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ABSTRACT

The three primary objectives of the Project Conquest program are (1) to raise the reading ability of mentally able disadvantaged children to where they can function successfully in regular classrooms, (2) to improve their self-concepts and academic aspirations, and (3) to train regular classroom teachers in remedial reading techniques. Children who have the potential to read at grade level but were achieving a year or more below grade level are selected for the program. In 1969-70, Project Conquest served 1,089 children in four "reading programs" (grades one, two, and three) and three "reading clinics" (grades four, five, and six). Forty-five minute sessions of remedial reading instruction are offered 4 days a week at the reading rooms and twice weekly at the reading clinics. The inservice training component of the project prepares regular classroom teachers to use diagnostic and remedial reading techniques. At the end of a year's training the classroom teachers return to their home schools to help problem readers in their classroom and disseminate information to the school staff. On the basis of reading achievement gain scores for the children it was concluded that the program was successful in improving the reading achievement of the pupils it served. (Author/WR)

NCEE

Model Programs

Compensatory Education

Project Conquest
East St. Louis, Illinois

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Model Programs

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Compensatory Education

**Project Conquest
East St. Louis, Illinois**

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION, AND WELFARE
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FOREWORD

This is the third in NCEC's *Model Programs* series, whose purpose is to inform educators about successful ongoing programs and to provide them with sufficient information to decide if locally modified replications would be desirable. Included in this series are descriptions of 15 "successful" compensatory education programs for disadvantaged children currently operating in the Nation's schools.

Under contract to the Office of Education, the American Institutes for Research in the Behavioral Sciences, Palo Alto, Calif., identified—through a literature search and nominations by local, State, and national educational agencies—over 400 candidate programs in this area. Of this number only 17 met the stringent criteria for success established by AIR in conjunction with OE. It should be noted that most of the programs rejected during the study were not rejected because they were demonstrated failures but rather because their evaluation methodology was so inadequate that a conclusion about success or failure could not be drawn.

Short descriptions of each program in the series have been prepared, covering such topics as context and objectives, personnel, methodology, inservice

training, parent involvement, materials and equipment, facilities, schedule, evaluation data, budget, and sources for further information.

Six of the programs in this series were formerly written up in the *It Works* series published by OE in 1969. These six continue to operate successfully, as evidenced by the evaluation data; and since the *It Works* booklets are out of print, the program descriptions have been updated and included in this *Model Programs* series.

Two other programs—Programed Tutorial Reading Project, Indianapolis, Indiana, and Summer Junior High Schools, New York, New York—identified as exemplary compensatory education programs were included in the former *Model Programs* series on reading. Since these program descriptions are still available from the U.S. Government Printing Office, they were not republished for this series.

Two previous *Model Programs* series have been issued—on reading (10 programs) and childhood education (33 programs). Booklets on these programs are available from the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402 for 15 to 25 cents each.

Project Conquest East St. Louis, Illinois

Overview

Project Conquest began in 1965 in response to the needs of capable disadvantaged youngsters whose reading problems could not be helped by regular classroom teachers. The three primary objectives of the program are: (1) to raise the reading ability of mentally able disadvantaged children to the point where they can function successfully in regular classrooms, (2) to improve their self-concepts and academic aspirations, and (3) to train regular classroom teachers in remedial reading techniques.

Children who have the potential to read at grade level but are achieving a year or more below grade level are selected for the program. In 1969-70, Project Conquest served 1,089 children in four "reading rooms" (grades one, two, and three) and three "reading clinics" (grades four, five, and six). Forty-five-minute sessions of remedial reading instruction are offered 4 days a week at the reading rooms and twice weekly at the reading clinics. These sessions provide (1) individual diagnosis of reading difficulties, (2) prescriptive remedial instruction in small groups, (3) instructional strategies designed to guarantee success, and (4) personal, positive reinforcement to enhance self-concept.

The inservice training component of the project prepares regular classroom teachers

to use diagnostic and remedial reading techniques. At the end of a year of inservice training in the reading clinics, the classroom teachers return to their home schools to help problem readers in their classes and to disseminate what they learned to the school staff.

The staff at the three reading clinics includes three supervising teachers, nine teachers-in-training, three teaching aides, and two clerks. The reading rooms which serve the lower elementary grades are staffed by nine teachers who had formerly received inservice training at the clinic. Their work is observed by a supervisor who has general charge of all reading rooms and clinics. Three additional supervisors are assigned to the 26 home schools to help teachers of project children set goals which are consistent with diagnosed needs. In addition, through workshops and study groups conducted at the schools, these supervisors help school staff upgrade reading instruction.

The project was evaluated in terms of its first objective, namely, raising the reading achievement of disadvantaged students who were reading below grade level. The evaluation model used to determine project effectiveness was a pretest-posttest model in which reading achievement gains were compared to test norms. In 1968-69, project evaluation was based on a random sample of 42 out of 1,055 students; in 1969-70, 358 students were randomly selected from 987 for evaluation purposes. In both years, reading gains in the reading rooms and clinics were found to be statistically significant. The gains were also considered to be educationally significant since project children gained more than the gain expected of nondisadvantaged children in regular classrooms for a comparable period of time.

Description

Context and Objectives

The children served by Project Conquest live in severely depressed metropolitan neighborhoods of East St. Louis, Illinois. Located across the Mississippi River from St. Louis, East St. Louis is the fifth largest city in Illinois. Less than a century ago, the city was a thriving industrial center as well as one of the largest pork producing areas in the world. Now, however, the packing houses and other industries have left, and East St. Louis is burdened with an oversupply of unskilled labor for the limited jobs available.

In a 1964 survey of cities with populations of 50,000 or more, East St. Louis ranked first in the percentage of families with annual incomes of less than \$3,000. Mid-1970 demographic data indicated that the city's population had dropped more than 16 percent since the 1960 census, that over 80 percent of its 70,000 inhabitants were black, and that 51 percent of these blacks earned less than \$3,000 a year at employment which consisted almost entirely of unskilled jobs. Unemployment rates were 20 percent citywide and 30 percent in the more depressed areas from which Project Conquest participants were drawn. In these areas, over 50 percent of the families received some form of public aid.

An overall decrease in population over the years has been associated with a declining tax base. Classrooms are overcrowded, and over half the district's schools are eligible for Elementary and Secondary Education Act title I funds. A survey of these schools in March 1970 revealed that from 51 to 84 percent of their students met criteria for serious economic and educational disadvantage. District averages on standardized reading tests have consistently fallen several months below norms. In 1965 a special study of children in 10 of the city's most disadvantaged schools revealed they were reading more than a year below grade level. A more recent needs assessment effort by

administrative and teaching staff produced a list of two dozen priorities, the top 10 of which were divided evenly between language skills deficiencies and social adjustment needs. Beginning in 1965-66, the East St. Louis title I program has followed guidelines derived from needs assessment data. The program consists of a number of projects, of which Project Conquest is just one.

Project Conquest was established to meet the needs of capable disadvantaged youngsters whose reading problems could not be helped by regular classroom instruction. Specifically, the project was aimed at disadvantaged children in grades one through six who were capable of reading at grade level but who were reading one or more years below grade level. In order to meet the academic and social needs of these children, the project aimed to:

- Raise their reading ability to the point where they could successfully function in their regular classrooms after 1 year of remedial instruction.
- Improve their self-concepts and school-related aspirations.
- Train classroom teachers full time for 1 year in remedial reading techniques.

Children who are underachieving in reading by at least 1 year are recommended by title I school teachers and principals. Each child is carefully screened by project staff to determine the nature of his language deficiencies and reading-related needs. If the prognosis indicates that remediation might improve the nominee's reading achievements, he is admitted to a special reading room or reading clinic. There, his diagnostic data are used to design a special remediation program which supplements reading instruction he continues to receive at his home school.

Beginning with one reading clinic which provided diagnosis and remediation to 100 children in 1965-66, the program has grown until four reading rooms and three reading clinics served 1,089 children in 26 public and private title I schools in 1969-70.

Project Conquest personnel consist of administrative, instructional, clerical, and paraprofessional staff, most of whom serve the project full time. Following is a description of the duties of the staff.

Personnel

Director.—In addition to exercising general supervision over Project Conquest, the director conducts preservice and inservice workshops for project teachers and aides.

Evaluator.—Program evaluation is conducted by one of the program staff.

Supervisors (4).—One supervisor is in charge of teachers in the special reading rooms and clinics. She observes their classes and suggests ways for improving instruction. Together with the director, she conducts inservice workshops for the project's instructional personnel and demonstrates remedial reading techniques. The other three supervisors are assigned to the 26 title I schools served by the project. They work closely with the regular classroom teachers to insure that the classroom demands made on the project's children are consistent with their clinical diagnoses. In special workshops and planning sessions, the three supervisors demonstrate remedial reading techniques, help teachers select materials and methods for use with problem readers, and generally assist title I schools to upgrade their reading instruction.

Supervising teachers (3).—The three reading clinics (grades four through six) each have one supervising teacher, a permanent member of the reading clinic staff who is responsible for supervising instruction at assigned clinics. In addition to providing

inservice training for clinic teachers and screening children for admission to the clinics, the supervising teachers prepare reports for home schools and for the project supervisor.

Clinic teachers (9).—These teachers staff the three reading clinics, three to a clinic, as part of the project's 1-year inservice training program in diagnosis and remedial techniques. After their year as clinic teachers, they either return to their home schools or fill vacancies which occur in the project's permanent reading room staff. The teachers, closely guided by each clinic's supervising teacher, provide specialized remedial instruction to children in grades four, five, and six.

Reading room teachers (9).—These teachers are required to spend 1 year in service in the clinics before joining the permanent reading rooms staff. The nine teachers staff four reading rooms, about two teachers to each room. For project children in grades one, two, and three, they provide remedial reading instruction based on needs identified by indepth clinical diagnoses. Besides their teaching duties, the reading room teachers assist in administering diagnostic tests and participate in regular meetings of reading room staff.

Teacher aides (3).—One teacher aide is assigned to each clinic to help free teachers for instruction. The aides live in the community served by the project and are sympathetic to the project's goals. They receive inservice training along with the clinic teachers, even though they do not assume instructional roles.

School-community aides (3, 3 days a week).—As members of the community who volunteer to serve the project without charge, the aides are able to establish rapport with parents, to help them understand project goals, and to encourage them to help meet the child's reading-related needs at home.

Clerical staff (3).—Two clerks perform duties assigned by the supervising teachers at the three reading clinics. The third clerk serves the director and supervisors.

Project children also receive hearing, vision, dental, and physical examinations. These are provided by nurses who serve all title I projects and by doctors who are called in as needed. A school psychologist employed by the district counsels children with social adjustment problems upon referral by the project.

Project Conquest has two complementary components, remedial reading instruction and inservice remedial reading training for classroom teachers. These components and related activities are described below.

Methodology

Remedial reading instruction.—Depending on their grade level, project children receive diagnosis and remediation at one of four reading rooms (grades one through three) or one of three reading clinics (grades four through six). Remedial instruction is provided in 45-minute sessions held 4 days a week at the reading rooms and twice weekly at the reading clinics. Reading rooms and clinics are similar in that they provide (1) extensive diagnosis of each child's reading-related problems, (2) techniques and materials tailored to meet each child's diagnosed needs, (3) remediation either individually, or most often, in groups of six children and one teacher, (4) an experience carefully structured so that the student rarely, if ever, fails to attain his objectives, and (5) a warm, one-to-one relationship with the children, using an abundance of praise and encouragement to enhance self-esteem. They also both use the same selection and release criteria. Children are selected on the basis of their failure to read at their potential or grade level, and they are released when they reach one of these established goals.

The reading rooms and clinics differ mainly in the grade levels they serve, their service schedules, and their training and supervision of teachers. These aspects are discussed below in connection with more detailed descriptions of methodology.

In the Reading Clinics

The three clinics are diagnostic and remediation centers for selected children in grades four, five, and six. Each clinic is staffed by one supervising teacher and three teachers. The supervising teacher at each clinic is a permanent member of the project staff; the teachers, however, are regular classroom teachers who were selected for 1 year of full-time inservice training in remedial reading techniques. Each teacher teaches five 45-minute periods Monday through Thursday, meeting with six children per period. Each child receives two periods of remediation at his assigned clinic every week. Fridays are reserved for visitation and coordination with the regular classroom teachers and for afternoon inservice training.

Diagnosis and remediation procedures at each of the three clinics are the same. After indepth clinical screening which helps to define the precise nature of a child's reading disability, the supervising teacher and inservice staff meet to devise a remediation plan based on diagnostic data. Attainable goals are assured at the outset by starting each child on tasks and materials geared about 1 year below his tested reading level. In this way, the child can see his reading progress and can be encouraged from initial success in an area he previously associated with failure.

The teachers apply their newly acquired remedial skills as they teach the clinic children under the close guidance of the supervising teacher. Early in the year, instruction is often provided on an individual basis. As the children acquire word-perception skills, the transition to small-group instruction is made. The clinic teachers and the

supervising teacher select materials and equipment for each child according to the individual remedial instruction program planned for him. These materials and devices are different from those provided in regular classrooms, and most can be adjusted to match the student's reading rate and comprehension levels.

In the Reading Rooms

Children who require remediation in grades one through three attend 45-minute sessions 4 days a week in the reading rooms. Each of the reading room teachers has completed 1 year of inservice training in the reading clinics. Approximately two teachers staff each of the four reading rooms. Their instruction is observed and guided by one supervisor who divides her time among the four reading rooms. Teachers employ basically the same diagnostic and remedial procedures in the reading rooms that they had been trained to use at the clinics. Many of the materials and audiovisual reading aids used in the reading clinics are also used in the reading rooms. However, unlike the reading clinics which use special basal readers, the reading rooms use the same basal readers that are used in the classrooms.

If a child can not demonstrate that he is ready to return to his regular class by grade four, he is transferred to a reading clinic for continued remediation.

Self-concept.—Special techniques are used in reading rooms and clinics to build the child's confidence, to encourage him to adjust to the demands of school, and to raise his level of aspiration. Teachers adjust instructional demands to insured success; they establish close rapport with each child; and they provide frequent opportunities for each child to demonstrate his progress and to be praised for his reading achievements.

During the child's year in the special remedial program, coordination between project and classroom activities is maintained. The three supervisors assigned to the home schools help teachers set realistic goals and select materials at appropriate difficulty levels for regular reading instruction of children in the program. As the child progresses at the clinic, the supervisor assists the teacher in selecting more advanced materials which will allow the child to demonstrate his reading achievement in class.

In summary, classroom activities are closely coordinated with activities in reading rooms and clinics so that each child has many opportunities to demonstrate progress. By providing a supportive atmosphere for remedial and regular reading instruction, it is hoped that these children will develop self-esteem in regard to their reading skills and, encouraged by their progress, will be motivated to adjust to the demands of school.

Inservice remedial reading training.—Classroom teachers without special training in remedial reading techniques are trained for a 1-year period in the course of their service as reading clinic teachers. The aims of this training program are twofold—to prepare some of the teachers for openings in reading rooms, and to equip them to use and disseminate remedial techniques when they return to their schools.

Training is initiated in a preservice workshop held 2 weeks before school opens. Full-day sessions focus on diagnostic and remedial techniques, methods of establishing rapport and enhancing self-confidence, and materials and equipment used in remediation activities. Diagnostic and remedial techniques are demonstrated by the director and a supervising teacher from one of the reading clinics. The background provided by the 2-week orientation prepares teachers for more detailed inservice training after they assume their duties as clinic teachers.

Two weeks after school begins, but before students are admitted to the program, joint training sessions are held for teacher aides and teachers. These sessions are taught by the project director. Training emphasizes the use of diagnostic and remedial materials. Once students are admitted for service, clinic teachers begin to apply the remedial techniques and skills to which they have been introduced, and they are guided by the supervising teacher at each clinic.

Joint inservice meetings for all reading personnel continue on a weekly basis throughout the year. At these meetings, teachers receive further training in diagnostic and remedial procedures, participate in critiques of videotape recordings of clinic activities, study current remedial methods and materials, and discuss clinic strategies with reading experts who occasionally attend inservice sessions.

Another inservice activity consists of formal and informal training of regular classroom teachers at the home schools. The three supervisors assigned to coordinate the project with these schools help teachers to diagnose reading problems and to develop remedial instruction for their slow readers.

Parent involvement.—Parents are urged to show an interest in the child's reading progress and to provide a home environment which will motivate him to participate fully in remedial reading activities. Parents are also encouraged to attend special orientation meetings and to observe classes at the reading rooms and clinics. Consultations between parents and project instructional staff are held regularly to discuss progress and needs of the children. Further contact with parents is provided through home visits by volunteer school-community aides. During their visits the aides help parents to understand the goals of the projects, the reading-related needs of their children, and the necessity to help their children aspire to higher levels of achievement.

Materials and equipment.—The project uses a wide variety of commercially available materials and equipment. Each item is carefully reviewed by the entire project staff prior to purchase. Most of the materials are used in both the reading clinics and the reading rooms; a selected sample follows.

Materials/Equipment

Publisher/Manufacturer

| | |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| <i>Conquests in Reading</i> | McGraw-Hill |
| <i>Magic World of Dr. Spello</i> | McGraw-Hill |
| <i>Programmed Reading Series</i> | McGraw-Hill |
| <i>New Reading Skill Series</i> | Charles E. Merrill |
| <i>Reading Skill Builders</i> | Reader's Digest |
| Classroom Reading Clinic Kit | Webster |
| SRA Reading Lab | Science Research Associates |
| Dolch letter and word games | Garrard |
| Language Master | Bell & Howell |
| Tachistoscope | Various |
| Listening Lab | Various |
| Controlled Reader | Educational Development Lab |
| Shadowscope Reading Pacer | Psychotechnics, Inc. |

Facilities.—Little or no modification of existing school facilities is required. Three of the four reading rooms are relocatable classroom units built especially for the project. Each unit includes areas designed for small-group instruction and for independent study. These units are separate buildings on the grounds of three elementary schools. The fourth reading room is contained within a reading clinic at one of the elementary schools. With this exception, two out of three reading clinics are situated

outside of, but near, the elementary schools. The clinic facilities also are designed to facilitate individualized instruction, and they include carrels and independent study areas.

Schedules.—Typical schedules for reading room and clinic instruction follow:

A Reading Room Period (grades one through three)

Phonics—10 minutes

Basal textbook—15 minutes

Programed reading—10 minutes

Oral reading, word games, or work on special devices such as the
Controlled Reader—10 minutes

A Reading Clinic Period (grades four through six)

Programed reading—5 minutes

Basal textbook (i.e., *Conquests in Reading* and related activities in
Magic World of Dr. Spello)—10 minutes

Dictation—10 minutes

Oral reading, or sight vocabulary games, or work on special devices
such as the Shadowscope Reading Pacer—10 minutes

A sample budget is reproduced below:

| | |
|-----------------|------------------|
| Salaries | \$249,105 |
| Materials | 5,350 |
| Operating costs | 4,968 |
| Fixed charges | 27,101 |
| Total | <u>\$286,524</u> |

Budget

Based on the 1,089 children served during 1969-70, the per-pupil cost was \$263 above the district's normal per-pupil cost of about \$585 during the same year. The three relocatable classrooms were provided as reading rooms for a capital outlay of \$42,000, and classroom furniture was purchased for \$3,000.

Costs of replication would vary considerably depending on the character of facilities, availability of volunteer school-community aides, provision for program administration by district personnel instead of program-supported personnel, salary schedules for teachers, etc.

Evaluation

Project Conquest's primary objectives are (1) to raise the reading ability of educationally disadvantaged children so that they can function successfully in their regular classrooms, (2) to improve the self-concept of disadvantaged children with reading disabilities, and (3) to train classroom teachers in remedial reading techniques. Since the program's first formal evaluation, completed in 1969, evaluation activity has focused on the first of the above objectives. The model consistently employed for evaluation is a simple pretest-posttest model with standardized test norms used for comparative purposes. The Gates Primary Reading Test, the Gates Advanced Primary Reading Test, or the Gates Reading Survey were administered to the project's students as the pretest in September of 1969. The comparable Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test was administered as the posttest in May, 1970. The Gates-MacGinitie is the replacement test for the older Gates Tests. Pretest and posttest scores were made comparable by conversion of the Gates pretest scores to their Gates-MacGinitie equivalents via the equi-percentile method.

On the basis of the reading achievement gain scores demonstrated by a sample of children from both reading rooms and clinics, it can be concluded that Project Conquest was successful in improving the reading achievement of the pupils it served. The achievement gains manifested by the program's children were both educationally and statistically significant.

To test statistically the educational significance of the gains reported, the mean gain for all clinic and reading room students was computed and compared to the mean expected for average students during the same period of time. The expected mean gain was .75 grade-equivalent units and the project students' gain was 1.04, for a difference of .29 units. A t test of the difference between these means showed the difference to be statistically significant. It was therefore concluded that the students in the clinics and reading rooms made reading achievement gains that were significantly greater than that expected by nondisadvantaged children in a regular classroom for a comparable period of time.

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Modifications and Suggestions

The project director suggested that replications of Project Conquest begin with one reading clinic during the first year of operation. During the second year, teachers trained in the clinic would become reading room teachers, and a new group of classroom teachers would begin 1 year of inservice training as clinic teachers. Gradually, as staff and funds permitted, the number of clinics and reading rooms could be expanded as they were in the case of Project Conquest during the 5-year period from 1965-70.

A second suggestion to districts wishing to implement a similar program was that there be an agreement with a local university to provide inservice training for instruc-

tional staff. For example, a remedial reading specialist on the university staff could conduct regular inservice meetings for reading room and clinic teachers, and perhaps for classroom teachers. This recommendation was made because adequate inservice training was felt to be particularly crucial to the success of Project Conquest.

Sources for Further Information

For further information about Project Conquest, contact the following individuals:

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(618) 874-2206

Moore, A. S. *The East St. Louis ESEA Title I Annual Evaluation Report for Disadvantaged Children, 1969-70*. East St. Louis, Ill.: School District 189, Research and Evaluation, 1970.

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Spann, B. P., and Weber, B. B. *Project Conquest 4622, P. L. 89-10 Title I Statistical Study Report of 1968-69 Gains (in) Reading Rooms and Reading Clinics*. East St. Louis, Ill.: School District 189, Research and Evaluation, 1969.

Spann, B. P., and Weber, B. B. *Project Conquest 4622, P. L. 89-10 Title I Statistical Study Report of 1969-70 Gains (in) Reading Rooms and Reading Clinics*. East St. Louis, Ill.: School District 189, Research and Evaluation, 1970.

MODEL PROGRAMS—Compensatory Education Series

Fifteen promising compensatory education programs for the disadvantaged are included in this series. Following is a list of the programs and their locations:

College Bound Program, New York, N.Y.

Diagnostic Reading Clinic, Cleveland, Ohio

The Fernald School Remediation of Learning Disorders Program, Los Angeles, Calif.

Higher Horizons 100, Hartford, Conn.

The Juan Morel Campos Bilingual Center, Chicago, Ill.

Learning To Learn Program, Jacksonville, Fla.

More Effective Schools Program, New York, N. Y.

Mother-Child Home Program, Freeport, N.Y.

Preschool Program, Fresno, Calif.

Project Conquest, East St. Louis, Ill.

Project Early Push, Buffalo, N.Y.

Project MARS, Leominster, Mass.

Project R-3, San Jose, Calif.

PS 115 Alpha One Reading Program, New York, N.Y.

Remedial Reading Laboratories, El Paso, Texas

Two programs also identified for this series were described in the *Model Programs—Reading* series: Programmed Tutorial Reading Project, Indianapolis, Indiana, and Summer Junior High Schools, New York, New York. Since these program descriptions are still current and available from the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, they were not rewritten for this series.

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