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Mainstreaming

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It is with a genuine sense of gratitude that we note the continual progress of *mainstreaming* students whose achievement, nature, or background may be different from the majority. We have come a long way since the days of tracking, inflexible grouping, and isolating those who seemed to present a challenge to the success of the instruction. Modern teachers in-training cannot believe the crudity of treatment of disabled readers which prevailed in the first third of this century.

Just as teachers of two hundred years ago believed that whipping and beating students was part of the instruction, teachers of past generations believed in teaching embarrassment, shame, and guilt as part of the daily lessons. If a student were unable or unprepared to read aloud, he or she was forced to admit publicly to this lack of preparation by failure in performance. As if this were not enough punishment, the teacher had special harsh words reserved for the unprepared students, delivered in front of all classmates, and designed to peel the conscience raw. In addition to all the above, a grade which reflected lack of preparation went home to the parents, where the whole can of worms might have been reopened, depending on the sensitivity of one's parents.

What we have learned and what we are still trying to help others learn is the importance of self-concept to those students who are somewhat handicapped in their reading. It is common sense that the best reading growth and development occurs within those students who are helped to feel good about themselves. There is no way of assessing growth of reading accurately when the youngsters feel they have been put into isolation cells or "dummy" classes. Thus, when persons who are trained reading teachers or specialists are employed by a school system, they may be found working just as hard for pleasant surroundings and positive atmosphere in which to teach as for hardware and faculty status.

A single move we could make in the field of reading that would immediately set ahead all the clocks of progress would be to eliminate for all times and from all levels of use, the word *remedial*. Wherever the word is used, it seems to cause disturbance. Although those who work in the field understand the practical meaning and validity of the word, we have allowed it to become stigmatized as a term of opprobrium for those who need special help in reading. You may have met the tenth grader who comes to the reading room door with a request that he be allowed to join the group: "I am a *remedial* student," as if it were an awful admission. While we have no immediate suggestions for substitute terms to use in place of *remedial*, we believe strongly that other words must be found to take its place, in school and out.

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Editor