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## Round Robin

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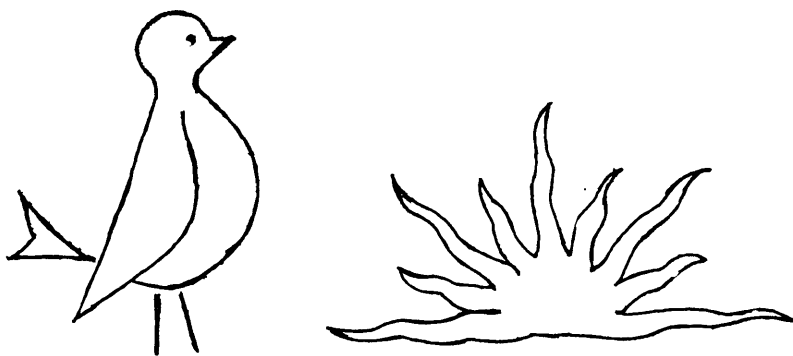
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## ROUND ROBIN

*Dorothy E. Smith, Editor*

*Title I, Title III, Upward Bound and Head Start* are all phrases which are finding their way into our professional educational jargon. Within the last few years more government sponsored programs have been initiated in the field of education than ever before since public schools came into being.

Teachers—and the public—are asking more and more how worthwhile these programs are. The expenditure of time, thought and money has been prodigious, and will undoubtedly increase before it becomes stabilized. We need to know if they are worth the cost.

We thought you might be interested in hearing about one such program. Jack Hamilton, Director of Head Start for the Kalamazoo Public Schools, provided us with the following information:

Dear Editor:

It was in January of 1966 that Head Start was instituted in Kalamazoo, and after six months of planning, organizing, and teacher training, the seven week summer session for four year olds began. The criteria used for choosing the children included those whose parents were on ADC or Welfare; those whose older brothers and sisters had a history of poor adjustment to school or who had dropped out; and those whose parents gave them little attention. We found the latter more often if the child either had eight or ten siblings, or if he was an only child. Another important criterion was the family's attitude toward education.

There were sixteen teachers, seven student aids, and over twenty volunteers. The volunteers were eleventh grade high school students. Mr. Baskerville, the counselor at Central High School, recommended the seven boys who became student aids. They were chosen on the basis of potential leadership and on their apparent need for the

status of a chosen leader. Six of the boys were Negroes. This was one of the most successful corollaries to the program. All of these boys started out by keeping their distance from the children but within the first week they were utterly involved with them and their problems. They all want the opportunity to work in the program again.

We see Head Start as having a dual purpose. We provide disadvantaged children with a great many experiences they otherwise would not have, and we "sell" the parents on the worth of education. Sometimes it seems to us our greatest contribution is in changing the attitudes of parents. We had two home-school social workers who made home visitations. They discussed with the parents their child, his welfare, and what the school was trying to do for him. Their attitude was always sincere and friendly concern. Their goal was primarily to give the parents a positive outlook toward school. These workers found that the parents' attitude toward education changes when they are convinced that somebody cares. Special invitations were made to the parents to come to school and to go on trips with their children.

We have found that four year olds are at precisely the vulnerable age for us to make an impression on their parents, for they are still vitally concerned with their children. At later ages the parents often lose control, and ultimately, interest.

Ours is the only school system outside of Detroit which has been doing anything of consequence with a pre-school program. We began in 1963, in a house on the north side of Kalamazoo with fifteen youngsters. The next year the program was financed through the Office of Economic Opportunity, and this year we will also be financed by Title III of the Elementary Education Act. We are the only program of this kind in Michigan under Title III, and perhaps in the nation.

During the current year we will be working with 180 youngsters, at six different schools. All of the children will be provided with a hot lunch each school day. We are planning to continue the practice of taking the children on many trips. Some of them have never been to downtown Kalamazoo, even though they live six or seven blocks from the center of the city. We take them to dairies, fruit farms and airports. We give them a ride on an escalator and we introduce them to policemen and firemen. Their experiential background is widened immeasurably.

The entire program is highly successful, we think. We are especially grateful for some unexpected gains, such as the maturation of the

student aids, the interested involvement with the medical and dental professions, and the growth we could see in parental attitudes.

Jack Hamilton