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Ten Second Reviews

By *Blanche O. Bush*

Western Michigan University

Not since the days of Flesch and his *Why Johnny Can't Read* has the profession faced an issue that has roused so much discussion and controversy as individualized reading. Everyone finds acceptable the principles of individuation of growth and the need to have the type and rate of instruction based on the child. Furthermore, for years exploration has been made of methods of instruction and classroom organization that will enable each child to develop to his maximum. Everyone recognizes the potency of reading interest as a factor in motivation and that children should have a wide variety of material from which to select. All texts in reading methods discuss procedures for organizing individual or small "helps" or "needs" groups for children with particular problems. Why then is there an issue?

—A. Sterl Artley

Individualizing reading starts not with procedures but with a creative, perceptive teacher—one who believes that children want to learn; who thinks with children rather than for them; who basically respects the individual behavior of every youngster and who works with children in orderly but not rigid ways.

—Leland B. Jacobs

Artley, A. Sterl, "An Eclectic Approach to Reading," *Elementary English*. (May, 1961), 38:321-326.

On the basis of the judgment and opinion of qualified leaders in the field, along with the findings of the growing body of research, the writer states that there seems to be no valid reason for making a choice between individualized reading and a group approach using basal materials. The wise procedure would be to combine and adapt the best features of each into a pattern that adequately serves the needs of the learner.

Betts, Emmett Albert, *Foundations of Reading Instruction with Emphasis on Differentiated Guidance*. American Book Company, Chicago, 1957, pp. 39-61.

Learning to read is an individual job, according to Dr. Betts, but except in isolated instances, most individualized programs make use of class planning, individual contributions to class problems or to entertainment and other socializing situations. In this way individual progress is recognized; an integration of school activities is possible; purposeful reading is motivated; class experiences are extended and deepened; and individual development is not reckoned in terms of class progress and a fixed curriculum. The writer also traces the history of individualized reading.

Bond, Guy and Eva Bond Wagner, *Teaching the Child to Read*. The Macmillan Company, New York, 1960.

According to the authors, reading cannot be systematically taught when the individualized approach is used. They point out that no teacher can keep in mind the reading needs of each child from week to week. Also, no teacher has the time to teach even one selection each week to each child if the usual procedure of teaching a selection is followed, namely: teacher preparation, building readiness, introducing new vocabulary, determining purposes, reading silently, discussing, developing reading skills and abilities, and using products of reading.

Carter, Homer L. J. and Dorothy J. McGinnis, *Teaching Individuals to Read*. D. C. Heath and Company, Boston, 1962, pp. 61, 70, 132-133.

Individualized reading is an approach to reading which is based on the needs of children. Instruction in reading is provided as each child reads material which he has chosen because it is of interest to him. Individualized reading is based on the premise that skills are necessary to reading but must be introduced functionally. It is also based on the assumption that each child should have an opportunity to proceed at his own pace and should not be compelled to compare his performance in reading with that of others. The difficulty level of the material is subordinated to successful and enjoyable reading.

Dolch, E. W., "Individualized Reading vs Grouping Reading," *Elementary English* (December, 1961), Part I, 38:565-575 and (January, 1962), Part II, 39:14-22.

Dr. Dolch believes that individualized instruction in reading is valuable regardless of the criticism made against it. This does not mean that it is the one and only method of teaching reading but that it will take its place in the repertory of the skills of teachers.

Draper, Marcella K. and Louise H. Schwietert, *Practical Guide to Individualized Reading for Teachers and Supervisors in Elementary Schools*. May Lazar (ed.). Board of Education, Bureau of Educational Research, No. 40, October, 1960.

As a result of research conducted in 1949-1953 dealing with third grade children who were "beginning readers" in 15 schools, it was found that current reading practices and procedures are not keeping abreast with the philosophy concerning effective reading experiences. Practices and approaches are not meeting the needs, interests, and ranges of ability of children. An evaluation of the findings seems to point to the fact that the solution lies in a truly individualized approach to reading.

During the period from September 1956 through June 1959 the staff members of the Bureau made a survey of approximately 80 schools and 200 classes engaged in developing individualized reading. Extensive and intensive observations in classrooms, detailed interviews with teachers, informal discussions with children, and conferences with supervisors were conducted. As a result of these experiences and activities the data were collated and an excellent guide was prepared. Detailed information on procedures and practices in the classroom, reading skills, problems confronted and an evaluation of individualized reading are presented. In an excellent appendix, books are suggested for individualized reading for grades one, two, three and four.

Groff, Patrick J., "Materials for Individualized Reading," *Elementary English* (January, 1961), 38:1-8.

The prime material requisite, as reported by the author, for the success of an individualized reading program is a large number of

books and other reading materials on various topics and on widely divergent reading levels. The teacher should acquaint himself with the content and difficulty of the books and be aware of the interests of each age level. The development of word analysis and other skills should not be overlooked and source material for developing these skills should be provided. The manuals for independent reading activities can be helpful in the choice of books.

Hildreth, Gertrude, *Teaching Reading*. Henry Holt and Company, Inc., New York, 1958, pp. 29-33.

Teachers turned to individual reading from traditional methods because of the advantages of ungraded teaching in typical classes, the discouragement that slow readers meet when they try to keep up with the rest of the class, and the demands of rapid learners for good books. Outcomes of experiments with individual reading and some of the controversial issues and problems are discussed by the author.

Jacobs, Leland B., "Individualized Reading Is Not a Thing," *Practical Suggestions for Teaching*, Alice Miel (ed.), Bureau of Publications, Teachers College, Columbia University, New York, 1958.

Learning to read is an individual accomplishment, yet we use procedures that basically deny individualism. Some teachers have begun to experiment with methods of teaching reading skills. They are trying to arrange the time for teaching reading so that individual attention can be given. They are also trying to assess more realistically the strengths and weaknesses of the child's current performance in reading and then put their energy where it is needed. They are encouraging children to choose their own reading material and keep a record of material read. This, Dr. Jacobs believes, is an experimentation which for want of a better name has come to be known as individualized reading. The misconceptions about individualizing reading and the insights essential for successful individualized reading programs are discussed.

Lazar, May, "Individualized Reading," *Education*. (January, 1958), 78:281-289.

Individualized reading is based on thinking which involves new

concepts not only with respect to class organization, techniques and materials, but to the child's developmental needs. According to Dr. Lazar the wide range of abilities within each class and the solution to successful learning lies in a truly individualized approach to reading—one that reaches the varying needs, interests, and abilities of all children in the class. She concludes that "if teachers are more concerned with the child than the subject, prefer personal to mass approaches, and see value in stressing growth and development not regimentation, then this individual approach to reading may be a step in the right direction."

McCullough, Constance M. and Lorene K. Fox, "Opinions Differ on Individualized Reading," *N. E. A. Journal* (March, 1958), 47:162-163.

Much of the knowledge we now have about teaching of reading has been developed by curious wasteful patterns of extremes. Therefore, before we waste time and effort on individualized reading, Dr. McCullough states, there are urgent needs for carefully planned research. First, an exploration to find why some school systems are discouraged with their systematic, sequential programs must be made, and second, varied degrees of the individualized type of approach must be injected into a systematic program to determine what combination of system and self-selection procedures might produce the best results. Dr. McCullough emphasized that as true professionals we must insist upon legitimate research, with the results interpreted by those best qualified in knowledge and objectivity, before accepting and incorporating them into our own practices.

Dr. Fox's opinion is that individualizing the teaching of reading means deliberately gearing materials, tempo and techniques, so that the children's needs, interests, and learning patterns, their insights and meaning can be called into fuller play. Learning to read has always been an individual matter, regardless of how uniform or carefully standardized the steps of teaching reading may have been.

Newton, J. Roy, *Reading in Your School*. McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., New York, 1960.

Proponents of individualized reading, according to Dr. Newton, do not advocate the individualized approach to the exclusion of

others. This plan is not new since teachers have been using it in a modified way for many years, but the idea of using it as a form of instructional organization for an entire class is relatively new.

Sperber, Robert, "An Individualized Reading Program in a Third Grade," *Practical Suggestions for Teaching*, Alice Miel (ed.), Bureau of Publication, Teachers College, Columbia University, New York, 1958, pp. 44-55.

The teacher who launches an individualized reading program must assume a number of responsibilities of both an administrative and instructional nature. These include: providing books and other seatwork; making arrangements for time allotment, seating and placement of hundreds of books; keeping records that will be effective; guiding the children's selections of books; forming flexible groups, especially after the middle of the year; providing instruction when needed without omission of necessary skills; and interpreting this technique to parents.

Strang, Ruth, Constance M. McCullough, and Arthur E. Traxler, *The Improvement of Reading. Curriculum and Methods of Education*. McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1961.

Recognition of individual differences and interests in every grade leads to an individualization of reading instruction. The features necessary for an individualized reading program include: books with a wide range of reading difficulty, interest and content; responsibility for selection of suitable books placed on the child; demonstrations of routine and self-management necessary for smooth functioning; records to be kept by children and teacher; individual inventories to ascertain pupil's independent reading level, accomplishments, deficiencies and interests; and worth-while activities for those children who are not having individual conferences. The authors also discuss the values of the method, give an appraisal of the program, and set forth the possible disadvantages and problems.

Veatch, Jeannette, "In Defense of Individualized Reading," *Elementary English* (April, 1960), 37:227-234.

Individualized reading is a program in which the pupils person-

ally choose the books and materials by which teachers instruct each child in reading. It must include a personal teaching period for each child of at least five minutes about every three days. She listed the areas in which more research is needed and concluded with the statement, "I welcome a new and challenging approach such as individualized reading, it is the first serious threat to our traditional system."

Veatch, Jeannette, "Individual Reading Guidance: Fifth Grade," *Practical Suggestions for Teaching*, Alice Miel (ed.) Bureau of Publication, Teachers College, Columbia University, New York, 1958, pp. 44-55.

By the time children reach the fifth grade they "differ enormously in reading tastes and in capacity to consume books." If a teacher invites children to read books which are to contribute to their own growth in reading, to their understanding of the many things going on in the world, and to real enjoyment, the author believes that the teacher must be ready to share all kinds of enthusiasm and know how to discuss books she hasn't read as well as those she has. Valuable suggestions for independent activities while the teacher is conducting individual conferences is given. Questions usually asked concerning this approach such as time spent in reading, size of classes, number of books, and integration with other subjects are answered.

Witty, Paul, "Individualized Reading—A Summary and Evaluation," *Elementary English* (October, 1959), 36:401-413.

Dr. Witty summarizes a good reading program as one that recognizes the value of systematic instruction, the utilization of interests, the fulfillment of developmental needs, and the articulation of reading experiences with other types of worth-while activities. He believes that the best features of both individualized and group instruction should be accepted. The basal text should be a dependable guide for acquiring all basic skills, but there is a need for more diversified materials as a supplement to the basal reader.

Wrighton, J. Wayne, Director, and May Lazar, Assistant Director. *Individualized Reading, Interim Report*. Board of Education, Bureau of Educational Research, New York, June, 1957.

In this study three major objectives are included: 1) to study

the current practices of individualized reading, 2) to evaluate the practices on the basis of accepted criteria of an effective reading program, and 3) to inaugurate in selected schools a project and then help in the development of a good individualized reading program. The criteria are:

1. Teachers must accept, respect and provide for individual differences.
2. Teachers must recognize that a child's physical and mental health are important in successful learning experiences.
3. Children must desire to read and have a purpose.
4. A child must be allowed to grow and develop at his own pace.
5. The program should provide methods and materials based on each child's own peculiar assets, needs and levels.
6. The child should be the best reader that he is capable of being.
7. The child should have successful experiences.

It is reported that the individualized reading program was definitely beneficial to the children. They read better and with more understanding. The authors stated, "Teaching principles are based on motivating the child, and the children are best motivated by interest which is incorporated in this program to its fullest extent."

SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENT

The seventh annual meeting of the Michigan Reading Association will be held February 28 and March 1, 1963, at the Kellogg Center, Michigan State University, East Lansing, Michigan. Special speakers for the occasion are:

Constance M. McCullough

Clara G. Stratemeyer

Charles Van Riper

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