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THE INTRODUCTION OF PROGRAMMED READING

in the

F. G. LINDSEY SCHOOL

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by

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The ability to read well is one of the most important skills a person can acquire. Our world is a reading world and satisfactory adjustment to living in a complex society requires effective reading.

The relatively large time allotted to reading in the elementary school and the wealth of teaching devices originated in relation to it would indicate that teachers and school officials recognize the importance of reading. But in spite of the quantity of time and materials available for teaching reading, a surprisingly large number of pupils still experience difficulty in acquiring satisfactory reading skills.¹

The F. G. Lindsey School in Montrose, New York, in its attempt to correct deficiencies and promote growth in reading skills introduced the Sullivan Programmed method of teaching reading. Although the Sullivan materials were not designed exclusively for remedial purposes, it was hoped that the materials would be suitable and successful when so used.

During the seven months that programmed reading was taught, observations, analyses of difficulties, informal tests, and diagnostic devices incorporated in programmed

¹Arthur I. Gates, The Improvement of Reading (3rd ed.; New York: The Macmillan Company, 1947), p. 2.

reading itself were used to measure the growth in reading skills of certain children. At the end of the seven months, the Iowa Test of Basic Skills was administered.

A comparison of groups of children using programmed reading materials to those using conventional materials did not produce striking contrasts. However, the most meaningful indication from testing and other evaluations was that almost all children exposed to programmed reading had shown considerable gains in reading comprehension abilities. The gains of these children seemed most important because most of these students had previously experienced only failure in learning to read. In addition to the gains shown on the Iowa test, a general improvement in children's attitudes toward reading seemed apparent.

Many contrasting opinions have been expressed by "experts" in the fields of reading and programming concerning the role programmed materials should play in the modern classroom. A decision to adopt or not to adopt a programmed method of dealing with reading deficiencies in an elementary school would, therefore, require careful consideration.

The Joint Committee on Programmed Instruction and Teaching Machines has encouraged experimental tryouts in schools of both locally and commercially developed programs. However, wide-scale adoption of any particular program may well await the evaluation of one or more provisional tryouts

of that program.²

The F. G. Lindsey School continues to make its tryout, and at the expiration of a second year of using programmed materials it hopes to be better able to determine how well programmed instruction has helped to correct children's reading deficiencies and to promote growth in reading skills.

²"Criteria for Assessing Programmed Instructional Materials, 1962 Interim Report", Audiovisual Instruction, February 1963, pp. 84-89, cited by John P. DeCecco, Educational Technology: Readings in Programmed Instruction (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1964) p. 408.