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ABSTRACT

The operating procedures of a university reading and study skills center for completely individualized reading instruction are described. The program is offered as a student service (no fee) on a voluntary, noncredit basis. A prepared set of instructional tapes is used whereby students can largely serve themselves, proceeding at their own rates, and professional staff time is devoted primarily to evaluation and conferencing. The sequence of steps described is as follows: Student appointment for conference, conference between student and staff member, reading test to determine needs, assignment, lab work, comments written on log sheet by student, log-sheet folder review by counselor, and termination of program when goals are reached. A recycling effect occurs, if necessary, with additional conferences and new assignments made until the goal is reached. Application of this procedure within the class organization is described. A sample registration card and a log sheet are included. This document is part of the "Techniques of Study" teacher's manual of the Self Instructional Reading Service. (CM)

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— AN
INDIVIDUALIZED READING PROGRAM

by

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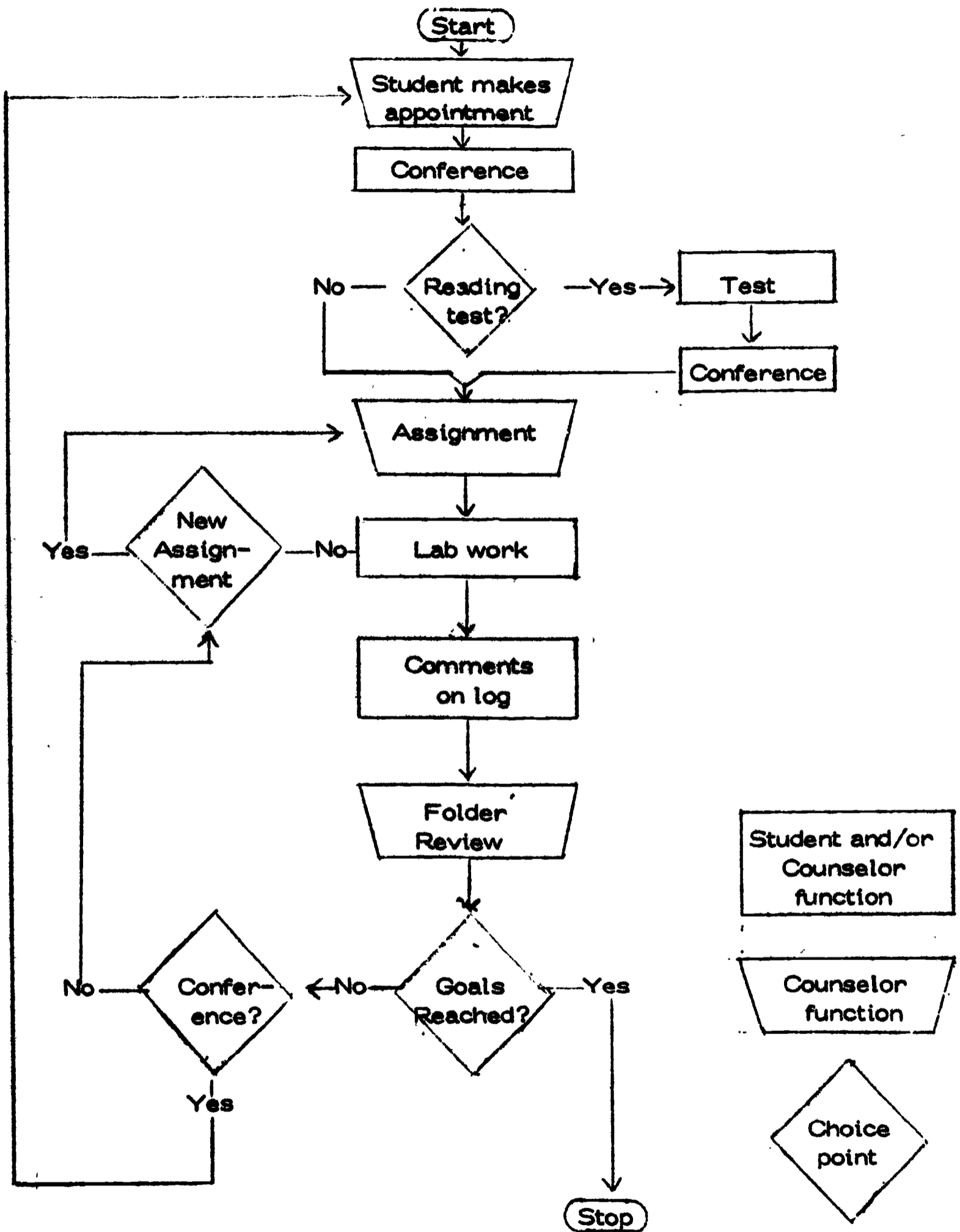
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RE 002

Operation of a Reading and Study Skills Center



The instructional tapes offered by Self Instructional Reading Service were developed for use in a completely individualized reading program. Students could receive what they needed in the order they needed rather than having to wait for the class to arrive at a particular topic. They could also spend as much or as little time as they needed rather than what the group or number of class meetings required. This type of management is described in detail because it has been worked out successfully in a smoothly operating program.

The tapes are equally usable in a class organization since their content is what a teacher would say to a class. The difference in programs is not in content but in management of the students.

Individualized Program

A truly individualized program means a break with traditional procedures. The program becomes a student service rather than a course to be taken and grades received. It is the individual student and what he needs that are the principal considerations.

In the program where this management procedure was developed there are no fees charged nor is any credit given (although some kind of arrangement could be made for use of the facilities). The program is offered strictly as a service on a voluntary basis. The assumption was made that if a student were seeking help for what he personally needed and found it, he would then continue in the program until his immediate goal was reached. He could then continue for additional work or return at a later time for additional work or refresher practice. Such a policy also allows for a student to discontinue his work temporarily when examinations and term papers come along then return when time is again available. This assumption has been proved valid by the increasing enrollments in the program by students of all skill levels from entering freshmen to graduate students.

The biggest break with traditional procedure probably lies in the testing area. In a completely individualized program, pre- and post-testing by standardized instruments are no longer an appropriate criterion for achievement. When each student is working on what he needs--in the sequence he needs--his criterion of success is his own progress in his regular course work--which is the reason he sought help in the first place.

In the instances of administrators who have regarded pre- and post-test scores as a measure of the program's success, the shift in viewpoint from "a course" to a student service can help in making the needed change in criterion measure. Time and patience are required for the "re-education" of students, faculty and administrators to this new type program. However, it must be recognized that administrators must defend budget requests; student enrollment and use of the facilities are suggested as criterion measures in a voluntary program.

An alternative to the entirely voluntary individualized program is to offer such a service as an adjunct to the formal course required for certain students. In this way those students ordinarily excluded from the required course but who still wish self-improvement can be served.

The flow chart (on facing page) represents an arrangement which can be followed whether the program is conducted by one person or a large staff,

whether located in one room or an elaborate complex of laboratory and offices. Each step is explained following the tables on the chart. The procedures are a suggested way; individual adaptations can be made at any point. It represents an arrangement whereby students can serve themselves, thus relieving professional staff of operating equipment, holding stopwatches, clerical work or other non-professional duties. The time of the professional staff is directed entirely to the individual student and his progress.

Student makes appointment--Where size of the program warrants office staff, a reception desk takes care of making appointments. This person also handles inquiries about the program and procedures for enrolling. In a small program where the instructor is the total staff, a sign-up sheet for appointments can be posted on a certain period each week designated as enrollment time can serve for small groups to be handled.

Conference--When the student arrives for his initial conference, a registration card is filled out so that there will be a record of his work (see illustration page 7), and a work folder is supplied with the student's name on the folder label. This registration procedure is handled at the appointment desk. Approximately 10 minutes extra time at this initial conference should be allowed for registration (10 minutes registration; 30 minutes conference).

The student takes his work folder and registration card to meet with his study counselor. The information given on the registration card can be expanded and/or explained. Additional information can be elicited if needed (see back side of registration card, page 8). An assignment is made and written on the log sheet (illustrated on page 9) and the general operation of the program explained.

The first conference serves as an initial diagnosis both as to skill needs of the student and also as to kind of treatment best suited to the individual. For example, some students prefer to work on one task at a time, whereas others prefer a variety. Or one student may need more structure and more personal contact than another. The assignment can be varied according to these personality needs.

Probably the most important outcome of the first conference is the establishment of personal contact between student and staff member, then the work can be done by programmed materials within a personal context.

Reading test--The inventory taken in the first lesson covers the techniques and skills offered in the set of lessons. In most cases this self-evaluation will be adequate for indicating where special attention must be given, and a formal test will not be needed. In certain cases where a formal test of some kind is needed by the study counselor to make an assignment, the conference ends with directions to the student for taking the test, then making an appointment for test interpretation and assignment of practice.

Wherever possible formal tests should be made self-administering, e.g. recorded on tape with directions and time signals, or directions written out including instruction in self-timing. In a non-credit program no precaution need be made against cheating. The student who is seeking help has no reason to cheat.

Assignment--The material to be used by the student is written on the log sheet. Terms used should always match the way materials are labelled

in the laboratory. It is the decision of the study counselor as to length of any one assigned unit of work before another conference is required. As indicated under Conference, the personality of the student as well as the kind of materials will influence the length of the assignment. Your experience with these taped lessons and with other materials you may be using will be a guide.

Lab work--Once the student has an assignment he then works on his own schedule, although three periods per week are recommended as the minimum time to be able to see progress reasonably soon. Materials should be arranged and clearly labelled so that the student can serve himself. Once acquainted with the procedure the student gets his own materials and returns them at the end of his work session. A filing cabinet to hold work folders should be available at the entrance to the laboratory section so that a student can pick up his own work folder. The usual alphabetical arrangement is sufficient for the student to serve himself.

If possible, a laboratory attendant can be on duty to introduce the student to materials and equipment. This person can also answer any questions which may arise. Regular duties include checking equipment and supplies. If extra staff is not available, then the study counselor will need to allow time at the end of the first conference to introduce the student to the lab.

A laboratory set up for individualized work is very much like a library: rather than copies for each class member, only a few copies of any one item need be purchased since students come and go throughout the day. Only experience in a given program can show the number of copies required to serve the peak load.

Individual tape stations in the reading and study skills laboratory can be used. However, some schools have individual study carrels equipped for tape reception, say, in a Learning Resources Center. In this case the tapes for reading and study training are a part of the general collection.

Comments on log--At the end of each work session the student should note the date and work done. In addition he should make some comment about his progress. Being required to react to his work means that the student is involved in his progress rather than passively carrying out an assignment made by the teacher. He should be encouraged to make honest comments including a completely negative reaction, such as, "I see absolutely no use in this material!" Since study counselors are not omniscient, they could have made a wrong assignment for that particular student. It could also be that the student misread his assignment or something else was wrong. But under this log system a mistake of any kind cannot exist for more than one work session (see next section).

When the student has completed his log sheet for a work session he then leaves his work folder in some designated place for his study counselor to pick up for review.

Folder review--Each day the study counselor picks up the work folders left by his students. He reviews the comments and work done by the student and in turn adds his comments to the log sheet. In case an assignment must be altered or a conference required, this information is written on the log. Even if there is little to say and the work is going well, some comment must be made to show the student that his work has been reviewed. The folder is then filed ready for the student to pick up.

A very personal dialogue develops on these log sheets and is the means

of maintaining close contact with the student. In most cases this review will take only a few minutes. If, say, 20 minutes or longer is needed to answer a student, then a conference should be requested.

The log sheet system described here is extremely important in a time when depersonalization is increasing. Through live contact in the first conference, individualizing assignments, and personal comments on the log sheet, extremely close contact with each student is maintained with a minimum amount of time required by the study counselor.

Goals reached--Whenever the student and/or study counselor decides that goals have been reached the student drops out of the program. This may be done by mutual agreement or the student merely stops working when he has achieved what he set out to do. In a completely individualized program there can be no set program nor set time. Goals can range from the high achieving entering student who needs to confirm his procedures in one conference to the poorly prepared student who must work patiently and slowly over a long period of time. The individualized procedure presented here permits this range of pacing.

Conference?--After the initial conference it is the option of either the student or study counselor to have additional meetings. This may be done on a scheduled basis, such as, at the end of a unit of work for the student to be checked out on application of a technique to his course work, then new work assigned. In the case of an immature and dependent student, follow-up conferences on, say, a weekly basis could be scheduled until the student has acquired independent skills and can function on his own.

New assignment?--New work can be assigned at either the Folder Review step or during a follow-up conference. A new assignment can reflect a modification of the original assignment: correction, repetition, or supplementary. New work can also be assigned as a part of normal progress: the student has successfully achieved one stage of progress and is ready for the next step.

The system recycles so long as the student has goals he wishes to reach. However, students vary in the way they wish to achieve several goals. Under Conference it was pointed out that some students prefer working on a single goal at a time. This can mean continued work, one goal achieved, then another, and so on. But it can also mean one goal this semester, another goal next semester, and so on. These statements merely reflect that if a program is to accommodate individual differences, then sufficient flexibility must be built into the system to accommodate these differences.

For administrative purposes the end of a semester marks the end of a cycle in the system. At the close of a semester the study counselor completes the registration card by reporting (I) the problem, (II) the treatment, (III) the evaluation, and (IV) the recommendation for further work. The registration card is then filed. Work folders are kept over for one semester for students who continue in the program. Under this voluntary system, students may have started quite late in the semester and will continue their work into the following semester or simply wish to work more than one semester. At the start of a new semester the student will complete a new registration form and continue with his old work folder. Work folders are kept for only one previous semester since a lapse of a longer time would mean a review or starting over.

As was stated in the introductory portion of this section, the system described here is what has been developed for a completely individualized and voluntary system. It represents the efficient use of professional staff as well as the personal contact students welcome and need. Each step in the procedure should be considered; however, the details of operating the system can be modified to suit any particular program.

Class Organization

Taped instruction permits individualized instruction within a class organization. The taped lessons represent the basic information which is given to the class. During the playing of the tape you can observe the students at work. As you can identify those who need to move ahead faster, let them. For those who must move more slowly, make provision for repetition and/or supplementary work. If you identify students who need special treatment, you can work with them while the rest of the class is listening to the taped lesson.

If you are using both Techniques of Study and Techniques of Reading, it is recommended that you begin with Techniques of Study since this set permits students to use whatever reading skills they presently possess to better advantage, to be followed up with Techniques of Reading.

One popular type of group treatment where students are required to enroll in a self-improvement course is to spend the first two or three weeks in a general orientation to college work. This procedure gives opportunity to know the students and for them to find out what they need—in particular. The class can then be opened up for individual treatment.

The minimum equipment required for group instruction is one tape recorder for presentation of the lessons. However, if multi-channel equipment is available, during class time after presentation of the new material, a previous lesson can be played for absentees or those needing review, the new lesson repeated if needed, pacing tapes for timed readings, special listening drill or any other kind of material available can be channeled to particular students.

Since each lesson is approximately 20 minutes, this time limit keeps the presentation of new material well within the attention span of students. Then the remainder of the class period can be devoted to special practice and can consist of a variety of activities: speed practice, vocabulary work, perception practice, different levels of comprehension skill practice, etc. It may also be desirable to devote the remaining class time occasionally to a discussion of any particular technique or to the content of the practice material accompanying the taped lessons.

It is hoped that these suggestions will stimulate you to use the tapes in whatever way that will permit you to deal with individual students. Even though there are common problems among students which permit group treatment, individuals still respond to individual treatment. Three general procedures are suggested for reaching individuals within a group organization: (1) meet the class with whatever comments you have according to the topic scheduled (this can vary from a few minutes to a lengthy commentary), play the tape for the topic scheduled then releasing the class to work individu-

play the tape for the topic scheduled then releasing the class to work individually, (2) alternate the taped instruction with free class sessions devoted to individual work, and (3) play the taped lessons the first part of the course then use the second half of the course for individualized work.

Registration Card -- Front Side

Name _____ Referred by _____

Address _____ Telephone _____

Sex _____ Age _____ Marital Status _____ Class _____

Major _____ School _____ Transfer? _____

Employment/activities _____ Hours per week _____

Previous registration at this Center? _____ When _____

Courses causing you problems, if any _____

Check areas of interest:

- | | | | |
|-----------------------|-----|--------------------------|-----|
| Reading comprehension | ___ | How to learn effectively | ___ |
| Reading rate | ___ | How to remember | ___ |
| Critical reading | ___ | How to concentrate | ___ |
| Vocabulary | ___ | How to listen | ___ |
| Grammar | ___ | How to take lecture | ___ |
| Spelling | ___ | notes | ___ |
| How to skim | ___ | How to study in con- | ___ |
| | | tent areas | ___ |
| How to make a study | ___ | How to prepare for and | ___ |
| schedule | ___ | take a test | ___ |

Write a paragraph about your areas of interest as checked above.

Note: Registration card is kept in work folder until end of the semester then filed as permanent record; note information along right hand side.
Areas of interest should cover materials available.
Written paragraph provides added information about interests as well as about student's language usage.

Name

Semester

Center Counselor

For Center Use Only

High School Rank ACT College
SAT - M _____ V _____ GPA _____

[Diagnostic test scores or profile can go in this space. Also inventory score and/or comments.]

Courses

[In the lower section of this card is space for the study counselor's report at the end of the semester. A suggested format is:

- I. Statement of the problem.
- II. Treatment.
- III. Evaluation.
- IV. Recommendations--checked below.

Recommendations:

_____ Regular academic program _____ Limited number of reading courses
_____ Additional assistance _____ Limited number of hours

Name _____

Log Sheet

Program _____

Date _____

Log sheets can be mimeographed. A copy is stapled to the inside front cover of the work folder. Additional sheets can be stapled on top. It is helpful in reviewing a student's work if the study counselor uses a red pen.