age. There are classes for older high grade girls, classes for younger children, and so on. It is possible to differentiate ungraded classes on the principle of the children's most insistent need—classes for neurotic children, classes for psychopathic children, trade extension classes for girls.[12]

Selection of Children for Ungraded Classes

The initial method for selecting which children qualified for placement in the ungraded class program was established by the Board of Education. Principals reported to Farrell any child who, in the opinion of the teacher, Department of Health, or Department of Physical Training, was unable to do regular class work due to mental deficiency or any child three or more years retarded in school. Retardation was determined according to the criterion established by the city superintendent: a student entering first grade at six or seven years of age and progressing through the grades as expected, his or her predicted ages on the last day of school for each grade would be as follows:

First grade	6-8 years
Second grade	7-9 years
Third grade	8-10 years
Fourth grade	9-11 years
Fifth grade	10-12 years
Sixth grade	11-13 years

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[12] Elizabeth E. Farrell, "Aiding the Backward Child," *New York Times,* 10 July 1927, sec. VII p. 6.

Seventh grade	12-14 years
Eighth grade	13-15 years [13]

The teacher then completed a card with information based on her observations of the student as well as any possible circumstances that might influence the child's condition: the economic condition of the family, home life, kindergarten attendance, number of terms in grade, school history, school attendance, required work, general knowledge, powers of attention and memory, motor control, and habits of anger, obstinacy, cruelty, and truthfulness. The record was next filed with Farrell's office, and the school principal was advised on the child's examination date; their dates were made in each district only once every six months.

These examinations, conducted by Farrell and the physician assigned to her department, when combined with the teacher's report, often yielded information that was useful to the regular teacher although the student might not be suited for the ungraded class. Farrell provided an example of such a case in her 1907 *Annual Report to the Board of Education*:

> An undersized, nervous, elf-like girl of nine years, she could keep awake and alert, except when required to sit at her desk. The moment she was still, her head was down and school forgotten; sleep would overpower her. Here was, indeed, a strange condition—a child apparently well, sleeping early in the school day. A word or two brought out the fact that this child, a mere baby, was required to rise at five o'clock in the morning, to sew buttons on boy's trousers until school time; after school in the afternoon, she was again compelled to take up the burden and work far into the night. This child knew that two different sizes of buttons were used, knew where to place

[13] Luther H. Gullick and Leonard P. Ayres, *Tenth Annual Report of the City Superintendent of Schools to the Board of Education, Appendix S: Causes of Retardation of Pupils, An Investigation of Retardation in Fifteen Schools in New York City, Borough of Manhattan* (New York: New York City Board of Education, 1908), 568.

> them; she knew that ten buttons were put on one pair of trousers and twenty on two, but beyond that she could not go. This child was not a case for the ungraded class. The child had ability but it was used up each day before school received her. The fact of sleeping, in this particular case, was due to fatigue. Nature was doing her work; school had to wait. The fact, however, that this peculiarity was noted saved the child. It was found upon investigation that the father was saving his earnings, while his wife and this child were providing food and shelter for him and one younger child.[14]

While this referral process provided a "clear, comprehensive idea of the child, and his proper place," Farrell ultimately viewed it as unsatisfactory as it left the selection of children to opinion and chance.[15] By relying on this method, undue numbers of children with conduct disorders who were not mentally defective were referred to the program, while there was a complete absence of referrals for quiet, unobtrusive children, whom Farrell felt were often overlooked due to "goodness." Further, some school principals failed to refer students at all. In 1908, the second year of Farrell's department, only 116 of 180 Manhattan schools reported, only 12 of 42 in the Bronx reported, and only 74 of 148 Brooklyn schools reported any students for potential placement to Farrell's department.[16]

To Farrell this represented a serious administrative problem. Wanting every school to know "the extent of its problem of mental abnormality," she longed for a more consistent manner of identifying and placing students in the ungraded classes, believing a

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[14] Farrell, *Ninth Annual Report*, 622.

[15] Ibid., 623.

[16] Elizabeth E. Farrell, *Tenth Annual Report of the City Superintendent of Schools to the Board of Education, Appendix T: Report on Education of Mentally Defective Children* (New York: New York City Board of Education, 1908), 602.

satisfactory method must be based on the elimination of chance, opinion, and emotional factors.[17] In her *Annual Report to the Board of Education* (1918-1920), Farrell noted with some dismay that "...it is obvious that we are not identifying all the mentally defective children in the schools...due to the inherent weaknesses in the present method of selecting children for examination..."[18]

Development of the Psycho-Educational Clinic

As Inspector of the Department of Ungraded Classes, Farrell worked to create a referral procedure that would both meet her criteria and correctly place only those children with low mentality in the special classes. Originally examining children referred for the ungraded classes once a week in Manhattan and Brooklyn at "clinic days," Farrell fought yearly for additional monies to fund more supervisory and medical staff positions. After the Board of Education approved Farrell's request in 1913, she started refining responsibilities and procedure to make testing and placement decisions more objective, establishing the Psycho-Educational Clinic.[19]

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[17] Farrell, *Annual Report of the Superintendent of Schools to the Board of Education, Reports on Special Classes: Ungraded Classes*, 24.

[18] Ibid.

[19] Elizabeth E. Farrell, *Fifteenth Annual Report of the City Superintendent of Schools to the Board of Education, Reports on Defective Children: Ungraded Classes* (New York: New York City Board of Education, 1912-1913), 6-7.

Part of the Department of Ungraded Classes, the clinic's function was to "reveal any underlying factors in the maladjustment of school children."[20] The Psycho-Educational Clinic employed personnel from four different fields: psychology, social services, medicine, and education, all of whom worked together to determine which children were best served with placement in the ungraded department and which children could be best served through other means.

Each professional within the clinic performed a specific function. In an effort to determine the student's rate of learning as well as "...traits and attitudes in the child that are useful or detrimental,"[21] the psychologists administered both the Seguin and Binet intelligence tests and the New York Regents Literacy Test. Results from both tests were then compared to reports from teachers. Individual exams, including the Pintner-Patterson Performance Test, the Haggerty Intelligence Exam Delta II, the Trabue Language Complete Scales B and C, the Woody-McCall Mixed Fundamentals in Arithmetic, and the Thorndike-McCall Reading, were administered only to those who scored below seventy or exhibited marked irregularity in the group intelligence exams, were below grade 3A, were of foreign-birth and in school long enough to have learned English but had failed to make satisfactory progress, and to those suffering from partial

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[20] William J. O'Shea, *Twenty-eighth Annual Report of the Superintendent of Schools to the Board of Education* (New York: New York City Board of Education, 1926), 310.

[21] Ibid., 310-312.

or complete deafness.[22] Believing they had "inaugurated a new method of selecting children for special education," Farrell maintained this was a more scientific way of selecting students to receive services.[23]

The medical inspectors were responsible for examining all children proposed for placement in the ungraded classes. Working to determine the basis of any nervous or mental disease, they often recommended the first line of treatment. They looked as well for evidence of contagious diseases, including ringworm, impetigo, scarlet fever, scabies, diphtheria, measles, chicken pox, pertussis, mumps, or tuberculosis, and sought to identify any physical defects that might impede school progress. Testing by the medical inspectors revealed that ninety percent of the children examined for placement in the ungraded classes were found to suffer from some form of physical defect.[24] Not all children with physical defects found their way into the ungraded classes, however. If it was determined that the child was prevented from learning due to the physical defect rather than low mentality, and it was possible to treat the defect, often it was "remedied while the child still remains in the grade and is enabled soon to do the normal work."[25]

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[22] According to Farrell's summary in the *Twenty-third Annual Report to the Board of Education,* the Haggerty Intelligence Exam Delta II was selected because it had well-established norms of performance on the basis of mental age and school grade and because it measured a wide range of functions. The Trabue Language Complete Scales B and C, the Woody-McCall Mixed Fundamentals in Arithmetic, and the Thorndike-McCall Reading were selected because they were well standardized according to school grade.

[23] Farrell, *Annual Report of the Superintendent of Schools to the Board of Education, Reports on Special Classes: Ungraded Classes*, 24.

[24] "How Our Schools Save Pupils from Handicaps," *New York Times,* 4 August 1929, sec. VIII, p. 18.

[25] Brown, *Seventh Annual Report of the Superintendent of Schools to the Board of Education, Appendix K: A Report on Special Classes for Defective Children*, 427.

Medical inspectors also had the responsibility of periodically re-examining all ungraded children. Farrell felt it was "absolutely essential" the ungraded class children be re-examined by a doctor regularly "to ascertain the progress of the child and to furnish data for recommendations for discharge, exclusion, or promotion."[26] Farrell noted that removals from the ungraded classes were made for three reasons: on the recommendation of the school principal that the child is ready to do grade level work, when the child is sixteen years old and is no longer required according to compulsory attendance laws to attend school, or if it is determined that the child is suitable for institutional care.[27]

Visiting teachers employed in the Psycho-Educational Clinic fulfilled a social worker function. Initially volunteers, they performed a variety of services for the clinic: analyzing home conditions, securing information from interviews regarding the child's early life, obtaining parental cooperation, discussing problems with teachers and principals, assisting ungraded teachers, and summarizing and following up on clinic recommendations. Additionally, they worked closely with social service agencies to get families registered and help them get financial help and medical care. Farrell discussed the work of the visiting teacher in "Aiding the Backward Child" (1927):

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[26] Elizabeth E. Farrell, *Thirteenth Annual Report of the City Superintendent of Schools to the Board of Education, Ungraded Classes: Report on Work for Mentally Defective Children* (New York: New York City Board of Education, 1910-1911), 27-28; Elizabeth E. Farrell, *Twenty-third Annual Report of the Superintendent of Schools to the Board of Education, Reports on Special Classes: Ungraded Classes* (New York: New York City Board of Education, 1921), 79.

[27] Farrell, *Fourteenth Annual Report*, 12.

> The visiting teacher learns about the child's life outside school. If he wants to hike, or join classes or neighborhood clubs, she arranges it. Then an effort is made to improve the child's physical condition, and sometimes, to educate the parents.[28]

Despite the important function visiting teachers performed, there were very few employed in the clinic. In 1913-1914 the Psycho-Educational Clinic had only two visiting teachers serving approximately 3,000 children.[29] By 1920-1921, the number of children needing assistance rose to approximately 6,000, yet there were still only three visiting teachers attached to the clinic.[30] Despite Farrell's repeated requests, the Board of Education made few provisions for additional visiting teachers. As a result, the existing visiting teachers could handle only the most urgent of cases, and principals and teachers often hesitated to involve them until the problem became severe. Farrell estimated that to adequately serve the children and families in need, an additional 200 visiting teachers were required.

Based on the results of all of the Psycho-Educational Clinic examinations, decisions were then made about which manner of treatment and placement would be appropriate. Not all students reported were eligible for placement in the special classes. Those ineligible included children with intelligence quotients between 75-85, children with average intelligence who could not read, and retarded adolescents with social adjustment problems. Only about one of every three children referred was admitted to the

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[28] Elizabeth E. Farrell, "Aiding the Backward Child," *New York Times,* 10 July 1927, sec. VII, p. 6.

[29] Farrell, *Twenty-third Annual Report*, 94.

[30] Ibid.

ungraded classes. Others were sent back to the regular class with suggestions regarding food, and physical welfare, and their progress was monitored. Some children were sent to classes for the physically handicapped or to truant/probationary schools.

Still other children were rejected by the Psycho-Educational Clinic as institutional cases. Farrell found that "...there was a small percentage...so far below normal that they do not respond to any method of advised training,"[31] and she proposed that the Board of Education enter into an agreement with the trustees of the Syracuse Institution for the commitment of these children.

Not every parent whose child was referred and qualified for the ungraded classes was grateful for the intervention, however. At least one parent, Samuel Kastenburg of the Bronx, appealed to the magistrate in an effort to have his eleven-year-old daughter removed from her ungraded class and returned to her original regular class. The magistrate, however, supported Farrell in her placement decision, saying that she had "supervision over ungraded classes and was qualified to decide whether children were normal or not." Thus, Farrell's right to determine which students should be placed in the ungraded classes was confirmed.[32]

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[31] Farrell, *Thirteenth Annual Report*, 149.

[32] "Court Upholds Act of Miss Farrell," *Ungraded* VII n.5: 117.

Influence of Intelligence Testing

While some viewed Farrell's Department of Ungraded Classes as a success, others, especially those on the Board of Estimates and Apportionment, the city department responsible for budgetary and financial concerns, viewed her expanding program with ever-increasing disdain. Considered an outgrowth of Superintendent Maxwell's drive to expand the school system's social agenda, the Board of Estimates looked for ways to rein in the growing school budget. Their sentiments were expressed clearly in an article published by the *New York Times* in 1906, which stated, "These special classes are regarded as a most interesting experiment in modern education...They are the conception of Superintendent Maxwell, and for this reason are regarded as another of his so-called fads and frills for which he campaigns." [33]

In response to this attack, Maxwell stated that:

> this great work for suffering humanity is an outgrowth of the modern spirit of social service. No longer can it be maintained that education at the public expense is to be directed solely to secure 'the survival of the fittest' or even of the fit. One of the prime checks of public education is to develop each child, fit or unfit, to his highest capacity, as far as conditions will permit, for the work and enjoyment of life. Education cannot perform miracles, but it can lighten the burdens of the defective by engendering habits that make for right living, and by training the capacity, no matter how slight it may naturally be, for work.[34]

Farrell, greatly influenced by her settlement colleagues, agreed with Maxwell that schools had a responsibility to assist children in reaching their potential, saying:

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[33] "Superintendent Maxwell Plans More School Novelties," *New York Times*, 4 March 1906, p. 20.

[34] William H. Maxwell, *Twelfth Annual Report of the City Superintendent of Schools to the Board of Education* (New York: New York City Board of Education, 1910), 103.

> The function of the school is to provide an environment in which the abilities and capacities of each individual may unfold and develop in a manner that will secure his maximum social efficiency. To secure this right environment, we must know the strength and the weakness of the individual's native endowment and we must know its modifications due to his experience. With these facts determined, the school life of the child will be tempered. The environment which society created for the education of the young will be so organized as to prevent in the vast majority of cases the development of the problems of retardation, truancy and conduct disorders, and will insure to all the children the opportunity to succeed, to control and to accomplish.[35]

In 1912, after a decade-long battle of wills, the Board of Estimates and Apportionment asked Henry Herbert Goddard, the Director of Psychological Research at the Vineland Training School for Feeble-Minded Boys and Girls, to evaluate Farrell's program of ungraded classes. While Goddard's primary charge at Vineland was to conduct research that might lead to the causes of feeble-mindedness, he was intensely interested in the use of intelligence testing in schools. In 1910 Goddard arranged for the Binet-Simon Intelligence Test to be translated for use in the United States and wanted to experiment with it on a large population of school children. Based on Goddard's perceived expertise in the education of the feeble-minded and the use of intelligence tests, the Board of Estimates anticipated a scathing rebuke of Maxwell's and Farrell's attempts to provide for those with low mentality. The results contained in Goddard's report, *The New York School Inquiry of 1911-1912*, surprised the sponsoring members of the Board of Estimates.

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[35] Elizabeth E. Farrell, "Mental Hygiene Problems of Maladjusted Children," *Ungraded* IX, n.5 (February 1924): 103.

Goddard's report was, indeed, highly critical of the ungraded class program, but not for the reasons the Board of Estimates had anticipated. While noting a steady increase in the number of ungraded classes, from 14 in 1906 to 131 in 1911-1912, with approximately 2,500 students enrolled, Goddard believed there were thousands of feeble-minded children that teachers failed to recognize. Generalizing data from an earlier New Jersey school survey, Goddard stated that:

> the most extensive study ever made of the children of an entire public school system of two thousand...has shown that two per cent of such children are so mentally defective as to preclude any possibility of their ever being made normal and able to take care of themselves as adults.[36]

Goddard thus concluded that New York should be providing for at least 15,000 students in the ungraded program. Rather than suggesting an abolishment of the program as the Board of Estimates had hoped, he instead encouraged its enlargement.

Goddard went on to state that the ungraded class program was plagued by misdiagnosis, with the wrong children placed in special classes. Using Binet's intelligence tests and relying on language considered grossly offensive by today's standards, he stated that he found mentality ranging from a three-year-old to that of a normal child, as well as "...imbeciles of Mongolian type, microcephalic idiots, hydrocephalic cases, cretins..." and "... a large number of middle and high grade

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[36] Henry Herbert Goddard, "Elementary Schools, Section E.- Ungraded Classes," *Educational Aspects,* Part II, Subdivision I, 369-373, in Leila Zenderland, *Measuring Minds: Henry Herbert Goddard and the Origins of American Intelligence Testing* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 134.

imbeciles."[37] Goddard further found "children who are really almost normal" and blamed teachers who had "misread only temporary or individual idiosyncrasies as signs of mental impairment."[38]

Goddard's report also stated that the program needed more supervisors and better-trained, skilled teachers, something Farrell had already been saying for several years. Goddard went a step further, however, stating that the special class teachers were "...painfully aware of their own lack of training and their own ability to do for the child what they feel must be done."[39] Without institutional training Goddard concluded they were "left as the physician would be who has gone through his medical course but has had no laboratory or hospital experience."[40]

Disagreeing with those who believed that "salvation lies in the ability to read books, to write letters, and to count millions," Goddard reported that a new curriculum was needed.[41] He wanted the schools to surrender their attempts to teach the three R's and follow the institutions' lead with a curriculum focused on manual training, arguing

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[37] Henry Herbert Goddard, *Report on the Educational Aspects of the Public School System of the City of New York to the Committee of School Inquiry of the Board of Estimates and Apportionment: Ungraded Classes* (1912), 361-381, in Safford and Safford, *A History of Childhood and Disability*, 181-184.

[38] Goddard, "Elementary Schools, Section E.- Ungraded Classes," in Zenderland, *Measuring Minds*, 133.

[39] Henry Herbert Goddard, *Report on the Educational Aspects of the Public School System*, 361-381, in Safford and Safford, *A History of Childhood and Disability*, 181-184.

[40] Goddard, "Elementary Schools, Section E.- Ungraded Classes," 363-369, 376-380, in Zenderland, *Measuring Minds*, 132.

[41] Goddard, "Report of the Research Department," *Annual Report of the Vineland Training School* (1908): 41, in Zenderland, *Measuring Minds*, 110; Goddard, "Report of the Research Department,": 40, in Zenderland, *Measuring Minds*, 110;

that the feeble-minded should be taught that which is necessary "to make life pleasanter for them...such as the training of games, of athletics, of doing things."[42] This was, perhaps, at the heart of Goddard's report—the premise that the institution ought to be the laboratory for special classes. It is important to note that Goddard worked closely under Vineland director E. R. Johnstone who supported the ungraded classes but saw them mainly as a "clearinghouse," stating, "...Keep them in special classes until they become too old for further care and they must be sent to institutions for safety."[43]

The report sparked both controversy and protest. Superintendent Maxwell, feeling provoked by the Board of Estimates, and wanting to rebut, faulted Goddard's logic in reaching the conclusion that the ungraded class program should be providing services to so many children, replying skeptically: "After testing 268 children...reaches the conclusion that 15,000...are mentally defective."[44]

Farrell, like Maxwell, was outraged, and she attacked Goddard's survey results. In the *Fifteenth Annual Report* (1912-1913), Farrell criticized Goddard for faulty research methods and questioned his sampling, noting that only seven out of a possible 496 elementary schools were visited and only one out of 21 possible high schools were visited, with all of the schools located in either the Upper West Side, Lower East Side,

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[42] Ibid.

[43] E. R. Johnstone, "The Functions of the Special Class," *National Education Association Journal of Proceedings and Addresses of the 46th Annual Meeting*, 114-118, in Safford and Safford, *A History of Childhood and Disability*, 182.

[44] William H. Maxwell, *Fifteenth Annual Report of the City Superintendent of Schools to the Board of Education* (New York: New York City Board of Education, 1913), 169.

Flushing, or the borough of Brooklyn. In her rebuttal to Goddard's report, she stated:

> It is then on a real basis of 120 observations out of a possible 750,000 that the statement is made...With these great sections of the school population left out and with a lack of definiteness as to localities that were examined, it is obvious that the distribution of children tested throughout the city was not such as would permit of fair and adequate notions of the whole school population to be obtained...It is questionable whether the 'samplings' were sufficiently distributed throughout the city and within the grades...It is obvious that with no information given as to the types of children tested, their ages, and their nationalities, no tabulations as to the times given to each examination, and the method of checking up the results, the statement of the School Inquiry Committee that two per cent of New York City public school children are feeble-minded has not been proved.[45]

Farrell also challenged Goddard's belief about the relationship between the institution and the special classes. While Goddard stressed the similarities between the ungraded classes and the institutions, she saw her role as "...emphasizing the points of resemblance and minimizing the differences between the regular grade child and the ungraded class child," articulating an early vision of an argument which would reemerge decades later in the mainstreaming debate.[46] She believed the goal of the special classes was to return students back to the regular classes, and therefore, the curriculum must not only teach the three R's but address diverse abilities and needs.

She further attacked Goddard's report, questioning mental tests as the only diagnostic tool stating, "...there is no universal belief in the Binet tests as the means of

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[45] Elizabeth E. Farrell, *Fifteenth Annual Report of the City Superintendent of Schools to the Board of Education*, 67-68.

[46] Ibid., 75.

diagnosing deviating or exceptional mentality."[47] Farrell obviously had concerns about the potential reliance on intelligence testing, noting that:

> from American students we learn that scholastic and other attainments and not native ability are tested by the Binet-Simon tests...the Binet-Simon tests do not properly classify children for definite treatment or for detailed care and they are not infallible in determining the mental grade of a child.[48]

Criticizing him as a "research student in psychology," Farrell concluded that Goddard's report "...lacks perspective," stating it was "concerned with conditions found at a given time, but lays no stress on the circumstances which brought them about nor on those in process of correcting them..."[49] Farrell continued:

> The service given by Rousseau to general education, by Pestalozzi to the education of poor children, by Horace Mann to public education in the United States, is similar to that expected from Dr. Goddard for the education of mentally defective children when he was employed by the School Inquiry Committee to investigate the aim, methods, and results of ungraded class work. To be unable to see the forest for the trees is sad. To have missed the vision is sadder still.[50]

Farrell's sharp reply surprised Goddard. She had presented him with his first serious opposition, effectively countering his conceptualization of the relationship between institutions and the public school, and challenging his claims of expertise. By 1913 Goddard's report and Farrell's reply had reached the Board of Estimates and

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[47] Ibid., 69.

[48] Ibid., 68.

[49] Ibid., 77, 79.

[50] Elizabeth E. Farrell, "A Study of the School Inquiry Report on Ungraded Classes," *The Psychological Clinic* 8 no. 2-4 (1914), 45, in Safford and Safford, *A History of Childhood and Disability*, 183.

Apportionment. The Board appointed separate committees to review both reports and submit recommendations. In 1914 the committee reviewing Goddard's report suggested a compromise, endorsing some of Goddard's conclusions and some of Farrell's. The committee agreed with Goddard's recommendations for increased salary bonuses for ungraded class teachers, leave time for additional training, and more program personnel. It rejected, however, Goddard's statements regarding the high number of potentially feeble-minded children the New York School System should expect to serve, choosing instead to endorse Farrell's argument that such a number was unproven. The committee further rebutted Goddard's claims regarding curriculum. Most importantly, however, the committee chose not to endorse Goddard's beliefs regarding intelligence testing, refusing to adopt it as the main determination for placement in the ungraded classes. In May of 1914 the recommendations reached by the committees were adopted by the Board of Education, effectively ending the debate.

Farrell's outrage over the reliance upon intelligence testing could do little to stem the tide, however. Despite the Board of Education's refusal to officially endorse intelligence testing, the use of intelligence tests by Goddard in the New York City Schools further served to legitimize them. Additionally, Goddard had a captive audience in the teachers who were in attendance at the summer teacher education programs sponsored by the Vineland Training School. By 1914 the movement had gained a

foothold in schools, introduced not by the Board of Education but by teachers who were Vineland Training School graduates.[51]

Issues of Nationality

While Farrell's rebuttal of Goddard's claims may have prevented the New York City Board of Education from endorsing all of his ideas, she did not have the luxury of completely disregarding his work. In 1912, the same year as the *New York School Inquiry*, Goddard authored *The Kallikak Family: A Study in the Heredity of Feeble-Mindedness*, centered around data collected on a girl in residence at the Vineland Training School. Working with research assistant Elizabeth Kite, Goddard claimed to have traced the young girl's relatives, finding mental defectiveness present at every level, and concluding, therefore, it must be passed through hereditary material:

> ...The surprise and horror of it all was that no matter where we traced them, whether in the prosperous rural district, in the city slums to which some had drifted, or in the more remote mountain regions, or whether it was a question of the second or fifth generation, an appalling amount of defectiveness was everywhere found...about 65 per cent of these children have the hereditary trait...[52]

Goddard went on to gather intelligence test data on immigrants entering the United States through Ellis Island. Based on this work, Goddard further concluded that most immigrants entering the United States were of low intelligence. He rejected the idea

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[51] Zenderland, *Measuring Minds*, 138.

[52] Henry Herbert Goddard, *The Kallikak Family: A Study in the Heredity of Feeble-mindedness* (New York: Macmillan, 1912): viii, 16, in John David Smith, *Minds Made Feeble* (Rockville, Maryland: Aspen Systems Corporation, 1985): 13, 15.

that the tests might be biased or that there might be physical or psychological factors influencing the results. Goddard maintained that intelligence testing "worked equally well with any child...it was, therefore, unnecessary to analyze any other variables."[53] However, it was this assertion that had "provoked one of the many criticisms" from Farrell.[54]

The New York City Schools further reinforced Goddard's claims about immigrants when the results of an investigation on retardation were released. *Laggards in Our Schools,* conducted by Leonard P. Ayres, the former superintendent of the Puerto Rican schools, and a statistician and economist with the Sage Foundation, and Dr. Luther H. Gullick of the New York City Schools' Physical Training Department, was the first scientific inquiry into the cause of retardation. Based on information from fifteen schools in New York City, including 20,000 students in Manhattan alone, Ayres and Gullick concluded that boys exhibited a higher percent of retardation than did girls, that the smallest percent of retardation was found in Germans, and the highest percent of retardation was found in Italians.[55]

These findings hit close to home for Farrell. During a time when there was significant concern regarding the "extraordinary number of over-age or retarded children in the grades" and more and more immigrant children were being referred to the

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[53] Zenderland, *Measuring Minds*, 265.

[54] Ibid.

[55] William H. Maxwell, *Tenth Annual Report of the City Superintendent of Schools to the Board of Education* (New York: New York City Board of Education, 1908), 62-63.

ungraded classes, she could not ignore research that suggested a correlation between ethnic origin and intelligence.[56] Disregarding her own immigrant background, she noted that "marked abilities, as well as marked disabilities, may be explained only by referring to ancestry and home."[57] In that same report, only one year after assuming the mantle of inspector, making remarks we would consider abhorrent today, Farrell discussed how a child's nationality might influence referral for placement in the ungraded classes:

> The question of nationality is of very great importance. For one not familiar with national characteristics, it is an easy thing to take the heavy, sluggish response of the Slavic child as indicative of real mental inability, while children of Latin Europe, with their lively shifting and seemingly inconsistent attention to school duties, seem to the teacher to be unfitted for regular grade work...The Slav, in his native home, spends his life wresting from an unproductive soil a bare existence for self and family. He never has had leisure for that side of life which demands the nice co-ordinations , the fine muscular adjustments and quick perceptions which are demanded in our schools. The Italian, on the other hand, in the warmth, bounty, and beauty of Southern Europe, has had time all through the ages to give to things other than those concerned in keeping body and soul together. The abundance which surrounded him encouraged him to flit from one thing to the next. He could pick and choose. To-day we have the Italian child in school indulging the same desire. He goes from one thing to the next until we of a different ancestry say, 'His lack of concentration is a morbid condition.'[58]

It appears, however, that Farrell may have had conflicting feelings about the weight given solely to nationality, as she made contradictory statements regarding the correlation between heredity and intelligence. In her appendix to the 1909 *Annual Report to the Board of Education*, Farrell recalled that the last annual report of the New York State Lunacy Commission called attention to the "...alarming increase of insanity among

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[56] Ibid., 61.

[57] Farrell, *Ninth Annual Report*, 621.

[58] Ibid., 620-621.

the immigrant population."[59] She cautioned, however, that there may be extenuating circumstances: the selection of children who were abnormally slow was more likely to be made in schools in which there were large numbers of foreign-born children or children of foreign-born parents, concluding that "schools in such neighborhoods are crowded as a rule and the exceptional child must be removed from the regular class in order to make conditions bearable at all."[60] With this remark, Farrell seemed more willing to attribute retardation and feeble-mindedness to issues other than heredity.

The next year, however, Farrell appeared to reverse course again. In her 1910-1911 *Report on Work for Mentally Defective Children,* she quoted the writings of A. F. Tredgold, an English neurologist and author, who believed that the causes of mental deficiency fell into two categories: "morbid heredity, where some ancestral, pathological condition modifies the parental germoplasm before conception of the child," and "adverse environment, where some external factor (disease or injury) affects the embryo in the uterus, the babe at birth or the growing child after birth."[61] While these statements seem to reflect those made by Farrell in her last two reports, Farrell further quotes Tredgold as saying that "90 per cent of all cases of mental deficiency are due to morbid heredity," seemingly agreeing that heredity is the larger issue of concern.[62]

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[59] Elizabeth E. Farrell, *Eleventh Annual Report of the City Superintendent of Schools to the Board of Education, Appendix S: Education of Mentally Defective Children* (New York: New York City Board of Education, 1909), 644.

[60] Ibid.

[61] Farrell, *Thirteenth Annual Report*, 19.

[62] Ibid.

By 1911 the Commissioner of Immigration at the Port of New York had taken up the matter of feeble-minded immigrants with the Board of Education. The Board, in response, and probably with Farrell's assistance, furnished to the Commissioner a list of foreign-born children unable to do the work because of mental defect. Immigration authorities began investigating these cases since the feeble-minded were included within a class of persons not eligible for admission to the United States and were subject to deportation if inadvertently admitted. Further, it was required they be deported if they become public charges within three years of admission.

Years later Farrell discussed the topic of ethnicity again. In the *Twenty-third Annual Report to the Board of Education* in 1921, Farrell revealed the results of an investigation conducted by the Department of Ungraded Classes. Prompted by "the fact that large numbers of foreign born parents are seen annually at the clinic, and the knowledge that many ungraded class pupils are foreign born," the study examined the nationality and race of the children served by the ungraded classes.[63] Study results showed that 88% of the children in the ungraded classes were born in the United States, and 75% of their parents were foreign born, results Farrell found to be "unusually interesting" in light of recent interest in legislation limiting immigration.[64] That interest was based partly on Goddard's work in the area of intelligence. These remarks again suggest that Farrell may have accepted the premise that heredity influences intelligence.

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[63] Farrell, *Twenty-third Annual Report*, 97.

[64] Ibid., 97-101.

The federal government, through the Ellis Island immigration authority, sought to prohibit the feeble-minded from entering the country by requiring intelligence tests of those suspected of being of low mentality. Reports of Goddard's research contributed to the passage of the Immigration Restriction Act of 1924 and the increased deportation of immigrants for reasons of mental deficiency. The act, which remained in effect until 1965, placed the heaviest restrictions on eastern and southern Europeans—Italians, Jews, Russians, and Hungarians—national groups Goddard, in his research, found to be feeble-minded.

The statements Farrell made regarding heredity and intelligence during her tenure as Inspector of the Department of Ungraded Classes are in many ways inconsistent. It appears she vacillated between accepting the "science" that correlated the two variables and rejecting the arguments wholeheartedly. One can assume a variety of circumstances were at play in Farrell's personal and professional life which may have influenced her acknowledgment of such a correlation, including her own immigrant history, the Progressive philosophy of the Henry Street Settlement and its residents, and the research considered "best science" at the time, as well as her own observations of the population being referred to and placed in the ungraded classes.

Changes in the Superintendence

Throughout this embattled period, Superintendent Maxwell publicly supported Farrell's decisions as she fought to increase the size of the Department of Ungraded

Classes and further clarify its mission. After being given repeated periods of leave, however, in 1917 Maxwell was forced to resign due to illness. Dr. Gustave Straubenmuller, an Associate Superintendent, who had been fulfilling many of Maxwell's duties since April 1915 when Maxwell first became ill, was named acting superintendent. In February of the following year, the Board of Education, in deference to Maxwell's role in leading the school system for so many years, offered to Maxwell the position of Superintendent Emeritus with a salary of $10,000 a year for life.

Numerous figures within the New York School System and beyond applied to be Maxwell's permanent replacement. Among them were Associate Superintendents Edward B. Shallow, John Tildsley, and William L. Ettinger, Farrell's former principal at Public School Number One; Board of Examiner members Jerome O'Connell and James C. Brynes; Principal John H. Denbigh; New York State Commissioner of Education John H. Finley (1913-1921); and the Superintendent of the Los Angeles School System Albert Shiels. After learning of a desire by New York Mayor John F. Hylan not to have an "outside expert,"[65] the Board of Education in a secret session in May 1918 elected William L. Ettinger.

Ettinger's election must have brought a sigh of relief to Farrell and others involved in the ungraded classes. In a letter to *Ungraded*, a professional journal published by the Ungraded Classroom Teachers Association, dated September 6, 1918, Ettinger

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[65] "Board May Choose School Head Soon," *New York Times*, 11 April 1918, p. 13.

renewed his support for the ungraded classes and discussed his work with Farrell in the early stages of its development:

> My deep interest in your subject is proven by the fact that I had the privilege of cooperating with Miss Farrell in organizing in this city the first class for atypical children...We have too long assumed that all children are about alike in terms of interest and abilities.[66]

Ettinger's support no doubt allowed Farrell to focus on other important issues she faced as Inspector of the Ungraded Classes.

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[66] Editorial. *Ungraded* 4 n.1 (1918): 13-14.

Ettinger's tenure as superintendent ended in 1924 when, despite the support of various community and educational organizations, he was forced out of office at the insistence of New York City Mayor John F. Hylan. In his criticism of Ettinger, Board of Education President George J. Ryan cited an atmosphere of divisiveness for which Ettinger was responsible. Associate Superintendent William J. O'Shea, without having petitioned for the position, was elected City Superintendent, and Farrell served under him until her death in 1932. O'Shea continued to provide the unwavering support that Farrell had experienced under the leadership of Superintendents Maxwell and Ettinger, and neither her role nor her responsibilities changed under O'Shea's direction.

CHAPTER FOUR

PROFESSIONALIZING THE ROLE OF THE UNGRADED TEACHER

Finding Qualified Teachers

In her role as Inspector of the Department of Ungraded Classes, Elizabeth Farrell faced many of the same issues that special education directors deal with today. Perhaps most critical among them was the shortage of qualified teachers to meet the demands for the number of ungraded classes required in the public schools throughout New York City. As head of the department it was considered one of Farrell's chief duties to discover those teachers who had a natural aptitude for dealing with atypical children.

It was no easy task. Every year the number of ungraded classes throughout the school district grew. In 1906 when Farrell became Inspector of the Ungraded Department there were only 14 classes; fifteen years later there were over 250.[1]

To assist Farrell in procuring additional ungraded teachers, the Board of Examiners began to conduct competitive examinations. These exams were open to women with at least three years teaching experience, as well as teachers in private schools and school districts outside of New York City. The examination consisted of three parts: written, oral, and practical. The written portion included two papers, one on the methods of ungraded instruction and the other on principles of education. The practical exam consisted of skill demonstration in such areas as basketry, piano playing, drawing, and sewing, and the oral exam required the candidate to be put in charge of an

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[1] Farrell, *Twenty-third Annual Report*, 78.

ungraded class in order to observe her use of the English language and her classroom management ability. If the applicant did not hold a regular license to teach in the New York City public school system, a certificate of physical fitness, along with proof of vaccinations and citizenship, was required.

For the most part, however, Farrell was forced to resort to less than ideal methods to secure teachers for ungraded classes. One of these was to ask for volunteers among the already licensed teachers employed within the school system. On occasion a teacher would volunteer because of a real interest in helping struggling children. Oftentimes, though, teachers would volunteer because those employed in the special classes made between $1,900 and $3,250 per year, an increase in salary over regular class teachers.[2]

Despite this, Farrell was in favor of increased salary amounts for ungraded class teachers, believing they rendered a valuable service and that the salaries were not commensurate with their difficult work. She felt that substantial increases might induce larger numbers of teachers to prepare themselves for a career in the ungraded classes.

Additional methods of securing teachers were no better. If no regularly licensed teachers volunteered, administrators sometimes chose teachers who were about to retire and might be looking to "escape the rigid inspections given to work in the regular grades."[3] Administrators also frequently turned to teachers who had a genuine ability to

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[2] Elizabeth E. Farrell, *Twenty-eighth Annual Report of the Superintendent of Schools to the Board of Education, Report of the Department of Ungraded Classes* (New York: New York Board of Education, 1925-1926), 397.

[3] Farrell, *Ninth Annual Report*, 619.

discipline a class, believing they might be well suited for ungraded class work.

Compounding the difficulty that Farrell faced in recruiting teachers was that these teachers needed special training, and there were few programs in the area able to provide adequate instruction in the methods of teaching defective children. One of these programs, a summer course sponsored by the Vineland Training School for Feeble-Minded Girls and Boys in Vineland, New Jersey, was an institutional program run by E. R. Johnstone and Henry Herbert Goddard, whose philosophy regarding special needs children was distinctly different from Farrell's. Johnstone, Vineland's superintendent, advocated "education in special classes until sexual maturity, to be followed by locally funded municipal custodial industrial institutions in the cities and by rural colonies to reclaim waste land."[4]

The second program, offered during the school year through Teachers College, was perhaps one of the best known and more cohesive with Farrell's programming ideas since she served as an instructor, but it required teachers to travel miles after the school day had ended. In her *Thirteenth Annual Report* (1910-1911), Farrell commented on the burden placed upon those who chose to become ungraded class teachers:

> Upon investigation, it was found that one teacher who took up ungraded work spent $150 and for five years has taken three hours a week in one of the local colleges. To take only the specialized work on the subject which was offered in the city necessitated miles of travel after the school day was over. This outlay of money and strength many good teachers are unable to make.[5]

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[4] Eugene E. Doll, "Before the Big Time: Early History of the Training School at Vineland, 1888-1949," *American Journal on Mental Retardation* 93 (July 1988): 7.

[5] Farrell, *Thirteenth Annual Report*, 26-27.

In 1906 the Board of Education led by Superintendent Maxwell attempted to address this thorny issue, passing a by-law concerning ungraded teacher training. It authorized three months' leave with full pay for ungraded teachers to study in a school that trained teachers of defectives.[6] Farrell, however, felt that while this was a good first step, it didn't alleviate the burden on ungraded teachers, their families, or the department, and she proposed establishing a three-month graduate course at the Brooklyn Training School for teachers assigned to ungraded classes, possibly because she could design it to specifically coordinate with New York City's ungraded class program.

Although originally not put into operation due to a lack of funds, in 1912 the idea was adopted by the Board of Education. Fifteen teachers were selected to attend the Brooklyn Training School in cohort groups. The first group of ungraded teachers reported in November of that year, with the second group beginning the course of study the following April. Teachers selected for cohort groups came from two areas: the first group held a regular teaching license and had three years' successful teaching experience in regular grades. These teachers were assigned to teach in ungraded classes with the appropriate salary for two years, at the end of which, they must have taken the exam and obtained an ungraded teaching license. The majority of the teachers enrolled in the Brooklyn Training School's graduate course were secured by this method. The second group of teachers was appointed from eligible lists as the result of ungraded teacher examinations. They had to be over 21 years old but less than 46 and meet all the

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[6] Maxwell, *Eighth Annual Report*, 113.

academic, professional, and special qualifications required in the Board of Education by-laws. [7]

The teachers attended classes organized to provide key information on the education of mentally defective children and the development of those skills necessary to be an ungraded class teacher, including psychology, physiology, class management, and manual training. In her *Report on Work for Mentally Defective Children* (1912-1913), Farrell described some of the courses:

> Psychology: The course will aim to give a knowledge of the nature and the activity of mind from the standpoint of normal development... Pathological conditions of attention, memory, will, etc. will be analyzed...
> Physiology: ...Abnormalities and pathological conditions found in school children will be studied and their relation to normal mental development demonstrated...
> Methods: ...Attention will be called to the necessity of establishing correct fundamental or primary habits—hence the obligation to present the concrete rather than the abstract, materials rather than symbols in the beginning work...[8]

During the course of study, the Brooklyn Training School teachers also worked in ungraded classrooms under the supervision of Farrell or one of her assistant inspectors. Ungraded class teachers were observed and evaluated, and observations were followed up with a conference. During this one-and-a-half hour meeting, both strong and weak teaching areas were identified and means of improvement discussed.

Eventually, the course of study at the Brooklyn Training School was extended to three years, and the curriculum was differentiated to identify those teachers who seemed

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[7] Farrell *Twenty-eighth Annual Report*, 396-397.

[8] Farrell, *Fifteenth Annual Report*, 19-20.

best suited to teach the elementary, middle, or upper grades, classifying students according to their ability.[9] Growth in the number of program applicants may have allowed the Board of Education to create more stringent requirements, yet the program proved such a success in securing qualified teachers that Farrell recommended that similar programs be established in other parts of the city.

As inspector of the department, Farrell sought ways to encourage professional growth among its members. Once employed, ungraded teachers were assigned to a small group for a two-year period. These groups, which included experienced teachers, met monthly "in order that they may develop the technique for remedial work in their classes."[10] As part of these groups, they gave demonstrations, formulated supply lists, participated in discussions, and examined problems related to health education, practical applications for math, manual training, industrial, household, and fine arts, and the practical and economical use of industrial supplies. Ungraded teachers also participated in periodic meetings with psychologists from agencies involved with ungraded classes in which they would discuss articles in professional periodicals and exchange views regarding psychological materials and evaluation procedures.[11]

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[9] William O'Shea, *Twenty-seventh Annual Report of the City Superintendent of Schools to the Board of Education* (New York: New York City Board of Education, 1925), 30.

[10] Elizabeth E. Farrell, *Thirty-first Annual Report of the Superintendent of Schools to the Board of Education: Ungraded Classes* (New York: New York City Board of Education, 1929), 258.

[11] William J. O'Shea, *Thirtieth Annual Report of the Superintendent of Schools to the Board of Education* (New York: New York City Board of Education, 1928), 264; O'Shea, *Thirty-first Annual Report*, 258; Elizabeth E. Farrell, *Thirty-second Annual Report of the Superintendent of Schools to the Board of Education: Ungraded Classes* (New York: New York Board of Education, 1930), 293.

Farrell also worked to improve the ungraded teaching profession through the publication of *Ungraded* magazine, a professional periodical sponsored by the Ungraded Classroom Teachers Association. At its inception in May of 1915, Farrell participated as a member of the magazine's advisory board.[12] Later Farrell became more involved, taking first the position of associate editor with, among others, Elizabeth A. Walsh, Farrell's assistant, and later assuming the position of editor, authoring such articles as "The Backward Child" (1915), "The Unclassified Child" (1923), "Mental Hygiene Problems of Maladjusted Children"(1924), and "What New York City Does for its Problem Children" (1925).[13] She also used the magazine as a vehicle to publish research conducted in the ungraded classes, submitting "Preliminary Report on Children Discharged from Ungraded Classes" (1915), and "Survey of Nationality of Children in Ungraded Classes" (1921). It was her relationship with *Ungraded* and the Ungraded Classroom Teachers Association that provided her with a platform to showcase her views regarding special children and their unique needs in the classroom.

University Work in Teacher Education

Farrell's work to foster professional growth was not confined to her department, however. She spent numerous years working to educate students at the university level. In 1906, the year she was appointed inspector of the department, Farrell was awarded a

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[12] *Ungraded* I, n.1 (May 1915).

[13] *Ungraded* X, n.1 (May 1925).

Bachelor of Science degree from New York University, and was later invited to work as a lecturer in the School of Pedagogy. Employed at NYU from 1913-1916, Farrell taught four courses related to the supervision and instruction of special classes: Observation and Practice, where students had the opportunity to observe special classes and participate in readings, discussions, and lectures; Observation and Practice—Advanced Course, where students continued the observation work begun in the earlier course; Organization and Management of Special Classes, which covered the principles and practices of the special classes and discussed factors regarding growth, supervision, and classification; and Standards for Measuring Instruction, where a student taught a group of ungraded children and had their work observed and discussed.[14]

Farrell also served as a lecturer at Teachers College, Columbia University, from 1915 until her death in 1932, teaching several classes jointly with her colleague, Dr. Leta S. Hollingworth, a professor of educational psychology and chief of the psychological lab at Bellevue Hospital. Together, they taught and supervised advanced students in graduate courses who conducted investigations or experiments in the special classes. These graduate courses included Methods of Teaching in Special Classes, later renamed Teaching in Special Classes, where Farrell reviewed the methods and subject matter of the elementary school needed by the special child as well as the diagnosis of failure; and Supervision of Special Classes, later renamed Organization, Management, and

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[14] New York University, *New York University Bulletin: School of Pedagogy* XIV, no. 16 (16 June 1914); New York University, *New York University Bulletin: School of Pedagogy* XV, no. 12 (13 May 1915).

Supervision of Special Classes, which was designed for students who planned on becoming principals, supervisors, instructors, or supervisory officers in teacher training schools.[15]

Professional Organizations

Farrell wanted to promote collegial relationships and communication among those who worked with special needs children. Seeking to recognize the looming impact that the field of applied psychology and intelligence testing would have on the placement of children in ungraded classes, she and several others who worked in education became members of the American Psychological Association (APA). As the number of applied psychologists grew, they looked to the APA for leadership. However, at that time the American Psychological Association was still strongly committed to the scientific side of psychology. To meet what they believed to be a growing need, Farrell, her assistant, Elizabeth A. Walsh, and Dr. Leta S. Hollingworth of Teachers College, attempted to organize the New York State Association of Consulting Psychologists at a meeting of the American Psychological Association in 1916.[16] Unfortunately, due to a lack of interest of the APA, the new organization didn't gain momentum.

Years later the organization resurfaced. Under the leadership of psychologist and Rutgers professor David Mitchell in 1921, the New York State Association of Consulting

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[15] Teachers College, Columbia University, *School of Education, Teachers College.* New York, 1916-1934.

[16] Dorothea McCarthy, *History of the New York State Psychological Association* (Unpublished manuscript, 1956), 3.

Psychologists (later the New York State Psychological Association) became the first state level psychological association as well as the first to advocate for the recognition of the profession of psychology. Organized for the purposes of "the promotion of high standards of professional qualifications for consulting psychologists" and to "stimulate research work in the field of psychological analysis and evaluation,"[17] membership in the organization was limited to those who had a minimum requirement of two years' graduate work in psychology. This new organization, the New York State Association of Consulting Psychologists, valued applied psychology at a time when the American Psychological Association's emphasis was on "pure and applied research."[18] At that formative time, the organization's executive committee included Mitchell as president, Elizabeth A. Walsh as secretary-treasurer, Farrell, and Hollingworth.

Perhaps the organization's biggest accomplishment during those early years was the June 1922 publication of a pamphlet by the American Red Cross entitled *Examination of Pre-School Age Children: Examination of Children Upon Registering Before Entering School*. The pamphlet, detailing mental test data on 1,113 children entering grades kindergarten and 1A in eight New York City public schools, was created in cooperation with Farrell and the Department of Ungraded Classes in June 1921. The goal of the publication was to provide data for principals to use in classifying children for the

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[17] "Notes and News," *The Psychological Bulletin* 18 (1921): 439.

[18] John D. Hogan, *A History of the New York State Psychological Association: The Early Years.* First Draft (New York: St. John's University, 1994), 4-5.

ungraded classes.[19] It was believed that if all examinations could be made in June, physical defects could be corrected during the summer through the coordination of services of the school nurses and the American Red Cross, eliminating the interruption of school attendance by first year students.[20] In this venture, Farrell used her involvement in the New York State Association of Consulting Psychologists to ease the burden on her Department of Ungraded Classes by lessening the number of children referred to the Psycho-Educational Clinic once the school year began.

Farrell was also involved at the ground floor in organizations focused on teaching special needs children. In 1897, upon petition of Alexander Graham Bell, the Department of Special Education of the National Education Association (NEA) was formed. In 1911 Farrell became vice-president of the organization, and later went on to become president in 1916 or 1918 (accounts vary). It was in this leadership capacity that she promoted collegiality, bringing together individuals representing day and residential schools, clinics, private agencies, state departments of education, hospitals, and universities to discuss topics related to special needs.[21] Unfortunately, records indicate that the department disintegrated in 1918 due to a lack of publications, meager committee work, and limited funds.[22]

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[19] McCarthy, 3.

[20] Farrell, *Twenty-third Annual Report*, 93.

[21] *The Journal of the National Education Association* (April 1917) in Harley Z. Wooden, "The CEC Story. Chapter 1. Growth of a Social Concept: An Overview," in Francis E. Lord, ed., *Exceptional Children* 47 n.7 (April 1981): 43.

[22] Harley Z. Wooden to Mary E. Harnett, 30 March 1962, *CEC Pioneers and Early Presidents*, Council for Exceptional Children Archives, Council for Exceptional Children, Arlington, Virginia.

After the dissolution of the NEA's Department of Special Education, an organization was needed which would fill the "void left by the demise of its forerunners" and keep special class teachers in touch with each other and with developments in the field.[23] Farrell was teaching summer courses at Teachers College in August of 1922 when a group of students enrolled in her courses, led by Henrietta Johnson of Oakland, California, asked her to attend a meeting to discuss possible ways to promote fellowship among educators as well as a means of exchanging ideas among workers in special education. At that meeting, the International Council for the Education of Exceptional Children (later the Council for Exceptional Children) (CEC) was formed, and Farrell, known for stressing the importance of communication among professionals, was unanimously elected president.[24]

At that first organizational meeting, the Council adopted three aims: to unite those interested in educational problems of "special children," to emphasize the education of "special children" rather than his/her identification, and to establish professional standards for teachers in the field of special education.[25] Membership was open to any

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[23] Harley Z. Wooden, "The CEC Story. Chapter 1. Growth of a Social Concept: An Overview," in Francis E. Lord, ed., *Exceptional Children* 47 n.7 (April 1981): 43.

[24] M. LaVinia Warner, "Early History of the International Council for Exceptional Children," *Journal of Exceptional Children* 8 (1942): 245.

[25] "IV History of the International Council for Exceptional Children, First Decade," Council for Exceptional Children Archives, Council for Exceptional Children, Arlington, Virginia.

person who was interested in the education of exceptional children, and dues were $1 per year. [26]

The Council, originally affiliated with the National Education Association, held meetings at the same time and place as the NEA's Department of Superintendence until the affiliation was withdrawn in 1977.[27] At the first annual meeting of the International Council in 1922, Farrell spoke about the purpose of such a teaching organization and the responsibilities of those who were called to join:

> The International Council for the Education of Exceptional Children will be the clearinghouse of knowledge useful to teachers in their special fields. The Council will be for teachers the authoritative body on questions of subject matter, method and school or class organization. At its annual meeting it hopes to present ideas proved to be useful in the training of exceptional children. The Council hopes to stimulate the teaching of children at least to the extent that psychologists have stimulated classification on the basis of intellectual power. The Council will stand back of its membership in demanding high professional qualifications for those designated to serve in its fields. It will demand freedom for its members as practitioners. It will promote the idea that educational work, whether in institutions or in public day schools, must be in the hands of and directed by men and women trained in the science and art of education...With modesty and great humility all its members accept responsibilities of their calling. They hope that because of their efforts public education in this country will be less machine-made and more individual; that the schools of this country will use the ability of each pupil group to its maximum; that the school will fit its burden to the back which bears it; that it will bring the opportunity of successful achievement to every child.[28]

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[26] "Minutes of the Organization of the Council for the Education of Exceptional Children," Executive Committee, Board of Directors, Business Meetings, 1922-1941. Council for Exceptional Children Archives, Arlington, Virginia.

[27] Gerald J. Hime, "Seventy-five Years of CEC Exceptional Service," *Teaching Exceptional Children* 29 n.5 (May/June 1997): 4.

[28] Elizabeth E. Farrell, "President's Address: First Annual Meeting of the International Council for Exceptional Children," 3-9, in Samuel A. Kirk and Francis E. Lord, eds., *Exceptional Children: Educational Resources and Perspectives* (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1974), 16-21.

Several items of importance were included in meeting discussions throughout the years, including teacher training, professional collegiality, and program and instructional design. In 1924, at the second annual meeting of the Council, a new section of the professional journal *Ungraded*, of which Farrell was editor, was designated to serve as the official pronouncement of the council, thus linking the journal, the Ungraded Classroom Teacher's Association, and the Council together.[29]

At the fourth annual meeting in 1926, Farrell stepped down as president of the council, taking instead the position of vice-president. By then there were over 400 members in the organization, with members from 33 states, the District of Columbia, Canada, India, and Holland, reflecting perhaps both the need for such an organization as well as Farrell's strength in fostering its growth. [30]

In 1929, at the Council's seventh annual meeting, a tribute was read to Farrell for her years of service to the Council and her contributions in the field of education. At that time Farrell was awarded a lifetime membership in the Council.[31] At its tenth annual meeting in 1932, a resolution was passed noting Farrell's silver anniversary with the

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[29] "Minutes of the Second Annual Meeting of the International Council for the Education of Exceptional Children," Executive Committee, Board of Directors, Business Meetings, 1922-1941. Council for Exceptional Children Archives, Council for Exceptional Children, Arlington, Virginia.

[30] "IV History of the International Council for Exceptional Children, First Decade," Council for Exceptional Children Archives, Council for Exceptional Children, Arlington, Virginia.

[31] "Minutes of the Seventh Annual Meeting of the International Council for the Education of Exceptional Children," Council for Exceptional Children Archives, Council for Exceptional Children, Arlington, Virginia

Department of Ungraded Classes. Following that, the Council sent her a congratulatory telegram.[32]

Many decades later Farrell's leadership is still recognized among current Council members. A bronze tablet bearing her profile hangs in the offices of the Council for Exceptional Children in Arlington, Virginia, reminding everyone about the guiding philosophies of its first president:

> In memory of Elizabeth Farrell, pioneer teacher of backward children in New York City. She devoted her life to the development of the ungraded classes and left to all children in need of special help the assurance that they might find it in the public schools.

End of a Career

Farrell celebrated the 25th anniversary of the Ungraded Class Department in March of 1932 with a party held at the Hotel Astor in New York. A variety of people spoke, including Dr. John H. Finley from the Department of Education; Dr. William H. Ettinger, Farrell's principal at the Henry Street School and superintendent of the New York Public School System; Lillian Wald of the Henry Street Settlement; Charles C. Burlingham, former president of the Board of Education; and Dr. Leta S. Hollingworth of Teachers College. Farrell received congratulatory telegrams from numerous influential people familiar with her work, among them Warden Lewis E. Lawes of Ossining "Sing Sing" Prison; Mrs. Franklin D. Roosevelt; Felix Warburg, president of the Board of

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[32] "Minutes of the Tenth Annual Meeting of the International Council for the Education of Exceptional Children," Minutes of All Business Meetings, 1922-1941. Council for Exceptional Children Archives, Council for Exceptional Children, Arlington, Virginia.

Directors of the Henry Street Settlement; the International Council for the Education of Exceptional Children; and E. R. Johnstone, Director of the Vineland Training School for Feeble-Minded Girls and Boys.

Additional telegrams were received from Ray Lyman Wilbur, Secretary of the Interior, who wrote: "You have pioneered in this important field of education, and your accomplishments help to prove the sound public policy of training the handicapped child to help himself,"[33] and from Dr. F. J. Kelley of the United States Office of Education, who referred to the effect the ungraded classes had on the whole field of education when he wrote:

> It emphasizes the right of the child to be dealt with intelligently as society's charge and not as its outcast...with the result that the whole system of education has been modified to consider improved conditions for all children.[34]

Not long after the celebration, Farrell requested a leave of absence from her inspector position to travel to Battle Creek, Michigan, and the Cleveland Clinic, in Cleveland, Ohio, for treatment of a heart ailment. Several members of her family, including her older brother George and younger sisters Ida and Agnes Irene, traveled with her. In her absence, Elizabeth A. Walsh, Farrell's assistant, was appointed acting inspector. Farrell passed away unexpectedly during treatment on October 15, 1932.

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[33] "Ungraded Classes Mark 25th Year," *New York Times*, 6 March 1932, p. 13.

[34] Ibid.

Her family accompanied her body back to Utica, New York, her hometown, to be buried in the family plot. Although many in Utica may not have realized the impact of her life's work, an editorial in the *New York Times* that ran after her death reminded everyone how important her presence had been:

> There are shrines where persons healed of their infirmities leave their crutches or other 'votive offerings' to the saint thus commemorated. If all the 'atypical,' 'handicapped,' 'ungraded,' children who had been helped by the late Miss Farrell, together with those who have worked with and under her, were to bring such symbols of their gratitude, additional rooms for these maladjusted little ones would be necessary...The moral of Miss Farrell's educational success is 'individualization.'[35]

Upon hearing of her death, a memorial resolution was adopted by the faculty of the Oswego Normal and Training School, recognizing her as an alumna and paying tribute to her educational contributions:

> Her contributions will continue to function in the future work of all teachers of special classes and will, through the years, continue to make it possible for handicapped children to have the opportunity for more efficient living and greater happiness as well as converting possible social liabilities into assets...She leaves us a legacy of work well done, of wisdom directed persistently toward the solution of the difficult problems in her chosen field, of loyalty to the profession and the noble ideals which it professes. We shall always cherish her memory as that of a wise and virtuous teacher.[36]

Farrell's loss to her New York City community and school system was keenly felt over the next year. A memorial service held in her honor in February of 1933 at the

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[35] " Elizabeth Farrell, Noted Educator of 'Ungraded' Pupil, Is Buried in Utica," *Utica (New York) Observer Dispatch*, 29 October 1932, p. 5.

[36] "Memorial Resolutions," 28 November 1932, Farrell Papers, Special Collections, Milbank Memorial Library, Teachers College, New York.

Cosmopolitan Club in New York included many of the same speakers as the 25th anniversary celebration the year before. Speakers included Dr. John H. Finley, Dr. Leta S. Hollingworth, and Felix Warburg, as well as Dr. Edward L. Thorndike, professor of education at Teachers College, Dr. Thomas M. Balliet, professor emeritus at New York University, and Margaret McCooey, associate superintendent of schools.

I. Grace Ball, president of the International Council for Exceptional Children (originally the International Council for the Education of Exceptional Children), sent a telegram to the memorial, describing the important role Farrell fulfilled:

> In the passing of Elizabeth E. Farrell, the International Council for Exceptional Children has lost its founder, a wise counselor, a rare friend. For her clear vision, her unfailing help, her warm championship of children, especially these handicapped little ones under her care, she will ever be a living influence in those whose lives she touched. We mourn her passing; we rejoice in her living.[37]

In May of 1933 the faculty and students of Oswego Normal and Training School dedicated a bronze tablet to Farrell to recognize her contribution in establishing their Department of Special Training in 1916 and her impact on special needs education. Dr. John H. Finley wrote the inscription:

> In memory of Elizabeth Farrell, Class of 1895, Oswego State Normal and Training School, who gave her life that the least might live as abundantly as their handicaps of mind or body permitted. A teacher of the atypical, the subnormal, the dull of spirit, the slow of speech, the inert. In teaching them she also gave instruction in the method by which the normal, the bright, and alert should be taught. Beginning with a little group

[37] "Minutes of the Eleventh Annual Meeting of the International Council for the Education of Exceptional Children," Minutes of All Business Meetings, 1922-1941. Council for Exceptional Children Archives, Council for Exceptional Children, Arlington, Virginia

of boys in the Lower East Side of Manhattan, she became the tutelary of the ungraded classes for all New York City, demanding no child too atypical to be neglected...Keep we the altars kindled. Guard we the sacred fires.[38]

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[38] "Dedication of Tablet in Memory of Elizabeth Farrell," Council for Exceptional Children Archives, Council for Exceptional Children, Arlington, Virginia.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Farrell's Role in Special Education

Although blessed with an upbringing of education and wealth, Elizabeth E. Farrell turned her back on her family's fortune to embrace the progressive reform movement and work to change the educational structure of the New York City Public School System. Laboring alongside Lillian D. Wald and others, Farrell laid the groundwork for a curriculum designed to address the needs of those children unable to succeed in the regular class setting. Indeed, her vision for the schools was far in advance of the profession at the time, and her philosophies became the basis for special education programs in use in the United States today.

Throughout her twenty-five years as Inspector of the Department of Ungraded Classes, she made decisions that proved to be both significant and influential in the field of education. Legislation passed in the United States decades later, including Public Law 94-142, the Education of All Handicapped Children Act, and its reauthorization, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, would confirm her convictions.

It was perhaps Farrell's first decision as department head that would prove the most monumental for the future of special needs programming and legislative action. After extensive study of the special class program in Great Britain, Farrell clarified her hopes for the ungraded classes, seeking to adopt a similar methodical procedure of examination and record-keeping but arguing against any attempt to copy Great Britain's

system of separate programs, separate facilities, and separate schools. Believing such a policy would stigmatize and differentiate students with special needs, she articulated an argument expressed years later in the landmark Supreme Court decision Brown v. Board of Education (1954) which prohibited the idea of "separate but equal."

Farrell also disputed the premise held by many at that time that special class programs were to serve as a precursor to institutional life. The goal of the special class, Farrell believed, was not to prepare students for lives in the institution but to return children back to the regular class setting after their difficulties have been addressed. Again, this judgment proved pivotal, as it served as the framework for later mainstreaming efforts in this country.

Farrell fought the use of intelligence testing as the single measure for placement of a child in the ungraded class, going up against one of the nation's premier experts on the use of intelligence testing in the schools, Henry H. Goddard. Her strong stance on this topic effectively prevented the New York City Board of Education from endorsing Goddard's findings regarding intelligence testing in his 1911-1912 New York School Inquiry report.

Instead, Farrell supported a comprehensive referral and placement procedure based on several different measures, in the hopes that children would be more appropriately identified and placed. She anticipated types of exceptionalities that had not yet been identified, comparing the emerging science of education to the field of medicine, saying:

> There was a time in the evolution of medical science when people fell into two groups—well people and sick people...The tendency in medical research to make closer classification in order that treatment may be more exact and definite. The application of a method similar to this is what the school needs.[1]

To further this effort, she created the Psycho-Educational Clinic, employing professionals from education, medicine, psychology, and social services, to operate in conjunction with the Department of Ungraded Classes. To this day, a variety of testing and evaluation procedures are required before a child can be placed into a program of special education.

As Inspector, one of Farrell's chief duties was to secure teachers for the ungraded classes, and she struggled with the shortage of qualified teachers. To help address this issue, Farrell taught at several universities, among them Teachers College and New York University, attempting to interest and encourage others to choose a career in the ungraded classes. Once employed, she promoted their professional growth through the use of teacher cohort groups, pairing novice and experienced teachers, allowing them the freedom to discuss issues relevant to the ungraded classes. She offered her guidance through the magazine *Ungraded*, published by the Ungraded Classroom Teachers Association, serving first on its advisory board and later becoming an editor and frequent contributor.

As founding president of the International Council for the Education of Exceptional Children (later the Council for Exceptional Children), she further promoted

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[1] Farrell, "The Backward Child": 7.

collegiality and professionalism among those who worked with the special classes, providing the support that could only be obtained through fellowship with others in the field. The Council, which began with a group of educators taking summer courses taught by Farrell at Teachers College, has grown to become the leading professional special education organization today.

Further, Farrell forever linked the profession of psychology to special education through her work with the New York State Association of Consulting Psychologists (later the New York State Psychological Association). Although not a psychologist herself, she recognized the importance of applied psychology in the schools and sought to build a body of knowledge based on information rather than opinion. Her union with this professional organization served to increase her credibility and was yet another example of the many ways in which Farrell promoted collegiality and professional improvement among those that labored in the public school systems. This organization continues to thrive.

Farrell and the Problems of Education Today

Despite her hard work creating a model of individualized education, it is uncertain how Farrell would view the current state of special education in this country. No doubt pleased to find that federal law requires accommodations be made for exceptional learners, Farrell might be dismayed by the sheer number of students needing support, many of whom are unable to qualify for special services.

While her Ungraded Class program initially served any student who struggled within the context of the regular class, requirements were later refined, allowing only those with low mentality to be admitted. The Psycho-Educational Clinic she created screened potential ungraded class students, and a substantial number of referred students were sent back to the regular class with recommendations and follow-up procedures in place. Although not eligible for the ungraded classes, Farrell saw to it that even these children were provided with some degree of support and assistance.

This is certainly an achievement when one examines the classrooms of today, where "at-risk" or struggling students who do not qualify for or are never referred for special services are frequently left to their own devices in the regular classes. In school systems throughout the country, there are still many children who "fall between the cracks," and there are no programs in place to assist them or monitor their progress. Farrell believed that placement in the ungraded classrooms should occur only after other types of intervention have been exhausted, and she made sure that students who were turned away from the Department of Ungraded Classes received support in the regular classroom. In this regard, Farrell's philosophy was apparent: the regular classroom is the best place for most public school students.

Farrell would also most likely be disappointed to learn that the educational disparity she sought to rectify in her work as part of the progressive reform movement is still the norm in communities throughout the United States. There are many children who, for reasons related to socio-economics, race, gender, language, school funding

issues, and limited opportunities, are unable to receive a quality education. Despite her struggle to improve social and educational conditions, the United States is still largely centered around a system of "haves" and "have nots." In many ways, not much has changed.

There are still several questions regarding Farrell and her Department of Ungraded Classes that have yet to be explored. During the developmental period of the ungraded classes, Farrell and the members of her team conducted systematic evaluations of children proposed for the ungraded classes. It was through this procedure that many conditions that impeded students' school progress were discovered. Following the creation of the ungraded classes and as a result of these examinations, other types of special classes were developed, including classes for the blind, the tubercular, and the anemic. During Farrell's tenure, a class was created to serve only those students with IQ scores of less than 50. A study detailing the development of these classes and Farrell's influence on their creation is also needed.

Further, there has been no detailed accounting of the progress of the ungraded classes after Farrell's death in 1932 to the present time. The change and evolution that occurred in the Department of Ungraded Classes no doubt mirrored, or even superseded, changes that occurred in the school systems of other large cities across the country. An examination of the program in the New York City schools would most likely provide key information regarding the history of legislation for the disabled in the United States. Additionally, it would be of interest to note how true the program in New York City

remained to Farrell's ideals. Therefore, a study examining the life cycle of the Department of Ungraded Classes is recommended.

We can only speculate as to how special education in the United States would be different were it not for the dedication and labor of Elizabeth E. Farrell. Therefore, it is fitting that Farrell be recognized for her contributions to educational practice and programming in the United States. It was her friend and mentor Lillian D. Wald who perhaps stated it best when she reflected upon the importance of Farrell's work:

> Looking back upon the struggles to win formal recognition of the existence of these children...we realize our colleague's devotion to them, her power to excite enthusiasm in us, and her understanding of the social implications of their existence, came from a deep-lying principle that every human being, even the least lovely, merits respectful consideration of his rights and personality.[2]

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[2] Wald, *The House on Henry Street*, 120-121.

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