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HORIZONS OF READING EDUCATION:

Attacking the Problem of the Adult Learner

William L. Holladay



Nazareth College's Department of Continuing Education, directed by Mr. Paul Hang, instituted a unique program in 1972 to serve some very specialized needs of the greater Kalamazoo area. Organized under the name of the Community Learning Center, the program reaches members of groups disadvantaged by income, minority background, and education.

Schools and institutions across the nation have felt the need for basic education programs. Such valuable programs often fail in respect to the individual who has been through the institutionalized educational process and for one reason or another has dropped out or failed to gain the necessary skills needed for dealing with life realistically. Nazareth's Center for Learning makes a good idea better by reaching out to undereducated or underemployed adults who may have no other source for basic education courses.

According to program coordinator, Ms. Edith Pulaski, the primary goals of the program are to improve reading and computation skills and to incorporate on an intensive level those services, agencies, and other educational alternatives available to persons in the metropolitan area. One vital function is the Center's continuing effort to reexamine and evaluate its existing programs in an effort to determine its impact on increasing academic and personal skills. The resultant major achievement is beneficial to the community as a whole . . . in increased student potentiality to become better parents, citizens, employees, and life-long learners.

The reading program is highly individualized incorporating several programmed texts. The *Educational Development Laboratories L-100* series is the core source. Reading teacher Betty Porter finds this individualized method to be best when working with adult learners. Word skills and comprehension are approached through various media utilizing realistic adult literature. College students help provide one to one tutoring. In accordance with the Center's philosophy of utiliz-

ing all available sources, much valuable time is given to the tutoring program by the retired Sisters of Saint Joseph.

One outcome of the adult reading program has been the need for special training of the teacher of the adult basic education reading student. Ms. Porter is now developing a series of videotapes dealing with teaching techniques for adult reading. These tapes should help fill the educational gap in the background of the reading teacher faced with the problem of teaching adults to read.

Two aspects of the Center's program will receive emphasis in the future. "English as a Second Language" is a unique program designed for Spanish-speaking Americans, foreign student wives, immigrants, and foreign wives of American citizens. Instructional level here is necessarily different. Center staff, while using commercial materials, are being creative in designing materials to meet these specialized needs. Besides reading and reading comprehension, conversation and listening skills are also stressed.

Center personnel keep in mind at all times that perhaps the major motivation of their students is to secure a job. Acting on this basis, they are working on a program of technical reading skills that students will find necessary for certain positions. Working with practical materials such as descriptive manuals with key words should engross the student in the learning process while experiencing a feeling of personal achievement.

Nazareth's Center for Learning stresses the personal approach to reading through self concept building and development of attitudes conducive to the successful reading program.