

DEVELOPMENT OF A PROGRAM
for
SLOW LEARNERS AT YORKTOWN HIGH SCHOOL

AN ABSTRACT OF
A THESIS
PRESENTED TO THE GRADUATE FACULTY
OF DANBURY STATE COLLEGE

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE
MASTER OF SCIENCE

by
Beatrice F. Farrell
June 1965

The school in the modern United States can no longer afford to emphasize mediocrity. Schooling must be tailored to meet the needs of specific groups of pupils as well as the average student.

The slow learner and his problems have seldom received the attention they deserve in American schools. To meet the needs of the slow learner, Yorktown High School is experimenting with a special program. The high school feels that students not intellectually gifted are as much entitled to our best efforts as educators as are the intellectually gifted children. A program designed for them will better enable them to fulfill their potentials. These students, through improvement of their self-image, assisted by a competent and interested staff, are capable of leading full and rich lives.

Enhancement of the self-concept of slow learners can result in learning. It can also enable them to deal with their environment in ways that are personally satisfying and socially effective. It appears that a specialized program wherein the enhancement of their self-concept (which has a vital relationship to their self-motivation to learn) is emphasized and their schooling is closely tied to the demands that will be made of them in life, is a possible answer to the problems of the slow learners. Making a special effort

on their behalf is, therefore, wholly consistent with the aims and ideals of education in a free society.

It is in accordance with this philosophy that the Team Project was inaugurated at Yorktown High School in September, 1964. The expectations of the Project are revealed in the pages of the action study, "Development of a Program for Slow Learners at Yorktown High School." The report describes the work of the team of staff members at Yorktown High School, who endeavored to establish bases for improving the self-concept of slow learners of high school age, and to create a worthwhile learning situation and program for these youngsters.

The aims and objectives of the program, The Team Project, are:

1. To assist the slow learner to become a responsible and contributing member of the school and for the further purpose of preparing him to become an adult citizen.
2. To accomplish the above through the improvement of the student's self-image, which hopefully will be realized in a full and thoughtfully designed program responsive to his needs.
3. To raise his economic and social possibilities by improvement of his basic academic skills and by vocational training.

The teachers theorized that if the youngsters could attain positive attitudes toward self, they would tend to achieve higher levels of school performance. Five months

elapsed since the inception of the program of instruction for slow learners of high school age. A critical analysis and evaluation of the Team Project is not included in the paper. To test the true merit of the program for slow learners will require a lapse of at least five years. However, evidence presented in the summary and conclusion of the paper strongly indicates that, since this program, which has been designed specifically to meet the needs of a particular group of slow learners has been instituted, most anti-social, anti-learning, deviate behavior has been either materially reduced in intensity or eliminated altogether. It appears that attitudes of disinterest and dislike for school and learning activities are not inherent in slow learners although they are often considered to be of an intrinsic nature. They are, instead, a reflection of their reactions toward continuous frustration, failure, lack of self-confidence, poor self-image, and meaningless activities--a perfectly normal reaction.

As a result of this study, it appears that the Team teachers will be able to assist the slow learners to improve their self-concept through a specially designed program of instruction, wherein there are learning activities to which they can comfortably relate and achievement goals to which they can realistically aspire--the foundations of any meaningful program for slow learners.