

## A Cooperative Research Project in Reading

A COOPERATIVE research project in reading is now being sponsored by eight school systems of central New York and the Reading Laboratory of the School of Education of Syracuse University. The major purpose is to determine the characteristics of good and poor readers in an effort to ascertain what curricular modifications are necessary for reading to be taught more adequately throughout a school system. This is a two-year project which began in September, 1948, and will be concluded in June, 1950. One thousand students are being analyzed with case-study techniques. Half of them are "good" readers and the other half "poor." All of them were to be within or above the normal range of intelligence.

The pupils in the study have been selected by teachers at each grade level. The teachers have made their selection on three bases: (1) The child is not sub-normal in intelligence; (2) he is a good or poor reader according to prior test achievement in reading where such data were available (a "good" reader defined as one whose reading was one or more grades above his present placement, and a "poor" reader one whose reading is one or more grades below his present placement); and (3) he is successful or unsuccessful in reading according to the subjective judgment of the teachers. An analysis of this teacher judgment has proved it to be valid. Of the students chosen, ninety-five percent have scored within or above the normal intelligence range, and the reading scores of the two groups have proved to be significantly different. The "good" readers have demonstrated distinct proficiency on standardized tests, while the "poor" readers have proved essentially limited in reading ability.

Each child has been studied intensively

in four areas: intelligence, personal-emotional adjustment, reading ability, and a "general" category described below. Intelligence has been measured in grades 1-6 by the *Stanford-Binet, Form L*, the *Grace Arthur Performance Scale, Revised Form II*, and the *California Test of Mental Maturity*. In grades 7-12, intelligence has been measured by the *California Test of Mental Maturity*.

Personal-social adjustment at both levels has been studied with the *Rorschach Psychodiagnostic Test*, the *California Test of Personality*, and an autobiography. Reading has been appraised through the *Progressive Reading Test* and a diagnostic test. In grades 1-6 the *Durrell Analysis of Reading Ability* has been used; The *Van-Wagenen Dvorak Diagnostic Examination of Silent Reading Ability* has been used in grades 7-12.

The fourth area, labeled "general" includes vision examined with the *Keystone Telebinocular*, perception with the *tachistoscope*, health data obtained from the school health authorities, parent and environmental background through an extensive interview form, and a teacher evaluation through a questionnaire filled out by the teacher of each student. After the child has been examined and the results summarized, a program of recommendations has been made out for the child.

During the study of a particular school, the research reading team has visited it at least once a week, administering the examinations during the school day. At the end of the day, the members of the team met with the teachers of the school and discussed each of the tests in detail. This has served an in-service purpose and has given the teachers a great deal of insight into the strengths and weaknesses of test-

ing, particularly in the areas of reading, personality, and intelligence. During the research, parent meetings have been held to acquaint the parents with the study. During these parent meetings, the parent questionnaire has been explained in detail. At the end of the study of a given school, the research workers have explained and discussed individual case studies with the teacher of each child.

The over-all study will be completed in June, 1950, and the data will be analyzed during 1950-51. The complete results obtained should be forthcoming within a year after its conclusion.

While yet incomplete, the study has already affected school practice in the communities surveyed. A quickened interest in therapeutic treatment for emotionally upset children has resulted from the initial reports of findings. Inadequate supplies of

supplementary reading materials revealed by the survey are already being remedied. Many have shown new insights regarding the teacher as a therapist, the role of remedial or corrective programs in the school, and the need of guidance in junior and senior high schools.

Some of the more specific findings are currently being reported in various journals. For example, "A Study of the Strengths and Weaknesses of Good and Poor Readers" by Sheldon and Hatch has been accepted by the *Elementary School Journal*. Monographs and articles on the *Rorschach Test*, intelligence, and reading will appear when the study is completed. Many implications for elementary and secondary school curriculums should become apparent in the months ahead.—*William D. Sheldon, School of Education, Syracuse University.*

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