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Bernice G. Hron

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THE DEVELOPMENT OF
AN INFORMAL INITIAL READINESS INVENTORY

by

Bernice G. Hron

A RESEARCH PAPER
SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
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This research paper has been
approved for the Graduate Committee
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Sister Marie Colette OSF
(Adviser)

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CHAPTER I

THE PROBLEM

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to determine how kindergarten teachers could convey to first grade teachers those observations of student development considered important to readiness for beginning reading and arithmetic.

Significance of the Study

Rather than accepting remediation as the solution to learning problems, it would appear that prevention of learning difficulties should receive greater emphasis. Emphasis toward the prevention of learning problems would benefit the child in three ways. First, there would be a less damaged self-image. Second, the child is less likely to develop undesirable attitudes toward all learning. And third, emotional and social frustrations will be minimized. What emphasis toward prevention of difficulties is important at kindergarten and first grade level?

Within any kindergarten classroom are found children who differ in chronological age, mental age, physical, emotional, and social maturity. Each responds differently to classroom procedures. Each kindergarten teacher plans such activities to implement the curriculum as she deems necessary and best to meet the needs of the students in her class. During the course of the year she makes many observations of the children in her care. Improved means of communication among teachers would

provide a better continuity of program for the child. How can these observations be communicated to the first grade teachers?

Moving all children into a regular first grade classroom because they have attended kindergarten one year does not recognize individual differences among children. Retaining some children in kindergarten may communicate to a child the thought that he is a failure. He will need to face another year of only half-days at school. He will be older than the other children. He may be larger than the others. What happens to the child who is retained in kindergarten? What happens to the child who is promoted into first grade before he is ready for beginning reading? Would placement in a transition room solve the problem?

These three areas, prevention of reading problems, communication of observations, and lack of readiness, have prompted the following questions:

1. What emphasis toward prevention of difficulties is important at kindergarten and first grade level?
2. How can kindergarten teachers' observations be communicated to first grade teachers?
3. What happens to the child who is not ready for first grade at the end of his kindergarten year?
4. Would placement into a transitional room solve the problem of possible maturational lag?

Of significance in this study, too, was the fact that it became necessary while developing the inventory, to identify those factors con-

sidered important to initial readiness for reading.

The fact that information on the inventory would be of value to other school personnel was important to the study.

Concept of the Transition Room

As early as 1940 Sr. Mary Nila mentioned the need for establishing a transition period for children who were not ready for beginning reading after having attended kindergarten a year.¹

In 1966, after twenty years of clinical experience with "educationally disabled children" de Hirsch, Jansky, and Langford recommended "that schools institute small 'transition classes' between kindergarten and first grade for children regardless of age, who are not 'ready'."²

Transition room, as defined by the teachers in this study, is a class which provides time for children to adjust from kindergarten to first grade. Children who have had a year of kindergarten and are not yet ready for first grade or who may not have attended kindergarten, but appear too mature for kindergarten experience at their present chronological age, are enrolled in this class. The first grade will be beyond their stage of readiness and the pace of activities there may lead to frustration, damaged self-image, and undesirable attitudes toward learning. They are in a stage of readiness beyond the usual September kindergarten child. They appear to be ready for a full day of school. Gen-

¹Sister Mary Nila Steinbach, O.S.F., An Experimental Study of Progress in First Grade Reading (Washington D.C.: The Catholic University Press, 1940), p.108.

²Katrina de Hirsch, Jeanette Jefferson Lansky, and William S. Langford, Predicting Reading Failure (New York: Harper and Row, Publisher, 1966), p. 86.

eral readiness factors may have been established, but the specific factors of visual and auditory perception, balance and coordination, listening, language development, following directions, visual and auditory memory, and building background experiences are in need of further development.

The desire to dream a little for the good of the children whose problems seem mountainous is present with all teachers. However, finding the funds to implement a project is often difficult. Fortunate, indeed, was the group at the Barton School, West Bend, Wisconsin. This attendance area qualified for federal funds under Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. These funds provided an opportunity to devise a special program for a group of children too far along to repeat kindergarten and not far enough for regular first grade.

Teacher judgement and the Metropolitan Readiness Tests³ scores were used to identify children for this special class, the transition room. In some instances the help of the school psychologist was sought.

Comments from the kindergarten teachers included: poor eye-hand coordination, very immature, does not listen well, easily distracted, poor number concepts, needs help in language development, poor muscular coordination, emotional instability, or negative attitude toward self.

The percentile scores on the readiness test of the children who were placed in the transition room ranged from thirteen to sixty-one. This placed them in the C, D, or E category of scores. The authors of the test describe these categories as follows:

³Gertrude H. Hildreth, Nellie L. Griffiths, and Mary E. McGauvran, Metropolitan Readiness Tests Form A (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., 1965).

- C Average---Likely to succeed in first-grade work. Careful study should be made of the specific strengths and weaknesses of pupils in this group and their instruction planned accordingly.
- D Low Normal---Likely to have difficulty in first-grade work. Should be assigned to slow section and given more individualized help.
- E Low---Chances of difficulty high under ordinary instructional conditions. Further readiness work, assignment to slow sections, or individualized work is essential.⁴

Indications that a child is not ready for first grade work must not be ignored. Essential readiness activities must be provided. Finding the child's strengths and weaknesses and building for him, a program to develop his specific readiness needs will help retain the child's enthusiasm for school and give him the success experiences he needs. Some of the children in the transition room may need many months of readiness, maturation, and building a background for learning.

To determine activities for the group the subtest scores of the Metropolitan Readiness Test⁵ were examined. The Marianne Frostig Developmental Test of Visual Perception⁶ was administered; as was the Wepman Auditory Discrimination Test, Form I.⁷

⁴Gertrude H. Hildreth, Nellie L. Griffiths, and Mary E. McGauvran, Manual of Directions Metropolitan Readiness Tests (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., 1965), p. 8.

⁵Gertrude H. Hildreth, Nellie L. Griffiths, and Mary E. McGauvran, Metropolitan Readiness Tests Form A (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., 1965). (For subtest scores see Appendix I, p.31).

⁶Marianne Frostig, Welty Lefever, and John R. E. Whittlesey, Marianne Frostig Developmental Test of Visual Perception (Palo Alto, Cal: Consulting Psychologists Press, 1961).

⁷Joseph M. Wepman, Auditory Discrimination Test (Chicago: 950 E. 59th Street, 1958).

The children need to be under the direction of an alert, perceptive teacher with an attitude of positive support toward the children. Hers is the task of structuring a program to meet each child's needs. The instruction must be organized in such a way that there is an orderly progression of skills. Changes in plans must be frequent as the child's responses to activities are noted. The instruction must be tension free. Children must be helped to function first on a somewhat simple basis and later in a more complex world.

The development of verbal skills, visual and auditory perception, and motor functions are important components of the transition room curriculum.

In addition to planning a program based on the needs of the children, materials to implement the activities must be available. In organizing the transition room these were carefully chosen to develop those areas in need of strengthening.

Enrollments should be kept low. Fifteen is considered the maximum number of students for the class.

A readiness for reading survey should be made before "book reading" is started. The Pre-Reading Test of Scholastic Ability to Determine Reading Readiness Forms A and B⁸ were used in the Barton School transition room to precede the basal series.

The adults responsible for the organization and operation of a

⁸Byron H. Van Roekel and Peggy Ramstad, Pre-Reading Test of Scholastic Ability to Determine Reading Readiness (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1966).

transition room should be aware of and concerned with the following factors:

1. An initial screening of all kindergarten children to be followed by a more detailed diagnosis of the children enrolled, will establish the needs of these children.
2. The classroom program must be structured to meet the needs of each individual.
3. Enrollment must be kept low - maximum is fifteen.
4. Many carefully chosen materials and equipment are a necessity.
5. Many concrete experiences must be provided.
6. An alert, well informed, creative teacher is needed to guide the ever changing activity for these young people.
7. Continuous diagnostic teaching must prevail.
8. Plans must be made for total program evaluation.
9. All adults around these children must be remembering constantly that children need to meet success many times each day as they develop the ability to see and understand the world about them.

General Plan

A review of literature was made to gather from recent research and from the studies of leaders in the field of reading, those factors justifying kindergarten existence and the thinking concerned with early education. Readiness factors were examined. Information on the causes

of reading difficulties discernible at kindergarten age and the possibility of preventing reading disabilities was also sought in literature. This survey is presented in Chapter II.

A series of three meetings was held with teachers of kindergarten and first grade in West Bend, Wisconsin to provide an opportunity to discuss factors important to readiness for beginning reading. Recognition of the importance of good communication between kindergarten and first grade teachers resulted in the development of the Informal Initial Readiness Inventory.⁹ Summary of the discussion at these meetings is presented in Chapter III.

This study has been concerned with developing a written means of communicating the observations of kindergarten teachers to first grade teachers. Of major concern also was the grade placement of children during their second year at school and the development of firm foundations for beginning reading so that, as far as possible, reading problems might be avoided. This summary along with educational implications and suggestions for further study are presented in Chapter IV.

Limitations

The findings recorded on the Informal Initial Readiness Inventory are not objective findings. There are no standardized test scores of performance or achievement. These checks are recordings of teacher observations of the child's responses and interactions in the classroom and on the playground from day to day.

⁹Appendix I, p. 32.

CHAPTER II

SURVEY OF RELATED LITERATURE

Justification for Kindergarten Existence and Need for Early Education

Research strongly supports the nation-wide plea for kindergartens as a part of the public school system. Currently less than half of America's kindergarten age children are in kindergarten. More and more states recognize this as a loss, perhaps irretrievable, for the numbers of children thus deprived.¹

This material was prepared by the Kindergarten Study Committee for presentation to the Massachusetts State Board of Education. Mindness and Keliher were members of the committee. They also quote from a 1925 publication by Gesell in which he recognized the importance of the early years. His statement lends support to the concept advocating pre-kindergarten schooling.

. . .the brain grows at a tremendous rate during the pre-school age, reaching almost its mature bulk before the age of six. . . .The mind develops with corresponding velocity. The infant learns to see, to hear, handle, walk, comprehend, and talk. He acquires an uncountable number of habits fundamental to the complex art of living. Never again will his mind, his character, his spirit advance as rapidly as in this formative pre-school period of growth.²

Bloom analysed data relating to achievement and stated that:

¹Mary Mindness and Alice V. Keliher, Review of Research Related to the Advantage of Kindergarten (Washington D.C.: Association for Childhood Education International, 1967), p. 1.

²Arnold Gesell, The Mental Growth of the Pre-School Child (New York: The MacMillan Co., 1925), p. 14, quoted in Mary Mindness and Alice V. Keliher, Review of Research Related to the Advantages of Kindergarten (Washington, D.C.: Association for Childhood Education International, 1967), p.1.

Since our estimates suggest that about 17% of the growth (in educational achievement) takes place between the ages of 4 and 6, we could hypothesize that nursery school and kindergarten could have far reaching consequences on the child's general learning pattern. . . . This suggests the great importance of the first few years of school as well as the pre-school period in the development of learning patterns and general achievement. These are the years in which general learning patterns develop most rapidly, and failure to develop appropriate achievement and learning in these years is likely to lead to continued failure throughout the remainder of the individual's career. The implications for more powerful and effective environments in the primary grades are obvious.³

The Head Start Programs financed with federal funds from the Office of Economic Opportunity have given support to early organized instruction; instruction which even precedes kindergarten; instruction which is based on the needs of the children it serves. Witty in "Reading Instruction for the Educationally Retarded and the Disadvantaged" states that, "Repeatedly emphasized by writers is the need of the disadvantaged for improved reading ability and greater proficiency in other skills of communication."⁴ When listing the bases for reading improvement Witty includes these factors:

The need for establishing pre-school or nursery centers to provide the background in language and related experiences essential to successful reading.

The importance of enriching the experience of pupils in school so as to equip them with the necessary background which has been denied or precluded.⁵

Other researchers in this field, de Hirsch, Jansky, and Langford,

³Benjamin S. Bloom, Stability and Change in Human Characteristics (New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 1964), p. 110, quoted in Mary Mindness and Alice V. Keliher, Review of Research Related to the Advantages of Kindergarten (Washington, D.C.: Association for Childhood Education International, 1967), p.1.

⁴Paul Witty, "Reading Instruction for the Educationally Retarded and the Disadvantaged," Invitational Addresses: 1965 (Newark, Delaware: International Reading Association, Inc., 1965), p.94.

⁵Ibid., p.95.

assure their readers that early education of a diagnostic nature will prevent many of the problems met in later school years. They include these thoughts in their findings:

Twenty years of clinical experience with intelligent, but educationally disabled children, whose learning drive has become severely damaged has convinced us that many of these children would not have required help had their difficulties been recognized at early ages. Early identification would have obviated the need for later remedial measures.⁶

Wachner reports that among several organizational modifications the pre-school program is worthy of note.

A pre-school program begun in one school to discover whether early preparation could offset some of the lacks of the child with limited background, now has "graduates" in the primary grades who are, in most cases, well ahead of peers who had no pre-school experience.⁷

It would appear that there is evidence to suggest that early education, both kindergarten and pre-kindergarten, will benefit the children involved. This is the time in the life of the child when learning patterns develop rapidly. It is also the time when enriching experiences will build good foundations for later success.

Readiness Factors

Knowledge of early developmental factors seem relevant to developing readiness for reading. In discussing these developmental factors Frostig places sensori-motor development in the first two years of life. It is at this time "that life movement and the reception of stimuli become fused into a single act." Here, too, visual-motor skills and eye

⁶Katrina de Hirsch, Jeanette J. Jansky, and William S. Langford, Predicting Reading Failure (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1966), p. 92.

⁷Clarence W. Wachner, "Detroit Great Cities School Improvement Program in Language Arts," Elementary English, XXXXI (November, 1964), p. 741.

movement develop. Language development takes place during the period from the second to the fourth year. Language development includes the auditory perception skills involved in speech and speech development. This is the formation of sounds as well as the development of patterns in the use of words. Visual perception skills, according to Frostig, are likely to unfold gradually in the ages between four and one-half and seven. Learning to read is possible at this time unless there is a lag in the development of visual-perceptual skill. Higher thought processes are likely to develop after seven years of age.⁸

Readiness is often described as maturation for a given task. Frostig, however, maintains that ". . .readiness is not only dependent upon maturational development, but can also be promoted by good teaching practices."⁹ The home as well as the school can contribute to this teaching. For some children the initial readiness development has taken place in the home environment. When there is a maturity of the developmental factors and a home in which a family reads together, discusses everyday happenings with each other, values every child as a human being, and motivates its members toward observations of the world about them, children are likely to come to school well advanced in the general readiness skills. For others not so mature or well prepared, a program must be carefully planned to include major emphasis on the development of readiness factors.

Educators err in their teaching unless they explore the steps

⁸Marianne Frostig, "The Needs of Teachers for Specialized Information on Reading," The Teacher of Brain-Injured Children, ed. William M. Cruickshank (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 1966), p.91.

⁹Ibid.

leading to new learning and ascertain the student's foundation for that new learning. To aid the expanding of a child's readiness teachers must also be aware that "Readiness is a cluster of skills."¹⁰

Skill in auditory--visual--kinesthetic perception is essential to reading success. Too many reading failures are due to the fact that these skills have not been taught thoroughly. Until first grade children learn perception skills, it is difficult for them to use other word recognition skills effectively.¹¹

Learning to distinguish one letter from another, either visually or auditorily, is not an automatic process. Just as the individual must learn to walk and talk, so too, must he learn to understand that which he hears and sees. Things may be seen or heard accurately without understanding. They are understood only as a result of learning. Review of research and literature shows that the development of both auditory and visual discrimination are important readiness tasks. "Poor performers on auditory-perception tests tend to do poorly in basic reading skills."¹² "When the auditory discrimination abilities of disabled readers are examined, research is in general agreement that disabled readers are markedly deficient in these skills."¹³ LaPray and Ross make recommendations for the development of auditory and visual perception.

¹⁰D. H. Radler and Newell C. Kephart, Success Through Play (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1960), p. iii.

¹¹Eleanor Johnson, Carlton Singleton, and Elaine P. Vonsavage, ed., Twelve Steps to Reading Success (Columbus, Ohio: American Education Publications, 1964), p. 10.

¹²Margaret Helen LaPray and Ramon Ross, "Auditory and Visual-Perceptual Training," Vistas in Reading, ed. J. Allen Figurel, Conference Proceedings of the International Reading Association, XI, Part 1 (Newark, Del: International Reading Association, 1967), p. 532.

¹³Robert Dykstra, "Auditory Discrimination Abilities and Beginning Reading Achievement," Reading Research Quarterly, I (Spring, 1966), p. 16.

Help children build their auditory perception and listening skills. Children do not learn to listen without our help. Small chunks of sound patterns which the child repeats or responds to are to be used in beginning instruction. Gradually, the complexity of skills in auditory perception may be increased.

Visual-perceptual activities which are most effective in building readiness seem to be those which are most closely related to reading.¹⁴

Mitchell, in summarizing the research he conducted in visual discrimination, makes these statements:

A majority of the professional books written by the experts in the field of reading support a visual discrimination program which begins with gross discrimination of objects and geometric forms and culminates in discrimination of letters and words.

Research studies seem to indicate a positive relationship between measures of visual discrimination given early in grade one and subsequent reading achievement.¹⁵

Shea, too, emphasizes the need "to discriminate visually between words."¹⁶ Robinson found that ". . .at first grade level, the value of the Frostig Test (of Visual Perception) was found to be greater than intelligence in predicting success in reading."¹⁷

Johnson, Singleton, and Vonsavage include these specific perception factors in a readiness program: visual discrimination of capital letter forms and lower case letter forms, auditory discrimination of rhyming words, beginning consonants, final consonants, and letter know-

¹⁴LaPray and Ross, op. cit., p.352.

¹⁵Ronald Warren Mitchell, "Kindergarten Children's Responses to Selected Visual Discrimination Exercises in Readiness Materials" (Unpublished Master's Colloquium Paper, University of Minnesota, 1965), p.17.

¹⁶Carol Ann Shea, "Visual Discrimination of Words and Reading Readiness," Reading Teacher, XXI (January, 1968), p.367.

¹⁷Helen M. Robinson, Samuel Weintraub, and Carol A. Hosteretter, "Summary of Investigations Relating to Reading, July 1, 1963 - June 30, 1964," Reading Teacher, XVIII (February, 1965), p.356.

ledge and association of sound with the letter.¹⁸

Language development is a readiness factor which must not be overlooked.

If children are to speak effectively, they must have something to talk about—something they want to talk about. . . . As children mature they find themselves, more and more, living in a world of abstractions. . . . The kindergarten primary classroom needs to create a concrete rather than abstract foundation for the abstractions encountered in life. . . . Building readiness for learning through experience takes time, but any enduring structure must have a firm foundation. . . . it (time) must be invested in order to ensure the long range success of children in mastering language skills.¹⁹

Too many educators are unaware that many children do not understand the language of the textbooks, especially those children whose home is different from the average American middle class home. Educators ". . . must realize that many words which seem quite concrete to the middle class teacher or middle class child are indeed, abstractions to the deprived child."²⁰

The development of early oral language based on concrete experiences is of utmost importance. Children are unable to learn words which are outside their realm of verbal and activity experience. "His reactions to the printed word are determined by the experiences that he has had with those objects or events for which the symbol stands."²¹

¹⁸Johnson, Singleton, and Vonsavage, op. cit., p.10.

¹⁹Harold G. Shane, Mary E. Reddin, and Margaret C. Gillespie, Beginning Language Arts Instruction with Children (Columbus, Ohio: Charles E. Merrill Books, Inc., 1961), pp. 23-24.

²⁰Edgar Dale, "Vocabulary Development of the Underprivileged Child," Elementary English, XXXII (November, 1965), p.781.

²¹Emerald V. Dechant, Improving the Teaching of Reading (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1964), p.19.

The culturally disadvantaged child is more likely to present problems of language deficit than the middle class child. Of the disadvantaged child Raph says:

Distinctive qualities of their language and speech include (a) a deficit in the auditory-vocal modality greater than in visual-motor areas; (b) a meagerness of quantity and quality of verbal expression, which serves to depress intellectual functioning as they grow older; and (c) a slower rate and lower level of articulatory maturation.²²

The physical development of the child is of importance to readiness for reading. Radler and Kephart express the views of others in their field when they say, that "Knowledge and ability to perform basic movement patterns is fundamental to further development. However, higher skills are built upon these elementary motor patterns."²³

Mindness and Keliher sum their findings on social and personality development with, "It seems clear that the association with their own age group, the stimulation of a rich environment and a variety of experiences, and the tutelage of a wise teacher add important ingredients of the growth to the kindergarten child."²⁴

A child is ready to learn when his sensori-motor skills, his language and speech patterns, his auditory and visual perceptual development, his physical, social, and personality growth are such that he has an adequate background for the learnings and experiences he will encounter.

²²Jane Beasley Raph, "Language Development in Socially Disadvantaged Children," Review of Educational Research, XXXV (December, 1965), p. 396.

²³Radler and Kephart, op. cit., p. 114.

²⁴Mindness and Keliher, op. cit., p. 5.

Causes of Reading Failure Discernible at Kindergarten Age

Potential reading difficulties must be discovered as early as possible in the child's school years. The pre-school activities of kindergarten children deserve far more attention than is currently given them. The primary grades should be years during which concerted effort is made to prevent difficulties from developing and careful consideration is given to each pupil's possibilities. Many lives would have been immeasurably altered if informed, alert teachers had recognized clues indicating lack of readiness, immaturity, or physical deficiencies at the beginning of the child's school experiences and then been able to do something about them. . . . But if clues are ignored and problems allowed to increase, the pattern of disability will gain a foothold.²⁵

The examination of causes of reading failure becomes "necessary for identifying competencies of pre-readers and for the structuring of a program to prevent failure in beginning reading."²⁶

When speaking of the early development of adverse emotional reactions to reading failure, Malmquist states that, "In Sweden prompt identification and remediation has led to reduction of reading disabilities"²⁷(and emotional problems).

Many of the problem children have the ability to learn but have not been so motivated. Passow points out that at the kindergarten and primary level, reading programs and services designed to prevent failure . . . help the child hurdle his educational handicaps, cultural limitations, inarticulation, short attention span, undeveloped abstract-

²⁵Mary C. Austin, "Problem Readers," Reading: Seventy-Five Years of Progress, ed. H. Alan Robinson, Proceedings of the Annual Conference held at the University of Chicago, XXVIII (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966), p. 33.

²⁶Helen M. Robinson, Why Pupils Fail in Reading (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1946), p. 219.

²⁷Eve Malmquist, "Organizing Instruction to Prevent Reading Disability," Reading as an Intellectual Activity, ed. J. Allen Figurel, Conference Proceedings of the International Reading Association, VII (Newark, Del.: International Reading Assoc., 1963), p. 38.

thinking abilities, lack of motivation for academic success, and similar deprivations that hobble a child's scholastic development.²⁸

Reading experts seem to agree that the causes of reading difficulty are many. Although the terminology is not exactly the same Strang,²⁹ Johnson and Myklebust,³⁰ Bond and Tinker,³¹ and Harris,³² all discuss physical, emotional, intellectual, educational, and environmental factors.

Preventing Reading Failure

The numbers of reading disability cases in our schools is far too great. Ilg and Ames state that, "Many teachers of reading believe that the need for remedial reading help could be greatly lessened if children were not forced to start reading before they were ready."³³ Bond and Tinker claim that "many reading difficulties can be forestalled. Others can be corrected in their initial stages by the classroom teacher at a time when correction is relatively easy."³⁴ They go on to relate the components of a preventive program which begins early in the child's school years.

²⁸Harry Passow, Education in Depressed Areas (New York: Bureau of Publications, Columbus Teachers College, 1965), p. 335.

²⁹Ruth Strang, Diagnostic Teaching of Reading (New York: McGraw Hill Book Company, 1964), pp. 154-156.

³⁰Doris J. Johnson and Helmer R. Myklebust, Learning Disabilities: Educational Principles and Practices (New York: Grune and Stratton, 1967), p. 147.

³¹Guy L. Bond and Miles A. Tinker, Reading Difficulties: Their Diagnosis and Correction (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1967), p.16.

³²Albert J. Harris, How to Increase Reading Ability (4th ed., New York: David McKay Company, Inc., 1962), pp. 220-275.

³³Francis L. Ilg and Louise Bates Ames, School Readiness Tests Used at Gesell Institute (New York: Harper and Row, Publisher, 1965), p. 337.

³⁴Bond and Tinker, op. cit., p. 14.

The preventive program implies at least three kinds of emphasis in instruction: a thorough going reading readiness program in preparing the child for initial reading and for reading at successive higher levels; proper adjustment of instruction to individual differences; and, systematic developmental program at all levels.

. . . In the well-organized instructional program, therefore, there will be a natural emphasis upon prevention of reading difficulties.³⁵

Kindergarten age presently does not seem to be the time to talk about drop outs, but curriculum more carefully planned toward prevention of reading difficulties at this early age would lead to a real improvement in the problem of drop outs. Strom in The Tragic Migration states that:

One thing is certain: If we are to keep all students in school, then all required courses must be designed and taught to meet all ability levels. Unless we can come nearer to this objective in practice, we will continue to have "built in" standards of performance which will force some students out of school. It is precisely in the basic courses of language arts, math, and social studies that antipathy or enthusiasm is nurtured, success or defeat is sealed, drop out or retention is determined.³⁶

A review of the literature would indicate that kindergarten activities are looked upon by experts in the field of reading and child development as a means of laying the necessary foundations for later learning. Both pre-kindergarten and kindergarten readiness provide for the development of sensori-motor skills, language and speech patterns, and auditory, kinesthetic, and visual discrimination and perception. Good listening habits are encouraged. Experiences are planned to build background for vocabulary development and understanding.

The causes of reading failure may come to kindergarten with the

³⁵Bond and Tinker, op. cit., p. 14.

³⁶Robert D. Strom, The Tragic Migration: School Drop Outs (Washington D.C.: National Education Association, 1964), p. 24.

child. A child with immature physical or social development and whose background of experience is meager needs a special program built to his specific needs. In kindergarten physical, emotional, intellectual, and environmental needs must be assessed. Organizing a program based on these assessed needs is essential at this early age if reading disabilities are to be prevented.

CHAPTER III

DEVELOPMENT OF INITIAL READING READINESS INVENTORY

Work of the Kindergarten and First Grade Teachers

Kindergarten and first grade teachers at the Barton School, West Bend, Wisconsin, became aware that they needed an opportunity to explore together factors related to readiness for reading. The group consisted of three kindergarten teachers, three first grade teachers, the transition room teacher, and the writer who is presently Title I Coordinator for the West Bend Public Schools and acted as chairman of the group.

A series of three meetings was scheduled from January through March. The purpose of the meetings was to provide an opportunity to exchange ideas on readiness factors important for entrance to first grade.

Discussion at the first meeting was centered about the readiness activities presently initiated in the kindergarten classroom and toward the experiences first grade teachers considered essential for children preceding their entry to first grade. Prevention of learning problems appeared to be an ultimate goal.

The teachers agreed that communications between kindergarten and first grade instructors must be improved in order to provide a better continuity of learning for each child. With the thought in mind that much information was lost in word-of-mouth communication, either because of lack of time or because of misunderstanding of what information the

child's next teacher wanted, the group endeavored to organize an inventory of initial readiness factors. As kindergarten teachers observed the behavior of children in their care, a check would indicate to the child's next teacher those factors which were well developed. The inventory would become a part of the cumulative folder information.

At this first meeting a brief summary of the arithmetic readiness program revealed that the kindergarten teachers were combining two sets of arithmetic readiness materials to present the learnings they considered essential in this area.^{1,2} Concern was expressed by these teachers regarding the developing of an arithmetic vocabulary which would continue through first grade and into succeeding grades.³

Kindergarten teachers pointed out that some of their usual reading readiness material⁴ was similar to the readiness material presented in the arithmetic program. An example of this is the recognition of geometric shapes. A comparison of the two programs led the teachers to decide that the arithmetic readiness materials were of greater value and the few additional reading items to be found in the basic reading material hardly justified the purchase of these materials. The kindergarten teachers themselves expected to develop the additional readiness material

¹Robert E. Eicholz and Emerson Martin Jr., Elementary School Mathematics Primer (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley Pub. Co., 1965).

²Annabelle Erickson and John Vodacek, Ginn Modern Math Series Kindermath (Boston, Mass.: Ginn and Company, 1967).

³The elementary teachers and curriculum director were in the process of selecting new arithmetic texts. It developed later that the materials chosen for district use was Elementary School Mathematics. Thus, teachers had assurance that the terminology they had begun to develop would be a part of a continuing program.

⁴Carolyn M. Welch, Ready Go (New York: American Bk. Co., 1958).

needed. One teacher has carefully studied the materials during her two years as a teacher and recommended that the basic material be purchased for any new teacher or beginning teacher, to give her an opportunity, too, to study the material in use.

Three readiness check lists^{5,6,7}, were distributed and briefly discussed. Attention was also directed to an article, "Concepts and Abilities Developed in the Readiness Program."⁸ It was decided to study these, find other pertinent professional materials, and meet in February to discuss this material in depth. At that time the group might decide which material would best serve this school.

Because many of the children in the attendance area of this school are in need of help in language development and because teachers liked the format it was decided at the second meeting of the group to use the "Let's Find Out Language Instrument"⁹ as a minimum list. This check list enumerates the language needs which would serve as a record for individual achievement as well as a reminder for teacher planning. The group agreed that a kindergarten curriculum must provide for language development, social experiences, opportunities to develop good listening habits, opportun-

⁵Loretta Hunt Marion, ed., "The Let's Find Out Language Instrument," Scholastic Let's Find Out (Oct. 8, 1967), p.4.

⁶"An Informal Reading Readiness Inventory," Guidance in the Elementary School (Gary, Ind. Public Schools, 1961), p. 9.

⁷Pierce H. McLeod, Teacher's Manual for Lippincott Reading Readiness Test (Including Readiness Check List) Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Co., 1965), p. 6.

⁸Albert J. Harris and Mae Knight Clark, "Concepts and Abilities Developed in the Readiness Program," Teachers' Guide for Pre-Primers (New York: MacMillan Co., 1965), pp. 34-36.

⁹Loretta Hunt Marion, ed., op. cit., p. 4.

ity to develop the ability to follow directions, opportunity for development of a left to right orientation, visual discrimination, auditory discrimination, physical development and coordination. The review of literature indicated that causes of reading difficulty include physical, social, and emotional factors in addition to the language development factors. Thus, items in these areas of child development were added to the check sheet.

At the third meeting in March the items headed Physical Development were made more inclusive of factors stressed in the school physical education program for primary grades.

The completed inventory then listed the following factors:

General Response to Language

- Expresses himself spontaneously
- Uses good sentences to express ideas
- Incorporates new vocabulary in speech
- Attention span sufficiently long
- Likes to be read to
- Remembers stories read aloud
 - Sequence of events
 - Names of characters
- Enjoys picture books
- Can turn pages in book
 - Begins at front of book
- Makes up simple endings to stories
- Has a fund of experience to draw from
- Appears to have awareness of time, place, speed, distance, direction, etc.

Auditory Response to Language

- Responds by gesture (winking, nodding, smiling)
- Familiar with children's verse
- Supplies rhyming words
- Aware of unusual words
- Can reproduce pronounced two or three syllable words
- Hears likenesses and differences in grossly similar words
- Follows oral directions
- Speaks with good voice, articulation and rhythm

Visual Response to Language

Recognizes his own name
 Interested in signs and labels
 Uses picture clues
 To interpret story content
 To make his own interpretation
 Identifies colors, sizes, shapes
 Has established left to right eye sweep
 Identifies similarities & differences in words or letters
 Knows letter names

Physical Development

Displays average motor ability (large muscle movement)
 Displays manual coordination in use of crayons, scissors, toys, etc.
 and in play
 Displays normal hand-eye coordination in learning and play
 Displays awareness of rhythm
 Has a good sense of balance
 Normal physical growth
 Frequent illness
 Appears to have normal hearing
 Appears to have normal vision

Emotional Development

Appears to be emotionally stable in relations with classmates,
 teachers, other adults, and other children
 Possesses average self-confidence
 Appears to be developing independence and self-reliance
 Carries task through to completion
 Willingly participates in activities

Social Development

Enjoys satisfying social relations with others
 Displays awareness of cause and effect in behavior

Attendance

Has attended school regularly

Kindergarten teachers expressed a need for space to record three
 evaluations. Each year, October and March were chosen as appropriate
 times to compare evaluations. The third recording of observations was
 to be made in April or May whenever, and if, the kindergarten teacher con-
 sidered it important. Directions for use were changed, too. It was
 decided that checking only those factors requiring further emphasis would

call these needs to the attention of the child's new teacher quickly.¹⁰

During the course of the meetings discussion sometimes turned to uses of the inventory by this group of teachers and by personnel other than these lower primary educators. It was concluded that the school psychologist and principal would find information here relative to the child's readiness for placement into a first grade classroom or transition room. The teachers, too, would find this inventory a point of reference at a parent conference. A new teacher would find it an aid in organizing her activities.

¹⁰Appendix I, p. 32.

CHAPTER IV

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this study was to determine how kindergarten teachers could convey to first grade teachers those observations of student development considered important to readiness for beginning reading and arithmetic.

Summary

A series of meetings was held to provide opportunity for kindergarten teachers, the transition room teacher, and first grade teachers of the Barton School, West Bend, Wisconsin, to explore together factors related to initial readiness. Discussion also included the effects of retention in kindergarten and the effects of premature promotion to first grade. Placement in the transition room seemed to be the answer. Preventing reading failure appeared to be the ultimate goal of these discussions.

The conferring together made teachers aware of the need for a means of graphically communicating observations of child development by the kindergarten teachers to the first grade or transition room teacher. This prompted the development of the Informal Initial Readiness Inventory. In developing the inventory teachers recognized the importance of the following factors: language development, including general, auditory and visual response to language, physical development, emotional development, and social development.

Assigning the unready child to the transition room rather than a regular classroom was deemed a preventive measure--preventive of learning failure. Here the child would be given time to develop and mature under the direction of an alert, capable teacher. His progress might be slow. His program in this small classroom would be structured to his needs. He would be given time to grow physically, emotionally, and socially.

To the writer it appeared that the development of the Informal Initial Readiness Inventory provided an excellent review for all involved, of the whole area of child readiness for learning.

An unexpected result of these meetings was a recognition by each group of the part the other plays in the total development of the child.

Educational Implications

The following implications are an outgrowth of this study:

1. The Informal Initial Readiness Inventory would serve not only as a record of teacher observations, but would also serve as a point of reference for new teachers. It would aid the principal and psychologist as they decided placement for some children into grade one or into the transition room. The inventory would serve as a point reference for teachers at parent conference time.
2. Teachers have made a thorough study of children's needs.
3. Teachers express a greater concern regarding teacher responsibility for finding children's needs. More diagnostic teaching is taking place.

4. The study seemed to lend support to the theory that teachers need to start teaching at the level to which the child has matured.
5. The study reinforced the concept that there is a readiness for each new skill which must be developed prior to presenting the new learning.

Suggestions for Further Study

1. A longitudinal study of the progress of transitional room children as they move through primary grades to determine the progress made by the transition room children as compared with progress made by others of that same kindergarten group, might be undertaken by teachers or administrators. Is early education retained along the way?
2. Various aspects of readiness might be studied more carefully to determine the best methods of strengthening those factors which are underdeveloped.
3. Further study is needed to develop simple diagnostic procedures for identifying kindergarten children in need of help.
4. Further study is needed to determine what changes of kindergarten curriculum; method, content, organization, and material, will be of value toward building a better program of activities for kindergarten children—a program which moves each child forward to the extent of his capacity.

APPENDIX I

METROPOLITAN READINESS TEST

CLASS RECORD

School Barton Elementary School Grade K Form ATeacher S - W - Z Date 5-9-67

Name	Boy Girl	CA	** 1	** 2	** 3	** 4	** 5	** 6	% ile Total	Draw-a Man Test*	
1 A	G	6-2	T R A N S F E R S T U D E N T								
2 B	G	5-10	13	15	4	7	7	7	46		
3 C	G	6-5	10	12	5	9	8	6	40		
4 D	B	6-0	6	10	8	15	11	10	61		
5 E	G	5-10	7	6	11	4	5	8	25		
6 F	G	6-8	11	12	5	4	8	5	31		
7 G	G	6-0	5	9	10	3	9	10	33		
8 H	B	5-9	7	13	3	10	15	10	57		
9 I	G	6-7	8	5	5	3	7	4	13		
10 J	B	6-2	5	10	5	12	14	4	40		
11 K	B	5-10	5	11	10	6	9	4	31		
12 L	G	5-11	6	11	3	7	9	7	27		
13 M	G	5-9	9	14	4	2	10	9	36		
14 N	B	5-9	6	9	7	8	17	11	48		
Total possible score			16	16	14	16	26	14	100		

* Not Available

**1 Word Meaning

**4 Alphabet

**2 Listening

**5 Numbers

**3 Matching

**6 Copying

INFORMAL INITIAL READINESS INVENTORY

Name _____ School _____ Date _____

Date of birth _____ Teacher _____

Initial readiness for reading begins in the child's pre-school years, continues through kindergarten into the early part of his more formal reading program. This check sheet is designed to aid in reporting observations to first grade teachers.

(✓ indicates need for help)

<u>GENERAL RESPONSE TO LANGUAGE</u>	Oct	Mar	<u>PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT</u>	Oct	Mar
Expresses himself spontaneously			Displays average motor ability		
Uses sentences to express ideas			(large muscle movement)		
Incorporates new vocabulary in			Displays manual coordination		
speech			in use of crayons, scissors,		
Attention span sufficiently long			toys, etc. and in play		
Likes to be read to			Displays normal hand-eye coord-		
Remembers stories read aloud			ination in learning and play		
Sequence of events			Displays awareness of rhythm		
Names of characters			Has a good sense of balance		
Enjoys picture books			Normal physical growth		
Can turn pages in book			Frequent illness		
Begins at front of book			Appears to have normal hearing		
Makes up simple endings to stories			Appears to have normal vision		
Has a fund of experience to draw			<u>EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT</u>		
from			Appears to be emotionally		
Appears to have awareness of time,			stable in relations with class-		
place, speed, distance, direction,			mates, teachers, other adults,		
etc.			and other children		
<u>AUDITORY RESPONSE TO LANGUAGE</u>			Possesses average self-confi-		
Responds by gesture (winking,			dence		
nodding, smiling)			Appears to be developing in-		
Familiar with children's verse			dependence and self-reliance		
Supplies rhyming words			Carries task through to		
Aware of unusual words			completion		
Can reproduce pronounced two or			Willingly participates in		
three syllable words			activities		
Hears likenesses and differences			<u>SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT</u>		
in grossly similar words			Enjoys satisfying social re-		
Follows oral directions			lations with others		
Speaks with good voice, articu-			Displays awareness of cause		
lation, and rhythm			and effect in behavior		
<u>VISUAL RESPONSE TO LANGUAGE</u>			<u>ATTENDANCE</u>		
Recognizes his own name			Has attended school regularly		
Interested in signs and labels			<u>COMMENTS</u>		
Uses picture clues			_____		
To interpret story content			_____		
To make his own interpretation			_____		
Identifies colors, sizes, shapes			_____		
Has established left to right eye			_____		
sweep			_____		
Identifies similarities & differ-			_____		
ences in words or letters			_____		
Knows letter names			_____		

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