

Methods of Individualization . . .

In Senior High School

*By regular and special classes
and through extraclass activities
a large senior high school
assists students as individuals.*

THEORETICALLY we are well aware of the necessity for developing classroom instruction that will serve the needs of the pupils to whom it is offered. Sometimes, however, we lose sight of means by which this educational goal can be achieved.

There are two major ways in which instruction may be individualized. One is within the classroom itself, and it is to be hoped that all teachers tailor their courses to the needs of each particular group of boys and girls. In a large high school another type of individualization is feasible.

It is quite possible to determine areas of need which apply to a number of pupils and to establish specific classes to meet these needs. Such classes may be geared to the fast learner or academically gifted. Some may give aid to the slow learner or to those pupils having special difficulties. And some offer assistance to pupils having special interests or abilities. It is this type of individualization that will be chiefly

considered in this article. Within many of these classes, however, instruction is further fitted to the needs and interests of each class member.

In order to be realistic let us consider a single comprehensive high school which has made an effort to meet some of the problems of its pupils. At the present time Denby High School, Detroit, includes grades nine through twelve and has an enrollment of approximately 3100.

Opportunities for the Gifted

Arts and science program. In recent years a number of classes have been organized which offer special opportunities for the academically more able pupils. An Arts and Science Program has been established, the purpose of which is both enrichment and acceleration in English, science and mathematics

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for pupils of outstanding ability. The program is a package deal, pupils taking all three courses plus an elective.

Boys and girls are selected after referral by teachers or counselors and when achievement marks and test data show them to be capable of handling the work. Each class is geared to the greater ability of the pupils although no more formal provision than usual is made to individualize the classroom instruction.

Pupils in such classes will, for example, take college algebra and trigonometry in the eleventh grade, and analytical geometry and mathematical analysis in the twelfth grade as their mathematical content. In science they will take one year each of enriched and accelerated chemistry, biology, and physics. It is hoped that within a year nuclear physics can be added.

Accelerated reading. Of the incoming ninth grade, one or two sections are set into operation each year as accelerated reading groups. These are made up of boys and girls having a reading level of eleventh grade or better. The purpose of the course is enrichment of content and books of a more mature nature, such as *The House of the Seven Gables*, *Kon-Tiki*, or *A Tale of Two Cities*, are read by the pupils.

Seminar. For twelfth graders of unusual ability a seminar is provided as an elective. For this, three instructors are available and the class is kept relatively small, 16 having been the class size during the past semester. The seminar has as its purpose provision for the education of gifted pupils by integrating their knowledge in different subject matter fields and enriching their general knowledge. It also gives them an opportunity to explore, more deeply than is usually possible in a regular classroom,

subject matter in which they have interest and concern.

Individual research is done on a project which the boy or girl selects for investigation. Work on this is guided by an instructor who is well versed in the subject field of the problem selected. Field trips are taken to places connected with the projects and consultants are invited to meet with the class. Part of the class time is devoted to discussion of assigned reading and part to a consideration of the progress being made in the various projects.

All-city gifted program. In addition to courses within the school's daily program, Denby High School participates in Detroit's all-city program for the gifted child. Classes are offered in chemistry (quantitative and qualitative analysis), creative writing, debating, foreign language (French, German, Italian and Spanish), genetics, great books, international relations and nuclear science. These classes are held one day each week after school hours in different schools throughout the city.

Pupils are selected for the program from any high school in the city and are drawn from those boys and girls having an intelligence score equivalent to a Detroit Learning Aptitude letter rating of A, a reading achievement 20 months above the pupil's current grade placement or normal grade placement for his age, and from those who have shown a generally high record of achievement. These pupils are invited to join a class in which they are interested. No school credit is given for these courses, the purpose being to offer additional learning opportunities to pupils who are able and interested. This program is not intended to replace or detract from regular school classes.

Help for the Less Able

In addition to its offerings for the gifted, Denby High School attempts to meet the needs of its least able by providing experiences especially geared to their problems and difficulties.

Remedial reading. The remedial reading course is one such attempt. A pupil having a reading ability several years below his mental age is urged to become a member of a remedial reading class. The purpose of this class is to identify the pupil's particular problem and to help him correct this whenever possible. His difficulties may be due to emotional problems, lack of knowledge of phonics, limited vocabulary, inaccuracies in habits of reading, carelessness in details, inability to see the main points when reading, inability to draw generalizations, or any number of others.

Through diagnostic tests, conferences, and listening to the pupil read orally, the teacher attempts to identify his trouble. This is followed by exercises prepared by the teacher to develop the particular skill the individual lacks. Pupils sometimes work as a group and sometimes work individually.

Since remedial reading is a noncredit course, a youngster who feels that he has conquered his difficulty and no longer has need of the class, can take a test to check himself. He stays in the class only as long as he needs it. It is also possible to add pupils to the class during a semester although class size is generally held to a top limit of 15.

Speech. An effort is made to meet the needs of boys and girls who have speech difficulties. Recently, however, the number of pupils having such problems far outran the number of teachers available. Denby High School has one speech

teacher who, at best, can take care of approximately 40 pupils since she is responsible for several other schools. In these classes she may have pupils who lisp, stutter, have cleft palates, delayed speech, or possibly are aphasic. Class plans must be geared to each of these conditions. However, since helping a boy or girl solve his speech difficulty often helps solve his personal problems and his academic difficulties, even this small adjustment is important.

Job-upgrading program. Denby attempts to serve another type of boy or girl who has been unable to succeed in school or work by means of a special program listed as the job-upgrading program. This is supported by the Detroit Board of Education and nine social agencies.

It offers aid to the least employable youth, those who have left school before completing high school work and are unemployed. A boy or girl must be between the ages of 16 and 21 and must have entered the class of his own free will. He is also free to leave at any time. The purpose of the program is to help these young people become more employable, help them to find jobs, to be self-supporting, to become successful workers, or if possible to aid them in their adjustments to life so that they re-enter regular school.

The morning is spent in the classroom with approximately an hour each day given to group discussions on such subjects as personality development, techniques of interviewing, kinds of possible jobs, good grooming, budgets and other topics of common concern. The remainder of the morning is on an individual basis, with the teacher spending a part of this time with each pupil. Job sheets are filled out as practice material—how to

use a telephone, how to use a street guide, how to make change, how to use a cash register, how to fill out a job application form, or how to work simple arithmetic problems. Practice is also given in such things as the actual operation of a cash register or making change. Sociodrama is frequently used to bring to life the various aspects of job problems. Films and filmstrips are used to broaden the understanding of these young people relative to job possibilities. Some class members spend a part of the morning in regular high school classes such as typing, bookkeeping, or English. In some cases this leads to a return to regular high school work.

The more adaptable person finds a regular job within a few weeks after attending the class. The school counselor visits the place of employment frequently during the first six months to see how the young person is adjusting. Other boys and girls who need work experience in order to become employable and who have been in the program a minimum of six weeks, and have shown a desire to improve, are placed in a six-week subsidized work situation in a social agency or in a city department. Here the youth works four hours per day, five days each week.

The job-upgrading class is a much needed salvaging program. In the course of a year Denby serves approximately 100 young people.

Special Interests and Abilities

Accelerated reading. Among the offerings available to pupils with special interests and abilities is a noncredit, six-week course in accelerated reading which is open to eleventh and twelfth graders. It is planned chiefly for boys and girls who are already competent

readers and who are planning to enter college, although others may take it if they wish. Its purpose is to develop an adult attitude toward reading and to develop adult reading skills.

Practice exercises are designed by the teacher to increase a pupil's rate of reading, his comprehension, and to develop an analytical approach to the material that he reads. In addition, study techniques are included which help pupils to apply the skills learned to such things as listening to lectures, taking notes, studying for examinations, and taking examinations.

Radio speech. The radio speech classes are composed of pupils who have an interest in radio and television. The class is usually operated on a workshop basis. It is divided into groups each of which prepares a series of productions for broadcast. Those chosen by the class are broadcast, the writer acting as the producer. Professional newscasts are also studied and evaluated by the more able pupils. Although only two semesters of radio speech are offered, the pupils gifted in this field may continue in the course for a second year.

Journalism. Journalism may be taken as an elective, or in place of tenth grade composition. The second and third semester journalism pupils serve as the basic staff of the school newspaper and yearbook, work on which is operated on a practical, workshop basis.

Great books class. Many of the able readers are attracted to the Great Books class, which has as its purpose the development of critical, analytical reading, thinking, speaking and writing. Various types of literature are studied such as mythology, drama, the novel, essays, poetry, and the *Dialogues* of Plato. The

method is intensive, decelerated reading using all possible tools of analysis.

Following the completion each day of an assigned piece of reading, the pupil writes his reaction to one key idea that strikes him as being important in his own experience. These comments serve as springboards to discussion, encourage consideration of controversial questions, and develop personal, honest reaction. A fully developed critical analysis is written when pupils have completed the reading of an entire piece of material.

Languages. At the present time, the first two years of language courses are not individualized. The second two years, however, are completely individualized. In these there are no textbooks. Pupils select topics on which to write according to their interests. Through such writing they develop new vocabulary and grow in ability to express themselves in the language.

It is planned that a language laboratory will be in operation within a few months which will bring individualized language instruction to each pupil at all levels. Booths are being constructed in which each pupil may listen to a tape recording geared to his level of language development. After listening to it, he gives answers in his own words to questions on the material. He also reads material from his text onto the tape and can hear himself afterward. It is expected that more advanced classes will assist in preparing some of the tapes to be used.

Retailing cooperative. For those who are interested in entering the retailing field upon graduation, Denby High School offers a retailing cooperative course to eleventh and twelfth grade boys and girls. One half of the day is spent in school and one half at work. The school program includes English, social

studies, and a double period in retailing. For his work experience a pupil is placed in a Detroit store where he is given as much experience in as great a variety of jobs as the store management can arrange. The pupil earns at the prevailing rate of pay for beginners. His training is handled by two coordinators, one at the school and one at the store.

Many advantages accrue to a pupil in this program. While still in school he learns to adjust to the business world which he wishes to enter. He not only becomes acquainted with careers that are possible in this field, but he has better opportunity for full-time placement after his graduation since he establishes a work record that is useful as a later reference. Through this experience he also may earn, upon satisfactory completion of the two-semester course, a certificate issued by the State Office of Vocational Education. In addition the program offers him an opportunity to participate and develop leadership in three clubs: Future Retailers of Detroit, Cooperative Education Club of Michigan, and Distributive Education Clubs of America.

Mathematics. In mathematics three tracks are offered at the ninth grade level: general arithmetic, general mathematics, and algebra. These are fluid and pupils may shift from one track to another depending upon the ability they show. At the tenth grade level, those who qualify according to result; of a geometry aptitude test are either placed in the regular geometry group which covers the material in one and one-half years or the accelerated superior group which completes the work in one year.

In the eleventh grade the regular group takes advanced algebra while the superior group goes into the areas of



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Pupils with unusual interests or abilities find help in specialized classes.

college algebra and trigonometry. The twelfth grade pupils follow three tracks, the superior group taking analytical geometry and mathematical analysis. The pupils who had general arithmetic in the ninth grade are retested and for those whose test scores fall below the seventh grade, a course in refresher arithmetic is required. Pupils who in the ninth grade had general mathematics have a choice between consumer mathematics and refresher mathematics.

Science. Science, too, is offered on a track basis depending upon a pupil's ability to cope with the subjects. Biology is a two track course, the college preparatory course including laboratory work while the general biology is without laboratory. Chemistry is a three track course: general, college preparatory, and accelerated. Physics is on a similar three

track basis: physical science, college preparatory, and accelerated. In addition Denby has the Arts and Science program which is offered to the most able pupils and which has been described earlier in this article.

Girls' health program. Although all girls are required to take two years of health work, a very real effort is made to individualize instruction to meet their widely differing structural development, coordination and interests. Swimming, for example, is offered on five levels. This includes beginners, those who are working for an American Red Cross intermediate card, those striving for the swimmer's card, and two advanced groups. One of these is geared toward earning a life saving certificate and the other is composed of extremely talented girls who are interested in synchronized

swimming. The gymnasium classes are on two levels, sports, and rhythm and dance. Sports may be either individual activities such as golf or tennis; and rhythm and dance has a beginners' group, a straight dance group, and dance composition. Those interested in dance composition may remain in the class without credit for a number of semesters.

Core. Denby High School also has a Core program open to a limited number of pupils which is elective after the ninth grade. Its purpose is to help pupils learn to think and work with others, and to solve problems in the best way possible. The contents of the ninth, tenth, and twelfth grades are planned by pupils and teachers on the basis of pupils' expressed concerns and interests. Thus each pupil has an opportunity to help in the selection of areas of work in which he has a personal concern.

In the eleventh grade, although the area of study is predetermined, namely American history, the approach is a problem approach with class members taking an active part in the planning of activities. The double period of time affords opportunities for individual work with pupils in areas in which assistance is needed and also provides time for individual counseling.

Extraclass activities. Among the 30 extraclass activities which provide outlets for the special interests of boys and girls are several that are somewhat unusual. The Philosophy Club is a discussion group which deals with questions in which pupils are interested drawn from newspapers, books and magazines, questions raised in classes, or questions of personal interest.

The Film Forum has as its objective introducing boys and girls to unusual professional films, and developing film

discrimination through reviewing and discussing such films. The club has also attempted to produce several films of its own.

The Great Books Club, which a pupil may join after having read 10 books from a sponsor approved list, reviews and discusses many volumes.

The Dance Committee is a service group, its members being responsible for decorating the gymnasium for dances, serving in the coke bar, auditioning bands, and working with the principal in ironing out difficulties when problems arise at the dances.

The Denby Broadcasting Guild has a Junior Guild for the younger pupils and a Senior Guild for the older boys and girls. These are, as their names imply, for those who are really interested in radio work. The Guild activities range from spending two hours a week studying announcing so that they may do the twice-daily broadcasts of school announcements over the public address system to appearing in out-of-school productions at station WDTR and over local stations.

The Drama Club offers pupils interested in dramatics an opportunity to participate in the production of mature plays and to read and discuss modern and classic drama.

Thus by means of regular and special classes and through numerous extraclass activities Denby High School makes an attempt to offer assistance to a large number of its students. It has by no means, however, succeeded in meeting the needs of all of its boys and girls. Continuous study of its student body is needed in order to identify the problems pupils are facing and to build a continuously changing curriculum to help boys and girls to achieve to their highest potential and to build satisfying lives.

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