Parents Panel Works
On School Plan Here

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A committee of parents appointed by the Lafayette Parish School Board to approve or reject the Board's plan to help failing students instead worked on its own plan last night.

The committee suggested several steps for the plan. The most important, according to committee member Rose Day, is to reduce the teacher-pupil ratio. The committee believes this is crucial, she said, especially in the lower elementary grades. The ratio should be no more than 20 students per teacher.

Some classes now have more than 30 students enrolled.

Mrs. Day said the parish computes teacher-pupil ratio by including all school personnel (librarians, for instance) as teachers. The committee says only classroom instructors should be counted.

The committee also said students should be grouped by ability so that slower students are not lost in lessons designed for better students and so that better students are not held back by lower-level lessons.

This form of teaching is most important in the first four years of school, Mrs. Day said, because reading skills are being formed and one teacher cannot meet the needs of students who are on different levels.

In grades above third grade, the parent plan says students should be grouped only for reading and math.

The parents also said kindergarten and elementary school teachers should return to the use of phonics.

The plan includes parent-teacher committees in schools to work with remedial students so the parents and teachers can better understand students' problems.

Some teachers who complained that parents were not helping students with their homework have found that the parents couldn't do it even if they wanted to, Mrs. Day said. That's because the parents themselves had had little schooling. So, instead of telling the teachers that their parents could not read, students told teachers that they did not want to do their homework or that they lost it.

The parents suggested that summer school be taught more on a remedial level so that problems could be solved instead of smoothed over by repeating the same material taught during the regular year.

Most of kindergarten through the third grade should be basic reading and math, the committee said, and students should not be split among several classrooms during the day. If students are kept in one classroom, teachers can get to know their students better and keep tabs on them.

The parents suggested that schools should look to the community for help in solving remedial education problems. Retired teachers and young teachers who are at home with small children and cannot work full days could be used to teach part-time remedial classes.

Mrs. Day said she believes the system now used for dealing with failing students in Lafayette Parish is "programming for future failure." About 3,000 students in grades 1-8 — about 20 percent of those enrolled — are failing.