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SUGGESTED PLAN FOR ORGANIZING AND CARRYING OUT A SCHOOL- WIDE STUDY SKILLS PROGRAM

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Because instruction in study skills involves all teachers of all subjects at all grade levels, the teaching of these skills should be regarded as the responsibility of the entire faculty of a school. Research points out that many pupils do not transfer reading and study skills to their content subjects. Therefore, the subject matter teacher must work on these skills which are *pertinent to his subject*.¹ A program in a school which includes work on the needed study skills in the content subjects as well as in language arts and reading classes can result in raising the general academic level of the school and can also make teaching more effective for the teachers and learning more meaningful for the students.

School systems have reported in literature a variety of successful plans which brought about significant improvement in students' marks and attitudes when all teachers worked together. Although there is not one master plan which will work for all schools, the plan which is suggested in this article has been prepared for the Kenmore schools, keeping in mind that it is better to organize such a program slowly and well rather than to attempt innovations too quickly. Therefore, a three year period of preparation is recommended—one year for exploration, one for orientation, and one for putting the program into action.

THE EXPLORATION YEAR

I. First Year: *Organizing the Program*

A. Step 1: *Determining Leadership*

1. A person who is in charge of curriculum in the school and who has the authority to serve as the director of the program would assume the leadership. He would work closely with the other administrators, area consultants, department chairmen, and teachers and would undertake the responsibility of carrying out a continuous program each year.

1. From the New York State Education Department Position Paper, "The Teaching of Reading," 1964.

2. This person need not be a “reading specialist” although he should be vitally concerned with the academic achievement of the pupils and with curriculum.
- B. Step 2: *Forming an All-School Planning Committee*
1. One person from *each subject area* plus a representative from the guidance department and the library would serve on this Planning Committee.
 2. The first year the *department chairmen* would be asked to serve, but the positions could be rotated the following years. Where there is no department chairman for a subject (art, music, industrial arts, homemaking, business, reading and physical education) an *interested* teacher would be asked to participate.
 3. The members of the Committee would report back to the teachers in *their* respective departments during the year to obtain suggestions and to interest as many teachers as possible. Through this sharing of ideas, communications within the school might also be improved.
 4. If possible, meetings of the Committee should be *on school time*.
- C. Step 3: *Preparing for Action*
1. The program leader and the Planning Committee would spend the remainder of the first year “preparing for action.” The following procedures might be used:
 - a. Each member would assume the responsibility of finding out what the teachers in his department are already doing to develop good study skills and would report this information to the Committee. A brief questionnaire might be sent to the teachers to obtain this information or it could be done through department meetings. The Committee members would also report on the types of reading and study problems which the subject matter teachers encounter in their classes.
 - b. Small study groups would then be formed to decide upon the responsibilities of the content area teachers to develop and/or improve study skills. These could be determined by—
 - (1) Studying current reading test scores
 - (2) Reviewing literature in the content areas
 - (3) Asking teachers to submit their suggestions

- c. The members would then report their findings, and together the Committee would make recommendations of the *types of skills* which should be emphasized in each subject area. A master chart might be the outcome of this first year's planning, thus avoiding unnecessary duplication or preventing omissions of necessary skills.

II. Summer Workshop: *Preparing Materials*

- A. A "Guide" (or some other type of material) for subject matter teachers might be prepared by certain members from the Committee who would be paid for this work during the summer. This "Guide" would include practical teaching suggestions with sample lesson plans.
- B. If possible, some of this material would also be included in new courses of study as they are being prepared.
- C. The Committee would then decide upon a plan to put the program into action in the fall.

THE ORIENTATION YEAR

I. Second Year: *Introducing the Program*

A. Step 1: *General Introduction to Teachers*

- 1. An outside speaker might be brought in to stimulate teachers to see the need for this type of program.
- 2. Or the principal or curriculum leader with the Committee could provide the initial "kick off."

B. Step 2: *In-service Work with Teachers*

- 1. *Departmental study groups* could be set up to meet periodically throughout the year *on school time*. A variety of topics could be covered such as:
 - a. The value of working on study skills in each subject.
 - b. How to construct and use an informal test based on the textbook to determine the study skills which will need emphasis.
 - c. How to use the text with pupils who have learning problems.
 - d. How general reading test results might help a content teacher. (Also the limitations of these tests)
 - e. How to develop specific study skills.
- 2. Later *demonstrations* might be arranged if time permits.
- 3. Teachers would be urged to try the suggestions in the "Guide" and to modify or add to them.

C. Step 3: *Evaluation of Program*

1. This would be done toward the end of the year.
 2. Results would be used in revising the "Guide."
- II. Summer Workshop: *Revision of Materials* (if needed)

THE TEACHING YEAR

- I. Third Year: *Putting the Program into Full Action*
 - A. Step 1: Presentation of revised materials to all teachers in department meetings.
 - B. Step 2: In-service work with all *new* teachers during the year *on school time*.
 - C. Step 3: Individual help or demonstrations upon request.
 - D. Step 4: General in-service *course* for content teachers in the system with state aid for local credit, bringing in outside people.
- II. Following Years: *Continuation of Program*
 - A. Step 1: In-service work with all *new* teachers
 - B. Step 2: Continued evaluation and modifications as needed

SUMMARY

"Perhaps the person most responsible for the success of the program is the junior high school principal or his representative. This crusader-diplomat must provide leadership, if it is not to be found or evoked elsewhere on the staff. He is responsible for obtaining books, pamphlets, consultants, standardized tests, and films in whatever order they may be desired. He must supply stenographic help and duplicating facilities. He must supply in-service training programs if they are required. Most important, he must provide *time* within the school day for study, meetings, and the work which must be done in connection with the developmental program. The administrator needs to *know* and to remember that whatever sacrifices he makes in other programs in order to improve reading and study skills will more than compensate for temporary inconveniences to faculty and students. He, too, must know that there is no other single program which will have as far-reaching an effect on the improvement of the total teaching-learning situation in the school. And he should realize that in a schoolwide developmental program he has a most effective public relations program."²

2. From "How Can a Junior High School Staff Get a Schoolwide Developmental Program Underway?" by Carl J. Freudenreich, *Improving Reading in the Junior High School*, U. S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, page 44.