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Date August 7, 1973

A SURVEY OF PARENTS' OPINIONS IN EKALAKA, MONTANA TOWARD IMPLEMENTING INDIVIDUALIZED INSTRUCTION

by

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this investigation was to determine the opinions of parents of elementary children in Ekalaka, Montana towards the implementation of individualized instruction.

This investigation was accomplished by a questionnaire completed by fifty-five parents of elementary students in Ekalaka, Montana. The questionnaire included four major areas broken down into twenty-eight individual questions. The four major areas covered in the questionnaire were student needs, evaluation, progress and process, and schedules and materials. A review of literature and related research was utilized to make the questions more meaningful.

From the survey of parents, it was determined that the parents were in general disagreement with seven questionnaire statements relating to characteristics of individualized instruction. The questions referred to the discarding of letter grades, elimination of criticism, failure, and discouragement from the schools, placing the responsibility for learning upon the student, making provision for students to spend most of their time during the day in library resource rooms, making and utilizing the library as the main resource center, and using teaching machines for students to study topics at different times from one another and to use them to free the teacher to work with individual students and their problems.

Recommendations were that a communications committee be instigated, made up of interested personnel from the school and the community for relaying information to the public, and, this committee could set guidelines for implementation of an individualized program. Also, further research be done in other communities to see if any additional light could be shed on setting up guidelines for implementation of innovative programs.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Although much has been written about individualized instruction, many problems that underlie the difficulties inherent in the implementation of such instruction remains obscure.

Sara (1970:11), noted:

> Despite all the talk about innovation in the last ten years, changes in education remain isolated, piecemeal, small in scope and often are temporary. Promising ideas tested and proven in one school or school district have been slow in affecting classroom practice in other locations.

An assessment of attitudes and opinions of those people that may be affected by the implementation of individualized instruction may reveal precise factors which underlie these difficulties. Parents, in particular, are affected by school curricula since most are concerned about the educational development of their children. Furthermore, as taxpayers, parents often feel a need to express opinions that often influence school curriculum decisions. Wilson (1971:108) suggested that, "It is no doubt healthy that they (citizens) never give up trying to extend or redirect existing institutions." Concerning his feeling that effective change comes only with public unrest, Wilson (1971:108) stated, "A new consciousness; always a prerequisite of social change, is not necessarily heralded by an absence of conflict. Indeed, tension is the expected result."

Statement of the Problem

The problem of this investigation was to determine the opinions of parents of elementary children in Ekalaka, Montana towards the implementation of individualized instruction.

Purpose of the Investigation

Of prime importance to the purpose of this investigation was the simple assessment of parents' opinions. Other concomitant purposes are, however, evident. The review of literature in this investigation will provide a goal clarification, which is essential not only to the accurate assessment of parent opinion, but also to the conflicting descriptions of individualized instruction. The need for such goal clarification is stated by Wilson (1971:112), "Goal clarification is probably the most difficult but most important task of community development." The opinions will hopefully provide a stimulus to parents to become involved in school curriculum development.

General Questions to be Answered

Several questions pertinent to this investigation are as follows:

1. According to authorities, what particular problems will be encountered in implementing an individualized instructional program?

2. According to authorities, what diversified settings are needed in order to implement an individualized program?
3. According to the authorities, what are the benefits of an individualized program?
4. As determined by the instrument, what if any philosophies relating to individualized instruction do the parents surveyed reject?
5. Do the results of the parental survey indicate a parental willingness to change to an innovative program such as individualized instruction and therefore provide means for setting up guidelines for implementation?

Procedures of the Study

From the review of literature, the researcher constructed a list of major features pertaining to individualized instruction. From this list, the researcher drafted a questionnaire of pertinent questions to be presented to eighty-five parents of elementary-age students in Ekalaka, Montana.

Data was collected and tabulated. The results are presented in frequency distributions in Chapter IV.

After the data was collected and tabulated, the questionnaires were analyzed to determine parental opinions about implementation of individualized instruction.

The results of this analysis might be utilized in setting up guidelines for implementing innovative programs. These guidelines will include factors garnered from this investigation in coordinated efforts to include community opinion and support to expedite the implementation process.

Limitations

The limitations of this investigation may be described as follows:

1. The review of related literature was limited to reference material available in the Montana State University Library and the researcher's personal library.
2. In reviewing related literature, many different interpretations of individualized instruction were found. This study was limited to only those facts considered pertinent to development of guidelines for a program of individualized instruction.
3. The questionnaire was limited to specific factors pertinent to the study.
4. The administration of the questionnaire was limited to parents of students in the Ekalaka Elementary School.
5. Pre-learned information about individualized instruction by parents cannot be effectively controlled.

6. Response of parents was not checked for reliability, nor can a representative sample of responses be guaranteed.

Definition of Terms

Individualized Instruction is a term describing a type of educational program which attempts to provide each child with a somewhat unique set of learning experiences. It emphasized the development of each individual at his own rate of speed. The student takes the responsibility for the areas of study he desires to pursue and time he wishes to devote to each area. (Hunter, 1970:53-54)

Differentiated Instruction is a term that is somewhat synonymous with individualized instruction. It applies to the recognition of and acceptance of different learning needs of children in the classroom and therefore includes modifying the methods of instruction to meet these needs. (Stahl, 1970:25-26)

Individually Guided Instruction, often called IGE, is closely associated with individualized instruction and differentiated instruction. Basically, it means guiding the individual with every resource available to make provision for each individual according to his needs.

The next step in this study was to review available literature and related research on individualized instruction. This is found in Chapter II.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE AND RELATED RESEARCH

It has never been easy to bring about change. Even changing the model of the car you drive, or the type of clothing that you wear, takes time and may be emotionally fatiguing. Often the anxiety of promoting change is far greater than the actual process of making the decision to change. The end goal is clear--the only problem is getting there.

Edling (1970:100) concurs by stating:

> There is nothing more difficult to take in hand, more perilous to conduct, or more uncertain in its success, than to take the lead in the introduction of a new order of things.

Introduction

It appears that the fundamental problem of implementing individualized instruction lies in getting people to realize that they in truth do believe in individualized instruction if they believe in the individuality of man and his personal dignity.

The reasons for implementation of individualized instruction are basically a part of the assumption that people are different and, therefore, learn differently. Differences among people are apparent on such various factors as sex, intelligence, cultural background and economic backgrounds yet, traditionally, schools have ignored such differences. (Farley, 1959:71-72)

Bishop (1970:1) noted that American school systems have been beleagured by dogmatic and too typical self-contained classrooms that are geared toward groups of students. Furthermore, he sees the traditional classroom as an unfortunate device that subjects children to group life, group norms and group conditions, when children's needs require personalized attention. Bishop (1971:1) also feels that such group methodology leads to isolated, neglected and faceless individuals.

Lewis (1971:11) noted that for years teachers have noticed differences in students' physical abilities, mental abilities, talents and interests; yet while these differences have been noticed, the observations of the typical classroom reveal one teacher trying desperately to communicate with thirty students as though all students learned at the same rate or all were interested in the same subject matter. Some more particular objections to the self-contained classroom are made by Bishop (1971:172) who states that it is detrimental to the creative process, denies self-expression, and opposes the learning process. He also believes the atmosphere of the self-contained classroom is as much of a detriment to the teacher as it is to the student.

Occasionally, according to Lewis (1971:11), the teacher, in an effort to make allowances for individual differences, will divide his class into two or three groups; however, such a division does

nothing more than present more groups for a similar teaching process. Other techniques practiced by educators, who try to avoid the pitfalls of the self-contained classroom, are listed by Lewis. Such innovations as multiple texts, special groupings (teaching and ability grouping) and the Joplin Plan did not, according to Lewis (1971:11), individualize instruction. In fact, he contends that homogeneous groupings harmed students. (Lewis, 1971:12)

This attitude is also held by two other well known educational writers, Jean D. Grambs and Walter B. Waetzen (1969:59). They state:

> The most unequal thing that happens in our schools is that unequals are treated as equals. We know that learning proceeds according to individual differences, and it follows logically that teaching must take these differences into account. It is curious and disconcerting , therefore, that while we embrace verbally the fact that individual differences exist and should be provided for, we overlook or disregard what the present authors believe to be an important difference among individuals.

Taking a more mollified approach to the distinction of individualized instruction, Hunter (1971:54) suggested that the concept of individualization does not mean that each student must work individually. To her, the concept means that the teacher, on the basis of the child's learning needs, decides if the child is to learn a particular task in a group or alone. In agreement with Hunter, Stahl (1970:25) suggests that not only is individualization on a one-to-one basis an impossibility but also undesireable. She believes that working with groups gives the child social learning skills

which are of great value. Occasionally, Stahl (1970:25-26) relates, a teacher will work with one child, but the teacher can use many other strategies to differentiate instruction. "Differentiation", according to her, is synonymous with individualized instruction and includes encouraging children to learn in various ways. Hunter (1970:53-54) summarizes the question of what individualized instruction means by stating, "It is not necessarily different for each learner, but must be appropriate for each."

Lewis (1971:12) feels that an individualized program would place responsibility for learning on the student and rightly so. She further suggests that by providing learning experiences and learning activities, which would be self-reinforced by a continuous process of self-assessment, the student would be encouraged to become a self-directed and self-initiating learner as he continues through a lifetime of educational programs.

In an effort to demonstrate specific items that demonstrate the need for individualized instruction, Stahl (1970:24) introduces and lists several hypotheses. Her commitment to individually guided education is based on the following hypotheses about children and learning.

(1.) There are many patterns of learning and no one teaching method meets the varied needs of all children. It is vitally important to provide alternatives in the educational program.
(2.) The teacher cannot tell a child how to think, but must provide him with the freedom, the encouragement, and the opportunity to do so.

(3.) Learning is an active, not a passive process and must involve participation in a task rather than mere absorption of information. As a result of learning, there should be a change in pupil behavior or no learning has taken place.
(4.) Children are consistent in their need for success experiences but vary greatly in their levels and rates of achievement.
(5.) Discovering and developing uniqueness in individuals is a major goal not to be thwarted by ignoring or minimizing differences.
(6.) Children bring to each new experience varying amounts of information and misinformation which may clarify or distort concept information.
(7.) Setting goals and evaluating progress are the privilege and the responsibility of the child and are essential to long-term learning. Teachers must not let a marking system distort evaluation.
(8.) The unstructured and inductive experiences, which occur in a child's life, are often the most profound and influential acitivities of childhood.
(9.) Children learn from each other through observation, imitation, and cooperative consideration of a mutually challenging task.
(10.) Learning is both positive and negative. When the activity does not fit the child's unique personal need, negative learning is certain to occur.
(11.) It is more important for children to appreciate and practice self-control than to be controlled by adult authority figures.
(12.) Intrinsic motivation makes children capable of meaningful self-selection and self-correction of appropriate learning activities.

A particular example of what such instruction can mean is demonstrated by an article in the Grade Teacher (1969:84) titled, "Here's What Individualized Instruction Could Mean To You." The article states, "Traditionally, school children are taught first and then tested. At the Osborn non-graded school, they're tested first--to find out where they are--and then taught." In other words, this

article relates that the teachers in the Osborn school diagnose the individual student's strengths and weaknesses first so they can prescribe, with every individual's differences in mind, so he or she can operate at his own speed and will, in his realm succeed. The teachers in the Osborn school or other similar systems are as much guidance counselors as instructors (Grade Teacher, 1969:84). The teacher seems to be an artist who has adapted her teaching methods and materials to bring about maximum development of the children entrusted to her. Because she is constantly working with children who have varied backgrounds and attitudes, she can never guarantee the outcomes. At times she will be able to impart knowledge based on common group, stages of readiness; but many times this procedure will not be sufficient, because not all stages of readiness are equal for each student. (Thomas, 1967:79)

Programs in Individualized Instruction

In the review of related literature concerning individualized instruction, there ran a full gamut of types of individualized instructional programs, including those that were just for high school students, and others that are centered around elementary school programs.

Some programs cover one class of multi-aged students, whereas other programs included all grades from Kindergarten through grade six.

One of the less complicated programs of individualized instruction is called Actionville: A Successful Experiment in Open Education.

Actionville is a multi-age class (fifth and sixth grades) of 48 children running the gamut from academically advanced to far below grade level, and housed in the Mamaroneck Avenue School, Mamaroneck, New York. (Abramson, 1973:27)

The program is operating in reclaimed space that had previously been unused and unwanted. That space has been upgraded to the point that it is now the envy of the system. Actionville is housed in a suite of basement rooms. It has, and uses, a main classroom, partly cordoned off to provide a listening-learning center; a small reading room; a former shower room now equipped as a science and cooking lab; a "living room" replete with carpet, easy chairs and couches, and a private bathroom. In addition, a deadend corridor outside the suite has been outfitted with dry study carrels and is used for small groups, individual instruction or independent work. (Abramson, 1973:27)

Actionville's teaching staff consists of one teacher, Domenick Tedesco; a part-time assistant teacher; four young teaching aides who work 10 to 12 hours a week; a student teacher; two college students who work as paid assistants; two high school students who

are paid to run a media lab six hours a week; four high school volunteers who work one day a week as tutors; eleven students from a nearby Catholic high school who teach mini courses two afternoons a week; a clerical aide; a multitude of parents, friends, former students and just plain visitors. (Abramson, 1973:27)

The basis of the Actionville program is "learning by doing", a phrase that has admittedly become something of a cliche among open education advocates. In the case of Actionville, it means that learning has come from using the world outside the classroom, either in simulation or actual experience.

But Actionville is not all fun and games, nor are the fun and games just for the fun of it. Each is a carefully planned learning activity, with a learning objective spelled out and reached. (Abramson, 1973:27-29)

Actionville has a very strong program specifically in the "basics". On the second day of school, all students receive a series of criterion referenced tests that Tedesco and district staff members have developed in math and reading. These scores are added to each student's folder and become the basis both for starting the year's work and measuring it.

In math, students are placed in one of six groups, with no distinction made between fifth and sixth graders ("we're interested

only in what they know and what they need to know," Tedesco says, "not in artificial grade designations.").

The groups themselves are really loose federations of students with similar problems and deficiencies rather than hard and fast organizations. Students do their own math on their own but within a context of friends who are speaking the same language. Any student can move out of a group when that step is indicated. (Abramson, 1973:29)

Language Arts is handled in a similar way. After the criterion referenced tests are analyzed and placed in the permanent folders, the students are placed in a totally individualized program with each student contracting to do work that is needed in one of many possible ways.

Actionville makes use of its diversified staff to provide individual tutoring in all subjects, plus mini courses in chess, drama, soccer, physics, golf, karate, typing, French, Spanish, algebra and auto mechanics which are instructed by interested high school students. (Abramson, 1973:29)

Parents are heavily involved in the Actionville program with activities ranging from helping with cooking, trips and sales, to coming to meetings and various affairs. But while the parents are involved and are very much aware of their children's positive attitude

towards school, there was an underlying feeling of concern and was succinctly expressed at each gathering: "They sure are having fun; I wonder if they're learning anything?" (Abramson, 1973:30)

In June of 1972, the whole Mamoraneck district completed a year-long period of testing and retesting children in the areas of reading and math. Students did as well or better than expected in almost every grade.

The results were especially gratifying to parents and teachers in Actionville. At both the fifth and sixth grade levels, in both math and reading the Actionville students outstripped fellow students in their school. Better than that, in several areas the class led the district in accomplishment, no mean feat since the school generally is the lowest academically in the district. (Abramson, 1973:30)

One of the more complex programs of individualized instruction was conducted at Marshall High School in Portland, Oregon. The basis for all phases of the Marshall program is the recognition that each child must do his own learning. The instructional program was organized so that each of the school's 2,200 students was able to adjust the program to fit his own particular needs. Therefore, the curriculum was adapted to the student. The implementation of this program would have been impossible without the aid of computers, however. (Petrequin, 1968:2)

The Marshall plan received a sizable financial grant to help with the cost of pioneering the program, particularly for in-service education of staff and instructional assistance for the teachers. Dr. Dwight W. Allen of Stanford University assisted with the computerized modular-flexible schedule, and it was in August of 1963 that Stanford University provided the first computer-generated school program for the Marshall school. (Petrequin, 1968:7)

An example of a schedule is shown below:

> Mary Jones has 40 modules of unstructured time during the week, and she may use these in any of the following ways:
>
> Work in an open lab (home economics, foreign language, biology).
>
> Study in the library.
>
> Study in a resource center (seven available)
>
> Hold a conference with her teachers or counselor
>
> Relax in the student union
>
> Participate in a prerogative (non credit, enrichment) course
>
> Pursue independent study project (possibly off campus)
>
> Visit interesting classes (large or small groups)
>
> Serve the school in the capacity of teacher assistant or assistant to a resource-center aide.
>
> (Petrequin, 1968:10)

A freshman student, who needed more direction, would have less unstructured modules and more teacher-directed activities.

Teachers working under the program have had the opportunity to experiment with how students learn best. The open-laboratory concept seemed to be accepted by a growing number of teachers. Instructors found that, given the opportunity, most students became responsible, to a large degree, for their own education.

Thousands of educators have visited the Marshall school in the past few years, and they have been "overwhelmingly favorable to the theory and practice of this institutional system". (Petrequin, 1968:14)

Another one of the more complex programs of individualized instruction is the open-concept plan. One of New Hampshire's first open-concept schools was one constructed almost completely without inside walls. The philosophy behind this concept was to make grouping and regrouping of youngsters easier so students and teachers can communicate with each other, for team teaching, and for students to receive individualized instruction. The school was composed of 640 youngsters, including disadvantaged children from a new urban renewal area, middle class children, and a few youngsters from affluent homes. (Wing, 1970:13)

Interpersonal relationships were the school's biggest problem --teacher-to-students as well as teacher-to-teacher. The children began to adjust to one another, but some of the teachers had some problems.

At first, relations within the community posed some problems too. But, almost without exception, critical parents who were willing to visit the school and talk with the staff were soon converted to supporters.

Funds from the Federal Title III Program helped meet the needs of the children and set up training programs for teachers. Charles Kadel, project director, listed eight components of a program individualized instruction: team teaching, flexible time patterns, flexible grouping, independent study programs, tutorial instruction (children tutored by teachers or other students), prescriptive techniques, continuous diagnostic testing, and multimedia experience (learning through touching, seeing, hearing). (Wing, 1970:14)

Other problems, which the project encountered, fell within the areas of teacher training, and parent and community relationships. Kadel stated that staff development was the most critical requirement. (Wing, 1970:15)

Another problem in the development of the open-concept school was the adjustment of the students to the new kind of freedom found there.

Still another adjustment, which had to be made, was brought about by the absence of desks. This was solved by having individual boxes stored on shelves for the children's personal belongings.

To help with public relations within the city, the project contracted with a public relations service to "disseminate information to its six open-concept schools through newspaper, radio, and television media." (Wing, 1970:15)

Now that the open-concept school had solved some of its problems, teachers in the project believed that children in the open-concept school got along better with one another. These children were learning to think in terms of the group, not just themselves. They talked openly about real problems. Tensions and anxieties had greatly decreased. Perhaps the most important development was that the children understood that freedom meant responsibility on the part of themselves and acquired a sense of worth through experiencing success. (Wing, 1970:15-16)

Still another open-concept school is the St. Paul Open School which has 500 students, ages 5 to 18, representative of the racial and social economic diversity of St. Paul, Minnesota. (Nathan, 1973:19)

The school had some money for start-up costs from Title III and two local foundations but substantially less than a typical school

would have. The Board of Education accepted the program with the provision that it would provide per pupil but not full start-up funds. The home base is a former UNIVAC warehouse which parents, students and staff have redesigned and recreated. (Nathan, 1973:19)

Learning centers in the building contain books, tapes, slide films, sewing machines, drill presses, etc. Students work on their own or in groups, taking courses offered by staff or community members, planning financing and going on trips. (Nathan, 1973:19-20)

Each student selects a staff member to serve as his advisor. During the first week of school, students and parents meet with an advisor to set general expectations and clarify policies. The student and advisor meet weekly to evaluate work on past goals, plan future goals and discuss any questions or problems the student has. Students fill out goal sheets at the beginning of each project and, together with the instructor, evaluate work at the end of the project. No grades are given. (Nathan, 1973:20)

The Open School decision making process includes an advisory council with student, parent, community and staff membership. The advisory council makes recommendations on matters ranging from budget to staffing policy to visitors. In virtually every case, the school's director (principal) has accepted those recommendations, though he can veto them. Expectations of students which have been developed through this process include:

1. Checking in each day with one's advisor.
2. Meeting regularly with the advisor (usually once a week).
3. Serving the school in some way from one to five hours per week (by tutoring, painting, helping cleanup and about 45 other ways).
4. Not infringing on the rights and activities of others. (Nathan, 1973:20)

The role of a staff member in the open school as the members see themselves is being a "facilitator of learning". (Nathan, 1973:20)

To become facilitators, teachers must change some of their fundamental assumptions about learning and the role of an adult in that learning. The psychologist Cart Rogers believes non-facilitators ask themselves: "What do I think would be good for the student to learn at his particular age and at his level of competence? What does the state require him to learn? How can I plan a proper curriculum which absorbs this curriculum? . . .

A facilitator, Rogers says, asks questions first of students, and those questions are much different: "What do you want to learn? What things puzzle you? What are you curious about? What issues concern you? What problems do you wish you could solve? . . ."

Then the facilitator asks: "How can I find the resources--the people, the experiences, the programmed learning facilities, the

books, the laboratories, the knowledge in myself--which would help my students learn in ways which would provide answers to the things that concern them? How could I help them to learn the things they are eager to learn? How can I stretch their minds as they satisfy their curiosity?" (Nathan, 1973:24)

As can be seen, being a facilitator requires more than being skillful at one of the new approaches to curriculum, such as learning packets or inquiry learning.

Working in an open individualized school is a learning experience for everyone, and probably is best illustrated by an incident that occurred during the first week that the St. Paul Open School was in existence. During that week parents, staff and students spent hours trying to recreate the old UNIVAC building.

At the end of one long day, the work crew was putting away gallon paint cans. Several adults were not content to carry just one or two cans in each hand and loaded themselves up. One adult went as high as six cans.

An eight year-old stood aside and surveyed the scene, then walked over to a wheelbarrow. Bringing the wheelbarrow over to the cans, he loaded up 15 and carried them away.

It's not always age and experience that determines who is the teacher and who is the learner. (Nathan, 1973:24-25)

Congdon Park Elementary School in Duluth, Minnesota, set up an instructional program in its fifth and sixth grades in an attempt to answer the questions: "What would formal schooling be like if it seriously tried to reach the ideal of educating every child according to his own personal inventory of abilities, needs and interests?" (Esbensen, 1968:15)

Project Congdon began in the fall of 1964 with four teachers, all volunteers; 120 fifth and sixth graders normally in attendance at Congdon, who as a group were high achievers; a principal dedicated to the success of the program; and a director of special services who acted as liaison between Project Congdon and the central office of the Duluth Public Schools.

The instruction was individualized, made possible through the use of a large assortment of instructional materials and devices. The key thought behind all instructional arrangements was flexibility. (Esbensen, 1968:19-20)

Student contracts were in the form of individual lesson plans designed for one week's work. Each student worked at his own rate of learning; and as he finished one contract, he was given another. Each student was encouraged to decide for himself how he could best complete the assignment. Tests were administered to check on completed contracts of each student, and his progress was used as a guide for further assignments.

The Iowa Test of Basic Skills was used to assess the project. Fifth grade students as a class scored at the 92nd percentile and the sixth grade students at the 98th percentile. However, since a control group working in a traditional self-contained classroom did nearly as well, these gratifying results could not be attributed solely to the learning environment of the project. The significant point was that it made it possible for those students in Project Congdon to grow in ability to organize their own learning activities and to acquire the skills of independent inquiry. (Esbensen, 1968:21-22)

One noted weakness in the Project was the fact that teachers retained the use of the standard report card, the traditional method of reporting to parents. They realized the necessity of devising some kind of basic skills achievement record and developing a system that would enable them to report "student accomplishment of specific instructional objectives in terms of observable performance". (Esbensen, 1969:23)

After the success of Project Congdon, Duluth educators raised the question, "Would the program work with other kinds of kids?" (Esbensen, 1968:27)

The Franklin-Nettleton Project was set up at all grade levels, Kindergarten through sixth grade. The more than 500 students, considered deprived, attending the two schools were introduced to the

individualized instruction approach to education, and, from their point of view, learning had become more fun.

Teachers received assistance from students from a senior high school individualized instruction program who came to Franklin and Nettleton schools on a regularly scheduled basis to help the younger students achieve their contract objectives. Also, the more able students often helped the slower ones. The conclusion of the teachers was that student-to-student teaching is a "powerful mode of instruction and should be widely employed". (Esbensen, 1968:70)

Instructors in the Franklin-Nettleton Project felt that the single most valuable piece of equipment they used was the tape recorder, and each teacher had one at her disposal. The film projector with a small screen set up at one end of the room was also a good instructional arrangement. Another piece of equipment found particularly useful was the Bell and Howell Language Master and its "talking cards" (other companies now offer a competing product). (Esbensen, 1968:74)

South Elementary School is a suburb of Grand Rapids, Michigan, encountered several problems in initiating its program of individualization.

According to Bergensen and Roettger (1971:70), one of the most difficult problems in getting started is initiating the system

with youngsters who had been conditioned to the traditional classroom with traditional classroom controls. A particularly effective technique for alleviating the problem was student involvement. Once youngsters were made aware of goals and objectives for the class and were involved in some of the planning, students participated in nearly all of the decisions. This student participation resulted in self-motivation, which in turn produced more effort toward educational activity.

A student transferring into a class using the individualized approach in South Elementary School realized the peer pressure of this classroom. He had been labeled a discipline problem in his previous classroom; but very shortly after he was admitted to the independent study class, his behavior approached the level of the other children. Students told him to "shape up" and "get organized" and then taught him the system for independent and group work and the skills he needed to function effectively. He was then accepted by the other youngsters and, in turn, accepted the system without the teacher ever having to intervene. (Bergesen, 1971:70-71)

Two other areas proved to be trouble spots--record keeping and scheduling. Score cards were kept on each student, one by the student in a file for reading and the second for other subject areas. On these score cards each student recorded his weekly goals and his accomplishments.

Scheduling was worked out by student and teacher cooperatively. Although reading was always scheduled in the morning, other subject areas were scheduled when and as the student desired. A few students preferred a structured program. (Bergesen , 1971:71-72)

Bergesen and Roettger (1971:72) listed the results of this individualized program:

1. Children developed greater self-confidence, trust, creativity, and initiative, while anxiety decreased. Cheating diminished and was no longer a problem.

2. As children become more involved, more interaction among youngsters became evident. More desireable social behavior was fostered, with a concomitant rise in self-discipline.

3. Because each student was allowed to succeed, interest and desire for academic related activities increased.

4. Rapport between children and students developed to such a degree that personal conferences were almost always constructive and academically rewarding.

5. The children and the teacher became more relaxed. As a result, perception increased along with a rise in academic risk taking. The children and the teacher felt free to step beyond the known and into involved problem-solving behavior.

6. Children challenged each other in healthy ways--the child who "lost" did so without losing face.

7. The above behaviors were fostered concurrently with a rise in academic achievement.

Another different type of individualized instruction has been demonstrated at Rye, New York. Osborn School is a Kindergarten

through grade six school; however, instead of having Kindergarten through sixth grade levels, it has classrooms operating on 14 different ability levels. The program, aimed at a one-to-one individualization of instruction, began in 1962 and is still being improved.

You have to forget the silent halls and sealed-in classrooms of the traditional school. Never in a traditional school could one see so many things going on at the same time in one classroom. There were always children "on the loose--on the way to the library, another classroom, or wherever else the quest for knowledge takes them." (Grade Teacher, 1969:84)

An Osborn child may have stayed in one classroom for the entire year, or he may have traveled through three or four levels. If he was bright, he may have completed all 14 levels of ability; but he didn't have to qualify for junior high school. Because the promise of immediate advancement was always there, Osborn children tended to try a little harder. The students always work at their own level without fear of failure. At Osborn there is only slow and fast progress. (Grade Teacher, 1968:83)

The teachers at Osborn used some ingenious methods of keeping records. One used an elaborate system of bar graphs to indicate where each child is in each curriculum area, whereas other teachers have devised a method of keeping a day-to-day record by stacking workbooks in a certain way. (Grade Teacher, 1968:85)

The Osborn's way made special demands on its teachers in such areas as (1.) reports to parents, which were written records instead of report cards; (2.) curriculum development, which was a continuing process, and teachers were asked to participate; and (3.) materials selection, since each teacher must of necessity know more about a wide range of materials. (Grade Teacher, 1968:85)

Sharing and comparing between classrooms, on the part of teachers as well as students, was encouraged; and classroom doors were always open to facilitate the "easy come, easy go of pupils and ideas." (Grade Teacher, 1968:85)

The curriculum too, was designed to provide for easy transition from one level to another. Osborn's teachers encouraged students to decide what they wanted to learn. There was never a "who" or a "when" question asked, rather the "what do you suppose?" kind of question was a typical question designed to get youngsters into the act. (Grade Teacher, 1968:86)

The school's aim was not so much to teach children facts as it was to teach them to think and probe.

Children were judged, not on the basis of facts they accumulate, but on their progress in skills that demonstrate ability to think and the ability to find and use information. As a result, the library is considered an extension of every classroom.

This type of atmosphere is what brings forth the idea that the Osborn school is where the action--and the teaching and learning satifaction--is, for its students and teachers. (Grade Teacher, 1968:86)

George Thomas and Joseph Crescimbeni (1967:4) summarize much of what the tenets of American education should be when they relate that education should provide for all children. Educators have realized the failings of the traditional grade school, but parents, educators and administrators feel secure in the traditional compartmentalized curricula. As Thomas and Crescimbeni conclude , "There have been attempts at changing this lockstep method of teaching, but it has been done under continuous pressure".

Summary

The problem of change is an arduous and perplexing endeavor according to researchers.

Implementation of Individualized Instruction, an educational change, falls in this category of endeavors.

A change to an innovative program, such as individualized instruction, is needed, according to authorities, because the traditional school does not provide for individual needs of students. The traditional school subjects children to group life.

Even though individual differences have been noted by educators, they continue to make allowances for these differences by using grouping techniques.

Although individualized instruction doesn't necessarily mean teaching each child individually, a child's learning needs are decided individually, and these needs may include group learning with certain tasks.

The review of literature covers many types of individualized programs, including those in high schools and those in elementary schools. Some programs cover one class of multi-aged students, and other programs cover all grades from Kindergarten to grade six; but all programs have one thing in common, they attempt to provide for all students as individuals.

The next step in this investigation was to set up procedures for carrying out the study. The procedures are found in the following chapter, Chapter III.

CHAPTER III

PROCEDURES

In an attempt to organize a survey of parent opinion about the implementation of individualized instruction, an outline of specific procedures will be given in this chapter. Areas included in this chapter discuss the sampling procedure, the method of organizing and collecting data, and a description of the categories used in the development and organization of the questionnaire.

Population Description and Sampling Procedure

Ekalaka, Montana, population six-hundred seventy-three, is a southeastern Montana town in Carter County. Ekalaka's elementary school, Kindergarten through eighth grade, has one-hundred eighty-five students. Most of the students come from ranch homes, and some of the students who commute by bus, travel as far as sixty miles one way. All parents of elementary school children in Ekalaka, Montana will be included in the sample.

Definition of Categories

For the purposes of organizing and developing the questionnaire, the investigation provided four general areas of consideration in the implementation of individualized instruction. The four areas were: student needs, evaluation, progress and process, schedules and

materials. Each general area contained seven items, thus, twenty-eight questions were included on the questionnaire. A five point Likert Scale running from "strongly disagree", to "strongly agree" followed each item. An example of the questionnaire is included in the Appendix, Appendix B.

Method of Collecting Data

A questionnaire designed by the investigator was sent to each parent of Ekalaka, Montana elementary school children. In an effort to explain the purpose of the questionnaire and to give adequate directions for answering the questionnaire, a cover letter was attached and mailed with the questionnaire. This cover letter will be found in Appendix A. A self-addressed, stamped envelope was also sent. The questionnaire was mailed on February 6, 1973. If no response from some parents was evident within two weeks, a follow-up letter and questionnaire was sent.

Method of Organizing Data

Data was presented in table form and showed strength or frequency. The tables were organized according to the four general areas described in "The Definition of Categories". Questions one through seven referred to "student needs", questions eight through fourteen to "evaluation", questions fifteen through twenty-one to

"progress and process", and questions twenty-two through twenty-eight to "schedules and materials". Each table provided frequencies of responses and percentages of responses.

Precautions Taken for Accuracy

In an effort to provide precautions for accuracy, the investigator analyzed the results of the questionnaire items three times. All questionnaire items were analyzed by hand and all responses to the items, and percentages of responses were figured by hand.

Summary

In conclusion, a twenty-eight item questionnaire was mailed to the parents of one-hundred eighty-five Ekalaka elementary school children. The parents responded to a five-point Likert Scale that followed each item. Data was presented in table form, and a written explanation about the results of each questionnaire item followed each item.

The tables and written explanations showing the results of each questionnaire item will be found in Chapter IV.

CHAPTER IV

SURVEY OF PARENTS' OPINIONS TOWARD IMPLEMENTING INDIVIDUALIZED INSTRUCTION

Introduction

The survey of parents included only those adults who had children in grades K-8 in the Ekalaka grade school. Fifty-five of eighty-five questionnaires mailed were returned. The survey instrument mailed to these parents contained 28 questions dealing with individualized instruction and their opinions about the philosophy of individualized instruction. This questionnaire may be found in Appendix B.

The general areas of the questionnaire considers four parts in the implementation of individualized instruction. Questions one through seven covers the areas of student needs, questions eight through fourteen covers evaluation, questions fifteen through twenty-one covers both progress and process, and questions twenty-two through twenty-eight covers schedules and materials.

The instrument, which was developed by the researcher, has been analyzed and broken down into 28 tables which will aid the reader. The tables show the questionnaire items, and the number and percentage of responses to the questions. Following each table a description of the dominant characteristics of the table are presented.

Table 1. School Instruction Should Meet the Needs of All of the Children of All the People.
(number and percentage of responses)

Response Scale	N	%
Strongly Agree	33	60
Agree	17	30.9
Undecided	1	1.8
Disagree	1	1.8
Strongly Disagree	3	5.5
Total	55	100

This table shows that fifty (90.9%) of the fifty-five respondents are in partial agreement that school instruction should meet the needs of all children as individuals. This indicates that the majority of parents surveyed are conversely in disagreement to the philosophy of traditional type education which centers around the needs of the group as a whole.

The parents surveyed appeared to be in agreement with the individualized approach to education. Three parents (5.4%) were not in agreement, two parents (3.6%) were undecided and fifty parents (91.1%) were in complete agreement that the instruction program should be evaluated according to the needs of students as individuals.

Table 2. Because of Wide Differences in Learners, Programs of Instruction Should be Carefully Evaluated in Terms of Their Offerings to Each Student.
(number and percentage of responses)

Response Scale	N	%
Strongly Agree	17	31
Agree	33	60
Undecided	2	3.6
Disagree	1	1.8
Strongly Disagree	2	3.6
Total	55	100

Table 3. A Student Should Be Allowed to Progress More Rapidly in Some Subjects Than He Might in Others.
(number and percentage of responses)

Response Scale	N	%
Strongly Agree	14	25.5
Agree	30	54.6
Undecided	5	9
Disagree	4	7.3
Strongly Disagree	2	3.6
Total	55	100

Along with the idea that students should be taught as individuals is the concept that students be able to progress in various areas at their own pace. Of the parents surveyed, forty-four (80%) of the fifty-five respondents agreed that students should be able to progress in each subject at their own pace.

Table 4. A Learning Program Should be Made for the Individual Rather Than the Group.
(number and percentage of responses)

Response Scale	N	%
Strongly Agree	11	20
Agree	23	41.8
Undecided	13	23.7
Disagree	5	9.1
Strongly Disagree	3	5.4
Total	55	100

Of the fifty-five parents surveyed, thirty-four (61.8%) agreed that the educational program should be constructed for the individual. Eight (14.5%) parents didn't believe the program should be centered around the individual, and thirteen (23.7%) of the parents were undecided.

Table 4 shows that a majority of the parents agreed the educational program should be for the individual, but a number of the parents (38.2%) were either in disagreement or were not sure.

This table readily shows that the educational program should make provision for both the individual and the group as a whole.

Table 5. A Student's Readiness (ability to move on) Should be Strongly Dependent Upon His Willingness to Advance. (number and percentage of responses)

Response Scale	N	%
Strongly Agree	9	16.4
Agree	26	47.3
Undecided	8	14.5
Disagree	8	14.5
Strongly Disagree	4	7.3
Total	55	100

Thirty-five (63.6%) of the parents out of fifty-five respondents agreed that a student's ability to move on should be dependent upon his willingness to advance. Twelve parents (21.8%) were in opposition, and eight parents (14.5%) were not sure.

Even though many of the respondents were in agreement that a student's willingness to advance is associated with his readiness,

some of the parents do not agree that a student is capable or responsible enough to move on just because he is willing to do so. Therefore, it is evident that when setting up and implementing a program such as individualized instruction, advanced public relations programs with parents be set up to resolve this concept.

Table 6. Learning Activities Should be Determined by Individual Student Readiness (ability to move on), Not by Age. (number and percentage of responses)

Response Scale	N	%
Strongly Agree	13	23.7
Agree	30	54.6
Undecided	6	10.8
Disagree	4	7.3
Strongly Disagree	2	3.6
Total	55	100

Seventy-eight percent of the respondents agreed that a student's ability is more important than age in determining what learning activities a student should have. Six parents out of fifty-five respondents agreed that age should be the determining factor and six parents (11%) are undecided about how they feel.

From this table, it can be seen that a parent workshop would be beneficial to inform parents of the process of learning.

Table 7. The Teacher Should Guide Activities for Student Growth According to the Student's Individual Abilities.
(number and percentage of responses)

Response Scale	N	%
Strongly Agree	17	31
Agree	32	58.2
Undecided	2	3.6
Disagree	2	3.6
Strongly Disagree	2	3.6
Total	55	100

Table 7 shows that a high percentage (89%) of the respondents agreed that a student's growth should be guided by activities relating to his abilities. Only four parents (7.5%) are in total disagreement with this concept.

Table 8. Evaluation of the Student's Work Should be a Continual Process.
(number and percentage of responses)

Response Scale	N	%
Strongly Agree	27	49.2
Agree	23	41.8
Undecided	3	5.4
Disagree	0	0
Strongly Disagree	2	3.6
Total	55	100

A great percentage (90.9%) of the parents agreed that student evaluation should be on a continual process and not at arbitrarily derived times, whereas only 2 (3.6%) out of fifty-five parents strongly agreed that student's work should not be a continual evaluation process.

Table 9. Students Should be Evaluated or Judged on Their Individual Performance Rather than by Comparison with the Group. (number and percentage of responses)

Response Scale	N	%
Strongly Agree	19	34.6
Agree	25	45.5
Undecided	4	7.3
Disagree	4	7.3
Strongly Disagree	3	5.4
Total	55	100

Seven out of fifty-five parents agreed that a student's work should be evaluated (graded) according to how his performance compares with group standards. Four parents (7.3%) were undecided, and forty-four out of fifty-five parents agreed that a student's performance and progress should be evaluated according to individual standards or against himself. This amounts to 80% of the parents.

Table 10. Goals Should be Set Up in Advance and Tests Used to Assist Both Students and Teachers in Determining Student Potentials and Individual Study Recommendations.
(number and percentage of responses)

Response Scale	N	%
Strongly Agree	12	21.8
Agree	34	61.8
Undecided	6	11
Disagree	1	1.8
Strongly Disagree	2	3.6
Total	55	100

Table 10 shows that parents have a strong feeling about goals being set up in advance that provides for individual potentials and for making recommendations to reach these potentials. Out of a total of fifty-five respondents, forty-six parents (83.6%) agreed that goals should be set up in advance and only three parents (5.5%) are in complete disagreement with this idea, leaving six parents who are undecided.

Question number eleven is similar in nature to question number ten, and it would be expected that the answers to the two questions would be closely associated, which they are to a certain extent, but it is interesting to note that on the positive end of the

continuum there is quite a discrepancy between the "agree" and "strongly agree" responses between the two questions.

Table 11. Students Should be Tested First to Find Out Where They Are and Then Taught, Not Taught First, and Then Tested. (number and percentage of responses)

Response Scale	N	%
Strongly Agree	21	38.2
Agree	23	41.8
Undecided	7	12.8
Disagree	2	3.6
Strongly Disagree	2	3.6
Total	55	100

On Table 11 there are twenty-three parents (40%) who are in agreement, whereas on Table 10 there are thirty-four parents (60%) in agreement. On Table 11 there are twenty-one parents (38%) who strongly agree and on Table 10 there are twelve parents (21.8%) who strongly agree.

On the negative end of the continuum on Table 11, there are four parents (7.3%) who don't agree with question number eleven, two parents (3.6%) who disagree, and two parents (3.6%) who strongly disagree.

Table 12. The Continual Evaluation of Individual Student Programs and Progress Should be Discussed With the Students and the Parents.
(number and percentage of responses)

Response Scale	N	%
Strongly Agree	20	36.4
Agree	29	52.7
Undecided	4	7.3
Disagree	0	0
Strongly Disagree	2	3.6
Total	55	100

On Table 12, a large majority, forty-nine out of fifty-five parents, felt that a student's progress should be discussed with the student and his parents on a continual basis. If the four parents who marked the undecided response were added to this, it would make up 96.3% of the parents surveyed.

This table points out the parental agreement that there should be more parent-teacher, student-teacher conferences dealing with student progress evaluation, which is a philosophy closely associated with the individually guided approach to education.

Table 13. Letter Grades Should be Discarded Because in Many Cases They Promote Feelings of Failure.
(number and percentage of responses)

Response Scale	N	%
Strongly Agree	8	14.6
Agree	8	14.6
Undecided	16	29.1
Disagree	13	23.6
Strongly Disagree	10	18.1
Total	55	100

Table 13 readily shows an area where parents are in discord with the individualized instruction philosophy. Twenty-three out of fifty-five, or 42% of the parents surveyed, were in complete opposition to the ideas of discarding letter grades. Sixteen parents (29%) were for discarding letter grades, and sixteen parents (29%) were undecided about how they felt about discarding letter grades.

Table 14 points out another area where parents are in somewhat of a disagreement with the philosophy of individualized instruction.

Table 14. Criticism, Failure, and Discouragement Should be Eliminated From the Schools.
(number and percentage of response)

Response Scale	N	%
Strongly Agree	15	27.3
Agree	16	29.1
Undecided	7	12.8
Disagree	12	21.8
Strongly Disagree	5	9.0
Total	55	100

Thirty-one percent of the parents surveyed don't agree with the statement in question number fourteen; 12.7% of the parents were undecided, and 56.4% of the parents agreed with question number fourteen.

Table 15. When Students Have Developed One Skill or Mastered One Concept, They Should be Free to Move to the Next, Regardless of the Progress of the Others or the Time of the Year
(number and percentage of responses)

Response Scale	N	%
Strongly Agree	17	30.9
Agree	21	38.2
Undecided	7	12.8
Disagree	8	14.5
Strongly Disagree	2	3.6
Total	55	100

According to Table 15, there is some skepticism by parents about the idea of letting children progress at their own rate. This is shown by the responses marked and number of times they are marked.

Table 15 shows seven parents (12.7%) are undecided and ten parents (18%) who disagree with the concept. This leaves a total of thirty-eight parents (69%) who agree with the concept to some degree.

Table 16. Students Should Not be Forced or Allowed to Move Into a New Task Until They Have Mastered the One at Hand. (number and percentage of responses)

Response Scale	N	%
Strongly Agree	15	27.3
Agree	25	45.4
Undecided	8	14.5
Disagree	4	7.3
Strongly Disagree	3	5.5
Total	55	100

Along with the concept in question number fifteen, but at the opposite end of the continuum, is the idea that students should not be able to move on to new material or a new task until they have learned the material they are working on at present.

Forty parents (72.7%) agreed with this concept, eight parents (14.5%) were undecided, and, seven parents (12.8%) were in disagreement with the idea.

Table 17. The Teachers Should Not Tell The Student How to Think, But Must Provide Him with the Freedom, the Encouragement, and the Opportunity to Do So.
(number and percentage of responses)

Response Scale	N	%
Strongly Agree	20	36.4
Agree	27	49.1
Undecided	4	7.3
Disagree	2	3.6
Strongly Disagree	2	3.6
Total	55	100

Table 17 points out that a large percentage of the parents surveyed believe that there should be more openness in a classroom so students can work with and receive a more varied education; 85.5% of the parents surveyed believed in this concept, 7.3% of those surveyed were undecided, 3.6% disagree, and 3.6% of the parents strongly disagree.

Table 18. The Responsibility For Learning Must be Placed On the Students.
(number and percentage of responses)

Response Scale	N	%
Strongly Agree	7	12.8
Agree	21	38.2
Undecided	10	18
Disagree	11	20
Strongly Disagree	6	11
Total	55	100

Table 18 shows a definite split between parents about the idea of putting the responsibility for learning upon the students. Twenty-one parents agreed with the idea and seven parents strongly agreed with it, making a total of 51% who are in agreement with the philosophy.

If the parents who checked "undecided" were added to the parents who checked "disagree" and "strongly disagree", this made a total of twenty-seven parents who were in disagreement, which was 49% of the respondents surveyed.

Table 19. Learning is an Active, Not a Passive Process. Therefore, It Should Involve Participation in a Task Rather Than Mere Absorption of Information.
(number and percentage of responses)

Response Scale	N	%
Strongly Agree	16	29.1
Agree	31	56.4
Undecided	4	7.3
Disagree	2	3.6
Strongly Disagree	2	3.6
Total	55	100

Table 19 shows pretty plainly that parents believe learning involves student participation in tasks rather than just absorption of information. A total of forty-seven parents, or fifty-one of those who marked "undecided" were included, out of fifty-five respondents believed in the philosophy statement given in question number nineteen. This leaves only four parents (7.3%) who were in disagreement with the statement.

Table 20. Students Should be Provided With Learning Experiences or Tasks That They Have Chosen Jointly With Their Teacher.
(number and percentage of responses)

Response Scale	N	%
Strongly Agree	7	12.8
Agree	31	63.6
Undecided	6	11
Disagree	5	9
Strongly Disagree	2	3.6
Total	55	100

Seven parents (12.8%) did not feel a student and his teacher should jointly choose learning experiences for the student. Six parents (11%) were undecided, thirty-five parents (63.6%) agreed with the statement, and seven parents (12.8%) strongly agreed with the statement.

Table 21. Teachers Work With Students in Group Sessions, but Major Emphasis Should be Placed on Individual Work Sessions With Students.
(number and percentage of responses)

Response Scale	N	%
Strongly Agree	9	16.4
Agree	36	65.5
Undecided	5	9
Disagree	3	5.5
Strongly Disagree	2	3.6
Total	55	100

This table points out the reinforcement of the parents surveyed toward the basic idea of individualized instruction, that being that the individuals needs be met which most naturally would be done by working more in individual work sessions.

Only five parents (9%) in the survey were against this concept of placing more emphasis on individual work sessions with students.

Table 22. A Flexible Schedule Should be Used to Organize a School Day so That Varying Amounts of Time Can be Spent on Different Subjects.
(number and percentage of responses)

Response Scale	N	%
Strongly Agree	15	27.3
Agree	28	50.9
Undecided	9	16.4
Disagree	1	1.8
Strongly Disagree	2	3.6
Total	55	100

Table 22 shows one of the areas where a large percentage of the parents surveyed were in agreement with the stated question, or, at least there were very few respondents who were in disagreement with the statement: actually only 5.5% of those parents surveyed.

Table 23. Each Student Should be Allowed to Plan with the Teacher Short-term Programs or Contracts of Study That Will Satisfy His Individual Needs.
(number and percentage of responses)

Response Scale	N	%
Strongly Agree	5	9.1
Agree	35	63.7
Undecided	11	20
Disagree	2	3.6
Strongly Disagree	2	3.6
Total	55	100

The statement contained in Table 23 is another of the series of questions dealing with individual needs of students.

Table 23 showed that there was very little outright opposition to the concept, actually only four parents (7.2%). But, there were eleven parents (20%) who were undecided about how they actually felt, which left forty parents (72.8%) who were not in opposition to the idea that short-term contracts be planned between a teacher and a student to satisfy the student's individual needs.

Table 24. Students Should be Allowed to Study a Content Area (subject) in Different Ways and with Different Amounts of Emphasis According to Their Individual Needs. (number and percentage of responses)

Response Scale	N	%
Strongly Agree	8	14.5
Agree	31	56.4
Undecided	11	20
Disagree	3	5.5
Strongly Disagree	2	3.6
Total	55	100

This statement closely parallels the statement in Table 23, and the tables should show approximately the same responses which they do.

In Table 24 there are five parents (9%) who disapproved versus four parents (7.3%) in Table 23. The eleven (20%) undecided responses were the same for both tables. In Table 24 there is one less parent in the total that agreed with the statement versus the total that agrees in Table 23. The total of thirty-nine parents, who agreed with the statement in Table 23, made up 71% of the parents surveyed.

Table 25. Provisions Should be Made for Students to Spend Much of Their Time During the Day in the Library Resource Rooms, and in Individual Study Rooms
(number and percentage of responses)

Response Scale	N	%
Strongly Agree	5	9.1
Agree	21	38.2
Undecided	13	23.6
Disagree	14	25.5
Strongly Disagree	2	3.6
Total	55	100

In general, many of the parents surveyed were somewhat skeptical about students spending much of their time in library resource rooms and individual study rooms.

Two parents (3.6%) out of the total fifty-five parents surveyed strongly disagreed with the idea. Fourteen parents (25.5%) disagreed, thirteen parents (23.6%) were undecided about how they felt, twenty-one (38.2%) of the fifty-five parents agreed with the philosophy, and five parents (9.1%) strongly agreed with the philosophy in statement number twenty-five of the questionnaire.

Table 26. The Library Should be the Main Resource Center, Not the Teacher.
(number and percentage of responses)

Response Scale	N	%
Strongly Agree	8	14.4
Agree	23	41.8
Undecided	6	11
Disagree	15	27.3
Strongly Disagree	3	5.5
Total	55	100

The number of parents who marked this question "disagree" is greater than for any other question in the survey. There were fifteen parents (27.3%) who marked "disagree" on the question, but there was only three parents (5.5%) who "strongly disagreed". This leaves thirty-one parents (56.2%) totally, who were in some agreement with the question, and six parents (11%) who were undecided.

Table 27. The Use of Teaching Machines Could be Utilized so that One Student Can Study a Topic at a Different Time From Other Students.
(number and percentage of responses)

Response Scale	N	%
Strongly Agree	8	14.5
Agree	25	45.4
Undecided	11	20
Disagree	4	7.3
Strongly Disagree	7	12.8
Total	55	100

Other than doing away with letter grades, there was more strong disagreement to this question than any other statement in the questionnaire. The seven parents who strongly disagreed added to the four parents who disagreed made a total of eleven parents in disagreement, or 20% of the parents surveyed.

Again, as with most other statements in the questionnaire, the biggest portion of the parents surveyed were in agreement with the statement contained in Table 27. To be exact, 60% of the parents surveyed felt teaching machines could be used by students to study areas different from one another.

This leaves 20% of the parents who were not sure how they felt about the question.

Table 28. Teaching Machines and Programmed Learning Materials Should be Utilized to Free the Teacher to Work with Individual Students and Their Problems.

Response Scale	N	%
Strongly Agree	10	18.2
Agree	26	47.2
Undecided	7	12.8
Disagree	8	14.5
Strongly Disagree	4	7.3
Total	55	100

Although there was a lot of agreement (65.4%) by parents surveyed to the above question, twelve parents (21.8%) definitely felt that teachers should not be freed to work with individual students, through the use of teaching machines and programmed learning, and seven parents out of the total of fifty-five parents surveyed really were undecided about which way they felt.

Summary

It has been shown by the questionnaire that out of the fifty-five parents surveyed in Ekalaka, Montana, there is quite a positive attitude toward the philosophy of individualized instruction.

On Tables 1 through 7, dealing with students' needs, it is shown that parents believe all students should include individual differences and allow each student to progress when he is ready. The program should be for the individual, not the group, and should be structured and guided according to a student's abilities.

Tables 8 through 14, dealing with student evaluation, show some discord with the philosophy of individualized instruction.

The parents surveyed were in favor of testing students to find out where they are, and then teaching them. They believe the evaluation should be on a continual basis with both student and parents, and that students should be evaluated on individual performance relating to pre-set goals.

The parents surveyed were not in agreement with dropping letter grade reporting, only 29% of the parents felt that letter grades promoted feelings of failure, and only 56.3% of the parents felt that criticism, failure and discouragement should be eliminated from the schools.

On the questions dealing with student progress and process, Tables 15 through 21, most parents were in agreement with the concepts.

The parents, in general, believed that a student can progress at his own rate, after he has attained certain skills, but he should not be solely responsible for his own learning. The parents felt that learning should be an active participatory process made up of experiences chosen jointly by the teacher and the student; and that major emphasis for learning should be placed on individual sessions, not group sessions.

Finally, the tables dealing with schedules and materials, items twenty-two through twenty-eight, show some skepticism about certain philosophy questions relating to individualized instruction.

The parents surveyed believe that a flexible schedule should be utilized to organize the school day, and that the student should be able to plan short-term contracts with the teacher as well as study a subject area at different times from the other students.

But, they were not too strongly in favor of students spending most of their time in library resource rooms making use of teaching machines.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

The purpose of the study was an attempt to establish how parents of Ekalaka grade school children regarded individualized instruction, thus making it easier to implement such a program if desired.

Educators have realized the failings of the traditional grade school, but parents, educators and administrators feel secure in the traditional compartmentalized curricula. As Thomas Crescimbeni concludes, "There have been attempts at changing this lockstep method of teaching, but it has been done under continuous pressure." (Thomas, 1967:4)

The problem of change is an arduous and perplexing endeavor, according to researchers.

Implementation of individualized instruction, an educational change, falls in this category of endeavors.

A change to an innovative program, such as individualized instruction, is needed, according to authorities, because the traditional school does not provide for individual needs of students. The traditional school subjects children to group life.

Even though individual differences have been noted by educators, they continue to make allowances for these differences by using grouping techniques.

Although individualized instruction doesn't necessarily mean teaching each child individually, a child's learning needs are decided individually, and these needs may include group learning with certain tasks.

The review of literature covers many types of individualized programs, including those in high schools and those in elementary schools. Some programs cover one class of multi-aged students, and other programs cover all grades from Kindergarten to grade six; but all programs have one thing in common, they attempt to provide for all students as individuals.

A questionnaire was devised and sent to those parents in Ekalaka, Montana to garner their opinions and ultimately establish what their philosophy was in relation to individualized instruction. The results of this survey and review of literature and related research will be used to set up guidelines of implementing an individualized program.

Conclusions

The results from the questionnaire indicated that, in general, parents were quite positive toward the philosophy and approach of

individualized instruction. The literature reviewed also indicated positive attitudes toward individualized instruction.

On the basis of the review of literature and related research and the opinions of parents about individualized instruction, the following conclusions were made:

1. Schools and teachers should provide for the individual differences and abilities of all students.
2. The evaluation process must be a continual process, but should show progress and success for each student at his own level.
3. The goals set up for students and the skills attained by students should be appropriate for all students.
4. Scheduling and organizational structures of schools should be flexible enough to satisfy individual student needs.
5. Classrooms could be reorganized and methods utilized to teach students more efficiently.

There appears to be seven major philosophical differences of opinions by the parents surveyed in relation to the philosophy of individualized instruction.

Those differences are:

1. The discarding of letter grades

2. Elimination of criticism, failure and discouragement from the schools.
3. Placing the responsibility for learning upon the student.
4. Making provision for students to spend most of their time during the day in library resource rooms and in individual study areas.
5. Making and utilizing the library as the main resource center, not the teacher.
6. Using teaching machines for students to study a topic at different times from other students.
7. Using teaching machines to free the teacher to work with individual students and their problems.

The reliability of this survey, prepared and used by this researcher, might be affected by the fact that the instrument was not subjected to a test-retest comparison.

The data presented in Chapter IV would be valid in the respect that the respondents were free to answer the instrument openly, honestly, and frankly. The survey was carefully tabulated and the number and percentages presented in Chapter IV are accurate and correct. The descriptions made were based on this data.

Recommendations

Most of the recommendations by the investigator concern possible ways of coordinating and implementing an individualized instructional program through a lifeblood communications program with the public, namely the parents.

In developing a communications program, it is important to keep in mind that communications must be a dual process and it should continue to remain open.

A major effort should be made to communicate the individualized instruction program to the parents. The primary focus should be to set up and organize formal and informal communications at all levels, in the school, in the community, and between the two.

It appears to this investigator that a committee made up of interested members in the community would be the best way to organize and manage this communications link. This committee should include students, parents, members of the teaching staff, and the administration of the school.

The function of this communications committee would be to find out what kinds of information would need to be disseminated to the public (parents) and make decisions about the most expedient ways of disseminating the information.

From the results of the survey, a tentative list of information to be disseminated to the public could include areas of

individualized instruction such as evaluation and assessment, learning directed by specific objectives, diversified learning activities, and background information on reasons and uses of programmed materials and teaching machines.

For the purpose of further study, the investigator recommends that parental surveys be taken in other communities to shed additional light on public opinion in relation to implementing individualized instruction.

Also, the survey instrument could be researched at greater length to include other pertinent information if applicable, and possibly eliminate any existing ideas from the survey instrument if they appear irrelevant.

There is a great responsibility in education, for students, educators and parents.

Promising ideas that challenge this responsibility have been slow in affecting education.

Despite all the talk about innovation in the past ten years, changes in education remain isolated, piecemeal, small in scope and often are temporary.

For the responsible school system, a well planned program of individualization may meet this challenge by providing an education that makes it possible for each student to reach his own personal potentials.

The investigator has enjoyed making this study because it is one area that needs much attention in our schools.

As Stahl (1970:25) points out:

> The challenge of change or transposing instructional theory into instructional practice is an open-ended task which often appears impossible to achieve. Certainly accepting the goal of individualized instruction presents all of us with a challenge which must be approached with both patience and creativity.

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APPENDIX

APPENDIX A

502 Palmer
Miles City, Montana 59301
February 6, 1973

Dear Mr. and Mrs.....

I am conducting a study designed to determine parental opinion toward individualized instruction.

This study will serve a two-fold purpose. First, to determine what opinions parents of Ekalaka elementary school children have toward individualized instruction. Secondly, it will assist me in my research for my professional paper while I am engaged in graduate work.

As part of my study, I need certain information. Specifically, I would appreciate greatly your taking some time to complete and return the enclosed questionnaire to me. Names will not be associated with any information on the questionnaire.

The questions can be answered by simple check marks. In a preliminary tryout of the questionnaire, respondents took an average of 15 to 30 minutes to complete the items. A stamped self-addressed return envelope is enclosed for your convenience in returning the questionnaire.

Your cooperation is most important to my study, and I shall be grateful for your response.

Please return the questionnaire to Donald B. Gundlach, Investigator, within two weeks after you receive the questionnaire.

Sincerely,

Donald B. Gundlach

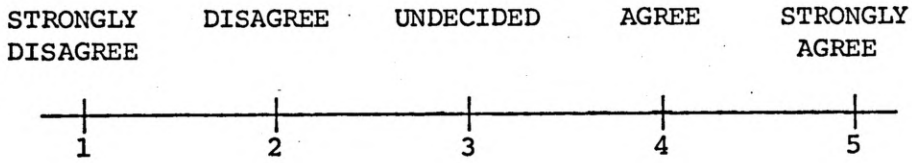
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APPENDIX B

QUESTIONNAIRE
(Sample)

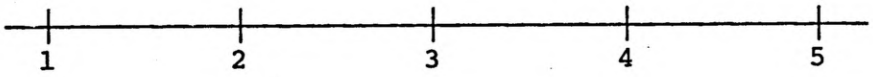
Please answer the questions by placing an X over the response on the scale that you feel most appropriately answers each question.

The responses will be as follows:



EXAMPLE:

All schools provide equal opportunity for all students.

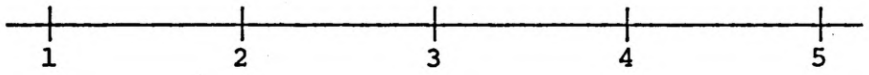


If after careful thought you were undecided about your answer, then response number 3 would be marked as in the example above.

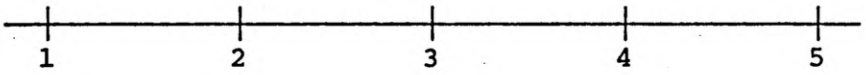
1. School instruction should meet the needs of all of the children of all the people.



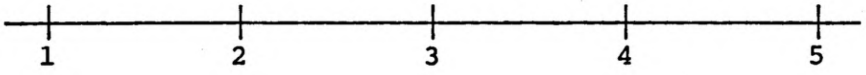
2. Because of wide differences in learners, programs on instruction should be carefully evaluated in terms of their offerings to each student.



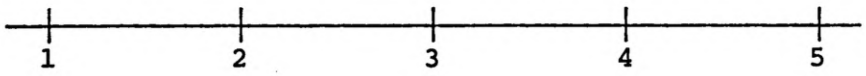
3. A student should be allowed to progress more rapidly in some subjects than he might in others.



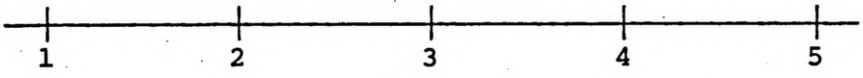
4. A learning program should be made for the individual rather than for the group.



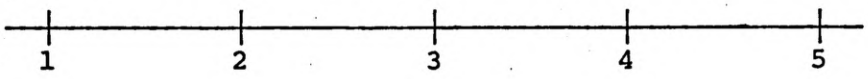
5. A student's readiness (ability to move on) should be strongly dependent upon his willingness to advance.



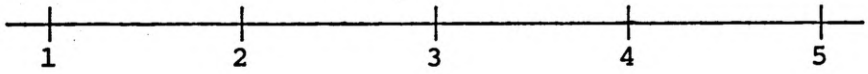
6. Learning activities should be determined by individual student readiness (ability to move on), not by age.



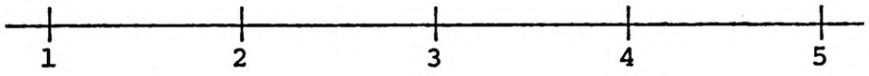
7. The teacher should guide activities for student growth according to the student's individual abilities.



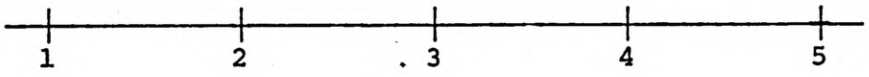
8. Evaluation of the student's work should be a continual process.



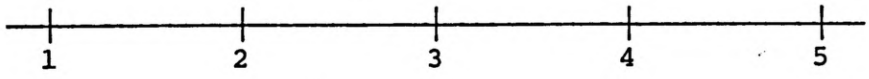
9. Students should be evaluated or judged on their individual performance rather than by comparison with the group.



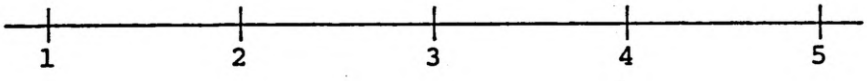
10. Goals should be set up in advance and tests used to assist both students and teachers in determining student potentials and individual study recommendations.



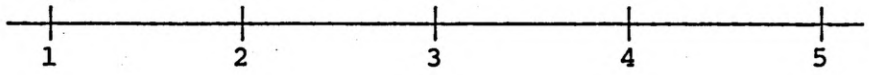
11. Students should be tested first to find out where they are and then taught, not taught first, and then tested.



12. The continual evaluation of individual student programs and progress should be discussed with the student and the parents.



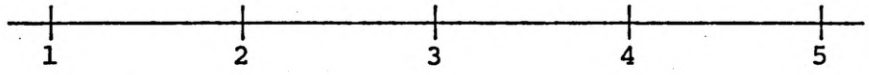
13. Letter grades should be discarded because in many cases they promote feelings of failure.



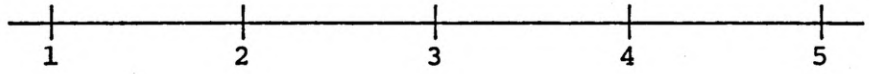
14. Criticism, failure, and discouragement should be eliminated from the schools.



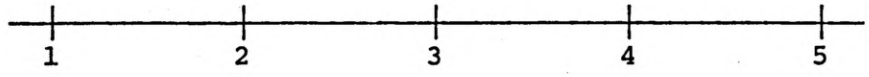
15. When students have developed one skill or mastered one concept, they should be free to move to the next, regardless of the progress of the others or the time of the year.



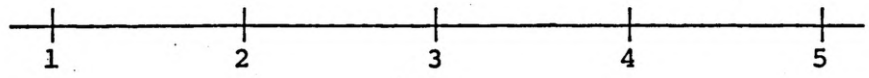
16. Students should not be forced or allowed to move into a new task until they have mastered the one at hand.



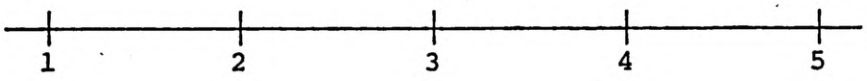
17. The teacher should not tell the student how to think, but must provide him with the freedom, the encouragement, and the opportunity to do so.



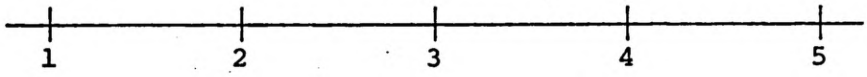
18. The responsibility for learning must be placed on the student.



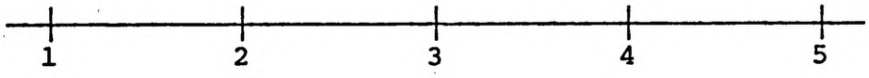
19. Learning is an active, not a passive process. Therefore, it should involve participation in a task rather than mere absorption of information.



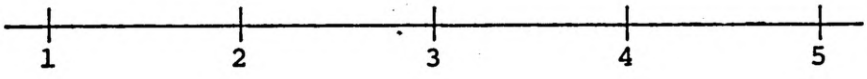
20. Students should be provided with learning experiences or tasks that they have chosen jointly with their teacher.



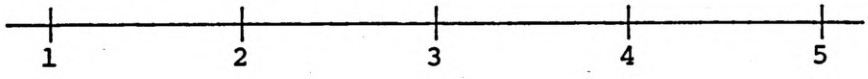
21. Teachers work with students in group sessions, but major emphasis should be placed on individual work sessions with students.



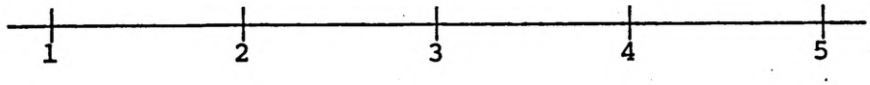
22. A flexible schedule should be used to organize a school day so that varying amounts of time can be spent on different subjects.



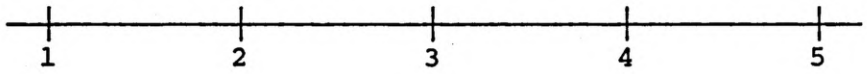
23. Each student should be allowed to plan with the teacher short-term programs or contracts of study that will satisfy his individual needs.



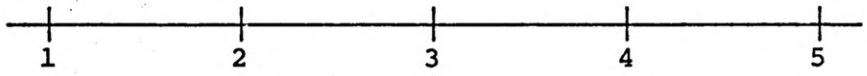
24. Students should be allowed to study a content area (subject) in different ways and with different amounts of emphasis according to their individual needs.



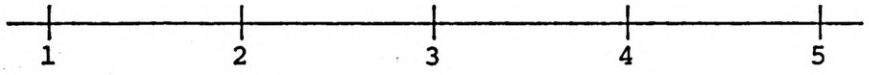
25. Provisions should be made for students to spend much of their time during the day in the library resource rooms, and in individual study areas.



26. The library should be the main resource center, not the teacher.



27. The use of teaching machines could be utilized so that one student can study a topic at a different time from other students.



28. Teaching machines and programmed learning materials should be utilized to free the teacher to work with individual students and their problems.

