

COMPLEMENTING A BASAL READING PROGRAM WITH INDIVIDUALIZED
READING AT THE INTERMEDIATE GRADE LEVEL

by

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B. S., Kansas State University, 1958

A MASTER'S REPORT

submitted in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree

MASTER OF SCIENCE

School of Education

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY
Manhattan, Kansas

1965

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The writer wishes to express her appreciation for the assistance given by Dr. Joe H. Loeb, School of Education, Kansas State University, Manhattan, Kansas. She would also like to thank Mrs. Eunice Bradley, Curriculum Director of the Manhattan Schools for her cooperation and assistance with this study.

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THE PROBLEM AND DEFINITIONS OF TERMS USED

Reading in the intermediate elementary grades includes three distinct areas, listening, guided reading and independent reading. In a Basal Reading Program the teacher's guide gives many concrete suggestions as how to proceed with the listening and guided reading activities. The independent reading in a basal program often occurs in three phases:

1. Independent reading of stories assigned by the teacher in correlation with the specific reading unit.
2. Independent reading of stories selected by the student in correlation with the specific basal reading unit.
3. Independent reading in an assigned or freely selected library book.

The latter has been a time of joy and relaxation for some students and a time of vegetation for others. The evaluation of independent reading has often been negligible. The most commonly used procedure has been to evaluate this reading occasionally through oral or written book reports.

This report is primarily concerned with an examination of the professional literature regarding the possibility of a reading program which includes guided independent reading for intermediate pupils; a program so designed that it not only would aid the student in becoming a better reader but also would instill in him the desire to read whenever the opportunity or need arose.

THE PROBLEM

Statement of the problem. It was the purpose of this study to review the literature to determine the feasibility of complementing an established Basal Reading Program of an elementary school system with individualized reading to provide a reading curriculum in harmony with the personal and social needs of all intermediate pupils in a constantly changing modern society.

Importance of the study. The value of reading as a skill cannot be over-emphasized. At the intermediate level many students fundamental reading attitudes and habits are progressing rapidly. Others however may still be at the initial stage in learning to read and a few may be bordering at the late readiness stage.¹

Not one, but many factors effect the reading progress of students. Some of these factors are:

1. Difference in mental ability of students.
2. Ways in which students learn best.
3. Skill of the teacher.
4. Kind and strength of home environment.²

Gray quoted Gates as stating that the age for learning to read under one method employed by one teacher may be entirely different from that required under other circumstances.³

¹William S. Gray, "The Teaching of Reading," Encyclopedia of Educational Research, p. 1117.

²Ibid., p. 1112.

³Gray, loc. cit., p. 1115.

Specific methods of teaching reading do not give equally good results among all students of a class. The real issue then is not if a Basal Reading Program is better than an Individualized Reading Program or vice-versa, but what each program can contribute to the optimum development of reading skills for all children.

RESEARCH PROCEDURE

The method of research used for this report was primarily library research. A review of literature using the facilities of Kansas State University Library and books from the professional library of the Curriculum Director of the Manhattan Elementary City School system was employed. The literature reviewed was concentrated specifically around findings regarding the teaching of reading covering the period from 1956 through 1964. Some textbooks of earlier periods were also reviewed.

LIMITS OF THE STUDY

The intermediate grade levels (grades 4-6) were used for this study. Due to the complexity of the problem and the range of ability in the intermediate grades, some research findings from the primary levels were included. The reading methods reviewed for this study are generally referred to as the Basal approach and Individualized approach.

DEFINITIONS OF TERMS USED

Complementing. Complementing was interpreted in this study as meaning the process or practice of combining or reinforcing methods and presenting these methods as aspects of one unifying activity.

Reading. Reading is best defined as the process of obtaining meaning from printed materials.¹

Basal Reading. Basal Reading was interpreted as meaning a systematic development of reading ability by means of a series of books or other materials, especially suitable for each successive stage of reading development. Synonymous with this term is Basic Reading.²

Individualized Reading. Individualized Reading was interpreted as meaning the free choosing of reading materials by pupils and the providing of instructional guidance and assistance in reading to such pupils in accordance with their own needs.³

¹ Willard Abraham, A New Look at Reading, p. 4.

² Dictionary of Education, p. 443.

³ Jeannette Veatch, Individualizing Your Reading Program, pp. 7-8.

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Reading research, according to Huey, originated in Europe in 1844. He stated that now more than ever educators are cognizant of the complexity of reading problems and far less certain of the answers to many of them.¹

Teachers are aiming constantly toward the improvement of their ability in the teaching of reading. If his teaching practices are not successful he will try to turn to newer approaches hoping for a solution of the problem.

PRINCIPLES OF TEACHING READING

Heilman stated that he felt that the reading problems in our schools today are not necessarily due to a lack of knowledge of the classroom teachers but more than likely are a result of reluctance or inability of teachers to follow the principles of the teaching of reading.²

Principles of teaching reading are those fundamental rules which form the academic basis from which all practices are instituted. Even though they do not furnish specific answers for specific cases, they should form the guidelines by which the teacher judges the suitability of teaching practices.

¹Encyclopedia of Educational Research, p. 1087.

²Arthur W. Heilman, Principles and Practices of Teaching Reading, p. 2.

Heilman believed that if the following principles were the basis for the teaching of reading at all levels of instruction, many practices in our schools may need re-examination. These principles are as follows:

1. Learning to read is a complicated process and is sensitive to a variety of pressures. Too much pressure or the wrong kind of pressure may result in non-learning.
2. Learning to read is an individual process.
3. Proper reading instruction depends on the diagnosis of each child's weaknesses and needs.
4. The best diagnosis is useless unless it is used as a blueprint for instruction.
5. No child should be expected or forced to read materials which at the moment he is incapable of reading.
6. Reading is a process of getting meaning from printed word symbols. It is not merely a process of making conventionalized noises associated with these symbols.
7. Any given technique, practice or procedure is likely to work better with some children than with others. Hence the teacher of reading must have a variety of approaches.
8. The concepts of readiness should be extended upwards to all grades.
9. Early in the learning process the child must acquire ways of gaining independence in identifying words whose meanings are known to him but which are unknown to him as sight words.
10. Children should not be in the classroom, if they have emotional problems sufficiently serious to make them uneducable at the moment or if they interfere with or disrupt the learning process.
11. Emphasis should be on prevention rather than on cure. Reading problems should be detected early and corrected before they deteriorate into failure-frustration-reaction cases.¹

¹Ibid., pp. 3-12.

As a result of not adhering closely to the fundamental rules of the teaching of reading several problems have emerged in the elementary classrooms. One of these problems is the fact that the materials used in the instruction of reading at times are rather dull and pupils as a result turn away from reading.¹

Another difficulty results from the lack of time to deal satisfactorily with all individuals in a classroom. The lack of sufficient study and guidance of the individual was, according to Gates, the outstanding deficiency in the teaching of reading and in other areas today.² It has been estimated that about one-third of all elementary school students in the United States are classified as retarded readers. A retarded reader is a pupil who for various reasons has failed to acquire the necessary reading skills and who therefore under-achieves not only in reading, but in all subject areas that are dependent upon reading.³

Among the many causes of poor reading, physical as well as emotional ones, those attributed directly to the school usually included overcrowded classrooms, shortages of experienced teachers and ineffective

¹Emerald V. Dechant, Improving the Teaching of Reading, p. 403.

²Arthur I. Gates, "Improvements in Reading Possible in the Near Future?", Reading Teacher, p. 84.

³M. F. W. Pollack and Josephina A. Piekars, Reading Problems and Problem Readers, p. 15.

teaching.¹ Fewer reading failures in school might reduce the number of reluctant readers. To accomplish this goal an atmosphere conducive to reading will aid toward stimulation of an eagerness to read, which will in turn help eliminate problems in reading.²

According to Heilman's principles of reading the major emphasis should be focused on prevention of reading problems rather than on curing them. To accomplish this every teacher must have a thorough knowledge of all the principles of reading and how to apply them.

BASAL READING

History of Basal Reading. History of education shows many methods have been tried for the teaching of reading. The pendulum moved from too much stress on oral reading to silent reading, from overdependence on phonics to neglect of the same.³

The "Speller Reader 1784-1785", also known as Webster's Blue-Backed Speller, served according to Nila Benton Smith as quoted by Gray in the same capacity as the basic reader today.⁴ Basic readers, a set of books used in regular daily instruction periods to teach the fundamental reading skills, became a necessity when a definite change in the

¹J. Roy Newton, Reading in Your School, p. 37.

²Nicholas P. Criscuolo, "Let's Stimulate our Reluctant Readers," Peabody Journal of Education, p. 162.

³Lillian Gray and Dora Reese, Teaching Children to Read, p. 31.

⁴Ibid., p. 34.

school population became evident. Chronological promotion, compulsory attendance and the social necessity of obtaining an education resulted in wide differences of reading ability. More pupils of low attainment stayed in school and classrooms in general became larger.¹

Bond and Tinker found that the average reading range in a fourth grade was 4.8 years, with the lowest achievement 1.7 years. In the average sixth grade these researchers found the range 7.0 years, with the lowest reading achievement 2.5 years.²

This increased range of achievement at the different grade levels plus an increasing understanding of the principles of child growth and development led toward the practice of grouping within the classroom and the widespread use of a graded series of readers, known as basal readers. Grouping was based on the premise that if it was done carefully and correctly, it would be possible to have a group of children who were sufficiently alike to be taught together. Frequently the classroom was divided into three reading groups, High, Medium, and Low. However, as Harris pointed out, there was nothing magical about the number three. He maintained that often two groups would suffice, while other times a multigroup plan needed to be used.³

¹ Arthur I. Gates, "Improvements in Reading Possible in the Near Future?", Reading Teacher, p. 84.

² Guy L. Bond and Miles A. Tinker, Reading Difficulties, Their Diagnosis and Correction, p. 37.

³ Albert J. Harris, How to Increase Reading Ability, p. 124.

Basic Concepts of Basal Reading. The basal reading program has three major parts, a children's reader, a teacher's manual or guide and a workbook. The principles around which most basal reading series have been developed are summed up by Russell as follows:

1. Continuity of growth in habits, skills and attitudes.
2. Wide variety of activities.
3. Complete organization of reading experiences.
4. Provides content of important ideas.¹

Bond in his book Teaching the Child to Read stated that he believed a basal reading program is absolutely essential for adequate reading development, because it provided the teacher with a sequential organization of the teaching of reading. The sequence has been carefully controlled through a gradual introduction and careful repetition of words. The possibility of instructional gaps or overemphasis has been reduced to a minimum and the maturing reading proficiencies of the students are noted.²

Bond strongly maintained that the basal reading program should be the core of the reading activities especially in the primary grades. Since reading has no subject matter of its own, materials of other subject matter areas must be used. All materials used as aids to learning

¹David H. Russel, "The Basic Reading Program in the Modern School," Ginn Company Reading Pamphlet No. 1, p. 2.

²Guy L. Bond and Eva Bond Wagner, Teaching the Child to Read, p. 196.

to read, should be attuned to the basal readers, if reading disabilities are to be prevented.¹

The group method of basal reading changed to an individual approach when the workbooks of a basal program were properly used. The student should be allowed to do his workbook assignments at his own rate, independent of the rest of the class.²

Basal reading concerns itself primarily with word recognition, vocabulary, understanding, and study skills according to Hester.³ For basal reading to be fully effective the following instructional points should be observed:

1. Creating a feeling and background for a story.
2. Presenting a story unit as a whole.
3. Breaking the story up into smaller units for directed study (guided reading of story).
4. Rereading the story.
5. Providing for systematic growth in skills.
6. Providing for individual differences.
7. Evaluation.

Content of Basal Readers. Basic reading promotes the development of attitudes and skills which are essential to various reading activities. Supplementary reading in a basal program should enrich the experiences of children and further cultivate favorable attitudes toward reading. Group activities should stimulate and motivate reading interests. The demands

¹Ibid., pp. 196-199.

²Ibid., p. 203.

³Kathleen B. Hester, Teaching Every Child to Read, p. 306.

of reading today are much greater than those of the past. Students must learn to read critically as well as creatively to be able to meet the problems of daily living. They must learn to weigh evidence, draw conclusions, make comparisons, and above all they need to learn to understand themselves and others around them.¹

Some authors criticized the context of the stories in basal readers and have labeled them as unrealistic and insipid. The stories in basal readers and their values should however be looked at from the child's point of view, not from the adult angle. Most children reacted favorably to the stories in basal readers.²

Otto Klineberg reviewed the context of fifteen basic readers and found in these too many stories which were characterized by ascribing human qualities to animals or inanimate objects. Another criticism from this author was that the relatively well-to-do society was over-emphasized. He maintained that if reading was to foster attitudes, this type of context presentation must foster great frustration in a number of poor children, because at least one-fourth of the American school population does not live in this well-to-do type of society.

Application of Basal Reading. In the greatest number of schools the basal reader is still the most important material used for the teaching

¹Lillian Gray and Dora Reese, Teaching Children to Read, pp. 28-30.

²Nicholas Criscuolo, "Exploring the Value of Basal Readers," Peabody Journal of Education, pp. 98-104.

of reading. Specifically in the primary years the use of the well organized, sequential basal reader has been considered as most important. Dechant found that in a survey of some 1300 teachers, 88-95 per cent of those questioned, considered the basal series as very important or as absolutely essential.¹

Gates found that basal reading programs are used almost exclusively, 99 per cent. For the most part he found that schools today use one or two sets of basal reading books and materials. The usual teaching procedure was to employ the main features as outlined in the manual.²

Gans said that learning to read has become a prescribed assignment of childhood. Reading is not demonstrable, it has to be acquired by logical, sequential steps toward mastery of the skill. Reading takes years of practice under expert guidance to achieve high levels of proficiency.³

Sheldon found in a survey made by Syracuse University Reading Laboratory that 95 per cent of the teachers of some thousand questioned relied upon one textbook as the major resource for instruction. The survey also revealed that the reading ability of not more than 50 to 60 per cent of the children at any grade level showed good comprehension at that grade level or above in the narrative or expository material used in reading tests.⁴

¹Emerald V. Dechant, Improving the Teaching of Reading, p. 105.

²Arthur I. Gates, "Improvements in Reading Possible in the Near Future," The Reading Teacher, p. 84.

³Roma Gans, Teaching Young Children, p. 156.

⁴William Sheldon, "Curriculum Problems Presented by Poor Readers," Reading Teacher, p. 175.

Leahy found in an investigation of one hundred elementary school teachers that the emphasis in the teaching of reading was on the technical skills than on those required for functional or purposeful reading.¹

INDIVIDUALIZED READING

History of Individualized Reading. Dissatisfaction with the quantity and quality of reading has led to a search for different instructional methods than those being used in the elementary school classrooms. According to Jenkins Individualized Reading as an organized systematic instructional program dates back to 1930. He stated that the use of individualized reading as a teaching method was a dramatic recognition of the fact that basic programs were of the greatest worth in the initial phases of reading instruction and that reading from basal texts was intended to carry only a part of the reading load that children will do. He believed that individualized reading was meant to be individual guidance in reading.²

The growth of an individual in a democracy is in a large degree dependent upon his ability to read with intelligence, refinement and pleasure. Providing for individual differences continues to be the most

¹ Mildred King Leahy, "The Stated Practices and Beliefs Concerning the Teaching of Reading of One Hundred Elementary School Teachers," Dissertation Abstracts, p. 4264.

² W. A. Jenkins, "Reading Skills in Teaching Literature in the Elementary Schools," Elementary English, p. 778.

difficult problem in reading at all grade levels.¹

Individualized reading has become one of the most controversial issues of the sixties. Much of the controversy is the result of considerable misunderstanding about what is incorporated in an individualized approach.²

Basic Concepts of Individualized Reading. The basic concept of an Individualized Reading Program was stated by Veatch as follows:

An individualized reading program provides each child with an environment which allows him to seek that which stimulates him, choose that which helps him develop most, and work at his own rate regardless of what else is going on.³

In an individualized program children choose books from those available to them. The student is free to decide which book or which material is interesting or challenging. This self-selecting will aid the student to select materials he can read without too much difficulty. In a classroom where the teaching of reading is on an individualized basis, one will recognize the following marks of individualisation.

According to Wahle these were:

1. Library is the center of learning.
2. Numerous approaches to similar learning or conceptualizations.

¹Helen Mackintosh and Mary H. Mahar, "Teaching Reading the Individualized Way," School Life, p. 7.

²Mary C. Austin, "Crosscurrents in the Teaching of Reading," Grade Teacher, p. 52.

³Jeannette Veatch, Individualizing Your Reading Program, p. 44.

3. Flexible grouping based upon defensible criteria.
4. Attention is directed to the exceptional.
5. Class is a group of separate human beings.
6. Guidance nourishes curriculum and curriculum serves guidance.
7. Classes or instructional groups are small.
8. Informed generalists direct school administration.
9. Respect for scientific inquiry and experimentation prevails.
10. Parents and patrons help define goals and purposes of education, but professional educators define and designate methods and techniques.¹

Veatch listed the organization and procedure of individualized reading as follows:

1. A large number and variety of trade and textbooks are used in instruction.
2. Children choose what they read.
3. Motivation arises from children's interests.
4. Instruction is on an individual one-to-one basis.
5. Grouping is short term and for specific immediate purpose.
6. Reading lesson prepared independently and seatwork has element of self-determination.
7. Remedial work integrated with other activities.
8. Planned sharing period.
9. Individual peak reading level checked and evaluated.
10. Gifted child progresses at his own pace.

¹Roy Patrick Wahle, "Method of Individualization in Elementary School," Educational Leadership, p. 75.

11. Slow reader not publicly stigmatized.
12. Close personal interaction with teacher serves child's psychological needs.
13. Reading at own interest and ability level fosters development of skills.
14. Acquiring skills only as needed assures their normal development.
15. Oral reading promoted by genuine audience situation.
16. Reading becomes its own reward.¹

Robinson felt that individualized reading seems to be a way of organizing a classroom so that every child is reading what appeals to him at all times.² The problem of developing interest in reading is reduced in individualized reading because each student may read what he can read. Students who thus make their own selection of reading matter will develop not only a desire to read but also a responsibility for their own learning.³

Content of Individualized Reading. Individualized reading is based upon the psychological concept of learning rather than on the logical sequence concept. The unique parts of an individualized reading program according to Fox were:

¹Jeannette Veatch, Individualizing Your Reading Program, pp. 12-13.

²Helen M. Robinson, "Individualized Reading," Elementary School Journal, p. 410.

³Leslie Carlton, "Individualized Reading," N.E.A. Journal, p. 12.

1. Using pre-tests to determine strengths and weaknesses.
2. Developing the child's ability to select appropriate reading materials.
3. Evaluating continuously each child's progress through use of individual conferences and detailed record keeping.¹

Individualized reading is not a "free reading period" but an instructional plan of reading.² The books used in this plan range from easy to difficult, covering a wide range of topics. Included in the materials for individualized reading may be many different types of reading materials.

The students select the books under the guidance of the teacher; the teacher and the pupil plan cooperatively. Instruction proceeds through regular daily reading periods. Small groups are formed when needed for the teaching of a particular skill. At times the entire class is involved in a sharing of what we have read period. This sharing may take the form of reports, dramatization, exhibits, choral speaking and others. The quality and quantity of reading done by the students is considered and evaluation is done in detail on pupil records, which need to be kept up to date at all time.³

Hester believed that this type of reading program creates a great amount of interest in the learning of reading and will lead to

¹Raymond B. Fox and A. Gudelia, "The Individualized Reading Controversy," The National Elementary Principal, p. 47.

²Kathleen B. Hester, Teaching Every Child to Read, p. 311.

³Ibid., pp. 312-13.

a highly motivated student participation. Unfavorable comparisons are eliminated, because each student sets his own pace through cooperative planning with the teacher in a one-to-one relationship. The student and teacher both constantly appraise the growth of the student.¹

Veatch believed that in this type of a program reading will become its own reward. She stated:

..., to read a story from choice is one thing, but to read it because the teacher requires it is quite another. In an individual conference, the teacher accepts and works with the reading matter chosen by the child. If the choice is unwise, the teacher accepts it while he works to improve future choices. But most important of all, the child reads because he wants to read. Teachers can make children do almost anything, but they cannot force enjoyment.²

Application of Individualized Reading Program. Since 1952 the development of individualized reading has gained more and more recognition. While the program seems simple on the surface it is not to be taken lightly or frivolously.³

Mackintosh quoted Shane as saying, "There is a widespread acceptance of the importance of individualizing instruction."⁴ Yoakan

¹ Ibid., p. 313.

² Jeannette Veatch, Individualizing Your Reading Program, pp. 32-33.

³ Patrick Groff, "Helping Teachers Begin Individualized Reading," National Elementary Principal, p. 47.

⁴ Helen Mackintosh and Mary H. Mahar, "Teaching Reading the Individualized Way," School Life, p. 4.

found that experiments in teaching children by individual instruction seemed to indicate that the fundamental skills in reading may be successfully taught by individual rather than by group instruction. The teacher must carefully plan the instruction for each child and keep accurate individual records to avoid gaps in the learning of skills.¹

Fowler believed that individualized reading could be identified by the letters R.I.S.I., standing for Reading, Interest, Sharing, and Instruction. A strong advocate for a flexible program in reading, he recommended the following teaching points:

1. Cooperative teacher-pupil planning, executing sharing and evaluating as the basic process of teaching and learning.
2. Pupil directed programs under guidance of the teacher.
3. Variety of group action and interaction.
4. Variety of activities for a definite purpose.
5. Reading of many books of different interests at different levels.
6. Flexible grouping within the classroom.
7. Flexible room arrangement.
8. Many media for creative activities.
9. High interest among pupils and teacher.
10. Group acceptance of individual pupils.
11. Good purposes for reading.
12. Attention to individual differences of pupils.

¹Gerald Alan Yoakam, Reading and Study, p. 481.

13. Use of a large block of time.

14. Use of instruction in language art skills, reading, writing, speaking and listening.

For a fourth grade level Fowler recommended a 70 minute block, which should be equally divided among reading, sharing and instructional activities.¹

Gray believed that individualized instruction is successful especially where a low pupil-teacher ratio makes individualization possible. She felt that although the timing of the personal interviews may present problems for some teachers, a real benefit can be derived from individual instruction.²

In contradiction to the popular belief of "Johnny Can't Read," Larrick felt that today's children are steadily making progress in reading and that they are reading more widely than any generation of children to date. She believed that this development had been influenced by two trends:

1. The availability of a growing number of book sources enabling children to find books they enjoy.

2. The availability of more library books in classroom projects.³

¹ L. F. Fowler, "The R.I.S.I. Individualized Reading," Reading Teacher, pp. 101-102.

² Genevieve Gray, "Educational Technology and the Individual Student," Phi Delta Kappan, pp. 6-8.

³ Nancy Larrick, "Children Read More Today," Grade Teacher, p. 54.

The availability of books however is not enough. There has to be in the classroom a climate for reading, a climate which promotes reading good books at every opportunity.

Spache stated his opinion about individualized reading as follows:

Undoubtedly individualized reading brings new elements to the reading program which will contribute the fresh vigor and vitality so badly needed. The closer working relationship between teacher and pupil fostered by the individual conference, the marked effects upon interest in reading, the elimination of failure and competition and the stimulation of reading materials closely related to individual needs will help to lift the current reading programs from the doldrums into which they have fallen.¹

TRENDS IN READING

The aims of teaching reading have been modified and augmented from time to time. Many new ventures in reading are neither novel nor revolutionary. They represent simply new applications, new emphases, new insights into the problems and procedures in the teaching of reading.²

Gray quoted Gans as believing that in each method and material proposed there are features which would help some students. But the claim that one procedure is the best for all is not acceptable. The attempts to promote the one way, the one material, the one system to teach all youngsters reading, regardless of experience or present readiness

¹George D. Spache, Toward Better Reading, p. 161.

²Theodore Clymer, "New Ventures in the Teaching of Reading," National Elementary Principal, p. 26.

and state of learning would be humorous were they not perpetrating a serious hoax on the children, their teachers and their parents. Research on a variety of methods of teaching reading, has in general, found no one way superior to all others.¹

As evidenced by research done by Dr. Wayne Wrightstone, Gray believed the real issue is not which of the two procedures is the better one, but simply what is the role of each in helping toward a more effective pupil development in reading.²

The basal reading program has the advantage of presenting a well planned program from Kindergarten through High school. The highly organized materials of a basal program help the teacher to provide a common background from which they can build and develop attitudes and skills. Gray felt, however, that a definite time should be reserved in which pupils can read to satisfy their own interests. He felt unless such specific time is provided, pupils will not likely develop permanent habits of independent reading.³

O'Connor believed that at least one basic reader should be used in a class. Study time should come first. She believed that individual instruction taken from a time stand point is as well practical as

¹Roma Gans, "There is no Best Way to Teach Children How to Read," Grade Teacher, p. 42.

²William S. Gray, "Role of Group and Individualized Teaching in a Sound Reading Program," Reading Teacher, p. 99.

³Ibid., pp. 102-103.

economical. Once the individualized method is initiated, the teacher will become more and more skilled as a teacher, tester and diagnostician and the students will become more skilled in the art of reading.¹

Stauffer recommended a modified basic reader approach, so the teacher of a class can as well provide appropriate group as individual instruction. He strongly believed that a basic program in and of itself is neither final nor sacred.²

Barbe stated that self selection and free choice are the primary necessities for a good reading program. The basal reader is not used in his approach to reading instruction, except in an incidental or supplementary manner in order to teach a particular skill. His method of teaching reading, which Barbe calls the P.R.I., or Personalized Reading Instruction program, is based on Olson's concept of "seeking, self-selecting and pacing."³

Barbe did not mean to imply that the older method of basal reading has failed, nor that the P.R.I. method will eliminate all the bad feature of early programs. He maintained that it is not likely that any one method ever will be found which will be effective with all the children, but that teaching methods must encourage interest and enthusiasm. Routine

¹Lulu Yost O'Connor, "Individualized Instruction in Reading," Instructor, pp. 122-23.

²Russell G. Stauffer, "Individual and Group Type Directed Reading Instruction," Elementary English, p. 381.

³Walter B. Barbe, Educators Guide to Personalized Reading Instruction, pp. 12-13.

teaching according to Barbe becomes more difficult for the teacher and less effective for the children.¹

The primary goal of Personalized Reading is to develop greater and more lasting interest in reading. Problems connected with the program are the need for great quantities of books and the need for a teacher who is competent to deal with the varied needs of the children that are in her classroom.² Barbe felt the choice of the word "Personalized" would be a better choice than "Individualized" because it implies a reading program for each child adjusted in such a way to promote the maximum amount of growth. It does not mean "Independent," which infers no formal instruction is ever given; it means adjusted to the child, sometimes one-to-one, sometimes in a group, sometimes to all.³

Witty favored the use of the term Developmental Reading. Developmental reading represents a balanced reading program in which a variety of materials are used, in such a program both individualized or personalized as well as group procedures are employed.⁴ He warned however that identifying pupils' needs is not an easy task. Teachers may get help to

¹Ibid., pp. 3-6.

²Ibid., p. 7.

³Ibid., p. 14.

⁴Paul A. Witty, "Individualized Reading: A Postscript, Elementary English, p. 216.

learn to identify needs by studying lists of needs and combining this knowledge with concrete facts about the pupils through observations, interviews and discussions.¹

Spache believed that it is quite apparent that there is still not enough research to show which type of grouping is the most effective under certain conditions. The groups should be flexible, dynamic, not mechanical. He proposed that group work gives way to individual work, when progress warrants this. Reading is a means to the end of building concepts, not merely a group of skills which are an end unto themselves. He believed the term Individualized Reading is inappropriate, because it does not mean relinquishment of the principle of grouping, nor does it mean absolute freedom of choice despite the emphasis upon self-selection.²

Sharpe reported on a nine-point reading program followed in the Los Angeles City Elementary Schools. The daily reading period of one hour was divided into one-third of the time under direct supervision of the teacher, one-third of the period of indirectly supervised reading seat-work and one-third of the period for independent related activities. The independent related activities included the use of reading aids, as in game or chart form, browsing for a library book, reference reading for information for an individual or group project, and independent art work.

¹Witty, "Meeting Developmental Needs Through Reading," Education, p. 457.

²George D. Spache, Toward Better Reading, pp. 445-50.

Since each of the three reading groups used the same length of time for each of the three activities, a nine-point program was initiated. It was found, however, that the spread in reading abilities was greater than could be provided for in three groups. An individualized approach was started by using the basal reader two days a week and the remainder of the week was used in individualized approach. Those children reading approximately two years above the class grade level, were considered independent readers. The independent readers worked with the teacher directly on alternating days, since they were capable of doing more independent work.¹

Sharpe believed that two prime requisites for individualizing a program successfully are the concern for raising the individual reading level of each child and the desire to do something about it.²

Richstone considered it expedient to follow a basic reading program at the beginning of the school year and a gradual introduction toward starting individualized reading at the beginning of midyear. By midyear the teacher knows the child well and has been able to observe the child in a number of situations. The teacher by midyear is able to know the needs of each of her students. This is a crucial point at the beginning of a school year. Discipline and self-discipline should be established and these are essential for the routine of an individualized reading program. The child in an individualized program has to be very

¹Maida Wood Sharpe, "An Individualized Reading Program," Elementary English, pp. 507-8.

²Ibid., p. 512.

aware of the importance of using his time wisely. Careful introduction and explanation will aid the student to look forward to this new experience and will assist the teacher and the school toward acceptance of the program by the parents.¹

The advocates of the Individualized Reading Program claimed that the advantage of the program is the opportunity to provide for individual differences and the resulting development of the desire to read. Opponents of the program felt it is too permissive and that the carefully controlled sequence of basal readers was needed, especially in early training.

Fox believed that the available evidence does not justify the claim that individualized reading produced greater gains in reading achievement than basal reading, nor did it support the contention that basal reading programs were superior to individual programs.² He believed the most discreet course of action for the classroom teacher would seem to be a careful combination of the two methods.

INTERMEDIATE READING

In beginning reading the emphasis was placed on meaning. When reading skills become more sophisticated the emphasis changed to

¹May Richstone, "Individualized Reading Program," The Instructor, p. 70.

²Raymond B. Fox and A. Gudelia, "The Individualized Reading Controversy," National Elementary Principal, p. 48.

understanding, enjoyment and appreciation.¹

Reading in the intermediate grades had two main objectives, these being:

1. To sustain children's interests and to create favorable attitudes so they will use books voluntarily.
2. To improve the basic skills so that they will get the full meaning of what they read and can make the fullest use of books for many purposes.²

The importance of practice should be emphasized and intermediate pupils are usually mature enough to understand this need. Students often enjoy contests and drills to test their skills. They need to be challenged toward independent work needed for locating extra materials while working on assignments. Intermediate students can learn to see the advantage of reading well. They can learn to distinguish between good and poor reading.³

To be able to learn the needed independence the intermediate student needs time and freedom to explore books and other materials. They must enjoy reading in this stage of their school life or they will turn to something else.⁴

¹Lillian Gray and Dora Reese, Teaching Children to Read, pp. 43-5.

²Gertrude Hildreth, Teaching Reading, p. 399.

³Ibid., p. 400.

⁴Hildreth, op. cit., p. 401.

The immature intermediate pupil needs to have a slow transition between the third and fourth grade. They definitely need more training in basic skills because they have not yet reached that point of mid-literacy. If students do not mature in reading they will face difficulties in all their school studies as well as in personal and social development.¹

By the end of the third grade, the average youngster should have learned 80 per cent of the 3000 most commonly used words in English. According to Hildreth this should be 95 per cent by the end of the fourth grade for the average youngster.²

The intermediate reading stage is the period in which the fundamental reading attitudes and habits progress rapidly. The aim of the teacher of reading during this period is to try to increase the reading power and the reading efficiency of her students. The pre-adolescent has a number of traits and characteristics which can contribute in one way or another to the advancement of his total growth. The pre-adolescent has a great variety of interests. He is at the age of wanting to know the answers to many facts in science, mechanics and natural phenomena. He has a new hobby every week and is an avid collector. Above all he likes to share his possessions, his knowledge with other individuals

¹Ibid., p. 401.

²Ibid., p. 99.

and with the group. Many of these youngsters reach their peak in reading in the intermediate grades.¹

Freeland said that the success of the teacher may well be measured in terms of how well each child uses reading to meet problems which surround him. The intermediate student begins to evaluate facts, formulates judgments and starts to make comparisons. This is the beginning period for critical reading, the period of getting greater insight and understanding of self and others. The teacher has a very fertile field to promote social and emotional growth through understanding of the reading needs of the pre-adolescent.²

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The literature was reviewed to gain insight into the feasibility of complementing a basal reading program with an individualized approach to provide the students of the intermediate grades with a reading program that is suitable for all individuals in a classroom, a reading program that promotes not hinders the desire to read.

Two programs of presenting reading were studied, these being the Basal Reading Program and the Individualized Reading Program. In addition those programs not necessarily identified by a specific name but representing the trend of combining features of both the basal and individualized

¹Alma Freeland, "Intermediate Grade Reading and Needs," Education, p. 467.

²Ibid., p. 468.

program were also reviewed. The general principles of the teaching of reading were used as a basis for this study.

The feasibility of complementing a basic reading program with emphasis on individualization was based on the assumption that in a basal reading program the time spent in independent reading activities was not used to full advantage by many readers.

The concept of reading has been broadened by many educators. Today most of them feel that reading should be meaningful from the very beginning and directly related with the interests and needs of the children. This concept of meeting the needs and interests of the children seems to have its greatest future in the increased ability of students to fulfill these needs through selective independent reading.

SUMMARY

The review of literature revealed that the basal reading program is still the most commonly used approach in the teaching of reading. This acceptance can be readily traced to the positive advantages inherent in the program of basal reading.

Basal reading, a well defined systematic approach to the teaching of reading attempts to develop skills in reading in an orderly, sequential manner and tries to promote understanding and attitudes in the same way. The teacher's guide, child's reader and workbook are carefully planned to avoid gaps in the learning process. Teachers are given many concrete suggestions as how to follow the basic elements of reading instruction

through careful motivation by creating a background for each story, presenting the story as a whole, and breaking the story up in smaller units to facilitate the guided reading of the story. Provisions are made in basal reading guides for aiding the presentations of skill development. Individual differences are taken into consideration through workbook activities.

Organization of the class using a basal reading program is on a grouping basis. Children who are sufficiently alike to be taught together, are combined in one reading group. The simplest form of grouping is to divide the class into two groups, those who can do normal reading for the specific grade level and those who cannot. More often classes have been divided into three groups, those who are reading at an average achievement level of the specific grade in the middle group, those advanced in the high group and those below the average in the low group. Evaluation usually is done formally when the reading of the book has been completed through standardized tests developed by the authors of the basal readers. Most schools give some type of Standard Achievement Test at the beginning or end of the schoolyear or both, to determine the all-over achievement of the class in several subject areas.

Individualized reading is a reading program which provides each child with an environment which allows him to seek that which invigorates him, choose that which helps him develop most and work at his own rate regardless of what else is going on. Individualized reading is an instructional plan of teaching reading and is not a free reading period.

The fundamental concepts of individualized reading may be summarized as follows:

1. Reading is a personal, individual process.
2. Each child should have the chance to set his own pace.
3. Reading experiences should not be compared with those of others.
4. A child may read above or below his own level; the enjoyment of reading is more important.
5. Freedom to select reading materials should develop real purpose for reading.
6. Reading instruction and reading itself are inseparable.

In individualized reading the child selects his own book; the teacher's guide in this program is the knowledge of the teacher and his familiarity with the books available in the classroom. No specifically assigned workbooks are available in connection with the books, since they represent materials from many sources.

Reading instruction is given in a regular daily reading period. Small groups are formed only if those particular individuals need to learn the same special skills. The entire class or whole group at times participates in sharing what they have read.

Evaluation is on a constant basis. One-to-one conferences between teacher and pupil are held and individual records are kept up to date at all times. Pupils as well as the teacher keep reading records. Sometimes standardized tests are given to small groups to determine reading levels or reading needs, but no standardized tests are given such as in the case of basic books. Standard Achievement tests are given as

required by the school administration at the beginning or end of the school year or both to determine the overall achievement of a class.

Some trends of combining the two programs in this study were reviewed. These trends seem to have developed as the result of observable differences of the present classroom population and the difficulties encountered as a result of these differences. The accepted practices of compulsory school attendance, chronological promotion and the social stress on the necessity of all receiving an education resulted in a marked increase of the range of individual differences, abilities and achievements. The consensus of some educators was that the basal program in its structured form seemed not flexible enough to cope with all these differences and the program as such possibly failed to some degree in providing for purposeful reading or subject reading. The problems of basal reading were caused by a too uniform application, the use of a text as the total program and the failure of teachers to apply insight as a result of a too rigid adherence to guides.

Other educators feared that some of the problems of the Individualized Reading Program presented too great a risk for sole dependency on such a program. Some of the problems mentioned were the danger of reading programs designed by classroom teachers, the lack of teachers' knowledge of the enormous variety and quality of children's books and the pressure of time needed for adequate evaluation of the individual progress of all children in a classroom.

CONCLUSION

In view of the information gained through the review of literature pertaining to the programs of the teaching of reading it seemed that most educators favored some type of combination of both the Basal Reading Program and the Individualized Reading Program. By some this was called a modified basic approach.

Several researchers found no valid evidence that either program produced greater gains than the other and the general conclusion seemed to be that the most prudent course of action for a teacher was the utilization of a combination of both approaches.

Since the best teaching appeared to be a combination of the good features of both methods, it could be stated that the best work with basal books included individualized teaching and the best individualized teaching used the whole class as a group, group activities and use of materials taken from or identical in principle with basal and workbooks.

Other educators found that individual methods did not produce better reading than a strong basal program, but recommended adding individual conferences to the basal reader plan.

Considering the aforementioned and recalling the fact that approximately 95 per cent of the schools use a basal reader approach it seems expedient to conclude that a basic reading program complemented with the unique features of an individualized program would be the best approach; these unique features being the self-selection of books and individual teacher-pupil conferences.

Specifically in the intermediate grades, when the distribution of reading achievement becomes rapidly greater not all children will be able to use a basal reader with equal benefit. As children develop into booklovers and library users, they outgrow the basal reader.

The teacher who is considering adding the features of an Individualized Reading Program to the basic approach needs to do a great amount of planning, before it can be put into operation. Books will have to be selected and a special corner or book case in the room designated for these. These books should range in a fourth grade from at least mid-second to high fifth grade level and it should be a collection of materials corresponding with the needs and interests of the class, containing possibly fiction and story books covering a wide range of motifs, such as adventure, mystery, fictional history, and such factual books as now available in science, geography or social studies or covering inventions and hobbies.

The teacher also needs to prepare the class for the changes in the traditional reading class organization. Teacher-pupil planning should be pursued to acquaint the children with what will be expected of them, such as behavior of the pupils while selecting books, class behavior during individual conferences, how to get help when needed for meaning or word attack while reading individually, and the responsibility of keeping an accurate personal reading record. If the entire class does not start this new approach at one time, careful explanations by the teacher need to be made, as to avoid such complications as sometimes

caused by the so-called high-low stigma of grouping.

Several researchers recommended a mid-year start so teachers would have time to acquaint themselves with the children, class routines would be well established and children would have learned to use their time wisely. A two or three week trial period could be used to iron out the difficulties or problems not anticipated. After the trial period a decision could be made to alternate basal and individual reading daily, or to use two or three week periods of each.

The need to instill in children the value of reading as a life long goal has too long been understated. It should be pointed out to students that many of our best educated adults continue to work all their life at improving their reading ability.

This is the decade of the "New" in teaching. Findings of studies, results of research and judgments of leaders in the field of education seemed to indicate that there is no cogent ground to have to make a choice between the group approach using basal materials and the individualized approach. The "New" in reading may well be a careful consideration of the possibilities of complementing a basal program with an individual approach.

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COMPLEMENTING A BASAL READING PROGRAM WITH INDIVIDUALIZED
READING AT THE INTERMEDIATE GRADE LEVEL

by

HINNIE G. SMITH

B. S., Kansas State University, 1958

AN ABSTRACT OF A MASTER'S REPORT

submitted in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree

MASTER OF SCIENCE

School of Education

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY
Manhattan, Kansas

1965

The purpose of this study was to investigate the feasibility of complementing a Basal Reading Program with individualized reading at the intermediate grade level.

A review of literature was made in the field of reading with emphasis in the following areas: (1) a consideration of the basic principles in the field of reading; (2) an investigation of the Basal Reading Program, specifically the history, basic concepts, content and application; (3) a similar investigation of the Individualized Reading Program; (4) trends in reading, representing findings or discussions of both the Basal and the Individualized Reading Program and similar approaches either named or not specifically identified by name; (5) a review of basic characteristics of intermediate reading.

The procedure was to study the data collected and to propose plans to be deemed appropriate for adoption of certain specific phases of individualized reading and incorporate these in the basal approach of reading.

The review indicated that: (1) basal reading was the most frequently used reading plan in most elementary schools; (2) individualized reading had been making great strides since the middle fifties and though it was viewed as an important development by many educators, it was also considered slightly risky as a total reading program because it is completely teacher oriented; (3) many educators proposed either adoption of some of the features of the Individualized Reading Program or a complete combination of both programs.

As a result of this study it is proposed to introduce and add two features of individualized reading, namely self-selection of books and teacher-pupil reading conferences as a complement to an established Basal Reading Program in the intermediate grades to avoid a textbook bound program in reading and to promote new life in the independent reading activities of a Basal Reading Program. Self-selection of books and individual teacher-pupil reading conferences should create a desire to explore and read books whenever the opportunity or need arose.