Echoes From the Field

Lois VanDenBerg

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Recently, the Kalamazoo Valley Intermediate School District organized a reading conference to help local school districts improve instruction.

The conference entitled the Southwestern Michigan I. T. A. (Initial Teaching Alphabet) Reading Conference was held May 23 and 24, 1967, at the Portage Northern High School Auditorium with Mrs. Fran M. Baden, Elementary Consultant, as director. It is reported that three hundred first grade and remedial reading teachers attended the conference from Indianapolis, Detroit, Benton Harbor, Bay City, Muskegon, and the Upper Peninsula.

Sir James Pitman, a designer of the i/t/a alphabet, was keynote speaker. He reported the following:

* Six million children in the English speaking world need to learn to read each year.
* These children learn to read by traditional methods about 350 printed words in the first grade.
* First graders gain a command of about 2,000 words with i/t/a.
* Reading materials are freed from the straightjacket of traditional vocabulary control with i/t/a.

Another authority and co-author of the i/t/a "Early to Read Series," Dr. Harold Tanyzer, particularly mentioned that:

* The whole language arts program is influenced by the students coming out of i/t/a classes.
* i/t/a "can't make a genius out of a dunce," but it is an exciting way to improve education.
* Children make giant steps forward in a complete language arts program.
* Teachers are challenged to keep children on this creative course begun with instruction in the forty-four sounds of the English language.

The second day of the conference was devoted to demonstrations of teaching techniques used in achieving i/t/a results in the classrooms.