

INITIAL TEACHING ALPHABET EXPERIMENTAL PROGRAMS  
SURVEYED BY GEARY COUNTY UNIFIED  
DISTRICT 475 AS A BASIS FOR  
A PILOT PROGRAM

by

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGE
THE PROBLEM AND DEFINITIONS OF TERMS USED . . . . .	1
The Problem . . . . .	1
Statement of the Problem . . . . .	1
Importance of the Study . . . . .	1
Definitions of Terms . . . . .	2
Drop-outs . . . . .	2
Traditional Orthography . . . . .	2
i/t/a . . . . .	2
Phonetic Alphabet . . . . .	2
Reading Ability . . . . .	2
First Grade . . . . .	3
Standard Alphabet . . . . .	3
PROCEDURES OF RESEARCH . . . . .	3
REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE . . . . .	5
Concerning the Problem . . . . .	5
History of the English Language . . . . .	6
History of i/t/a . . . . .	8
Evaluation of i/t/a Programs . . . . .	12
AN ANALYSIS OF THE USE OF THE INITIAL TEACHING ALPHABET IN CONTACTED SCHOOLS IN THE UNITED STATES . . . . .	16
SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS . . . . .	26
REFERENCES . . . . .	29

	PAGE
APPENDICES . . . . .	33
A. Questionnaire Concerning the Operation of i/t/a . . . . .	34
Letter Sent to the Schools Contacted in This Study . . . . .	39
B. List of Forty-three Schools Contacted in the United States Contacted in This Study . . . .	40
C. Comments from i/t/a Questionnaire Under "Additional Comments" . . . . .	43
D. Initial Teaching Alphabet . . . . .	46

## LIST OF TABLES

TABLE	Page
I. Summary of Questionnaire Responses from Contacted United States Schools Relative to Establishing i/t/a Relationships with the Public--1966 . . . . .	18
II. Summary of Information Compiled from the Answers to Questionnaire Relative to Selection of Children Involved in i/t/a Classes . . . . .	20
III. Summary of Responses Compiled from the Questionnaire in Regard to Administering of Readiness Tests . . . . .	20
IV. Summary of Questionnaire Responses as to the Selection of Children in Regard to Possible Mobility . . . . .	22
V. Summary of Location of Classrooms Used for i/t/a as Indicated by Questionnaire Response .	23
VI. Summary of Information Concerning the Preparation and Involvement of Teachers from Information on Questionnaires . . . . .	25

## THE PROBLEM AND DEFINITIONS OF TERMS USED

For many years the standard twenty-six letter alphabet has been used in attempting to teach beginners in our public schools to read. The Initial Teaching Alphabet of forty-four symbols is being set forth as a great improvement over the traditional orthography of twenty-six letters used in many of the public schools at the present time. The claims concerning the success of the new method by its proponents have been based on limited observation and experimentation.

### The Problem

Statement of the Problem. It was the purpose of this study (1) to explain the history and background of the i/t/a (Initial Teaching Alphabet) system; (2) to present the claims made by the proponents of i/t/a when compared with t.o. (Traditional Orthography); and (3) to present evaluation opinions of educators who are inside and outside the field of research in i/t/a.

Importance of the Study. Under the present system of formal education in the public schools, the need for "becoming a good reader" is of much importance. It appears that society needs to educate the masses, not the few. Present methods seem to need improvement as proved by "drop-outs", crowded remedial classes, and limited success with retarded pupils. In spite of the recognition of these problems by

school personnel, government officials, and the general public, little has been done in a practical way to get at the root of the problem and produce a better educated product. This study concerns very new materials for teaching beginning pupils in our schools to read and is supported by a limited amount of research, but with great claims of its success, which makes it a method that seems to demand investigation.

#### Definitions of Terms

Drop-outs. "Drop-outs" was interpreted to be those pupils who leave school for some reason before receiving basic training for life.

Traditional Orthography. This is also referred to as t.o. Both terms refer to spelling as it is used in the regular English alphabet.

i/t/a. These initials are used to refer to the initial teaching alphabet. It was first known as the Augmented Roman Alphabet but later changed since it was to be a temporary alphabet to be used in some beginning programs.

Phonetic Alphabet. An alphabet which has only one sound for each letter or symbol.

Reading Ability. Reading ability was interpreted to mean being able to read at a level at which word recognition errors do not exceed five per cent, and having 75 per cent comprehension.

First Grade. Used to refer to the usual performance of pupils of the first grade.

Standard Alphabet. The twenty-six letter alphabet used in the English language.

#### PROCEDURES OF RESEARCH

This was action research in the Geary County Unified Schools, No. 475, Junction City, Kansas, by a committee of teachers who volunteered to work on this project. This research was under the direction of the Elementary Counselor of the Geary County Unified Schools and a teacher chairman selected by the superintendent of this school. Dr. J. Harvey Littrell, Kansas State University, Manhattan, Kansas, was the consultant.

This committee of volunteer teachers met once a week for the first month to study available literature, hear a report from the Des Moines workshop, and to divide into subcommittees for discussion and work.

The results of the work of the subcommittees were compiled into (a) evaluation of the success of the i/t/a program in schools doing research with this alphabet, (b) adequacy of materials to use in teaching classes using i/t/a, (c) suggestions for selection of pupils to be included in an i/t/a pilot program, (d) suggestions for training of prospective i/t/a teachers, (e) suggestions for explaining this program to the board of education, teachers and parents, and



(f) possible dates for starting an i/t/a pilot program in the Geary County Unified Schools, No. 475.

Articles written about i/t/a by recognized authorities in the field of reading were collected. Questions which future research needs to answer were compiled. Information was collected concerning the general characteristics of i/t/a. The consistency of the system and the explanation of the symbols' similarity to traditional orthography were investigated. It was found that forty per cent of the words are the same, twenty per cent are similar, twenty per cent have "regular irregularities", and twenty per cent look quite different. Because of this variation the committee spent several sessions working with this alphabet to see how quickly the alphabet could be used by adults and in this manner be able to transfer this knowledge to children.

The names of forty-three schools in the United States where i/t/a is being tried were obtained and questionnaires<sup>1</sup> were sent to these schools. Thirty-eight responses were received. Four of the responses were printed materials which concerned the schools but did not answer the questions on the questionnaire. The information from thirty-four questionnaires was tabulated and from this information much of the work of the committee was planned.

A list of evidences of success was gathered concerning

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<sup>1</sup>A copy of the questionnaire may be found in the appendix.

decrease in non-readers, increased ability, change of attitude toward learning to read, creativity, and spelling ability. A publicity committee contacted parents and schools to acquaint them with the program. Teachers were asked to volunteer for the program and two were selected for the i/t/a classes and two for the t.o. groups.

The trial classes will be started in September of 1966 in two schools in the Geary County Unified Schools in Junction City where it is felt that a cross section of the population will be represented.

#### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This portion of the study is a summary of the articles pertaining to the value of the initial teaching alphabet which is being tested in some schools in England and in the United States. The articles reviewed were written by educators who have been interested in following the results of the initial teaching alphabet as compared to the traditional orthography. Stands have been taken for and against its use.

#### Concerning the Problem

In case there is wonder as to why a new alphabet is being suggested, the following sentence may help illustrate the present problem. "Once upon a time, in the forest lived a little skunk named Sammy." The first letter O. How does it sound? Like the "o" in "on"? Or in "do"? Or in "woman".

Then one comes to "i" in "time". Is it the same "i" as in "timid"? And what happens to the "e" in "lived" when you pronounce the word? It just disappears! The trouble is that the English spelling follows no logical rules. It has no reasonable pattern that can be applied. Instead, the 40-odd phonemes (distinct sound units) are spelled 2000 different ways, and even the shapes of the letters vary drastically in capital, lower case, printed, and handwriting forms.<sup>2</sup>

### History of the English Language

English is made up of many words or parts of words taken from many languages. The basic reason for much of our "alphabet sounding turmoil" is our use of the Roman alphabet. The English language is the 26-letter system of a people who didn't speak English at all, but Latin.<sup>3</sup> All twenty-six letters are non-phonetic. Many times there is no similarity between the sounds which children have been taught and the symbols they see when the words are written. English uses sounds which makes it 20 per cent phonetic. Italian, by comparison, is 100 per cent phonetic, and both Russian and German come close with 90 per cent each.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>John Godson, "Why Johnny Can Read," Coronet, (August, 1964).

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>John Godson, "Why Johnny Can Read," Coronet, (August, 1964), pp. 21-22.

English contains a whole series of speech sounds that were never heard in Latin and for which the Romans had no written symbols. The Anglo-Saxons tried to take care of this by borrowing signs from Scandinavia and by inventing a few of their own. This might not have been too bad had not the Normans from France invaded and conquered England in 1066 and made French the language of the ruling class.<sup>5</sup>

At this time confusion really began. The Normans insisted on pronouncing all Anglo-Saxon words as if they were French. They also insisted on spelling them as the French would. Some examples of the change in spelling can be seen in the English word "cwen" which became "queen" and "niht" which was turned into "night".<sup>6</sup>

English is not the only language that was plagued with a nonfitting alphabet. The Turks inherited their alphabet from the Arabs and the Russians, the Cyrillic Script, which originated in the Orient. Both of these alphabets were either abandoned or reformed when the Turks and Russians seriously began teaching their youngsters to read. The English alphabet alone remains very much as it was and as a result English speaking children begin their reading with a built-in handicap.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

<sup>6</sup>Godson, op. cit., p. 22.

<sup>7</sup>Godson, loc. cit.

## History of i/t/a

One might ask, "What is the Initial Teaching Alphabet? Where did it come from? Does it offer an easier and better way of teaching reading?"

The seeds of i/t/a were planted more than one hundred years ago when Sir Isaac Pitman, schoolmaster from Somerset, England invented Pitman shorthand, which is phonic. You can write any language with Pitman shorthand because it has symbols for nearly every sound vocal chords can make. In devising his shorthand Sir Isaac made a close study of the phonetic basis of English. These notes were preserved and came into the hands of his grandson, Sir James Pitman, publisher and member of Parliament. Sir James pointed out that our English is "phonetically phony", and that standard spelling is full of "booby traps".<sup>8</sup>

Sir James had no ambition to change the standard alphabet of English spelling. After reading his grandfather's notes, he wondered if the beginning reader might not make better progress if the alphabetical symbols could be made to represent exactly and distinctly the sounds used in everyday speech. He began working on this idea and didn't try to do away with our present alphabet (except two letters, q and x). He added symbols so the reader might easily identify the five

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<sup>8</sup>John Godson, "Why Johnny Can Read," (Coronet, August, 1964), pp. 23-24.

"o" sounds, the many "s" sounds, etc.<sup>9</sup>

He first called his new alphabet the Augmented Roman, that is, an extension of our present Roman alphabet. Since the alphabet is designed only to teach beginning reading, the name was changed to Initial Teaching Alphabet. It is referred to as i/t/a because the alphabet used only lower case letters. Capitals are larger versions of the lower case shapes.<sup>10</sup>

In 1960 Sir James Pitman took his phonic alphabet to the University of London Institute of Education. There the project was turned over to Research Officer John W. Downing, a psychologist with teaching experience in primary and secondary schools and research experience in education and industry.<sup>11</sup> John Downing was much impressed with this new method of teaching and encouraged its use on an experimental basis. Through Downing's influence a number of London publishers began printing children's books in i/t/a. With books available, pilot test programs began in England and soon after this pilot programs were started in the United States. In both countries classes using i/t/a were matched with classes taught by traditional methods.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>9</sup>Ibid.

<sup>10</sup>William D. Boutwell, "What's Happening in Education?", The Parent Teachers' Association Magazine, (September, 1964), p. 23.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid.

<sup>12</sup>George Riemer, "A Bizarre Alphabet Teaches Johnny to Read," The Ladies' Home Journal, (October, 1964), p. 139.

The first large scale pilot program in the United States started at Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, in September of 1963. Lehigh University's Department of Education received a \$150,000 three-year grant to work with the Bethlehem public school system on plans, materials, and tests.<sup>13</sup>

In the fall of 1964, one thousand two hundred first graders in the Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, school system started using the new forty-four letter alphabet. In 1965 all of the first grade children in this system were started in i/t/a classes.<sup>14</sup> This project was started by Dr. Albert J. Mazurkiewicz of Lehigh's Department of Education, and Dr. Harold Tanyzer at Hofstra University at Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. These men prepared the readers and workbooks which were used in the Bethlehem Public Schools and in projects in over half of the states in the United States. After books were available it was an easy matter to get interested schools to start pilot programs.<sup>15</sup>

In England the i/t/a experimenters had produced some materials using the controlled vocabulary prepared by Pitman but this was slow as only a few books were available for use in classes attempting to experiment with i/t/a. The books

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<sup>13</sup>William D. Boutwell, "What's Happening in Education?", The Parent Teachers' Association Magazine, (September, 1964), p. 23.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid.

<sup>15</sup>Nancy Larrick, "What Forty-four Letters Can Do," Science Research, (September, 1964), pp. 66-67.

prepared in Bethlehem helped the programs in England for they could now secure materials to expand their programs.<sup>16</sup>

For the Lehigh-Bethlehem project Dr. Mazurkiewicz and Dr. Tanyzer prepared special reading material which included a readiness book, six readers and workbooks, teacher's guide, and other necessary materials.<sup>17</sup> The content of these readers is very different from the traditional textbooks used in our regular classrooms. There is no Dick and Jane family in every story, but rather a collection of unrelated stories about such subjects as piracy, space travel, baseball, a cattle round-up, deep-sea diving, and children's problems with their parents.<sup>18</sup> Some stories are new and some are from the classics (i.e., The Elves and the Shoemaker). All of the stories have something happening. They have plot, suspense, humor, and even pathos. This kind of material is seldom found in traditional first grade readers. The difference in the type of story may have had an effect on the interest of the children.<sup>19</sup>

The i/t/a readers (texts), two through seven, which are all used in the lower grades, provide one hundred different stories on eight hundred sixty pages, which constitutes

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<sup>16</sup>Ibid.

<sup>17</sup>Larrick, op. cit., p. 69.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid.



much more bulk than t.o. The bulk created the need for the material to be divided into more books, seven in number. These seven books teach 1,557 different words as compared with 543 introduced in the Macmillan first grade books, and 235 words introduced in the Laidlaw series. These books emphasize listening and writing with little stress of the traditional separation of reading, writing, and speaking. The result of this is that i/t/a children learn to write anything they say and this develops creativity.<sup>20</sup>

#### Evaluation of i/t/a Programs

One teacher said there is no time for anything but reading since she uses the initial teaching alphabet. She mentioned one sentence in the i/t/a teacher's guide which warned that excited chatter should be stopped. As she listened to the children she wondered whether the children needed the Pitman "sound symbols" as much as they needed the opportunity to express themselves orally.<sup>21</sup> Nancy Larrick says the initial teaching alphabet does not create the meager educational fare that this group of children seemed to be getting and she pointed out that any method requires a teacher who presents the material well. i/t/a can be used with any kind of individual instruction or grouping and with activities of

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<sup>20</sup>Ibid.

<sup>21</sup>Nancy Larrick, "What Forty-four Letters Can Do," Science Research, (September 19, 1964), p. 67.

most any kind. In this case i/t/a was being used without regard to the needs of children. Dr. Stewart does say that you get into reading sooner in traditional instruction but from then on it levels off into a slow, hard climb with too many children falling behind. This does not happen in i/t/a although some children do better than others but all of them read and continue to improve.<sup>22</sup>

Observation of procedures, as seen by Nancy Larrick, former president of the International Reading Association, and well-known writer about children and their education, seems to indicate that those children taught by i/t/a are ahead of those in t.o. but the new alphabet is no panacea. Nancy Larrick also says we do not know yet how well "i/t/a taught children" will unlearn the Pitman symbols and convert to the traditional English spelling. She says we will have to wait to learn if, as adults, they will read more easily than their neighbors.<sup>23</sup>

The purpose of the use of the initial teaching alphabet is to simplify the young child's task of learning to translate letter sounds by eliminating different letter combinations for the same sound. Pitman's symbols are intended only for initial stages of reading instruction. It is claimed

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<sup>22</sup>Dr. Rebecca Stewart, "How to Eliminate the Non-Reader," School Management, (Fall, 1964).

<sup>23</sup>Nancy Larrick, "What Forty-four Letters Can Do," Science Research, (September 19, 1964), p. 67.

that the transfer to t.o. is made ideally at the end of the first grade. Promoters of this plan, Dr. Albert Mazurkiewicz and Dr. Harold Tanyzer, claim that by the fourth month of i/t/a instruction pupils begin to push ahead of those in t.o. About 10 per cent can read and deal effectively with a vocabulary of 320 words written by Pitman.<sup>24</sup>

Those using the Pitman alphabet are taught to form letters and symbols from the start of instruction and are urged to write letters, words, sentences, and paragraphs. By the end of six months of instruction many write nine- and ten-word sentences easily and quickly. Word recognition tests were given in January to a sampling of children and these tests indicated that those who had mastered the forty-four Pitman "sound symbols" scored the equivalent of second semester of third grade.<sup>25</sup>

Tests made of the i/t/a pupil's ability to read conventional print show that transfer seems quite easy. Only eighteen months after beginning to learn to read with i/t/a, children seem to obtain very superior scores on tests printed in traditional alphabet and spelling. The children who began in i/t/a and later transferred to the standard print could read the latter with greater accuracy and comprehension than the children who had been taught the traditional alphabet and

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<sup>24</sup>Sir Edward Boyle, British Minister of Education, 1964 Parliamentary Debates, (March, 1964), p. 14.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid.

spelling from the beginning.<sup>26</sup> Although some children have made a successful transition to t.o. without any apparent difficulty there may be some with mental abilities of psychological sets which will make it difficult for them to discard one medium and master another. There will probably need to be more research to determine the types of learners for which i/t/a works best.<sup>27</sup>

We do not as yet know the long-range effect of i/t/a on reading and spelling performance and may not clearly see what effect (if any) it will have until pupils who have taken part in the experiment reach the fourth or fifth grade or perhaps later. These possible effects need to be carefully weighed against the advantages claimed for early reading achievement by using the i/t/a system.<sup>28</sup>

Nor is it known as yet the extent to which the enthusiasm of teachers, and the glamour of an experimental situation, lifts pupils to higher reading achievement. The "Hawthorne Effect" can never be completely eliminated in educational experiments, since teacher enthusiasm is an uncontrollable variable.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>26</sup>William D. Boutwell, "An Easier Way to Learn to Read --i/t/a," The Parent Teachers' Association Magazine, (October, 1964), Bulletin, What's Happening in Education, p. 4.

<sup>27</sup>Warren G. Cutts, Specialist for Reading, United States Office of Education, NEA Journal, (September, 1964), p. 21.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid.

<sup>29</sup>Warren G. Cutts, Specialist for Reading, United States Office of Education, NEA Journal, (September, 1964), p. 21.

The i/t/a experiments in England are scheduled to continue until 1974. Educators should carefully consider interim reports from both British and American studies but should not at this time draw conclusions about the full significance of i/t/a.<sup>30</sup>

A final evaluation of the i/t/a experiment will not be possible until some while after the children concerned have transferred to traditional orthography. But if the promise of the results obtained thus far is fulfilled, there seems to be little doubt that the use of this alphabet will spread further, and that its significance will become more widely understood.<sup>31</sup>

AN ANALYSIS OF THE USE OF THE INITIAL  
TEACHING ALPHABET IN CONTACTED SCHOOLS  
IN THE UNITED STATES

To obtain information concerning the value of the use of the initial teaching alphabet in teaching beginning reading, questionnaires were sent to forty-three schools in the United States that are experimenting with the i/t/a alphabet. It was anticipated that the alphabet would be used not only in regular rooms but for remedial purposes. Forty-three

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<sup>30</sup>Ibid.

<sup>31</sup>Sir Edward Boyle, British Minister of Education, 1964 Parliamentary Debates, (March, 1964), p. 14.

schools and institutions<sup>32</sup> were contacted and replies were received from thirty-eight. Of the thirty-eight replies four were pamphlets concerning the program of those schools but did not answer the questions on the questionnaire. The compiled results were made of the thirty-four schools which did fill out the questionnaire. The per cent of return of usable material was 78.88 per cent. The comments from all questionnaires<sup>33</sup> were also recorded. The following tables and percentages were based on the thirty-four responses which answered the questions on the questionnaire.

In making plans for setting up an i/t/a experiment program in the Geary County Unified District, No. 475, in Junction City, the committee realized there was a need to study the relationships with the public concerning this project. It was found that in 21, or 61.77 per cent, of the 34 schools responding to the questionnaire that films were used to help explain the program to the parents of children who might be involved in the program the next school year. These films were secured from i/t/a publications. Fifteen schools, or 44.11 per cent, showed these films at PTA meetings. Other methods mentioned were parent conference, demonstrations, news articles, visual aids, workshops for parents, and letters to

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<sup>32</sup>A list of the forty-three schools in the United States which were contacted concerning their experience in the use of i/t/a may be found in Appendix B.

<sup>33</sup>The additional comments made on the questionnaires may be found in Appendix C.

parents. In order to secure parental consent for the child to enter the program ten of the 34 schools, or 29.40 per cent, secured written consent and these said this was done by letter. One school commented that they secured permission by telephone. Table I presents these comparisons.

TABLE I

SUMMARY OF QUESTIONNAIRE RESPONSES FROM CONTACTED  
UNITED STATES SCHOOLS RELATIVE TO ESTABLISHING  
i/t/a RELATIONSHIPS WITH THE PUBLIC  
1966

Questions	Yes	%	No	%	No re- sponse	%
A. Education of the public						
1. Were films used?	21	61.77	13	38.23	0	0
2. Was this education of the public done through PTA?	15	44.11	16	47.05	3	18.84
3. Were other methods used for education of parents of participating pupils?	26	76.45	5	14.71	3	8.84
B. Parental consent						
5. Was written consent obtained from parents involved?	10	29.40	24	70.60	0	0

A survey was made to find out what children were to be involved in the program. A check was made of the socio-economic levels of students included in the thirty-four projects.

Twenty-eight, or 82.44 per cent, selected pupils from all levels, four, or 11.76 per cent, selected lower level pupils, one, or 2.94 per cent, used upper level pupils, and three schools, or 7.82 per cent, drew from the middle levels.

A check was made of the levels of mental ability included and it was found that 25 schools, or 73.5 per cent, selected from all levels. Three, or 7.82 per cent, selected bright or gifted children, three, or 7.82 per cent, took average learners, four, or 11.76 per cent, included only slow learners, and two, or 5.88 per cent, used the program only with educable or retarded learners. Compiled information is in Table II, page 20.

It was found that twenty-six, or 76.47 per cent, administered readiness tests, and seven, or 20.59 per cent, indicated that they gave special tests. Among those listed were individual IQ, Pre and Post (Lee, Clark), and at the beginning and end gave California Achievement tests. One school did not reply. Refer to Table III, page 20.

It was of importance to the Junction City project to investigate the mobility factor as to its relationship to the problem of selecting children for the program. Eleven schools, or 32.35 per cent, indicated that they selected children who were thought to be permanent in the school district. Twenty, or 59.81 per cent, did not make this distinction. Three schools, or 8.84 per cent, did not answer this question. Sixteen schools, or 47.04 per cent, did try to accommodate the



TABLE II<sup>a</sup>

SUMMARY OF INFORMATION COMPILED FROM THE ANSWERS TO  
QUESTIONNAIRE RELATIVE TO SELECTION OF CHILDREN  
INVOLVED IN i/t/a CLASSES

Questions	No	%
A. Selection		
7. What socio-economic levels of students were included?		
a. All levels	26	76.47
b. Lower levels	4	11.76
c. Upper levels	1	2.94
d. Middle levels	3	7.62
8. What levels of mental ability were included?		
a. All levels	25	73.50
b. Bright and gifted	3	7.82
c. Average	3	7.82
d. Slow learners	4	11.76
e. Educable-retarded	2	5.88

<sup>a</sup>The number of responses (36 and 38) exceeded the number who responded (34) because of multiple responses. Some schools checked more than one item.

TABLE III

SUMMARY OF RESPONSES COMPILED FROM THE QUESTIONNAIRE IN  
REGARD TO ADMINISTERING OF READINESS TESTS

Question	Yes	%	No	%	No re- sponse	%
A. Selection						
9. Were readiness tests administered?	26	76.47	7	20.59	1	2.94

child who had to transfer within the school year to a school without i/t/a. These schools tested the pupil who was transferring to establish the t.o. level. In cases where the transfer was known about long enough in advance the child was given instruction in t.o. Twenty-two schools, or 64.70 per cent, indicated there was no evidence of adverse effect on the child who had to make such a move. Ten, or 29.4 per cent, did not make any comment on this inquiry. Two schools, or 5.90 per cent, said there was adverse evidence to a small degree and one of these two only feared there might be because only one week's time was had to prepare for the transfer. This information was compiled in Table IV on page 22.

Inquiry was made concerning the use of the classrooms for the i/t/a program. The number of classrooms involved in the schools contacted ranged from 1 to 26. However, most of the schools had from one to eight rooms of i/t/a and only two schools had over this number. Bethlemin, Pennsylvania, had 26 rooms. The number of pupils in the classroom ranged from 1 to 31 with the large concentration being from 23 to 30. Thirteen, or 38.23 per cent, had two or more classrooms conducted in the same building. Nineteen, or 55.88 per cent, did not have more than one in a building and two, or 5.89 per cent, did not answer. However, sixteen, or 51.04 per cent, replied that experimental classes were conducted in more than one building in the same system. Sixteen, or 51.04 per cent, also said they did not have more than one building in the

TABLE IV

SUMMARY OF QUESTIONNAIRE RESPONSES AS TO THE SELECTION OF CHILDREN IN REGARD TO POSSIBLE MOBILITY.

Question	Yes	%	No	%	No re- sponse	%
B. Mobility						
12. Was care used in selecting children who were permanent residents?	11	32.35	20	59.81	3	8.84
13. Was anything done to accommodate the child who had to transfer within the school year to a school without i/t/a?	16	47.04	14	41.18	4	11.78
15. Was there any evidence of an adverse effect on the child who had to make such a move?	2	5.90	22	64.70	10	29.40

system involved in the experiment, and two, or 5.89 per cent, did not answer. See Table V, page 23.

The experiment had been carried out on every grade level including Junior High and Senior High and with adults, except the sixth grade level. Twenty-nine, or 78.96 per cent, did teach the children in ability groups within the class and five, or 14.7 per cent, did not divide the class. Twenty-three, or 67.62 per cent, indicated that i/t/a did increase

TABLE V

SUMMARY OF LOCATION OF CLASSROOMS USED FOR i/t/a AS  
INDICATED BY QUESTIONNAIRE RESPONSE

Question	Yes	%	No	%	No re- sponse	%
Location						
19. Were two or more experimental classrooms conducted in the same building?	13	38.23	19	55.88	2	5.89
20. Were the experimental classes conducted in more than one building in the same system	16	51.045	16	51.045	2	5.89

the amount of individualized instruction needed. Ten or 29.4 per cent, said it made no difference. One did not reply to this inquiry.

When asked if there was any carry-over into other subjects including number sentences, twenty-three, or 67.62 per cent, said there was. However, ten, or 29.4 per cent, indicated it did not carry over into number sentences and one did not answer, while eight said it did not carry over into other subjects and three did not answer.

In the preparation and involvement of teachers the assignment to teaching i/t/a was first considered.

Twenty-eight, or 82.32 per cent, responded that it was a voluntary basis assignment. Five, or 14.7 per cent, said it was not voluntary and one school did not answer. Twenty-eight also indicated that they used experienced teachers but in no case was age a factor. One school did indicate that they did not use first year teachers. Refer to Table VI, page 25.

Extra training was reported by twenty-five of the schools but the training courses were short. All were workshops and sixteen reported from two to four days were spent at these meetings. Most of the schools said their i/t/a teachers did visit classes being conducted with i/t/a. Over half of the schools did train the second grade teachers to cope with children who had not made the transition to t.o. Nine schools, or 26.46 per cent, did train substitutes. For the most part this training was acquired at workshops.

The inquiry was made as to what time during the first grade that the majority of the children made the transition from i/t/a to t.o. It was found that 22, or 64.70 per cent, made the transition sometime between January and the end of the school year. One school reported a transition between November and December and one said at the end of Book 4 of the i/t/a series. Ten questionnaires did not have an answer to this inquiry.

The approximate range in reading levels in t.o. after the transition was made ranged from grade levels 1.5 to 5.8.

TABLE VI

SUMMARY OF INFORMATION CONCERNING THE PREPARATION AND  
INVOLVEMENT OF TEACHERS FROM INFORMATION  
ON QUESTIONNAIRES

Question	Yes	%	No	%	No re- sponse	%
<b>Assignment</b>						
37. Were teachers assigned on a voluntary basis?	28	82.33	5	14.72	1	2.95
38. Were experienced teachers used?	28	82.33	5	14.72	1	2.95
39. Was age a factor in teacher assignment?	0	0	32	94.11	2	5.89
<b>Training</b>						
41. Were preparatory courses made available?	25	73.54	7	20.57	2	5.89
43. Could classrooms using i/t/a be visited by prospective teachers?	32	94.11	2	5.89	0	0
44. Was it necessary to train second grade teachers?	11	32.36	16	47.07	7	20.57
45. Were substitute teachers trained?	9	24.47	21	61.77	4	11.76

Twenty-three schools answered this question and thirteen of these said the range in their schools was from grade levels 2 to 4.3. Seven schools indicated the range in grade level to be from 1.5 to 4.7, and three schools replied that their range was from grade levels 1.9 to 5.8. Eleven schools found that this question was not applicable to their situations. These included the retarded, remedial, junior high, three first year classes, and one whose teacher could not be contacted. It was found that in eight instances the same teacher taught the children in the second grade. Sixteen schools indicated this was not their policy and ten schools did not answer this inquiry.

#### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The following section consists of a summary of the analysis of the use of the initial teaching alphabet system as opposed to the use of traditional orthography. This analysis was based on the review of literature prepared by experts in the field of reading and the results of answers to a questionnaire sent to schools in the United States that are experimenting with this new alphabet system.

The thirty-four schools that responded to the questionnaire were unanimously impressed with the results of the use of the initial teaching alphabet system in the short time that the experiments have been conducted. This questionnaire data indicated that children at all levels of socio-economic

levels and mental abilities could benefit greatly by the use of this alphabet as compared with the traditional method. Even when the children had to move from one school to another before the transition to traditional orthography was made they seemed to be able to adjust in a short time and as yet no great evidence of adverse effects have been found. It was desirable that the teacher be informed well in advance of the transfer but the child could make the change even without this extra help from the i/t/a teacher.

This program seemed to require more work on the part of the teacher to individualize some of the materials presented but the teachers seemed to like the work and preferred to stay in it. Progress on the part of the children seemed very rewarding. The teacher was considered a very important part in making the program a success as in any field of teaching and the teacher did not need a long training period. From two to four days at a workshop made it possible to train regular teachers and also to train substitutes and second grade teachers if desired. Enthusiasm on the part of the teacher was of utmost importance. Teachers entered this program on a voluntary basis and it seemed that best results were obtained when experienced rather than first year teachers were employed.

The parents were also enthusiastic and there was more of a problem to eliminate those who wanted to enter the new program rather than a problem of having to draft pupils for



the program. The publicity committee seemed to do a good job of explaining the program and with the use of films were able to create an enthusiastic public.

The results of tests seem to show that a great advancement was made in a short time when the initial teaching alphabet was used to teach beginning reading. The grade level advancements indicated by tests before and after the program showed a gain of 2 to 5.8 grade levels in one year of teaching with the initial teaching alphabet system. This was taken from work done with pupils with all levels of ability. It seemed the teacher could satisfactorily cope with classes of thirty although the experiments ranged from classes of three to classes of thirty-one. The greatest number used classes of thirty.

From this summary of the responses received from the replies to the questionnaire and from the review of the literature prepared by experts in the reading field as well as those in research, it would seem that the programs had met with success in the schools reporting. It cannot be known for some years just what degree of success can be expected from such a program but it does seem that it might be well worth trying.

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## REFERENCES

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## APPENDICES

## APPENDIX A

## QUESTIONNAIRE CONCERNING THE OPERATION OF i/t/a

## I. RELATIONSHIPS WITH THE PUBLIC

## A. EDUCATION OF THE PUBLIC

1. Were films used? . . . . . 1. YES\_\_\_ NO\_\_\_
2. Was this education of the public  
done through PTA? . . . . . 2. YES\_\_\_ NO\_\_\_
3. Were other methods used for edu-  
cation of parents of participat-  
ing pupils? . . . . . 3. YES\_\_\_ NO\_\_\_
4. If your answer was "Yes", please  
state the methods used. . . . . 4. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## B. PARENTAL CONSENT

5. Was written consent obtained  
from the parents involved? . . . 5. YES\_\_\_ NO\_\_\_
6. If your answer was "Yes", explain  
how this consent was obtained . . 6. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## II. THE CHILDREN INVOLVED

## A. SELECTION

7. Check the socio-economic levels  
of students included: 7. \_\_\_\_\_
- a. All levels a. \_\_\_\_\_
- b. Lower levels b. \_\_\_\_\_
- c. Upper levels c. \_\_\_\_\_
- d. Middle levels d. \_\_\_\_\_

8. Check the levels of mental ability included: 8.
- |                      |          |
|----------------------|----------|
| a. All levels        | a. _____ |
| b. Bright and gifted | b. _____ |
| c. Average           | c. _____ |
| d. Slow learners     | d. _____ |
9. Were readiness tests administered? 9. YES \_\_\_ NO \_\_\_
10. Was there special testing when remedial children were involved? . 10. YES \_\_\_ NO \_\_\_
11. If your answer was "Yes", please explain . . . . . 11. \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

#### B. MOBILITY

12. Was care used in selecting children who were permanent residents? . . 12. YES \_\_\_ NO \_\_\_
13. Was anything done to accommodate the child who had to transfer within the school year to a school without i/t/a? . . . . . 13. YES \_\_\_ NO \_\_\_
14. If your answer was "Yes", please explain . . . . . 14. \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_
15. Was there any evidence of an adverse effect on the child who had to make such a move? . . . . . 15. YES \_\_\_ NO \_\_\_
16. If your answer was "Yes", please explain . . . . . 16. \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_



## III. USE OF CLASSROOMS

## A. QUANTITY

17. How many classrooms were involved  
in the initial experiment? . . . 17. \_\_\_\_\_
18. How many children were enrolled  
in each classroom . . . . . 18. \_\_\_\_\_

## B. LOCATION

19. Were two or more experimental  
classrooms conducted in the  
same building? . . . . . 19. YES \_\_\_ NO \_\_\_
20. Were the experimental classes  
conducted in more than one  
building in the same system? . . 20. YES \_\_\_ NO \_\_\_

## C. GRADE LEVEL

Check blank opposite grade levels  
in which experiments were conducted:

21. Kindergarten: Only readiness . . 21. \_\_\_\_\_
22. Kindergarten: Actual reading . . 22. \_\_\_\_\_
23. First . . . . . 23. \_\_\_\_\_
24. Second . . . . . 24. \_\_\_\_\_
25. Third . . . . . 25. \_\_\_\_\_

## REMEDIAL:

26. Third . . . . . 26. \_\_\_\_\_
27. Fourth . . . . . 27. \_\_\_\_\_
28. Fifth . . . . . 28. \_\_\_\_\_
29. Sixth . . . . . 29. \_\_\_\_\_
30. Junior High . . . . . 30. \_\_\_\_\_
31. Senior High . . . . . 31. \_\_\_\_\_
32. Adults . . . . . 32. \_\_\_\_\_

## D. GROUPING WITHIN THE CLASSROOM

33. Were children taught in ability groups within the classroom? . . . 33. YES \_\_\_ NO \_\_\_
34. Did i/t/a increase individualized instruction? . . . . . 34. YES \_\_\_ NO \_\_\_

## E. CARRY-OVER IN OTHER SUBJECT AREAS

35. Was i/t/a used for number sentences? . . . . . 35. YES \_\_\_ NO \_\_\_
36. Was i/t/a used for other subjects? . . . . . 36. YES \_\_\_ NO \_\_\_

## IV. PREPARATION AND INVOLVEMENT OF TEACHERS

## A. ASSIGNMENT

37. Were teachers assigned on a voluntary basis? . . . . . 37. YES \_\_\_ NO \_\_\_
38. Were experienced teachers used? 38. YES \_\_\_ NO \_\_\_
39. Was age a factor in teacher assignments? . . . . . 39. YES \_\_\_ NO \_\_\_
40. If your answer was "Yes", please explain . . . . . 40. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## B. TRAINING

41. Were preparatory courses made available . . . . . 41. YES \_\_\_ NO \_\_\_
42. If answer was "Yes", explain any special training for teaching of i/t/a . . . . . 42. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
43. Could classrooms using i/t/a be visited by prospective teachers? 43. YES \_\_\_ NO \_\_\_
44. Was it necessary to train second grade teachers to cope with children who had not made the transition to t.o. in first grade? . . . . . 44. YES \_\_\_ NO \_\_\_

45. Were substitute teachers trained? 45. YES \_\_\_ NO \_\_\_

46. If your answer was "Yes",  
explain how . . . . . 46. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

C. TRANSITION

47. At what time during the first  
grade did the majority of chil-  
dren make the transition from  
i/t/a to t.o.? . . . . . 47. \_\_\_\_\_

48. What was the approximate range  
in reading levels in t.o. after  
the transition was made? . . . . . 48. \_\_\_\_\_

49. Did one teacher ever teach the  
same group in both first and  
second grades? . . . . . 49. YES \_\_\_ NO \_\_\_

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS MAY BE MADE ON ATTACHED SHEET.

Geary County Unified Schools  
Sixth and Adams  
Junction City, Kansas

January 28, 1966

Our school system is considering an experimental program using i/t/a. As a part of the study being made, we are sending a questionnaire to administrators, directors, or teachers of the programs already in progress.

Will you please fill out the enclosed questionnaire, or hand to the teacher involved? Thank you.

Respectfully yours,

Chairman of i/t/a Study  
Committee  
Geary County Unified  
Dist. 475

Teacher:

## APPENDIX B

LIST OF FORTY-THREE SCHOOLS IN THE UNITED STATES  
CONTACTED IN THIS STUDY

State	City	School
California	Freedom	Amesti School
California	Happy Camp	Happy Camp Public Schools
California	Lompoc	Lompoc Unified School Dist.
California	San Quentin	Department of Corrections California State Prison
California	Sausalito	Bayside School
California	Stockton	Stockton Unified School Dist.
Connecticut	Simbury	Garfield School
Illinois	Evanston	Haven Elementary School
Indiana	Terre Haute	Laboratory School Indiana State University
Michigan	Detroit	Macomb School
Minnesota	St. Cloud	Garfield School
Missouri	St. Louis	Delmar Harvard School
New Jersey	Dumont	Dumont Public Schools
New Jersey	New Providence	Lincoln School Borough of New Providence
New Jersey	Oradell	Oradell Public School
New Jersey	Piscataway	Fellowship Farm School
New York	Fredonia	Eagle Street Foundation School
New York	Long Island	East Islip Public School

State	City	School
New York	New York	Laboratory School 20 East 46th Street
New York	Orangeburg	Rockland State Hospital
New York	Rensselaer	Craigo School
New York	Schroon Lake	Morish Central School
New York	Syracuse	Syracuse State School
New York	Williamsville	Maple Road School
Oregon	Salem	Oregon State Penitentiary
Ohio	Canton	Canton Public Schools
Ohio	Maple Heights	Broadway School
Ohio	Maumee	Union Elementary School
Ohio	Summit County	Nordonia Hills School
Pennsylvania	Bethlehem	Bethlehem Area Schools
Pennsylvania	Bethlehem	Lehigh University
Pennsylvania	Boyertown	Boyertown Area Schools
Pennsylvania	Berwyn	Berwyn School
Pennsylvania	Clear Field	Clear Field Area School
Pennsylvania	Mars	Mars Area Joint School
Pennsylvania	Slippery Rock	Laboratory School Slippery Rock State College
Pennsylvania	Lancaster County	Southern Lancaster County School
South Carolina	Greenwood	Greenwood School, Dist. No. 50

State	City	School
Texas	Kingsville	Presbyterian Pan American School
Washington	Bellingham	Bush Private School Western Washington College
Washington	Callam Bay	Callam Bay Public School
Wisconsin	Union Grove	Southern Wisconsin Colony and Training School (Mentally retarded)
Wisconsin	Waupan	Jefferson School

## APPENDIX C

COMMENTS FROM i/t/a QUESTIONNAIRE  
UNDER "ADDITIONAL COMMENTS"California, Sausalito

"This first class was chosen to include all levels of ability--also Negro and Oriental children."

Illinois, Evanston

"I thoroughly enjoy using the medium of i/t/a with the Early-to-Read program, and feel pretty sure that good and average pupils can read more interesting material much sooner. Their creative writing is delightful. Slow learners are less frustrated and bewildered. All the children read with pleasure and self-confidence."

Michigan, Detroit

"These people are almost completely non-English speaking, just-off-the-boat adults. I begin my work with sounds in i/t/a, teaching symbols and using mimeographed material. They go rapidly through the first little books and we continue until they read with a fair degree of fluency--about the end of Book 4. Then they just go into Reader's Digest Skill Builders at a low level and other books for foreign born. They seem to have no trouble.

"Our Macomb Mother's Club gave me \$100 to purchase i/t/a materials which we use in my little class. The children pay for their own workbooks so it is a revolving replenished fund.

"Truthfully, with all my work in i/t/a with adults, some private tutoring of low IQ illiterates and my foreign born classes, I've never done transition as such. Somehow, THEY JUST BEGIN TO READ IN T.O. ALSO. None of my little remedial class experience any difficulty in switching from i/t/a to t.o. for their other subjects.

"I find it a very worthwhile method of beginning reading and a wonderful remedial tool. They all have "instant success"--the whole secret."



Minnesota, St. Cloud

"We'd be more than happy to have you visit. We don't have all the answers, but we've had much satisfaction from the i/t/a program. Teachers like it greatly and don't care to go back to Basic materials. Some teachers I know might not like the program. The teacher is the key to the success of any program. They do well in anything they like and believe in."

Missouri, University City

"We have no reservations about the effectiveness of beginning reading in i/t/a. We started in 1964-65 with 3 experimental rooms. Now in 1965-66, we have eleven first grade rooms using i/t/a. Next year we'll have all (25) first grade rooms using i/t/a."

New Jersey, New Providence

"Our first experiment was in the fall of 1964. This was with nine second graders who had failed in first grade. I saw these children for 1 and 1/2 hrs. in the morning and afternoon, being responsible for their language arts program. These children completed the transition without difficulty and are doing well in their third grade work."

"At present, the first grade teachers are amazed at the reading and writing of their pupils, most of whom will complete the transition before school closes."

"I addressed a joint meeting of all the parents of kindergarten. All the parents requested that their children be in the program."

New York, Syracuse (State School)

"Our original experiment was limited to 23 mentally retarded children in 7th grade. Our success was so great that the next year we used i/t/a in all special education classes starting with reading readiness groups. We had excellent results. This year (the 3rd year of our experiment) we do not use i/t/a at all in junior or senior high."

Oregon, Salem (State Penitentiary)

"I am enclosing a report of our i/t/a program over the past 18 months which I feel explains our program thoroughly. We have had extraordinary success with i/t/a and highly recommend it to those school districts contemplating initiating an i/t/a program."

Pennsylvania, Bethlehem (First extensive project in the U.S.)

"Our project with i/t/a began three years ago. This year all first graders are being taught to read through this medium. (48 classrooms) I am enclosing a report of the first two years of the project."

Pennsylvania, Mars

"Although it wasn't necessary to train the second grade teacher in i/t/a, she had to be familiar with the program. These children go to second grade with a flair for writing, but this can be quickly destroyed by a teacher who does not understand i/t/a. Children will continue to spell in i/t/a and continue to use no capitals. This transition may take more time. Another factor to watch is teaching a directed reading lesson page-by-page. This seems to be a difficult concept for the more traditional type teacher to grasp--that these children read a story in its entirety for a purpose. Another tendency is to use the feature of directed lesson-word drill-which is probably not needed. The teacher must challenge and expect them to move ahead.

"This is a wonderful answer to the low-average learner. Our second graders are still holding their own in reading--none have fallen below level. I hope to try this program with junior high, or upper intermediate students who read at a primary level."

South Carolina, Greenwood (only one-year experiment)

Twelve fourth graders: Dec. 1964-May 1965

"Most of the youngsters made approximately a year's growth in reading but showed more improvement in comprehension than in word recognition.

"We feel the program has definite merit, but involves a tremendous amount of work for the individual teacher who should put all work in i/t/a. It certainly gave these pupils who needed to start from the pre-primer level an opportunity to have a fresh approach with new material."

girls and boys learn

to read with it|a

æ b c d eē  
 face bed cat dog key

f g h ie j k  
 feet leg hat fly jug key

l m n œ p r  
 letter man nest over pen girl

r s t ue v w  
 red spoon tree use voice window

y z s wh ch  
 yes zebra daisy when chair

th th sh z n  
 three the shop television ring

a au a e i o  
 father ball cap egg milk box

u ω ω ou oi  
 up book spoon out oil

Initial Teaching Alphabet Publications, Inc.

20 East 46 St., New York, N. Y. 10017

Pitman's Initial Teaching Alphabet, with its 44 symbols and words illustrating the sounds these symbols represent.

INITIAL TEACHING ALPHABET EXPERIMENTAL PROGRAMS  
SURVEYED BY GEARY COUNTY UNIFIED  
DISTRICT 475 AS A BASIS FOR  
A PILOT PROGRAM

by

BERNICE VANETTA SEYMOUR

B. S., Kansas State Teachers College,  
Emporia, 1959

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AN ABSTRACT OF A MASTER'S REPORT

submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree

MASTER OF SCIENCE

College of Education

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY  
Manhattan, Kansas

1966

Reading is of great importance to the individual and to society. Much concern has been felt concerning the product of our present plan of teaching reading. In the countries where English is taught there seems to be a growing demand to change the present methods.

It was the aim of this study to determine the extent of success achieved thus far in schools which have been experimenting with the Initial Teaching Alphabet founded by Pitman and Downing of England, and taken up by Dr. Albert J. Mazurkiewicz of Lehigh University and Dr. Harold Tanyzer of Hofstra University, Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, in the United States.

A study was made of articles written by reading authorities concerning their views on the use of the Initial Teaching Alphabet system as compared with traditional orthography. It was recognized by these authorities that a measure of success was being had by the use of this new alphabet but most of the conclusions seemed to indicate a reservation on complete approval until more research results could be had.

A committee was selected in the Geary County Unified District, No. 475, Junction City, Kansas, for the purpose of conducting research on the results of projects which have been conducted in the United States.

A questionnaire was compiled under the direction of Dr. Harvey Littrell of Kansas State University, Manhattan, Kansas. This questionnaire was sent to forty-three schools

and institutions. Thirty-eight replies were received. Four of the replies were printed materials and did not answer the questions directly.

Of the thirty-eight replies all commented favorably on the results of their projects. None had reservations about the effectiveness of the use of i/t/a to teach beginning reading. Those using it for remedial purposes, retarded programs, foreign born, and illiterates all felt that it was very effective.

The comment was made that in many cases the teacher is the key to the success of the program. The program seems to require a great amount of work on the part of the teacher but those teachers replying preferred i/t/a to traditional orthography and preferred to stay in the program.

The success of the teacher did not seem to depend on the amount of training which the teacher received but rather on the personality of the individual.

It would seem that this program is worth trying although it is recognized that not enough time has elapsed to make definite recommendations or positive statements concerning the final outcome. This will have to carry over into adulthood to learn if these pupils remain readers after their formal schooling is finished.