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ABSTRACT

The Expanded Language Arts program aimed to increase the basic language skills of educationally disadvantaged children by decreasing class size and improving instructional materials. Students were drawn from a low income inner-city area of Buffalo and ranged in age from 11 to 19 years (grades 7-12). Fifty percent of the students spoke a Southern rural dialect, 20 percent spoke Italian in the home, and 1 percent spoke Spanish in the home. Language arts classrooms were used as laboratories for the teaching of writing. Electronic recording and playback equipment were used to improve oral language skills. Lists of books, magazines, and audiovisual materials are included. In 1966-67, two standard achievement tests were used: the California Language Test, Junior High and Advanced Levels, Forms W and X, and the Sequential Tests of Educational Progress (STEP), Levels 2 and 3, Forms A and B. Anecdotal comments rather than test data were gathered for 1967-68. Test scores for 1968-69 have not yet been compiled. The 1966-67 test data, however, showed that six to fifteen mean months of gain were registered. (KG)

EXPANDED LANGUAGE ARTS Buffalo, New York

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FOREWORD

This project report is part of an independent study of selected exemplary programs for the education of disadvantaged children completed by the American Institutes for Research in the Behavioral Sciences, Palo Alto, Calif., under contract with the U.S. Office of Education.

The researchers report this project significantly improved the educational attainment of the disadvantaged children involved. Other communities, in reviewing the educational needs of the disadvantaged youngsters they serve, may wish to use this project as a model - adapting it to their specific requirements and resources.

Bureau of Elementary and Secondary
Education

EXPANDED LANGUAGE ARTS BUFFALO, NEW YORK

Introduction

The purpose of the Expanded Language Arts Program was to increase the basic language skills of educationally disadvantaged children by decreasing class size and improving instructional materials.

The students were educationally disadvantaged seventh through twelfth graders enrolled in target-area schools in Buffalo, New York. They ranged in age from 11 to 19 years and came from heterogeneous inner-city neighborhoods in which the occupations of heads of families varied from unskilled to professional, with some receiving welfare. Fifty percent of the students spoke a Southern rural dialect, 20% spoke Italian in the home, and about 1% spoke Spanish in the home. The remaining students spoke standard English.

Project children were selected by the high school guidance counselors. Their classroom grades and scores on reading tests and the English departmental examinations were used as a basis for selection. Eighty-five percent of the students chosen were achieving in the lower third of their class. The remainder were drawn from a middle ability group.

The program began in February of the 1965-66 school year. It took place in four public and two parochial high schools. During that year 2,871 children were involved, many for only a 6-week period. In 1966-67 and 1967-68 the program operated for the whole school year. One additional public school joined the program. The number of participating students dropped to 1,884 in 1966-67, since the 6-week revolving plan was replaced by a full year's class with pupils who remained all year. In 1967-68, due to a change in funding, the parochial schools had to be dropped and the total participating students became 1,626 in number.

An evaluation of the 1966-67 program showed project pupils gained 9 months in language achievement during the 7 months between testings. The California Language Test was used in the evaluation.

Personnel

A. Project Administrator

The administrator was responsible for staffing, program planning, coordination of the project with the regular English program, supervision of teachers, and in-service training.

B. Teachers

There were 20 full-time teachers in the program, 6 males and 14 females. All were certified by the Buffalo Board of Education,* but only two had relevant experience before joining the program.

The teachers were assigned to secondary schools in the target area on the basis of one project teacher for every three regular language arts teachers. They were assigned small groups averaging ten pupils, for whom they provided a highly individualized program of instruction.

C. Clerk

There was one full-time clerk, who handled all typing, record keeping, and other clerical activities related to the program.

Methodology: General

The objectives of the Expanded Language Arts Program were:

A. To effect an improved teacher-pupil ratio in language arts classes through the addition of teachers to each school faculty.

B. To convert each language arts classroom into a virtual laboratory for the teaching of writing.

C. To effect an improvement in the oral language skills of educationally deprived children through the increased use of electronic recording and playback equipment.

D. To provide for closer supervision of the language arts program in educationally deprived areas. (Clapp, 1966; p. 1)

The students participating in the program were assigned to small groups (averaging 10 pupils) for instruction in language arts. These classes were taught by teachers hired for the program. Thus, the size of the regular English classes was reduced, although the effect of this on the performance of students in these classes was not evaluated.

The program emphasized providing each pupil with as much practice in speaking and writing as possible. Project teachers were free to select their own specific lesson topics and techniques, but they were encouraged to use a maximum amount of small group and individual instruction. Activities were designed to be relevant to the pupils' life situations. Very little time was devoted to the formal study of grammar and punctuation. These topics were treated only incidentally as part of the study of clarity of expression.

*Buffalo certification is by examination. All applicants must have a college degree in the teaching area, but hours of credit in education are not required for beginning as a temporary teacher. Those teachers who do not have education credits must take 6 hours of education courses during each year until they complete 18 hours in the required courses.

The materials used in the program were chosen to encourage active participation in the learning process. Composition skills were studied by examining literary samples of the students' own writing via the overhead projector. Tape recorders were used for practicing skills in formal and informal speaking. Films and filmstrips were used as attention-getters in introducing new topics. Textbooks and standard reference books were presented as composition tools. In addition, the magazines and paperback books used in the program were chosen to provide interest and motivation.

A major component of this program was the closely structured supervision of teachers. The program was initiated by a week of orientation meetings during which lectures and discussion were held on such topics as the use of new materials and individualizing instruction. During the year, in-service meetings were held once a month to provide an opportunity to exchange ideas and to learn the use of new materials. Special meetings were called by the teachers or the project administrator whenever the need arose. Each teacher also received a weekly visit from the project administrator which included a class observation followed by discussion. In addition to the schedule of meetings, curriculum bulletins were sent out once a month containing helpful information and ideas for lessons gathered from teachers, administrators, and consultants on topics related to the program.

Methodology: Specific Examples

A. The following are examples of the types of learning experiences which were provided by the Expanded Language Arts classrooms:

Writing instruction concentrated on expository writing, for the most part. Students were given practice in writing job applications, composing personal and business letters, and explaining points of view. Speaking lessons were equally as practical. They included the development of conversation skills through the discussion of current, controversial community issues, practice in giving accurate directions, and experience with simulated job interviews.

B. Each English teacher in the project schools was provided with a tape recorder, a record player, an overhead projector, a projection screen, a portable equipment table, and a listening unit complete with eight headphones. A collection of 16 records, 8 filmstrips, and 18 films were also available to all the English teachers in the project schools.

Topics such as the following were included:

- Records - "Julius Caesar" Marlowe Society
Encyclopedia Britannica
Wilmette, Illinois
- "Early American Ballads" Folkways/Scholastic Records
Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey
- "The Changing English Language" Folkways/Scholastic Records
Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey

Filmstrips -	"Steps in Building a Paragraph"	Society for Visual Education Chicago, Illinois
	"Myths and Legends of Ancient Rome"	Eye Gate House, Inc. Jamaica, New York
	"Understanding Poetry Series"	McGraw-Hill Text Films New York City, New York
Films -	"Word Building in Our Language"	Coronet Films Chicago, Illinois
	"Ways to Better Conversation"	Coronet Films Chicago, Illinois
	"Writing a Good Paragraph"	Coronet Films Chicago, Illinois

C. Each project and regular English teacher received one copy of the following books:

Roget's Thesaurus (Everyman)
Warriner's English Grammar and Composition (Harcourt, Brace and World)
Bartlett's Familiar Quotations (Little, Brown, and Company)
Language Programs for the Disadvantaged (National Council of Teachers of English)

D. Oral language laboratory teachers received publications such as the following:

Social Dialects and Language Learning (National Council of Teachers of English)
Non-Standard Speech and the Teaching of English (Applied Linguistics)
Pattern Practice in the Teaching of Standard English to Students with a Non-standard Dialect (Teachers College, Columbia University)

E. The following books, magazines, transparencies, etc., were also ordered for use in each classroom:

Webster's Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary (G. & C. Merriam Co.)
Learning Your Language (Follett)
Gateway Series (Macmillan)
On Target, Top Flight, Best TV Plays (Scholastic Publications)
The Galaxy Series (Scott Foresman)
New Worlds of Literature (Harcourt, Brace and World)
SRA Contemporary Composition Transparencies (Science Research Associates)
Creative Writing Transparencies (EAV, Pleasantville, New York)
Scope Magazine (Scholastic Publications)
Scope Skill Books (Scholastic)
 16 paperback books, such as:
The Family Nobody Wanted by Doss (Scholastic)
Lilies of the Field by Barrett (Scholastic)
A Separate Peace by Knowles (Bantam)
The Venetian Affair by MacInnes (Crest)
The Pearl (Viking Press)
The Red Pony (Viking Press)
A Bell for Adano by Hersey (Bantam)

Evaluation

A. Measures of Achievement

No objective evaluation was made of the initial half year of the project (February to June, 1966), which was devoted to the organization and administration details necessary to put the program in operation.

In 1966-67, two standardized achievement tests were administered as pre- and posttests. These were the California Language Test, Junior High and Advanced Levels, Forms W and X, and the Sequential Tests of Educational Progress (STEP), Levels 2 and 3, Forms A and B.

The tests were administered by the project teachers to all pupils who were in attendance on the testing dates. The pretest was administered in October and the posttest in May.

The project students made essentially no gain on the STEP in the seven months from pre- to posttest. The teachers felt that this test was too difficult for the students and, as a result, that their motivation to do well was very low.

Gains were made, however, on the California Language Test. A total of 1,268 of the 1,884 registered pupils were present at both pre- and posttestings. Table 1 shows the mean gains in terms of grade equivalents for an unbiased sample of 612 pupils, who comprised the set of raw data on hand in May of 1969. At least one class from each of the 20 teachers is represented.

TABLE 1

Average Language Gains in Grade Equivalents
for Pupils in the Expanded Language Arts Program 1966-67

Grade	Sample N	Registered N	Pretest Mean	Posttest Mean	Mean Months of Gain in 7 Months
7	78	361	5.3	5.9	6
8	74	308	5.9	6.5	6
9	202	423	9.6	10.4	8
10	72	293	8.6	10.1	15
11	98	268	8.8	10.2	14
12	86	231	10.2	11.0	8
	610	1,884			

As can be seen from the table, the mean gains for the total sample for grades 9 through 12, representing 65% of the registered pupils, were greater than the time between testings.

No test data were collected in 1967-68. Evaluation that year was in terms of anecdotal statements from teachers and pupils. Results from the 1968-69 school year had not been collected at the time that this report was compiled.

B. Other Evaluation Indices

One other non-standardized test was used to assess achievement gains of program students. This consisted of comparisons by the Project Administrator of samples of the students' writing ability. Two compositions by each student, one from the beginning and one from the end of the semester, were compared at the end of each semester. The results were summarized as follows:

More than any other impression gained from the samples was the indication that the students had been motivated to think and to express their thoughts effectively in writing.

Reports were received that boys and girls who had written very little and who seldom responded in regular classes were trying hard and were producing written work of which they and their teachers felt proud [Clapp, 1967, p. 14].

Besides these evaluations of cognitive achievement, attitudinal measures were used as well. Principals evaluated the program, in general, and the project teachers in particular. Most principals and teachers were in favor of retaining and expanding the program. Teachers' answers to a survey showed a wide acceptance of the audio-visual aids and other new materials and equipment supplied by the program. Students were polled for their opinions about the program. They especially enjoyed the individual attention made possible by smaller classes.

Budget

The first 2 1/2 years of the program (February 1966 through June 1968) were financed in full by funds from ESEA Title I grants. In the fall of 1968 the cost of operating the program was taken over by the New York State Urban Aid Fund.

The total operating cost for the most recent school year (1967-68) was \$217,878 for 1,500 students, yielding a per pupil cost of \$145.50. The main sources of expenditure for that year can be broken down as follows:

Salaries of Administrator, Clerks, and Teachers	\$147,785
Office Equipment and Supplies	500
Staff Transportation and Conference Travel	497
Teaching Equipment, Supplies and Materials	12,402
Retirement - Teachers and Civil Service	30,658
Social Security, Insurance, Workmen's Compensation	12,501
Total	\$204,343

In addition to the yearly operating cost, a total of \$55,855 was spent on teaching supplies and equipment when the program started.

Modifications and Suggestions

The project administrator suggested the following alterations in the existing program:

A. The addition of a reading development program complete with the necessary personnel to supply in-service training and consultation.

B. A drive to increase parent involvement through personal invitations to attend classes.

C. More in-service training devoted to methods of individualization, a technique which has proven difficult for some teachers.

D. A thorough examination of the appropriateness of the materials used in the program.

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