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ED 018 838 CG 001 864

DEVELOPMENTAL GUIDANCE IN THE ELEMENTARY GRADES.

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PUB DATE APR 66

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.25 HC-$0.68 15P.

DESCRIPTORS- *CHILD DEVELOPMENT, *DEVELOPMENTAL PSYCHOLOGY, *ELEMENTARY EDUCATION, *GROUPING (INSTRUCTIONAL PURPOSES), CLASS ORGANIZATION, INDIVIDUAL CHARACTERISTICS, MEASUREMENT, GUIDANCE PROGRAMS,

EXISTING DIRECTIVES FOR PLACEMENT IN SCHOOL ARE INADEQUATE. MORE IMPORTANT, GROWTH AS THE GOAL OF EARLY EDUCATION IS ALL TOO OFTEN SACRIFICED TO A RIGID TEACHING-AND-LEARNING PROCESS WITH ITS BURDENSOME DEMANDS. THIS OFTEN LEADS TO EMOTIONAL MALADJUSTMENT. PROPER PLACEMENT AND GROWTH CAN BE ACHIEVED ONLY IF EVERY CHILD IS KNOWN IN HIS OWN RIGHT. THE BEST WAY TO GAIN THIS KNOWLEDGE IS THROUGH DEVELOPMENTAL EXAMINATION, WHICH SHOULD BE THE BASIS OF THE GUIDANCE OF EVERY CHILD. DR. ILG EXPLAINS THE DEVELOPMENTAL-EXAMINATION SYSTEM AND DISCUSSES THE SELECTION, TRAINING, AND DUTIES OF THE EXAMINER. HE STRESSES THE ADVANTAGES OF DEVELOPMENTAL EXAMINING--(1) A CHILD CAN BE PLACED WHERE HE CAN PROPERLY GROW AND FUNCTION, (2) CURRICULA CAN BE BETTER GEARED TO THE DEVELOPMENTAL NEEDS OF THE CHILD, (3) A GROUP CAN BECOME A GROUP MORE QUICKLY, INDICATE MORE CLEARLY ITS INTERESTS AND CAPACITIES, AND BETTER GENERATE ITS OWN ENERGY, AND (4) THERE CAN BE MORE TIME AND ENERGY FOR CREATIVE TEACHING. RESISTANCE FROM EDUCATORS AND PARENTS TOWARD GROUPING BASED ON DEVELOPMENTAL EXAMINATION MUST BE OVERCOME. THIS RESISTANCE IS EXPENSIVE AND RETARDS TRUE GROWTH IN EARLY EDUCATION. (RD)

Developmental Guidance in the Elementary Grades*

by

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To guide effectively, one should know first what or whom one is guiding. All too often especially in the education of the young child there has been a hit or miss process. Certain supposed stabilizers such as the age of the child have been used, e.g., that a child should be a certain age by the time he enters kindergarten or first grade. But in both parents' and educators' zeal the original directive that a kindergartner was a five-year-old and a first grader was a six-year-old has been watered down to mean that a child could be allowed to reach this age in the midst of his year in kindergarten or first grade.

Teaching and learning began to supplant growing both in the minds of the adult and in the life of the child. The adverse effect of this thinking became increasingly evident in the response of first and second graders when the more rigorous demands of these grades are placed upon them. These very years when the child's eagerness to learn should be so joyous and unmistakable, all too often go wrong with a large proportion of children who are not ready for the demands put upon them. As Edward Summerton, elementary principal in New Castle, Delaware, has so aptly put it, "too many of our schools are like tailors trying to fit the boy to the pants instead of the pants to the boy."

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*A presentation at The Invitational Conference on Elementary School Guidance at the U.S. Office of Education, Washington, D.C., March 31-April 2, 1966.

With a small proportion of children, perhaps around 30 percent, the pants really do fit. The children in this group usually have age on their side. Their birth dates are often in the months of January and February if their schools have the cutoff date of December 31. They are ready to experience the joy of learning.

With the large majority, however, let us say 50 percent of the grade group, the fit of the pants is too tight; the demands put upon the child are too great. This is shown in poorer success at school, struggle and tension, but without failure. Even more important, tensional outlets rise after the child has left the school confines. Mothers often steel themselves at home knowing that outburst of crying, temper tantrums, wild running or collapsing into sleep may occur on the child's return from school. With others the outlets are more delayed and insidious, expressing themselves in nightmares or a return to bed wetting. The remedy for this group may be no more than a six-months slower course in school.

With the remaining 20 percent the fit of the pants is so tight that they split. The children in this group show a breakdown in school either emotionally or intellectually. They cry. They are disruptive. They cannot learn. They sit and daydream. The need for an immediate remedy or a new pair of pants for such children is obvious even to the less perceptive adult. The demands of the grade they are in are obviously too much for them. They need to progress at least one or possibly two years slower in school. If they are more than two years behind they may need to be sidetracked.

The sad part of this state of affairs is that age really does have a place in the decision about any child. We have misused age, but this does not mean we should now discard it entirely. Rather, we should come to have a respect for age. A simple directive such as that all girls should be five by September 1 and all boys should be five by July 1 might solve close to 50 percent of our school problems. We have been aware that boys develop more slowly than girls; the evidence is ununmistakable, but we have only given it lip service and we have done little about it. A difference of entrance age between boys and girls will at least salvage some of the boys who are more obviously not ready because of age.

But chronological age is not enough to take care of all children nor are general directives enough. It is the individual child who is being educated. Each child needs to be known in his own right. Each child expresses his own biological rate of growth as well as his own method or way of growing. The child is trying to tell us in all sorts of ways about himself but we as adults are all too often blind and deaf. We brush off the sight of a child blinking his eyes or close our ears to his crying, loud though it may be. What has made us lose our compassion? What has put us in this vise of holding to the directives of our system?

The answers to these last two questions are hard for me to give especially since I am not an educator. But with Churchill in the midst of the overt tragedy of the second World War, I too would say, "let us not try to unravel the sins of the past or we are in danger of losing the future."

It is the immediate "now" that should concern us. It is the woof of life, the incessant shuttling back and forth of time as it is being lived that is defining the pattern of our lives. When the now or the woof of life is operating more smoothly we can take time to look more closely at the warp of life, those long strands that were laid down from our very beginning, those strands determined by our inheritance, those strands snarled along the way or possibly dropped.

How to get at the woof of life, the pattern of a child's life as he is living it now is the task we at the Gesell Institute have set ourselves to. Over the years through the tools of developmental examining we have attempted to document the unfolding patterns in response to specific stimuli. Dr. Gesell's initial directive "behavior grows and is patterned" is our ever present guide. But even after more than 50 years of careful work we are only on the threshold of knowing how growth takes place through the development of these patterns.

Our emphasis in research at the Gesell Institute during the past 10 years has been especially on the child from 5 to 10 in the expression of his inner growing, or rather of his unity, for he cannot grow other than all of a piece. Over the years we have deliberately chosen certain aspects of our testing that seem to tell us most about a child especially within a longitudinal setting. We want to be able to document these changes from age to age, changes that can be clearly seen even by the untutored. We have tried to cut our examination down to a half hour in length and to include items that interest and challenge the child and through which he can express his age.

The developmental examination as we give it now is divided into seven different parts, the major four parts being sandwiched between an initial and concluding interview. These interviews give both the feeling of the texture of a child's life, the level of his intellect, of his interests, and how he puts these to use. He is initially asked to give his age, birth date, is questioned about his last birthday party, and reports on his siblings, and father's occupation. Some of this reporting not only tells us about his mental organization but also the social structure of his home. We were a bit aghast the other day when a 10-year old boy reported he had 5 sisters and 15 brothers. On checking we found this to be true. In the concluding interview the child's interests are tapped. He is initially asked what he likes to do best and then to specify his preferences at school and home, both indoors and outdoors.

The three major test areas which make up the body of the examination include pencil and paper tests, right and left tests and form tests. In the pencil and paper tests the child is asked to write his name and address or letters according to his age, numbers from 1 to 20, and to copy six basic geometric forms ranging from circle to diamond. An incomplete man figure is to be completed and the facial expression given.

On right and left tests the orientation to his own body both in naming parts and carrying out directions gives us a good idea of his ability to localize both in accuracy and in speed.

The form tests include both a matching test (Monroe Visual 1) which is restricted in its use to a five-six year old and a memory for designs

test (Monroe Visual 3) which can be used well beyond 10 years. The latter is also used as a projective test.

A fun test of naming animals for 60 seconds is thrown in which also gives some language clues. The power of sustaining, of organization, of ranging, and even of regression, can be surprisingly revealed on this simple test of naming animals.

The last or seventh item of the test is the recording of the eruption and decay of teeth. This is a physical item which in its present stage of research tells most about the immature or nonready child. This evidence becomes a supportive indicator when a child who is judged to be younger in his behavior than in his age, also shows a slowness in tooth eruption.

The examination is not difficult to give though one quickly recognizes the smooth flow of a well-given examination by an expert along with the positive response of the child. It is the interpretation of the examination that is more difficult, that demands training and most of all constant exercise of giving.

It is this examination we are recommending to be given to every child. It is this examination we would wish to be at the basis of the guidance of every child. New personnel is needed to be trained to do this work. The developmental examiner would necessarily put her major effort in the first two years of exercising her new profession in examining a school population, for instance, of 500 from kindergarten through the fifth grade. As each group or age level has been examined her next task would

be to group the children developmentally. When these initial tasks have been completed or are well under control, new areas of interest and activity should open up for the developmental examiner. We anticipate that the areas of guidance and coordination might eventually become even more important. Wherefore, we have conceived of the title of Developmental Guidance Coordinator. With her knowledge of the individual child and his place in the group she will become ready to coordinate forces between home and school, teacher and principal.

Some educators have suggested that existing personnel in the guidance field be trained as developmental examiners. This might be possible in some instances. At the present time the guidance area in these early grades--kindergarten to fifth--is more often in the hands of the psychologist. He has his own special tools more often related to the intellect and the inner psyche. These are important tools and should be available as the need arises. Whether the psychologist can take on the extra tools of developmental examining is still to be questioned and determined. The psychologist is often too specialized. He has a hard time coming down to the mundane pulse of life the way a teacher can.

It is therefore that we are at this time recommending the choice of selected teachers who really know and love children and who are eager to know more about them. Schools are full of teachers ready to do this type of work. We would recommend that a teacher who is to become a

Developmental Guidance Coordinator be chosen from the ranks of her own school. She should be able to communicate and work with both the educational staff and with parents. She should be able to feel and know a child individually through the developmental examination, as a member of his group, and finally within the influence of his home. She should at any time be capable of relieving a teacher both to keep in contact with the group and also to give a teacher occasional time off to explore other areas.

Ideally, we would like to have one developmental examiner for each unit of around 500 children from kindergarten to the fifth grade. We would anticipate that it would take close to three years to have a developmental placement program in full swing within a six-grade unit through the fifth grade. Initially, the time required to train the developmental examiner would slow down the program. We would recommend that she attend a two-week workshop on developmental examining, such as we now give at the Gesell Institute. The use of School Readiness (Ilg and Ames; Harper & Row) as an examining manual should be supportive. Supervision in her initial training by a consultant would be ideal.

An initial "screening test" of the kindergarten applicants is a good way to have the developmental examiner test her wings. This "screening test" includes only a short interview and the pencil and paper tests. This takes only 10 minutes. Ten examinations could be done in a day, being scheduled at 20 minute intervals. Thus, there could be a little time between examinations to jot down salient items that define the child.

Within the span of two weeks a potential kindergarten population of, say, 100 kindergartners could be covered. May or June are preferable times. September could be used if the first two weeks of school were given over to testing though this is not likely in most schools. The other advantage of spring testing is that the obviously not ready child could have other plans made for him such as attending nursery school.

The more demanding full scale testing would be started on the first grade children in the fall. Probably no more than four per day should be scheduled. Time should be given to digest each examination and to write a summary. These summaries should be written the same day as the examination. Thus, a first grade population of 100 children could be covered within five weeks. By this time, preferably with some supervision, the developmental examiner should feel quite comfortable in examining and should begin to feel the demands of this type of textural examining as opposed to simple testing. One of our examiners after four weeks of examining said it suddenly struck her like a streak of lightning what growth was and what the examination was about. Here is the potential good examiner. Here is the examiner who can distill behavior in its essence, including scoring, but not relying on scoring alone. Some individuals cannot examine developmentally. They demand rigid scoring. They cannot see behavior in its related parts. They should be returned to their classrooms after a trial run of perhaps a month has revealed that this type of thinking and examining is not easy for them.

By the end of a year of examining, the developmental examiner should not only feel quite confident in examining children from five to eight years of age but she should feel quite capable in evaluating her findings. Grouping the children should be coming into form by this time but another year of experience needs to elapse before she will feel more confident in her grouping. In her evaluations she should be able to place children at half-year intervals and to determine whether they are at A or B levels, that is, whether they need a more enriched or A level of curriculum or a more usual B level.

Grouping children developmentally is surprisingly easy after each child has been examined and given a level such as 4½A or 5B as within a kindergarten group. Often children can be given alternate groupings such as 4½A/5B. This allows for greater flexibility in eventual grouping. We have had enough experience in grouping within a variety of school populations to know that given a group of 100 kindergarten children, they will most probably fall into four groups, two at a five-year level with an A and B section and two at a 4½ year level also with an A and B section.

If a child is not correctly placed initially, his misplacement will be evident as he interacts with the group. If, for example, he were placed in a 5A group but could not keep up with the group, he should be more fully evaluated and then placed where he was more truly functioning. If he were on the young side a 4½A group might well be indicated. This shift should not be delayed after the machinery between home and school has been set in motion. It has surprised us greatly that the change in the child's

behavior after he has been shifted to the group where he belongs usually occurs at once. There is no adjusting period. The truth is that he is now in a milieu in which he can function.

The intricacies of an examining schedule and methods of grouping cannot be dealt with here. But our research has made us aware of the need to group at six-month intervals and at two levels, A and B. Thus, a child should ideally never need to repeat a grade. He simply moves at a slower pace. Thus a child may spend three years in kindergarten without repeating. At five he could be in a 4½B group, by six in a 5B group, progressing to a 5½B group by seven years of age. This would suggest that he should be ready for the first grade by eight years of age, two years behind schedule.

If a child, however, takes this long to go through kindergarten, all evidence indicates that he will be hard to teach and may need special handling. If he is more than two years behind the usual rate we judge him to be out of running and not capable to remain in the usual stream of education. A careful decision needs to be made before a child of this type is even allowed to enter first grade. These are the potential non-readers, the later potential dropouts. This group includes anywhere from 6-10 percent of the school population. The ones we are referring to are not retarded, since they score within the realm of 90 to 110 on an IQ test. They need to be respected in their own right. Much more research needs to be done on this special group and better educational facilities need to be provided.

With developmental grouping the initial evaluation and placement of a child is related to his potential, but it in no way determines his progress, that is, it does not place him in a track. Some children need to go faster at one stage, then need to be slowed down at a next stage. A child may do very well within the new stimulation of first grade but he may bog down in second grade when completion of work is demanded. Thus, within a three-year span a child might start out in 6A, progress to 7B, and slow down to 7½A. We want him to be fully ready before he enters the third grade. The third grade is an expanding experience which demands a quicker more total grasp. A good third grader should have lost his laborious seven-year-old ways. Speed and tackle are his two most valuable attributes. As a further check on his readiness, his smile's revelation of four upper second incisors will also indicate biological readiness.

We haven't yet done the work on grouping which we wish to do. Much will be revealed when we shall be able to put our paper grouping to the test beyond the kindergarten level. But we have been impressed by the ease of paper grouping. And we have also been impressed by the resistance of educators to carry out the grouping. Educators seem to have difficulty facing the facts. They cannot believe that so many children are or could be overplaced. They are slow to make a shift and would rather keep a child where he is, holding him there with patch-up methods such as remedial work. These are expensive methods both from the point-of-view of human energy and also of finances. Opposition to holding a child back

and having him progress at a slowerrate also comes from the parents, especially from fathers, as well as the educator. The very child who does the poorest seems often to have a father who yells the loudest. We hope that parent education might bridge this gap.

The most rewarding aspect of developmental grouping as we have seen it with various kindergarten populations is that a group becomes a group more quickly. It becomes immediately evident that a 5A group is ready for much more than a 4½B group. The 5A group is eager to explore numbers and letters as in the forms of calendars and signs. It can operate as a more cohesive group in games and various activities. The teacher of a burgeoning 5A group is often put upon to provide the type of curriculum the children need without moving into first grade work. A similar curriculum for a 4½B group would be disastrous. If a nursery school experience with large wheel toys, and possibly a dress-up corner or good housekeeping areas with water facilites is not provided, the children of this group will be ready to leave by 10:30 or 11:00 if they haven't already broken down under the strain. Watch the children of a poor 4½B group fetch their coats at this early hour and spend the rest of their time at school with their coats under their arms. A curriculum suited to their level and their interests obviously needs to be provided.

Eventually it is to be hoped that we shall be able to define more clearly the possible curricula at each age level. These should be geared to the developmental needs of the child. We anticipate that a well placed group

will speak out more clearly as to its interests and capacities. A teacher will discover that whereas she needs to spend less time on discipline and on teaching the unready child, she will have more energy and time to teach her group in a truly creative way. A good group can actually generate its own energy. Some teachers of 5A groups have even reported that the group can take care of itself.

We anticipate that the developmental guidance coordinator will have more time to spend with the groups as the program continues. Her heavy examining load will be relieved after the first two years of the program. From then on observation of the working of the groups, and the checking of her placement judgments will become more essential. She should be able to pick out any misfits. These are surprisingly evident when a group has a cohesive quality. She should then review her findings, possibly examine the child in question more fully (especially if he has only had a screening examination), discuss findings with the teacher, and make a decision in consultation with the principal. Any needed shifts should not be delayed. The parents should be included in any final decision.

Beside the developmental guidance coordinator's interest in the individual child and in the smooth working of the group, she will most probably become more involved in the curriculum as time goes on.

We can already foresee marked changes in the curriculum. I have already hinted at the changes in the young or 4½-year-old kindergarten groups. Five and a half year old groups should not be thought of just as reading

readiness classes. There is much more to a school experience than reading. As for the six- and seven-year-old levels an entire shift in attitude may well be in order. Why do so many first and second graders hate school? Do we listen enough to the child in relation to his own spontaneous demands? Do we teach enough through content which will have more meaning for the child? Is not a seven-year old's love for his teacher as important as learning to read? Not that there won't be formalizing moments and stronger demands. But let third grade be the transition area into the stricter regime of fourth grade when the nine-year-old wants to put his ideas and his skills to the test. He wants to be timed. He wants to receive marks to tell him how well he has done. He works independently and he knows his process of thought or action. Is he better off if he has had a strict regime in the first and second grades, or is he better off if we has been given time for growing?

It is this area that interests us most, the area of growing. Educators have thought all too long about learning and not enough about growing. May the schools of the future provide a place for growing. Then learning will follow naturally and hopefully within the realm of discovery.