THE MENTALLY RETARDED CHILD VERSUS THE NORMAL CHILD

IN THEIR ADJUSTMENT TO THE CLASSROOM

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THE MENTALLY RETARDED CHILD VERSUS THE NORMAL CHILD
IN THEIR ADJUSTMENT TO THE CLASSROOM

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

American educators, have accepted in theory, the principle that children should have, in terms of their abilities, equal educational opportunities. Every child must be given an opportunity to succeed and be happy to the limit of his or her originally given powers. Each individual must be given the education facilities for which his nature fits, and which can make him a happier and better citizen. 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 facts that has ever confronted educators. Until this type of procedure is completely banished we shall continue to send out people unable to meet life situations to any degree of satisfaction.

Purpose of Study

The need of providing for individual differences is gradually becoming a part of every school curriculum. From a social and economic standpoint the school must prevent

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failures. The purpose of this study is to determine the problems of adjustment of the mentally retarded child as compared with the problems of adjustment of the normal child.

Source of Data

The data for this study were purely research from much reading on the findings, opinions, and suggestions of recognized authorities and others in the field of education. Pamphlets, bulletins, magazine articles and books read on the subject of adjustment of the mentally retarded child and the normal child were used to formulate a basis for the comparison of the two.

Limitations

This problem was limited three ways: namely, a study of the mentally retarded child with an I.Q. from 70 to 90; a study of the normal child with an I.Q. from 90 to 115, and an investigation of the educational literature to determine a teaching procedure to be used in the adjustment of the retarded child and the normal child. This study does not include an experiment in any way.

Treatment of Data

This research is based upon the idea that adjustment problems can be solved if properly handled. Investigation has been made of the characteristics of the mentally retarded child and the normal child. A comparison and an
analysis was made of the essentials of sound adjustment which have been found to be the most effective in meeting the needs of the mentally retarded child and the normal child.

Definition of Terms

Mentally retarded child.--Is the child whose mentality is lower than the necessary for learning in the public school in his respective age group. This study includes the retarded child whose I.Q. is between seventy and ninety.

Normal child.--Is the child who shows development from year to year at a normal rate that can be measured, and progress in one line of development keeps in pace with the progress of another.

Adjustment.--Is the special form of guidance which seeks to effect changes in the pupil. Successful adjustment involves two processes, (1) discovery of the causes of difficulties, and (2) the corrective or remedial treatment.

Intelligence quotient (I.Q.).--Is the ratio of mental age to the chronological age.

Mental age.--Shows the level of mental development that the child has reached at a given time.

Chronological age.--Shows the number of years and months the child has reached.
Plan of Thesis

This study is organized and presented in five chapters. Chapter I is an introduction to the problem. Chapter II describes the characteristics of the mentally retarded child. Chapter III describes the characteristics of the normal child. A comparison of adjustment problems of the mentally retarded child and the normal child are discussed in Chapter IV. The recommendations and conclusions follow in Chapter V. The concluding statements are based wholly upon the facts secured in the investigation of educational literature.
CHAPTER II

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE MENTALLY RETARDED CHILD

The retarded child is a problem. Mental ability is the most significant factor today for predicting success in making adjustments to school life for the majority of children. The retarded child has a slower rate of development than the normal child. He has limited ability to apply in one situation experiences learned in another, to anticipate consequences, and to criticize his own conduct.

The mentally retarded child is often spoken of as "good for nothing." As a matter of fact, he is good for something, but only, if he is put into suitable surroundings where his weak intelligence will not be overworked. Work above his ability will be an endless hindrance to the development of his so-called intelligence.

The retarded child is a child of habit but not a child of reason. He is a child of doing but not of using his thinking ability. He must be given the opportunity of meeting over and over again the types of experiences to which he is expected to make adjustment in his daily life. These experiences must be simple so that adjustment will be only the natural thing.

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1A. Gesell, The Retarded Child, p. 29.
About fifteen to eighteen per cent of the school population is placed in the seventy to ninety I.Q. range. A child with an I.Q. between seventy and eighty can succeed fairly well in academic work in an ungraded group, a slow moving grade, in a slow section of the regular grade, or in a small group where the academic work is individualized.

Intellectual retardation may assume different forms. From one child to another it may vary in extent, in intensity, or in origin. However, there must be a distinction between what is inborn retardation and what is acquired retardation.\(^2\) The actual knowledge that a child displays in school, his proficiency in spelling, his power to add or multiply, his acquaintance with historical and geographical materials are all acquired. They are accumulated effects of instruction of learning through memory and practice.\(^3\)

The temporarily retarded child can learn but for some reason has never actually done so. The child could be called backward in school work only. The child may be too immature to keep up with the rest of the class, due to the over anxious parents who prevaricate about the child's age in order to send him to school early. However, it is the law in most schools now that a beginner must present a birth certificate before he can be enrolled in the public school.


\(^3\)Ibid., p. 9.
A deficiency that is inborn or inherited can never be cured. This child cannot learn and may be called dull. The I.Q. for the inborn deficient with which this study deals does not go below seventy. It is made up of micros who often cause disciplinary troubles in school, and unless the school socializes them they may become criminals. No amount of training can ever raise them to the level of the attainments which the children of mentally normal capacity are capable of achieving.

The deficiency in either the temporarily or permanently retarded child is first noticed in the child's failure to respond effectively to the ordinary situations of his school tasks. This is due to the inborn causes or some unfortunate hindrances, such as prolonged or frequent absences from school, frequent changes of school, insufficient teaching or a physical disability. Other hindrances, such as bad home surroundings which may include malnutrition, improper diet, loss of sleep and such things of like nature may cause retardation. If these physical handicaps are either removed or improved the child will show marked improvement in scholastic progress. To deal with both types side by side with the normal child in the same classroom is almost a hopeless task. "No grindstone can make a good blade out of

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bad metal; and no amount of coaching will ever transform the inborn dullard into a normal child. 5

To discover the dull and backward child we may rely principally on standardized tests. Any pupil who about the middle of his school career, falls two or more years below the normal standard for his age should be considered definitely retarded. 6

Educators in this field of study seem to agree to a certain extent on the various characteristics of the retarded child. The ideas and opinions of different writers on the subject will be discussed in the following pages of this chapter.

Briefly, Garrison, characterizes the retarded child as:

1. A child with poor habits of study
2. A child whose attention is hard to hold
3. A child with a very limited vocabulary
4. A child who lacks comprehension and organization ability for ideas. 7

The retarded child usually learns to walk late, learns very slowly and sometimes in rare cases with an I.Q. of

5 Burt, op. cit., p. 9.
he does not learn any muscular co-ordination. As stated before the retarded child has short attention and ambition spans; he is not resourceful, and he lacks judgment, reasoning ability, and mental aggression. His sense organs of hearing, sight, and touch function imperfectly and are often defective.

The retarded child generally has speech defects and is slow in expressing himself. He is often friendless and depressed. "Usually no one child exhibits all these disabilities given, but all dull and mentally retarded children possess one or more of them in varying degrees." 8

The retarded child is apt to come from a home lacking in culture and refinement with the result that his scanty abilities have lacked the stimulus that they need for correct development. He is often more emotionally unstable than the average child. His resort to bluffing and bullying causes him to become greatly disliked by his group. This in turn adds to his difficulties of social adjustment. He is inclined to have an individualistic point of view in trying to satisfy his own needs; he naturally encounters many situations where there is a definite need of considering other individuals. It is of some importance to note that our juvenile delinquents are coming in unbelievable

8 A. D. Inskoep, Teaching Dull and Retarded Children, p. 11.
proportions as dull and retarded by the tests and teacher's judgment.

Another writer, George E. Hill, suggests nine important characteristics of children of below average ability.

1. The retarded child, usually characterized as the slow learner, shows a tendency towards slow reactions, this resulting in general slowness in absorbing information. In the content subjects this is commonly related to slowness in reading and poor comprehension.

2. The retarded child shows inability of transfer. He is unable to transfer one learned situation to another. It can never be assumed that the retarded child will have learned a thing unless he has been taught directly.

3. The retarded child is likely to have inaccurate reasoning power, due to his lack of ideas. He is apt to jump at conclusions without an adequate background of evidence.

4. His power of concentration is limited, due to the short span of attention.

5. The retarded child tends to lack the power to work under his own steam. He needs constant, direct, and detailed direction.

6. To draw general or definite conclusions, from a confusing array of facts is difficult and many times impossible for the retarded child.
7. The slow learner finds it difficult to work with abstractions. Usually he is not interested in anything except the immediate and concrete.

8. The retarded child has little ability for evaluating his own efforts. He is unusually sensitive to evaluation coming from others, especially if the criticism is negative.

9. Finally, the retarded child has a very narrow range of interests. This is sometimes due to limitations by unfavorable home conditions.\(^9\)

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Christine P. Ingram illustrates the mentally retarded child in the following manner:

Sam, age 8 years, 6 months; mental age 6 years, 1 month; I.Q. 72; of Italian parentage.

**Physically.** He measured 45½ inches and weighs 55½ pounds. In height he is below the norm of the average eight-year old, which is 50 inches, but he is stocky in build, robust, and very strong. His speech is plain and distinct. He skips, hops, and jumps with ease, and catches a ball at a distance of twenty feet. His eye-hand co-ordinations are improving. Three months ago, when he entered the special class, he did all handwork carelessly and cruelly. He is still awkward with crayons and scissors, but now shows greater control and neatness. His greatest improvement has been in sawing.

**Socially.** Sam came from a below-average Italian home and is the fourth in the family of eight children. The mother says he is a good boy at home. He washes the dishes and takes care of the babies. He plays with boys of his age and likes to play ball and marbles. He has not yet learned to pay well with

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other children in school, wants his own way, is quarrelsome and moody, and does not obey readily. Often he does not want to enter into group activities. He wants constant praise for all his efforts. He likes to hear stories and listens attentively, but never offers to tell any stories himself.

MENTALLY AND EDUCATIONALLY. At eight years, six months he has the learning ability of a first-grade child. He fails in tests of associative memory and rote memory for years six and seven. He defines objects in terms of use and cannot give any difference between a fly and a butterfly, or notes objects and actions. He cannot print his name without following a copy, and he recognizes no more than ten word forms. He counts to twenty and writes figures to ten.10

The retarded child lacks the ability to judge, he cannot use self-criticism, for he is unable to sit and realize his own standards of workmanship. He lacks mental alertness, initiative, and ability to analyze and to reason. His observing power is very weak; he cannot recognize familiar elements in new situations, nor can he detect his own errors. He not only learns slowly but forgets quickly. He needs direct and specific guidance if he profits from an experience.

Ingram gives the following list of the characteristics of the retarded child:

1. His physical development is like the normal child. His interest may not be wide or so varied, but he can take his own place in games with the normal group and learn to conform to group codes.

2. He is interested in the constructive and doing side of experience and profits from this type of expression.

3. His language development is slower than the development of the normal. He forms fewer associations and forms them more slowly. Word meanings and vocabulary development come very slowly and only through real experiences.

4. His rote memory is better than his associative and logical memory.

5. He does not readily recognize similarities or discriminate differences. His abilities to do these things are developed by repeatedly directing him to observe and to study and make comparisons.

6. He is led to generalize only through being helped to appreciate the application of general principles to a large number of specific instances.

7. He is limited in the powers of independence, initiative, and resourcefulness, and requires more direction and more frequent opportunity than does the normal child to plan and to carry out activities within his ability.

8. The retarded child is slower in detecting and correcting his own errors than is the normal child, and needs more specific guidance if he is to profit from his experience.11

11 Ibid., p. 332.
Many of the retarded pupils come from homes which are below average in cultural background, moral standards, healthful conditions, and economic wealth. Much time must be devoted to improving their environmental influences and physical well being. It is important to have frequent complete physical examinations with adequate follow up and treatment to the end that such common difficulties as malnutrition, poor eyesight, poor teeth, diseased tonsils and adenoids, and other defects may be corrected.

Elizabeth Long relates the characteristics of the retarded child as:

The dull learners are slow in forming associations, especially between words and ideas. In other words, they require concrete expression and have difficulty in using symbols. Acquiring the symbols of learning consequently is a real challenge to the dull mind, and the application of these symbols as tools for larger meanings is correspondingly difficult. Principles as well as facts have to be kept in mind by keeping them more or less concrete. They are not only slow in making associations, but unable to call up and apply a multiplicity of associations or to coordinate two or more mental functions. This fact makes complete mental problems beyond them. They do not grasp long or complicated problems or even statements. Their mental associations are very simple and so require simplicity in the words which symbolize them.12

A dominant social characteristic of the retarded child is his narrow individualism and lack of group consciousness. Social service, assembly work, social studies and health

education will aid in developing him and bringing about social adjustment.

Cowen's discussion of the retarded child may be summarized as follows:

1. Much of the abstract material of the usual curriculum is beyond a possible comprehension of the retarded pupils. Difficult material must be written on the retarded child's level. Inability to read cannot be taken as indicating mental deficiency. Retarded children have their own peculiarities. Some commence readily to read but soon tire or perhaps their attention wanders. Often the child has no idea the meaning of the text. Writing is perhaps easier than reading if the selected materials from which he is to copy is limited to short words and short sentences. Often times the child will write two or three words and then ramble into a scribble which is meaningless. Very few retarded children learn the simple facts about arithmetic. They will give their attention more readily if objects are used rather than figures.

2. The short attention span of the retarded child requires a definite adjustment in adapting the educational program to his ability. Pupils who can give attention to a project for only a relatively short interval should give


14 C. P. Lapage, Feblemindness in Children of School Age, p. 75.
their program so organized that a succession of activities will hold the interest up to a reasonable high point.

3. The discovery of lack of good judgment in a child gives the teacher a cue for the planning of a special program. The development of good judgment comes through a combination of reasoning and experience. Retarded pupils can be provided with situations that call for reasoning; they can be taught how to think through a situation and to foresee the results of a given procedure.

4. Because an individual is subnormal in abstract ability it is not always true that his ability in other lines will be equally low. He may have a higher degree of ability in doing mechanical work and in achieving art and music. 15

After the achievement tests have been given, and there is still a question in the mind of the teacher as to the deficiency of the child, Fraser suggests some signs which the teacher might notice. Does the child bring his eyes too close to his work? Does he seem to have difficulty in hearing, especially when his back is toward the teacher? Does he persistently breathe through his mouth, and does his face have a flat fishlike appearance. Does he appear to be in a stupor and sleepy? Is he restless and irritable? Does he seem unfed? In any of these cases his performance on school tasks is probably below his real capacity. If

the defects are remedied, his work should improve, but not necessarily up to the normal standard.¹⁶

Bachelard says that the main treatment of mentally handicapped children must continue to be education. Everyone within the retarded child's livelihood must give to him that amount of information and character training which corresponds to his capacity, and in the form which he can best assimilate it. To live up to a true democracy every child will be given the education that his ability apprehends which alone can make him a contented man and a better citizen. Democracy will oppose the forcing upon a child of an education so out of proportion with his mental strength, that it can only result in oppressing, discouraging and harming him and the community.¹⁷

¹⁶David K. Fraser, Education of the Backward Child, p. 31.

¹⁷Bachelard, op. cit., p. 15.
CHAPTER III

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE NORMAL CHILD

The make up of the individual is growing mentally, physically, and socially as it reacts to its environment; it is acquiring certain skills, habits, and attitudes. The normal child shows development in these respects from year to year at a normal rate that can be observed or measured, and that progress in one line of development keeps pace with another. In the normal child there is a greater probability that his body will be healthy, but it does not mean it will be perfect. Proper development is the goal in every individual's behavior.

The normal child is an integrated, unitary organism at birth and the teacher must strive to safeguard this integration or adjustment as the child is guided in learning to deal with an increasingly complex home, school, and community environment. Physical limitations may produce problems, such as the distress of those so limited in ability that they fail in school. On the other hand, some symptoms of difficulties which appear to have a physical basis, such as the common tic, are in reality evidences of emotional maladjustment. None of these factors has a separate or independent nature; instead they are interrelated manifestations of difficult aspects of the total function, growing, changing individual or organism. 1

Nothing special is set aside for the normal child. He grows and develops into a well rounded individual without any

1Fay Adams, Educating America's Children, p. 176.
'specialities'. In the following poem there is a clearer understanding of how the normal child feels about himself.

I'm Just A Normal Child

Johnny Jones has lost a leg,
Fanny's deaf and dumb,
Marie has epileptic fits,
Tom's eyes are on the bum.

Sadie stutters when she talks,
Nabel has T. B.
Morris is a splendid case
Of imbecility.

Billy Brown's a truant,
And Harold is a thief,
Teddy's parents gave him dope
And so he came to grief.

Gwendoline' a millionaire,
Jerald is a fool,
So every one of the darned kids
Goes to a special school.

They've special lunches right in school,
While I -- it makes me wild! --
I haven't any specialities,
I'm Just A Normal Child.\(^\text{2}\)

No matter how much we hope and expect to achieve through education, it is to be remembered there are certain definite inborn traits of the child that cannot be changed by the most skillful conditioning. Parents who are quick to decide what their child is to become should remember these

words of T. H. Jennings, one of America's most famous biologists: "You can train a 'normal' child to almost any profession, but you cannot make it excel in it, that is something which his inherited constitution affects." 3

Mateer says the factors that make up the behavior of the normal child may be divided into two classifications: (1) his inherited traits, and (2) his experiences. 4 By inheritance a person gets only intellectual potentialities; but his experiences include the training he has been given and the conditions under which he has lived.

In his home environment the normal child will develop closer relationships if he is loved and wanted there, and knows it. In the home he should be given the time that he can use his own way, and a place where he can do things for himself. If he is made to feel that he is a part of the family group, sharing in its fun, its work, and its planning his home relationships will become a part of him.

According to Stevens the world is built on averages. Average or normal children have many companions who think and act as they do - they present few emotional problems, they usually adjust well, and in general they fit comfortably into their environment. 5

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3 Grace Adams, Your Child is Normal, p. 76.
4 Florence Mateer, Just Normal Children, p. 3.
Various educators are more or less agreed on the characteristics of the normal child. Some discussed their opinions innumerable, while others were very brief and to the point. The opinions of different writers on this subject will be given below:

W. H. Burnham suggests in the development of normal behavior the child learns to face reality, to acquire habits of attention and orderly association. He develops wholesome interests, learns to control his emotions, and cooperates in a normal social group. He develops the integration of the individual character and integration of the social group. These traits are more valuable than the acquisition of knowledge and the mastery of all convention accomplishments.6

Another writer characterizes the normal child as follows:

1. He is a happy child and he shows it. He has a feeling for people as well as respect for them.

2. Children respond to situations emotionally before they are capable of responding to the same situations intellectually.

3. The average child will likely approach intellectual maturity at a slightly earlier age than the dull child, if both are stimulated up to the level of their potentialities. The below average can master many things the normal child can, but it will take a longer period of time.

4. Leadership qualities appear in the normal child.

5. Social adjustment demands are made by the average child at an earlier age, than by a retarded child, because of the greater maturity of the average.

6. When the normal child enters school he has already learned to understand spoken language and to express his ideas orally.

7. The normal child desires to learn when he is sufficiently mature, when he has definite goals, and when practice is under guidance.

8. To the normal child, play works off excess energy, prepares him for life, and aids in social development. Play activities to be educative must be adjusted to the maturity level of the child, but the child is likely to do his own adjusting if the school is not too authoritative.7

In the natural behavior of the normal child, he develops initiative, independence, judgment, and a feeling of responsibility for himself and others. He is more concerned about the approval of his own age group, than he is the adult. He may play alone or with others; he gets the feel of living and working with others, learns what groups can do that individuals cannot, and will postpone personal satisfactions for the common good of the group. The normal child likes to

explore, to experiment, and as has been indicated before, to discover things for himself.

Ingram describes the normal child as the following:

At a given chronological age, a certain state of maturity is reached, the development of certain achievements may be expected. For instance, the average child of six years chronological age may be expected to be about forty-four inches in height and forty-two pounds in weight, to show large muscle co-ordination, to enjoy the element of imaginative play, to play co-operatively with other children, to enjoy making things, to know what is expected of him in home and school, to enjoy songs and stories, and to be interested and mentally ready to learn to read. Studies have proved that for the large majority of the normal group there are expected rates of physical, mental and social progress, although there are, of course, individual differences in respect to development in their several aspects even in the normal group. 8

A normal child can and does employ every device that nature has provided. Winnicott states that in a normal child's play he can enjoy playing along or with some one; in his play he can employ a rich imagination, and also join with pleasure in games that depend on information derived from external reality. If his playing shows he is capable, given reasonable good and stable surroundings, of developing his own personal way of life, he eventually wins the title as a whole human being. 9

Most normal children show a hearty resistance to all rigid and formal schooling before the age of six. By doing

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8 Christine P. Ingram, Education of the Slow-Learning Child, pp. 11-12.

9 D. W. Winnicott, "What Do We Mean by a Normal Child," New Era, XXVII (March, 1946), 61-63.
this, they are using more intelligence than the adult, who by means of unnatural coaching tries to make the child more mature and more accomplished than they really should be. If the child shows no special talent during his first six years the parents should not worry. In fact they might consider themselves fortunate, for there are more important things for a growing child to learn than the mastery of some particular art or special field of knowledge.

Florence Mateer contends that a normal child is a child who has nothing vitally wrong with him, but it is hoped that he will develop normally physically, mentally, morally and socially. He is by no means a perfect child. A few of her ideas are listed:

1. He is like the great majority of people around him, capable of growth, development, and achievement.

2. His accomplishments in any or all fields may be average, a little below, or a little above average.

3. He can be made more efficient in almost every case. He may be made more efficient by a careful and very impersonal study of him, followed by an attempt at correction of all his defects.

4. Some normal children are apt to have physical defects, inefficient habits of thinking and feeling, and behavior tendencies which are not satisfying and often need correction.\(^{10}\)

\(^{10}\text{Mateer, op. cit., pp. 1-2.}\)
Tiffin, Knight, and Asher refer to the characteristics of a child with normal intelligence as being:

1. A person who is alert, wide awake, sensitive and attentive of what goes on around him. He has normal sensory equipment (eyes, ears, power to think, etc.,) and it seems to be integrated with his high levels of nervous energy and of general bodily activity.

2. He cannot profit from his impressions unless they are assimilated and retained.

3. A fertile imagination is an important element of intelligence. If the child is able to imagine, he is able to see new situations as a combination of familiar elements, and to apply what he has learned to it.

4. He has the ability to see into a situation and to see the solution to a problem.

5. The child has an understanding of what is required of him and is able to judge whether or not he has succeeded.

6. He develops confidence in his capacity to meet new situations.

7. He is interested and highly motivated.\[11\]

Not every normal child will possess all the given characteristics. Educators are entirely correct when they say that all students are not capable of being educated to the same level. Individual differences in mental endowment

cannot be circumvented no matter how much the fact of such differences may strike us as unjust or as undemocratic. Babies are born free, but they certainly are not born equal. The only kind of equality we may eventually hope to place at the child's disposal is equality of opportunity.12

To note some of the physical characteristics, Strang points out, that the behavior of an average child depends upon his stage of maturity, previous acts, thoughts, and feelings, as well as on his present bodily condition, and his immediate environment. Each child has a past in which he has developed a unique personality. In the average boy or girl evidence shows that individuals who mature early are usually taller and heavier at each age prior to adolescence than those who mature later. The rate of physical growth of the normal child is faster than the physical growth of the retarded child. The normal child should be free of headaches due to eye strain and digestive disturbances. He should breathe easily through either nostril and not breathe habitually through the mouth. He is interested in active games and has almost perfect control over his body. He acquires skill in sports readily, and his interest in play might be accounted for as a release of surplus energy, preparation for adult life, escape from conflict of boredom, or spontaneous activity engages in for its own sake.13

On the average you will find that normal children live in a sanitary and healthful environment at home and at school. They are free from worry, other unfavorable emotional status, and there is no danger of mental deficiency. The children want to work with others their age and with their ability. Terman sets up a chart showing the standard mental age for children whose work is of average quality.  

**TABLE 1**

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<th>Grade</th>
<th>Chronological Age</th>
<th>Standard Mental Age or Approximately</th>
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<td>1</td>
<td>6--6 to 7--5</td>
<td>7 years</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>7--6 to 8--5</td>
<td>8 years</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>8--6 to 9--5</td>
<td>9 years</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>9--6 to 10--5</td>
<td>10 years</td>
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<td>11 years</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>11--6 to 12--5</td>
<td>12 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>12--6 to 13--5</td>
<td>13 years</td>
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The language ability of the normal child is related to both general intelligence and cultural background. His mental alertness determines the extent to which he will profit by the quality and kind of language he hears. It is estimated that six-year old children on the average, have a speaking vocabulary of approximately 2,500 words.

14 L. M. Terman, *The Intelligence of School Children*, p. 93.
Children think in concrete terms and later develop an appreciation of abstract ideas. "With increasing age thinking becomes more abstract, acquires wider content, and at the same time is more detailed and disciplined."\(^{15}\) The normal child is capable of average performance in anything he undertakes to do. He is the individual who is to be contented and happy as a child, and able to take his place as a well-adapted member of our dynamic society.

\(^{15}\) Strang, *op. cit.*, pp. 471-473.
CHAPTER IV

PROBLEMS OF ADJUSTMENT

This chapter deals with the problems of adjustment of the mentally retarded child as compared with the problems of adjustment of the normal child. The adjustment problems analyzed are: (1) social, (2) security, (3) self-direction, (4) association; (5) individual, (6) cooperation, (7) interest, and (8) suitability of the curriculum to meet the needs of the individual; along with various suggestions for adjustment.

Adjustment is a special form of guidance which effects changes in the individual. It may be that the individual himself can make the changes required to effect adjustment but such is not often in the case of the elementary school child. In most instances certain changes in the pupil or his environment must be made for him. In some cases the problem of adjustment is too technical a process to be successfully carried out by school teachers or principals; henceforth, the services of persons with special training, such as physicians, psychologists, and psychiatrists are required.

Successful adjustment includes two processes, the discovery of the causes of difficulties and corrective or remedial treatment. The discovery of the causes involves the
collection, analysis, interpretation, and evaluation of the conditions which have acted upon the individual to bring about the abnormal condition. When the causes have been found the treatment then consists in making the changes which are required to restore the individual to as nearly normal status as possible.

Maladjustment is a matter of concern to the school for a number of reasons. It is produced within the educative process, and it is a factor in the educative process. It may exist in the student and upset his work and annoy the teacher, and it may also exist in the teacher and upset his work and annoy the students. It is an evil to be destroyed, whether it is of major or minor proportions. Because a child does not become a neurotic is no proof that the school has done a good job with him. Nothing short of optimal development for every pupil can be the aim of the educational system. To combat maladjustment one must know it thoroughly, both as to its effects and symptoms and its causes and prevention.

The teacher who uses good judgment and puts forth an effort to help the child to adjust properly will help him develop his potentialities, his ability to think; to feel, to use his muscles and his bodily power; to enjoy arts, crafts, and useful everyday skills, to get along with others, and to get along with himself. Each child has potentialities according to his own measure and design. To help the child realize his possibilities is of first importance. It is a

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recognized fact that no elementary school can carry on a program of instruction without recognizing individuals as having different interests, different personalities, and different amounts and types of intelligence.

If the individual has a low I.Q., or if he is of the average group, adjustment to the given situation is of most importance to him. The following problems of adjustment of the retarded and normal child have been compared and analyzed in this study.

Social

The social need is essentially a need for status. These status needs are met by establishing various relationships at different ages. The failure or success of these relationships is taken by each person to rate his value in society. The child must win recognized membership in the family circle, in school groups, in play groups, and in community groups of his interest. Unless he is successfully accepted into these groupings, he cannot feel secure in the social role.3

Adjustment of the retarded.--Ninety to ninety-five percent of the retarded children are not in institutions, but in their homes and are sent to the public schools. The most conspicuous point of attack to their social adjustment is within the school. According to Morgan, the retarded child

must learn to become sensitive to other persons, to understand them, and to learn the pleasure that may be derived from knowing that they are essential to the happiness of others. Some are very conscious of their need for friends but they do not know how to win them. They should be taught through social experience that they and others like them contribute to the happiness of the group. 4 The retarded child is less capable of making adequate social adjustment; therefore, he should learn from experiences to take in all elements in a complex situation, to foresee consequences, and to form judgments to the extent of his ability.

Adjustment of the normal child.—The normal child is capable of eliminating frustrations that injure his social adjustment. He has the ability to understand other children in the group. He has the feeling that in the public school every child 'belongs'. He feels it is the obligation of the development in every way. The two very important factors of social adjustment which most normal children are concerned with are the skill in the games other children are playing and the easiness in oral expression. 5

Self-direction

The teacher should be the leader of the class but the pupils need not be merely blind followers. The development

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of self-direction is an attitude of realistic self-assurance which the teacher may help the child to achieve through her comments on his work. It is recognized that the teacher should be perfectly honest where the child shows ability. The teacher's guides and aims are to give a feeling of satisfaction and pride in that part of the work honestly performed at the highest level of which the child is capable. 6

Adjustment of the retarded child.---The child who constantly repeats grades becomes very discouraged and develops a feeling of inferiority. He lacks the confidence that is essential for self-respect that comes from success in school work. Encouragement and completion of tasks develops within the retarded child a feeling of self-reliance. If he cannot do the work and develops his self-direction in such a way as to make wholesome adjustment to the classroom, then suitable provisions must be made for him. 7

Adjustment of the normal child.---For the normal child to gain self-direction he takes the advantage of the encouragement, praise, and appreciation. He completes his work and is able to use criticism for improvement. He is dependable and knows he can be trusted to complete his work to the point of his ability. Each product should represent


the child's own work, whether done by the normal or retarded, and it should be judged according to the ability of the individual.

Security

Security merely means the feeling of being at ease in the environment of 'belonging.' For a feeling of security, children need a teacher who enjoys being with children and who enjoys her work. The atmosphere of the classroom must give the child the impression that he has the teacher's confidence and her respect. To provide a more adequate feeling of security children should be given more freedom to express themselves naturally and should have fewer restrictions placed on them.

Adjustment of the retarded child.—For a confident feeling of security in the classroom the retarded child should be encouraged to do the best he can. He should have the feeling of "knowing that failure will not be censored though it will not be condoned." In adapting security, responsibility is placed on the retarded within his limits of ability. In school he meets his first organized competition and to grasp a feeling of security within the group there must be a certain amount of success. His success or

3Rivlin, op. cit., p. 264.
9Percival M. Symonds, The Dynamics of Human Adjustment, p. 106.
10Rivlin, op. cit., p. 264.
failure is of paramount importance in determining his feelings of security. 11

Adjustment of the normal child.—Security is a need that continues all through life. For the normal child security avoids frustrations. The ability of knowing a thing and being able to handle the situation is the best feeling of security an individual can develop. This is developed by the normal child through self-assurance.

Association

For all children the teacher provides an environment that reduces unnecessary mental or emotional strain to a minimum, and leads to the "creation of the best possible conditions for permitting each person to adjust himself adequately to his surroundings, to the limit of his potentialities." 12 The teacher’s guidance can help a child overcome his problems, and cause the child to be changed into a well-adjusted, self-motivating individual. She cannot make the child over, all she can do is to provide opportunities so that he can utilize his environment, the change comes from within the child.

Adjustment of the retarded child.—The mentally retarded children circulating among normal children are pressed

11 S. Harcourt, "The Slow and Bright Group as Seen by a Mental Hygienist," High Points, XXII (Oct., 1940), 19.

12 Rivlin, op. cit., p. 3.
into school work which they have not the ability to comprehend; however, they often compensate for their defects by grouping together. Size plus age has a lot to do in group association. Gladys Ise describes a pair of large boys who caused behavior difficulties in the sixth grade. These boys were just fourteen years of age, but men in size. They felt themselves too large to associate with the babies in their class. The boys were dull and slow and could not do fifth-grade work. They were placed in a disciplinary school with a class of large boys like themselves and became adjusted quite well.13

Adjustment of the normal child.--The normal child develops a well defined pattern of adjustment in his group association, if the pattern is one that encourages a satisfying response from his classmates. He often desires to be a member of a large group, if not the leader, an intelligent follower.14

Individualism

No two individuals are alike. Every child is a separate individual and must be respected and treated as such.

13 Gladys Ise, "Reclassifying Pupils Who Are Misplaced In School," Fifteenth Yearbook, National Elementary Principal, XV, No. 6 (July, 1936), 515.

Each individual is assumed to have a certain amount of a given trait, the differences among individuals being the amount of the trait they possess. Individuals not only differ in the amount of a given trait, but also the manner in which various traits are integrated into a personality make him different from other individuals.  

Adjustment of the retarded child.—The mentally retarded child must understand that every individual has abilities and limitations. He should find his difficulties and strive to overcome them to the extent of his own power. He must have the spirit of co-operation, helpfulness, and desire to get along with other people. He can do this if he is adequately motivated through group living. If the retarded child is not able to stay in the group without friction, he must be taught how to participate in the group and be respected.

Adjustment of the normal child.—The normal individual searches for the goal which will give him academic skills and knowledge in order to be comfortable and productive in society. He will set the stage for daily success, and meet the problems for improvement for himself. To adjust himself individually he will accept self-appraisal and self-guidance. He will have learned to meet the needs of our dynamic society.
Co-operation

If there is an understanding between the children and the teacher the classroom will have a co-operative atmosphere. It is of great value if the children are made to realize they are indispensable in rendering useful services and their presence is significant. Through these feelings of assurance, of 'belonging', and of being important and necessary, a foundation is laid through which the children's co-operation may be gained.

Adjustment of the retarded child.--If there is no understanding there is no co-operation as far as the retarded child is concerned. There cannot be understanding unless the work is brought down to his level or his interest. Finnegan gives an illustration of a boy sixteen years of age, tall, awkward, and had the reputation of being "the worst pupil in school." Thomas came from a good family, but he had been neglected at home. He had no ability when it came to studying grammar and fractions; his lack of interest and failure to co-operate with school regulations had caused him to be expelled from school the past two years. This year, on the first day of school the teacher asked how many of the children would be willing to help scrub out the school room. "Thomas threw up his head and took a good look as if he had discovered a glimmer of intelligence in an unexpected place." After the cleaning episode, he was willing to co-operate in
anything within his range of ability and interest. His frame
and muscles were intended for active work, and unless the
school work took them into consideration, it could not help
him to be one of the group.\textsuperscript{16}

Adjustment of the normal child.--The normal child who
has received adequate home training in the duties, co-opera-
tion, and responsibilities that result in social and emotional
maturity will accept the school environment and adjust to it
without serious emotional conflicts. The normally adjusted
child is courteous, obedient, co-operative, and successful in
his school work.\textsuperscript{17} He works for a common good, and knows
the individual preferences are modified to meet the require-
ments of the group.\textsuperscript{18}

Interest

Each child should 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.\textsuperscript{19}

Adjustment of the retarded child.--To promote good be-
havior in school the child must be kept interested in what-
even meets his needs. The range of interests of the retarded

\textsuperscript{16} Estelle Finnegar, "Reading the Difficult Child Through Individual Incentives," Grade Teacher, LXV (Oct., 1947), 74.
\textsuperscript{17} T. L. Torgerson, Studying Children, p. 26.
\textsuperscript{18} H. D. Whipple, Making Citizens of the Mentally Limited, p. 17.
\textsuperscript{19} C. P. Ingram, Education for the Slow-Learning Child, p. 1.
child is somewhat limited, and the work for him must be carefully adjusted to his mental age as well as his chronological age. The education of the retarded child, in the main, deals with materials that can be manipulated in order for him to give full expression of his personality. It is of interest to the child to cut out pictures and paste them on booklets. Modeling clay offers abundant opportunities for individualistic and creative expression. It is through this medium that the child is able to reproduce things he is interested in and things he has seen.

Adjustment of the normal child.—Children's interests differ in many ways. The normal child is interested in or may easily become interested in a variety of experiences. Interests will ultimately determine usually what the individual will do or become, provided he possesses the necessary abilities and opportunities to allow these interests to function normally. Certain interests are desirable, others are undesirable; it is a duty to encourage the former and substitute something better for the latter.

Curriculum to Meet the Needs of the Individual

In developing a curriculum for a school program the principal, teacher, and children should work in harmony. The

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20 A. D. Inskeep, Teaching Dull and Retarded Children, p. 19.

21 Fay Adams, Educating America's Children, pp. 94-95.
most important factor being the child. A curriculum that fits the needs and interests of the child provides better motivation for better adjustment. With child interest as a basis for the school work, classroom activity takes its direction from the problems of the child.

The absence of grades and marks with their unpleasant feeling of formal promotions and retardations, frees the child from one of the major causes of maladjustment. However, mental retardation is not excused in the progressive school, it is not announced publicly. Progressive schools with the flexible curriculum, have accepted the assumption that children are not equally gifted in all directions and that the school exists to give to each child the necessary environment for attaining his maximum development. The child is not labeled failure because he is uninterested in the more academic aspects of the school. 22

Adjustment of the retarded child.—Children need for their happiness a feeling that they are successful in what they try to do. Someone has said, "The exceptional child, more than any other, cannot be allowed to grow up, but must be cultivated." 23 Adjustment to the curriculum must be slow and simple. The retarded must be so stimulated that they will

22 Rivlin, op. cit., p. 367.

23 Mary S. White, "Educating the Exceptional Child," The National Elementary Principal, XXVIII, No. 4 (Feb., 1942), 38.
feel independent and secure, and at the same time be a socially acceptable individual.

Adjustment of the normal child.--The normal child should be given the meanings, understandings, and skills necessary for him to meet his life problems on a rational basis, rather than an emotional basis. He adjusts to the flexible curriculum if it provides greater opportunity for satisfying a worth-while accomplishment on the level of which he is capable of learning.24

An individual who has achieved an appropriate degree of emotional and social maturity may be described in a number of ways. First, he has developed habits which permit him to work independently. Second, he assumes the responsibility for his own behavior. Third, his relationships with others are stimulating and satisfying. Fourth, he has acquired socially acceptable techniques for contributing to group activities. Fifth, he has broad interests that make life interesting and challenging. Sixth, he has something to contribute to group activity. Seventh, he is a good listener. Eighth, he has learned to co-operate with the group in spirit and act. Ninth, he has achieved intelligent and reasonable attitudes toward authority. These and kindred items of behavior make up wholesome, well-adjusted children.25


25 Emmet A. Betts, Foundations of Reading Instruction, p. 141.
In analyzing the problems and differences in adjusting to the problems of the classroom a summary has been drawn up as shown in Table 2.

**TABLE 2**

A COMPARISON IN ADJUSTMENT TO THE CLASSROOM

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Problem</th>
<th>Mentally Retarded Child</th>
<th>Normal Child</th>
<th>Differences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social</td>
<td>He feels the presence of others and learns to understand other people. He contributes to the happiness of the group.</td>
<td>His social contacts helps eliminate frustrations. He understands other children in the group. He is concerned with other individual's happiness. He is at ease in a group.</td>
<td>The retarded adjusts in a very simple form, for instance, his acquaintance grows, first, one, two, three, etc., until he is accepted into the group. The normal child begins with the group and is concerned with the happiness of the group.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Direction</td>
<td>Encouragement in all work done helps him to adjust. He develops a feeling of independence and of confidence of self respect that comes from success in school. He knows the success comes from completion of tasks.</td>
<td>He takes advantage of the encouragement, praise, and appreciation. He takes criticism for improvement. He completes his tasks and is dependable.</td>
<td>Self-dependence is one of the most important factors of adjustment, for the retarded child time is the most important element. It takes a greater length of time for the retarded to acquire the feeling of self-direction, than it does for the normal child.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problem</td>
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<tr>
<td>Security</td>
<td>He knows that failure does not mean complete failure, but means the lack of understanding. The feeling of responsibility is placed on the individual. He develops a feeling of competition and acquires a knowledge of how to handle himself in a competitive group. To him success is of most importance in developing security.</td>
<td>He sees a need for security now and a continuation of security throughout life. To him it saves embarrassment. He handles situations successfully and intelligently. He completes tasks successfully.</td>
<td>Since the retention span of the retarded is short, his means of security has only to do with immediate problems. The normal child uses security as a means of adjustment right now, and he sees a value in it for future use.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Association</td>
<td>He accepts group association. He prefers chronological grouping. He gets a feeling of satisfaction from group association. In a learning situation interest may be stimulated by previous learning experiences through association.</td>
<td>He accepts group association. He prefers homogeneous grouping. He accepts satisfying response from his classmates. His interest may carry on to a higher degree of learning because of the association of learned experiences.</td>
<td>The retarded child is better satisfied with children his size and age, whereas the normal child's association is usually with children his age and within his range of ability. Their environmental situation shows a difference in their learning association.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problem</td>
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<td>Normal Child</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual</td>
<td>He regards his abilities and limitations and tries to overcome them to the extent of his power. He develops his desire to get along with other people, to understand them, and to regard them as individuals of their own potentialities. He develops a spirit of co-operation and helpfulness. He understands group learning, participates in the group and is respected individually by the group.</td>
<td>He searches goals which will give him academic skills and knowledge. He seeks daily success for improvement for himself. He accepts self-appraisal and self-guidance. As an individual he accepts group suggestions for improvement. He makes suggestions for group improvement.</td>
<td>The retarded child must be given time to learn to be a respected individual. He accepts group responsibility in a very simple form. The normal child regards himself as an individual and accepts himself as one of the group immediately.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Co-operation</td>
<td>There is a definite understanding of what he is to do. He has an understanding of the pupils he has to work with. The work he has to do is not above his mental ability; however if there is any learning there has to be a challenge.</td>
<td>He understands what there is to do and does it for a common good. He accepts opinions of others. His interests are highly motivated by a definite goal.</td>
<td>The retarded child co-operates on a slow and simple scale. He understands the advantage of co-operation if it is within his ability. To the normal child co-operation is living, without it, living a democracy would be worthless.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problem</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Interest</strong></td>
<td>He is kept interested in whatever meets his needs. Manipulative materials keeps his interest stimulated. He acknowledges physical ability as a highly motivating activity. The more his interest is developed, problems of discipline will weaken.</td>
<td>He sees a need for whatever experience he develops. His variety of interests need to be classified, those desirable, need to be encouraged; those undesirable, a substitution for something better need developing. His particular interest may formulate an outlook toward his future living.</td>
<td>The interest of the retarded is narrow because of the lack of being able to develop his experiences into useful learning. To him a definite goal must be cited by an individual of higher mentality. The normal child develops his interest to meet his needs for a definite goal.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Curriculum</strong></td>
<td>He proves he is not a failure, if his interests are developed. He is able to live in the necessary environment for attaining his maximum development. The curriculum is simple because he develops slowly. He learns how to get along with other people. He learns how to co-operate with the group in spirit and act.</td>
<td>He develops the meanings, the understandings, and the skills to meet situations and know how to handle them. The flexible curriculum develops his interest and satisfies his needs. He develops a well-founded personality and learns how to get along with people in a democratic way. of life.</td>
<td>The retarded child's attention span is very short; therefore frequent changes must be admitted to the curriculum to meet his ever-changing interest. Regardless, retarded or normal the child must see a NEED for developing his interest. The normal child requires a greater length...</td>
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TABLE 7--Continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Problem</th>
<th>Mentally Retarded Child</th>
<th>Normal Child</th>
<th>Differences</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>He feels independent and secure. He develops a feeling that there is a place for him in the world. He is made to feel he is not an outcast or a failure.</td>
<td>He develops a sense of responsibility which creates a maximum of self-assurance within himself.</td>
<td>of time to develop an interest, because he sees a value in it and has the feeling there is a need for learning. The retarded child and the normal child take the advantage to use the flexible curriculum</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Symonds leaves with us the idea, "If there is no tissue or organic barrier, the difference between the normal individual and the pathological individual is mainly quantitative and not qualitative." 26

26 Symonds, op. cit., p. 566.
CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions

In order to analyze more clearly children's adjustment problems the teacher must be aware of the processes by which they develop. Those interested in the field of child development want to help each child realize to the greatest extent such dynamic capacities as he may have, and they want to help him make his adjustments in accordance with them.

Adjustment problems in every classroom will be lessened when every child, normal or retarded, have been given the opportunity to use to the fullest extent those abilities that he possesses in terms of his individual needs and interests. The needs and interests of the retarded are less qualitative than the needs and interests of the normal child; therefore, the adjustment of the former will be of a simpler nature than that of the latter.

Recommendations

After a wide and varied investigation of the educational literature on the subject of adjustment the following recommendations are offered in this study.

1. The curriculum of every elementary school should be flexible in order that each child shall be able to develop his abilities to the fullest capacity.
2. A well rounded program should be established in the classroom to stress independence and responsibility.

3. The retarded children's group should not be excluded from the normal group.

4. Every child must be considered as an individual and treated as such in adjusting to new situations.

5. The environment should challenge the child's ability and interest, and stimulate his curiosity.

6. The program should be so well developed the child will adjust to other children without any realization of what is happening.

7. The manual work which is done should stimulate creative activity. It should be an outgrowth of the life needs and interests of the child.

8. The normal and retarded child need social contacts that will satisfy their want for companionship.

9. An abundance of praise and encouragement even for a small amount of success must be used. Remember that "Nothing succeeds like success."¹

10. The children should be encouraged to develop their natural talents, or interests, by letting them do what seems important to them.

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