EVALUATING THE PROVISIONS MADE FOR SLOW LEARNING CHILDREN IN IOWA PARK ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

THESIS

Presented to the Graduate Council of the North Texas State Teachers College in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of

MASTER OF SCIENCE

By

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Iowa Park, Texas
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The children of today are the citizens of tomorrow. The hope of our future democracy depends upon what the schools and the communities make of these children. Pressy has said,

Modern psychological investigation tends to indicate that to an extent hardly dreamed of a decade ago, people are what the world has made them. In character, in personality, in usefulness, and in happiness, people are the products of forces which can be controlled. And the chief agency for such control must be education.\footnote{\textit{Christine P. Ingram, Educational Method}, March, 1938, p. 416.}

That all men are born equal does not mean that all human beings are endowed with equal mental efficiency any more than it means that all people possess equal physical strength, good looks, or personality. A democratic nation cannot blind itself to the fact that there are individual differences, and that provisions must be made in our schools to care for these individual differences. Every boy and girl must be given an opportunity to succeed and be happy to the utmost limit of his or her originally given powers. Each individual must be given the type of education for which his nature fits him and which can make of him a happier and a better citizen. Forcing the type of education upon a child which is disproportionate with his mental strength is hardly in accord with our democratic ideals. The old standard, that of making all pupils jump the...
same hurdles with the idea that what is good for one child is good for another, is one of the most absurd realities that has ever confronted educators. Until we banish this type of procedure completely we shall continue to send out into the world people who are unable to meet life situation to any degree of satisfaction.²

Equal opportunities for every boy and girl should be our goal. The only method of equating opportunities for them is by adaptation. Our curriculum must be adapted to individual differences. The "what" and "how" of adaptation is the responsibility of each and every teacher who truly is, whether he accepts the responsibility or not, his pupils' guardian even after they have left school and gone out into the world.³ The child who learns slowly is not necessarily of inferior mentality. A careful check-up of the causes which contribute to slow learning reveals the fact that there are numerous causes or combination of causes which make learning difficult for some children. The leading factors or causes are: (1) certain physical or mental characteristics, (2) physiological defects, (3) social maladjustment, (4) emotional instability, (5) wrong habits of work, and (6) wrong attitudes. The last four causes mentioned may be started and nurtured by school procedures which have failed to meet the needs and interests of the pupils.


³Elizabeth Long, Educational Method, November, 1927, p. 73.
The study which follows these introductory remarks is concerned chiefly with curriculum adaptation to the needs of retarded children and is based upon field investigation and experience.

Purpose of the Study

Educators are becoming more and more aware of the need of providing for individual differences. From a social and economic standpoint the schools must somehow prevent failures. It is the greatest safeguard for success and happiness. The writer of this thesis has undertaken the study of the retarded child in an effort to determine whether the present set-up in the Iowa Park Elementary School meets the needs of the slow-learning child. The purpose of the study is to classify the retarded children from the viewpoint of selection for special education to determine the probable percentage of slow learning children in the elementary school, and to evaluate the provisions made for the retarded group. From this study it is to be hoped that an adequate educational program can be arranged. The problem in view is that of selecting, analyzing, and evaluating methods, practices, materials and other agencies used which have been found to be the most effective in meeting the needs and interests of these children.

Source of Data

An extensive study of literature in the field of the slow
learning child has been made. The following books and the one article formed a background or partial basis for the study:

4 *Modern Practices in the Elementary School*, *Education of the Slow-Learning Child*, "Opportunity for the Slow Learning Child," *Appraisal of New Practices*, and *Why Children Fail*. In addition to field investigation, a study was made in the Iowa Park Elementary School. The facts and findings in this thesis are based upon the results of the mental and achievement tests given, interviews with teachers, experimentation and observation.

**Treatment of the Data**

Research in the field of the slow learner was made to secure suggestions for classification, methods of selection, diagnosis and treatment. Opinions of the various authors in the field helped me to formulate some principles and practices which might be followed in perfecting the plan or program.


5 Christine Ingram, *Education of the Slow-Learning Child*.


8 Gladys G. Ide, *Why Children Fail*. 
The material or data secured through conferences, special investigation, testing, and experimentation were used to formulate a basis for determining the value or importance of providing special opportunities for the slow learning child in the light of his usefulness to the society of which he is a definite part.

Scope of Study

This study was made in the Iowa Park Elementary School and includes only the retarded group. The figures in the tables, which include all the groups, were given for comparison only. Each division of the slow learning group was under the supervision of the writer. Records made, methods used, and the progress were carefully checked. The following types of children were included in the study:

1. Slow thinking children who required time or additional help to complete the term's work.

2. Mental defectives who were unable to do regular work.

3. Those who had habitually failed for various reasons.
CHAPTER II

CRITERIA FOR MAKING PROVISIONS FOR THE RETARDED CHILDREN

The selection of the children who were to be included in the slow learning group and for whom special provisions were to be made was done on as comprehensive and scientific basis as possible in order that only children who actually needed this type of education would be included. Intelligence and achievement tests were not considered a sufficient basis for selection. They were supplemented with past achievement records.

In the beginning of the classification the Kuhlmann-Anderson Intelligence Tests and the New South Achievement Tests were given to all the children whose past achievement records showed low ranking in ability. In a conference with the teachers the records of the children in question were discussed. The tests were checked and the results tabulated. In conference a comparison was made of the past records of the children and the results of the tests given. With few exceptions the records agreed and it was found that proper grouping had been determined. The check-up also revealed the fact that approximately two per cent of the children were actually mentally handicapped. The others were presumably retarded because of irregular attendance, poor health due to malnutrition or physical defects, poor home environment in which the children received little or no encouragement, lack of application, haphazard schooling or poor teaching.
Whatever the causes of retardation were, the fact remained that our program for the slow learners should be revised.

The following tables show the findings or results of the mental tests and achievement tests. Table 1 shows the distribution of the children according to mental scores.

**TABLE 1**

DISTRIBUTION OF THE CHILDREN IN THE SECOND, THIRD, FOURTH AND FIFTH GRADES ON THE BASIS OF THOSE WHOSE MENTAL AGE IS BELOW CHRONOLOGICAL AGE AND THOSE WHOSE MENTAL AGE EQUALS OR EXCEEDS CHRONOLOGICAL AGE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Number in Grade</th>
<th>Number in Grade Whose Mental Age Is Below Chronological Age</th>
<th>Number in Grade Whose Mental Age Equals or Exceeds Chronological Age</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 was based upon the record score sheets compiled by the Gray-Votaw General Achievement Tests for the purpose of determining the grade levels. Table 2 shows the classification of the pupils on the basis of records made on the mental tests and achievement tests. The classification was made

\[1\] Gray Votaw General Achievement Tests, Record of Scores.
to determine the number of children who were below grade level. Table 3 was based upon the same source.

**TABLE 2**

DISTRIBUTION OF THE CHILDREN IN THE SECOND, THIRD, FOURTH AND FIFTH GRADES ON THE BASIS OF GRADE LEVEL AS DETERMINED BY TESTS GIVEN IN SEPTEMBER

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade Level</th>
<th>Second Grade</th>
<th>Third Grade</th>
<th>Fourth Grade</th>
<th>Fifth Grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>Per Cent</td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>Per Cent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Above Grade</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At Grade</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Below Grade</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TABLE 3**

DISTRIBUTION OF THE CHILDREN IN THE SECOND, THIRD, FOURTH AND FIFTH GRADES ON THE BASIS OF GRADE LEVEL AS DETERMINED BY TESTS GIVEN IN MAY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade Level</th>
<th>Second Grade</th>
<th>Third Grade</th>
<th>Fourth Grade</th>
<th>Fifth Grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>Per Cent</td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>Per Cent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Above Grade</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At Grade</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Below Grade</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3 shows the classification of the pupils on the basis of achievement after the revised program for slow learners had been put into effect. Table 4 shows the improvement or gain.

Table 4

DISTRIBUTION OF THE CHILDREN IN THE SECOND, THIRD, FOURTH AND FIFTH GRADES ON THE BASIS OF GRADE LEVEL AS DETERMINED BY TESTS GIVEN IN SEPTEMBER AND MAY AND THE PER CENT OF PUPILS AT EACH GRADE LEVEL WHO MADE A GAIN

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade Level</th>
<th>First</th>
<th>Second</th>
<th>Gain</th>
<th>First</th>
<th>Second</th>
<th>Gain</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Above Grade</td>
<td>7 11</td>
<td>15 27</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>4 18</td>
<td>6 12</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At Grade</td>
<td>36 58</td>
<td>35 64</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>29 58</td>
<td>32 64</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Below Grade</td>
<td>19 31</td>
<td>5 9</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>17 34</td>
<td>12 24</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fourth and Fifth Grades</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Above Grade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At Grade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Below Grade</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Tables 1 and 2 gave proof enough that something was lacking in our educational set-up. We were expecting all children to meet the same standards. There was a possibility that our standards were too high. Perhaps there was a lack of sympathetic
understanding of the part of our teachers toward these retarded children. Although we believed in education for all the children of all the people we had failed to meet the needs and interests of all our pupils. Table 4 shows the improvement made when we began to meet the needs and interests of the slow learners.

The environment of the slow-learning child should be more carefully controlled and planned. More frequent opportunities should be provided for recurrence than for the normal child. The retarded child is unable to respond to many diverse elements. Ordinarily we place too much emphasis on the element of recurrence in education and overlook the element of need. Like every other individual the slow child has needs and purposes and when he is placed in a stimulating environment more effective learning and development will take place. Our purpose then, in setting up a special program for retarded children, was to provide for the needs and interests of these groups in a more stimulating environment.

Guiding Principles on Which the Program Was Based

The principles on which the education of the slow learning child should be based must emphasize the child as a growing

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individual. It must be based on (1) the level of his mental development, (2) the level of his social and physical maturity, (3) the nature of his learning processes, (4) the type of his home environment, and (5) his general health. A suitable program for educating retarded pupils cannot be provided for unless these basic principles be kept in mind.

The backward children in our schools will be a definite part of our citizenship. Our task is to see that

Each child shall be educated in keeping with his capacities, limitations, and interests, looking forward toward the happiest adjustment he can make in life and the most constructive contribution he can bring to society. Such an adjustment and such a contribution are the secrets of mental health and the essence of social efficiency.³

All children, whether they be backward or of superior intelligence have need of social efficiency, but the degree of efficiency will vary according to groups. Some will be leaders, carrying on the affairs of their community or nation efficiently and constructively. Their problems will center around business, the professions, and social service. To many, many people social efficiency will mean the ability to get along with people, ability to follow wisely, to support oneself, to keep physically fit and participate in community life as efficiently as their limited abilities will permit. Our school program should be based on these concepts.

Constant recurrence of failure among pupils in school will quite likely develop the habits of failure. Repeated failures

³Ingram, op. cit., p. 1.
cause a feeling of humiliation, a loss of pride and self-respect, all of which is hardly conducive to good citizenship. We are all aware that "nothing succeeds like success and nothing fails like failure."  

Our objectives in setting up our special program were the same that one finds in any normal situation. The needs and interests of this group were just as important and real as those of the superior groups. The idea was to give them more constant and specific supervision, more drill, for their retention is limited, more external stimulus to arouse interest, more time for learning, more encouragement and sympathetic understanding, and patient guidance.

We assumed that each child has latent abilities and resources which were undeveloped, but which, upon proper stimulation, could be directed into worthwhile channels. The ultimate goal was to be useful, self-reliant, well adjusted, cooperative human beings rather than people with faulty views of life, lack of self-control, stability and independence.

Selecting Means of Providing a Suitable Program

The teachers of the various retarded groups based their programs upon the assumption that with the right objectives in view each child would begin to want to know whatever interested him. The key that unlocks the door of inert, sluggish minds is

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interest. It, therefore, became the task of each teacher to arouse the interests of the pupils in various activities conducive to learning. It was also their task to be able to apply the fundamentals of good teaching technique for the slow-learners, that is to know in any given situation when to apply drill, when to use appreciation lessons, or when to use "units" or project methods with the subject matter in hand, or whether to present it as a game.\(^5\)

In the beginning the teachers considered it necessary to outline objectives by which they might be guided. Since the retarded group ordinarily have the same needs or problems to face as the average or superior groups, only in a more limited fashion, it was considered a good policy to review the general objectives for normal children. The objectives adapted from "Cardinal Objectives in Elementary Education" and generally recognized by progressive schools were reviewed. The following is a list of those objectives:\(^6\)

1. Health, both physical and mental--the development of a healthy physique and wholesome mental attitudes toward life and its problems.

2. The understanding and practices of desirable social and civic relationships--intelligent participation

\(^5\)Annie D. Inskeep, Teaching Dull and Retarded Children, p. 15.

\(^6\)C. P. Ingram, Education of the Slow Learning Child, p. 61.
in family life and in community responsibilities in a co-operative society.

3. The discovery and development of individual interests and aptitudes—the recognition, and provisions for the growth, of creative ability in every child.

4. The development of interests and skills for participation in worthwhile activities for leisure time—the fostering of interests, appreciations and enjoyments in varied activities as a guide to independent choices.

5. A mastery of knowledge, appreciations, and skills of the school subjects as integral parts of life experiences—a recognition of these abilities as they are a part of the vital experience and conduct.

6. The development of the habits of critical thinking—the ability to recognize problems, to organize pertinent material, to examine it critically, and to arrive at unbiased judgments.

7. The development of vocational interests and efficiency.

The slow group cannot live so fully as the normal group. They cannot make adjustments so easily but they can achieve adjustments within their reach, co-operate and contribute to the extent of their abilities and enjoy life at their own level of interest and accomplishment.

The objectives for the slow group should take into account conditions prevalent in the group. It will be well to remember that
1. Mental development will be slow.
2. Normal standards will be more nearly attained in physical and social than in mental development.
3. Home environment provides generally inadequate opportunities for experience.
4. Hand skills are the sphere of greatest likely success.
5. Adjustments must ultimately be made chiefly in the rank of semiskilled and unskilled industry.

After these principles of education were reviewed the teachers began making special adaptation for their application. Since it was necessary to revise the program to meet the needs and abilities of the slower groups some sort of standards had to be set up by which the teachers might be guided in teaching these children. The best possible plan decided upon was that offered by Hockett and Jacobsen. These standards were adopted by the teachers and plans were made to center the program around the following sixteen objectives:


Objectives must be made definite and concrete. In spelling for example, it is better for these children to master the words in their own vocabularies than to study all the words in a given list. Not only will

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these children need to be conscious of simple forms of courtesy, but they also will need to practice them and check themselves on their success.

The teacher should encourage activities which will enrich the pupils lives in the future as well as the present, such as those leading to the love of good music and the appreciation of art. Through the organization of civic service, health and athletic clubs the teacher can help backward pupils develop habits of cleanliness, good citizenship and sportsmanship.

2. Present Materials in Short Definite Learning Units.

Teach thoroughly each step in a process; do not try short cuts. Do not expect to find a long span of interest. Be systematic in explaining work in detail. In a third grade arithmetic class, for example, this is very important for here the children usually begin the study of combinations. If the combinations are not mastered difficulty is always experienced in later work.

3. Provide Much Drill in Short Frequent Periods.

Closely relate drill to the situations requiring the particular skill. Emphasize habits and behavior patterns. In arithmetic, for example, drill on the combinations must be provided over and over again. When a new skill, the fundamentals must be given concurrently.

4. Overcome Lethargy with Variety.
Use various means to stimulate interest, arouse ambition, and overcome listlessness. One's interest in any task is increased when the value of the work is clearly recognized, and especially when it is related to strong existing purposes. In beginning a new piece of work, therefore, it is a good plan to discuss the value of the work, to give a clear idea of its scope, to divide the material into short, definite, learning units, and to assign concrete problems to small committees for discussion and research.

The visual appeal should be used widely to arouse and stimulate interest. Well chosen pictures help the child to interpret interest.

5. Simplify Your Language.

Make all directions concise, direct, and concrete. Use language that is simple in vocabulary and structure. The vocabulary of the backward pupil is more limited than that of the average child. Directions must be given in language that can be understood by all. If there is to be growth in ability to understand and follow directions, however, there also must be growth in vocabulary.

6. Simplify Situations and Make Illustrations Concrete.

Do not expect much generalization or application of general principles from backward children. An illustration of this principle is seen in a class seeking to understand the term cooperation. A baseball game
18

is used for illustration. The teacher points out that it takes all nine players to make a good team. Each player must do his part and at the same time be ready to help the others. A good captain is very necessary but he alone cannot win game. The first baseman may be a fine player, but he misses many chances if the fielders do not work with him. So it is in the classroom. Teachers and pupils must work together with the same team work as a baseball nine. So it is in the school as a whole--principal, teachers, and children work together and help one another for the good of all.

7. Counteract Forgetfulness by Reteaching and Reviewing.

To retain facts a child of limited mentality needs constant reteaching. Reteaching should be undertaken in such a manner that new interest is created. A game or race in which the whole class participates is helpful.

Review and drill frequently are limited to facts and skills. But it should be borne in mind that concepts and processes, too, are often forgotten, that they are not really mastered until they have been experienced again and again in various settings and relationships.

8. Provide Suitable Reading Material.

To be suitable reading matter must be on the
level of pupils' interests and yet easy in vocabulary and structure. Encourage reading of the best material available and the development of permanent reading interests.

There is need for much more suitable reading material for backward children. Such material as is available should be secured and made accessible. Teachers may include picture collections with each picture well labeled, and with readable information pasted on the back. Additional material based on pupils' first hand experiences or class newspapers may be used. Backward children enjoy a daily period in the school library where they may read and become acquainted with new books through browsing.


Valuable intellectual training will accompany properly organized handwork activities. Many of these children will be handworkers all their lives.


Make sure that pupils can feel success often. Find things they can do well and use these successes to encourage them to try other and more difficult tasks.

Careful planning of things to be accomplished in terms of pupil ability is essential to success. Nothing is more discouraging than constant failure. Therefore every effort should be made to have the slow child feel
that he is a success in school. Any task given him should be within his ability. Quiet praise for any work that is well done will do much to inspire satisfaction in achievement.

11. Give Heed to Social Adjustment.

Encourage participation by backward children in group activities, in order to facilitate social adjustment and overcome tendencies toward selfishness. As children learn that they must wait their turn for materials, tools, and play equipment, as they learn to coordinate their wishes and desires with those of their fellows, they overcome selfishness, roughness, thoughtlessness and grow better able to conduct themselves happily and successfully in the world of people.

Taking part in dramatics develops poise, dependability, and self-respect, as well as interest. The responsibility of having a part in a play arouses ambition and a realness for harder and more substantial work. Wise selection of a suitable play may change a listless class into an alert, eager group of children.

12. Teach the Value of Play.

Encourage wholesome pleasures and recreations that pupils can carry over into their leisure time, such as games, handwork, music, drawing, gardening, and the making of collections.

Nature study and social studies develop interests that may be the key to the opening of wider activities.
Hobbies furnish valuable recreation. Help the boys and girls to realize the different values of recreation. Help the boys and girls to realize the different values of recreation.

13. Let There Be Firsthand Contact with Community Life and with Nature.

In the classroom make much use of concrete objects and visual aids. Use frequent class trips.


Retarded children often live amid unwholesome and unaesthetic surroundings. A variety of aesthetic experiences, nevertheless, lies close at hand for all to enjoy, if the teacher has eyes to see and the ability to open the eyes of her children. Beauty can easily be provided in the classroom through pictures, flowers, draperies, color harmony, and happy atmosphere. A genuine experience of beauty arouses emotion in children. If the atmosphere of the room is wholesome, if friendly interest is shown by the teacher and there is freedom of self-expression, the children, after such experiences, may be encouraged to express their feelings.


Teach the wise selection of food and clothing. Build habits of thrift.

Good health is a matter of knowledge, cooperation,
and habit. The following are among the habits which should be stressed: breathing good air, eating proper food, protecting oneself from diseases, drinking sufficient water, caring for teeth, eyes, hair, skin, wearing suitable clothing, securing adequate sleep.

In regard to safety, the pupils may study such problems and topics as the use of the street for play, the causes and prevention of fire, the efforts within the local community to reduce accidents, the dangers of hitch hiking, and safety rules for pedestrians.

16. Train for Followship Rather than Leadership.

In building habits of behavior, stress conformity to generally accepted standards, but strive also to help these children acquire convictions that will lead them to wise choice of leaders. Build attitudes of vigorous resistance to the temptations of unwholesome or unscrupulous companions.

The sixteen objectives outlined formed a basis for the program. The outcomes expected from this new plan of teaching the retarded children not only included sufficient mastery of the three R's to enable them to make their way in industrial life, but also to be able to adjust themselves socially. The following desirable qualities were listed as measurable outcomes to be expected:

1. Habits and attitudes of healthful living.
2. A higher grade of citizenship.
3. A greater degree of happiness.
4. Ability to get along with associates.
5. Adaptability.
6. Dependability.
7. Cooperation.
8. Increased self-confidence and self-reliance.
10. Steadiness.
11. Perseverance.
12. Willingness to assume responsibility.
13. Increased understanding of more intelligent participation in family life.
14. Increased understanding of community relationships.
15. Profitable use of his leisure time.
16. Fair play.
17. Personal integrity.
18. Enthusiastic and appreciative reception of the aesthetic qualities of life.

Chapter II has dealt only with the accepted criteria for developing the program and the desirable outcomes to be obtained. Chapter III gives the set-up, organization, curriculum, general activities used to stimulate the pupils, description of units of work, anecdotal records, etc.
CHAPTER III

THE ORGANIZATION AND FUNCTION OF THE PLAN

General Procedure

The organization of the school for teaching backward children does not present unsurmountable difficulties. As a matter of fact there are few differences in such an organization and that of the average elementary school. Both have common elements. Guidance of the retarded children differs from that of the average child only in that it requires more ingenuity, more courage, and more faith. Organization of any type should be determined by the educational program which is best for the group or groups of children who are to be included. In any type of program the pupil should be studied and appraised as an individual. The general program which has been adopted as a result of much study, experimentation, and planning should be adapted in the most sensible manner to the needs, interests and abilities of the particular groups under observation. The general plan may have to be changed continuously as the year's work proceeds. New weaknesses may be discovered. Changes may occur in the child as a result of his new experiences under the revised program. The best teacher

is continually alert to these possibilities and will be able to meet each new situation in a constructive way.

The first step taken in planning our program was that of proper grouping. Homogenous grouping was selected to be used with modification. This type of grouping must be done with as little discrimination as possible, however. Branding a child as a slow learner is a rather serious affair. The organization which offers as many opportunities as possible without discrimination is the most desirable. Groups should be thrown together as much as possible in order that the feeling of discrimination will be non-existent if possible. The writer explained the method used in determining proper grouping in Chapter II. Although the mental and achievement tests were used as a basis for the study, the teachers were fully aware of the limitations of these tests and in many cases depended upon our own judgment and the reactions of the children.

The next step taken was that of developing and applying some means of providing (1) psychologically correct methods of teaching, (2) standards of achievement that fitted the mental rather than the chronological ages of the children, (3) courses of study adapted to their needs. Elizabeth Long suggests that three essential steps be taken in connection with the application of the methods above:

1. The school administration and the teachers should recognize the problem itself and the individuals who compose it in the organization.
2. The children should be grouped on the ability to make possible the required adaptation in methods, progress, rate, and the curriculum.

3. A study should be made of the common characteristics of the slow learner to guide in making the adaptation.

It is believed that slow learners will go further with less strain on them and all those who work with them if the subject matter is motivated at the mental level of the children and the teaching is adapted to their interests and needs. It was our plan to do these things. Chapter II listed the criteria essential in providing a suitable program. The remainder of this chapter is concerned chiefly with the development of the criteria and the program in action. Only one other thing need be mentioned here. Each teacher working in the field was thoroughly acquainted with the techniques of progressive teaching. They also had a sympathetic understanding of the children and their problems.

Nature of the Objectives.

The sixteen objectives which were chosen to serve as a guide in teaching were fully explained in Chapter II. Each of the objectives was invaluable to the teachers and children as well. Proof of this will be seen in the curriculum. The

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objectives are so closely interwoven with the curriculum that it will not be necessary to discuss them in a separate division of this thesis.

The Curriculum

The place of reading in any program is of the utmost importance. Experience has taught us that with few exceptions the slow-learner reads with difficulty. It is a well known fact that a child who reads with difficulty finds it equally difficult to make rapid progress in the other academic subjects. He may be a good mathematician as far as computation and reasoning are concerned but if he can't read the problem his arithmetical abilities are limited. Our first concern, then, was with reading. Failure to acquire the essential reading techniques is the most frequent cause of reading difficulties. The problem then was to develop essential reading skills if possible.

The percentage of our reading failures seemed to be exceedingly high and it was imperative that we reduce this percentage before reading habits became so fixed that nothing could be done about it. We assumed that the slow-learners were not actually mentally inferior. In fact we knew that the majority were not. The only conclusion to draw was that we had failed to reach them. This seemed to be the case in the fourth and fifth grades. In these two grades our problem was that of remedial work. The problem in the primary grades was more a
matter of prevention. Here we were trying to prevent the formation of wrong reading habits which had presumably caused the necessity for remedial work in the fourth and fifth grades.

It does not matter whether a teacher is giving remedial or preventive instruction in reading it is still reading and the same principles should be followed as in any other plan of good teaching. As a matter of course both preventive and remedial reading should be individualized instruction. The same weaknesses will not appear in all the children, therefore, reading instruction should be designed for the child not the group.

The most important step to be taken in the beginning of a reading program is that of providing suitable reading material. We knew that a large per cent of the slow-learners actually did not care for reading. They seemed bored rather than interested in the reading periods. Our own experiences have taught us that uninteresting material will bore even the most brilliant pupils. Why should we expect children of less imaginative natures to be enthusiastic over material that has little or no meaning to them? A child must enjoy what he reads. It must have meaning. Too many boys and girls consider reading a punishment. This is only because of the type of material which they are required to read and the manner in which it is presented to them. Our first consideration was given to the selection of reading material which we knew to be of proper reading difficulty. Usually a slow-learner spends most of his time struggling with material that is beyond his ability to read. A child cannot overcome his reading difficulties if he is forced to struggle along in this manner.
Our problem was to select material that was within the range of the children's ability. We had to keep in mind that the slow readers would become discouraged if they were forced to read long stories or selections. They do not have a long span of interest. They had to be made to feel that they had successfully completed a given piece of work within a reasonable length of time; therefore, the selections were relatively short, especially at the beginning. Usually the material presented to the groups was a year or more below grade. For instance we gave third grade children first grade and even primer and pre-primer material. The pupils were not told that they needed this type of reading material and they were not asked to read any material which they had read in the first and second grades. The easy material was put on the bookshelf with the explanation that some new reading material was on the bookshelf if they cared to read it. Even the best readers read pre-primers with interest. More difficult reading material was gradually introduced. A child was not required to read books which were beyond his comprehension and ability to read.

We were aware of the fact that children who have reading difficulties need much review. Retention among slow-learners is limited. In reading, as well as other subjects, much reteaching is necessary. Some educators believe that a child must see a word at least eight times before it becomes his own. If this is true a slow learner will have to see a word many times in various settings and relationships before it becomes his own. Forcing a child to go over material again and again because he cannot read
it successfully is hardly conducive to good learning. The best way to review is by the use of a wide variety of easy reading material which we tried to provide.

Free reading is considered essential in any reading program. It was found that the slow-learner needs more supervision than the average child in the "free-reading" periods. If he selected material that was too difficult he merely pretended to read. If he selected material that was too easy his time was wasted. Free reading was done under careful supervision to prevent this.

Individual instruction in reading is highly recommended for the slow-learner. Children do not have the same reading difficulties, therefore, provisions should be made for all the reading disabilities. Although individual instruction is recommended, it is by no means to be inferred that group reading is to be avoided. On the contrary reading on a co-operative basis gives the child confidence. It is also more interesting. Most children like to prove to themselves and others that they can do things. The slow-learners, more than any other group, need encouragement in participating in activities which will make them feel that they "belong."

We found that the more motivation that was provided for the children and the more chances we gave them to engage in reading orally or reporting orally resulted in greater learning or progress. Silent reading was a part of our reading program but much more time was given to oral reading. The children
were given every opportunity possible to read aloud. They read interesting stories from library books and magazines to the group. They read articles, poems and any other material available. It was understood, however, that each child was to be prepared to read orally before he came before the group. It was necessary to hold the interest of the children who were listening and a poorly prepared reader could not do this.

Charts and graphs were found to be invaluable in checking the progress of the children. The pupils were interested in the progress charts. It stimulated them. Any progress, no matter how small, gave the child a feeling of success. Success is important to all children but it is very essential to the slow-learners. The more confident and successful the children become the more rapidly they will progress. One particular group of slow readers watched with keen interest any changes that appeared on the reading chart. They were buoyed up or depressed according to the markings of the chart. The danger lay in the fact that some never quite "found" themselves or the teacher failed to "find" them and the charts proved more discouraging than helpful to those whose progress was practically at a standstill.

Checking the results of our reading program it was found that the children tested lower in comprehension than in any other phase of reading. We had discovered this situation in the beginning and efforts were made to correct it. We felt that a child must be able to read comprehensively in order to be able to master facts necessary to his education. In many cases we had to
begin at the beginning and proceed steadily and slowly using and explaining materials on the level of the children's mental abilities. 3 We also discovered that many of the children were not interested in reading material which was chiefly informative. They were more interested in stories in which the meaning was easy to grasp. Fanciful stories, stories about animals, and stories about boys and girls of their own age interested them. They remembered best stories with amusing incidents in them.

Following the interests of the pupils in the selection of "free reading" we found these books or types of books to be their favorites:

- Bow-Wow and Mew-Mew
- Tale of Curly Tail
- Fifty-Funny Animal Tales
- Peter Rabbit
- Shoes for Sandy
- Adventures in a Dishpan
- Little Black Sambo
- Li'l Hannibal
- The Princess and the Apple Tree
- Araminta's Goat
- Snipp, Snapp, Snurr
- The Wise Little Donkey
- Little Elephant Catches Cold

Constant encouragement is of the utmost importance to the slow reader. It is true that many children will not make normal progress under the most favorable circumstances but if they are made to feel that they are doing their share the results are surprising. It will be well for the teachers to remember that perfection cannot be attained. If the slow reader is made to want to read the greatest of all reading difficulties has been overcome.

Many teachers have expressed the opinion that arithmetic is easier for the slow learner than any of the other tool subjects. This may be true in many cases as far as computation is concerned, but we did not find it true as a whole. Slow learning children find arithmetic difficult. Very often their
reasoning ability is far below par. Their retention is limited. There is need for much drill and much review. It was found, while working with the various groups in our school, that the children actually like drill and review. While the average group might find too much drill monotonous the slow learner does not mind monotony. Review and drill gives him an opportunity to use what he has learned and nothing is so stimulating as a chance to prove that he knows something. However, the main purpose of drill is to provide over and over again in new situations material which he vitally needs. In this way skills are mastered and habits are formed.

Formal arithmetic in the primary grades does not hold as important a place as it once did. Instructors are beginning to see the folly of such instruction. For the retarded child formal instruction is worse than folly. One of the chief obstacles in the way of learning with the retarded child is listlessness and formal arithmetic won't reduce it. While it is true that the slow learner does not mind the monotony of drill he responds to variety in drill with surprising results.

The writer recalls the method used in teaching first grade children the smaller number combinations. A small store was provided. Each article or group of articles had a price tag. No price exceeded the numbers with which the children were familiar. The children took turns playing clerk. The position of a clerk depended upon the progress the child made. No one was denied the position but he had to prove himself worthy. There
was a great deal of interest exhibited by all the children. Going shopping was something to be looked forward to. It was soon discovered, however, that something was wrong. A very brilliant little clerk refused to sell any more of the cheaper articles. When he was asked why he wouldn't sell he replied that his stock was running low because certain children bought only the articles which were low in price. The sum of the prices rarely exceeded five or six. They bought the same articles every day. As a result they were making little or no progress. The reason was simple. The slow learners wanted to shop but since their ability to add and give change was limited they had to resort to the practice of buying the same cheap articles over and over in order to be able to shop. The class as a whole was going too fast for them. Adjustment was necessary. They needed more time, more encouragement and more chances to participate in the enterprise. One must proceed slowly and carefully with such groups. This is true even in the most stimulating circumstances.

A third grade group struggled with statement problems in a textbook until both teacher and pupils were exhausted. The children were very poor readers, but they made little progress even after they had mastered the reading of the problems. Finally the teacher substituted names and circumstances familiar to the children for those given in the textbook. The children did pretended shopping. Names of the stores where they actually shopped were used. Trips were planned to places where they would
like to go, using the figures in the book. There was little
difficulty in starting an arithmetic lesson after this plan was
used. There was difficulty in stopping it.

Not all arithmetic can be taught in games, however. There
are certain fundamentals which must be taught in which the game
element has little or no place. Drill on the number combina-
tions must be provided for. The slow-learner forgets the num-
ber combinations very easily and it is very necessary that the
children master them in the third grade if difficulty is not
to be experienced later. We found it difficult to master them.
If we failed to drill on this type of work constantly the chil-
dren forgot. Some of the groups were drilled almost daily in
some form. It was quite helpful to give the children flash
cards, the self-testing kind, to use at free periods. Long di-
vision seemed to be the most difficult of all the arithmetical
processes in the fourth grades. We attributed this to the fact
that they had not sufficiently mastered the combinations. We
doubled our efforts in this field, hoping to make long division
easier.

Slow-learning children cannot apply the general principles
of arithmetic very readily. Concepts and processes are not eas-
ily retained, even by the older groups. As in reading the teach-
ers need not expect perfection but a patient and skilful teacher
can carry the slow-learner much farther than she realizes.

The general procedure for all the other subject matter pre-
ented to the slow groups was about the same as that of reading
and arithmetic. Slow-learners do not spell any better than they read. They spell better if the word list is made up of words in their own vocabulary. Far too many children lack a sense of sound, which is a handicap in spelling. The author of this thesis believes phonics to be an essential part of any child's education and invaluable to the slow-learning child. Although it is recognized as an aid to reading we found it simplified spelling for the retarded groups and we taught phonics with the wholehearted belief that it should be a definite part of the slow-learners education.

Procedures in the teaching of language, writing, etc. were the same as in any normal situation. Since the vocabulary of the slow learner is limited everything was given in as concise, concrete and direct method as possible. An attempt was made to increase the vocabulary of these children since the ability of the children to understand directions depends upon their vocabulary.

Slow-learners often excel in music and art. Too often many of the children live under conditions where music and beauty are sadly absent. The school should provide a wholesome atmosphere where children can find beauty and enjoy good music. One of our groups made excellent progress in music. It is true that the mechanics of music was difficult for them but the same degree of pure enjoyment of singing and the harmony they produced was not found in any other group in the school. We knew that they would fail in the theory of music but there was nothing lacking in the
appreciation of pure melodies. In this they excelled and were given full credit for it. The sheer fun and enjoyment of singing is worth far more to the individual than the most perfect conception of the mechanics of music.

Social studies was considered a vital factor in the curriculum. Through social studies we hoped to be able to create within each pupil the desirable qualities or attitudes listed in Chapter II. These attitudes are necessary to the child in making social adjustments. Social studies and elementary science often unlock the door to greater interests. Community life served as a basis for both social studies and science. Our science program was limited, consisting mainly of the study of our surroundings. The study of elementary science was sufficient, however, to convince us of the importance of a more varied program. The collection of a few turtles, bugs, etc., wasn’t sufficient. Lacking equipment, except of the improvised type, we visited the science department in the high school department. We used pictures where the actual objects were absent. Stories and books on elementary science were provided.

One of the most interesting projects which we undertook as a part of our social studies work was that of the Junior Patrol. This was in connection with health and safety. Only fourth and fifth grade boys were allowed to become members. Perhaps the Junior Patrol accomplished more in establishing right attitudes than any other type of work. Good work and good behavior were pre-requisites to membership. Boys were seldom told twice that
they had been marked off the roll because of conduct and bad grades. Some never quite reached the standard required but there was noticeable improvement, nevertheless.

In many cases the knowledge of good health habits in retarded children is sadly lacking. There is little need to go beyond the child’s surroundings in an effort to find material for health instruction. The best plan is to take the child where he is and give him sound instruction in the formation of correct health habits. A diseased body is a menace to society, therefore, it is imperative that the child be educated to the necessity of a clean, sound mind and body.

One of the most interesting activities of all our social studies work was that of giving original plays. Every child is an actor and is only waiting for an opportunity to act. Usually a play was written by one or by several in the group after a study had been completed. The plays centered around such topics as health, safety, thrift, good manners, character study, places they studied about in geography, and stories they had read. The fifth grade pupils had a wider variety, being able to include historical incidents.

Discovering Latent Talent

Geniuses have been found among slow-learning children but that is the exception rather than the rule. Teachers may not find geniuses among their group but it is quite possible to find many children who need "discovering." A stimulating school
environment may be the means of arousing many passive and apathetic individuals. Although we were not particularly searching for prodigies among our slow-learners we were pleased to find some who showed unusual talent in various fields. In fact we were rather chagrined to find that we had grossly misjudged the ability of several children. Three case studies are cited to prove this statement. An anecdotal record was kept of Case I.

Case I

William X was eleven years of age and in the third grade. He had failed in the first grade and again in the third grade. He was considered a problem child in the third grade. According to reports from the teacher he wouldn't do anything and he didn't want to do anything. He appeared healthy and full of energy except in the classroom. The writer felt certain that the boy was capable of meeting the requirements of his grade. The following anecdotal record shows how the boy responded to school work after it was discovered that he had musical ability. (Table 5 on page 41).

Case II

John Z was twelve years old and in the fifth grade. He was the despair of his teachers. Low grades did not discourage him. He wasn't remotely interested in any of the activities of his group. He was a dreamer but his dreamy existence wasn't helping him get through school. Teachers considered him an insolent,
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>First Week</th>
<th>Second Week</th>
<th>Third Week</th>
<th>Fourth Week</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>Did not enter school.</td>
<td>Entered school and came two days.</td>
<td>Absent.</td>
<td>Came back to school but had difficulty in adjusting himself.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II</td>
<td>The teacher discovered he had a fine voice. He responded to praise.</td>
<td>Rather shy. Still having trouble with work due to absence.</td>
<td>Agreed to try solo work during the music hour. Hid his face several times and the teacher had to stand by him.</td>
<td>Asked to be permitted to sing alone.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV</td>
<td>Transferred to 5th grade music class because of the strength and quality of voice.</td>
<td>Splendid improvement in all work, spurred on by recognition of his musical ability.</td>
<td>Absent.</td>
<td>Began to care for flowers etc. in the room. Anxious for the approval of the teacher in everything.</td>
</tr>
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</table>
TABLE 5 (Continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>First Week</th>
<th>Second Week</th>
<th>Third Week</th>
<th>Fourth Week</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>VI</td>
<td>Art work poor. Little or no interest. Had to reprimand.</td>
<td>Asked to be permitted to sing with Choral Club.</td>
<td>Changed groups in reading again because of continued improvement.</td>
<td>Elected the best citizen in the classroom for the week.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VII</td>
<td>Absent.</td>
<td>Absent.</td>
<td>Interest low because of absence.</td>
<td>Returned to fifth grade music class. Asked to stay after school and make up work he had missed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VIII</td>
<td>Helped prepare the citizenship program for the week. Showed leadership qualities.</td>
<td>Asked for additional reading material to take home.</td>
<td>No evidence of any particular achievement.</td>
<td>Changed ball teams, playing with older boys—Continued social adjustment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IX</td>
<td>Became worried over promotion. Doubled his efforts.</td>
<td>Played important part in Citizenship Club program.</td>
<td>No evidence of any particular achievement.</td>
<td>Chiefly interested in achievement scores. Extremely happy when his general achievement and music was given to him. Wanted song book.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

idle child. Strangely enough his latent ability was discovered under rather harassing conditions. A special project was under
way in which he showed not the slightest interest. In des-
peration the teacher scolded him for his lack of interest and
attention. He was told to do anything that he wanted to do.
The following poem was the result:

I'm always sitting at my desk,
Not even paying attention,
There's lot's of things that I should do,
And things I shouldn't mention.

Like when the teacher gets real angry,
And looks at me with all her heart,
I get to work right quick, and then,
I think that I am smart.

She tells me to be quieter,
And of course I go ahead,
Like I have never even heard her,
She should thump me on the head.

Someday I'll get enough of this,
And then I'll be real good,
I'll always be so quiet and nice,
And do the things that I should.

John Z did what he wanted to do. The result was pleasing
to both teacher and child. It is needless to say that John Z
presented a different figure in future events. The effect it
had on his personality was immeasurable. Inspired by the con-
fidence in his ability which the acceptance of the poem gave
him, he lost the insolent attitude toward school that had been
his. He felt he was understood.

Case III

Hugh Y was eleven years of age and in the fourth grade.
Queer beyond description was probably all that could be said
about him. He was undernourished and poorly dressed. He was
actually shunned by the other boys in school. He craved
companionship but he didn't know how to get it. His efforts at friendship were repulsed. He was an outcast despite the efforts of some of his teachers until he was "discovered". He was an artist and a poet. His true self was revealed in work of this type. Later in the term he was transferred to a school system in which art was given much attention. A most excellent report on the boy was sent back to us in a few months. His artistic ability was receiving much attention.

These incidents are given to prove that if we search long enough we may find in every slow-learning child a hidden talent which, when brought to light, may be the salvation of the child.
CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

It cannot be doubted by any person who is sincerely interested in the welfare of society that a curriculum adapted to the needs and interests of retarded children is a boon to society. The curriculum of every elementary school, as well as every secondary school, should be as flexible as possible in order that each boy and girl shall be able to develop his or her abilities to the fullest capacity.

Each child should be educated in keeping with his capacities, limitations, and interests, looking forward to the happiest adjustment he can make in life and the most constructive contribution he can bring to society. Such an adjustment and such a contribution are the secrets of mental health and the essence of social efficiency.¹

The data presented in this thesis seem to justify the conclusion that curriculum adaptation for slow-learners is highly essential in any school program. The increased rate of progress, as shown by Tables 3 and 4, tend to show that major objectives can be reached in educating slow-learners. Such evidence seems to give tentative proof of the validity of the educational practices used in the program.

¹C. P. Ingram, Education of the Slow Learning Child, p. 1.
Recommendations
According to the data presented and the conclusions made the writer offers the following recommendations that:

1. Elementary schools make a scientific diagnosis to determine the percentage of slow-learning children in the schools.

2. School administrators help the slow-learner succeed by building the program around the child's own life and on the basis of his mental status.

3. The children be encouraged to develop the natural talents that they possess by letting them do what interests them and what seems important to them.

4. Less discrimination and more encouragement to be offered retarded children.

5. More stress be placed on preventive reading in the primary grades in order that the correct formation of reading habits and attitudes will make remedial reading unnecessary in the intermediate grades.

6. Each teacher working with the slow groups be thoroughly acquainted with the most progressive teaching methods in the primary grades.

7. Each teacher be an efficient diagnostician and efficient in applying remedial treatment after weaknesses have been discovered.

8. Each teacher be familiar with the principles of mental hygiene.
9. Each teacher have a genuine love for children and a sympathetic understanding of their problems.

10. The teachers in the school where this study was made accept these findings as a basis for future curriculum making, revising and improving where errors have been made, in order that better teaching may be developed and a more abundant school life be provided for each individual.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


