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Editorial Comment

SHOULD TUTORING BE ENCOURAGED?

The state of reading in America has reached the crisis level. To meet this problem, the federal government, through massive financial aid, has stimulated many compensatory, experimental, and remedial reading classes. In spite of the implementation of elaborate and new programs and the spending of millions of dollars for personnel and equipment, the rate of success in reducing the number of poor readers has not been significantly increased. Is there an inexpensive alternative for insuring every child with the "right to read"?

One such alternative is the use of non-professional aid. Volunteer tutors, whether they be parents, pupils from higher grades, or interested adults from the community, may hold the key to reaching our national reading achievement goal. A tutorial program can provide a flexible, individualized, and personal approach to a vexing problem. The tutor, of course, will require training and constant supervision. He will also need an opportunity to work with students in novel ways so that the experience for his pupils is not a duplication of previous unsuccessful classroom situations. Centers where tutors have been used report great benefits to both tutors and pupils. On the surface at least, tutorial programs appear promising.

If schools decide to use non-professional tutors, careful and unbiased evaluations of their effectiveness must be made. It is possible that the results of such investigations may provide us with an inexpensive solution to an ever-present problem. The answer to the question, "Should tutoring be encouraged?" can come only from a series of well-controlled studies of tutorial programs.

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