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A STUDY OF AN INDIVIDUALIZED READING PROGRAM
FOR
FOURTH GRADE

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The program described in this action study was undertaken in an attempt to discover whether children read better, more widely, and with more interest when allowed to choose their own materials. The children who took part in the program were fourth grade students in a homogeneously grouped reading class. They had completed a basic reader, and had practiced related skills in a workbook and on work sheets.

Individualized reading is a broad approach which should set up a creative learning climate, provide for individual differences, and convey to the child the realization that reading can be a satisfying experience. Its usefulness is dependent upon the ability of the teacher to organize well, and the ability of the child to work well independently.

A classroom library was established and arrangements were made for extra time in the school library for individual students. The children soon learned, with help from the teacher, to select their own books. When they had finished a book, they signed up for a conference with the teacher.

A conference was held with each student once a week whether he had finished a book or not. The conferences took place in a quiet corner in the back of the classroom. During the conference, teacher and pupil would discuss the book,

and the teacher would check the child's progress.

There are no standardized tests available to test the skills and attitudes developed by students participating in an individualized reading program. Tests were adapted from the Ginn Reading Achievement Test, and the scores from the Iowa Test of Basic Skills were used. Questionnaires were given to the students which attempted to evaluate their interest in reading.

The children responded with enthusiasm to the program. They wrote on the questionnaires that they thought it helped them to read better and faster, and that it improved their vocabulary.

The reading tests and Iowa Test of Basic Skills showed no appreciable difference in scores before and after the program, so it may be concluded that this individualized program did not improve the reading skills of the participants. There is evidence, however, that the children read more widely and with greater interest after participating in the program.

Further studies are needed to determine whether this individualized reading program would be equally successful in expanding the interest of children with lower ability and less motivation than those who participated in this program.