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Round Robin

Dorothy E. Smith

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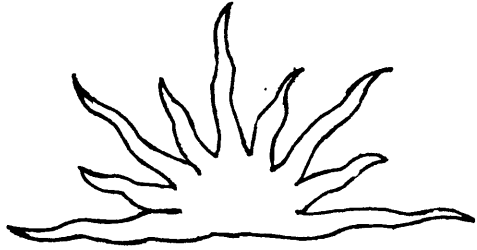
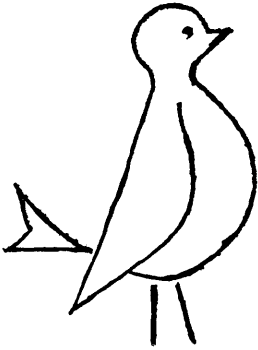


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ROUND ROBIN

Dorothy E. Smith, Editor

Dear Editor,

Teachers are noticing a greater number of poor readers in our public schools today in spite of all the remedial programs, improved materials, and new teaching techniques which have been introduced in recent years. In the opinion of the writer, there are five major causes which account for the increased numbers of poor readers. Each of these causes is briefly discussed.

CAUSE ONE

Poorly trained teachers in reading are being graduated from universities today. When the teacher arrives on the job, he is given a set of books and is expected to teach according to the methods prescribed in the accompanying teacher's guide. Many don't have the slightest idea how to begin so they resort to trial and error procedures. For example, in our school teachers group children by grade level not by skills, and these are permanent groups where it is almost impossible to move to a different group. Teachers tell the children to read the story and do the pages in the workbook with no purpose given. The best solution for this problem is for the colleges to stress the teaching of reading for all those taking education as a major. With better teaching and understanding in this area, the teacher would be able to do a more thorough job.

CAUSE TWO

Elementary teachers are given too many pupils per classroom. Two of our first grades had thirty-eight pupils per room. With fewer

children in a classroom, a teacher would have more time to spend with each child. There would be a better opportunity to observe each one, more time for the administration of informal inventories to ascertain where each child needs additional help, and a greater opportunity to provide instruction “tailor made” for each child. Disabled readers with physical and emotional defects would be easier to spot, and treatment could be started earlier.

CAUSE THREE

Not enough time is spent on reading activities. Children spend so much time watching TV at home and so little reading is done there, that the writer firmly believes that much more reading should be done in the schools. Children in elementary school are exposed to too many subjects plus having special teachers for art, gym, vocal and instrumental music, speech and reading, as well as visiting teachers, and school psychologists. It is recommended that early elementary children be taught only reading, penmanship, spelling, and arithmetic. The upper grades would have a concentration of the same subjects with the reading materials, after the formal reading, branching into the field of interest of the child whether it is science, social studies, literature, art, aeronautics, or music.

It is also recommended that early elementary children attend school for half days only. They would be taught their basic subjects in the morning; and could go home for their exercise or physical education, art, music, or dancing lessons. Children begin to dislike school when they reach junior high level. If they had not attended all-day school in the early grades, perhaps school would not be so monotonous in their later years. Perhaps they would show more interest in the subjects presented while they are in school and discipline problems and boredom would be lessened.

CAUSE FOUR

New innovations are continually tried—TV, teaching machines, team teaching, i.t.a., linguistics, phonics, sight approach, and basal readers to mention only a few. When these don't appear to work, the administrator has a different one to try. The child is constantly having to work with another method. Teachers don't always like these different approaches, and when a teacher must use one she doesn't like, the children know it and little learning takes place. The method or combination of methods used is not important. If the teacher feels confident and likes a particular method, that is the one she should use.

CAUSE FIVE

We, as educators, have been more concerned with the child's social growth than with his academic growth. There is a lack of order in our schools. Chaos often results, and no learning can take place in that kind of a situation. Let's get discipline back in our schools, expect children to assume responsibility for their own achievement, and place the emphasis where it should be—on the development of academic skills.

Gertrude Jurgensen
Dowagiac Public Schools