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Reorganizing a Primary Department in Reading to Meet Learner Needs

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REORGANIZING A PRIMARY DEPARTMENT IN

READING TO MEET LEARNER NEEDS

by

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

What children experience during their early school years has a significant effect upon their health and personality throughout life. Every child is building the basic foundation for his later education in the first three years in school.

The purpose of this study is to increase the writer's ability (1) to understand pupil needs and to provide guidance in reading to meet the needs of the wide range of children's abilities found in typical classrooms at primary grade levels (individual instruction, as well as class and small group activities characterize the procedure); (2) to provide maximum learning opportunities for all pupils in a given room.

At a recent reading conference the subject of small group work as a means of meeting these two goals was one that teachers were keenly interested in discussing, though some said that they have never heard of small group work and had never considered making anything but uniform provision for all the class.[1]

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[1] W. S. Gray, Conference on Reading, Supplementary Education Monograph No. 76, P. 252. University of Chicago Press, 1952.

There is ample evidence to show that in instances where such uniform provision is made for all the class a large number of children will sit year after year looking at textbooks, but their reading ability will grow very little, if at all. In these schools all pupils are required to engage in the same activities whether or not they profit from them. In schools where testing programs are established, it is found that a wide range of abilities exists.

While, to many teachers and administrators, there is nothing new about a procedure which individualizes work to meet learner needs, its practical application is not common in many systems, and a further study may strengthen the writer's ability to practice and use such a plan more effectively.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF EXPERIMENTAL PLANS

No attempt will be made to describe all reading
situations in operation and the procedures practiced
in all of them. The discussion to follow is a
composite of observations of good reading procedures
in present schools, and of reading about efforts which
good schools are making to improve the reading program.
Such a discussion is stated not as a prescription to be
applied as uniformly as possible in every classroom,
but in order that one may know what can be done as a
result of reasonable planning and critical evaluation
from various points of view.

One plan explained by De Long provides for
individual differences by dividing the work of the
first and second grades into six instructional levels
as set up by Stone.[1,2] The major emphasis is placed

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[1]Vaughn R. De Long, "Primary Promotion by Reading
Levels," Elementary School Journal, 38:663-671, 1938.

[2]Clarence R. Stone, Better Primary Reading.
St. Louis, Missouri: Webster Publishing Co., 1936.

on pupil readiness for successive reading levels rather
than formal promotions or non-promotions. The eight
provisions of the plan are as follows:

1. Abolish promotion and failure in the
first two grades. A pupil entering school
will enter the primary department until he
is promoted to grade three. During this
primary period, he will be subject to trans-
fer from one group to another.

2. Pupils entering school will be tested for
reading readiness and intelligence. Those
ready to begin reading will immediately re-
ceive instruction in reading. Those not
ready for reading will be given pre-reading
work in order to prepare for reading.

3. Pupils in the primary department will be
grouped in small groups, not to exceed
approximately fifteen members.

4. Each reading book in the primary department
will be placed on one of the six reading
levels according to the levels set up by
Clarence R. Stone in his book, Better Primary
Reading.

5. Groups of pupils or individual pupils will
progress from one level to another as they
demonstrate their fitness.

6. Fitness for progress to a higher level will
be determined by tests and by the number of
books to be read satisfactorily on each level.

7. Pupils who do not meet these standards will
be transferred to another group on the same
level and read different books from those
previously read until they are ready to
progress to a higher level.

8. Pupils will be promoted to grade three at
the end of each semester as at present.[3]

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[3]De Long, op. cit., pp. 666-667.

V. R. De Long, after experimentation with the system, formulated the following standards which such a plan must satisfy:

1. Mastery of a basic vocabulary as one of the chief goals of primary reading.

2. Little or no repetition of reading material by slow pupils.

3. A scientifically established means of determining the levels of difficulty of available reading materials.

4. Simplicity in order that additional burdens would not be imposed on the primary teacher.

5. The acceptance of the plan by parents as a fair and reasonable method.

6. The imposing of little or no handicap on children entering or leaving the school system.[4]

A similar plan of a flexible progress system has been described by Leonard B. Wheat.[5] In this plan, the first three grades are divided into eight instructional groups. Further grouping within each room is arranged on the basis of maturity and reading ability. This plan also abolishes for all children the repeating and the skipping of grades, but instead, allows each child to work at the grade level which fits his educational foundation and mental maturity. For some pupils

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[4]De Long, op. cit., pp. 666-667

[5]Leonard B. Wheat, "The Flexible Progress System," Elementary School Journal, 38:175-183, 1937.

it may require four years to go through the primary
school, although many finish earlier, since pupils are
transferred to a higher group whenever their work so
justifies. In such instances advancement may be slow
but with no failure or repetition of grades or materials.
Neither does the child work with others of superior
ability where the competition is unfair.

A third experimental plan which recognizes indi-
vidual levels of achievement to perhaps a greater extent
than that proposed by Wheat was evaluated by J. T. Worlton
of the public schools in Salt Lake City, Utah.[6] This
plan involves (1) an inventory of the learner, (2) a
rich variety of materials organized around content units,
(3) systematic development of basic reading skills and
abilities, (4) and a continuous check on individual
progress. Worlton concluded that such a plan is superior
to the traditional plan in the following respects:

1. Children of all types--bright, normal, and
   slow--have better opportunities to learn to
   read and read to learn.

2. Children read under the stimulus of a
   personal and vital motivation.

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[6] J. T. Worlton, "Individualizing Instruction in
Reading," Elementary School Journal, 36:747, June 1936.

3. The teacher is better able to meet the individual needs and interests of pupils.

4. The experimental procedures have greater practical value to the child since they typify more closely the methods of life outside the school.

5. Children like the experimental procedures better.

6. Children make better progress in the interpretation of reading materials.

7. A richer program of reading material is provided.

8. The money cost for books and supplies is less than that under the traditional plan.[7]

Still another program organized by reading levels has been described by Miss Margaret L. White of the Cleveland, Ohio, public schools.

> Children of the primary grades and the upper elementary grades are given instruction in reading as two separate units and each pupil reads at his own level. This is achieved in the upper-elementary classes by setting aside one hour each day at which time each pupil is assigned to a room with other children of approximately the same level of reading ability. To further recognize individual variations in reading ability, the pupils in a given room are divided into three groups. Materials are selected in terms of reading levels and interests and each child is allowed to progress at his own rate. Individual study sheets and dramatizations are emphasized procedures.[8]

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[7] J. T. Worlton, "Individualizing Instruction in Reading," Elementary School Journal, 36:747, June 1936.

[8] Margaret L. White, "A Reading Program Organized by Reading Levels," National Elementary Principal, July 1938.

In a laboratory school in Chicago a primary group
is composed of five units of children whose chronological
ages vary from six years to seven and one-half years.
Each unit is composed of about twenty-eight children
with two teachers. Each unit within the primary group
is as nearly comparable in range of chronological age,
mental age, social and emotional maturity as can be ar-
ranged.

The children in these units are combined in various
ways for recreational games in the gymnasium, stories in
the library, and music in the music room. In their own
home rooms the children are taught the social studies,
art, nature-study, literature, free-reading, writing,
and numbers. Only reading, numbers, and writing are
taught in small groups and sometimes individually.

Children who are doing first grade work go home at
noon while the other children stay until about two-
thirty in the afternoon. After lunch and a rest period,
the children who are doing second grade work are divided
into ability groups for reading instruction.

Ada R. Polinghorne, in describing this grouping of
children in primary grades at the Chicago laboratory
school, states:

> All the children of a particular ability
> level are brought together in one room. The

more able readers are in large groups, while
the less able groups have only three or four
members. The composition of these reading
groups is constantly changing as children
progress in facility or demonstrate a need for
specific types of training.[9]

In order to discover whether there are other schools
that combine pupils of different age or grade levels and
in order to discover what other people are thinking about
the grouping of school children, Polkinghorne sent out
questionnaires to 435 schools. Of the 225 respondents,
39 per cent combine pupils of different age and grade
levels for instructional purposes.[10]

In a study of more recent literature on ways of
adapting the reading program to pupil needs and abilities
the emphasis tends to shift even further toward adjusting
teaching to individual differences in ability and achieve-
ment. An Individualized Reading Program for the Elementary
School as described by N. Dean Evans of the Rosemont School,
Wayne, Pennsylvania, is an example. Evans describes the
plan as follows:

Each individual in the class must realize
that his progress in reading depends on his own
efforts and that a certain independence is re-
quired. Self-selection of reading materials is
the key to individualized reading. Therefore
children should understand that they are to have

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[9] Ada R. Polkinghorne, "Grouping Children in Primary
Grades," Elementary School Journal, 50:205-208, May 1950.

[10] Ibid.

in their possession at all times a book of their choice. Each child is also encouraged to keep a record in his notebook of the reading that he does. A notation of title, author, and a brief comment on each book, article, or story read is sufficient. Those pupils with word trouble should be urged to keep a vocabulary list, to which they add as they read. Finally, the pupils should understand that the teacher will help them improve their reading through individual and group conferences and instruction.[11]

Following orientation of the children, the program involves the following activities:

1. Individual conferences of three to ten minutes between teacher and child.

2. Silent reading in books or of stories of the children's own choice.

3. Teaching sessions with small groups of children in which instruction in all types of reading skills is given.

4. The grouping of children who have selected the same story. The group will read and discuss the story together.

5. The use of a short period in which children spontaneously talk about books and stories which they have just read, with the thought that others in the class might be interested in reading them also. The entire class participates in this activity.

6. The provision of time for some children to work on their individual reading lists or to study their individual vocabulary lists.

7. Provision for small groups to engage in creative work growing out of a common reading. For instance, some children to be preparing a play.[12]

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[11]N. Dean Evans, "An Individualized Reading Program for Elementary School," *Elementary School Journal*, 54:158, November 1953.

[12]Ibid.

After considering the success of experimental plans
reviewed in the preceding pages, one becomes convinced
of the need for reorganizing a primary department to meet
learner needs. In each plan described the workers have
attempted to define their problems and then develop
techniques for coping with them. As a result progress
in improving instruction to meet learner needs has been
accomplished. The program is flexible and provides
maximum efficiency in the use of time. Pressures and
tensions to meet standards of a traditional reading group
are eliminated. The program tends to eliminate undesirable
attitudes toward reading. Each child is given the help he
himself needs and he advances in reading ability at his
own rate of learning. The slow readers get results and
the fast readers enjoy their reading. Improved reading
achievement will not only benefit the individual pupil
but will also enable the teacher to do more effective work.

CHAPTER THREE

APPRAISAL OF PUPIL NEEDS

With a study of various plans as a point of departure,
an attempt will be made to describe one which seems most
applicable for local usage. Such an attempt seems justi-
fied in view of the fact that an effective plan of organi-
zation makes it easier for the teacher to do good work.
Furthermore, it is not always possible to transfer satis-
factorily one program already in operation to a new
situation. What works well in one school may not be satis-
factory in another.

The procedure for reorganizing a program to meet
learner needs should be such that a teacher can individu-
alize instruction without encountering administrative
difficulties. The program should be easy for the teacher
to administer and easy for the pupils to follow. In
planning a program for reading instruction it is important
that school administrators and teachers be constantly
aware of individual differences that exist within the
classroom. Russell argues that differences in children
are not something to be ignored or eradicated but
desirable characteristics to be fostered.[1] It is

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[1] David H. Russell, "Cherishing Differences in the
Reading Program," Reading Teacher, Journal of the Inter-
national Council for the Improvement of Reading, p. 66,
December 1953.

necessary that each child be accepted by the teacher at his own learning level. He can not always learn where the teacher thinks he should be or where his mother wants him to be unless that opinion coincides with his level of achievement. Each individual has his own learning rate which the teacher must recognize also. This realization of differences requires a diagnostic testing program to measure the achievement of each child in various types of reading skills. After the levels of achievement have been determined, individualized instruction and an effective remedial program should follow. Tinker lists nine areas of reading to be measured if one is to obtain a satisfactory picture of reading development. They are as follows:

1. Word identification and recognition
2. Vocabulary meanings and concepts
3. Comprehension
4. Rate of reading
5. Study skills
6. Specialized reading skills
7. Oral reading
8. Attitudes
9. Interests and tastes.[2]

The selection of tests to be used in a testing program must be determined by the uses to be made of the testing. In appraising silent reading ability the following tests

[2]Miles A. Tinker, Teaching Elementary Reading. New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1952, p. 286.

are recommended for primary levels:

Gates Primary Reading Test[3]
Gates Advanced Primary Reading Test[4]
Metropolitan Reading Tests[5]

Standardized oral reading tests are given as an aid in diagnosing oral reading needs. The best known of the few standardized oral reading tests available are the Standardized Oral Reading Paragraphs and Standardized Oral Reading Check Tests by William S. Gray[6] and the Gilmore Oral Reading Test.[7]

The use to which scores on standardized tests are put is important. The classroom teacher needs information from the tests to aid her in much of her planning. Some of the more important uses are as follows:

1. Determining the level of difficulty at which a pupil can read.

2. Determining what growth has taken place during a school year.

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[3]Miles A. Tinker, Teaching Elementary Reading. New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1952, p. 286.

[4]Ibid.

[5]Ibid.

[6]William S. Gray, Standardized Oral Reading Paragraphs and Standardized Oral Check Tests. Public School Publishing Company, 1922.

[7]Gilmore, Oral Reading Test. Yonkers-on-Hudson, New York: World Book Company, 1952.

3. Identifying those pupils who are achieving below their capacity to achieve.

4. Determining the range of pupil ability in the same grade.

5. Diagnosing the needs of the pupils.

6. Improving instruction and better pupil guidance.

7. Grouping pupils within a class for reading instruction.

As previously stated one of the most valuable uses of standardized tests in setting up the program visualized is to determine the range of pupil ability in the same grade. The highest pupil in a given grade will be several years above the lowest pupil of that grade in reading ability. The range of abilities increases in each higher grade. In using standardized tests for such a purpose, however, the teacher must allow for the fact that these tests may rate pupils above or below their actual achievement levels. Often the need arises for a child to repeat the test within a short space of time. For that reason tests of more than one form are desirable. It is well to check the results of standardized tests against the teacher's estimate in each case.

Often high achievement is attributed either to excellent teaching or to high intelligence (depending upon the modesty of the teacher or supervisor). The real question is this: what is the relation between children's capacity or potential

ability to read and their accomplishment in the actual reading process? Sometimes all of a child's school work may be average, below average, or above average, but on intelligence tests he shows that he has the mental capacity to do much better work in school than he has achieved thus far. Therefore, no appraisal of a pupil's ability should be made without consideration of the results of intelligence tests.

Intelligence tests are available which can be given by a well-prepared teacher. At primary level it seems best to choose tests in which the directions are given orally and the children indicate their answers by marking pictures to assure the child is not being handicapped by lack of reading ability. The following group tests are recommended for first grade use:

1. Pinter-Cunningham Primary Test
2. Detroit Beginning First Grade Intelligence Test
3. California Test of Mental Maturity
4. Kuhlmann-Anderson Intelligence Tests

One of the best single indexes to mental capacity is the Stanford-Binet Intelligence Scale, Revised. The test should be given only by a person with special training.

The results of any test should be carefully analyzed and evaluated. Whether a child scores low or high should not diminish the vigor with which the teacher works. Appraisal is a continuous process and it should be made often

enough to provide the teacher with all the information which she requires for guidance as she plans her instruction. Various techniques are used for appraisal of pupil needs, some of which will be discussed in the following pages.

INFORMAL ORAL READING INVENTORIES

If standardized tests are not available, much can be learned about each child's achievement by administering an informal procedure for estimating reading levels. An informal oral reading inventory helps the teacher to group pupils according to their reading abilities. Through such an appraisal, a teacher may discover each child's reading level. A resourceful teacher should have many methods of informal testing from which to choose. An easily administered and inexpensive method is described here.

> The teacher should start with a well-graded series of readers of average difficulty, preferably one that is unfamiliar to the pupils. In each book she should choose a selection of about one to two hundred words, an d make up a few comprehension questions on it. Let the student start at a low grade level and keep reading until he can go no further. The teacher will be able to tell at which grade level he can read comfortably.[8]

The independent reading level is the book level at which a child can read independently with ease and

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[8]Albert Harris, <u>How to Increase Reading Ability</u>. New York: Longmans, Green and Company, Inc., 1947.

understanding. He makes not more than two or three word recognition errors in each hundred words, and gets a perfect or nearly perfect comprehension score. This is the level at which he should do supplementary reading and unsupervised library reading for enjoyment or information.

The instructional reading level is the highest book level at which the pupil is able to read with success under the teacher's guidance. It is the level at which the teacher begins purposeful teacher-directed learning.

The frustration level is the book level at which the child is at a loss because he is unable to comprehend what he is trying to read. The teacher makes no use of this level, but she should know that such a level exists. All skills taught and all materials which are used should be at the instructional learning levels rather than the frustration levels.

A chart such as the one on the following page is helpful.[9]

[9]Emmett A. Betts, Foundations of Reading Instruction, New York: American Book Company, 1946. Chapter XXI, page 438.

STANDARDS FOR ORAL READING INVENTORY

	Independent Reading Level	Instructional Level	Frustration Level
Comprehension	90% score	75% score	Less than 50% score
Vocabulary (based on 100 running words.)	Pupil is able to pronounce 99 words	Pupil is able to pronounce at least 95 words	Pupil fails to pronounce 10 or more .words
Oral Reading	Natural, rhythmical, well phrased	Natural, rhythmical, well phrased	Jerky, un-natural, many substitutions, omissions, repetitions
Tensions	None	None	Finger point-ing, frowning, faulty breath control

SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL NEEDS

Pupil needs with respect to a reading program
will not be realized either by dependence solely on
results obtained from standardized tests, intelligence
tests, or informal reading inventories. The importance
of individual differences in phases other than scholastic
achievement should be considered. The social climate of
the classroom depends upon the extent to which guidance
is differentiated in the several classroom activities to
help each child develop his capacities to the fullest

extent. When special aptitudes are recognized in music, art, science, mathematics, and so on, each learner comes into his own. One teacher, when asked about her gifted pupils, replied, "All of my pupils are gifted."

When a teacher recognizes the fact that progress in reading is dependent on many factors, she will acquaint herself with the child's intellectual, emotional, and environmental responses. A child grows best in an environment that is physically, socially, and emotionally rich and stimulating.

"It is as crucial to begin with the interest level of the child as it is to begin with his level or reading ability," states Betts in the Forty-eighth Yearbook.[10] To take this interest factor into consideration is often easier said than done, however, since as Durrell points out it is difficult to discover genuine interests when apparent interests change rapidly.[11] There may be such a variety in expressed interests that if an attempt were made to follow them, only confusion and difficult classroom

[10]Emmett A. Betts, "Adjusting Instruction to Individual Needs," Forty-eighth Yearbook, National Society for Study of Education, University of Chicago Press, 1949, p. 277.

[11]Donald D. Durrell, Improvement on Basic Reading Abilities. Yonkers-on-Hudson, New York: World Book Company, 1940, p. 103.

management would likely follow. However, suitable centers
of wide interests may be used profitably.

An interest inventory may serve as a basis to discover
a child's interest. An interest inventory is simply an
oral questionnaire which gives the interviewer important
facts about the habits, attitudes, and general background
of a pupil.[12]

Another type of guide to serve as a way of looking at
children to obtain needed information about them is a test
of personality. An example of such a test is the California
Test of Personality. A definition of good personality is
a balance between self and social adjustment, which can be
determined as the following outline describes:

I. Self Adjustment: Based on feelings of personal security.
    A. Self-reliance
    B. Sense of Personal Worth
    C. Sense of Personal Freedom
    D. Feeling of Belonging
    E. Freedom from Withdrawing Tendencies
    F.   Freedom from Nervous Symptoms

II. Social Adjustment: Based on feelings of social security.
    A. Social Standards
    B. Social Skills
    C. Freedom from Anti-Social Tendencies
    D. Family Relations
    E. Community Relations[13]

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[12] William Kottmeyer, Handbook for Remedial Reading.
St. Louis: Webster Publishing Company, 1947, p. 48.

[13] Elva E. Knight, "Development Through Reading,"
Reading Teacher, October 1953, pp. 21-28.

Although these various tests help in the appraisal of pupil needs, it seems best that one should be aware of the many factors, such as timidity and nervous tension, which might be likely to interfere with securing accurate measurement. Careful observations made by the teacher will bring to attention the need for adjustment in the environment of the classroom.

CHAPTER FOUR

ADJUSTMENT OF INSTRUCTION IN TERMS OF PUPIL NEEDS

GROUPING

Effective grouping of children for instructional purposes is one of the most adequate helps to successful reading. Plans for classifying pupils into instructional groups on the basis of reading ability must take account also of variations in intelligence, in maturity, in interest, and in the presence or absence of handicaps to learning. As Harris has said, "The range of ability within the class, age of the pupils, the previous experience of the pupils in working in groups, the materials available, and the teacher's competence all have to be considered."[1]

Frequently small groups are organized within the classroom to clear up specific reading needs. One may find a group so badly in need of phonics to help them get on their feet in reading that their group can be known as the phonics group.

In most classrooms today which do practice grouping to fit individual needs, there are usually from three to five reading groups in the lower grades. The number of groups will depend upon the size and needs of the class.

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[1] Albert J. Harris, How to Increase Reading Ability. New York: Longmans, Green and Company, 1952, Chapter IV, p. 109.

Wolfe has this to say about good grouping practices:
"Continuous appraisal should be a part of the daily pro-
cedure in each reading group. Grouping should always be
flexible enough to meet class and individual needs,
develop individual and group rapport, and provide equal
learning activities."[2]

Whipple advises that,

> Good grouping practices never form rigid
> lines between good and poor readers. Flexibility
> and tentative groupings on a variety of bases
> are useful in preventing rigidity. Every effort
> should be made to avoid in both our speech and our
> attitudes towards the groups, anything which might
> be interpreted as segregating children because they
> are slow learners.[3]

Uniform achievement is impossible due to variations
in general intelligence, wide range of individual dif-
ferences, home factors, rate of performance, and the
quality of teaching. A pupil is encouraged to achieve
according to his ability. The important consideration is
not what the pupil does to the work, but what the school-
work does to the pupil.

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[2]Josephine B. Wolfe, "How Can I Help Every Child
With Thirty or More in a Classroom?" Reading Teacher,
p. 16, September 1952.

[3]Gertrude Whipple, "Good Practices in Grouping,"
Reading Teacher, p. 70, December 1953.

GUIDANCE

The child who experiences only displeasure or failure when he reads soon begins to avoid the process in any form. Competent, understanding guidance from the beginning prevents warped personalties and poor attitudes. When a child has decided that he is inferior to his classmates and can not succeed, it is important that a sympathetic teacher diagnose his difficulty and convince him that he can succeed. Efforts should be made to develop apparent talents and to nourish aggressive tendencies where only self-distrust and timidity exist.

It is important that reading difficulties be treated as if they were normal and healthy to avoid tension in the child by making him feel that something is wrong. The teacher should be enthusiastic and understanding in helping the child adjust to his own growth pattern. To assure motivation, the child must be made to feel that he is worthwhile and capable of improving. No amount of pressure beyond a child's ability will develop desirable learnings. Slow learners will acquire reading skills slowly and will profit by much direct help. Special attention should be given to specific reading techniques and individualized assignments.

Though the conscientious teacher is rightly concerned with the slow reader, an alert teacher should also be aware

of the normal and superior pupils in her class. It is
from these children that much of the leadership and
constructive work of the world must come. Their instruc-
tion should be one of enrichment in their fields of
interest and special aptitude. To an increasing extent
schools are recognizing that able pupils need stimulation
and guidance in bringing their reading level up to capacity.
In the case of the bright or gifted child, many writers
voice the warning against meeting the needs of the child
by acceleration.

Harris gives this advice: "By enriching the course
of study rather than acceleration, the dangers of social
maladjustment that often occur when bright children are
placed with children two or three years older than they
can be avoided."[4]

Rapid learners and superior readers gain more from
extensive individual reading of thought-provoking
materials than from instruction which is beneath their
present attainments such as phonics and flash card drill.
The more capable pupils will progress rapidly with a
minimum of guidance. Competent, understanding guidance
in helping each child adjust to his own growth pattern
will improve the learning situation for all learners.

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[4]Harris, op. cit., p. 99

CHAPTER FIVE

PRINCIPAL'S ROLE IN REORGANIZATION

Since no program for improving the learning climate
will show its best results without the full cooperation
of the administration, some consideration of the principal's
role in the program of reorganization seems in order. Ac-
cording to the results of a study made by Gray, as recorded
in Stone's "Better Primary Reading," any school system can
reorganize and improve its instruction in harmony with the
results of research.[1] Gray outlines the problems involved
in reorganizing and improving instruction in reading. The
essential requirements are these: trained leadership, a
competent and professionally-minded staff, continuous study
of current trends and the results of scientific studies,
constructive study of teaching problems, including various
types of service research, and sufficient time.

Changes in any program of instruction are most likely
to succeed when supervisors and administrators facilitate
the teacher's efforts. Whipple recommends for a success-
ful reorganization in grouping:

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[1] Clarence R. Stone, Better Primary Reading. St. Louis:
Webster Publishing Company, 1936, p. 21.

1. Adequate number and variety of books (many individual books, sets of supplementary books)

2. Teachers' meetings to exchange ideas and share techniques they have worked out

3. Arrangements whereby teachers may observe the reading activities of other classes

4. Preparation of bulletins containing suggestions based on superior practices in schools the country over.[2]

The availability of these essentials for an improved program to meet the varying needs of pupils certainly falls largely within the province of the administrator.

The teacher who is striving to develop the type of program outlined here will need more from the administrative staff than books, bulletins, and teachers' meetings. She requires, too, sympathetic guidance. The principal should work out with each teacher the particular program of instruction for her group. The teacher's work should be observed and suggestions should be made for further improvement. Once each week at the close of the school day, teachers and principal will profit by meeting and discussing problems, efforts, successes, and exchanging ideas. At these meetings teachers need help in offering guidance and in recording and appraising growth in reading.

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[2]Gertrude Whipple, "Good Practices in Grouping," Reading Teacher, December 1953, p. 70.

Finally, any such program calls for a principal who will encourage other teachers in the system to work out similar plans. Improvement in reading throughout a school or a system is greatest when every teacher cooperates. "Individual differences among students at any age-grade level may be a challenge to creative teaching or grounds for passive despair."[3] There is a definite gap between theories to which teachers give lip service so readily and the application of these theories in their schools. There are still schools in which faculty members are not interested in the reading ability of their pupils except to the extent that they blame previous teachers for defects.[4]

It is possible for a flexible and effective plan of class organization to be accomplished without any added expense to the school. In-service teacher training directed by a reading specialist within the school itself is very effective. However, the plan does not necessitate the employing of more teachers, but it may be effected by using the present teaching staff. The school should be so organized that the school nurse is included in the program. In systems where guidance is in action teachers request that physical, visual, and auditory tests be given

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[3]"Commission on English Curriculum of National Council of Teachers of English," The English Language Arts. New York: Appleton-Century Crofts, Inc., 1952, p. 273.

[4]Kathleen B. Hester, "Problems in Teaching Reading," Elementary School Journal, 1954, p. 84.

frequently, especially after a child has experienced long absence from school due to illness.

The principal is the key person in helping the teacher to successfully reorganize a reading program to meet the needs of individual pupils. He must be aware of a wide variety of differences within the classroom. He should be deeply interested in the improvement of reading instruction and offer encouragement to the teachers. It is his responsibility to cooperate in placing the teachers where they can do the best teaching and then have faith in their ability as he accepts instructional leadership.

CHAPTER SIX

SELECTION OF MATERIALS

A scientific appraisal of pupil needs, a wise grouping of children on the basis of abilities, needs and interests, and a sympathetic administration will accomplish little unless a wise selection of materials for the program has been made. A wide variety of books must be available in the classroom or school library. There needs to be a variation in reading materials available both with regard to range in difficulty and range in nature of content. It is desirable to have eight or ten copies each of a number of good basic readers as well as fiction and non-fiction on different levels.

An important help to prevent deficiencies in reading is to secure a plan which provides ample simple reading material for children. If children are given books that are too difficult, their speed of reading is lessened; their phrasing and word recognition are poor, and comprehension and interest are lacking. It is therefore a sound policy to give the child much opportunity and experience in reading material that is easy for him, until he has gained confidence in his ability to read.

White makes these recommendations:

> Time should be taken for the child to enjoy,
> understand, and acquire the vocabulary of a given
> book before he is hurried on to another. This
> does not mean that he should be drilled in this
> material until it loses all interest and meaning
> for him. Much of the material in primary books
> can be a nucleus for lessons in English, social
> studies, and science; and if the material is
> presented in a variety of situations, such as
> charts, blackboard lessons, it need not be
> monotonous or ineffective.[1]

The more difficulty a child has in learning to read,
the more material he needs at that particular level to
meet successfully the readiness required for the next
level.

Many teachers fail to utilize the child's present
interest when selecting reading materials. No matter
how immature one's interests are, it is important that
materials which are introduced be related to them. Ac-
cording to Traxler there is a shortage of materials that
have been scientifically prepared and evaluated so that
they will have high interest value for pupils and at the
same time be on a low difficulty level.[2]

Teachers who are looking for books which are high
in level of interest, but low in level of difficulty,

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[1]Margaret L. White, "A Reading Program Organized by
Reading Levels," National Elementary Principal, 17:522, July 1938.

[2]A. E. Traxler, "Remedial Reading Today," School
Review, 61:20, 1953.

will get much help from the following sources:

1. Durrell, D. D. and Sullivan, Helen B., High
   Interest--Low Vocabulary booklist, Boston
   University School of Education, 1952.

2. Hill, Margaret K., A Bibliography of Reading
   Lists for Retarded Readers.[3]

Other things being equal, the materials of instruction are selected in terms of the independent and instructional reading levels as well as the interests and specific needs of the learner.

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[3]Extension Bulletin, College of Educational Series No. 37, Iowa City: State University of Iowa, 1953.

CHAPTER SEVEN

TEACHER'S JOB IN RE-ORGANIZATION

IMPORTANCE OF GUIDANCE

The forty-eighth yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education maintains that "a major need in education is to provide continuously effective guidance throughout the entire period of schooling and into adult life, so as to insure unceasing development to an optimum of proficiency for each individual."[1]

The curriculum must be based upon pupil needs, interest, capacities, and abilities. Instructional procedures must be based on a study of pupil differences as well as likenesses. The teacher must conceive of her function primarily as one of guidance. Pupil failures may be teacher failures to provide adequate guidance. Much depends on the quality of rapport in the classroom, use, or misuse of basal instructional materials.

Of the twelve principles and practices of guidance as set forth by Cox, Duff, and McNamara, in an article by Persons and Grumbly, it is apparent that six are fundamental to the philosophy of reading.

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[1] "Reading in the Elementary School," Forty-eighth Yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1949, p. 3.

1. Guidance consists in helping pupils to set
   up objectives that are for them dynamic,
   reasonable, and worth-while, and in helping
   them, so far as possible, to attain those
   objectives.

2. The major fields in which guidance is neces-
   sary are health, vocation, avocation, educa-
   tion, and human relations.

3. The idea of guidance is inherent in all
   efforts to educate.

4. The kind and amount of guidance needed varies
   greatly with different children and in dif-
   ferent situations and at different times.

5. A research and measurement program is an
   essential part of successful guidance work.

6. The proper adaptation of curriculum and method
   to the needs of individual pupils is best pro-
   moted through guidance activities of teachers.[2]

Faculty members should become increasingly competent

in the use of many types of guidance techniques which are

also essential to a good reading program. The purposes

and the uses of individual interviewing, group guidance

methods, case conferences, standardized tests, records,

report forms, rating scales, inventories and blanks

should become increasingly clear to all teachers. Nor

is the alert teacher content to fix the pupils' needs

and abilities by these various media. On the contrary,

she reappraises each child's progress frequently and

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[2]G. L. Persons and M. H. Grumbly, "Group Guidance
in the Program of a Reading Laboratory," Journal of
Educational Psychology, 41:405, 1950.

readjusts the programs to meet the individual pupil's needs. The guiding principle must be to develop the growth of each child according to his capacities and his level of learning. The major emphasis is directed toward prevention of students' problems by means of diagnosing them before they cause serious trouble.

Teachers prepared to understand pupil needs and to provide guidance in terms of those needs may well bear in mind that a pupil in our educational system today should be expected to achieve according to his capacities instead of forced to meet a rigid requirement of all academic goals. Emphasis should no longer be only upon learning certain facts and developing skills for the sake of the facts and skills but should include also acquiring meanings, understandings, and attitudes as the prerequisite to proper child development and the effective living of a happy and abundant life.

PARENT-TEACHER RELATIONSHIP

It is not to be assumed from the foregoing discussion, however, that the teacher exercises the only guidance role in implementing a program such as has been outlined. Cooperation of the home is vital. The approval of the parents is necessary if anything is to be a success in public schools. Friendly contacts should be made with

the home by conference with parents or home visits when that is possible. Many school systems are now providing released time for parent interviews. From these contacts the teacher has an appreciation of the pupils' background, equipment, and educational opportunities that can not be obtained in any other manner.

Frequently after such conferences the teacher can understand the child and his attitude and is able, therefore, to by-pass many difficulties that arise.

Lindquist advises,

> Of inestimable value, too, is precise and detailed information available for parental conferences and interviews. The teacher who has only her impressions or unsupported opinion about a child's performance often finds herself insecure and possibly defensive in talking with parents. Discussion of specific data, which confirm the teacher's observations, aid in removing a parent's suspicion that they may be the result of personal bias.[3]

RECORDS

The teacher's part in planned reorganization requires, too, the maintenance of a satisfactory record of pupils' progress. Case histories or narrative records of a child's learning experiences are needed and are

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[3]Franklin R. Lindquist, "We Need to Learn From and About Children," Reading Teacher, December 1953, p. 18

becoming more widely used. A case history should give the personal life of the pupil in his family setting and with his previous school experiences. It should provide information on his social adjustment, his previous and present physical limitations, and his interests.

If every reading teacher kept a careful record of the time at which each pupil begins and finishes each book, of his transfer from one group to another, and of the type of work done on each book, much waste of time could be prevented. Each new teacher through the grades would benefit from the earlier teachers' notes and would add to them. Such a cumulative record would assure at any point accurate information regarding each pupil's progress and the future steps needed.

During the first six weeks of school a careful analysis should be made of the total personal and scholastic status of every child. Factors studied include the specific abilities and habits in reading that have been determined by systematic observation and test results. Also studied are general health, sensory conditions, intelligence, social and emotional responses, language facility, home background, and home reading opportunities.

The children themselves enjoy individual progress records. These records also lessen confusion for

the teacher as children progress at varying rates of speed.

DETERMINING READINESS

Certainly the teacher is also charged with the responsibility for determining reading readiness. As was previously stated in many experimental plans for improved reading programs, advancement to the next higher level depends on readiness for that level. An interest in reading readiness is extending to reading instruction at all levels of instruction.

Aspects of readiness in the teaching of reading at all levels of instruction include:

1. Mental readiness in terms of capacity for thinking, judgment discrimination, perception, and the ability to give attention.

2. Linquistic readiness.

3. Readiness in terms of experience and interest.

4. Physical readiness.

Reading readiness tests help determine whether or not the child is mature enough to begin formal reading. Experts now writing on the subject of reading disability conclude that many children are too immature to learn to read at the age at which we admit them to school. If a child is not ready to read, he should be given a differentiated program along the line of his special needs,

regardless of how this may affect traditional administrative customs. Frequently immature children are very intelligent.

CLASS PLANNING

Finally, the teacher in this kind of reading program is charged with the responsibility of day to day planning by and with the pupils. Many teachers, when planning the day's activities, often fail to realize the importance of including the opinions of the group.

> When pupils are given the opportunity to help the first thing each morning in planning the day's work, they will know where they are, where they are going, and what they are doing to achieve their respective goals. Pupil-teacher evaluation at the close of the school day will serve as an aid for future planning as well as an excellent public relations device. However, teachers should not fail to observe that sound teacher planning and evaluating should precede all pupil-teacher activity, regardless of other demands.[4]

It is recommended that when the teacher is working with one group, the other group or groups must have definite assignments which they can carry on without the help of the teacher. A plan which is often followed is alternating reading with drawing, arithmetic, or some seatwork which does not require direct teacher supervision.[5]

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[4]Josephine B. Wolfe, "How Can I Help Every Child With Thirty or More in a Classroom," Reading Teacher, September 1952, p. 16.

[5]Albert J. Harris, How to Increase Reading Ability. New York: Longmans, Green, and Company, 1952, p. 115.

CHAPTER EIGHT

SUMMARY

Since each school, each classroom, and each child
is unique, no single program can be successfully pre-
scribed to be used uniformly for all. However, the key
to the improvement of reading instruction is guidance
in terms of individual needs. The goal is to help each
individual achieve to the limit of his capacity and to
develop his personality to the fullest extent possible.
It is the teacher's responsibility to learn the indi-
vidual before teaching him in group situations. Guidance
must become a reality in classrooms rather than just a
topic to be discussed.

Until recent years emphasis was placed upon having
each child meet reading standards set up for his particular
grade. Today emphasis is placed upon the child rather
than upon reading standards. Reading instruction that
will produce desirable changes in the behavior of
children is stressed.

A plan being practiced in many schools is to combine
first, second, and third grades into a primary unit to
include all children of those chronological ages. A
child may still be identified as a first grader, second

grader, or third grader, but that will mean to the teacher that he has been in school one, two, or three years. It does not signify that he actually has hit all the academic goals formerly set for those specific grade classifications.

The new program classifies the students according to levels of achievement in each subject rather than according to grades. By administration of certain tests, he is classified according to his level in each subject. If this is his second year in school, and if he is still reading at primer level, the teacher works with him at that level. If others in the class are capable of using third grade materials, their needs are also met.

Those whose attainment is at the same level would normally be grouped together for study in that field. Children should be taught on the levels at which they actually are, rather than being required to meet skills which have been allocated to the grades in which the children are placed. Thus instruction and materials are more closely fitted to the needs of the children.

This plan continues to be in a process of evaluation and revision. The program should be built slowly and firmly as it requires intelligent leadership, courage, and unceasing effort. The advice of

Josephine B. Wolfe is this: "Don't laud your program or uses of differentiation. The result will be your greatest evidence of growth."[1]

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[1] Josephine B. Wolfe, "How Can I Help Every Child With Thirty or More in Classroom," Reading Teacher, p. 16, September 1952.

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