

A STUDY
OF
INDIVIDUALIZED READING

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Reading must be related to the child's current and previous experiences and interests or there is the danger that the reading process will be interpreted by the child to be a stringing together of bewildering symbols. Current reading practices recognize this necessity and textbook publishers have attempted to assess the general background and interests of many children. They have graded and scaled their research findings into a series of readers and procedural instructions for the teacher. However, this is a highly structured process geared to an "average" child, and many children do not fit into this scheme.

Individualized Reading is an approach which is based on the recognition that children differ from one another in many ways and consequently, involves new concepts of class organization, techniques and materials.

The wide range of physical differences, economic and social differences, and the complexity of individual emotional needs all contribute to the unique personality of any one child. The Individualized Reading approach is based on the evidence of research which indicates that no matter the variety of particular needs a healthy child may have, he has built-in the over-riding desire to grow—hence to learn. He will seek from his environment at his own pace those experiences which will suit his needs and free him to grow.

All children must feel acceptable and pacing is a technique by which a teacher can demonstrate her acceptance of the whole child including his unique growth tempo, and by which she can provide the

materials that ensure success for him. All children must experience success or face the possibility of a crippling anxiety. Since there is a high correlation between interest, motivation and learning, Individualized Reading attempts to protect the force of interest and direct it toward the success of children learning to read. Children are encouraged to select reading material that is of interest and significance to them.

There is no well-defined Individualized Reading method. However, there are areas of classroom management to which all teachers who individualize their reading programs give careful consideration:

- . The classroom must have an ample library of books of about three or four titles per child. These titles must be renewed often and should cover differing interests and reading levels.

- . The details of the procedure are carefully discussed, understood and agreed upon by children and teacher.

- . Careful records are kept by teacher and children of each reading conference.

The conference time is recognized by teachers with Individualized Reading Programs as the most crucial aspect of the program. The conference must be a rewarding and satisfying experience for the child. The teacher has the opportunity to direct her attention to the whole child, to evaluate his feelings toward reading as well as his ability with specific reading skills.

The results of studies comparing Individualized Reading Programs with conventional programs indicate that Individualized Reading Programs are as effective as conventional programs in developing reading skills.

However, since Individualized Reading has objectives which include but go beyond the development of reading ability alone, it needs to be assessed by criteria directed to its many different levels.