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**A Study of Methods and Materials as Can Be Applied to the  
Improvement of Primary Reading in the Bessmay Junior High  
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A STUDY OF METHODS AND MATERIALS AS  
CAN BE APPLIED TO THE IMPROVEMENT OF  
PRIMARY READING IN THE  
BESSMAY JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL



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A STUDY OF METHODS AND MATERIALS AS CAN BE APPLIED TO THE  
IMPROVEMENT OF PRIMARY READING IN THE BESSMAY  
JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

By

Sadie Nellson Jones Poole

A Thesis in Rural Education Submitted in Partial  
Fulfillment of the Requirements  
for the Degree of

Master of Science

In The

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of

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The writer is especially grateful to her husband, Mr. Preston E. Poole, for his constant encouragement and assistance throughout the conduct of the study.

S. J. P.



## BIOGRAPHY

Sadie Jones was born June 21, 1916 at Langston, Oklahoma, the third child of N. A. and E. McConnell Jones.

In 1920 the family moved to Prairie View State College, Prairie View, Texas where the writer received all of her formal education. She finished high school at the age of thirteen in 1930, and was graduated from college in 1935 after losing a year from college training because of illness.

The writer has taught in various public schools of Texas since the fall of 1935 with the exception of the school year 1938 - 1939 which was spent at Prairie View where work at graduate level was begun. She was married to Preston E. Poole in 1940, and in the summer of 1942 resumed her work toward a Master's Degree at Prairie View College.



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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Bessmay, Texas is a sawmill town located fourteen miles northeast of Silsbee on the Kirbyville highway. The population of Bessmay has a tendency to be transient and to move from one sawmill to another at irregular intervals. School enrollment suffers from this practice but, on a whole, there are about enough children who attend school regularly to balance the group who attend for two or three months, drop out of school, and reenter a month or two before school closes.

Poor housing, low wage scale, lack of recreational facilities in the town and low moral standards of the population all have their effect on the school population. An example of the latter condition is this: Of fifty-one children enrolled in the first, second, and third grades, only eleven lived with both parents who maintained a normal family group. The others lived with one or no parent, or with one parent who, although not divorced from the legal mate, maintained family relations with another person.

Such factors influence the behavior of the school children and prevent their making the responses and progress in school that they should. These factors have also helped to produce a type of school child for whom school work must be made especially interesting and meaningful, else he stays at home or sits in the classroom day after day without responding to whatever instruction might be



given.

A matter of increasing concern to both the research worker and to the practical educator in the field has been the number of failures among the beginners in reading. The success of instruction which is adjusted to the abilities and interests of these failing children, suggests that many of them might have succeeded from the beginning had their first instruction been as well adjusted to their needs as the remedial teaching.

There is a large, rapidly growing literature which reports how children who had failed were later successfully taught to read. As early as 1922, monographs on the subject were published by both Gates <sup>1</sup> and Gray.<sup>2</sup> The Psychological Clinic of the University of Pennsylvania has published a series of case studies and reports on this subject. A general conclusion which may be drawn from these and other reports is that children become successful in learning to read when their instruction is adjusted to their needs and interests.

#### Statement of Problem

Classwork done by students in the upper grades of the Bessmay Junior High School shows that those students

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<sup>1</sup> A. I. Gates, The Psychology of Reading and Spelling with Special Reference to Disability, p. 34

<sup>2</sup> William S. Gray, with the co-operation of Delia Kibbe, Laura Lucas, and Lawrence W. Miller, "Remedial Cases in Reading; Their Diagnosis and Treatment". 1922.

<sup>3</sup> Arthur Phillips, "The Clinical Examination and Diagnostic Teaching of Cases at the Psychological Clinic of the University of Pennsylvania". Psychological Clinic, November, 1930, XIX: 169 - 200.



have deficient knowledge of reading. This deficiency has prevented the progress and attainment of success in school work that is to be expected of pupils of these grades; namely, 5-9. Certain factors are evident which indicate that the difficulty might lie in the previous methods of teaching reading that have been employed in the primary grades. The problem to be solved is: What are the most effective methods and materials that may be employed in the Bessmay Junior High School, or other elementary schools with similar problems, for the improvement of primary reading?

#### Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study is to collect, analyze, and evaluate methods and materials used by a representative number of primary teachers, and to describe the successful experiment performed with a retarded second grade at the Bessmay Junior High School with the objective of determining the greatest degree of success afforded by the use of certain methods and materials in teaching reading in the first three grades. It is also the purpose of this study to present this information in a concise form that will be available for those interested in, or working with, groups of children in situations similar to that of the Bessmay Junior High School.

#### Methods Employed in Making Study

1. Diagnostic tests in reading administered to pupils of grades 1-9, inclusive.



2. Compilation of forms sent to 100 primary teachers who have employed improved reading teaching practices to advantage in their classes.

3. Visits to schools in two counties; namely, Jasper and Newton, to observe practices used in teaching reading in the primary grades and the results obtained.

### Previous Studies

So far as the writer has been able to ascertain, no other studies have been made on this subject in the Bessmay Junior High School. Several studies on improvement of reading have been noted, but the writer has been unable to find any study that dealt specifically with methods and materials, as such, used in improving reading in a situation such as the one considered in this study. There have been other related studies dealing with reading, namely:

1. Perle Collier; 'An experimental study of two types of teaching procedure in first grade reading'. The writer attempts to determine the effectiveness of an enriched procedure as compared with a formal procedure in teaching reading to beginners. A description is given of an experiment conducted in an elementary school in Shreveport, Louisiana.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Unpublished Master's Thesis, Tulane University, Baton Rouge, Louisiana, 1938.



2. Goldie Andrews Russell: 'A study of specific reading procedure and its effect on achievement in a first grade classroom'. The writer describes a remedial reading program given to first-grade children and shows that the pupils to whom this program was given reached or surpassed the achievement norms by the end of the year.<sup>1</sup>

3. Mabel McCallister: 'A comparison of two methods of teaching reading to extreme reading disability cases'. This study is mainly a description of an experimental study of individualized or seriously retarded readers, using the sound tracing method with one group and the combination method with the other.<sup>2</sup>

#### Definitions Used in This Study

1. The term 'Junior High School' in this study is used to designate Grades 1-9, inclusive. The Bessmay Junior High School includes those grades in the one school with no separation of grades into the generally accepted form, i.e., primary, elementary, and junior high school.

2. Materials of Instruction are those means of experiencing which children and teachers together employ for enriching the curriculum.

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<sup>1</sup> Unpublished Master's Thesis, University of Chicago, Chicago, Illinois.

<sup>2</sup> Unpublished Master's Thesis, University of Southern California, Los Angeles, California.



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<sup>1</sup> Unpublished Master's Thesis, Tulane University, Baton Rouge, Louisiana, 1938.



## CHAPTER II

THE NEED FOR IMPROVED METHODS AND MATERIALS FOR TEACHING  
PRIMARY READINGThe Purpose of Reading

The purpose of reading is to get meaning; meanings which are gained through the experience of the individual. Experience is a continuous re-integration of responses made up of physical movement, ideas, and feelings.<sup>1</sup> As the child responds to stimuli in the progress of experience, he accumulates a store of meanings which he uses in interpreting new situations and which furnish the background needed to give meaning to the printed symbols when they are presented to him.

To teach reading as the knowledge of the written symbol is to teach merely the calling of words. The traditional school emphasized merely the getting of words and the reading of sentences without always making sure that the child responded to these symbols with concepts made meaningful by experience. In a well-rounded rich program of reading, emphasis must be placed on real and vital experiences of children for the purpose of building a store of meanings, and as a means of establishing attitudes toward reading as a lifelong source of pleasure, information, and personal development.

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<sup>1</sup> Thomas Alexander, and Mildred English, Teacher's Guide To Happy Hour Reading, p. 1.



## Pertinent Facts on Reading Situation Today

Although at no other time in history has there been a more impressive array of factors which are favorable to a solution of the reading problem in this country, we find a disappointing as well as discouraging situation with regard to reading. Some pertinent facts in regard to reading are given in the National Elementary Principal's Bulletin; <sup>1</sup> These facts are, namely:

1. Approximately one-fourth of all failures in our elementary schools are due to reading.
2. From ten to forty per cent of the children in the first grade failed to be promoted.
3. Reading accounts for ninety-nine per cent of the failures in Grade I. in city school systems.
4. A large per cent of the retarded readers (eighty per cent in one study at the intermediate-grade level) have normal or superior intelligence.
5. Failure in school is a major catastrophe to many children. Recent experiments and the experience of the child clinics indicate that serious disability in reading usually results in serious personal and social maladjustments.
6. From eight to fifteen per cent of the school population is characterized by varying degrees of reading disability.

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<sup>1</sup> "Newer Practices in Reading in the Elementary School". NEA Bulletin, 17th Yearbook. July, 1938, p. 236.



7. At the end of Grade III., at least four per cent of all pupils have not enough reading ability to handle the fourth-grade reading curriculum without handicap.

8. More than half of the college students do no optional reading of books; sixteen per cent occasionally read newspapers and magazines.

9. Gates interprets his data as evidence that "there are probably no children physically able to go to school with an I. Q. of 70 or more, who cannot be taught to read to the extent roughly commensurable with their mental ability."<sup>1</sup>

#### Mental Results of Reading Disability in Primary Grades

Typical of the cases reported by remedial teachers are the four which Blanchard <sup>2</sup> discusses. She observes that failure in reading sets up feelings of inferiority in the individuals which lead to the development of personality and behavior aberrations unless adequate compensation is achieved. Among these aberrations are day dreaming, lack of interest, and over sensitivity to fancied slights. Monroe<sup>3</sup> also found from his analysis of cases that children who fail to learn to read may develop emotional and personality problems. Ladd<sup>4</sup> investigated the relationships be-

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<sup>1</sup>"Newer Practices in Reading in the Elementary Schools." NEA Bulletin, 17th Yearbook. July, 1938, p. 237.

<sup>2</sup> Phylis Blanchard, "Reading Disabilities in Relation to Maladjustment, Mental Hygiene. October, 1938.

<sup>3</sup> Marion Monroe, Children Who Cannot Read: The Analysis of Reading Disabilities. 1932, XVI. pp. 206.

<sup>4</sup> Margaret R. Ladd, The Relation of Social, Economic and Personal Characteristics to Reading Ability. 1933, p. 100.



tween some personality traits and reading failure and found less pronounced differences between good and poor readers than other investigators have found. Monroe and Backus<sup>1</sup> found the following types of personality maladjustment among reading disability cases: aggression, withdrawal, compensation, defeat, and hypertension. They give reports from teachers which show that in general improvement in reading under improved methods of instruction is accompanied by a proportionate improvement in behavior.

#### Factors that Retard Progress of Reading Instruction

If there is to be an improvement in the teaching of primary reading it will be well to know of some of the factors that retard the progress that is to be expected of the modern school. Results from the investigation of conditions in the schools used in this study reveal that the following are the more outstanding factors that retard progress in teaching reading:

1. A lack of understanding on the part of administrators, and possibly of supervisors and teachers, of what an adequate reading program should encompass.
2. The dissociation of much of the research in reading from actual classroom conditions, needs, and difficulties.
3. The large classes in primary grades, making it im-

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<sup>1</sup> Marion Monroe and Bertie Backus, Remedial Reading, 1937, XI. p. 171.



possible for teachers to give the individual child the attention he needs.

4. The inability of the teacher (for various reasons; some of them her fault, many of them not) to meet the needs and interests of different children.

5. Inflexible grading and promotion schemes, with rigid and uniform requirements for "passing".

6. Lack of adequate materials to meet different age interests and to care for varying abilities.

7. In some cases, too early entrance of children to school.



## CHAPTER III

STAGES OF DEVELOPMENT USED IN ORGANIZING A PROGRAM OF  
PRIMARY READING INSTRUCTION IN THE BESSMAY JUNIOR  
HIGH SCHOOLStages of Development Characterized as Units

Resulting evidence from general study of child development, pupil achievement in reading, and the value of reading in school activities in the Bessmay Junior High School, showed justification of the organization of a reading program in terms of stages of development. These stages are not clearly differentiated from each other in all respects, but do represent sections of a constantly changing curve of development which may be considered as units because of marked similarities. These units are briefly characterized as follows:

1. The stage at which readiness for reading is acquired, comprising as a rule the pre-school years, the kindergarten, and often part of the first grade.

2. The initial stage in learning to read, which for pupils who advance normally usually occurs during the first grade and often extends into the second. Some of the essential activities and attainments at this stage are: engaging in continuous meaningful reading of very simple material, acquiring keen interest and absorption in the content of what is read and beginning to read independently.

3. The stage of rapid progress in fundamental reading attitudes, habits and tastes. By the end of this stage of



developments pupils should be able to read with reasonable ease, understanding, and pleasure, both informational and literary materials such as are usually assigned in the fourth grade.

4. The stage at which experience is extended rapidly, interests broadened, and increased power, efficiency, and excellence in reading are acquired. By the end of this period pupils should be able to engage successfully in the various types of reading activities required at the beginning of the junior high school period.

#### Age for Systematic Instruction in Reading

Early studies of the relation of mental age to progress in learning to read led to the conclusion that children who are less than six years of age mentally should not as a rule be given systematic instruction in reading. Later studies led to the conclusion that a mental age of about six and one-half represents the optimum time at which to learn to read. Such conclusions failed to recognize the fact that the materials and methods used in teaching reading make radically different demands upon the reader.

As a result of experiments relating to this issue, it was found that when instruction in reading was adapted to the ability and needs of the learner, pupils with a mental age of less than six years often made reasonably rapid progress in learning to read. On the basis of such evidence Gates concluded that it would be possible to provide instruction simple enough for four-year-old children



to learn to read or so difficult that most children could not learn readily until eight or nine years of age.<sup>1</sup> It follows that the time at which reading should be introduced cannot be defined uniformly for all in terms of either chronological or mental age. As commonly taught today, however, reading may be introduced to advantage between the mental ages of six and six and one-half.

#### Indications Pointing to Reading Readiness

It proved well also to know the indications that show that a child is ready to learn to read. This knowledge helped to prevent needless activity on the part of both teacher and pupil in readiness activities. These indications are: <sup>2</sup>

1. The child has a speaking and understanding vocabulary covering at least words commonly met in primers and first readers.

2. He is constantly reaching out for additional experiences, and the vocabulary necessary to talk about such experiences.

3. He understands English well enough to communicate with the teacher and others about him.

4. He expresses in clear, connected sentences the ideas gained from his experiences.

5. He has for the most part eliminated any "baby

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<sup>1</sup> "Newer Practices in Reading in the Elementary School," NEA Bulletin, 17th Yearbook. July, 1938. p. 268.

<sup>2</sup> "An Experience Curriculum in English", English Monograph No. 4, prepared by National Council of Teachers of English. 1935, p. 20.



talk" or gross errors of pronunciation or enunciation.

6. He has come to know that ideas are expressed, or communication carried on, by means of symbols (print or script).

7. He is able to give his attention, as one of a group, when not all of the stimulation is directed to him alone.

8. He has built up a desire to read.

#### Application of Stages of development to Bessmay School Situation

In this experiment the knowledge of all these facts pertaining to reading helped greatly in adjusting the instruction to the age-level of the children. Adequate time was spent on readiness activities suitable for beginning children; the result of such activities was most gratifying as they did much to bridge the gap between home and school.

The extensive use of charts, booklets, and mimeographed materials based on the actual experiences of the child helped to enrich the curriculum for those children just learning to read. Later in the year (for most pupils, January) the children read many simple, well-written stories and books pertaining to their activities and projects. These helped to give the children a wide knowledge of units worked on during the year. At this period there was also made available much supplementary material such as carefully chosen commercial illustrative material and primary



newsweeklies.<sup>1</sup>

The third and fourth stages of development were those at which even more material was made available for the children. They were encouraged to contribute in many ways; to offer suggestions for projects and activities, to bring new materials that might be of interest to the group, and were taken on several field trips and tours to gain first-hand knowledge of some phase of work in connection with their activities. Reading material was selected that would accommodate the reading abilities of all the children, thereby eliminating as much as possible the possibility of little or no reading on the part of the poorer or slower readers. Knowledge of the indications of various stages of development also helped to prevent over- or under-estimation of the expected performance of the children.

It is, therefore, apparent that every teacher of a first grade should feel (1) a grave responsibility for removing the causes of various reading difficulties and (2) the necessity, when they do arise for taking prompt action to prevent their becoming strongly entrenched reading disabilities. This is, indeed one of the most important instructional problems of this period.

#### Objectives of Reading Instruction

In order to meet the problem more adequately, the writer has investigated recent sources to determine the objectives of reading instruction.

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<sup>1</sup> The Weekly Reader for Primary Grades. Published weekly. American Education Press, Columbus, Ohio.



## CHAPTER IV

## METHODS USED IN TEACHING READING

What the Teacher Should Feel in Regard to Improving Reading

In teaching reading to primary children in the Bessmay Junior High School the writer attempted to locate and make use of any factors that tended to improve the instruction use in teaching the children to read.

Research has shown that normal and even brilliant children sometimes fail to make satisfactory progress in school because of some reading disability which began in the first grade and could have been prevented.<sup>1</sup> Such children frequently become retarded in other subjects and they often become behavior problems. This results in social and vocational maladjustment.

It is, therefore, apparent that every teacher of a first grade should feel (1) a grave responsibility for removing the causes of various reading difficulties and (2) the necessity, when they do arise for taking prompt action to prevent their becoming strongly entrenched reading disabilities. This is, indeed one of the most important instructional problems of this period.

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<sup>1</sup> Phyllis Blanchard, "Reading Disabilities in Relation to Maladjustment". Mental Hygiene. October, 1938, p. 18.



tives in reading instruction. In 1939 the National Committee on Reading, after considering all available evidence, concluded that the most important objective of reading in both elementary and secondary schools are:

1. To broaden the vision of readers.
2. To make their lives richer and more meaningful.
3. To enable them to meet the practical needs of life more efficiently.
4. To develop social understanding and the ability to use reading in the intelligent search for truth.
5. To promote a broad common culture and a growing appreciation of the finer elements in American life. <sup>1</sup>

#### Need for Teacher Knowledge of Reading Objectives

It was found to be necessary that the teacher should know what the possible causes of reading deficiencies are, how the causes may be prevented, and in cases in which difficulties have already arisen, how to help the child overcome them.

Some children seemed to be able to learn to read as readily by one kind of instruction as another. Other children were so limited in varying degrees by their particular handicaps that they were more likely to respond successfully to certain kinds of teaching in reading than to others. Such handicaps included visual aid and hearing disabilities, poor sound discrimination and speech defects. The

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<sup>1</sup> Newer Practices, 17th Yearbook, p. 210. Op. Cit.



studies of Bond <sup>1</sup> and Fendrick <sup>2</sup> show that children with visual defects are more likely to succeed under a type of instruction that stresses phonetics than under a type that stresses the visual approach. The reverse is reported to be true of children with hearing defects.

Care was taken to see that no child was put into a situation in which he was to try to learn to read while suffering from a remediable defects which were discovered. To assist in this adjustment children with poor hearing and vision were seated near the source of instruction.

#### Adjustment of Reading Instruction to Child's Learning Ability

It developed that when reading instruction is not adjusted to the child's ability to learn, his attitudes, skills, and reading experiences all suffer. Too easy reading delays the child's progress in acquiring a larger vocabulary and in developing skills in the techniques of reading. Failing to present sufficient challenge it causes him to lose interest. Too difficult reading causes even more serious harm. The child who is confronted in every lesson with many words he has failed to learn will almost certainly lose hope, and become convinced that he is too stupid to learn to read. Such a conviction interferes with his learning even that material which he would otherwise

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<sup>1</sup> G. L. Bond, The Auditory and Speech Characteristics of Poor Readers. Contribution to Education, No. 657, p. 86.

<sup>2</sup>P. Fendrick, Visual Characteristics of Poor Readers. 1935, p.32.



have been able to learn. Since he has little hope of getting the meaning from the printed material itself and has not developed adequate word recognition skills, he guesses wildly from pictures or tries to recall how the sentences have been read before by some other child.

#### Undesirable Methods in Attempting Adjustment of Instruction

When the reading program is considered unmodifiable, and an attempt is made to adjust the child to the reading instead of adjusting the reading to the child, as was the case in some of the schools observed, procedures similar to the following were usually used. One common procedure was to use much of the reading time in preparatory word drills and other non-reading activities. This practice left little time for real reading experience. The little reading done under this plan was "study" reading, the children working it out word by word as they attempted to apply what they recalled from the preparatory drills. This procedure developed habits of slow reading and of thinking in words rather than in larger units.

Another equally undesirable plan of adjusting the children to too difficult reading material was to have them read and reread small portions of the material until they seemed to have mastered it. This method encouraged memorization of the material rather than the development of desirable reading habits. It greatly restricted the amount of reading done, and wore out the children's interest in reading.



Partially adjusted programs, also, were not entirely satisfactory. These programs adjusted the reading to meet only one factor, such as the abilities or the interests of the group. Such programs which met only one factor ignored the results of making reading an uninteresting task. At its worst, this type of partially adjusted instruction presents to the reader successions of disconnected sentences whose only purpose is to give each word its due number of repetitions. At its best, such a program offers the child little that he wants to read. This deprives him of an opportunity to develop a love of reading. As a result, the child's development of reading skills is handicapped by lack of motive.

#### The Remedial Reading Experiment Carried on in the Bessmay Junior High School

A description of the remedial teaching carried on by the writer with a group of thirteen second grade children having first grade reading ability is given to illustrate that children who have been previously judged as failures can make appreciable progress if given suitable instruction and taught by recognized methods.

#### Diagnosis of Second Grade Pupils

These children had been in the first and second grades from two to five years. A diagnosis of reading habits was made in individual interviews supplemented by observation during instruction. Group remedial lessons given for one week stressed the development of each child's awareness of his own needs. Each child was given means of working



toward the correction of his undesirable habits. The work for the remainder of the year was based on the clear understanding of the needs of each pupil.

### Plan of Work

The work was planned so that the child was prepared by previous reading activities so that he read each story with ease and pleasure. First, he read silently and completed individually the preparatory materials in the workbook. During the silent reading the teacher gave him whatever guidance seemed necessary. Group oral reading and discussion of the preparatory materials just completed led to each child's scoring of his own responses. It was possible for each child to know at once just what his difficulties were and to replace with the correct response any tendency to error. Children who needed further practice were given the appropriate supplementary material, while those who did not need extra practice were allowed to enjoy free reading or to engage in other activities which the teacher had planned.

### Procedure

When ready, the class read the story in the Reader silently first with guidance as needed, then orally. While the story usually was read in one lesson period, the preparatory activities might require several lesson periods. Meanwhile the related activities and conversation periods were providing further experience and background information.



There was no provision for class word drills or extensive oral development of reading materials. There was provision, however, for each child to receive an adequate preparation by means of reading experiences adjusted to his needs.

The books for independent reading were first read silently when other work was completed or during library periods. As with the other reading materials, children were encouraged to take them home to read to others. In some cases they were permitted to read these books to the first or third grade classes. Whenever a child felt that he was ready, he did the comprehension exercise for the book. Later in the year the children were encouraged to select and read parts of the more difficult books from the school library.

#### Writing, Spelling, and Phonics

The teaching of writing, spelling, and phonics in the group was combined into one activity. The words learned and the skills formed in writing, spelling, and phonics are closely related to the word recognition techniques used in reading. The children were taught manuscript writing. The visual method of teaching spelling was adapted to give more emphasis to phonetic analysis of the words learned. The words taught were selected with the following criteria in mind: inclusion in the Gates Word List with special emphasis on the 220 basic sight vocabulary words (see Appendix); degree of ease in writing and spelling; graded introduction



of new letters; usefulness in developing phonetic ability; order of occurrence in reading vocabulary; and usefulness in writing sentences. All this work was postponed until the second semester.

### Outcome of Experiment

The background and advanced age for their grade of most of these pupils necessitated a form of instruction different from that used with the first and third grades. Success in handling this group is attributed to emphasis on concrete rather than abstract learning and to the use of elementary arts and crafts to aid in the expression of meaningful experiences in which these children were led to participate. The term success is used in this case because the children in this group showed such marked improvement in reading and other subjects that they were recommended for promotion to the fourth grade with those children who were in the third grade at the time the experiment was in progress.

The degree of adjustment of the instruction planned in this experiment required only facilities which would be available in the average school system. The basic materials, textbooks, workbook and manual, were already in use in the school. The hectographed supplementary material did not exceed the amount which might ordinarily have been made for all three classes. All the teaching was done by the regular classroom teacher. The plan for the adjusted instruction required no more time than that usually spent in conventional reading and related activities.



## CHAPTER V

## MATERIALS OF INSTRUCTION

The program of the modern school is thought of as being made up of those experiences of children which are shaped, guided, utilized or afforded by the school. As pointed out under Definition of Terms, page 5, Materials of Instruction are defined as those means to such experiencing which children and teachers together employ. <sup>1</sup>

One of the main objectives of the schools is to socialize the population. If this function is adequately performed, however, it must extend to all the children of all the people, not merely to the intellectually selected group who were its constituents even so late as half a century ago. Moreover, with the inadequacy of modern community life for that share of the task which in the past it effectively performed, mere symbolic literary or numerical instruction is incapable of serving the necessary purpose even for the intellectually select, and the more so for the total population. Materials of instruction and the methods employed in using them must obviously be extended beyond those types which formerly sufficed.

Classification of Materials of Instruction Used in this Study

Materials of instruction in this study are classi-

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<sup>1</sup> Materials of Instruction, Eighth Yearbook. Department of Supervisors. 1938, p. 4.



fied as of three types: (1) those which help children to a first-hand knowledge of real things; (2) those which help to second hand knowledge; (3) those which help in expressing ideas, interests, or feelings.

Study of the materials used by various primary teachers allows a somewhat more inclusive elaboration of the three classifications. They are:

1. Materials used in arriving at knowledge or understandings.

a. Materials involved in or contributing to first-hand experience, as social institutions of the community which can be observed or participated in; plant and animal life, rock formations, stars, or other natural phenomena of which some direct experience may be had; art and museum collections, laboratories, garden plots, or any other provisions by means of which direct information may come.

b. Materials for indirect, second-hand, or vicarious experiencing.

(1) Seeing the actual events take place or handling concrete objects and materials.

(2) Seeing and participating in the events "acted out", as in plays or pantomimes.

(3) Photographs, pictures of characters and objects.

(4) Maps, posters, charts, and similar graphic representations of objects and facts.

(5) Verbal account and description, heard or



read and using the vocabulary of daily life.

School reading in the modern school appears to be far broader in function than it formerly has been; it shows, in many cases, an aspect of rich and abundant living and a preparation for future growth. Thus greatly enlarged in significance, the reading program presupposes and requires materials of greatly increased variety and scope.

### Basic Materials

The basal textbook, both in reading as such and in other recognized school subjects, remains with us in a large majority of schools as a common core, but it was found that around it should be massed a body of extensive reading materials that vary with the requirements of individual readers.

There is much diversity in the printed materials used in the primary grades. They usually consist of a basal series of readers, with certain accessories, and one or more supplementary books for each grade. Reading instruction in the first three grades is expected to give normal pupils, by the beginning of the fourth grade the ability to master new vocabulary sufficiently well to enable them to read unfamiliar materials with relatively little dependence on the numerous adjuncts required by beginners.

Today there is available an abundance of basal readers and related equipment in series form, any one of which can be used effectively by normal or even moderately handicapped children. A brief survey of features common



to many of these reading systems revealed certain current trends. A minimal conventional basal-reading equipment for the first three grades consists of a primer and a first reader for the first grade and one reader each for the second and third grades; each one can be preceded, accompanied, or followed by a consumable workbook closely related to it in content and vocabulary.

In teaching reading to beginners at the Bessmay Junior High School the children were provided with one or more preprimers, the use of several proved better, to promote reading readiness; though sometimes preprimers were dispensed with when adequate workbook materials were available for use preparatory to the primer. Large illustrated wall charts which function quite like preprimers were provided. These can be procured to accompany the basal text but in this situation were constructed by the teacher. The use of word, phrase, and sentence cards insured pupil recognition of isolated portions of what is read. Care was taken, however, to avoid over-emphasis of this phase of the work; most of these cards were used in the third grade.

#### Differentiation Between Use of Materials in Formal and Informal Situations

Of the schools surveyed primary reading materials were found to vary through many degrees of formality. The more formal programs placed great reliance upon accessories, so far as the printed equipment is concerned, and placed a greater reliance upon capitalizing the interests



that the children display in the classroom.

It may be that the distinction between formal and informal reading methods is chiefly one of emphasis. Different published systems of reading vary in formality by almost imperceptible degrees. It was noted that slow children need a more detailed method with greater reliance upon accessories than bright children do, though bright children occasionally respond especially well to relatively formal habits, like word analysis, that give them keys to be applied readily to new situations.

Materials for basal-reading for the primary grades have been perfected to such a degree that any one of many systems can be used successfully under ordinary conditions. Care must be exercised, however, to guard against the use of different portions of several primary grade systems that are essentially incompatible and hence virtually incapable of use in sequence.

#### Supplementary Materials

At the preprimer stage there is in many schools an increasing disposition to relate reading materials to the children's environment and experiences. This trend, manifest in many published readers was particularly noticeable in school systems in which an activity curriculum prevailed. In such systems, as well as those in which reading was taught as a distinct subject, teachers sometimes preferred to prepare their own preprimer materials, based upon experiences of the children, and to issue the supplementary



materials to their classes in mimeographed or hectographed form. The requirements for this procedure upon the teachers' time, initiative, and skill are heavy. To be most effective, such materials should conform, to a reasonable degree, with the recognized principles of preprimer construction as to vocabulary control and the like. To be effective they should also articulate with later reading materials for which they are expected to lay a foundation.

At the early and middle primary level these materials prove particularly valuable. Above that level, however, individual teachers or local groups of teachers seem increasingly unlikely to improve upon the product of professional textbook-makers. This does not mean that reading matter based on the children's experiences should not be used in the later primary grades; they can often be used to advantage but should not occupy as prominent a place in the class work as in the first two grades. It must be borne in mind also that reading matter thus prepared locally as an outgrowth of class experiences is valuable, usually, only in the classroom in which it was produced or in classrooms in which nearly identical experiences can be repeated. Efforts to substitute it in other classrooms for published material having more universal appeal seldom proves justified.

The present trend to increase the amount and range of supplementary reading is doing much to give children a sense of mastery in the early grades. Probably no other



movement in reading matter is purposefully selected. Aimless reading of numerous books, haphazardly assembled, may prove discouraging and confusing to average pupils.

Books of work-type reading, closely related in vocabulary to the basal reader, are now in demand as virtual textbooks in content subjects throughout the first three grades. Such subject matter texts are supplementary to the reader, and at the same time lay the foundation of instruction in the arts and in the sciences, social and natural. It is the careful vocabulary coordination with the basic reader that has made possible this relatively new development. The former notion that subject-matter texts in the primary grades were not feasible has been due largely to the lack of serious efforts in vocabulary coordination.

Since materials are one of the chief tools of learning it is only natural that the pupils entrusted to one's care are benefitted and respond in proportion to the variety and diversity of materials that are made available for their use.



## ANALYSIS OF DATA

Diagnostic tests in reading were administered to one hundred and thirteen pupils in all grades (1 - 9) of the Bessmay Junior High School in April. This test was administered to determine specific difficulties of pupils in reading. The results of these tests are shown in Graph 1. Increase in class median scores over the norm are as high as 53% for the first grade. Scores for second and third grade also show increase over norm. A decided drop can be noted in the scores for the other five grades.

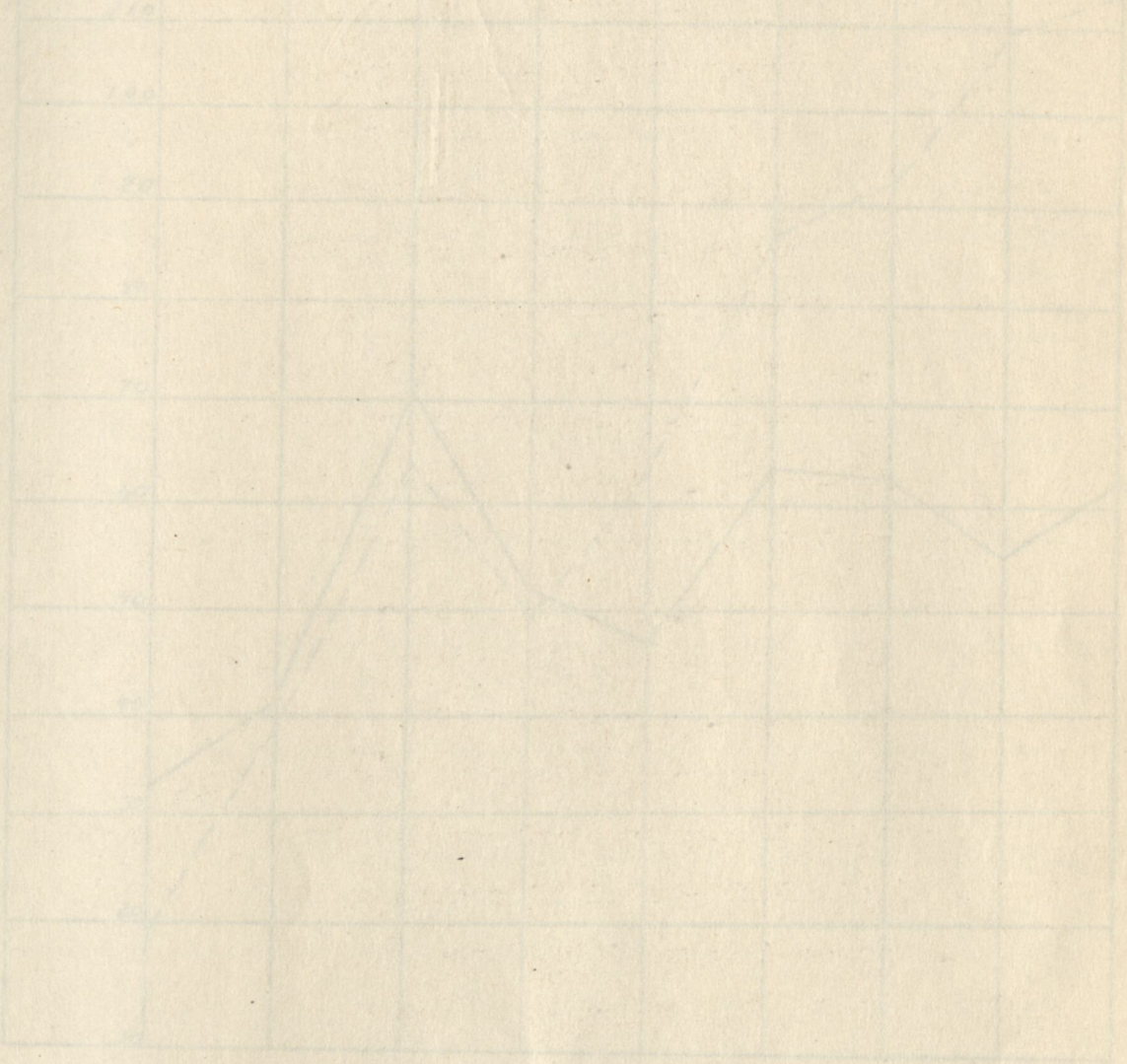
The diagnostic tests were not relied upon alone to show improvement in scores by grades. Gray-Votaw achievement tests administered in May show almost identical results for all grades. It might also be noted that increases in primary grade scores are high enough that they could not be taken as mere happenings of chance. Study of Graph 3 which shows the scores of the primary grades on the Gray-Votaw achievement test for three consecutive years. A decided rise in median scores in 1941 - 42 indicate that improvement of some kind resulted in such increases.

Tests also showed that correlation between items in the test were high, averaging .94 for all classes. Thus, those children making low scores in vocabulary on the Pressey Diagnostic score also made low scores in paragraph-comprehension. Low score in paragraph comprehension also resulted or was evident in speed.

The general indication seems to point toward a need for improvement in techniques in the upper five grades as

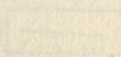


might have obtained in the first four in order that such increases in scores of valid tests can be noted for all grades instead of only the first four.



Graph 1

Class Scores



Norm

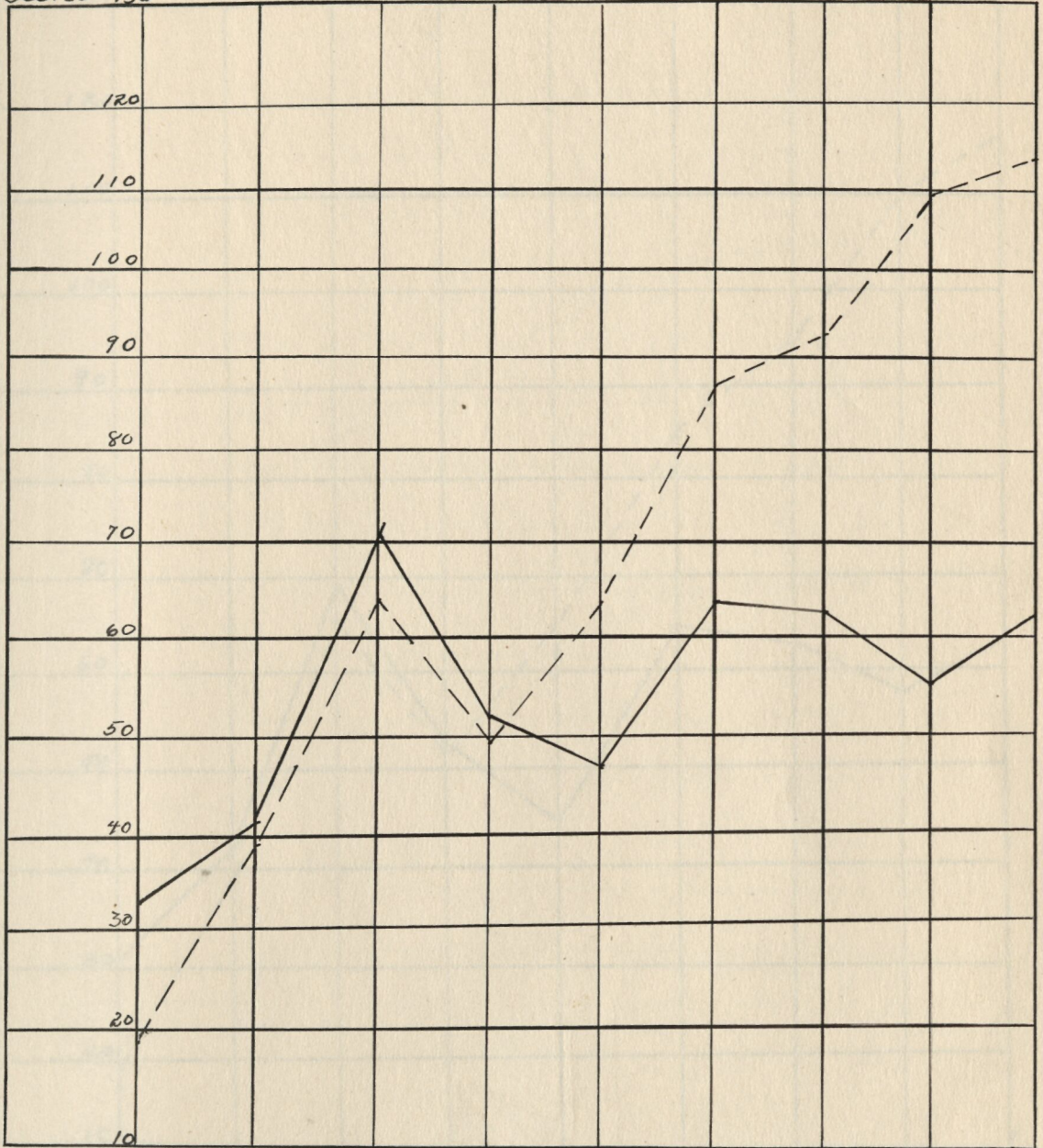


Median Class Scores and Norm  
for Diagnostic Reading Tests 1942.



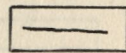
# Grades

Grade First Second Third Fourth Fifth Sixth Seventh Eighth Ninth  
Scores 130

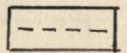


Graph 1

Class  
Scores



Norm



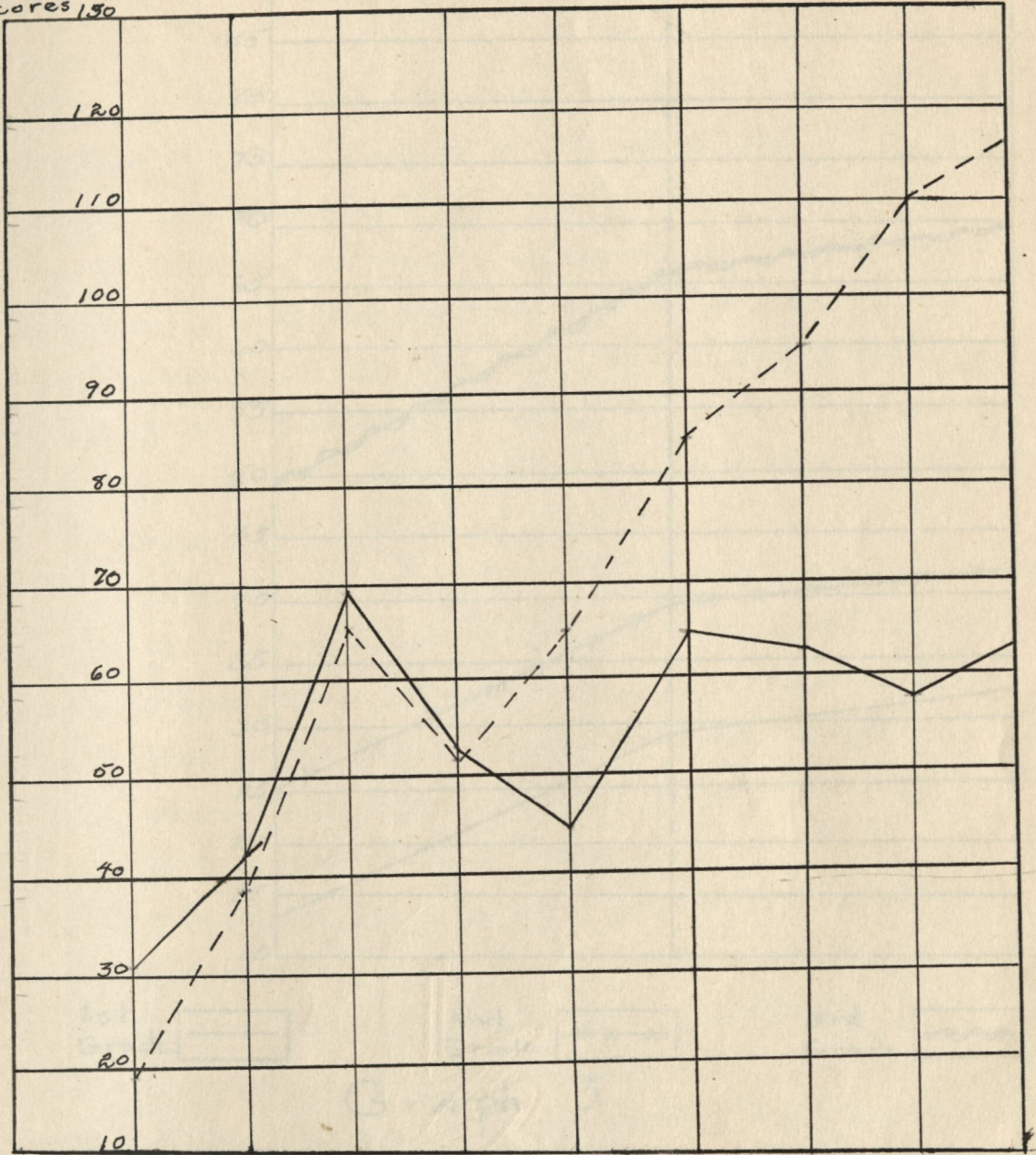
Median Class Scores and Norm

for Diagnostic Reading Tests 1942.



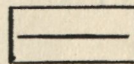
# Grades

Grade First Second Third Fourth Fifth Sixth Seventh Eighth Ninth  
Scores 130

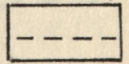


Graph 2.

Class  
Scores

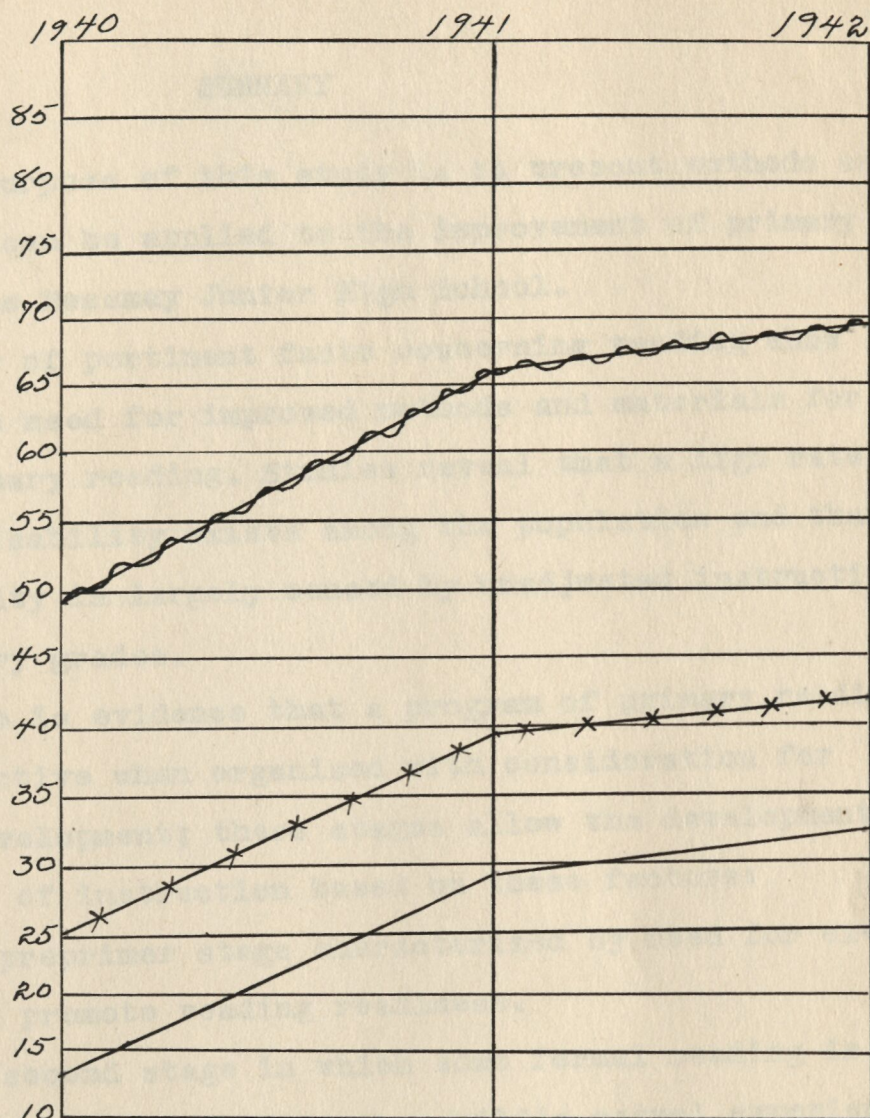


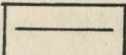
Norm

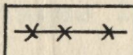


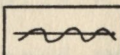
Median Class Scores and Norm  
for Achievement Tests 1942





1st  
Grade 

2nd  
Grade 

3rd  
Grade 

Graph 3

First, Second and Third Grade  
Achievement Test Scores for  
1940-1941-1942 on Gray-Votaw  
Achievement Tests



## SUMMARY

The purpose of this study is to present methods and materials as can be applied to the improvement of primary reading in the Bessmay Junior High School.

Study of pertinent facts concerning reading show that there is need for improved methods and materials for teaching primary reading. Studies reveal that a high rate of reading disability exists among the population and that this disability is largely caused by unadjusted instruction in the primary grades.

There is evidence that a program of primary reading is more effective when organized with consideration for stages of development; these stages allow the development of a program of instruction based on these factors:

1. The preprimer stage characterized by need for experiences to promote reading readiness.
2. The second stage in which some formal reading is taught with emphasis still on the child's actual experiences.
3. The third and fourth stages in which the child's ability to read is improved so that he is able to read material on the fourth grade level without the aids required of children who are beginning to read.

Resulting scores from tests administered show that children taught by modern methods made better progress than those taught in schools where conventional methods were employed. The modern school emphasizes activities based on the interest of the child.



In schools where improved methods are employed the materials used are of great variety. Suitable materials are necessary to provide an adequate program; the basal materials such as books, workbooks, and manuals that are not supplied in adequate quantities should be supplemented with carefully planned and executed teacher- or teacher-pupil-made materials. Such materials include wall charts, booklets, posters, and any other materials which are of interest to the child and foster wholesome learning.



## CONCLUSION

The following conclusions can be drawn from the study reported on the preceding pages.

1. Reading failure in primary grades (1 - 3) can be prevented to an appreciable degree by such adjusted instruction as is possible in any small school system.

2. Adjustment of instruction to the needs and abilities of the learners depends upon the teacher's adaptation of a diagnostic point of view and upon her proficiency in the use of means for discovering and meeting the needs of her pupils.

3. A supply of reading material, whether published or especially prepared, which will afford each child successful reading experiences at each stage in his development is a necessary part of the adjustment.

4. Pupils who have been taught by improved methods show an appreciable degree of improvement over children taught by conventional methods.



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### Photographed material

Photographed materials were used extensively to supplement the basic material in the classroom for the following reasons: (a) Since of all the types that are constructed, photographed materials (when done with a proper typewriter) were most similar to book reading, they required less adjustment on the part of the children and presumably facilitated their learning; (b) Individual differentiation of instruction could be made more easily when each child has a copy of the material; (c) children had booklets for their own personal "libraries"; (d) Children could take home to read to parents materials which they could read successfully; and (e) it was possible to keep files of children's work to watch their progress.

### APPENDIX

When facilities for photographing are limited or not available, some of the advantages of the photographed materials can be provided by blackboard and chart materials. For example, the longer stories may be hand-lettered or lettered with a rubber stamp printing set on tag board and hung in a series along the wall of the classroom for group reading. These same large sheets of tag board might be made into a "big book". Such exercises as the choice words in sentences and directions to draw may be placed on the blackboard. Children can illustrate the cartoons or comic strip type of story by folding their papers in six parts, numbering the parts, and drawing the appropriate



## APPENDIX

Hectographed material.

Hectographed materials were used extensively to supplement the basic material in the classroom for the following reasons: (a) Since of all the types that constructed, hectographed materials (when done with a primer typewriter) were most similar to book reading, they required less adjustment on the part of the children and presumably facilitated their learning; (b) individual differentiation of instruction could be made more easily when each child has a copy of the material; (c) children had booklets for their own personal "libraries"; (d) Children could take home to read to parents materials which they could read successfully; and (e) it was possible to keep files of children's work to watch their progress.

When facilities for hectographing are limited or not available, some of the advantages of the hectographed materials can be provided by blackboard and chart materials. For example, the longer stories may be hand-lettered or lettered with a rubber stamp printing set on tag board and hung in a series along the wall of the classroom for group reading. These same large sheets of tag board might be made into a "big book". Such exercises as the choice words in sentences and directions to draw may be placed on the blackboard. Children can illustrate the cartoon or comic strip type of story by folding their papers in six parts, numbering the parts, and drawing the appropriate



pictures according to the story on the blackboard. The group rereading the story might result in selection of the best pictures to paste on a "comic strip" for the reading table. This "comic strip" might be prepared in advance with the story printed by the teacher, spaces having been left for the children's drawings.



## APPENDIX

Mechanical Arrangement of Materials

This refers to such qualities as size of type, length of line, and number and spacing of lines on a page. The supplementary materials used for adjustment in the experiment followed the form used in basic reading materials. Mimeographed materials were hand-lettered at first to conform with the style of lettering used by the teachers for blackboard and chart work. After this early period, a primer typewriter was used. The standard for mechanical arrangement by which the supplementary material was judged was the similarity of the mechanical arrangement to that of the basic materials. It was assumed that any difference in arrangement would disturb some children and would introduce unnecessarily a further handicap to adjustment. The basic materials used in the experiment had been prepared in accordance with generally accepted standards of mechanical arrangement.

Some of the more important points of mechanical arrangement which were observed in the preparation of the supplementary material are:

1. The lines were not more than four inches in length.
2. Double spacing was used between lines.
3. Phrases natural in speech were kept as units on a line.
4. Thought units larger than phrases were kept on the same line as far as possible. That is, not



Mother said, "We may go to the park".

but

Mother said,  
"We may go to the park".

5. Paragraphs were indicated by indentation.

6. Paragraphs were kept as a unit, not divided between pages.

### Literary Qualities.

In the selection and construction of the supplementary materials used in the experiment and in regular classwork, an attempt was made to attain the following literary qualities, in so far as they were appropriate to the purposes of the material.

1. Clarity of expression.
2. Inclusion of relevant details only.
3. Repetition, not for itself alone, but as a natural unfolding of the story.
4. Paragraphs <sup>as</sup> real thought units, not merely a succession of sentences.
5. Dramatic action.
6. Suspense.
7. Climax.
8. Surprise ending.



## APPENDIX

## METHOD OF TEACHING RETARDED GROUP OF PRIMARY PUPILS

The foundation of adjusted instruction in this situation was based on the clear understanding of the needs of each pupil; not only at the beginning of the school term but continuously throughout the school year. The background and advanced age for their grade of most of these pupils necessitated a form of instruction different from that used with the other children. Success in handling that group is attributed to emphasis on concrete rather than abstract learning and to the use of elementary arts and crafts to aid in the expression of meaningful experiences in which these children were led to participate.

## I. Materials of instruction:

## A. Basic materials

1. Textbooks

2. Workbooks

## B. Supplementary materials

1. Supply of appropriate reading experiences as their needs were shown;

a. planned to present the necessary experience in a setting of materials already mastered.

b. planned to develop desirable reading habits.

2. Material arranged so that each child's mastery



and comprehension were clearly indicated by the responses he made.

C. Independent reading materials

1. Carefully selected, well-illustrated books.
2. Experience booklets and charts composed by the children; rendered and illustrated by them with supervision.
3. Weekly news publication edited especially for children in the primary grades.

II. Instruction

- A. Reading instruction
- B. Independent reading
- C. Writing, spelling, and phonics

III. Measures of success.

- A. Results of Gray-Votaw achievement test administered near end of school session.
- B. Progress to extent of promotion of retarded pupils (excepting two) with third grade at close of school session.



## QUESTIONS TO BE ANSWERED

1. What factors should be kept in mind when attempting to improve reading of primary children?
2. How can an interest in reading be cultivated?
3. Of What advantage or benefit are field trips in improving primary reading?
4. What are some basic materials that each school should have that will help in teaching to read?
5. What characteristics of the learner other than mental age influence progress in learning to read?
6. Should basic instruction in reading be given, in part at least, during special periods reserved for the purpose?
7. At what age should systematic instruction in reading begin?
8. What stages of development are most useful in organizing a program of reading instruction?
9. What are the major objectives of instruction in reading?
10. What techniques are to be acquired in learning to read?
11. What indications show that the child is ready to learn to read?
12. What factors, physical or otherwise, retard progress of children learning to read?



## SCHEDULE

Name of School \_\_\_\_\_

Place \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Teacher \_\_\_\_\_ Grades Taught \_\_\_\_\_

Enrollment by grades: 1st \_\_\_\_\_ 2nd \_\_\_\_\_ 3rd \_\_\_\_\_

1. Is the size of your classroom (check one)  
 ample \_\_\_\_\_ adequate \_\_\_\_\_ too small \_\_\_\_\_

2. Do you have sufficient (Yes or No)  
 seats? \_\_\_\_\_ tables? \_\_\_\_\_ chairs? \_\_\_\_\_  
 other equipment? \_\_\_\_\_ library facilities? \_\_\_\_\_

3. Is your classroom well lighted by windows? \_\_\_\_\_

4. What type of artificial lighting is used? (Check one)  
 electricity, \_\_\_ Kerosene lamp, \_\_\_ gasoline lamp, \_\_\_  
 other \_\_\_\_\_

5. What three materials of instruction, such as charts,  
 devices, do you use to greatest advantage in teaching  
 reading?

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

6. Are these materials furnished by (indicate one or more)

School Board \_\_\_\_\_

Private School Fund \_\_\_\_\_

P. T. A. or other organization \_\_\_\_\_

Teacher \_\_\_\_\_

Others \_\_\_\_\_

7. What major objectives do you work for in teaching  
 reading?



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8. What three reading skills do you expect primary children to master?

\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_

9. Do you employ reading readiness activities? \_\_\_\_\_

For how long? \_\_\_\_\_

10. Do you consider field trips valuable? \_\_\_\_\_ Why? \_\_\_\_\_

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11. Do you use any type of remedial reading for retarded pupils? \_\_\_\_\_ Do you obtain favorable results? \_\_\_\_\_

12. Briefly describe the method you believe to be most effective in teaching primary children to read.

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13. Are standardized achievement tests administered to your pupils during the year? \_\_\_\_\_

14. How do you use the results obtained from these tests?

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## APPENDIX

A BASIC SIGHT VOCABULARY OF 220 WORDS <sup>1</sup>  
 E. W. Dolch

Since these two hundred and twenty words make up from fifty per cent to seventy-five per cent of all ordinary reading matter, they should be recognized instantly by sight by all school children.

a	come	had	many	round	together
about	could	has	may	run	too
after	cut	have	me		try
again		he	much	said	two
all	did	help	must	saw	
always	do	her	my	say	under
am	does	here	myself	see	up
an	done	him		seven	upon
and	don't	his	never	shall	us
any	down	hold	new	she	use
are	draw	hot	no	show	
around	drink	how	not	sing	very
as		hurt	now	sit	
ask	eat			six	walk
at	eight	I	of	sleep	want
ate	every	if	old	small	warm
away		in	on	so	was
	fall	into	once	some	wash
be	far	is	one	soon	we
because	fast	it	only	start	well
been	find	its	open	stop	went
before	first		or		were
best	five	jump	our	take	what
better	fly	just	out	tell	when
big	for		over	ten	where
black	found	keep	own	thank	which
blue	four	kind		that	white
both	from	know	pick	the	who
bring	full		play	their	why
brown	funny	let	please	them	will
but		light	pretty	then	wish
buy	gave	like	pull	there	with
by	get	little	put	these	work
	give	live		they	would
call	go	long	ran	think	write
came	goes	look	read	this	
can	going		red	those	yellow
carry	good	made	ride	three	yes
clean	got	make	right	to	you
cold	green			today	your
	grow				

<sup>1</sup> Edward William Dolch, A Manual For Remedial Reading, p. 154.