

1-1-1969

# Review of recent literature on individualized instruction in the intermediate grades

Catherine Jane Babe

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REVIEW OF RECENT LITERATURE  
ON INDIVIDUALIZED INSTRUCTION  
IN THE INTERMEDIATE GRADES

by

Catherine Jane Babe

A RESEARCH PAPER  
SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE  
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF  
MASTER OF ARTS IN EDUCATION  
(READING SPECIALIST)  
AT THE CARDINAL STRITCH COLLEGE

Milwaukee, Wisconsin

1969

This Research Paper has been  
approved for the Graduate Committee  
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Date December 30, 1968

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### Purpose of the Study

For many years educators have been saying that each child is unique. They have acknowledged that there are individual differences and therefore individual needs and interests. Since the early part of the twentieth century, various methods have been tried to meet these individual needs and interests. Individualization has been an important part of many of the approaches used.

This writer has been individualizing in reading and mathematics for the past three years. Individualizing even more in the language arts has become a goal for the future.

This survey of literature in the field of individualized instruction has been undertaken in the hope of finding helpful information on how this individualization can best be accomplished.

As long as basic skills are taught to give the child the tools he needs to work with, and specific skills are taught as the need arises, this writer believes that by individualizing, each child is more likely to attain his potential.

Most of the current literature seemed to favor individualization. This is perhaps due to the present popularity of this approach to meeting individual differences.

### Definition of Terms

Individualized instruction, as such, has not been defined. The definitions have been associated with individualizing instruction in reading or in spelling, or in language, or in mathematics. The definition most frequently used in connection with reading is one by Lazar.

Individualized reading is a way of thinking about reading - an attitude toward the place of reading in the total curriculum, toward the materials and methods used, and toward the child's developmental needs. It is not a single method or technique but a broader way of thinking about reading which involves newer concepts concerned with class organization, materials, and the approach to the individual child. The term Individualized Reading is by no means descriptive but for want of a better term most proponents of the approach continue to use it....

The term Individualized Reading is not synonymous with Individualized Instruction. Many programs involve individualized instruction which in no way resembles the kind of classroom approaches inherent in the broad concept of Individualized Reading....

Individualized Reading must also not be confused with Extensive Reading, although they have some features in common. Practically all schools have some kind of extensive or recreational program, but these generally are adjuncts to the "basic reading" program. Individualized Reading is the basic program because it not only includes the development of skills but provides directly for the enjoyment of reading as well. Instruction in reading and reading itself are constantly interwoven and are developed simultaneously.

When applied to the teaching of literature, individual needs and interests are considered. The child reads from a book he has selected himself. He is guided and helped wherever and whenever guidance or help are needed. Comprehension and vocabulary are checked at regular intervals. Selections are read orally so that the teacher can check the oral interpretation. Individual

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<sup>1</sup>May Lazar, "Individualized Reading: A Dynamic Approach," The Reading Teacher, XI (December, 1957), pp. 75-83.

records of progress are kept by both pupil and teacher.

The definitions for individualizing spelling, language, mathematics, and oral and written expression would have to be adapted from the suggestions made to individualize them. Meeting the needs and interests of each child would be a prime objective. Individualized instruction is concerned with the child's development in all its aspects - physical, mental, emotional, social, linguistic, and experiential.<sup>2</sup>

#### Limitations

This study has been limited to literature and research concerning grades four, five, and six. The writer has also attempted to limit the review of research to the past ten years. There are, however, a few such studies which were done a year or more before 1959 which the writer considered significant.

#### Significance

Having acknowledged the existence of individual differences, educators have been searching for the best way to meet these differences. By reviewing the literature, this writer has hoped to find some answers to the questions of all teachers of children about how best to individualize their teaching.

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<sup>2</sup>Nila B. Smith, Reading Instruction for Today's Children (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1963), pp. 133-34.

## CHAPTER II

### METHODS AND MATERIALS USED TO INDIVIDUALIZE INSTRUCTION

#### Grouping

Grouping is not so much a method or approach as it is a plan of organization. Unless groups are formed for the definite purpose of facilitating instruction, they cannot be justified.

Reading ability as measured by standardized tests or teacher judgment is the common basis for interclass and intraclass grouping. Interclass grouping may be vertical. The vertical, or cross-grade plan, allows pupils from two or more grade levels to meet as a unit for reading. This arrangement is typical of the Joplin plan. Sometimes ability groups are formed within a specific grade level. This is a horizontal plan. For example, a school with five sections of fourth grade may decide to arrange all pupils in terms of total scores on a reading achievement test. The pupils are then sectioned; one teacher is assigned to the top fifth; another, the next; and so on. Except for a formal reading period, the children function in a regular heterogeneous or mixed classroom.<sup>1</sup>

Interclass grouping is the kind most often used when grades or classes are departmentalized. The homogeneity of the groups is presumed and therefore no provision is made for individual differences within the groups.

The usual arrangement for intraclass grouping is three groups based upon total reading achievement or teacher judgment.

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<sup>1</sup>Richard C. Wilson, "Criteria for Effective Grouping," Forging Ahead in Reading, ed. J. Allen Figurel, Proceedings of the Twelfth Annual Convention, Vol. XII, Part I (Newark, Delaware: IRA, 1968), p. 275.



Like interclass grouping, intraclass grouping assumes that the groups are homogeneous and therefore does not allow for individual interests, learning rates, and mastery of skills necessary to good, efficient reading.

Although grouping has some limitations, it also has values, which should be kept in mind when considering grouping.

1. Many children participate more actively within small groups than within larger ones....
2. Often children need to be with others who have an interest in the same books or other reading materials.
3. The small group frequently facilitates interaction between teacher and pupils.
4. The exchange and sharing of materials is accomplished with greater ease within a small group.
5. Small group instruction minimizes the waste inherent in teaching a larger group for no greater reason than to regimentize teaching and keep all students reading the same materials at the same time.<sup>2</sup>

The same article from which the above values of grouping was taken has also listed some valuable guidelines for grouping, which, the reader will notice, do appear to recognize individual needs and differences.

1. Every group should be flexible and subject to change....
2. Grouping should meet an immediate recognizable need.
3. Groups should be dissolved when their purposes have been met.
4. There should be no more groups operating simultaneously than can be judiciously handled.
5. Girls and boys sometimes like to be together for reading. On occasion they enjoy being separate. This is a good reason to group by sex sometimes.
6. Because the topic may be more important than "togetherness" on a reading test, grouping because of similar interests has merit.
7. For purposes of discussion, review, and some oral reading, it makes sense to group when each member has different material about different topics....
8. No member of the group should feel overwhelmed by the tasks set for the group.

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<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 276.

9. Groups should operate with some degree of leadership. They should not shift aimlessly without some direction.
10. Grouping for reading should not isolate reading skills from content. Children should think of reading as a tool for learning rather than as a subject. Reading is a part of every subject.
11. Labeling groups should be for simple short-term identification. The use of such terms as fast, average, and slow should be avoided. Such labels unnecessarily stigmatize and erode a child's self-respect.
12. When possible, provide an opportunity for children to participate in developing group plans and activities; personal involvement fosters interest and good working relationships.
13. Anticipate obstacles and prepare the membership for certain difficult tasks. Discuss possible solutions.
14. Keep in contact with groups working independently. Help when needed; transfer members to other groups when goals are met.<sup>3</sup>

Both interclass grouping and intraclass grouping are usually carried on with the basal reader as the foundation of the program. Workbooks and supplementary readers are also used.

Some of the same kinds of grouping can be used in the teaching of mathematics and the language arts as those recommended for the teaching of reading. Children having difficulty in a particular skill or function may come together temporarily until the difficulty has been cleared up. For example, a few children might be having trouble with some of their arithmetic facts, or two or three might find certain words that they are having the same problem with in spelling. A particular group might want to work together to write and produce a play. Some children might need extra guidance or help in oral and written expression. They might wish to meet to discuss a book or books they have read. Whatever the area of the curriculum, the practice of grouping can serve a useful purpose.

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<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 276-77.

### Individualizing

The teaching of reading or any other subject may be individualized by differentiating instruction within the group or in the class. This might be accomplished by making individual assignments that fit the ability, needs, or interests of each particular child. In reading, graded skills books and workbooks could be used so that each child could work at his own level and at his own rate on some skill or practice he might need. Books at many levels and on a wide variety of topics could be used for enrichment as well as supplements to the basal reader.

Where a basal reader and basic texts are not used, it is necessary to have a great number of books in the classroom library, trade books and multiple texts which cover the material to be taught. These books must of necessity have a large range of reading difficulty, must include a wide variety of topics to meet the needs and interests of each child, and must contain books to read just for fun, enjoyment, and appreciation. In addition to a good classroom library, the assistance of the school librarian should be enlisted. Children should also be encouraged to visit the public library. In a program not using a basic text, workbooks and skill books at various levels and for all areas of the curriculum are required to provide for the sequential development of skills as they are needed.

Programmed materials have been suggested as another way of facilitating the individualization of instruction. The Mac-

millan Spectrum of Skills<sup>4</sup> is one of these. It provides lessons and practice in Reading Comprehension, Vocabulary Development, and Word Analysis. There are six levels of difficulty for each of these skills. Each response is checked immediately so that incorrect responses can be corrected before they become habit. The SRA Reading Laboratories<sup>5</sup> and the SRA Spelling Kits<sup>6</sup> may also be used to individualize instruction. Each of these contain basic skills at the various levels of difficulty. They contain the lessons and practice necessary to maintain the skills learned.

No single approach to individualized spelling has been determined although most authorities agree that the practice of teaching for individual needs which allows for individual differences is desirable. The use of the pretest helps to determine immediately some of the individual needs. Another method is the use of programmed material, although in this method, the student might study words already known. A completely individualized approach would consist of having each child develop a list of words misspelled on his compositions. Perhaps the most commonly used technique combines the use of the standard word list with the pretest to which are added a number of words which the child as an individual needs to learn. These words may be dictated by

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<sup>4</sup>Marcella Clark Johnson, The Macmillan Reading Spectrum (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1964).

<sup>5</sup>Don H. Parker and others, SRA Reading Laboratory (Chicago, Illinois: Science Research Associates, Inc., 1958).

<sup>6</sup>Don H. Parker and others, Spelling Word Power Laboratory (Chicago, Illinois: Science Research Associates, Inc., 1965).

pairs of children who work together to check the individual portions of the spelling lists.<sup>7</sup>

Another method that has been used to individualize instruction was started in 1963 at the Oakleaf School in Pittsburgh. It was called Individually Prescribed Instruction (IPI).<sup>8</sup> This system was built on sequenced worksheets and lessons that allowed youngsters to progress at their own pace. Worksheets were stored in open-ended boxes on shelves. Children learned to select worksheets themselves according to directions in individual learning prescriptions written daily by their teachers. Series of placement tests determined the point of entry in the curriculum for each child, and continuing review test constantly checked on mastery. A success level of 85% was required before children were permitted to proceed to the next level. Most of the beginning reading program was built around the first fourteen programmed texts published by Sullivan Associates.<sup>9</sup> This material is supplemented by special records and worksheets. The second phase of the program is built around paperbacks and the third is an independent reading program where children select their own reading material from the school library. These were used with IPI skills worksheets.

According to teachers involved in the program, children

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<sup>7</sup>I. M. Tiedt and S. W. Tiedt, Contemporary English in the Elementary School (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1967), pp. 182-86.

<sup>8</sup>"Learning by the Ton," The Reading Newsreport, II (November, 1967), pp. 15-19, 48.

<sup>9</sup>Cynthia Dee Buchanan, Program Director, Sullivan Associates, Programmed Reading (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1963).

became more independent and self-motivating. Teachers became diagnosticians and prescribers of learning. The program was still being used experimentally.<sup>10</sup>

The teacher-pupil conference should be an integral part of any program of individualized instruction. The conference may be an individual one, a small group one, or a combination of both. During a conference specific problems can be cleared up. In reading conferences, oral reading, comprehension, vocabulary, and other skills can be checked. In literature conferences, brief reports can be given or a book read by several members can be discussed. In mathematics conferences, individual or small group problems can be handled. In spelling and in oral and written language, an individual conference can quickly clear up some difficulty that could go unnoticed in group instruction. Both pupil and teacher evaluate what has been accomplished.

Time must also be planned for group sharing of ideas, experiences, and discoveries. Sometimes the whole class may come together to plan a particular class activity.

#### Class Size

In the opinion of this writer class size probably has less bearing on the success of an individualized program of instruction than the attitude of the teacher and the children to be taught by this approach. Certainly there would be less planning necessary with a very small class than with a large one. There are often some children in the class who are not yet ready for independent

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<sup>10</sup>"Learning by the Ton," The Reading Newsreport, II (November, 1967); pp. 15-19, 48.

work. These children need more guidance in group work before they can be expected to proceed individually. Some may never reach the stage where they are able to work independently, but these are the exceptions. The great majority of children seem to enjoy working at their own pace as long as they know what is expected of them.

### Advantages

There are many advantages connected with individualized instruction. Smith lists the following:

1. The child proceeds under his own motive and drive.
2. He reads at his own pace.
3. Interest is increased because the child reads material of his own choice.
4. The program permits the reading of larger amounts of material than does the grouping plan.
5. Each child is taught the skills that he needs when he needs them; thus he realizes the usefulness of skills.
6. The individual conferences promote close personal relationships between pupil and teacher.
7. There are increased opportunities to integrate reading with other language arts: vocabulary development, writing, listening, spelling; motives to communicate are strengthened.
8. The psychological effect of the program on the child is desirable. Pressures and tensions to meet grade standards are relieved, frustrations arising from failure to read as much or as well as others in a group are avoided, and the stigma of being "behind in reading" is removed. All of these concomitants pay rewarding dividends in mental health.<sup>11</sup>

Among other advantages there is the stimulation of the gifted students, free selection, and the wide use of library and other supplementary materials. Children are introduced to a great variety of literature, learn to appreciate it, form lifetime reading habits, good independent study habits, and acquire the ability

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<sup>11</sup> Nila B. Smith, Reading Instruction for Today's Children (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1963), p. 137.

to concentrate and pursue their individual interests. Each child competes only with himself. His own record of progress shows him how well he has done in each area of the curriculum - reading, language arts, or mathematics. If he can see progress, he need not worry about what anyone else has done.

### Disadvantages

Although there are several disadvantages to individualization, any teacher who truly strives to meet individual needs will find some way to overcome them. The following disadvantages are listed in Smith:

1. Children need to have new vocabulary and concepts developed before reading a story in order to get the most enjoyment and understanding from it. In individualized instruction the child simply plunges in. Readiness preparation is ignored.
2. Few teachers have sufficient grasp of the scope and sequence of reading skills or the necessary time to enable them to develop a completely balanced sequence of skills in each individual.
3. The values of group dynamics may be lost sight of in a highly individualized program. The development of interpretation and critical reading proceeds best where there is mental stimulation and interaction with the thinking of several children. Children do learn and profit by working with each other.
4. The attention span of primary children is short. They get tired of working alone for long periods of time.
5. Children can't judge their reading level by looking at a book. They often choose books that are too difficult.
6. Many schools at present cannot afford the quantities of books and seatwork necessary to meet individual interests and levels, and are not able to procure them from a library or other sources.
7. With large classes it is extremely difficult to schedule the daily and weekly program so that each individual receives an adequate amount of attention.
8. Making provision for the entire roomful of children to be occupied over long periods while the teacher is working with one child poses a real problem and may result frequently in having children do "busy work" or dawdle instead of spending their time on worthwhile activities.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup>Ibid., pp. 137-38.



As previously stated, the problems presented above can be overcome by careful planning and constant observation. By anticipating possible problems in different areas, steps can be taken to prevent their occurring.

## CHAPTER III

### SURVEY OF RECENT RESEARCH

Much of the research done in the field of individualized instruction has been done with primary children. Most of the studies were done in individualized reading. However, some research has been done with intermediate grade children.

Calder<sup>1</sup> did a study to test the effects self-directed reading materials have on improving children's ability to read, as reflected by their ability to carry out manipulative activities. The major hypotheses were, first, whether pupils using self-directed materials to supplement the basic reading program would make greater gains in reading than those using only a basic reading program; and second, whether pupils in the self-directed reading program would develop a more positive attitude toward reading than pupils using only the basic reading program.

Materials were developed to enable children to read written and illustrated procedural steps and perform manipulative tasks related to the different areas of the curriculum.

Sixty-two fifth grade pupils were used. Thirty-two were assigned to the experimental group, thirty to the control group. The California Test of Mental Maturity was used. Groups were not

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<sup>1</sup>Clarence R. Calder, Jr. "Self-Directed Reading Materials," The Reading Teacher, XXI (December, 1967), pp. 248-52.

significantly different in general intelligence. Pre-testing on the Iowa Silent Reading Test and the STEP Listening Test found the two groups similar in reading and listening ability.

Pupils received the same basic fundamental and developmental reading instruction. The experimental group used self-directed reading materials to supplement the basic reading program. Each chose his own self-directed reading booklet of interest from sixty topics in many subject areas. Each worked at his own rate. Both groups were allowed to read books from the classroom and school libraries.

The Iowa Silent Reading Test was used to assess pre- and post testing status of pupils. Attitude toward reading was tested by means of an interest inventory questionnaire; by studying post-test written statements about using self-directed materials; and by getting teacher's reactions concerning pupils' attitudes toward reading and general work habits.

It was found that the differences between the two groups were not significant in reading achievement or improved attitudes toward reading according to the post-test. However, the written statements of the self-directed group indicated more favorable attitudes toward reading. The teachers' comments also indicated that the children were more interested in reading as a result of using self-directed materials.

Groff<sup>2</sup> wrote a review of studies done on individualized reading instruction. When compared with ability grouping, no

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<sup>2</sup>Patrick J. Groff, "Comparisons of Individualized and Ability Grouping Approaches to Teaching Reading," Elementary English, XLI (March, 1964), pp. 238-41.

significant difference was found in reading achievement according to most of the studies, but there was a change of attitude and interest in favor of the individualized reading groups.

Gurney<sup>3</sup> tested two hypotheses. The first one was to show that pupils using an individualized reading program gained a more positive attitude toward reading than those engaged in a grouped basal reading program. The second hypothesis was to show that the experimental group obtained greater gains in reading level than the control group.

From a school with a number of fourth grade classes, one class was selected to use the SRA Reading Laboratory IIA<sup>4</sup> for a fourteen week period. Subjects in the experimental group were then matched with control subjects in the other fourth grade classrooms on the basis of chronological age, Gates Reading Test grade scores, Lorge-Thorndike Non-Verbal Intelligence Quotients, and attitude toward reading as measured by an experimental instrument designed by the investigator. The other fourth grade classes continued with grouped basal reading programs. A Gates Reading Achievement Test and the Experimental Attitude Inventory were administered at the end of the experiment.

Results revealed that groups did not differ on reading achievement, but there was a significant difference in attitude toward reading (at the .01 level) favoring the experimental group.

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<sup>3</sup>David Gurney, "The Effect of an Individual Reading Program on Reading Level and Attitude Toward Reading," The Reading Teacher, XIX (January, 1966), pp. 277-30.

<sup>4</sup>Don H. Parker and others, SRA Reading Laboratory (Chicago, Illinois: Science Research Associates, Inc., 1958).

Walker<sup>5</sup> evaluated two programs of reading in the intermediate grades. One group was taught by traditional grouping. The other group was taught by the individualized approach. No significant differences were found between the groups in reading gains. Children in the individualized group showed more interest and read more books. However, student teachers were used. Results might have been different under experienced, prepared teachers.

On the other hand, Kaar<sup>6</sup> found that children in group procedures made slightly greater gains than those in individualized reading programs.

To find the relative effectiveness of using a basal reader or combining the basal reader and self-selection, Talbert and Merritt<sup>7</sup> used 436 fifth graders in eighteen classrooms. The children were randomly assigned. There were nine experimental classes and nine control classes. The classes were compared on gains in amount of reading done, on gains in attitude toward reading, on gains in paragraph meaning and word meaning as measured by the Stanford Achievement Test in Reading.

Comparison of the mean number of pages read revealed a

<sup>5</sup>Clare Walker, "An Evaluation of Two Programs of Reading in Grades Four, Five, and Six of the Elementary School" (unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, School of Education, New York University, 1957).

<sup>6</sup>Harold Kaar, "An Experiment with the Individualized Method of Teaching Reading," The Reading Teacher, VII (February, 1954), pp. 174-77.

<sup>7</sup>Dorothy G. Talbert and C. B. Merritt, "The Relative Effectiveness of Two Approaches to the Teaching of Reading in Grade V," The Reading Teacher, XIX (December, 1965), pp. 183-86.

significant difference (at the .01 level) in favor of the experimental group. There was no significant difference in gains in reading achievement nor in changes in attitudes toward reading.

Kingsley<sup>8</sup> experimented with an individualized reading program based entirely on library books. It was begun when a Gates Reading Survey of a sixth grade showed a tremendous range in reading achievement. Only six of the twenty-seven were reading at sixth grade level. Other scores were spread from 2.8 to 8.8. It was found that in the process of simply learning to enjoy books, more than the expected normal growth was made in the basic reading skills.

There was a session of general planning and discussion. The discussion centered around four major items: (1) Would they enjoy reading library books of their own choosing rather than the series of readers or specified books related to their social living? (2) How would they keep track of the books they read? (3) What about words with which they had trouble? (4) The responsibility which must be assumed by the individual himself supplied with suitable reading material.

An effort was made to help each child understand where he stood in vocabulary, comprehension, and speed as measured by the Gates Reading Survey. The most difficult part of the task was helping the child to accept the fact that he read at a certain level and that it was all right.

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<sup>8</sup>Marjorie Kingsley, "An Experiment in Individualized Reading," Elementary English, XXXV (February, 1958), pp. 113-118.

As part of the orientation, a trip was made to the public library where materials were chosen which were appropriate in both difficulty and interest. Then they just read - 45 minutes in the morning and 30 minutes in the afternoon.

During the first four months materials from the public library, the school library, and home libraries were used. Then the school district purchased 250 high interest, low difficulty books.

Each child kept a record in his own notebook including the titles of books read, names of the authors of the books, date each book was begun, date each book was finished, and comments sufficient to help the reader tell someone else about the books. At the time of the individual conference, the teacher would check on the books read, the comprehension of what was read, oral reading, and note any particular problems.

The results of the experiment in individualized reading were both objective and subjective. The objective results showed an average growth during an eight month period of nine and one-half months. Students who were above grade level and those who were below grade level in September both averaged nine and one-half months growth. Big individual gains were made in both groups. The "bulge" in the grade score distribution moved up on the scale. The children read a total of 1352 books, an average of fifty books per child and a range of thirteen to 103.

Some of the non-objective results included learning to enjoy books, learning to choose books of appropriate interest and difficulty, and learning to enjoy many different kinds of books. Children also acquired a great deal of general information through

reading and through hearing others tell about books. They learned responsibility for providing themselves with necessary materials for specific purposes and accepted the fact it was all right to read at their own level and that improvement was up to them.

Other by-products of the individualization were: (1) Development of the concept of "average" as used in math, related to the number of books read per child and by the group and the number of months of growth for each child and for the group. (2) Improvement of correct English usage, both oral and written. (3) Acquisition of more poise in talking before a group. (4) Organization of ideas in proper sequence. (5) Experience in group activity. (6) Opportunity to plan and carry out a year-long program to its completion and to evaluate the results. (7) Understanding of the idea that different people made different kinds of contributions to group activities and that each contribution is of value to these activities.

From the standpoint of the teacher, the larger the class, the more sensible this kind of program. It is highly efficient for both child and teacher because conference time efforts are directed toward the development of reading skills for each individual youngster. The child is really interested. The objective of learning to enjoy books is accomplished. In terms of planning a well-rounded program, attention should be called to the kinds of reading skills which were best handled in specific areas. Children worked with reference books and dictionaries in social living. They became concerned with differentiating words in math and science. Skill in reading maps and graphs needed in a number of areas was acquired. Spelling of words of similar configuration



became a kind of critical reading.

McHugh reported on high achievers in thirty-five classes in grades four, five, and six who were given individual reading.

After a year's program of differentiated instruction in thirty-five intermediate-grade classrooms, the resulting achievements were compared with those of pupils under the same teachers at the end of the previous year. The following findings are presented in relation to changes in achievement in skills subjects:

1. The program of differentiated instruction in grade four produced a statistically significant improvement over the previous year only in spelling; in other subjects there were no significant changes.
2. In grade five, the program produced improvement in all subjects; these gains were statistically significant in three of the six measures.
3. Grade six showed marked improvement under differentiated instruction; the improvements were statistically significant in five out of six measures.
4. The differentiated program in arithmetic produced statistically significant gains in problem solving in grades five and six. In computation skills there was a statistically significant gain in grade five, a slight gain in grade six. Grade four showed no change in problem solving, a slight loss in computation.
5. Spelling responded with statistically significant improvements over the previous year in all grades.
6. The program in reading produced statistically significant improvement only in grade six.
7. In English (grammar-usage-punctuation) grade six improved significantly; grade five made a mean improvement of five months.
8. Children with I. Q.'s of 120 and above made marked improvement under the differentiated instructional program in reading, arithmetic problem solving, English, and spelling in grade six. Fifth grade children of this I. Q. level made gains in arithmetic problem solving, computation skills, and spelling; however, there were significant losses in reading and English.
9. Children with I. Q.'s between 96 and 119 in grades five and six appeared to benefit greatly by the differentiated program. They made statistically significant gains in all subjects except arithmetic fundamentals in grade six. In grade four, however, this I. Q. group showed small losses in all subjects except spelling.
10. The children with I. Q.'s of 95 and below made gains in all subjects in all grades, except arithmetic computation in grade four. However, only three of the subject differences were significant.
11. Boys made greater improvement than girls in all subjects in grades four and five; the reverse was true in all subjects in grade six.

12. The program of differentiated instruction produced growth in achievement greater than the normally expected gains for the I. Q. level in all subjects in grade four, in all but reading vocabulary and English in grade five, and all except spelling in grade six.<sup>9</sup>

Another study of differentiated instruction in the content subjects was done by Manning.<sup>10</sup>

With team-learning techniques used in the classrooms and the acceleration of pupils due to the individualization of skills instruction much time was saved. Pupils, allowed to read their basal readers at their own rate, soon exhausted their content. Likewise, in spelling and arithmetic, brighter pupils were saving time by not being exposed to excessive drill. This saved time was to be used for various enrichment purposes, the first being a balanced reading program.

Children often want to read in one specific area to the exclusion of others. Therefore, a balanced program was instituted to broaden the children's reading experience. Except for periodic comprehension and vocabulary checks, advanced pupils were left to enjoy the reading period unhampered.

The purpose of the study was an attempt to measure pupil growth in achievement as a result of a program of individualized instruction which emphasized adaptations to varying levels of ability, to differing rates of progress, to special skills weaknesses, to the need for self direction, and to enrichment possibilities.

No significant change in achievement was found in history, but geography, literature, and science were significantly improved.

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<sup>9</sup>Walter J. McHugh, "Team Learning in Skill Subjects in Intermediate Grades," Journal of Education, Vol. 142 (December, 1959), pp. 22-51.

<sup>10</sup>John C. Manning, "Differentiating Instruction in the Content Subjects in the Intermediate Grades," Journal of Education, Vol. 142 (December, 1959), pp. 52-65.

Those having I. Q.'s of 120 or over showed improvement in science and literature in grade six. There was a loss in social studies in grade five, but other changes were minor. Children with I. Q.'s between 95 and 119 showed gains in social studies, literature, and science in grade five; in social studies and science in grade six. Children with I. Q.'s below 95 showed no change in grade five, but showed gains in social studies and science in grade six.<sup>11</sup>

Ramsey<sup>12</sup> evaluated cross-grade grouping as a method of meeting individual differences in reading. The Joplin Plan as it operated in grades four, five, and six in two elementary schools in Logansport, Indiana, during the school years 1958-1960 were evaluated.

The program of cross-grade grouping appeared to be effective in producing expected reading gains for all three grade levels, when each group was considered as a whole. For those who were in the upper third of the classes in intelligence, it was effective in producing gains equal to or greater than expected, except for the fourth grade in vocabulary. For those children who were in the lower third in intelligence, it was not effective in producing gains as great as expected, except in the fifth grade.

Teachers generally looked with favor on the program and believed it was effective in caring for individual differences in reading, except possibly for those who were retarded in reading. (One teacher expressed this reservation.) Children had few objections to it; many liked it very much. Reading seemed to be held in fairly high esteem as evidenced in the selection of reading as a favorite subject by one student in every five, and the designation of reading as a favorite leisure time activity by one third of them. Only a small proportion indicated that their parents thought they should be in a different group. This is interpreted as a sign of a lack of parental objection to the program. It is recognized that in the instances in which gains exceeded expectation, the excess of gains over expectancy could not be

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<sup>11</sup>Ibid.

<sup>12</sup>Wallace Ramsey, "An Evaluation of a Joplin Plan of Grouping for Reading Instruction," Journal of Educational Research, LV (August, 1962), pp. 567-72.

attributed totally to the grouping plan used. It is further recognized that there were several variables in the situation that could not be measured or their exact influence determined. This study is reported in order that it may become part of the accumulating body of knowledge concerning the effectiveness of various types of reading programs. Its limitations should be taken into account when any attempt is made to generalize from it or to apply the plan of grouping to other educational situations. Study and evaluation of the Joplin Plan of grouping in the Logansport Schools will continue. The findings will help to substantiate or refute the present tentative conclusions.<sup>13</sup>

Safford<sup>14</sup> also evaluated an individualized reading program. The scores of seven classes of 183 children taught by the individualized plan were compared with national norms for reading achievement. It was found that the majority of pupils made less than average gains during the experimental year. No significant difference was found between gains of superior or average groups. Individualized reading yielded about the same amount of improvement in vocabulary and comprehension.

Sartain<sup>15</sup> reviewed and analyzed research in individualized reading and had this to say concerning that research.

After analyzing the strengths and the shortcomings of each study, one can offer some factual conclusions.

1. The individualized-reading approach can be somewhat successful under certain circumstances.....
2. The successful teaching of individualized reading requires especially competent teachers.....
3. The less capable pupils are less likely to achieve success in an individualized situation.....
4. Children read more books under the plan of self-selection with individualized instruction.
5. The personal conference between the pupil and teacher

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<sup>13</sup>Ibid.

<sup>14</sup>Alton L. Safford, "Evaluation of an Individualized Reading Program," The Reading Teacher, XIII (April, 1960), pp. 266-70.

<sup>15</sup>Harry W. Sartain, "Research in Individualized Reading," Education, LXXXI (May, 1961), pp. 515-20.

- is of particular value....
6. Individualized Reading does not allow adequate time for the setting of thought-provoking purposes for reading, nor for the introduction of new vocabulary....
  7. The lack of a planned sequential skills program makes teachers uneasy about a wholly individualized organization.
  8. Teachers using the wholly individualized approach are constantly pressed for time to provide the conferences that pupils need.....<sup>16</sup>

Smith and Becker<sup>17</sup> evaluated a program of self-selection with intermediate grade children. The program was conducted with the same teacher and the same children from January, 1957 to May, 1958. Standardized tests and interest inventories were administered. Teacher-pupil planning was done and an outline of skills necessary to good reading was constructed. Each child was helped to evaluate his own strengths and weaknesses and to find out where he needed improvement.

Materials from classroom, home, school, and public libraries were used. The teacher carefully budgeted class time to allow for wide reading, individual conferences, and sharing of reading experiences. Methods of keeping records, evaluating progress, and teaching skills when needed were planned. A letter was sent home asking for parental cooperation in carrying out the program.

The following is a summary of the evaluation of this plan of self-selection among intermediate grade children:

Children are eager to read if they are provided with interesting materials on their reading level from which they can make their own selection.  
 Children in a self-selection program become acquainted with

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., p. 519.

<sup>17</sup>Lois Smith and J. Becker, "Self-Selection with Intermediate Children," The Reading Teacher, XIV (November, 1960), pp. 83-88.

a great number and variety of good books. A child in such an individualized program learns to evaluate his own growth and recognize the skills in which he needs improvement.

Growth in reading skills is as great in a self-selection program as in a basic text program.

Individual differences are provided for in a self-selection program, with its wide range of interesting books at different levels of difficulty.

Close cooperation between the teacher, school librarian, public librarian, reading teacher, parents, and the principal are essential to the success of this program.

The teacher who carries out such a program saves herself nothing in time or energy, but reaps a rich reward.<sup>18</sup>

Buzby<sup>19</sup> did a study to evaluate the effectiveness of individual programs in their application to specific classroom populations and to compare the TMI (Teaching Machines Inc., Albuquerque, 1961) Grolier Fundamentals in Spelling Program, as presented on the Min/Max Teaching Machine, with flash card self-tutoring, and teacher-taught programs.

Since TMI did not have separate spelling lists, the experimenters found 384 words and prepared spelling lists and flash cards. Subjects were from fourth grade classes at Whitpain Elementary School, an accelerated, average, and slow learning class. Twelve subjects were selected from each class and assigned to various experimental conditions matched by threes on basis of spelling scores on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills. All were above third grade reading level. Subjects were tested before and after the experiment with the list drawn from the TMI Program and compared on the spelling section of the Iowa Test of Basic Skills.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., p. 88.

<sup>19</sup>John J. Buzby, "The TMI Self-Tutoring Program in Spelling Compared with Teacher and Flash Card Taught Programs," Journal of Educational Research, LV (August, 1962), pp. 585-86.

It was found that the TMI Self-tutoring did not appear to hold any advantage over ordinary or flash card taught programs.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>20</sup>Ibid.

## CHAPTER IV

### SUMMARY

#### Restatement of Purpose

As stated in the introduction, this survey of literature in the field of individualized instruction was done in the hope of finding helpful information on how this individualization can best be accomplished. This writer hoped to pass on whatever helpful information there might be to others who are interested in meeting individual needs and interests through the individualization of instruction.

#### Findings of Research

Few research studies have been done in the field of individualized instruction involving children in the fourth, fifth, and sixth grades during the last ten years. Those studies which have been done reported results that in some cases favored the individualization of instruction, and in other cases favored the basal reading program. In most of the studies individualized instruction was at least as successful as the basal reader approach. In many cases attitudes toward learning and enjoyment of it showed marked improvement. In the cases where losses were reported, variables not considered in the studies could have been the cause rather than the method of instruction used. Results



obtained in these studies may have been influenced by differences in materials used, differences in the amount of motivation provided, differences in procedures used, differences in the amount of time allotted for instruction or for practice of skills learned, or any number of other factors.

### Implications

The conflicting results of the studies found indicated a need for further investigation of individualized instruction in all areas of the curriculum. Duker<sup>1</sup> has stated principles which should govern any study of individualized reading. He has also listed a number of questions that might be answered through research governed by the principles he stated. In the opinion of this writer, many of these might be modified to include studies in other areas of individualized instruction. Duker stated:

Before listing specific research needs, three general principles that should govern any study in this area will be discussed briefly.

1. The desirability of an individualized approach to the teaching of reading cannot be established by showing that results obtained are as good as, or even better than they would be if obtained by some other method. The real question is whether individualization leads to accomplishment of the aims of reading instruction.....  
A prerequisite to any effective research in reading is, therefore, the preparation of a set of aims.....
2. It is often assumed that only research which has a control group built into its design is valid. This is certainly a mistaken concept.... take a rather large sample and then note carefully what occurs from day to day...and why.....  
Our procedures would be those of testing, interviewing, and observing.

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<sup>1</sup>Sam Duker, "Needed Research on Individualized Reading," Elementary English, XLIII (March, 1966), pp. 220-25, 246.

3. Much educational research deals only with immediate, short-term results.... We are much more interested in the effect of a particular mode of teaching reading on a long-term basis.<sup>2</sup>

After stating the principles and discussing them Duker suggested that the following questions might be considered for future research studies.

1. Is individualized reading equally effective at all grade levels?.....
2. What is the relationship between varying levels of mental ability and the success of individualized instruction in reading?.....
3. How many books are needed to assure a successful program? .....
4. What is the effect of a successful individualized reading program on pupils' achievement in other subject areas?... ..
5. What is the effect of a successful elementary school individualized reading program on pupils' achievement in secondary school?.....
6. What is the nature of the most effective teacher-pupil conference?.....
7. What is the nature and extent of desirable formal instruction in the so-called "basic skills" of reading under the individualized plan?.....
8. What are the most effective ways in which a child shares his reading with his class group?.....
9. What is the value of reading tests in assessing a program of individualized reading?.....
10. What are reasonable expectancies for growth in reading?.. ..
11. To what extent are children of various age groups capable of selecting material of a degree of reading difficulty appropriate to their abilities?.....
12. What is the optimum extent and nature of record keeping in an individualized reading program?.....
13. What are the values of the case study approach in an individualized reading program?.....
14. What is the effect of an individualized reading approach on speed of reading?.....
15. To what extent are the principles of individualization of instruction adaptable to other subjects in the curriculum? .....
16. What is the role of the individualized approach in remedial reading?.....
17. In using the individualized approach, is there danger of failing to identify children with severe reading handicaps? .....

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<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 220-21.

18. To what degree is "self-selection" of reading materials essential to the individualized approach to reading instruction?.....
19. How is this approach best explained to children? to parents? to administrators? to the public? and to teachers? .....
20. Is it possible for any teacher assigned to the teaching of individualized reading to be successful?.....
21. To what extent is the success claimed for various individualized reading programs attributable to the fact that more time was spent than would ordinarily be devoted to reading instruction?.....
22. Is the individualized reading approach equally successful with all children?.....
23. Does the individualized reading approach cultivate habits of carelessness and lack of thoroughness in reading?....
24. What emphasis should be given to individualized reading in teacher training courses?.....
25. What is the most effective way of training teachers in service to teach individualized reading?.....<sup>3</sup>

### Conclusions

As long as new concepts and basic skills are taught to give the child the tools he needs to work with, and specific skills are taught as the need arises, this writer believes that by individualizing, each child is more likely to attain his potential.

All concerned with an individualized program of instruction must be well prepared. Children in such a program need to understand how the program works and what is expected of them as individuals. They must understand that they compete only with themselves and that it is all right to work at their own level of difficulty and at their own rate.

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<sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp. 221-25.

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