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ECHOES FROM THE FIELD

Lois Van Den Berg

The Portage Public Schools are now in the second year of a three-year program aimed at developing a balanced high school reading program. The first phase of the program began last year with a *corrective reading program* geared to those students whose reading ability was no more than three years below grade level and who were of average or above intelligence. The students selected for the program also showed some disparity between their verbal and non-verbal Lorge-Thorndike scores. The corrective reading classes (fifteen to a section) met five days a week in a reading laboratory for intensive reading instruction.

In a four month period the average gain in reading level, based on the Iowa Silent Reading Test, was two years and five months. Ninety-four percent of the students made some gain and 67 percent gained more than two years and achieved grade level.

This year a *developmental reading program* was instituted for all college bound juniors. In addition, *remedial instruction* is now offered for those who are reading far below their potential.

The total program will be in operation next year when *elective courses* in developmental reading will be offered as part of the *English curriculum*. With the introduction of the elective developmental courses, reading activities will be available in the Portage secondary schools for all students—from the very best readers to the greatly handicapped readers.

Another program at Portage involves those students who are behind academically at the time they make the transition from the elementary school to junior high school. This program is especially concerned with those students who have average or above average IQ scores but who are behind in reading and language development. Many of these students who could do much better in school with some encouragement and special help are being seen on a one-to-one basis, two to five times a week. In the near future they hope to have interested high school students working as tutors to augment the present programs. This will make it possible to see and help more students.