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READING AND UPWARD BOUND— ANOTHER LOOK

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The major purpose of summer Upward Bound instructional programs is to assist those high school students who have the potential for succeeding in a college or university, but who otherwise would probably not be given the opportunity to enter an institution of higher learning. The generally low academic achievement of many of these students is often due to a variety of factors including poor and ineffective teaching(1), lack of motivation(8), and an environment which is far from conducive to scholarly or academic pursuits. In sum, typical school activities tend to be less than relevant for many of these bright young men and women. The Upward Bound programs are usually designed to aid participating students in overcoming their adverse reactions to learning so that they will be better prepared to further their education.

It is noteworthy that all too often high school students lack many of the basic communication skills fundamental to clear thinking, effective speaking, and critical reading(9). The absence of these skills, coupled with an environment that frowns upon learning, together with a society not yet mature enough to accept men for what they are and can do, provides a frame of reference that ultimately leads the locked-in to be locked out. This causes a detritus syndrome which leads to feelings of hopelessness and frustration. Upward Bound is an educational effort designed to break the cycle and end the detritus syndrome.

The 1969 Upward Bound Summer Program on the campus of Western Michigan University brought together some one hundred ten high school students from the surrounding geographical area and was so oriented as to strengthen the academic skills of all students. Although there were many excellent instructional programs taking place in the several disciplines during the eight weeks that the students were on campus, the present discussion is limited to the developmental-corrective reading program carried out by the authors of this report.

Procedures

All Upward Bound teachers had been briefed regarding the im-

provement of reading skills in their special disciplines. This was carried out by the senior author during several pre-program seminar sessions. Developmental reading was to be an integral part of the total instructional effort.

Decisions had to be made as to which students would receive special developmental-corrective reading instruction. To this end, pretests were administered to all first year students. These included (1) The American School Reading Tests for Senior High Schools and College Freshmen—Grades 10 through 13, Form A, and (2) the Lorge-Thorndike Intelligence Test, Non-verbal Battery, Level 5, Form A. The existing records were also examined so that a profile of greater depth could be obtained for each student.

Selections were made on the basis of the relationship between high intelligence test—low reading test performance scores(3). Students whose I.Q. scores were high and whose reading scores were low were selected first. As it turned out, almost two-thirds of the group of first year students were in a position to participate in the special reading program. A number of second year students were selected to participate as well.

There were two afternoon sessions of about an hour each. Fifteen students were assigned to each session and classes met on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays. Wednesdays and late afternoons each day were open to those who wished special help.

The basic thrust of each instructional session was aimed toward general reading improvement, but specific effort was directed toward increasing students' perceptual speed, perceptual span, vocabulary understandings, and reading for comprehension(4). Many different media were utilized to help students increase their performance in these reading skills.

Perceptual speed and perceptual span development activities were exercised through the use of devices such as the controlled reader and a special experimental reading program developed by the senior author of the present discussion. Although the efficacy of the special experimental reading program has yet to be demonstrated, pilot study results seem to be positive(5).

Reading comprehension skills were also developed through the use of the controlled reader technique as well as the special experimental reading program. Further efforts to increase student comprehension were focused on the use of vocabulary cards(2) and Latin prefixes and roots(7). Moreover, every effort was made to reinforce and complement the nature of and need for better reading skill and this

was carried out through the use of a series of sixteen millimeter films designed to acquaint high school students with reading improvement techniques.

A final but vital aspect of each reading instructional session consisted of directed free reading wherein assistance was available on request. In this activity, students were permitted to read in programmed self-instruction texts as well as to read the texts and execute the assignments from the courses they took in the mornings. When problems or questions arose, the teachers were there ready to assist as needed.

A Sample Lesson

A typical reading instructional period began with student review of their vocabulary cards(2). This was done individually or students could pair up and work together. After several minutes of such vocabulary review, students put away their cards and prepared to participate in the special experimental paradigm program(5). The digital perceptual speed-span sheets were distributed, headed, and then turned face down. When all students were ready, they turned the sheets face up and began tracking. At the end of one minute they were told to stop, and the checking took place. They then scored their own sheets and entered the score on a graph devised for that purpose. This activity became progressively more difficult as the weeks passed and students went from sheets containing three digit patterns to four digits, and then on to five and six digit patterns.

The digital sheets were then collected and the vocabulary sheets were distributed, headed, and turned face down. When students were ready, they turned the sheets face up and began the activity. At the end of one minute they were told to stop, and the checking then took place. The correct answers (the most appropriate synonyms) were read off by the instructor and students checked their own work. Whenever questions arose regarding definitions, students were requested to use their dictionaries. Moreover, if a student had a different answer, but could defend his choice and it made sense, *he was allowed to count his response as correct*. Appropriate entries were made on their graphs and the vocabulary sheets were then collected. This aspect of the lesson also became progressively more difficult for students as the weeks went by. The vocabulary items were of an increasingly higher order as students progressed through the series of lessons.

Comprehension paragraph sheets were then distributed, students made the proper entries, and turned the sheets face down. When all

were ready, they turned their sheets face up again and proceeded to execute the directions as given. At the end of five minutes they were told to stop and check their responses. Each step was noted on the chalkboard and students could determine where they made their errors. Subsequently these scores, the number of correct steps, were entered on the individual record graphs and the sheets themselves were then collected. These activities also became more difficult as students progressed through the series. The last comprehension paragraph consisted of some twelve separate steps, but the time (five minutes) remained the same.

Typically on Monday of each week one of the films in the "Reading Improvement" series was shown to the students and time was allowed for discussion as well as questions. On the other days, more time was devoted to vocabulary learning and independent study.

To increase student understanding of vocabulary and to aid them in independent word attack, lessons in Latin prefixes and roots were undertaken(7). Most of this work was carried out through the use of the chalkboard and students subsequently made appropriate notations. In order to help themselves become more familiar with the nature and function of Latin as related to English, students were required to make pertinent entries on 4 x 6 index cards. It was suggested that they carry these cards with them at all times and make use of odd moments of free time by studying the entries on the cards. In this manner the concept of spaced learning was brought out and it was hoped that there would be a significant carry-over in the use of this procedure when the students returned to their regular studies in the fall.

To augment perceptual speed-span skill development, all students participated in the controlled reading aspect of the program. Typically, students perused the comprehension check questions prior to reading the story(6). The vocabulary pertaining to it was then discussed and questions were posed regarding what students might realistically expect the story to be about. Upon viewing the selection at a predetermined speed, students executed the comprehension check. Afterward they corrected their responses and made the appropriate entries on their reading progress charts.

In the time that remained during each of the reading instructional periods, every effort was made to have students study and learn on their own and to receive individual assistance from the teachers. To this end, students were requested to bring their textbooks and assignments from their morning classes and time was given to let them pro-

ceed with the execution of these activities. Some students preferred to increase their reading skills by working with self-instruction lessons in reading for meaning and for other purposes. It was during this time period that each student was contacted individually and a mutual appraisal of his reading progress was made. Instruction was given where needed and adjusted reading skill goals were agreed upon. This effort at individualizing reading instruction continued throughout the program.

Results

Objective data were obtained from the American School Achievement Test-Reading. Form A was administered as a pretest and Form B was administered as a post test during the last week of the program. Although the results are not spectacular, they are encouraging.

Pretest scores on the Vocabulary sub-test gave a mean of 40 percentile points and post test scores gave a mean of 43 percentile points. Pretest scores on the Rate sub-test gave a mean ranking at the 49th percentile and post test scores ranked students at the 61st percentile. Pretest scores on the Comprehension sub-test gave a mean ranking at the 10th percentile and post test scores ranked students at the 15th percentile. Pretest scores for the Total Test gave a mean of 33 percentile points and corresponding post test scores gave a mean of 40. It would appear that reading comprehension was the greatest problem experienced by these students because, as a group, they ranked lowest in this cluster of skills. Appropriately enough, reading speed seemed to enjoy the greatest gain and it would appear that the special reading program was most effective in this area. Vocabulary knowledge seemed least affected by the program.

Evaluation

These brief data seem to indicate that, on the average, the reading program was successful in that progress was made in all three areas of concentration; speed, vocabulary, and comprehension. The greatest gain was made in reading speed, then comprehension, and finally vocabulary. Reading for comprehension is still the greatest problem faced by these students and remains the skill area to be stressed in their educational activities. Yet it must be recognized that eight short weeks of instruction is far from enough to overcome deficient reading skills in particular and negative attitudes toward learning in general simply because these habits have been built up over a period of many years of failure and frustration. Reading improvement is a

long term developmental process that must be nurtured by all professional educators throughout the academic life of the student. This takes time.

Subjective observation of student classroom behavior indicated a definite positive trend in most instances. From a "show me if you can" attitude exhibited initially by many students, there was a gradual shift or change to a posture which can be best described as "help me." Unfortunately no objective measures of this subtle change was available, but it is the considered opinion of the authors that the students did indeed behave differently toward the end of the program and that the changes were positive in nature. It is hoped that these changes will be nurtured by the regular high school teachers when these students return to their classes in the fall.

Recommendations

The reading instructional program did not always function in the manner planned by the teachers. Because these classes were held in the afternoon, a number of conflicts with other activities arose. The major recommendation to be proffered from this experience is the suggestion that developmental-corrective reading be scheduled for the morning. This would keep the afternoons free for individual help as the occasion warrants.

Because the eight week summer period was far too short a time for students to make dramatic reading progress, the reading instructional period should be extended throughout the school year. Such augmentation should take place in each and every high school classroom. The regular classroom teacher is in an ideal position to teach reading skills and to do so through the use of the regular textbook materials in the several curricular areas. It is recommended that high school teachers follow through and teach reading skills in conjunction with the subject matter of their special disciplines.

Discussion

Objective and subjective evaluations of the reading program described above seem to indicate that progress was made by many students during the eight weeks they were on campus. The carryover effect, which could result in better grades for the coming academic year, remains to be determined. But whatever happens, one point must be emphasized: *these students can learn*. If they are given the right kind of help in overcoming their individual reading problems, they can succeed in their course work. They can become better stu-

dents. Hopefully the academic progress of each student will follow the pattern of the stone dropped into a still pond. Ripples can be created where none existed before. Perhaps these ripples can lap upon the shores of academic success and sweep away the debris of faulty thinking so that subsequently these students may take their rightful place in society.

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