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ABSTRACT

This report concerns one of the Florida Elementary and Secondary Education Act Title III projects validated as innovative, cost-effective, and exportable during 1973. The project rationale is that, through training, K-3 teachers may become adept at individually diagnosing specific language arts behaviors for all children in their classrooms and may learn to provide an appropriate variety of child-oriented learning tasks. The information contained in this report has been excised from the project's validation report and is composed of (1) an abstract featuring the focus of the project, the objectives, the activities, the evaluation, and the findings; (2) a summary of the project for exportability featuring an introduction, the context of the program, a program description, a cost-effectiveness analysis, and a description of the evaluation procedures; and (3) the conclusions and recommendations of the four-member, out-of-state validation team on innovativeness, effectiveness/success, cost effectiveness, and exportability. (Author/CS)

A NEW ADVENTURE IN LEARNING

Mrs. June Johnson, Project Director

Dr. Ned B. Lovell
Superintendent
Leon County Schools

February, 1973

This project is one of the Florida Elementary and Secondary Education Act, Title III projects validated as innovative, effective, cost-effective, and exportable during 1973. The information which follows has been excised from the project's validation report and is composed of

(1) an abstract featuring the focus of the project, the objectives, the activities, the evaluation, and the findings;

(2) a summary of the project for exportability featuring an introduction, the context of the program, a program description, a cost-effectiveness analysis, and a description of the evaluation procedures; and

(3) the conclusions and recommendations of the four member, out-of-state validation team on innovativeness, effectiveness/success, cost effectiveness, and exportability.

For additional information, please contact the project director indicated on the following page.

A NEW ADVENTURE IN LEARNING

Language Arts: Grades Kindergarten Through Three

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ABSTRACT

FOCUS: A major concept of this project is the rationale that through training, K-3 teachers can become adept at individually diagnosing specific language arts behaviors for all children in their classrooms, can learn to provide an appropriate variety of child-oriented learning tasks and settings, can develop management techniques to assure systematic instruction, and can thereby promote each child's success commensurate with ability. Another primary concept is that the way in which each child sees himself is a critical factor in his attainment of success and teachers and aides can learn specific techniques for helping children establish "success cycles" both in academic and social behavior.

OBJECTIVES: The project centered around the following three principal objectives:

1. To develop and implement the individual language arts program for each child based on his observed educational needs and capabilities.

2. To maintain a positive school atmosphere through the application of positive reinforcement.

3. To develop in pupils appropriate academic and social self-management skills.

Objectives which were to be achieved in a setting of an activity-centered language arts program were concerned with helping children read at or above their expected levels; remediating psycholinguistic skills of language handicapped pupils; increasing vocabulary of all pupils; and developing in third grade pupils skills of spelling, mechanics of writing, and study skills commensurate with their abilities. Reinforcement interactions were to be demonstrated by teachers. The development of self direction, ability to make instructional choices, acceptance of others and positive attitudes toward school were also objectives of "A New Adventure in Learning."

ACTIVITIES: Extensive teacher inservice and the imaginative use of teacher aides and parent volunteers formed the supportive framework for providing child-centered learning activities. A variety of settings--large group, small group, partner and one-to-one study--were used to provide stimulating experiences for pupils as they learned to use language as a vital part of communication.

EVALUATION: Summative date were derived from standardized tests in measuring the following area:

Reading expectance/achievement: Gilmore Oral Reading Test, California Reading Achievement Test, California Test of Mental Maturity.

Verbal learning ability: Illinois Test of Psycholinguistic Ability, Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children, Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test.

Vocabulary development: Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test.

Mechanics of writing, spelling and study skills: California Test of Basic Skills.

Mental maturity: California Test of Mental Maturity.

Formative data recording growth in written expression and reading skills areas were collected by a learning observer. Additional individual monitoring was done by continuous direct measurement of daily frequencies of pupil performance.

FINDINGS: Findings indicated that mental age can be significantly increased through daily, structured verbal interaction; disadvantaged pupils respond positively to an individually determined program; psycholinguistic skills can be effectively developed through planned programs of remediation by regular classrrom teachers; heavy reliance on programmed or individual materials without accompanying teacher-pupil interaction did not produce pupil growth in reading; with training, teachers can acquire special strategies for demonstrating acceptance of children, creating a positive atmosphere where pupils are on-task a much higher percentage of the time than has been researched in traditionally oriented classrooms. Practical management techniques can be developed to facilitate systematic instruction for total classrooms while monitoring individual pupil programs. Effective methods for helping children read, spell, and use mechanics of writing and study skills at their ability levels can be systematically implemented on an individually determined basis.

COMMENTS: The innovativeness of this project is a combination of procedures, specific devices, and educational climate aimed at individually determined instruction for the total school population from kindergarten through grade three. The program embraced all levels of ability and achievement from the mentally retarded to the gifted.

The children were age-grouped into centers, each staffed by three or four teachers and one or two aides. Each center seemed alive with a variety of activities in which all children were happily and productively engaged.

NEW ADVENTURE IN LEARNING
ESEA TITLE III
Walter T. Moore Elementary School
Dempsey Mayo Road
Tallahassee, Florida

EXPORTABILITY

Introduction

The major program focus is to provide an individually determined, activity-centered language arts program for each K-3 pupil. Specific techniques for diagnosing pupil needs, prescribing tasks, evaluating and recording pupil progress are being developed. This is done in an accepting climate using special methods for developing positive self-concepts.

Context of Program

The community served by the project includes a part of the eastern section of the city of Tallahassee, Florida, capital of the state and center of state government, two universities, with a population of 102,530. Twenty-nine percent of the district are non-white. The school zone extends north to the Florida-Georgia state line. Fifty-seven percent of the project population comes from the rural section, with less than five percent of the families in this group actually engaged in farming. The housing in the attendence area ranges from exclusive residential areas to low value dwellings without plumbing. Average income is between $4,000 and $5,000. The diversity of the population presents both challenges and opportunities in meeting educational needs, as many students come to school well prepared for academic and social success while many others have severe deficits in language skills, experiential background and lack positive self concepts. While project was designed to meet the critical educational needs of this particular population, because of its emphasis on the individual child and his progress the rationale and procedures would be appropriate to almost any public school in the nation.

The school in which project is housed has administrative leadership which encourages creativity and a teaching staff receptive to change and willing to acquire new skills. These qualities have been important in implementing the project and would be necessary in any school wishing to adopt this program.

Program Description

The project population consists of 151 black pupils and 156 white pupils, with mental ages ranging from below the test floor in the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test to 12+ years. Reading performance on Gilmore Oral Reading Test ranges from non-reading to 7.4.

Objectives which are to be achieved in the setting of an activity-centered language arts program are concerned with helping children read at or above their expected levels, remediating psycholinguistic skills of language handicapped pupils, increasing vocabulary of all pupils and developing in third grade pupils skills of spelling, mechanics of writing and study skills communsurate with their abilities. Objectives for teachers involve the demonstration of reinforcement interactions which are 80% positive. Self direction, instructional choices, accepting others and a positive attitude toward school are also objectives of New Adventure In Learning.

Imaginative use of teacher aides and parent volunteers form the supportive framework for providing child-centered learning activities. A child may work part of the time with other children in a small group with the teacher or aide. Later he may work alone after getting directions from his teacher. Again, he may work with a partner, teacher aide or parent. There is also appropriate large group instruction. As further example, art activities are used to stimulate writing and language, educational games and creative dramatics to build concepts and expand vocabulary. All the activities are used to provide stimulating experiences for pupils as they learn to use language as a vital part of communication.

The staff of this project is trained to implement the unique combination of diagnostic - prescriptive and management strategies employed. In-service has involved the following areas:

1. Theory and application of behavior modification, including types of reinforcement, errors of reinforcement, and the ability to recognize individual differences and to structure a class environment with meaningful contingencies relevant to specific situations.

2. Use of informal diagnostic instruments, such as reading inventories, phonics inventory, visual and auditory readiness inventories. Included in the training is the interpretation of test results, and identification of strategies for improving pupil performance.

3. Interpretation of standardized test scores for use in the planning and implementation processes.

4. Extensive training in the psycholinguistic skills, considered a necessary prerequisite to reading; interpretation of the scores on sub-tests of psycholinguistic tests; and strategies to be employed in each area to decrease the number and scope of deficits.

5. Interpretation and follow-up of observer reports.

6. Awareness of and use of many kinds of information to be gained from on-going observation of pupils during daily pupil-pupil or pupil-teacher interactions.

7. Analysis of available materials: purpose, scope, type of pupil and setting to which it is best suited, range of possibilities for use and so on.

8. Use of teacher aides in ways to directly benefit pupils. Teacher aides are, in turn, trained to perform many instructional tasks with children (not involving instructional decisions). Aides are used as important adjuncts to program, expanding greatly their traditional role as clerical helpers.

The project is housed in a modern open space school. This setting serves to facilitate many project thrusts. Materials are more easily accessible to children through common and convenient storage spaces in each learning center; thus more kinds of materials are made available to each child. The open space, together with team organization, promoted flexible instructional management. Small or large skills groups can be called by a teacher for any children in the center. Activity centers where children can apply learned language skills and pursue interests can easily be structured and supervised in the open areas of the center. Self-direction can be promoted as children learn to function in the context of a large learning center. While these factors affect the ease with which teachers are able to implement the program, the style of the facilities in no way would prohibit the successful use of the program where a staff was dedicated to its success. The project could serve as a model for total school program or for a smaller segment, even one self-contained classroom.

Materials used in project include basal texts, reading kits, programmed texts and workbooks, linguistic texts and

workbooks, audio-tapes, and filmstrips. Equipment consists of language masters, filmstrip projectors, 16mm. film projectors, listening stations, overhead projectors, record players and 8mm. film loop projectors.

Project Budget and Cost Effectiveness Analysis

Project budget for the initial planning grant was $73,647.00, with the first operational grant $129,459.00, the second and third continuations being $103,600.00 and $85,958.00, respectively. A major portion of the monies were expended for professional staff salaries for in-service training and supervision, para-professional salaries, equipment purchases during first two years and instructional materials.

The developmental or planning costs include $224,730.73 provided by normal district support. The major portion of this was spent for teacher salaries and in equipping a new facility.

Estimated start-up costs are considered to be those needed in addition to the funds provided by the local school district in its normal support of an on-going elementary school program. Start-up activities would necessarily involve in-service. Approximately $8,430.00 would provide a two-week teacher training workshop with consultants, plus 1 day a month in-service with release time for teachers. The number and variety of multi-level materials and equipment such as record players and tape recorders would determine the expenses in this area. For a new school, or one with very limited materials and equipment, as much as $9,200.00 could be needed.

Operational costs after installation would be minimal beyond those normally provided by the local school district. Replacement of consumable materials might call for some monies beyond the usual school budget ($500-800 very adequate). This is the only financial supplement seen as necessary after teachers are fully trained. The in-service needed to maintain skills should be available through normal district budgets.

Evaluation

Evaluation for project is both summative and formative. Summative data are derived from standardized tests in reading (both group and individual), spelling, mechanics of language, study skills, psycholinguistic skills, and mental maturity.

Formative data recording growth in written expression and reading skills areas are collected by a learning observer. Additional individual monitoring is done by continuous direct measurements of daily frequencies of pupil performance.

1. To measure reading expectancy/achievement:
   California Test of Mental Maturity is used to get an IQ score for computing expected reading ages (grades 1-3) as designated by a formula proposed by Albert J. Harris. For obtaining reading achievement scores all 1-3 pupils are given Gilmore Oral Reading Test and California Reading Achievement Test. Process evaluation is done through on-going informal assessment in word analysis skills.

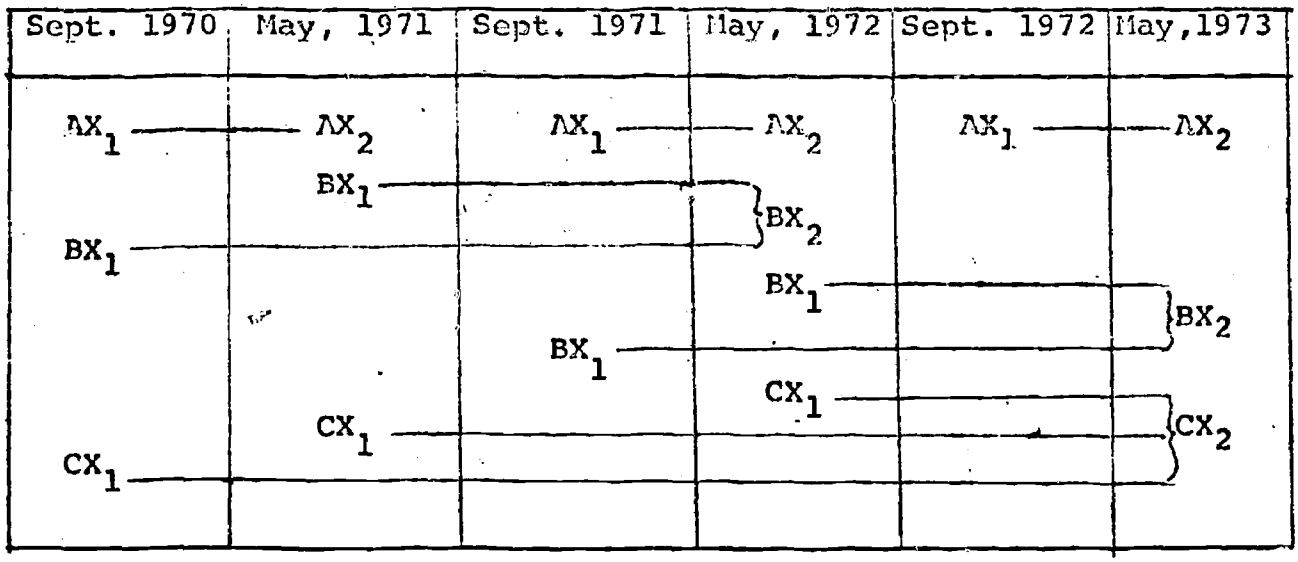
2. To measure verbal learning ability:
   A sample (approximately 10% of the K-3 population) of the pupils with demonstrated language fluency deficits are given Illinois Test of Psycholinguistic Ability, Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children, and Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test.

3. To measure vocabulary development:
   Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test is given to all K-3 pupils.

4. To measure achievement in mechanics of writing, spelling, and study skills:
   California Test of Basic Skills is given to all third grade pupils.

5. To assess pupil attitude:
   All 1-3 pupils are given "How I Feel" Attitude Inventory for Primary Pupils.

Scheme for Standardized Tests



X_1 = pre-test X_2 = post test

A = pupils in program 1 year B= pupils in program 2 years

C= pupils in program 3 years

Analysis of data has produced the following findings:

Of the total second and third grade population at the onset of the project, 38.6% were reading at levels commensurate with their abilities. In May, 1972, this figure had increased to 54%. 84% of the third grade pupils achieved at their expected levels in mechanics of language, 90% in spelling, and 91.2% in study skills.

Statistically significant growth in mental age, spoken vocabulary, IQ and psycholinguistic skills took place in every classroom where a structured oral language concept-building program occurred daily.

The widely researched need for a mental age of 6.0 (or very near) before beginning formal reading, has been confirmed by project. Techniques have been developed to significantly increase the mental age to prepare children for entering formal reading program.

Without adequate, direct teacher instruction, primary emphasis on materials, no matter how well individualized or programmed, with not produce growth in reading.

In those classrooms in which positive reinforcement techniques were used consistently, discipline problems and non-productive (off-task) behavior were greatly reduced.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

I. Innovativeness

The innovativeness of this project is a combination of procedures, specific devices, and educational climate. Housed in a modern, open-space school, the project setting facilitates flexible instructional management, small or large skill groups, activity centers, and large learning centers which encourage self-directed learning by children.

The target population of the project is all of the approximately 350 children in levels K through 3 at W. T. Moore Elementary School in Tallahassee, Leon County, Florida. The children are age-grouped into centers, each staffed with three or four teachers and one or two aides.

The activity-centered language arts program of individually determined instruction, with emphasis on student decision making, is based upon identifying (assessing) language arts needs and planning and implementing instructional programs.

Numerous devices, e.g., group or individual standardized tests, general and specific observations (by teacher or other), and group or individual informal tests, are used for initial and on-going assessment. Diagnosis of psycholinguistic skills is a part of the assessment procedures.

On the basis of the preceding diagnosis, the teacher plans a program of instruction for each child. The program, written as a prescription, includes determining objectives, selecting appropriate materials and equipment, and determining the most suitable setting for each activity.

The project staff is trained to implement a combination of diagnostic-prescriptive and management strategies. In-service involved the study of theory and application of behavior modification, use of informal diagnostic instruments, study of psycholinguistic skills and interpretation of scores on sub-tests, interpretation of standardized test scores, interpretation and followup of observer reports, analysis of available materials, and effective use of teacher aides.

The entire instructional process consists of a cycle of assessment, planning, implementing and back to assessment. The theory and application of behavior modification plays an important role in the positive educational climate of the classrooms. These components are combined to create an educational atmosphere where each child is free to move and interact with others, experience success in academic tasks, and is treated as a person of worth.

II. Evaluation Summary

Evaluation for project is both summative and formative. Summative data are derived from standardized tests in reading (both group and individual), spelling, mechanics of language, study skills, psycholinguistic skills, and mental maturity.

Formative data recording growth in written expression and reading skills areas are collected by a learning observer. Additional individual monitoring is done by continuous direct measurements of daily frequencies of pupil performance.

The objectives of the program which deal with pupil behavior are listed below, along with a summarization of the procedures for evaluating each.

Objective 1: Given instructional programs based on their assessed needs, pupils who do not have severe physical, emotional nor neurological handicaps will achieve in reading at or above expected levels as estimated by the formula proposed by Albert Harris and measured by Gilmore Oral Reading Test.

To measure reading expectancy/achievement: California Test of Mental Maturity is used to get an IQ score for computing expected reading ages (grades 1-3) as designated by a formula proposed by Albert J. Harris. For obtaining reading achievement scores all 1-3 pupils are given Gilmore Oral Reading Test and California Reading Achievement Test. Process evaluation is done through on-going informal assessment in word analysis skills.

Objective 2: Given instructional programs based on their assessed needs, disadvantaged pupils will significantly increase their verbal learning, as measured by Illinois Test of Psycholinguistic Ability, Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children, and Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test.

To measure verbal learning ability: A sample (approximately 10% of the K-3 population) of the pupils with demonstrated language fluency deficits are given Illinois Test of Psycholinguistic Ability, Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children, and Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test.

Objective 3: Given instructional programs based on their assessed needs, pupils will demonstrate increased vocabulary development as measured by Peabody Vocabulary Test.

To measure vocabulary development: Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test is given to all K-3 pupils.

Objective 4: Given instructional programs based on their assessed needs, third level pupils will achieve at or above expected levels in spelling, mechanics of writing and study skills. Measure: California Test of Basic Skills.

To measure achievement in mechanics of writing, spelling, and study skills: California Test of Basic Skills is given to all third grade pupils.

Objective 5: Pupils will demonstrate a positive attitude toward school, as measured by the How I Feel Attitude Inventory for Primary Pupils, and by teacher and parent observations.

To assess pupil attitude: All 1-3 pupils are given How I Feel Attitude Inventory for Primary Pupils.

At the beginning and end of the first year all of the program, a random sample of parents and all teachers were assessed on their attitudes and their perceptions of the attitudes of the children on a self-constructed check list. The parent and teacher assessments were obtained during individual interviews.

Objective 6: As a demonstration of self-directed behavior, pupils will maintain on-task academic behaviors 75% of the time while engaged in academic tasks, to be measured by observer recordings.

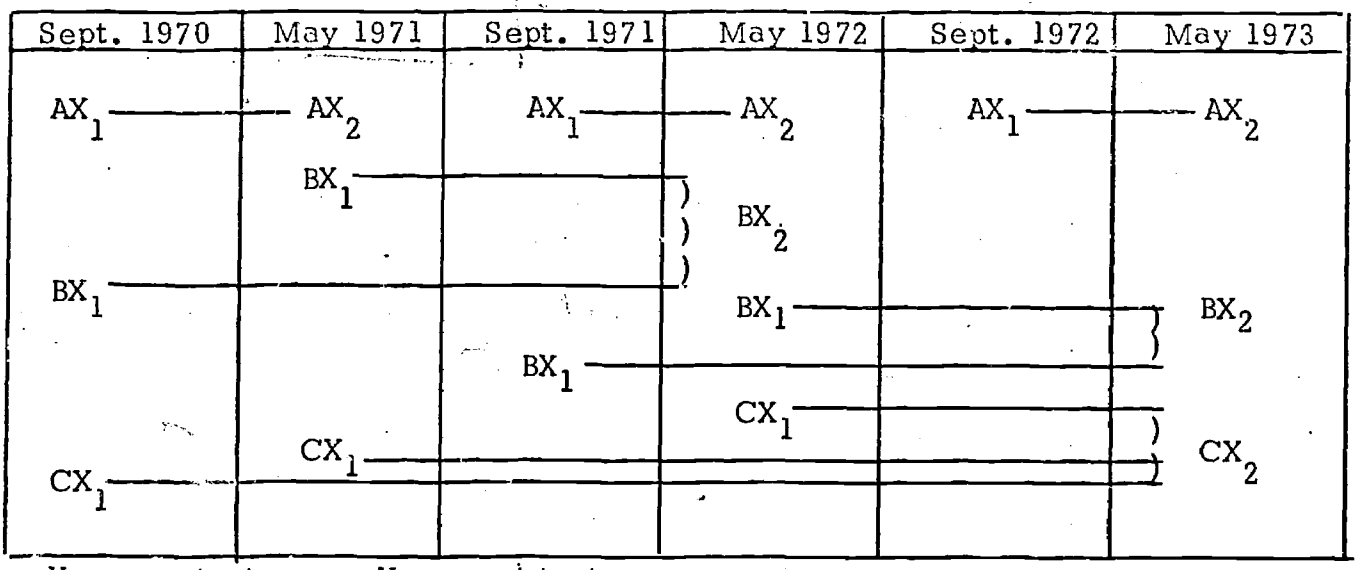
The behavior observer recorded the total number of children engaging in "on-task" behavior during standard 15-minute observation once every two weeks. Observation data were compiled and graphed across time.

Objective 7: Pupils will make instructional choices appropriate to their abilities. Each teacher made observations on an informal basis.

Objective 8: Pupils will demonstrate acceptance of pupils who achieve at different levels than themselves. This will be measured by sociograms done at the beginning, middle and end of the year.

A biograph was completed in the fall; however, due to various problems, the analysis of this objective was abandoned.

Scheme for Standardized Tests



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Increasing teacher competencies in behavior modification techniques was a major component of the program and are reflected in the final objectives listed below.

Objective 9: Given appropriate training, teachers will demonstrate reinforcement interactions with pupils which are 80% positive as measured by observer recordings.

Objective 10: Given training teachers will reduce errors of reinforcement to less than 1% of their reinforcement interactions with pupils, as measured by observer recordings.

Ten-second interval observation schedules were used by one full-time observer to record each teacher's social and academic reinforcement interaction and reinforcement errors with pupils. The observer spent a 15-minute block of time in each room once every two weeks. The frequency with which each rated behavior occurred was computed and the percentage for each observation period was graphed across time.

Major findings which have been validated:

Of the total second and third grade population at the onset of the project, 38.6% were reading at levels commensurate with their abilities. In May 1972 this figure had increased to 54%. 84% of the third grade pupils achieved at their expected levels in mechanics of language, 90% in spelling, and 91.2% in study skills.

Statistically significant growth in mental age, spoken vocabulary, IQ and psycholinguistic skills occurred. Disadvantaged students experienced the greatest growth in these areas.

The widely researched need for a mental age of 6.0 (or very near) before beginning formal reading, has been confirmed by project. Techniques have been developed to significantly increase the mental age to prepare children for entering formal reading program.

In those classrooms in which positive reinforcement techniques were used consistently, non-productive (off-task) behavior was greatly reduced. Pupil attitudes toward school were positive and no decrease in attitudes occurred from grade one to grade three.

Teachers increased their competencies in the rise of behavior modification teachers. Ten of the 12 teachers met or exceeded 80% positive reinforcement interactions. Errors in reinforcement were less than 1% for 11 of the 12 teachers. Teachers administered more positive reinforcement with greater accuracy in academic than in social interactions.

III. Cost Effectiveness Summary

This project has apparently rendered high effectiveness in terms of achieving its objectives at moderate cost. The diagnostic-prescriptive approach to teaching the language arts is highly desirable, and this project has adopted this approach to all children--from the educationally disadvantaged to the more gifted student. A most significant aspect of the project has been the results in developing self-concepts and positive attitudes which have come as a result of training personnel in behavior modification. The benefits of the project appear to adequately justify the costs.

New Adventure in Learning could be replicated in varying degrees and at varying costs, depending upon the desires and availability of funds of the LEA. The minimum estimated start-up cost of approximately $17,000.00 for about 300 students is well documented by the project director. Such a minimum program

would include the necessary pre-service training and the continuous in-service education of project personnel, consultant fees, and the necessary materials and equipment. Implementation of the project with a full compliment of personnel would require a much larger initial outlay. Additional personnel might include a project director, a language arts specialist, teacher aides, evaluators, clerical assistants. The installation cost of the minimum program per pupil above that normally spent by the district would be about $55.00, whereas the start-up maximum cost would be as high as $250.00 per pupil above the amount normally spent by the district.

The cost of continuation of a program similar to New Adventure in Learning appears to be negligible. It is probable that the in-service requirements of the program and the materials and equipment needed to keep such a program going could be provided through the district's regular in-service and its normal allocation to schools for materials and supplies.

IV. Exportability Summary

The major program focus is to provide an individually determined, activity-centered language arts program for each K-3 pupil. Specific techniques for diagnosing pupil needs, prescribing tasks, evaluating and recording pupil progress are being developed. This is done in an accepting climate using special methods for developing positive self-concepts.

The community served by the project includes a part of the eastern section of the city of Tallahassee, Florida, capital of the state and center of state government, two universities, with a population of 102,530. Twenty-nine percent of the district are non-white. The school zone extends north to the Florida-Georgia state line. Fifty-seven percent of the project population comes from the rural section, with less than five percent of the families in this group actually engaged in farming. The housing in the attendance area ranges from exclusive residential areas to low value dwellings without plumbing. Average income is between $4,000 and $5,000. The diversity of the population presents both challenges and opportunities in meeting educational needs, as many students come to school well prepared for academic and social success while many others have severe deficits in language skills, experiential background and lack positive self-concepts. While project was designed to meet the critical educational needs of this particular population, because of its emphasis on the individual child and his progress, the rationale and procedures would be appropriate to almost any public school in the nation.

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7. Analysis of available materials: purpose, scope, type of pupil and setting to which it is best suited, range of possibilities for use, and so on.

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CONCLUSIONS

The validation team recommends the project, New Adventure in Learning, for national validation. On three of the four major sections of the validation instrument, this project received maximum scores of 25 and a score of 23 on the remaining section for a total of 98 points out of a possible 100 points. The project is considered innovative, effective, cost effective, and exportable.

Through personal on-site observation and careful examination of project data, it is obvious that the community, parents, administrators, supervisors, teachers, and pupils are planning together, working together, continually assessing and evaluating progress in a serious effort to complement and reinforce each other in creating a school where pupils find they are respected, that they can be successful, and that what they do makes a difference.

The data points conclusively to an unqualified success. Shortcomings have been or are in the process of being corrected. There is positive evidence of out of the ordinary pupil growth in achievement, attitudes and behavior. This is a significant project worthy of replication.

The following suggestions are made for schools considering replication:

1. Acquire and study the project materials.

2. Make an on-site visit to the project.

3. Employ W. T. Moore School project personnel as consultants for teacher, aide, and parent in-service.

4. Consider reducing or consolidating objectives.

5. Employ less expertise in evaluative personnel, except in the administration and evaluation of the WISC and ITPA tests.

6. Carefully screen teachers for creativity, willingness to learn new skills, and who have some prospective degree of permanence.

7. Spend much time and effort orienting and informing the community.

8. Maximize effective use of minimum materials and equipment.

9. Develop evaluation procedures which relate to the achievement gains of pupils enabling the determination of the most effective classroom materials and procedures.

10. Establish and maintain close communication and coordination with other schools so as to insure articulation.