

TO WHAT EXTENT ARE FIRST GRADE TEACHERS PROVIDING FOR
INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCES IN READINESS INSTRUCTION

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Reading readiness is acquiring the skills and abilities necessary to meet with success in initial reading instruction. When a child has developed readiness, he is sufficiently mature, experienced and interested to assure the best possible response to introductory reading.¹

It has been the writer's experience that in many school systems all children in the first grade often are expected to read the first reader at the same rate, and at the same time. However, it has been shown that children vary in their rates of learning just as they do in physical make-up.² When classroom activities are based on this assumption, the teacher does not attempt to keep every child on the same page or even in the same book, but each pupil is allowed to achieve to his maximum ability.

A well-planned readiness program to meet the specific needs of children is essential for success in reading. Inability to read is a major cause for failure among children.³ After observing the success of remedial instruction which is adjusted to the abilities and interest of children, it is probable that many of these failures might have succeeded from the beginning had initial instruction and readiness been as well adjusted to the needs of the child as the remedial teaching.

Knowledge of children's abilities, interests, and needs must be known in order to meet reading objectives.⁴ Teachers

¹Dawson, Mildred A., and Bamman, Henry A., Fundamentals of Basic Reading Instruction, Longmans, Green and Co., 1959, p. 5.

²Betts, Emmett A., Foundations of Reading Instruction, American Book Co., 1957, p. 252.

³Causey, Oscar S., The Reading Teacher's Reader, The Ronald Press Co., 1958, p. 107.

⁴Durrell, D. D., Improvement of Basic Reading Abilities, World Book Co., 1956, p. 3.

must then consider these differences and base their instruction upon them. With the introduction of differentiated instruction, reading difficulties can be reduced because the teacher is learning about the child before she is teaching him.

An adequate program in reading readiness should provide for adaptation of instruction to different levels of ability, to different rates of learning, and to varied pupil needs. To insure success in reading, these factors must be considered if a child is to develop to the limits of his capacity.

Statement of the Problem

It is a well known fact that the abilities of different persons are not equal. At the beginning of the first grade, wide individual differences are found in background of experience, mental age, social adjustment, language facility, and all other traits concerned with human differences and readiness for reading. This study has been made to determine the most common inabilities and deficiencies of children entering school and the extent that first grade teachers provide for these individual differences in readiness.

Procedures

There were two procedures used in this study. The first was a review of current literature to provide background material concerning individual differences in readiness. The second was an interview-questionnaire administered to first grade teachers in the Gallatin Valley area.

Limitations

The literature reviewed included: The Encyclopedia of Educational Research, current literature, and professional books and periodicals in the Montana State College library. The interview-questionnaire was limited to the first grade teachers in the Gallatin Valley area because of the time and expense involved. It is possible that the information gathered in an interview-questionnaire may not always be accurate because of the possible admission of professional inadequacy indicated by a forthright answer. In other words, some teachers may (at times) have given answers to enhance their professional status.

A most important factor in meeting a child's reading needs is the provision of reading materials suited to his level of reading ability.¹ This factor is equally important in meeting individual needs in reading readiness. Before teaching on different levels can be accomplished, some important factors in reading readiness must be considered. In Chapter II the nature of development of these factors will be discussed.

¹Durrell, D. D., op. cit., p. 6.

CHAPTER II

NATURE AND DEVELOPMENT OF READINESS

Definition of General Readiness

One of the most important factors to consider in a reading program is that of reading readiness. In order for a child to learn to read, he must be capable of meeting with success the tasks required by initial reading instruction. A long period of preparing and maturing must come before a child can recognize printed words. Simply because a child has reached a certain age, this by no means insures initial success in reading.¹ A child must be capable mentally, physically, emotionally, and socially. Then, too, he must have a rich background of experience with ability in language expression. In the writer's experience, some first grade children experience failure when given formal reading instruction. After several days and weeks of failure their attitude toward reading is negative since they have experienced continued failure. The frequency of these problems in beginning reading provides some indication that mistakes are being made in meeting children's reading readiness needs. It is obvious that if a child cannot read, he will not read. For this reason alone, we should be able to justify the importance of a reading readiness program.²

Reading readiness implies that the child is ready for initial instruction, developed to the point where he is ready to learn to read.

To develop reading readiness, a teacher must know the important factors that are included in the term readiness,

¹Artley, A. S., Your Child Learns to Read, Scott-Foresman Co., 1953, p. 10.

²Adams, Gray Reese, Teaching Children to Read, Ronald Press Co., 1949, p. 113.

how important they are, and what she can do about them.¹ A state of readiness at any particular time is a very involved process. It is a sum of the pupil's physical, social, emotional, mental and language development.² It is generally agreed that these factors are present in children, though to different degrees depending upon the child.

Physical Readiness

Physical readiness requires good general health, and correction of any sensory or speech defect.³ In order for a child to profit from six hours of school a day, his general health should be good. A teacher may still find many cases of malnutrition, lack of sleep, and even diseases and infections among children today. The periodic weighing of children, giving physical examinations by physicians and the interpreting of this information by teachers with the aid and direction of school nurses are all valuable aids conducive to good general health of children.

Nervous conditions of children may be even more dangerous to the program of learning than poor general health. It is the teacher's concern to prepare youngsters for reading; therefore, she should notice any signs of nervous condition the child may have which would deter progress. In such cases, the teacher should refer the children to the proper place for correction of the condition. Many parents do not recognize nervous conditions in their own children. Parents with children who show signs of nervous disorder should consult with a doctor who has given special attention to nervous and mental difficulties.

¹Dolch, Edward W., Teaching Primary Reading, Carrard Press, 1951, p. 43.

²Ibid, p. 68.

³Dolch, Edward W., op. cit. p. 44.

Sensory defects and speech defects are two more aspects of physical readiness.¹ The failure in many children learning to read stems from such sensory defects as far-sightedness, near-sightedness, and poor hearing. Teachers should not rely on observation in respect to these defects, and all children should be checked for the possibility of existing deficiencies. Speech defects are easily noticed when communicating with a youngster. This type of defect is a great hindrance to reading because a child will usually hesitate to speak, which in turn will retard his vocabulary and language development.

Although many of the problems a teacher faces in the reading readiness program seem to be the concern of the parents, a knowledge of them and steps necessary to remedy them falls on the teacher.

Social-Emotional Factors

Emotional maturity and social adjustment are also important factors in readiness for reading.² Lack of adequate adjustment in these areas may upset the child so much as to prevent learning. The problems encountered in the first grade are usually more numerous if there is no kindergarten in the school. The teacher may find many children who are socially inexperienced and much of her time will be used to stress the social skills in different activities.³

Emotional stability is essential in order for a child to attain the adjustment necessary for beginning reading. The child who is not emotionally mature is not ready to profit to the fullest extent from readiness instruction.

¹Ibid, p. 46.

²Causey, Oscar S., The Reading Teacher's Reader, Ronald Press Company, 1958, p. 69.

³Dawson and Bamman, op. cit., p. 39.

Lack of preparation for entering a new environment is responsible for the lack of adjustment with many children. The child who has not felt secure at home is likely to feel more insecure in the new experience.¹ Poor attitudes toward reading may also stem from undesirable home conditions. A child who is subjected to constant nagging by parents may give vent to his hostility by refusing to cooperate in school.

A major cause of social and emotional problems within the classroom, stems from the inability of the child to meet with success, which he pictures as necessary to be accepted by his peers, himself, and his teacher. The child who is socially unacceptable, often feels inferior, becomes discouraged and gives up trying. The mentally superior child also can become maladjusted. Sensing his superiority, he may become a show-off, which may cause social unacceptance and later emotional instability.

Another cause of social and emotional problems is that of comparing the child to his siblings. Expecting the child to perform with equal ability to his brothers and sisters may hamper his wholesome development. If the child feels he cannot measure up to the expectations of the parents or teacher, a refusal to try to read often follows.²

If the teacher notices the types of behavior that cause a child to have difficulty, she can adjust her instruction to prevent further blocks to learning. Some of the common behavior characteristics shown are feeling of inadequacy, infantile behavior, resistance to authority and withdrawal tendencies.

Satisfactory social adjustment for children usually provides an environment which is comfortable and wholesome; thus

¹Hester, Kathleen B., Teaching Every Child to Read, Harper and Brothers, 1955, p. 42.

²Ibid., p. 42.

making it possible for the child to think and work without as many mental distractions. Many people can contribute to this type of adjustment, such as teachers, parents, and other children. With the proper adjustment, the child is more apt to meet with success rather than failure in initial instruction. An important factor in a readiness program then, is to insure success so as to keep a positive attitude toward reading. Until the child enjoys reading, he will not make rapid progress in the subject.

Mental Maturity

The mental age necessary for successful beginning reading may vary with the materials used, teaching efficiency, individual assistance, and adequacy with which special problems are handled.

Although there is no exact age mentally or chronologically that all persons learn to read, it is generally accepted that a child whose mental age is below six years, seldom makes satisfactory progress in reading.¹

Since mental maturity is so important in the reading readiness program, intellectual development is a determinant of reading success.² The mental age of a child is a term suggesting his capacity to learn in comparison to the norm for children his same chronological age.³ The child's mental age can be reasonably well established by his score on at least two properly administered intelligence tests. If the mental age, as scored on these tests is the same as the chronological age, a child is said to be normal.

¹Gray and Reese, op. cit., p. 98.

²Tinker, M. A., op. cit., p. 24.

³Morphell and Washburne, When Should Children Learn to Read, Elementary School Journal, September 1959, p. 10.

Starting a youngster to read before he is mentally developed may have serious effects on that individual. The mentally immature child often will not be able to comprehend the material; he will become frustrated, and consequently develop a dislike for reading. Without a love for reading, mastery of the subject is almost impossible.¹ The child who has no interest in learning to read is apt to have difficulty developing the necessary skills needed to meet with success in initial reading instruction. Because reading is interpreting and evaluating the author's meaning from written symbols, the child must have an interest in it if he is to carry on these complex processes.

According to Gray and Reese, intelligence is more closely related to success in reading than any other factor.² The writer feels that mental age may have been a more appropriate term than intelligence. Nevertheless, if the pupils cannot grasp certain abstractions, thinking results only in failure. A child has developed mental readiness only after he is capable of recognizing relationships of things, the correct order of events, and being able to solve simple problems.

Results of intelligence tests should be supplemented by observing the pupils' awareness of new situations, curiosity of environment, ability to communicate, degree of sustained attention to a task and the ability to cope with problems in school.

¹Hester, Kathleen B., op. cit., p. 18.

²Gray and Reese, op. cit., p. 130.

Determining Readiness

The following list of general features of a readiness program has been developed by Ohlsen:¹

Provisions for the child's adjustment to the school situation.

Development of a background of experience which will insure the meaningfulness of reading.

Extension of the child's command of oral language and the formation of good speech habits.

Arousal and encouragement of interest in reading and the desire to read.

Keeping these features in mind, the teacher now begins to develop the skills and abilities necessary to meet initial success in reading. These skills and abilities are: reading from left to right, developing listening skills, auditory and visual discrimination, determining oral context clues, proper use of pictures and the desire to want to read.

Reading from left to right is an ability that the teacher should not take for granted.² Parents and teachers should encourage young children to look at a sequence of pictures or letters in a word from left to right. Pre-reading activities provide an opportunity to do this. When a child is reading words or related series of pictures and they make sense to him, proper development has taken place.³

Listening is an important skill to be learned because through listening the child learns the words to attach to his experiences, and how to put them in sentences. Furthermore, he gets nearly all of his directions through listening.

¹Ohlsen, Merle M., Modern Methods in Elementary Education, Henry Holt and Company, 1959, p. 199.

²Betts, Emmett A., Foundations of Reading Instruction, American Book Co., 1957, p. 288.

³Ohlsen, Merle M., op. cit., p. 201.

During the readiness period the teacher reads many interesting stories to the children. When listening skills are sufficiently developed, the child should be able to understand the main idea, get details in the right order, and be able to draw simple conclusions from the story. The indications are that when listening ability is low, reading ability tends to progress at a slower rate.

Learning to read effectively is facilitated by skill in auditory and visual discrimination both as to whole words and the details of words. Children are sensitive to likenesses and differences in sounds to some degree, otherwise they could not have learned to talk. A teacher can use many different techniques to help develop these skills.

One technique to follow is to ask the children to listen for rhymes, such as: Jill and hill in the well-known nursery jingle, or to listen to words that start with the same sound in a sequence of words, such as: run, ran, rock, rust, and bed. Ask the children to tell which word does not belong. Another way is to encourage children to listen to and imitate the sounds of animals, machines, and other things to develop the ability to discriminate sounds.

The ability to recognize words in oral context is another important skill in reading readiness. When the child hears unfamiliar words in a sentence, the use of context clues can be a valuable aid to determine their meaning.¹ In oral context the teacher is careful to use only common and familiar words. Context clues are derived from the meanings of those words in the sentence already known to the child. As the child progresses in reading, he will meet many more words which are unfamiliar to him, and he will use context clues to unlock the meaning and pronunciation of these words.

¹Dawson and Bamman, op. cit., p. 92.

Practice and instruction using oral context prepares him for the ability to use written context clues later. Usually oral context clues are approached through the use of pictures. For example at the very beginning, the teacher may show the class a picture of a boy throwing a ball. She might then write the sentence: The boy is throwing a _____. The child then fills in the word "ball". Repeated practice of context clues at a consistently more advanced level aids children in attaching appropriate meanings to new words as well as practice in phonetic and structural analysis.

In teaching the proper use of pictures, the teacher emphasizes the importance of the picture. A good method used to help children understand the picture is by the use of questions. Some of the questions that might be asked are: What is happening now? What just happened? What do you think will happen next? Who is talking to whom? What do you think they are saying? How do you think they are saying it? By the proper use of pictures, the children get ample practice in the thinking which is so important in a readiness program. Pictures also can be used to develop the ability to find the main ideas, put things in a logical order, and draw simple conclusions.

Motivation is another factor to consider. Cultivating the desire to want to read is one of the most important skills the teacher must develop in children. Book corners where children may go and select books for the teacher to read aloud to them is one way of developing a desire to want to read. What ever method is used, the children's interest in reading will be enhanced when they find out what pleasure books can bring to them. Also the teacher develops in the pupils an awareness that reading is a useful tool which is needed greatly if we are to get along well in society.

If children are not ready to read, from the standpoint of maturity, formal reading instruction is largely wasted and

even the best methods are of little value.¹ Individual factors have a greater effect on reading growth than does method. Since individual differences are of such a wide range, the teacher must be careful in determining the level of each child in the different readiness skills. The teacher's concern for adequate preparation does not imply holding back children who are ready for initial instruction. This situation causes as many problems as starting the child too soon. Children's readiness should be based upon the individual progress since each group will vary in attainment.² Some children who enter school are ready for initial reading instruction the first day. Factors which contribute to this readiness are: background of experiences with things, people and different situations, a good oral vocabulary, interest in reading, and a home environment with understanding parents. Consequently, as soon as the child has had time to adjust to the new school situation there is no reason why he should not receive initial reading instruction.

Some of the important factors of readiness have been discussed. Since the readiness program is important, the purpose of this study was to survey the problems of readiness and the extent that teachers provide for individual differences in readiness instruction. The construction, administration, and results of an interview-questionnaire used in this survey will be discussed in Chapter III.

¹Uhlsen, Merle M., op. cit., p. 195.

²Ibid, p. 199.

CHAPTER III

CONSTRUCTION, ADMINISTRATION, AND RESULTS OF INTERVIEW-QUESTIONNAIRE

An interview-questionnaire was constructed to be used in this study as a means of surveying inabilities and deficiencies in children entering school. It was used for three reasons: (1) for ease in computing results, (2) assurance that questions asked would be exactly the same to each person, and (3) insure 100% return. The construction, administration, and results of the interview-questionnaire are discussed in the following sections.

Construction of the Interview-Questionnaire

The interview-questionnaire was constructed in two sections. Both sections concern problems selected from the expert opinion of others, a review of literature, and the writer's experience.

In Section I, these problems were grouped into three general areas: Physical, Mental (thinking), and Social-Emotional. The aforementioned areas were chosen for the questionnaire because of their importance as found in the review of literature.

Physical readiness was one of the major problems discussed in the related research. It was included in this study because a lack of physical readiness or physical defects in children entering school, may cause the child to meet with difficulty in coping with the readiness program successfully.

The mental (thinking) ability area was included since it is generally agreed that without adequate mental (thinking) abilities, success in initial readiness instruction often is delayed. In like manner, the degree of readiness a child has for the task he is to undertake is directly related to his understanding and skill in his thinking ability.

Since readiness to learn is dependent, to a certain extent upon social and emotional development, it was the writer's opinion that this area should be included. This is a very important factor in learning because many reading disabilities stem from lack of adjustment in the social and emotional area. The child who is not adjusted in these respects is not ready to profit to the fullest extent from classroom instruction.

Space was provided at the end of each area for other responses that teachers felt should have been included. The purpose of using this method was to allow a place for inabilities or deficiencies that may have been overlooked in the review of literature.

The only reason for placing the areas in the numerical order in which they appear was to show that in the related research, the areas appeared in this manner in a majority of cases.

Section II of this interview-questionnaire was composed of interview type questions. These questions were constructed to determine what experienced first grade teachers are doing in daily instruction to meet the needs of students with these inabilities and deficiencies listed in Section I.

A rating scale of frequently, occasionally, seldom, and never was used for the first section for the purpose of evaluating each statement. It was also given a numerical rating, corresponding to the terms used of 3, 2, 1, and 0 for the ease in computing the frequency of each statement.

All of the questions used in the questionnaire either had been encountered by the writer while elementary principal, or they were problems found to be prominent in the review of literature. The individual questions used in this study were screened with the assistance of others to determine the significance of each one, clarity of understanding, and to provide for better organization.

Administration of Interview-Questionnaire

The interview-questionnaire was administered to first grade teachers in the Gallatin Valley area. It was administered personally by the writer to each teacher individually.

The names of teachers and schools have not been mentioned in this study because it was the opinion of the writer that teacher responses might be affected if such a procedure was used.

Each teacher was given the instructions the same as they appeared on the questionnaire for Section I. The directions given were: "Please check the frequency that you have noticed these problems in children entering school". The second section was used strictly as a guide for interviewing teachers. Questions in this section were asked each teacher individually to determine what methods they use to provide for individual differences in readiness.

The results of the interview-questionnaire were then tabulated to determine the responses to each question. These results will be discussed in the following section.

Results of the Interview-Questionnaire

Results of the interview-questionnaire were computed on the basis of the rating scale of 3, 2, 1, and 0. Each question on Section I of the questionnaire had a maximum rating of 60 if each received a marking of frequently. The total score of each problem is shown in Figure 1.

The average score of each area was tabulated to determine in which area most problems are concentrated. Since there were a different number of statements in each area, the average was figured by totaling the scores in each part and dividing by the number of items in that area.

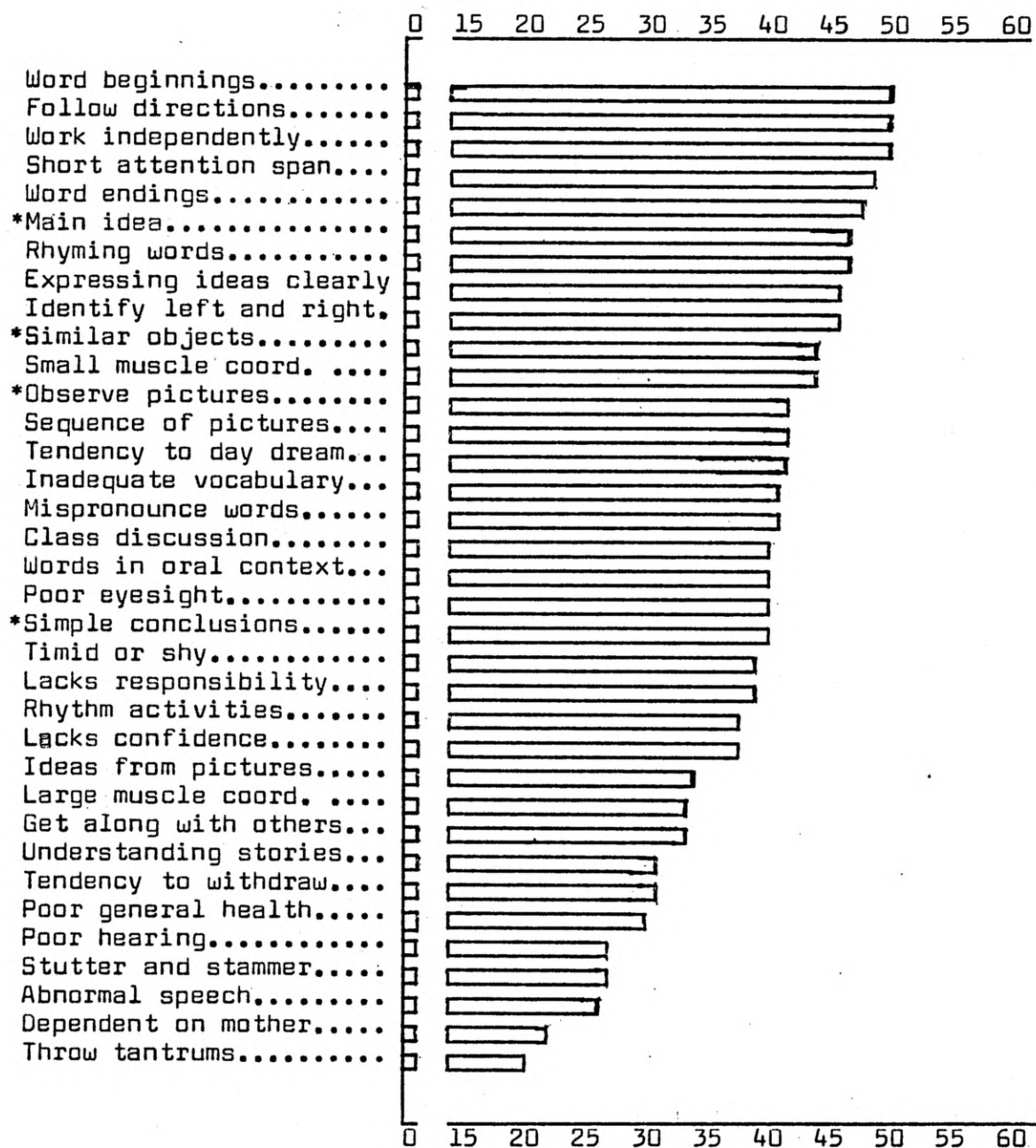


Figure 1. Ranking order of problems on Section I of questionnaire.

* For complete identification and explanation of the item see the interview-questionnaire, Appendix.

Upon the basis of the results obtained in Section I of the interview-questionnaire, the three highest ranking items in each area were given major emphasis in the following discussion, along with the methods used by the teachers to deal with these problems. The instructional procedures used by the teachers were determined from interview questions listed in Section II.

Physical Area. The physical area was the first area appearing in the interview questions. From taking an average of total scores in each area, this area ranked third in student inabilities and deficiencies. There were eight statements listed in this area as shown below. The total score for each item, arranged in ranking order, is illustrated in Figure 2.

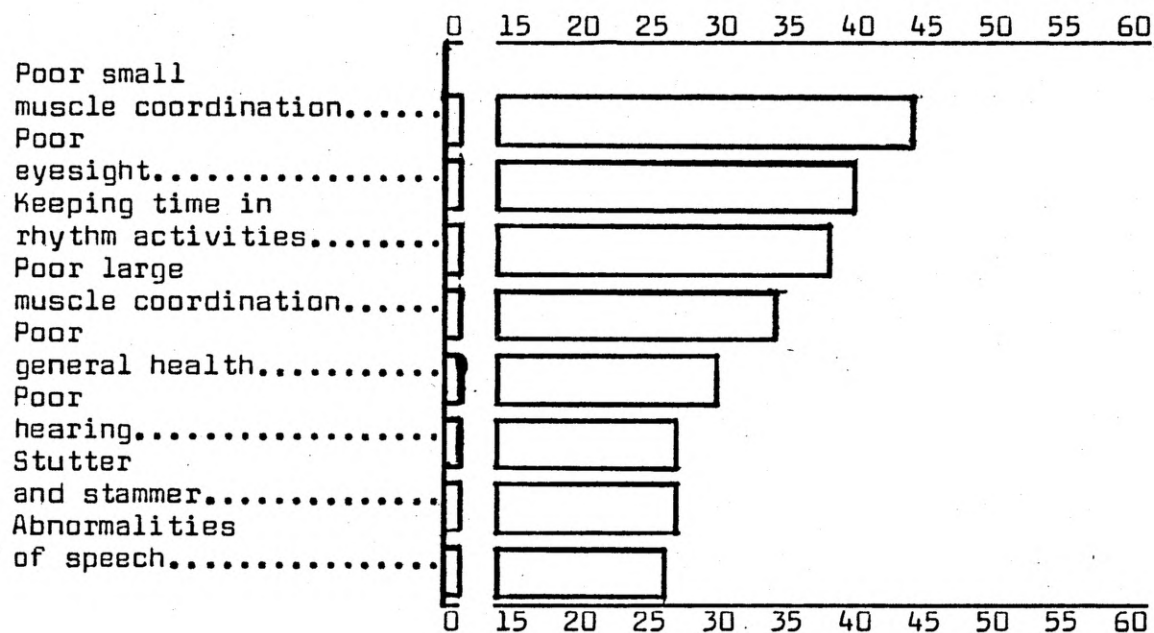


Figure 2. Ranking order of each statement in physical area.

Poor small muscle coordination with a rating of 44 was the item receiving the highest score in the physical area. The most

common methods being used by the teachers interviewed to improve small muscle coordination is playing games which exercise these muscles. Some of the games suggested were concerned with the manipulation of blocks, beads, and puzzles. The use of geometric designs--coloring, cutting-out, and arranging--was a method employed by three teachers to improve coordination of eye and hand muscles. Another method being employed is rhythm activities; thereby, the children can develop coordination and also improve in the ability to keep time in rhythm activities. Other methods suggested were: finger painting, action dances, tracing, coloring, physical activities, and the use of scissors.

Poor eyesight, having a total score of 40, was the second highest item in this area. The majority of teachers give an eye test and the one most frequently used was the Snellen Eye Chart. If sight irregularities are found, the parents are informed by the teacher or the school nurse. Many teachers temporarily handled the problem by changing the seating of the students until glasses could be fitted or corrective measures taken. If the child's eyesight problem could not or would not be taken care of by the parents, five teachers referred the case to the social worker in that locality.

The third ranking item was difficulty in keeping time in rhythm activities which received a score of 38. Additional practice in rhythm games, dances, and exercises are the methods employed by the reporting teachers to develop rhythmic coordination. Two teachers said they played records where the musical beat and tempo were exaggerated. The students were asked to keep time by tapping the beat.

Mental Area. Part II, Section I of the interview-questionnaire was the mental (thinking) area. This area had the highest ranking of inabilities and deficiencies in this study. There were seventeen statements in this area. The total score for each item, arranged in ranking order, is illustrated in Figure 3.

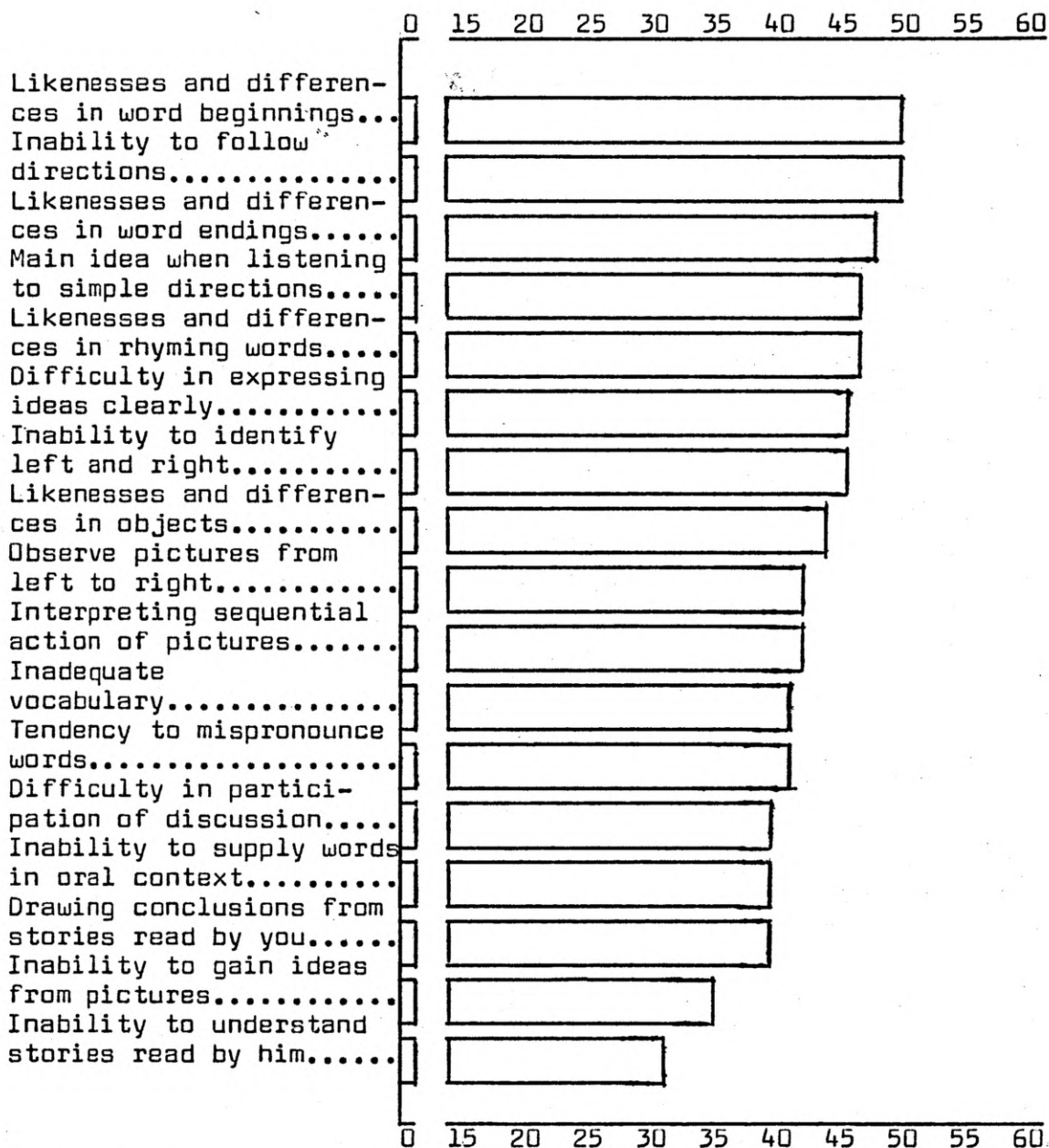


Figure 3. Ranking score of each statement in mental (thinking) area.

The two items receiving the highest score in the mental (thinking) area were: inability to hear likenesses and differences in word beginnings and inability to follow directions. Both of these items received a score of 50 on the rating scale.

Ranking second in the mental (thinking) area was the inability to hear likenesses and differences in word endings, which received a score of 48. Inability to grasp main ideas and inability to hear likenesses and differences in rhyming words each had a score of 47.

Inability to hear likenesses and differences in beginning sounds of words was of major concern with the teachers interviewed. Teachers helped children overcome this deficiency in different ways. The most common method used to develop this ability was playing games. Teachers in this study felt that by using this method, a greater skill in listening as well as following directions was developed. For example, the teacher might pronounce boy, dog, and baby, and ask the children to tell which words began with the same sound.

Picture charts which illustrate beginning sounds is another method suggested by teachers to develop the ability to distinguish between initial sounds. Other procedures suggested were: musical games, sound imitations of animals and science experiments concerned with different sounds and tones. Some teachers did not express clearly how this ability was taught.

The inability to follow directions also was one of the paramount problems in the mental (thinking) area. Although this problem ranked as one of the two highest on this part, seven of the teachers did not state any method used to overcome the problem. Of the teachers giving their method for improving this ability, the majority gave directions in a step-by-step manner to aid the students in understanding the directions. Other procedures used were: making the choice of words used by the teacher simple and the directions concise; not repeating the directions after they had been given twice; asking a child who has been listening to repeat the directions, giving praise to that child stating the directions adequately, thus giving other students added incentive; and giving directions for activities in which the children have a keen interest.

The inability to hear likenesses and differences in word endings ranked second in the mental (thinking) area. Teacher methods for improvement in this area were the same as word beginnings with one exception. Eleven teachers felt that talking at a slower rate was the only difference in handling the two problems. It was the opinion of five teachers that grouping similar words, such as: cat and pat would lead to a better understanding of word endings.

Ranking third in the total score were the items, inability to grasp main idea when listening to simple directions and inability to hear likenesses and differences in rhyming words. Both items had a score of 47. The most common method used to develop the ability to grasp the main idea was telling stories. Following the story, the teacher then asked comprehension questions covering the main idea and simple details. Then, too, questions were asked to draw out generalizations and conclusions. Staying on one activity for a shorter period of time was suggested by most teachers to keep interest and attention. Other methods cited were: the use of workbooks; the making of material easy enough to understand; the use of expressiveness in voice and gesture; and games to develop good listening habits. Hearing likenesses and differences in rhyming words was developed by the majority of teachers through the reading of riddles to the children. Seven teachers used visual aids for pupil practice in rhymes. For example, a ditto sheet is given each pupil with pictures containing pairs of words that rhyme, such as: a picture of a cat and a rat. Another method suggested was reading nursery rhymes and jingles to the students to develop a sensitivity to rhyming words.

Social-Emotional Area. Part III, Section I of the interview-questionnaire was the social-emotional area. This area ranked second in this study of inabilities and deficiencies. The ten

statements in this area are illustrated below in Figure 4. These items are in ranking order, along with the score of each item.

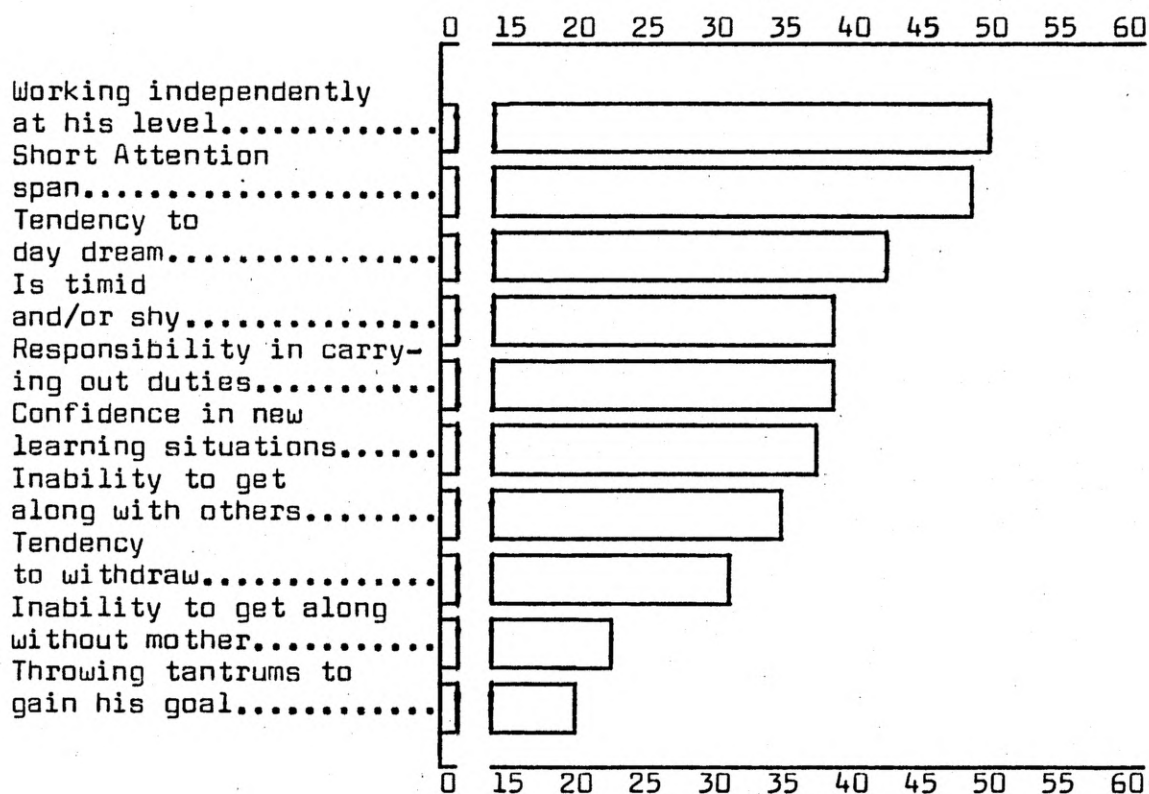


Figure 4. Ranking score of each statement in social-emotional area.

The item receiving the highest score in the social-emotional area was the inability to work independently at his own level. This statement received a total score of 50. Receiving a total score of 49 and ranking second, was short attention span. The tendency to day dream ranked third in the social-emotional area with a score of 42.

Methods used to develop the ability to work independently generally centered around giving the child classroom responsibility. The majority of teachers listed duties that the child

could carry out. Among them were: helping others around him whenever possible, class monitors, playground safety, and game leaders. Another method being used by many of the teachers is to insist that the child completes a task he has undertaken.

Short attention span, with a total score of 49, ranked second in the social-emotional area. Procedures used to overcome this problem were: the development of interest, limiting activities to hold interest, and having children engage in those activities which do not cause excessive concentration. Visual aids were also mentioned as a means of getting attention of those who are easily distracted. Materials of bright colors and action pictures have been used to hold the child's attention.

The tendency to day dream, with a score of 42, ranked third in this area. A common method used by the majority of teachers answering this question to correct this deficiency was to allow children periods of freedom to exercise and enjoy other activities. Group participation in games was cited by three teachers in order to hold a child's interest. Other methods used were: singing, telling stories, and drawing to relieve tensions.

In Chapter IV, the study is summarized and conclusions are drawn based upon results of the interview-questionnaire. Some recommendations also have been presented.

CHAPTER IV

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In order for a child to meet with success in initial reading instruction, a period of getting ready is of great importance.¹ Children reach the readiness stage at different times, depending upon such things as home background with understanding parents, wide experiences, and adequate speaking vocabulary.

It was the writer's opinion that in many instances, readiness instruction was not geared to meeting individual differences in children entering school. The question to be answered in this investigation was: to what extent are first grade teachers providing for individual differences in readiness instruction.

An interview-questionnaire was constructed and administered to 20 first grade teachers in the Gallatin Valley area. The questions appearing on the questionnaire were obtained from expert opinion of others, a review of literature, and the writer's experience as elementary principal.

Summary

Results of the interview-questionnaire revealed that most inabilities and deficiencies in children entering school were in the mental (thinking) area. The three most frequent problems in this area were: inability to hear likenesses and differences in word beginnings, inability to follow directions, and inability to hear likenesses and differences in word endings.

The social-emotional area ranked second in importance of inabilities and deficiencies in children entering school according to teachers interviewed. Inability to work independently

¹Artley, S. A., Your Child Learns to Read, Scott-Foresman and Company, 1953, p. 10.

at his own level received the highest score in this area. Short attention span ranked second and the tendency to day dream third in the social-emotional area.

Physical readiness was considered the area of fewest problems by the teachers reporting. Poor small muscle coordination was the item receiving the highest score in the physical area. Ranking second was poor eye sight and difficulty in keeping time in rhythm activities was a close third.

From the results obtained in the interview-questionnaire, it was evident that individual differences are being ignored by many teachers in their readiness instruction.

Conclusions

Three conclusions were drawn from this study. It was evident by the results of the interview-questionnaire that some teachers did not recognize individual differences in children entering school. Results of this study indicated that many of the problems in one specific area were seldom encountered by the teachers, but when asked the same questions in a different form, this area was given as the area of greatest pupil difficulty. For example, questions concerned with social-emotional area were generally checked as problems seldom encountered; however, when asked in which of the three areas in readiness do most children experience difficulty, the answer given was in the social-emotional area. Also when asked what method was used to determine readiness, five teachers reported that age was the only method used.

The second conclusion of the writer was that some teachers recognize individual differences in children but do not adjust their instruction to meet these differences. Of the 20 teachers reporting in this investigation, six teachers seemingly did not provide for individual needs as they were unable

to suggest any methods used to overcome the problems they had checked as occurring frequently.

It was also the writer's conclusion that some teachers think they discover pupil deficiencies by observation only. Four of the teachers interviewed did not administer any eye test, and nine teachers did not administer any type of hearing test or check. Experience has shown that children with rather serious hearing loss are mistaken sometimes as slow learners simply because they cannot hear well.

Recommendations

On the basis of the results obtained from the interview-questionnaire, individual's needs are not always cared for; therefore, the following four recommendations are made.

It is recommended that a teacher in service training program concerned with readiness instruction be encouraged whenever possible. Without a thorough knowledge of how to determine readiness and how readiness skills, knowledge, and attitudes are developed, instruction is of little value. Readiness programs are valuable aids in helping children to establish a good foundation in the skills they will need in initial instruction.

Further, it is recommended that instruction be adapted to different levels of ability so that each pupil may progress at his own rate.

It is strongly recommended that before readiness tests are administered, the pupils be allowed sufficient time to adjust to their new environment. Adjusting to school is an important part of readiness. The child entering school for the first time is suddenly placed in an entirely new environment.

Also it is recommended that teachers make every effort possible to find pupils who are having sight or hearing difficulties. Some means of testing should be used to screen out those pupils who may need further examining from the school nurse or physician.

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APPENDIX

Questionnaire Answered By
First Grade Teachers

QUESTIONNAIRE ON READINESS ABILITIES AND DEFICIENCIES
IN FIRST GRADE CHILDREN FROM
THE GALLATIN VALLEY

This questionnaire includes a number of inabilities and deficiencies that cover the following three areas: Physical, Mental, and Social-Emotional. Please check the frequency that you have noticed these problems in children entering school.

(3) (2) (1) (0)
Frequently Occasionally Seldom Never

I. Physical:

a. Poor eyesight	_____	_____	_____	_____
b. Poor Hearing	_____	_____	_____	_____
c. Abnormalities of speech (cleft palate, etc.)	_____	_____	_____	_____
d. Stutter and stammer	_____	_____	_____	_____
e. Poor general health	_____	_____	_____	_____
f. Poor small muscle coordination (hands, etc.)	_____	_____	_____	_____
g. Poor large muscle coordination (legs for running, etc.)	_____	_____	_____	_____
h. Difficulty in keeping time in rhythm activities	_____	_____	_____	_____
i. Other:	_____	_____	_____	_____
1. _____	_____	_____	_____	_____
2. _____	_____	_____	_____	_____
3. _____	_____	_____	_____	_____

II. Mental:

a. Inability to grasp main idea when listening to simple directions.	_____	_____	_____	_____
b. Inability to draw simple conclusions from stories read by you.	_____	_____	_____	_____
c. Inability to hear likenesses and differences in word beginnings.	_____	_____	_____	_____
d. Inability to hear likenesses and differences in word endings.	_____	_____	_____	_____
e. Inability to interpret the sequential action of picture stories.	_____	_____	_____	_____
f. Inability to supply words in oral context.	_____	_____	_____	_____
g. Inability to gain ideas from pictures.	_____	_____	_____	_____
h. Inability to see likenesses and differences in similar objects, figures and letters (such as: b-d, h-n).	_____	_____	_____	_____
i. Inability to hear likenesses and differences in rhyming words.	_____	_____	_____	_____

	(3) Frequently	(2) Occasionally	(1) Seldom	(0) Never
j. Inadequate vocabulary.	_____	_____	_____	_____
k. Difficulty in expressing ideas clearly.	_____	_____	_____	_____
l. Tendency to mispronounce words: (Mothō for Mother)	_____	_____	_____	_____
(tome and do for come and go)	_____	_____	_____	_____
m. Difficulty in participation of discussion.	_____	_____	_____	_____
n. Inability to follow directions.	_____	_____	_____	_____
o. Inability to understand stories read to him.	_____	_____	_____	_____
p. Inability to identify left and right.	_____	_____	_____	_____
q. Inability to observe pictures in left to right progression.	_____	_____	_____	_____
r. Other:	_____	_____	_____	_____
1. _____	_____	_____	_____	_____
2. _____	_____	_____	_____	_____
3. _____	_____	_____	_____	_____

III. Social-Emotional:

a. Tendency to day-dream.	_____	_____	_____	_____
b. Short attention span.	_____	_____	_____	_____
c. Inability to work independently at his level.	_____	_____	_____	_____
d. Inability to get along with other children in work and play activities.	_____	_____	_____	_____
e. Tendency to throw tantrums to gain his goal.	_____	_____	_____	_____
f. Tendency to withdraw.	_____	_____	_____	_____
g. Is timid and/or shy.	_____	_____	_____	_____
h. Inability to get along without mother--cries often--asks for her.	_____	_____	_____	_____
i. Lacks responsibility in carrying out extra duties assigned by you.	_____	_____	_____	_____
j. Lacks confidence when approaching new learning situations.	_____	_____	_____	_____
k. Other:	_____	_____	_____	_____
1. _____	_____	_____	_____	_____
2. _____	_____	_____	_____	_____
3. _____	_____	_____	_____	_____

1. In ranking order, what do you believe would be three most important things parents could do to get a child ready for school?
1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
2. Of the following three areas in readiness: physical, mental, and social-emotional, in which one do most children experience difficulty?
1. _____
3. Do you give any eye tests or checks? Yes _____ No _____
If yes, what eye test or check do you use? _____
4. If you discover some deficiency or indication of poor visions, what follow up procedure do you use?
1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
5. Do you give any hearing tests or checks? Yes _____ No _____
If yes, what hearing test or check do you use? _____
6. If you discover some deficiency or indication of poor hearing, what follow up procedure do you use?
1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
7. Are readiness tests administered in your school? Yes _____ No _____
If yes, what tests do you use? _____
If tests are given when are they usually administered?
____ (1) First week ____ (4) Fourth week
____ (2) Second week ____ (5) Other _____
____ (3) Third week
8. If you discover the child has poor muscle coordination, do you have some especially good procedures for correction?
1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
9. In ranking order, what methods do you use to determine readiness?
1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
10. Do you send a questionnaire concerning the personal data of the child to the parents? Yes _____ No _____
11. Do you give special instruction to children who are left-handed or left eyed? Yes _____ No _____
If yes, what methods of instruction do you use?
1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
12. Do you group children for readiness instruction? Yes _____ No _____
If yes, what method of grouping do you use? _____

13. What are some of the most effective methods you have used to develop listening skills; such as, main idea, details and simple conclusions?
1. _____ 3. _____
2. _____
14. What are some of the most effective methods you use to develop abilities to see likenesses and differences?
1. _____ 3. _____
2. _____
15. What are some of the most effective methods you have used to develop left-to-right movement?
1. _____ 3. _____
2. _____
16. What are some of the most effective methods you have used to develop the ability to follow directions?
1. _____ 3. _____
2. _____
17. What are some successful methods you use to teach a child how to interpret a picture?
1. _____ 3. _____
2. _____
18. What are some successful methods you use to teach a child the use of oral context clues?
1. _____ 3. _____
2. _____
19. What are some of the most effective methods you have used to develop a sense of responsibility in children?
1. _____ 3. _____
2. _____
20. What are some successful methods you use to develop cooperation among children?
1. _____ 3. _____
2. _____
21. In ranking order, what are some methods you use to provide for individual differences in readiness instruction?
1. _____ 3. _____
2. _____
22. What are some especially good methods you use to promote interest in beginning reading?
1. _____ 3. _____
2. _____
23. Do you have some especially good methods you use in dealing with children who are shy, timid, or day-dream?
1. _____ 3. _____
2. _____
24. Do you have an entrance policy regarding age for admission to the first grade? Yes _____ No _____ What is the date? _____
If yes, what is your opinion regarding this policy? _____
25. Do you have some especially good methods for helping a child to develop in the social-emotional area?
1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____