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Round Robin

Dorothy E. Smith

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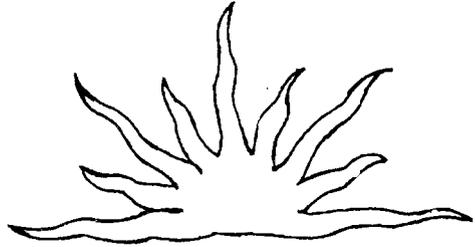
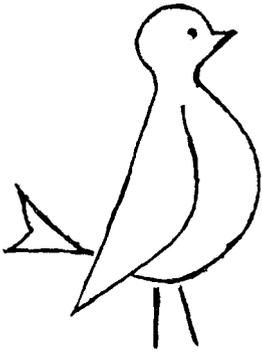
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ROUND ROBIN

Dorothy E. Smith, Editor

There has been much discussion lately about the age when a child reaches "reading readiness," and what the child's rate of learning might be at different age levels. There is also at present some controversy about the optimal age level for beginning the teaching of foreign languages. Below is a letter telling of some experiments in the specialized field of Spanish teaching, but the conclusions reached will surely be of interest to everyone connected with teaching.

Dear Editor:

In experiments concerned with tests and materials for the teaching of Spanish, a team composed of Enrique Lamadrid, Laurel Briscoe, Carl Dellaccio, and myself, has been able to demonstrate the following:

(a) Second and third graders require about 70% more time (actual classroom minutes) to reach the same stage as older students and they do not have as good pronunciation nor as competent control of the materials.

(b) Something significant educationally happens between third and fourth grade. Fourth graders appear to be able to learn as rapidly as older students.

(c) Fifth and sixth graders can handle any of the difficult problems in language just as well as senior high students. They accept materials at the same rate, learn just as rapidly, and do just as well on all types of examinations.

Sincerely,
William E. Bull
Department of Spanish and
Portuguese
University of California
Los Angeles 24, California

A different subject, but one which is also of interest to teachers—and parents—is that of educational television. In the previous issue the viewpoints of several of our readers were printed. Below we offer two more letters on the subject.

Dear Editor:

The succinct reviews of such a good cross section of articles on educational television by Blanche Bush point out the benefits and handicaps which accrue to the learner from the point of view of the educator and researcher. They were a challenge to me to “turn Roving Reporter” and interview the learners to discover their problems.

At the New York State Future Teachers of America Spring Conference I talked to 11th and 12th graders, most of whom had had TV courses for years. Here are some of their comments:

“TV is all right if it has to be used for economy reasons, but it is no substitute for a good teacher.” “I miss the ‘aliveness’ of a person presenting facts.” “There is nothing individual about a television lesson. It’s like the difference between taking a bus or driving your own car to the place where you want to go. When you take a bus, you have to make all of the stops others might need. When you drive your own car, you go directly to your desired destination.” “It’s maddening! Just when you want to discuss something interesting, the lesson moves on. I can’t learn that way.”

The genuine affection and appreciation for the “good teacher” displayed in their discussions reminded me of a story reported in the *Manchester Guardian*. A young student was standing at his teacher’s desk when the pay clerk came in and handed the teacher her check. The curious student asked immediately, “But where do you work?”

I want especially to point out that students are worthy of consideration in the overall planning for their educations. More emphasis should be put on developing persons who have become emotionally attached to learning rather than whether this type of education is good because these young people passed as good a test as the control group.

Most Sincerely,
(Mrs.) Dorothy Towner
Special Teacher-Central-Technical High
Syracuse, New York

Dear Editor:

My experience with educational TV has not been successful for many reasons. Poor reception within the building . . . no pre-training for the teachers . . . reference books referred to in the manual were not available in our school . . . such sketchy information in the manual that I gave too much or too little pre-instruction before the programs . . . the schedule of programs often conflicted with the school schedule of vacations, parent-teacher conferences, and teacher institute meetings. At the moment I feel I would rather do my own teaching and forget about television. In my opinion the money which has been spent on a mediocre plan could have been used to much greater advantage by investing in more conventional materials which are badly needed.

Sincerely,
Mrs. Alberta McGrew
Dowagiac, Michigan