

CASE STUDIES OF SELECTED JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL  
PUPILS WITH PHONIC DISABILITY

by 149

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A MASTER'S REPORT

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requirements for the degree

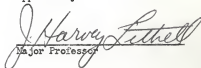
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## INTRODUCTION

The writer has observed that a disturbing number of junior high pupils have difficulties in reading. For example, some students pronounce words correctly but seemingly have no comprehension of the meaning; in other cases, students cannot recognize and pronounce familiar words correctly. A difficulty with phonics may thus result in a reading disability. This investigation was limited to research on students displaying a severe phonic disability. The writer was fully aware that phonic instruction should not comprise the total approach to word recognition. In a recent article, Nila Banton Smith clarified this point:

Phonics is just one part of the total word-recognition program. Teachers not only teach phonics more extensively than ever before but they equip the child with several other word-getting techniques, as well.<sup>1</sup>

Furthermore, word recognition is not the ultimate goal of good reading instruction; the primary aim in reading is to grasp the meaning of the material presented. However, a student who cannot recognize words because of a phonic disability is severely handicapped in his ability to comprehend the printed material. Therefore, the recognition of a student's problem with phonics coupled with an application of appropriate remedial teaching techniques should ultimately help that pupil to read with more understanding.

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<sup>1</sup> Nila Banton Smith, "Phonics in Beginning Reading: Review and Evaluation," The Reading Teacher, 9:76, December, 1955.

### Background

Secondary teachers and administrators are increasingly aware of the need not only to develop and expand students' reading abilities but also to be able to help the students who have indicated specific reading disabilities. Observant teachers recognize students who have problems in reading, but they are unable many times to give those students valuable assistance because they do not know their exact reading difficulties nor the factors contributing to their reading disabilities. Research has shown that one factor contributing to reading difficulty is that of a phonic disability. Therefore, it would seem logical that it would be helpful to the teacher to know which students have specific phonic disabilities and, furthermore, which factors may be associated with these difficulties.

### Statement of the Problem

In this study, the writer was primarily concerned with factors associated with phonic disability. The specific purposes were these:

1. Identify students who demonstrated gross phonic disability;
2. Make individual case studies to note factors which may have contributed to a general reading difficulty and specifically to phonic disability;
3. Observe any common characteristics among individuals which may be associated with the phonic disability.

No attempt was made in this study to prove that specific factors caused a phonic disability for a particular student. The research was undertaken in order to try to discover a possible pattern of factors



and characteristics among students with severe phonic disability. Further research would be necessary to show that given factors tended to cause phonic disability.

#### Definition of Terms

Several terms mentioned in this report need to be clarified as to exact meaning. The following definitions given by Heilman were accepted for this study:

Phonics--A facet of reading instruction teaching speech sounds of letters and groups of letters in words.

Phonic analysis--The process of sounding letters or letter combinations to arrive at the pronunciation of words.

Phonetics--That segment of linguistic science which deals with speech sounds, how these sounds are made vocally, sound changes which develop in languages, and the relation of speech sounds to the total language process. All phonics instruction is derived from phonetics, but phonics (as it relates to reading) utilizes only a relatively small portion of the body of knowledge identified as phonetics.

Word analysis--An inclusive term which includes all methods of recognizing words which are not known as sight words.<sup>1</sup>

Also, phonic disability was defined as the inability to pronounce an unfamiliar word by applying sounds to letters and letter combinations. When the findings on characteristics of those with phonic disability were reported, the term common characteristic meant that at least seven of ten students displayed a similar factor; a fairly common characteristic indicated that five or six of ten students displayed a similar factor.

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<sup>1</sup>Arthur W. Heilman, Phonics in Perspective (Columbus, Ohio: Charles E. Merrill Books, Inc., 1964), p. 2.

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

### Lack of Literature on Phonic Disability

The writer could find no books or articles that dealt specifically with research into causes of phonic disability for secondary students. A great deal of research and writing has been done on students with a general reading disability, many of whom can be presumed to have difficulty also with phonics. Phonic training is usually recommended as a part of the program for those students with reading disability.

Much literature is also available on methods and values of teaching phonics in the primary grades. The present approach is primarily eclectic; that is, phonics is one aspect of the program for beginning readers. Generally, training in phonics is not emphasized until after the students have established a sight vocabulary. A common recommendation is that teachers of basal reading use configuration, context clues, phonetic helps, and structural analysis of words to help beginning students learn to read.<sup>1</sup>

The emphasis on linguistic study has encouraged more experimentation with phonetic training for students. The linguists do not agree among themselves on a particular approach to reading. Also, many linguists disapprove of the way in which phonics is presently being taught in the primary grades. Undoubtedly, more research will be done on linguistic approaches to beginning reading.

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<sup>1</sup>William Kottmeyer, Teacher's Guide for Remedial Reading (St. Louis, Missouri: Webster Division, McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1959), p. 8.

Assisting Students with Phonic Disability

Regardless of the methods which teachers have used to teach reading, some students have not learned the skill adequately and need further training. The writer was concerned particularly with those students whose reading was impaired because of phonic disability.

Different approach for older students. The older student with phonic disability will probably need a somewhat different approach to phonic training than is customary in the primary grades. The teacher would need to keep in mind that, in all likelihood, this pupil has been introduced to this material previously and failed to learn it adequately. Therefore, new ways must be devised to help the individual student attain a measure of success with phonic rules. The teacher should avoid embarrassment of the pupil by selecting material and techniques suitable for older pupils.<sup>1</sup>

Single-letter phonics approach. William Kottmeyer advocated "the use of single-letter phonics" with the person who "has little knack for retaining a sight vocabulary or for making his own phonetic generalizations from his experiences with reading material."<sup>2</sup> He qualified this point by emphasizing that teachers must avoid distortion of sounds in the use of single-letter phonics. Mr. Kottmeyer also recommended more drill

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<sup>1</sup> Florence Roswell and Gladys Natchez, Reading Disability, Diagnosis and Treatment (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1964), p. 85.

<sup>2</sup> Kottmeyer, op. cit., p. 13.

with phonic training for those who lack skill in this area than is customary for normal readers.<sup>1</sup>

Recognition of possible maturational lag. Roswell and Natchez have suggested that a maturational lag may prevent some students from learning phonic principles in the primary grades:

Many children with reading disability have difficulty in blending sounds together to form whole words. In most cases, this difficulty is overcome at about nine years of age, at which time a systematic phonic approach may be used. . . . Rarely a child is ten or eleven before he can synthesize sounds together.<sup>2</sup>

Knowledge of the maturational lag mentioned above could be of particular aid to teachers who are helping students with phonic disability.

Sequence of phonic skills. Roswell and Natchez used the following sequence in helping students who needed additional training in phonics:

1. Learn the sounds of the letters;
2. Learn how to substitute initial consonants in known words in order to figure out new ones;
3. Blend separate sounds together in words.<sup>3</sup>

However, if individual students simply cannot learn the material, in spite of the teacher's ingenuity, then a different method such as the visual, visual-motor, or kinesthetic method must be used until individuals can profit from phonic instruction.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 8.

<sup>2</sup>Roswell and Natchez, op. cit., p. 84.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 85.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

Elimination of handicapping factors. It might be suggested that an elimination of handicapping factors such as sight, hearing, or speech defects would help a student overcome a difficulty with phonics. However, supplying a student with glasses or correcting a speech difficulty may still leave that student unable to read effectively or to utilize phonic rules, according to Pollack and Piekarz. These authors suggested that the "pattern of factors involved seems to be more important than any single factor or condition for such children."<sup>1</sup> Therefore, the teacher should see that as many factors as possible be improved but should not wait to begin training in phonics until optimal conditions are reached.

Training in language development and visual and auditory discrimination. In attempting to prevent phonic disability in the first place, some authorities advocate strongly the practice of helping youngsters with language development, visual discrimination, and auditory discrimination. Eleanor Johnson pointed out that

studies show that reading failures in the first grade were greatly reduced when training in certain aspects of language and in visual and auditory discrimination was given.<sup>2</sup>

Teacher training in principles of phonics. Another aspect in preventing phonic disability among students would be to require that

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<sup>1</sup>M. F. W. Pollack and Josephine A. Piekarz, Reading Problems and Problem Readers (New York: David McKay Company, Inc., 1963), p. 16.

<sup>2</sup>Eleanor M. Johnson, "Pre-Phonics Training: Basis of Success in Reading," The Reading Teacher, 9:71, December, 1955.

teachers have more training in teaching reading and phonics. The Harvard-Carnegie study found that

1. Three per cent of colleges required no reading course.
2. Fifty per cent of colleges related reading to other courses and gave up to eight hours of college credit.
3. Generally, content and instructional techniques for the intermediate and upper grades were neglected.
4. Many future teachers had never been introduced to the principles of phonetic analysis.<sup>1</sup>

Teachers with more training in reading and phonics should be able to assist their students to a greater degree. However, more pre-training service and in-service training for teachers in these areas will not entirely eliminate the individual student with a phonic disability. Therefore, there should be remedial teachers available who are skilled in helping students with their particular difficulties.

Teachers who have a thorough knowledge of the principles of phonics and various ways of presenting this material to the student should be able to use the pupil's scores on the diagnostic keys of the California Phonics Survey to begin helping him immediately in his areas of greatest difficulty. If the individual can be helped to overcome his areas of phonic disability at least partially, then, through skillful teaching and motivation on his own part, he should also make progress in reading which is his, and his teacher's, ultimate aim.

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<sup>1</sup>Donald L. Cleland and Lorraine C. Morgan, "The Role of Phonics," Education, 87:3, September, 1966.

## PROCEDURE USED IN STUDY

In order to identify students with phonic disability, the California Phonics Survey was given to seventy-five ninth grade students in a Wichita junior high school in September, 1966. Fifteen of these students were enrolled in a class for problem readers, thirty-two were students in a general English class, and the remaining twenty-eight students were from an honors English class. The writer personally conducted the test in each of three classes by using the tape furnished by the test company. The tests were scored manually by the writer.

On the basis of the test scores, ten students with gross phonic disability were selected. Case studies on these ten students were then made to determine individual factors and common characteristics which might be related to phonic disability. In the research for the case studies, the following individual records were checked: (1) health records, (2) cumulative records, and (3) data about the home and family relationships.

### Description of Test

The California Phonics Survey (CPS) is a group test to measure phonic ability at the junior high through college levels.

The CPS is made up of seventy-five items, divided into five test exercises, which use listening and reading to reveal the most common reversals, confusions of blends and of vowels, and other errors that reflect the inability to relate letter combinations to spoken sounds.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Grace M. Brown and Alice B. Cottrell, California Phonics Survey Manual (Monterey, California: California Test Bureau, 1963), p. 3.

The five different exercises in the test are mainly to provide variety in presentation; they do not measure different kinds of skills. "Each item contributes to the overall pattern of errors a student may make."<sup>1</sup> Some test items are actual words; others are nonsense sounds.

In Exercise 1, the students are to find the printed form to correspond to the spoken word or sound. Exercise 2 has short sentences which end with an imaginary name or term. This term is pronounced again and students are to match the printed form to the spoken term. In Exercise 3, real words are spoken, and students are to match the spoken word with the printed form. In Exercise 4, students are asked to indicate the written form that rhymes with the spoken sound. Exercise 5 requires students to pronounce nonsense words and sounds to themselves and to indicate whether any of the items are pronounced the same as an actual word.<sup>2</sup>

The test provides, in addition to a raw score, a series of diagnostic keys which indicate particular difficulties that a student may have with phonic principles. The student's pattern of errors as given on the profile sheet and interpreted according to the information given in the manual may be a basic diagnostic guide and a beginning point for remedial work.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 4.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.



The evaluation of the California Phonics Survey in the Sixth Mental Measurements Yearbook is commendable:

Much care and attention have gone into the construction of this test. The selection of the test items to include all of the common speech sounds in their usual spelling, the careful analysis of the experimental results, and the analysis of diagnostic implications, the preparation of analytical data, and the other details of test construction and standardization appear to be well done.<sup>1</sup>

### Test Results

Table I shows that only ten of the seventy-five students tested received an adequate score, according to the ranking suggested by the test authors. The test manual suggested the following cut off points on raw scores for degrees of phonic disability:

adequate	75-70
some	69-58
serious	57-46
gross	45-below

In other words, a student with a score of 60 would be expected to have some difficulty with phonics. Exactly one third of all the students tested ranked in the range of gross disability in phonics. The seventy-five students tested had a wide range of IQ scores and reading abilities; however, there were very few scores in the first two categories indicating adequate ability in phonics or only some phonic difficulty.

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<sup>1</sup>Oscar Krisen Buros, The Sixth Mental Measurements Yearbook (Highland Park, New Jersey: The Gryphon Press, 1965), p. 1101.

TABLE I

THE NUMBER OF NINTH GRADE STUDENTS  
HAVING VARIOUS LEVELS OF PHONIC  
DISABILITY AS SHOWN BY THE  
CALIFORNIA PHONICS SURVEY

Type of Class	Number in Class	Adequate	Some	Serious	Gross
Honors	28	9	13	5	1
General	32	1	6	14	11
Basic	15	--	1	1	13
Total	75	10	20	20	25
Per cent of Total		13.3%	26.7%	26.7%	33.3%

The range of scores in the honors class was noteworthy. Actually, only one third of these "good" students had adequate phonic scores, and one of these "honors" pupils ranked in the gross disability range. The scores in the general English class showed a more predictable curve although lower scores were predominant. Three fourths of these average students indicated at least a serious difficulty with phonics. In the basic or remedial reading class, the high percentage of pupils with gross phonic disability was expected as each of these students had previously indicated a reading problem.

Types of phonic errors. The types of phonic errors made by the students on the Phonics Survey are shown in Table II. The authors of the test explain the various categories as follows:

I-A: Long-Short Vowel Confusion

Errors in this category indicate confusion with regard to the rules for the pronunciation of long and short vowels . . . .

I-B: Other Vowel Errors

Errors in this category indicate confusion with regard to any of the other vowel sounds, and the correct pronunciation of the vowel digraphs . . . .

II-A: Consonants--Confusion with Blends and Digraphs

Errors in this category indicate ignorance of the correct pronunciation of consonant digraphs or of consonant blends, and confusion between single consonants and consonant blends . . . .

II-B: Consonant-Vowel Reversals

Errors in this category show a tendency to transpose vowels and consonants and therefore to pronounce the word incorrectly, by reversing the letter sounds . . . .

III: Configuration

Included in this classification are errors that occur because the student, instead of perceiving the printed letter combination accurately, guesses the answer on the basis of general appearance or configuration . . . .

IV: Endings

Errors in this category all have to do with misreading of suffixes, i.e., grammatically significant endings of words . . . .

V: Negatives and Opposites; Sight Words

Two error groups have been combined in this classification because of the small number of items in each, and because in both categories, an apparently minor error in word perception can produce a major error in the perception of meaning . . . .

## VI: Rigidity

Errors in this category seem to occur when the student is in some way too tied to the visual appearance of words. He cannot dissociate auditory from visual associations in the perception of words, even with specific instructions to do so . . . .<sup>1</sup>

The test manual also provides a safe number of errors that a student can make in each category and still have an adequate knowledge of phonics. Two errors each are allowed in I-A, Long-Short Vowel Confusion, and in VI, Rigidity. One error each is granted in categories I-B, Other Vowel Confusion, II-A and II-B regarding consonants, and III, Configuration. No safe errors are allowed for categories IV, Endings, and V, Negatives and Opposites and Sight Words.

It can be noted on Table II that the students who were at the level classified as adequate had even less than the safe number of errors in most categories; but in the two areas where no mistakes were allowed, those students had made errors. Those students with adequate scores had the greatest difficulty in the area of rigidity. The fact that the students with adequate scores made mistakes due to rigidity might indicate that they had a large vocabulary of memorized sight words and were not sure of phonetic principles.

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<sup>1</sup>Grace M. Brown and Alice B. Cottrell, California Phonics Survey Manual (Monterey, California: California Test Bureau, 1963), pp. 21-22.

TABLE II

THE AVERAGE NUMBER OF ERRORS IN EIGHT CATEGORIES  
ABOVE THE SAFE LIMITS SET BY THE TEST FOR EACH  
OF THE SEVERAL LEVELS OF PHONIC DISABILITY

Category of Error	Adequate 10*	Some 20	Serious 20	Gross 25
I-A Long-Short Vowel Confusion	—	—	2.00	3.76
I-B Other Vowel Confusion	—	—	.70	2.88
II-A Consonants: Con- fusion with Elends & Digraph	—	.10	1.25	3.12
II-B Consonant-Vowel Reversals	—	—	1.65	3.76
III Configuration	—	1.55	5.05	8.04
IV Endings	.20	.45	1.05	2.80
V Negatives, Oppo- sites, Sight Words	.20	0	.60	1.48
VI Rigidity	.40	.35	.80	.84

\*The figure immediately under each level of phonic disability refers to the number of students who ranked within that level of the seventy-five students who took the test.

Errors in configuration were the most numerous (except for students with adequate scores). The students experiencing gross difficulty with phonics had eight times the number of errors that were considered safe in this category. This result could indicate that students guess at a particular word in reading and do not recheck the word as long as the meaning seems somewhat clear. There were no errors of Category V, Negatives and Opposites and Sight Words among the twenty students who experienced some phonic difficulty.

Six of the students chosen for case studies were from the general class, and four were from the basic class. In checking their number of errors above the safe limit as two groups--general and basic--it was discovered that the four basic students actually made fewer errors than the general students in three categories. These four basic students had slightly fewer errors than the general students in both of the consonant categories, II-A and II-B. These four basic students also had considerably fewer errors in the area of rigidity than their counterparts. (The basic students' score was .25 over the safe limit in the category of rigidity compared to 2.17 errors over the safe limit for errors of rigidity for the six general students.) These figures might suggest that the students who have limited sight vocabularies are not hampered by a preconceived notion of how a particular word is normally spelled.

Criteria for Selecting Individuals for Case Studies

All of the individuals chosen for further study had gross phonic disability. Fifteen students with raw scores ranging from 44-28

(out of 75) were selected. Upon checking the cumulative records of these students, five names were removed from the list because their records were inadequate for purposes of this study. The ten students finally selected had attended the Wichita public schools throughout their school career. Students with higher scores on the California Phonics Survey (though still indicating gross phonic disability) were chosen for further study because it was felt that the students who had the very lowest scores on this test would rate very low on other tests as well; thus nothing too significant could be noted about their phonic scores in relation to other factors.

Of the ten students studied, six were from the general English class and four were members of the basic reading class. Six of the cases studied were boys and four were girls.

#### INFORMATION FOUND IN CASE STUDIES

Each of the complete case studies can be found in Appendix C. In this section the writer will concentrate on relevant information discovered about the home situation, the health record, elementary school grades, absences, and test scores. Also included will be comments on possibly significant emotional problems and an evaluation of the individual reading records.

#### Home Information

Two of the ten individuals studied had parents who were separated or divorced.

Sibling relationships. A common characteristic among these individuals became evident in that seven of these ten pupils came from families with four or more children. None of these ten was an only child; one student belonged to a family of ten children.

Only one subject was the oldest child in the family; four of the ten students, however, were the youngest in their families. Thus, fifty per cent of these students were middle children.

Age upon beginning school. All of the pupils were six years old by the time they began the first grade. This number included the two students who later repeated a grade.

#### Health Records

Vision. Three students reportedly had normal vision throughout their school years. According to the data of the school nurses, another two students had almost normal vision; in other words, their vision registered 20/30 at some point in the lower grades. The remaining five students were fitted for glasses—one each in grades two, four, and eight, and two students in grade six. No record was found to indicate that these students may have needed glasses in the lower grades.

Hearing. Nine of the ten students registered normal hearing on the school screening tests. Most of these students had been given both audiometer and otometer tests at some time in their school career. One student had a slight ear difficulty recorded when he was in the eighth grade; however, this was not considered serious.



Speech. Three students were given speech therapy at various grade levels.

Diseases. The usual children's diseases were recorded for these students. One half of them had had chicken pox, and four had had the red measles. German measles, mumps, and whooping cough were each listed for three of the students. One student had had scarlet fever; another had experienced diphtheria. Two of these students had no diseases recorded for them. Another child had apparently had none of these diseases but had had a heart murmur and rheumatic fever in kindergarten.

#### Elementary School Records

Three of the ten students had attended more than one elementary school. In addition to grades, the elementary teachers had indicated whether the students had satisfactory or unsatisfactory habits and attitudes in school. Four of the ten subjects had a satisfactory rating in habits and attitudes for each year from kindergarten through the sixth grade. Another three students had records of satisfactory habits and attitudes for every year but one. One student had an indication that he needed to improve his habits and attitudes during two separate years, another student had ratings of unsatisfactory habits and attitudes recorded for three of his school years, and one student had received a rating of unsatisfactory school habits and attitudes for five of his seven years from kindergarten through the sixth grade.

Absences. Each of these students was absent at least ten days in kindergarten. In fact, a common characteristic was that seven of the ten students were absent more than fifteen days each in kindergarten. In second grade, all ten students were absent at least five days each. In first, second, and third grades, five of the students were each absent ten or more days. Absences decreased considerably in most cases in grades 4-6.

In order to determine whether these students were absent more than the average child might be, the writer checked with the student attendance clerk for the entire Wichita city system. Figures were not immediately available for a city-wide average of absences per year, but the average number of absences per year on various grade levels at a given school were obtained. For example, School A averaged 12.3 absences per pupil in the first grade, 11.3 absences in the second grade, and 9.7 in the third grade. Average absences per pupil at School B in 1965-66 were as follows: 7.8 in grade one, 7.5 in grade two, and 7.3 in third grade. The writer would describe School A as having a large number of disadvantaged children and School B as having children of middle and upper middle class families. The ten students in this study had the following absences per year on the average: 11.3 in grade one, 10.7 in grade two, and 9.0 in grade three. Thus, these students were absent on the average slightly less than the students in School A, but more than the students in School B.

Language, reading, and spelling grades. In the Wichita city system, students were not given letter grades in school subjects in the elementary grades. Instead, pupils were given an indication as to whether they were at their grade level in a given subject or above or below their grade level. Table III shows how these ten students were rated by their teachers as to success in reading, language, and spelling.

TABLE III

THE NUMBER OF STUDENTS WHO WERE BELOW, AT, OR ABOVE GRADE LEVEL IN EACH OF THREE ACADEMIC AREAS IN THE ELEMENTARY GRADES

Yearly Scores In Relation To Grade Level	Language Grades		Reading Grades		Spelling Grades	
	1-3	4-6	1-3	4-6	1-3	4-6
All scores at grade level or above	7	5	5	2	6	4
Two of three scores at grade level	3	3	2	3	1	3
One of three scores at grade level	-	1	1	4	2	1
All scores below grade level	-	1	2	1	1	2

In grades 1-3, seven of the ten students in the study ranked at their grade level in language, and the other three pupils had two out of three language grades recorded at grade level. Six students ranked at their grade level in spelling in the primary grades. Only five students consistently ranked at their grade level in reading. Two students,

including a repeater, always ranked below their grade level in reading, and the other three students ranked at grade level in reading at least fifty per cent of the time in grades 1-3.

In grades 4-6, the students' subject matter grades were not as high as in the primary grades. Five students consistently ranked at their grade level in language, four pupils did so in spelling, but only two were always at their grade level in reading. Therefore, in these intermediate grades, eight of the ten students were rated below their grade level in reading for an entire year or more. These students, then, were indicating an increasing inability to cope with their lessons.

In eighth grade, there were no separate reading grades. A reading grade may have been included in the English grade. Only one student received an English grade of B for the year, three students received C's, and the remaining six pupils had a D for the yearly grade in English.

Reading record. Each of the cumulative folders for these students contained a reading record. The relevant information from each student's reading record can be found in Appendix A. Each teacher in grades 1-6 was given the responsibility for commenting on the individual's progress in reading for a particular year. In many cases, the teachers reported on these records any special problems the student may have had in reading as well as the reading group with which he read. The students were shifted from group to group, as their individual needs warranted. Nine of the ten students were reported to have read in the lowest reading group during at least one year before they reached the sixth grade.

Three of the ten students were reported to have a speech difficulty or impediment which the teachers felt hindered their progress in reading. Two of these students who had speech difficulties were also listed as having a good deal of emotional tension.

Three of the ten students had experienced difficulty with sounds in the primary grades, according to their teachers' comments. Two of these students who had difficulty with sounds of letters had also been listed as having problems with speech.

A factor mentioned in four of these individual reading records was that the student involved lacked confidence in his reading ability or worried a good deal about his progress in reading. Two other students also were reported to "try hard" even though they experienced difficulty.

On the other hand, three other students were reported to have poor work habits or to be lazy. One of the students who lacked confidence in her reading ability in grade one was reported to be lazy by her teachers in subsequent years. Two of these students with gross phonic disability actually began reading with the top group in the first grade, but they were among those who were reported to have little confidence in their abilities.

There has been some unavoidable overlapping of cases in the above-mentioned comments. For example, a student with a speech difficulty may also have been listed as one who lacked self-confidence.

The reading records for the ten students were not all complete; in some cases, a teacher had failed to write in any comments for a particular year. Also, some teachers had merely filled in the group with which that student had read or perhaps whether he had finished the accompanying reading workbook. The reading records were nonetheless helpful in this study.

Emotional problems. The reading record of individual students was one of the chief sources for data on emotional problems. As mentioned in a preceding paragraph, four of the ten students were listed as having a lack of confidence in their own reading abilities or worrying about their progress in reading. Three students were specifically noted as having emotional problems.

One of these three students stammered quite frequently, and the teacher felt that his emotional tension contributed to his speech difficulty. It was also felt that this boy used his speech problem as a crutch. Another of these students with emotional problems had a speech difficulty and tended to "choke up" as she read. A third student was listed as "very emotional." She became discouraged at the slightest difficulty and was also one of the pupils who reportedly worried a good deal.

Another student might be categorized as having emotional problems in that he was listed as immature in the first grade and as not being interested in reading at that time. Each of his later teachers implied that he failed to apply himself and to work up to his ability.

Test Scores

Mental ability tests. Table IV reveals that IQ on the California Mental Maturity tests decreased numerically in eight of the ten cases between kindergarten and grade five.

TABLE IV  
INTELLIGENCE QUOTIENTS FOR STUDENTS  
AT VARIOUS GRADE LEVELS

Student	CMM Kdg.	CMM 5th	L-T 3rd	Stanford- Binet
I	133	86	109	94 (3rd grade)
II	107	95	102	99 (2nd grade) 105 (4th grade)
III	112	118	114	
IV	118	101	104	104 (2nd grade)
V	87	87	95	80 (1st grade)
VI	101	85	97	---
VII	118	95	111	
VIII	114	108	109	110 (1st grade)
IX	92	65	79	83 (1st grade) 67 (4th grade)
X	111	91	111	93 (1st grade)

NOTE: The abbreviations are as follows: CMM--California Mental Maturity, and L-T--Large Thorndike.

The writer noted whether these students rated higher in the verbal or non-verbal areas of the California Mental Maturity tests taken at the fifth grade level. Six of the ten pupils registered higher in the verbal area than they did in the non-verbal part, thus indicating a fairly common characteristic. However, two of the four students who did better

in the non-verbal area had quite a large point difference in the two scores. Table V shows the verbal and non-verbal percentile scores made by the ten students on this test.

TABLE V

CALIFORNIA MENTAL MATURITY VERBAL AND  
NON-VERBAL PERCENTILE SCORES ATTAINED  
BY STUDENTS IN THE FIFTH GRADE

Student	Verbal Percentile	Non-Verbal Percentile
I	35	10
II	14	69
III	92	77
IV	33	71
V	25	20
VI	22	15
VII	45	31
VIII	67	73
IX	15	1
X	27	31

Reading and language percentile scores on achievement tests.

Table VI shows the exact scores made by the ten students on the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills (ITBS) at the various grade levels. On the ITBS in both the fourth and sixth grades, nine of the ten students ranked at the 35th percentile or below on the reading test. On the language test of the ITBS, the highest percentile rank was 35 in the fourth grade.



In grade six, one student ranked at the 41st percentile on the language section. The other nine students all ranked below the 25th percentile on this language test in the sixth grade.

TABLE VI  
 PERCENTILE SCORES MADE BY STUDENTS ON THE  
IOWA TESTS OF BASIC SKILLS AND THE PUPIL  
RECORD OF EDUCATIONAL PROGRESS  
 IN SELECTED SUBJECT AREAS  
 AT VARIOUS GRADE LEVELS

Stu- dent	Read. ITBS 4th	Read. ITBS 6th	Read. PREP 7th	Read. PREP 8th	Lang. ITBS 4th	Lang. ITBS 6th	Eng. PREP 7th	Eng. PREP 8th
I	29	7	47	24	9	41	12	10
II	9	35	56	72	1	17	67	23
III	32	72	56	64	9	22	31	40
IV	26	8	5	18	9	21	46	36
V	29	21	11	18	25	17	1	10
VI	41	6	20	22	20	11	10	19
VII	19	31	51	12	16	3	51	12
VIII	19	9	17	11	35	11	31	27
IX	35	28	5	7	25	14	5	7
X	22	24	37	28	25	19	14	19

On the reading test in seventh grade, two students ranked at the 56th percentile. All others ranked below the 50th percentile. Six of these ten pupils ranked below the 35th percentile. On the PREP reading test in the eighth grade, one student ranked at the 72nd percentile.

Seven of the ten students ranked below the 35th percentile on this eighth grade reading test.

On the FREP English test in the seventh grade, seven of the ten students ranked below the 35th percentile. Only two students ranked above the 50th percentile on this seventh grade English test. On the FREP English test in the eighth grade, the highest score was at the 40th percentile. Eight of ten students ranked below the 35th percentile on this eighth grade English test.

#### SUMMARY

Test results on the California Phonics Survey revealed that one third of the seventy-five ninth grade pupils tested experienced gross phonic disability. Over one half or 53.4 per cent of all the students tested had some or serious phonic disability. Only a very few of the students tested had adequate phonic analysis according to the scores made on the Phonics Survey. The pupils tested belonged to either an honors or general English class or a basic reading group; therefore, there was a wide range of mental abilities among the pupils given the test.

As to the types of phonic errors made on the Phonics Survey, the category of configuration had the greatest number of errors. Long-short vowel confusion caused the next largest group of errors above the "safe" limit.

Those students with an adequate score on the Phonics Survey had very few errors with regard to vowels, consonants, and configuration. However, those same students who scored high on the test had slightly more than the "safe" number of errors with regard to endings, negatives, opposites, sight words, and rigidity.

According to this study, no one factor can be said to be associated with phonic disability. In fact, there were relatively few common characteristics shared by the ten pupils on whom case studies were made. However, a number of significant factors may have contributed to the phonic disability of a particular student.

An outline of the common and fairly common characteristics discovered on these case studies can be found in Appendix B.

No characteristics found in this study could be identified as contributing to a phonic disability and not to a general disability in reading.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

The California Phonics Survey identified those students with a serious or gross phonic disability at the ninth grade level. It would seem desirable to identify students with a possible phonic disability at an earlier age so that remedial teaching might take place before these students have encountered the usual problems in school brought about by reading difficulty. The writer would recommend the following

procedures in an effort to discover students with phonic disability in the elementary school:

1. Select or develop a test similar to the California Phonics Survey that can be used to diagnose the phonic ability of students in grades four to six.
2. Conduct further research on pupils who have shown a difficulty with phonic analysis in grade three to see whether they might profit from training in phonics in grade four. Phonics training after the approximate age of nine could benefit those students who may have been unable to learn phonic principles earlier due to a maturational lag in their development.

Recommendations for further research in the area of phonic disability would include the following:

3. After students with phonic disability have been identified, attempt to learn from their former teachers what phonics training they may have been exposed to after the second grade.
4. Conduct case studies on students who indicate a serious phonic disability but who have high or average intelligence to see if factors can be determined for having serious phonic disability.
5. Attempt to separate factors contributing to phonic disability from those contributing to a general reading disability.

The writer would recommend that, after the California Phonics Survey has been given and scored, the diagnostic scores for pupils with serious or gross phonic disability should be given to a teacher skilled

in teaching phonic principles and reading. That teacher could then intelligently attempt to help the given students with their particular difficulties in phonic analysis. This remedial training should help these students overcome their handicap in reading at least partially and thus improve their chances for success in other school subjects.

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APPENDIX A

COMMENTS FROM THE INDIVIDUAL READING RECORDS  
FOR STUDENTS IN CASE STUDIES

Student I started in the high group with a great deal of ability but later moved into the middle group. He lacked confidence in himself. In second grade he stayed in the low group all year and reportedly had much difficulty with sounds, expression, and comprehension. He seemed to worry a lot. In the fourth grade, he was rated as below average and in need of remedial work. His teacher said that he was "very weak in mechanics of reading."

Student II had no teacher comments recorded for grades one and two, but the third grade teacher wrote that he had a speech difficulty and was very timid, but tried hard to learn. It was also reported that he had difficulty with some sounds, read in the low group, and needed individual help. In grades four and five, he also read in the low group; however, in grade six, he read in the middle group and did good work, according to his teacher. His teacher remarked that he had wanted to read the Scouts handbook and this motivation helped him in reading other materials.

Student III read in the middle group in grades one, two, three, and five. In grades three, four, and five, he was reported as having poor work habits and as failing to apply himself.

Student IV was reported to read in the top group in grade one, but she needed more confidence in her reading. However, in the second grade, her teacher reported only that she was lazy. In third grade, she

read in the top group of the low room and seemed satisfied in doing only enough to get by. In fourth grade, she read in the low group and her teacher felt that she could have done better. In the fifth grade, she also read in the low group and did poor work on her workbook. Her teacher wrote that she was a slow reader and did not concentrate on school interests.

Student V was reported to read fluently at the primer level in the first grade. In grades two through six, he read in the middle group. His second grade teacher reported that he "read quite slowly and with only fair comprehension." He did, however, make a good effort.

Student VI was very emotional and worried a good deal in the first grade, according to her teacher. In fact, the teacher let her continue to read in the top group even though the work was hard for her because the child became so upset when placed in another group. Her second and third grade teachers mentioned her lack of self-confidence although she was reported to be improving at one time in this respect. Her second and fourth grade teachers reported that she would get discouraged when she encountered any difficulty. In grades four and five, she read in the low group and had difficulty with comprehension.

Student VII had almost no teacher comments on her reading record except that in first grade, she tried hard and read well but was below average in comprehension. In the third grade, she read in the middle group, but she read in the low group in the fifth grade.

Student VIII was immature for the first grade and not interested in reading, according to his teacher. He did not know his sounds or

letters well and had a short attention span as well as an unco-operative attitude. His teacher felt he should repeat first grade, but his mother preferred that he go on to second grade. He read in the low group throughout elementary school. Each of his teachers felt he could have read better if he would have applied himself. His fourth and sixth grade teachers mentioned that he was immature. Both his fifth and sixth grade teachers reported that he needed much oral practice. In fifth grade, he was reported to have good comprehension; in sixth grade, he was a very slow reader.

Student IX repeated the first grade and was reported to need much individual help the second year and to have difficulty with reading. In grades two and three, she had poor comprehension, according to her teachers. Her teachers in grades three, four, and five each mentioned that she had limited ability. Her fifth grade teacher felt that she had an emotional problem as she choked up when she read. Subsequently, her sixth grade teacher mentioned a speech impediment which rendered her oral reading "slow and faltering."

Student X had a speech difficulty which was mentioned by his teachers in grades 2-6. His second grade teacher wrote that he stammered and got behind in his reading. His third grade teacher felt that the speech problem was due to emotional tension, and the fourth and fifth grade teachers felt that he used the speech difficulty as a crutch.

These teachers also mentioned that he hardly knew one sound from another which greatly hindered his reading and spelling. However, he made great improvement in reading during the latter part of the fifth year.

APPENDIX B

COMPILATION OF INFORMATION FROM CUMULATIVE  
RECORDS OF TEN STUDENTS IN CASE STUDIES

Common Characteristics

Common characteristics indicate that at least seven of the ten students in the case studies shared this characteristic.

Home Information

- 7 came from families with four or more children.

Health

- 9 registered normal hearing on school screening tests.  
7 were not registered as having a speech difficulty.

Elementary School Records

Absences

- 7 were each absent more than fifteen days in kindergarten.  
10 were each absent at least five days in the second grade.

Subject matter

- 7 rated at grade level in language in grades 1-3.  
8 rated below grade level in reading at least one year during the intermediate grades.  
9 read in the lowest reading group at least one year before they reached sixth grade.

Test scores

- 8 showed a decrease in IQ on California Mental Maturity tests between kindergarten and grade five.  
9 ITBS reading scores in the fourth and sixth grades ranked at the 35th percentile or below.  
10 ITBS language scores in fourth grade ranked at the 35th percentile or below.

## Test scores (Continued)

- 9 ITES scores in language in sixth grade ranked below the 35th percentile.
- 7 PREP reading scores in eighth grade ranked below the 35th percentile.
- 7 PREP English scores in seventh grade ranked below the 35th percentile.
- 8 PREP English scores in eighth grade ranked below the 35th percentile.

## Fairly Common Characteristics

Fairly common characteristics indicate that five or six of the ten students in the case studies shared a particular characteristic.

Home Information

- 5 were middle children.

Health

- 5 were fitted for glasses at some time before the ninth grade.
- 5 had had chicken pox.

Elementary School Records

- 6 had a perfect or almost perfect record of satisfactory habits and attitudes throughout their elementary years, according to teachers.

## Absences

- 5 were absent ten or more days in each of the three primary grades.

## Subject matter

- 6 rated at their grade level in spelling in grades 1-3.
- 5 rated at their grade level in reading in grades 1-3.
- 5 rated at their grade level in language in grades 4-6.
- 6 received a D for eighth grade year of English.



## Test scores (Continued)

- 6 registered higher on the verbal area rather than the non-verbal on IQ on the California Mental Maturity tests in fifth grade.
- 6 PREP reading scores in seventh grade ranked below the 35th percentile.

APPENDIX C

#### COMPLETE CASE STUDIES

In each of the following case studies, the table showing class grades, attitudes, and absences has a code of numbers and letters identical to that on the students' cumulative records. The numbers refer to a student's relationship to his grade level in a given area: a 1 signifies above grade level, a 2 means at grade level, and a 3 means below grade level. In the areas of habits, skills, and attitudes, the letter S means a satisfactory performance, and the letter N denotes a need to improve in that area.

## STUDENT I

Birth: 8-28-52 at Wichita, Kansas

Home Information:

Father's Occupation: KG&E Lineman

Mother's Occupation: Clerk

Parents do live together

Siblings:

Brothers -- 1 younger

Sisters -- 2 older, 2 younger

School Information:

Attended one elementary school

## ELEMENTARY CLASS GRADES, ATTITUDES, AND ABSENCES

Class	Lang.	Read.	Spell.	Habits Attitudes	Work Skill	Pers. Social Attit.	Absences
Edg.	-	-	-	S	-	-	22
1st	2	2	-	S	-	-	4 $\frac{1}{2}$
2nd	2	3	3	S	-	-	7
3rd	2	2	2	S	-	-	11 $\frac{1}{2}$
4th	2	3	3	S	S	S	6 $\frac{1}{2}$
5th	C	C	C	S	S	S	5 $\frac{1}{2}$
6th	C	C	B	S	S	S	9

8th English grade: D

California Phonics Survey: 44 of 75 right

Health Record:

Diseases--chicken pox, German measles, mumps

Vision--normal, 1st-7th grades

Hearing--normal, 1st-8th grades; no defects, audiometer

## STUDENT II

Birth: 2-7-51 at Iola, Kansas

Home Information:

Father's Occupation: Tool Designer, Boeing

Mother's Occupation: Housewife

Parents do live together

Siblings:

Brothers -- 1 older

Sisters -- 1 older

School Information:

Attended one elementary school

## ELEMENTARY CLASS GRADES, ATTITUDES, AND ABSENCES

Class	Lang.	Read.	Spell.	Habits Attitudes	Work Skill	Pers. Social Attit.	Absences
Kdg.	-	-	-	2	-	-	3/4
1st	2	3	-	S	-	-	31 3/4
2nd	3	3	3	N	-	-	14
2nd	2	3	3	S	-	-	6 1/2
3rd	2	3	3	S	-	-	7 1/2
4th	C	D	F	1	-	-	0
5th	D	C	D	2	-	-	2
6th	B	B	B	S	-	-	1 1/2

8th English grade: C

California Phonics Survey: 43 of 75 right

Health Record:

Diseases--3-day measles, whooping cough, chicken pox  
Vision--1961-62 had glasses fitted but didn't wear them;  
1963 had new glasses fitted.

Hearing--no defects, 1st-8th grades

Speech therapy--4 years, 1957-60

## STUDENT III

Birth: 8-11-52 at Coffeyville, Kansas

Home Information:

Father's Occupation: ?  
 Mother's Occupation: Factory

Student lives with mother; parents divorced when student was  
 in 4th-5th grade; moved often.

Siblings:

Brothers -- 1 older  
 Sisters -- 0

School Information:

Attended four elementary schools

## ELEMENTARY CLASS GRADES, ATTITUDES, AND ABSENCES

Class	Lang.	Read.	Spell.	Habits Attitudes	Work Skill	Pers. Social Attit.	Absences
Kdg.	-	-	-	-	-	-	11
1st	2	2	-	S	-	-	1
2nd	2	2	2	S	-	-	14
3rd	2	2	2	S	-	-	4½
4th	C	D	C	2	2	2	0
5th	C	C	C	2	2	2	0
6th	C	C	C	2	2	2	1

8th English grade: D

California Phonics Survey: 40 of 75 right

Health Record:

Diseases--German measles, red measles, chicken pox  
 Vision--normal, Edg-6th grade; eye symptoms, 1-11-65,  
 new glasses

Hearing--no defects, audiometer and otometer

## STUDENT IV

Birth: 6-13-52 at Wichita, Kansas

Home Information:

Father's Occupation: Western Control  
 Mother's Occupation: Boeing

Student lives with father and relatives; parents are separated.

Siblings:

Brothers -- 1 older  
 Sisters -- 1 younger

School Information:

Attended one elementary school

## ELEMENTARY CLASS GRADES, ATTITUDES, AND ABSENCES

Class	Lang.	Read.	Spell.	Habits Attitudes	Work Skill	Pers. Social Attit.	Absences
Kdg.	-	-	-	S	-	-	19
1st	2	2	-	S	-	-	3
2nd	2	3	2	N	-	-	5½
3rd	2	2	2	S	-	-	0
4th	2	3	3	S	S	S	0
5th	C	D	C	S	S	S	0
6th	C	C	B	N	N	N	1

8th English grade: D

California Phonics Survey: 37 of 75 right

Health Record:

Diseases--none  
 Vision--normal, 1st-2nd; 6th grade, glasses  
 Hearing--no defects

## STUDENT V

Birth: 1-9-52 at Wichita, Kansas

Home Information:

Father's Occupation: Plumber  
 Mother's Occupation: Housewife

Parents do live together

Siblings:

Brothers -- 1 younger

Sisters -- 2 younger

School Information:

Attended three elementary schools

## ELEMENTARY CLASS GRADES, ATTITUDES, AND ABSENCES

Class	Lang.	Read.	Spell.	Habits Attitudes	Work Skill	Pers. Social Attit.	Absences
Edg.	-	-	-	S	-	-	89 wd
1st	2	2	-	S	-	-	7½
2nd	2	2	2	S	-	-	7
3rd	2	2	2	S	-	-	10½
4th	D	C	C	2	2	2	7
5th	C	C	C	1	1	1	½
6th	C	C	A	S	2	2	1

8th English grade: C

California Phonics Survey: 37 of 75 right

Health Record:

Diseases--rheumatic fever  
 Vision--no defect, 1st-7th  
 Hearing--no defect, audiometer and otometer



## STUDENT VI

Birth: 1-26-52 at Wichita, Kansas

Home Information:

Father's Occupation: County Highway Department

Mother's Occupation: ?

Parents do live together

Siblings:

Brothers -- 3 older

Sisters -- 2 older

School Information:

Attended one elementary school

## ELEMENTARY CLASS GRADES, ATTITUDES, AND ABSENCES

Class	Lang.	Read.	Spell.	Habits Attitudes	Work Skill	Pers. Social Attit.	Absences
Kdg.	-	-	-	S	-	-	30
1st	2	2	-	N	-	-	14 $\frac{1}{2}$
2nd	2	2	2	S	-	-	16 $\frac{1}{2}$
3rd	2	2	2	S	-	-	19
4th	2	3	2	S	S	S	21 $\frac{1}{2}$
5th	D	D	C	S	S	S	22
6th	C	C	A	S	S	S	27

8th English grade: C

California Phonics Survey: 37 of 75 right

Health Record:

Diseases--German measles, red measles, scarlet fever,  
whooping cough

Vision--no tests normal; glasses, 6th grade

Hearing--no defect, audiometer and otometer

## STUDENT VII

Birth: 4-19-52 at Yates Center, Kansas

Home Information:

Father's Occupation: Laborer  
 Mother's Occupation: Housewife

Parents do live together

Siblings:

Brothers -- 3 older, 1 younger  
 Sisters -- 2 younger

School Information:

Attended two elementary schools

## ELEMENTARY CLASS GRADES, ATTITUDES, AND ABSENCES

Class	Lang.	Read.	Spell.	Habits Attitudes	Work Skill	Pers. Social Attit.	Absences
Kdg.	-	-	-	S	-	-	12
1st	2	2	2	S	-	-	3½
2nd	2	2	2	S	-	-	11
3rd	2	2	2	S	-	-	8½
4th	C	C	C	2	2	2	7½
5th	C	C	B	2	2	2	1
6th	C	C	B	2	2	2	2

8th English grade: B

California Phonics Survey: 35 of 75 right

Health Record:

Diseases--diphtheria, chicken pox, whooping cough,  
 red measles, mumps

Vision--normal, 1st-6th

Hearing--no defects, audiometer and otometer

## STUDENT VIII

Birth: 8-26-52 at Wichita, Kansas

Home Information:

Father's Occupation: Boiler Mechanic

Mother's Occupation: Housewife

Parents do live together

Siblings:

Brothers -- 6 older

Sisters -- 3 younger

School Information:

Attended one elementary school

## ELEMENTARY CLASS GRADES, ATTITUDES, AND ABSENCES

Class	Lang.	Read.	Spell.	Habits Attitudes	Work Skill	Pers. Social Attit.	Absences
Kdg.	-	-	-	S	-	-	10
1st	3	3	3	N	-	-	10
2nd	1	3	2	S	-	-	6
3rd	2	3	2	N	-	-	3
4th	D	C	D	N	N	N	1
5th	D	D	D	3	3	3	11
6th	C	D	D	3	3	3	4½

8th English grade: F (D after summer session)

California Phonics Survey: 35 of 75 right

Health Record:

Diseases--chicken pox, red measles, appendectomy

Vision--needed glasses, 11-3-59 glasses fitted

Hearing--no defects, audiometer and otometer

## STUDENT IX

Birth: 4-12-51 at Wichita, Kansas

Home Information:

Father's Occupation: Machine Foreman

Mother's Occupation: Housewife

Parents do live together

Siblings:

Brothers -- 1 older

Sisters -- 1 older, 1 younger

School Information:

Attended one elementary school

## ELEMENTARY CLASS GRADES, ATTITUDES, AND ABSENCES

Class	Lang.	Read.	Spell.	Habits Attitudes	Work Skill	Pers. Social Attit.	Absences
Kdg.	-	-	-	3	-	-	18
1st	3	3	-	N	-	-	21
1st	3	3	-	S	-	-	14½
2nd	3	2	3	N	-	-	17
3rd	2	2	2	N	-	-	10½
4th	D	D	D	2	2	2	9½
5th	D	D	D	2	2	2	18
6th	U	D	D	2	2	2	13

8th English grade: D

California Phonics Survey: 32 of 75 right

Health Record:

Diseases--3-day measles, mumps

Vision--almost normal, 1st-3rd; normal, 4th-7th no glasses.

Hearing--no defect, audiometer

Speech problem--received therapy

## STUDENT X

Birth: 2-23-52 at Wynoka, Oklahoma

Home Information:

Father's Occupation: Painter; Cessna

Mother's Occupation: Housewife

Parents do live together

Siblings:

Brothers -- 2 older

Sisters -- 1 older

School Information:

Attended one elementary school

## ELEMENTARY CLASS GRADES, ATTITUDES, AND ABSENCES

Class	Lang.	Read.	Spell.	Habits Attitudes	Work Skill	Pers. Social Attit.	Absences
Kdg.	-	-	-	S	-	-	22
1st	2	2	-	S	-	-	16
2nd	2	2	2	S	-	-	8 $\frac{1}{2}$
3rd	2	2	2	S	-	-	15 $\frac{1}{2}$
4th	2	3	3	N	N	N	9
5th	C	D	B	S	S	S	3
6th	C	C	B	S	S	S	0

8th English grade: D

California Phonics Survey: 28 of 75 right

Health Record:

Diseases--none

Vision--almost normal, kdg. and 2nd; no defect, 4th-7th;  
no glasses

Hearing--no defect, audiometer and otometer

Speech problem--stuttered; therapy given

CASE STUDIES OF SELECTED JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL  
PUPILS WITH PHONIC DISABILITY

by

Evelyn Faye Stenzel

B. A., Bethel College, 1962

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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

1967

Secondary teachers and administrators are increasingly aware of the need for providing assistance for those students with a reading disability. One aspect of reading difficulty is that of a phonic disability.

In this study, the writer was primarily concerned with factors associated with a phonic disability for certain students. The specific purposes were the following: (1) identify students who demonstrated gross phonic disability, (2) make individual case studies to note factors which may have been associated with a general reading difficulty and specifically with a phonic disability, and (3) observe any common characteristics among individuals which may have been associated with phonic disability. No attempt was made in this study to prove that specific factors caused a phonic disability. The writer could find very little literature available on causes of phonic disability at the secondary level.

In order to identify students with phonic disability, the California Phonics Survey was administered by the writer to seventy-five ninth grade students in a Wichita junior high school. The students tested were from three English classes--an honors group, a general ability class, and a remedial reading group.

The test authors used four areas of phonic analysis--adequate ability, some disability, serious disability, or gross disability. The test results showed that ten of the seventy-five students tested received an adequate

score in phonic analysis. One third of the students tested were found to have gross phonic disability.

The test authors provided diagnostic keys that showed the following categories of phonic analysis: I-A, Long-Short Vowel Confusion; II-A and II-B dealing with consonants; III, Configuration; IV, Endings; V, Negatives, Opposites and Sight Words; and VI, Rigidity. The students tested had the greatest number of errors in the category of Configuration.

The writer chose ten students with gross phonic disability and checked their cumulative records for information that might suggest factors associated with phonic disability. Some common characteristics shared by these students were observed in the data gathered about the family backgrounds, the absences, class grades, and individual reading records in the primary grades, and the reading and language percentile scores on achievement tests.

According to this study, no one factor can be said to be associated with a phonic disability. However, a number of significant factors may have contributed to the phonic disability of an individual student. No characteristics found in this study could be identified as contributing to a phonic disability and not to a general reading difficulty.

The writer recommends that students with phonic disabilities be identified as early as the fourth grade so that remedial teaching might begin earlier. The writer also recommends that further research be undertaken with students who indicate a serious phonic disability but



who have high or average intelligence in order to identify possible factors contributing to the difficulty with phonics.

After students have been identified by tests as having severe disability in phonics, it is imperative to have a skilled teacher available who can help them with their specific difficulties as outlined on the diagnostic keys.