

Motivated Remedial Reading in the High School

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In recognition of the large number of children who enter the high school with reading ability so low as to handicap materially (if not preclude success in) their work in most courses, an attempt is being made to devise an effective and feasible method of teaching these children to read efficiently. It is hoped that from the experimental work will emerge a remedial technique applicable in all high schools. This project is being developed at the Steinmetz High School.

The children selected for this special work are 1B and 1A students whose reading level, on standardized tests, is below that of the 7th grade, and who possess IQ's over 80. These youngsters have been placed in special English classes; their English period is devoted to remedial work in reading. In individual interviews teachers have made a thorough inventory of each child's vital interests, activities, and experiences: favorite leisure activities, hobbies, play preferences, vocational ambitions, wishes, personal problems and relationships, movie and radio preferences, and reading habits and experiences. These interviews, conducted during the regular English and study periods of the first few weeks of the semester, have served the purpose of: (1) Providing a basis for the teacher's real understanding of the individual; (2) effecting a friendly, sympathetic teacher-pupil relationship, important in all school endeavor, and essential in remedial work with children who have failed, who are frequently maladjusted, antagonistic, or indifferent, and whose *attitudes* consequently must be changed; and (3) obtaining an index to books and periodicals which the children will *want* to read, because these materials relate to the *children's* problems, *their* activities and interests, the things they want to know about.

Many new and vital materials, representing diverse interests, and appropriate for these children of limited reading ability, have been selected and are being made available. The library has cooperated in this phase of the program.

Day by day classroom procedures are carefully and specifically planned in advance (in weekly units). However, these schedules are flexible and may be adapted to special conditions and needs which may arise. Detailed descriptions of the daily programs, and samples of the forms devised for recording children's progress, are made available to those who visit the school. Typical procedures will be portrayed.

One very important phase of the project is a clinical set-up which provides for thorough physiological and psychological diagnosis of each child. The clinic, an extension of the Northwestern University Psycho-Educational Clinic directed by Dr. Witty and Dr. Kopel, is held weekly. Every Tuesday, from 10 A. M. to 3 P. M., visitors may observe examinations of children's vision, hearing, lateral dominance, intelligence, reading and general adjustment.

An informal conference of the entire staff (consisting of the director—Professor Witty, the psychologist—the writer, the four remedial teachers and their apprentice assistants, and an administrative assistant in immediate charge) takes place each Tuesday from 12:30 to 1:15 P. M. Problems and experiences of the previous week are discussed, and plans for the following week are formulated. Visitors are invited to attend these conferences and to observe the classes at work.

It should be understood that the program to be described is in the *developmental* stage; it is *experimental*, *tentative*, and *exploratory*, and only a *preliminary* to a mature and expanded program which will be initiated in various schools in 1936-1937.