

# FOCUS ON EXCEPTIONAL CHILDREN

## CURRICULUM AND METHODS IN EARLY CHILDHOOD SPECIAL EDUCATION:

### ONE APPROACH

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#### EARLY CHILDHOOD SPECIAL EDUCATION CURRICULUM

Is the preschool teacher of a handicapped children's program an innovator or merely a caretaker? Recent developments indicate that precise planning can lead to important, even dramatic, changes in the development of young handicapped children. Basic to this precise planning is the involvement of the teacher in applied curriculum development.

The literature abounds with many definitions of curriculum; however, for the purpose of this article, curriculum is defined as those activities identified and used by the teacher to change/enhance a child's behavior to reach identifiable objectives and goals. In this sense, the activities may be implemented in the classroom, on the playground, on a field trip, on the school bus and in the home—the major characteristic being that it is a planned activity under the supervision of the teacher.

A variety of approaches to the process of teaching have been developed and described in the literature. A recent book, *Models of Teaching* (Joyce & Weil, 1972), provides a general overview of various ways of approaching the teaching-learning situation which have implications for curriculum development. In the early childhood area, the recent publication edited by Ronald K. Parker (1972), *The Preschool in Action*, provides descriptions of 12 specific curriculums for the preschool classroom. While these approaches were developed with disadvantaged children, adaptations can be made for use with the handicapped.

### PROBLEM AREAS

The development of any curriculum and selection of related teaching methods should be based on some rationale. One approach is to select a series of goals based on some philosophical orientation and then develop curricular materials to achieve these goals. Another approach, one adopted by the authors, is to select goals based on their relevance to problems identified through research and observation of individual children with

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handicaps. The following represent some common problems characteristic of handicapped children for which appropriate goals and objectives should be established and curriculum developed.

1. *Language*—One area critical to the total development of the young handicapped child is language. Language development is important because it is highly related to successful academic achievement, to the facilitation of social interaction and to the development of an adequate self-concept. There<sup>is</sup> also some basis for the belief that language can promote motor development.

Studies of children and groups of children often reveal deficits in one or more of the following language processing areas: reception, association, expression, sequential memory and closure. Frequently, patterns of deficits can be identified within groups of children. For example, many low income children are weak in Auditory Association and Verbal Expression. Educational programming to meet the needs of these children must be directed toward the amelioration of these deficits.

2. *Social Skills*—Studies of the handicapped reveal data to indicate that the handicapped most frequently fail to be successful on the job because of inadequate social skills rather than lack of competency to perform the task. Weak language development, poor social models by parents,<sup>a</sup> overprotection by parents and rejection by peers and members of the family are frequent inhibitors of the development of appropriate social skills.

3. *Self-Concept*—Handicapped children frequently develop weak self-concepts. The development of a strong, positive self-concept is fostered when the child is able to interact successfully, but children who lag behind in language development have difficulty communicating their ideas to others. When a child is provided with learning tasks where success is possible and where feedback is available, he feels good about himself. Conversely, when he encounters a preponderance of failures, his self-concept is undermined. Too often the handicapped child encounters failure because his teachers have not given due attention to what Hunt (1961) refers to as the match, that is, providing him with tasks compatible with his cognitive development so that he can interact with others and complete tasks successfully.

4. *Self-Help*—A basic concern of parents and teachers of young children is that they develop self-help skills particularly in the areas of toileting, eating and dressing. Immaturity, inappropriate training techniques including overprotection, and consequent lack of opportunity appear to be the major reasons for handicapped children lagging behind in this area. Successful development of self-help skills determines to a large extent the amount of acceptance of the handicapped by others.

5. *Motor Skills*—Many handicapped children lack motor skills in one or more areas. Good control over one's body tends to enhance self-confidence. A child with poorly developed motor skills tends to feel inadequate and is reluctant to attempt activities requiring well developed motor skills. A child with poor motor skills is likely to have problems in the Self-Help area. He may hesitate to work and play with other children who are more skillful motorically even though they are his same age.

6. *Cognitive Skills*—The development of cognitive skills influences all facets of the child's development. If he is retarded in cognitive development, he is usually retarded in other important facets of development—self-help, social, motor and language. Poorly developed cognitive skills is one major characteristic of the mentally retarded. Too often the handicapped child is given tasks more in keeping with his chronological age than his mental age. When this is the case, the handicapped child becomes frustrated and emotional problems may develop.

FOCUS ON EXCEPTIONAL CHILDREN is published monthly except June, July, and August as a service to those concerned with mentally retarded and emotionally disturbed children. This journal is abstracted and indexed in *Exceptional Child Education Abstracts*. Subscription rates, \$9.50 per year. Copyright 1973, Love Publishing Company. All rights reserved. Reproduction in whole or part without written permission is prohibited. Printed in the United States of America. Second class postage is paid at Denver, Colorado.

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7. *Lack of Understanding from Parents*—Typically, parents of the handicapped have no preparation to understand or to cope with the problems of the handicapped child. They need guidance and support in learning the new techniques for fostering the development of their handicapped child. It is important that the school and the home combine forces and provide the child with a consistent and appropriate curriculum both in the school and in the home.

### BASIC ASSUMPTIONS AND BELIEFS

A well conceptualized curriculum for young handicapped children has imbedded in its philosophy and procedures a set of basic assumptions. The following represent the basic beliefs underlying one model program for young handicapped children developed at the University of Illinois. After the assumptions are described, they are related to actual practice in the classroom through a variety of illustrations.

- A high adult-child ratio fosters frequent interaction between the adult and child in an organized manner when structure is basic to the approach. In addition, feedback to the child is more frequent when the adult-child ratio is high. To maintain a high adult-child ratio, paid paraprofessionals, volunteers and parents should be utilized. (Their use is viable because the inherent structure of the program permits the necessary preplanning and post-teaching evaluation.)

- Teamwork among the adults is required as a characteristic of the approach. Teamwork includes involvement in preplanning, goal selection and the formulation of objectives for obtaining the goals on a group and individual basis. Also, the adults need to be able to convey by look, gesture or other signal how to cope with or change strategy for handling a given child as smoothly and unobtrusively as possible as they implement their plans in the instructional program.

- The social structure of the adult-child interaction should be as carefully planned as the activities designed to promote intellectual processing and acquisition of concepts. (Movement of the child from small group to larger group activities must be preplanned. The transfer of the control of a child from adult to adult must be accomplished smoothly, consistently and unobtrusively as the child moves from activity to activity.)

- To cope with the vast amounts of individual programming required, the teacher must be careful to delineate and implement structure in the instructional setting.

- Since handicapped children require the services of ancillary personnel and agencies, their expertise must be incorporated into both the planning and operational phases of the program.

- Ongoing group evaluation both of the child and of the adults is essential for program implementation. Evaluation should have as its major goal the delineation of positive growth. Inherent in the evaluation process must be a built-in feedback system to the appropriate personnel.

- In general, the entire approach should be "orchestrated" so that the parts fit together harmoniously with no one portion being too dominant or illusive.

### PREPARING A LEARNING ACTIVITY

Inherent in any structured program is the need to develop a variety of carefully designed activities to foster learning. Consider the following guidelines found to be useful in the preparation of appropriate activities:

An instructional model is useful in developing activities. A model derived from the clinical model of the Illinois Test of Psycholinguistics has been found to be particularly helpful in guiding the development of curriculum, especially for handicapped children. A rationale for the use of this model is derived from its language focus which is quite congruent with many of the identified needs of handicapped children. In addition, it is a model that is process oriented. Process refers to the abilities to perceive, organize, manipulate, synthesize and integrate information regardless of the content. These are skills an individual needs throughout life.

Although the ITPA model lends itself to the identification of areas in need of specific emphasis, additional assistance can be derived from developmental guidelines which help illustrate the sequence of mastery in an area—skill or knowledge. The use of developmental guidelines helps the teacher be realistic about expectations so activities will be in line with the child's stage of development.

The following 11 areas identifiable through the ITPA clinical model provide one of the bases for determining goals.

Auditory Reception—Understanding what is heard.  
Visual Reception—Understanding what is seen.

**Auditory Association**—Mentally manipulating, organizing and relating concepts presented orally.

**Visual Association**—Mentally manipulating, organizing and relating concepts presented visually.

**Verbal Expression**—Expressing ideas verbally.

**Manual Expression**—Expressing ideas through gestures.

**Auditory Memory**—Remembering in proper sequence what is heard.

**Visual Memory**—Remembering in proper sequence what is seen.

**Grammatical Closure**—Using syntax and grammatical constructs appropriately.

**Visual Closure**—Perceiving/integrating physical units into a whole or in complete pictures.

**Auditory Closure**—Perceiving/integrating sounds into meaningful words.

Objectives are selected, delineated and organized based on their relevance to a particular goal. The sequence in which activities are presented is determined by the functioning of the child, the desired goal and the developmental difficulty of the task.

Pacing of activities should be such that the handicapped child is challenged. At the same time the activities should be at a level where the child is not frustrated and where success is frequently attained. Careful sequencing of materials from simple to complex provides the basis for achieving appropriate pacing.

While the development of processing skills is felt to be more important than content, the acquisition of specific knowledge or content is essential to the development of information processing skills. It is important to select content that is of interest to the child and relevant to both his present status and future needs. Careful selection of content will help bridge the gap between the limited knowledge of the young child and the demands made of him later in his schooling.

Young handicapped children can often be motivated to learn by embedding an activity in a game format. Such an approach can arouse basic curiosities, create a feeling of excitement and result in improved motivation and desire to learn.

Materials that are flexible lend themselves to the development of important processes since a handicapped child can learn to interact to the same materials in a variety of ways. Although a set of materials may encourage flexible usage, little is accomplished unless the teacher uses a flexible approach. Every teacher must be constantly aware of alternative uses for a set of materials and use this knowledge to meet the needs of the handicapped child.

The most effective materials are often those which stimulate a variety of senses—those which encourage each child to touch, taste, smell, see, hear. Often when one sensory modality is weak or yields distorted perceptions, input through another sense may provide feedback that compensates for the handicap and assists in the learning.

Regardless of the worth of the activity, the teacher must introduce the activity in such a way as to obtain the attention of the child and establish a set for learning. Many activities fail to motivate the child to learn because the teacher fails to understand the importance of promoting a set for learning or inadvertently establishes an inappropriate set.

Since preschoolers have yet to develop the ability to benefit from written materials, most of their instruction and learning occurs through oral directions and dialogue between the adult and child and between children. The teacher must anticipate appropriate dialogue with children and incorporate such preplanning in the curricular materials he is developing or adapting so that paraprofessionals and volunteers who are supplementing the curriculum will use appropriate dialogue.

Since the basic goals are concerned with the development of processing skills, the child must be stimulated in a variety of ways to process relevant content. Provision of a wide variety of experiences based on careful planning and selection will help insure learning.

Although the teacher may use appropriate dialogue, stimulate various modalities, use materials flexibly and be prepared to promote an appropriate learning set, the activity may be a failure unless it is also interesting to the child and to the teacher. Both must be enthusiastic to ensure maximum learning. Novelty and uniqueness help to make an activity interesting, especially when the objective is to provide an overlearning "experience."

Criterion activities help the teacher determine if she has taught what she intended to teach. Careful observations of the child's behavior as he engages in the criterion activity provides information the teacher can analyze and use to determine present attainments and future curricular needs.

To ensure permanency of learning, the teacher must carefully plan review and reinforcement activities. Such activities should occur both shortly after the original learnings and several weeks or months later.

In addition to providing for direct reinforcement of new learnings, the teacher needs to provide activities that are similar to but not the same as the original learnings. In this way the child will develop a more generalizable set of behaviors. Thus, he will be able to function more adequately in a broader variety of problem areas.

## IMPLEMENTING A LEARNING ACTIVITY

The best teachers are those who are able to develop curriculum to meet the needs of the children in their classes. The foregoing section provides a series of guidelines to help the teacher organize her thinking as she prepares an activity and to help her evaluate the likely effect of the activity. To illustrate the application of the guidelines, selected lesson plans<sup>2</sup> are presented and analyzed using the guidelines.

### MANUAL EXPRESSION #20

#### To pantomime action stated by teacher

*Materials:* None

#### *Procedure:*

1. "Today we are going to be actors. You see actors on television—the people who act out parts in plays and movies. I will whisper something I want you to do, and you will act out what I say. You will pretend you have the things you need. If I whisper to you to sweep, you'll pretend you have a broom. Like this."

Show children how you hold your hands and swish a pretend broom back and forth.

"When you have finished, the other children will raise their hands if they think they know what you are acting out. I will call on one of them."

2. Give each child several turns to perform simple actions: washing his face or hands, shoveling snow, raking, swimming, eating an ice-cream cone, hanging clothes on a line, cutting with a scissors, putting on a hat and mittens, cutting with a saw, hammering, putting on socks and shoes.
3. Give help to children who are shy about performing in front of others or who cannot think of appropriate actions. Whisper "Could you do it this way?" (Demonstrate.) "Now you do it."
4. Help children be perceptive in interpreting the actions. "Watch how John moves his arms. Try to

2. Reproduced by permission of the Milton Bradley Company, Springfield, Massachusetts, from the *GOAL: Language Development* program by Merle B. Karnes, 1972.

think what he might be holding." Commend children who wait to be called on after they have raised their hands to identify the action of another child.

#### *Criterion Activity:*

—Each child will pantomime two actions suggested by the teacher. These should be actions not previously demonstrated in this lesson.

—Have the other children guess what each performer is doing.

#### *Reinforcement:*

The above activity may be extended and reinforced through the use of the following:

1. "We'll pretend a boy named Johnny has asked all of you to come over to his house to play. For awhile you play outdoors. Then it begins to rain, and you have to go inside. Johnny says to you, 'What can we do inside on a rainy day? What can we do with our feet? Say, I have an idea. We can jump with our feet. Let's jump with both feet.'"
2. "Let's do what Johnny says, 'jump with both feet.' Now Johnny says, 'What else can we do with our feet?'"

Ask a child for a suggestion. If he suggests an action that can be done with the feet, ask all children to perform it. If he cannot think of an activity, tap your foot. Say to the child, "What am I doing? Yes, tapping my foot. Let's all tap our feet."

3. Other appropriate activities to be performed with the feet include tiptoeing, galloping, running, stamping, skating, hopping on one foot, walking on heels, walking on the outside of the feet, walking with the feet pointed outward or inward.

It will be noted that the major goal of the lesson is an information processing skill derived from the ITPA. Thus, this lesson plan meets the first criterion that activities should be based on an instructional model. As stated previously, one of the identified needs of most handicapped children is help in improving their language functioning. Since the instructional model is language

based, it is an appropriate type of activity for handicapped children who manifest deficits in language.

Children who do poorly in school have difficulty processing information. The ITPA based instructional model is a process oriented model. Further, since the lesson plan itself provides the opportunity to utilize a wide variety of content, it seems to fit well in the process domain.

Since the activities in the program were developed on a base population of children from 3 to 5 years of age, the lesson plan should be appropriate for some of the handicapped children in a class made up of similar ages. Analyses of the needs of the children and the developmental level of the activities contained in the lesson plan should permit selecting and presenting the activities at a time when it is an appropriate match for the stage of development of the children.

The specific objective in the example lesson plan is to have the child "pantomime action stated by the teacher." This objective is obviously relevant to the goal of Manual Expression.

Since the lesson plans in the *GOAL: Language Development* program are intended to be model lesson plans, only moderate attention has been given to the sequencing of activities in an area; thus, the activities within a lesson plan may be too complicated for some children and too simple for others. The teacher will need to assess the capabilities of each child carefully and sequence the lesson plans for each child. In the above lesson plan, for example, a young 3 year old might not be able to pantomime the action of sweeping a broom without initial cues. The teacher may cue him by having him watch her sweep with a broom; then sweep with the broom himself; then pretend to sweep along with her; and, finally, pretend to sweep when she whispers to him to sweep. This entire sequence of activities might take place over several days for one child; for another child, who doesn't need the task to be broken down in such simple steps, it might be accomplished in a single period.

If the teacher, through careful observations, is aware of the development of each child and sequences activities commensurate to his stage of development, frequent success will be possible. The child will not be frustrated, but will enjoy learning and develop further motivation to learn.

The acquisition of appropriate content is necessary for the growth of a child. This lesson offers a variety of opportunities for the selection of appropriate content. For example, children who need to improve their self-help skills might be asked to perform motor tasks such as

washing their face or hands, hanging clothes on the line, putting on a hat or mittens, putting on shoes and socks. Similarly, children who need a broader understanding of vocational activities might be asked to pretend to do such things as rake, hammer, cut with a saw.

This lesson plan can be easily adapted to capitalize on current interests such as acting like certain zoo animals after a field trip to the zoo or like farm animals after a visit to the farm. Adaptations can also be made for different cultures. Indians, for example, might be asked to demonstrate activities appropriate to their culture such as dances, sign language, making pottery, weaving baskets.

Analysis of the lesson plan reveals that the game format is used to implement the activities in the lesson. Curiosity should be easily aroused by the feeling of secrecy introduced in the activity. Excitement can be generated by the attitude of the teacher who conveys to the children that the activity is fun and exciting.

The question as to whether or not the lesson plan meets the criterion of flexibility can receive an affirmative answer on at least two dimensions. First, as previously illustrated, the lesson plan is extremely flexible with regard to content since the choice of content is essentially unlimited. In addition, the materials are flexible in levels of difficulty since it can be introduced with something as simple as washing of the face or hands or as complicated as the teacher deems necessary.

Although the basic activity stresses manual expression for the target child, the fact that each child in the group has an opportunity to go through the cycle of hearing the command (Visual Reception), manually expressing the idea (Manual Expression), observing another child (Visual Reception), and reporting his observation (Verbal Expression) clearly brings into play more than one modality of learning.

The establishment of an appropriate set is important for getting the attention of the children, stimulating their interest and motivating them to engage in an activity. Contained in the lesson plan are some suggestions for promoting a learning set, i.e., "Today we are going to be actors. You see actors on television—the people who act out parts in plays and movies. I will whisper something I want you to do, and you will act out what I say." Similar suggestions should be included in any adequate curriculum materials.

Through their play activities children often show delight when role playing or mimicking others. Since it is very similar to the natural actions of children, role playing becomes an inherently interesting lesson.

A criterion activity is provided to give the teacher additional opportunities to observe the child and determine if he is making progress in manual expression as delineated by this lesson. In addition, the lesson plan provides suggestions for revision and reinforcement of the language processing skill.

#### ADAPTATIONS OF A LESSON PLAN TO TYPES OF HANDICAPS

In this section a lesson plan from the Visual Reception area of the *GOAL: Language Development* program is adapted for children with different handicapping conditions.

#### VISUAL RECEPTION #8

##### To distinguish two like items in a set of three

##### Materials:

1. Two cups and one plate (can be paper)
2. Two forks and one spoon
3. Two pencils and one piece of chalk
4. Buttons of various shapes and sizes (must have two of the same of some buttons)
5. Two large spools and one small spool
6. Two each of the geometric shapes—circles, squares, rectangles, and triangles

##### Procedure:

1. Have all the items in a large container beside you, but out of sight and reach of the children.
2. Say to the children, "Let's play a game called 'Just the Same.' I will put *three* things on the table. When I call your name, you are to hold up all the things that are just the same."

Demonstrate by beginning with very simple items, such as two cups and one plate. As the child holds up the two cups, encourage him to say, "These are just the same."

Continue the game using sets of:

Two forks and one spoon  
Two pencils and one piece of chalk  
Two large spools and one small spool  
Two circles and one square

Two squares and one triangle  
Two rectangles and one square  
Two triangles and one circle

##### Criterion Activity:

—Put two different buttons on the table, saying, "Now I will give each of you a turn to find the one button on the table that looks just like the one I have in my hand."

—Hold up a button that matches one of those on the table and say, "Elizabeth, find the one that looks just the same as this."

—The child should hold up the matching button and say, "This is the same."

—Give each child a turn, changing the buttons each time.

##### Reinforcement:

The above activity may be extended and reinforced through the use of materials such as:

1. Picture Cards, Set 2, Alikes  
Place three pictures on the table. Have the child find the two that are alike and tell why. "These are alike. They are both roosters."
2. Use Playskool No. 702 Jumbo Beads.  
Place three beads on the table. The child is to hold up the two that are alike and tell why. "These two are alike. They are both (red, round, square)."

This sample lesson meets the criteria of a good lesson plan in the following areas: It is model based and language processing oriented; the objective leads toward a goal; it is flexible in regard to sequence, pacing and content; the game format is used; the learning set is described and the dialogue provided; a criterion activity is included as well as review and reinforcement activities. The lesson plan as written tends to be limited to one modality—the visual; however, the child can manipulate the materials which stimulates a second set of senses. To adapt the lesson, the teacher might describe the objects, which would stimulate the auditory senses, if she felt some child needed special help in the Auditory Reception area.

The activity is highly flexible with regard to the relevancy variable; therefore, it will be up to the teacher to select materials appropriate to the needs of the children. Since the lesson is so adaptable, it is especially appropriate for use with retarded children.

By using the illustrated format but varying the content by selecting items that are markedly different, one can begin the teaching of the concepts of likenesses and differences. For example, markedly different items such as two pencils and a book or two oranges and a shoe would be used initially. When the children are successful with these activities, items with greater similarity could be used such as oranges and an apple.

This lesson plan is basically very appropriate for the young deaf child, but the initial instructions should be modified. Repeated nonverbal demonstration of what is expected of the child should be used until he shows that he understands the activity. Dramatic reinforcements of correct responses would foster learning.

Adaptation of this lesson plan for use with blind or partially seeing children is relatively easy. More emphasis would have to be placed on the children handling the materials. In fact, the children should be encouraged to feel each item in a set thoroughly before determining the two that are alike. Great ingenuity can be used by the teacher in finding what will be especially interesting and stimulating to the blind child; for example, feathers, cotton balls, sandpaper of varying grits, rocks of different weights, smoothness and contour, different textures of fabric.

Adaptation of this lesson for an involved orthopedically handicapped might require the child to point with a stick to the two alike items or even knock them off the table with a swipe of the hand. Similarly, some markedly physically handicapped child may have to verbally indicate the two items that are alike by saying "Yes" or "No" when the teacher points to the three items one after the other.

If a young child is blind *and* deaf, this activity might be used by having the child feel the objects and eventually hold the two that are alike in the palms of his hands. Undoubtedly, learning will be a slow process, so the items used should be markedly different. Reinforcement with a hug, pat or even a bit of candy will help foster learning.

For the child who has a learning disability in the Visual Reception area, the lesson may be adapted so that he becomes more aware of the likenesses and differences through a combination of tactile, auditory and visual stimulations. For example, when determining the two that are alike—two cups and one plate—he should hold a cup; label, or call it, a cup; associate it with milk or water. The

teacher might call attention to the handle and say, "Put your finger through the handle." The same general procedure would be used with the plate—running the finger around the edge, holding it between the palm of the two hands to feel the flatness of it and associating the word "food" with it. Then the teacher might say, "Look at the objects. Now give me the two cups." Later, she could expect the child to give her the two that are the same. The extent to which the process is task analyzed will be determined by the extent of the child's learning disability.

This lesson plan might be very appropriate for use with a young emotionally disturbed child since it requires a low degree of social interaction with other children and with the teacher. Should some suggested objects prove to be too stimulating, the teacher might want to make substitutions. On the other hand, the teacher might wish to desensitize the child by playing the game over and over again while providing the child with considerable support when disturbing objects are presented. If the process is approached appropriately, the teacher may be able to desensitize a child to disturbing stimuli and, at the same time, help him develop cognitive skills. In a similar vein, children with socially inappropriate behavior may be helped to gain social skills if they are appropriately reinforced during the playing of the game.

#### A LESSON PLAN AS A TEACHING AND/OR DIAGNOSTIC TOOL

One of the problems teachers of preschool children face is the development or selection of activities commensurate with the needs of the children they are teaching. Since the young child cannot prepare products such as a theme or a complex scientific project that can be carefully studied by the teacher, she must gather most of her information about a child as he engages in an actual activity. The problem of gathering relevant data is probably most acute in the Auditory Association area where the teacher must be aware of both the question the child asks and the quality and content of his answer. The use of lesson plans as a setting for observation will facilitate controlling the types of questions that are asked of the children. Then, the teacher can spend more time and care in making observations as to how the child responds to the demands of the activity.

Many teachers find the ITPA model useful for developing activities and organizing their instructional program but lack the time of a professional psychologist to evaluate the children on the ITPA test. The class analysis sheet (see



Figure 1) derived from the *GOAL: Language Development* program provides one way a teacher might determine the strengths and weaknesses of the children in her class.

Since the Auditory Association area is extremely important for a child's growth and development yet difficult to evaluate, a sample lesson has been selected for discussion.

Figure 1

(Date)

**ITPA—AUDITORY ASSOCIATION**

**Class Analysis**

| Guidelines   | Names of Children |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|--|-------------------|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|
|  |                   |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 1. Perceives same, different, and opposite relationships presented verbally. |                   |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 2. Understands complex directions.   |                   |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 3. Makes inferences from verbal materials.                                   |                   |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 4. Detects "foolish" statements about a familiar topic.                      |                   |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 5. Answers questions of a "What if?" or "Why does?" nature.                  |                   |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 6. Responds to questions requiring divergent thinking.                       |                   |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 7. Responds to questions or riddles requiring convergent responses.          |                   |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 8. Makes a riddle about an object or setting.                                |                   |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 9. Gives "thoughtful" answers.   |                   |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

To make a class analysis, observe and rate the child as "below average" = 1, "average" = 2, and "above average" = 3.

(Reproduce for classroom use.)

No one activity lends itself to observing children in all aspects of the guidelines under Auditory Associations; thus, it will be necessary to watch children as they engage in more than one activity. On the other hand, the teacher must begin with some activity, preferably one that provides an opportunity to observe children along several guidelines of the processing area. Consider the appropriateness of the following lesson plan.

**AUDITORY ASSOCIATION #3**

To associate something with auditory clue and respond with appropriate answer

Materials: None

Procedure:

1. "Today I am going to ask you some questions. I will find out what good thinkers you are. I know you are good thinkers, but today you will really have to prove it.

"If I say that I am going to the bank, why do you think I am going?

If I say I don't feel very well, what do you think is wrong with me?

If I have a hole in my coat pocket, what do you think may happen?

If your refrigerator stopped running, why would your mother be concerned about it?

If your stove were broken, what might happen?

If you were carrying a glass of jelly and fell, what might happen?

If a dog ran after you, what would you do?

If there were a big cloud in the sky, what do you think might happen?

If you fell out of a tree, what might happen to you?

If everyone threw his chewing gum on the sidewalk, what would happen?"

2. Encourage children to respond in complete sentences. You may need to encourage some children by asking other questions or making a few suggestions.

Criterion Activity:

—Ask the children to respond to the following question. Have each of them think of a different answer. "If it

were your birthday and you could have anything you wanted, what would you ask for?"

Comparison of the lesson plan with the guidelines (see Figure 1) reveals that there will probably be little opportunity to observe the children on "perceiving same and different" (No. 1) and "making a riddle" (No. 8). On the other hand, it should be immediately obvious that observations can be easily made on "makes inferences" (No. 3), "What if?" (No. 5), "divergent thinking" (No. 6), "convergent thinking" (No. 7) and "thoughtful answers" (No. 9). With some modification of the content of the lesson plans, information might be obtained appropriate to "understanding complex directions" (No. 2) and "detects 'foolish' statements" (No. 4).

Once the teacher has analyzed her lesson plan and decided upon which guidelines she wants to focus, she is ready to initiate the observation in an actual situation. One of the most practical ways is to take groups of six to eight children to a quiet area of the room, preferably around a table, and engage the children in a selected lesson plan. During the session, she might write an abbreviated record of responses given by the children. After the completion of the lesson, if possible, or immediately after the children have left for the day, the teacher should sit down and rate the children on their responses relative to the guidelines. Children who are above average for the group will be given a 3; children who are average for the group will be given a 2; children below average will be given a 1 on each guideline. For example, one child might be above average (3) on divergent thinking and below average (1) when thinking convergently. In the same way, the other children in the class should receive the same lesson plan and activities and be rated accordingly. During succeeding days, additional lesson plans should be selected covering the guidelines not evaluated by the initial lesson (same-different; riddle). After the teacher has completed her evaluations of all the children in the class on all the guidelines in an area, she will want to consider carefully how to regroup in order to program for them. Analysis may reveal that a regrouping of the class into small working groups based on overall maturity—social, physical and intellectual—may constitute the best grouping. Nevertheless, some children may need to be assigned to different groups based strictly on social interactive problems as might be the case when two children seem to agitate each other. Once workable groups are established, careful attention can be given to the selection of the lesson plans and the adaptation of lesson plans to meet not only the needs of the group but of individuals within the group.

Thus, for example, when the teacher asks the group, "If your stove were broken, what might happen?" she might expect one child to be able to say something like "Have to call a repairman," "Have to go out for dinner," and "Eat cold food." Another child might answer "No food," "No eat," "Hungry." Each child could be praised for responses commensurate with his stage of development. In this way a workable social group can be established, yet each child will receive more careful individualized attention than would be possible if the above procedure were not followed.

### PACING OF LESSON PLANS

Within a class, some children learn more rapidly than others. Furthermore, some children will have had broader experiences and different backgrounds than others. As a consequence, it is necessary to present lesson plans which hold differing expectations for achievement within a lesson plan. To illustrate how a lesson plan can be paced to meet individual differences in learning, the following lesson plan is presented.

#### VISUAL SEQUENTIAL MEMORY #23

To name in order four articles of clothing placed in suitcase

##### *Materials:*

1. Suitcase
2. Clothes (shoes, socks, sweater, slacks, pajamas, necktie, cap, handkerchief, underwear, shirt, toothbrush, toothpaste, comb)

##### *Procedure:*

1. Put the suitcase and clothing articles on the table. "Today we are going to pack a suitcase to go on a trip. We will take turns putting two things in the suitcase. Watch so that you can tell us how the things are put in the suitcase. I'll start. I'm going on a trip. Watch what I put in the suitcase." Put in the shoes. "Now watch!" Put in the sweater. Close the suitcase. "Benjamin, what did I put in my suitcase first?" If the child does not name the articles in sequential order, review with him what you put in the suitcase first, then second.

2. Continue this same procedure, giving each child a turn to pack two articles. Another child should tell in sequence how the articles were packed.
3. After the children are able to recall a series of two articles, increase the series to include three, then four articles.

*Criterion Activity:*

—Open the empty suitcase. “Watch while I put four things in the suitcase. Then I will close the suitcase and ask you to name the things in the order I put them in the suitcase.” Alter the sequence of four for each child.

—This same procedure can be used in the following ways. Play a game in which three to five animals go in and out of a barn. Ask the children to recall in order the animals that went in the barn. Then have a child bring the animals out of the barn in the same sequence they went into the barn. (Milton Bradley Picture Sequence Cards No. 7524 can be used following this same game format.)

—Have each child identify objects as they are put into and taken out of a purse. Begin with two objects and progress to five.

The above lesson plan provides for making the lesson easier and more difficult by changing the number of items a child is expected to recall. During the first session with this activity, the number of articles that a child is asked to remember might be increased until his ceiling is reached. During subsequent sessions, the teacher can more accurately set the goal for each child as one item above that which he was able to accomplish during the last session. Once the child has obtained a goal, a new goal can be established. Extremely careful observation may reveal a child can remember three articles of clothing if they are very familiar with the items (shoe, sock, shirt), but only two of the items are unfamiliar (necktie, robe). Expectations can be varied based on the degree of familiarity.

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# CLASSROOM FORUM

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## PROBLEM 26

*My principal tells me I should try a “time-out room” as an approach to behavioral problems. Does it work?*

The question fails to clarify whether the time-out room is for the *students* or the *teacher*! Possibilities for the latter are intriguing. However, let us consider the problem in regard to the students.

The use of a time-out room allows the teacher to remove the student from all reinforcement when the reinforcement *cannot* be removed from the student (such as attention from peers). It also allows the student to “pull himself together” in private. This technique is most useful for decelerating behaviors which are disruptive and frequent (e.g., tantruming, fighting, talking-out, etc.). It should *not* be used alone to accelerate desired academic behaviors.

The behavioral principle behind this technique, supported by extensive research, is that *a behavior not followed by positive reinforcement will gradually extinguish*. The time-out (from reinforcement) procedure can be very effective under the following conditions:

1. Removal from class must be a punishment only in the sense that the student is removed from a truly reinforcing environment. The basic behavioral principle is not in effect if the time-out area is interesting and rewarding and/or the classroom is dull and nonreinforcing.
2. When feasible, the consequence for *specific* inappropriate behaviors should be clarified with the students *before* initiation of the technique. This includes the minimum time period. With most students this can take the form of contracting or mutual agreement.
3. The student should be *reminded of the agreement* upon removal from the classroom. The teacher should be firm and matter of fact. However, this is *not* a time for scolding or “reasoning.”
4. Above all, the teacher should act *immediately and consistently*.

5. As with any management technique, the teacher must work to *accelerate appropriate behavior* while the inappropriate behavior is undergoing deceleration. For example, in your effort to decrease out-of-seat behavior, the student must be reinforced when in-seat behavior is occurring.

When the above criteria are met, the chances are very good that the technique will be effective. The above conditions can be critical for achieving two "plus" factors of this technique: (1) the chances of emotional conditioning leading to avoidance behaviors are reduced, and (2) control of the behavior will gradually become internalized within the student.

The procedure is simple enough, but there are several cautions which should be kept in mind.

1. Unless the behavior(s) is dangerous to the student or his peers, most behavioral psychologists advise trying other techniques first, notably:

*Extinction*—the systematic ignoring of inappropriate behavior.

*Cost response*—the behavior "costs" the student something.

*Self-recording*—the student records the number of specified appropriate and inappropriate behaviors.

2. Since the intent is not to scare or endanger the student, the time-out room should be well lighted, quiet and safe.

3. Recent research has indicated that effectiveness is maintained with a maximum time limit in the time-out room of 8 minutes, the average being 3-5 minutes. In the case of tantruming, crying, etc., the student should be removed the first time he is quiet *after* the set time period has elapsed. In a broader scope of Contingency Management, the contract could be modified to include return to the classroom whenever appropriate behavior has been established.

4. Record data! Since the target behavior often accelerates before extinguishing with this technique, accurate records are the only way you can really "see" if the procedure is working. Subjective impressions can be deceiving. (I have heard of one case where the teacher thought the technique was working until she was shown the actual data, which illustrated that the behavior had accelerated and remained there. Upon investigation, it was found that the time-out room had a large window through which the student—a young boy—could watch workmen constructing

a new building right next door! Selection of a more appropriate time-out room did the job.)

5. Do not allow the student to avoid academic work. You must have a mutual agreement that such work is accomplished after the "time-out" occurs.

6. Other staff members (teachers, janitors and especially your principal) need to be informed about the principles involved in using a time-out technique. Their unintentional "meddling" could destroy the effectiveness of the procedure.

7. As a final caution, try to be prepared with appropriate courses of action (consequences) if the "unexpected" happens. For example, what will you do if the student "escapes" from the time-out room (do not lock the door!) or attempts to harm the room or himself?

The following are excellent books describing the use of the time-out room and other techniques in a classroom setting:

Anderson, Dan et al. *Behavior Modification Techniques for Teachers of the Developmentally Young*. Greeley, Colorado: Rocky Mountain Special Education Instructional Materials Center, 1972.

Clarizio, H. F. *Toward Positive Classroom Discipline*. New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1971.

Madsen, C. H. Jr. & Madsen, C. K. *Teaching/Discipline: Behavioral Principles Toward a Positive Approach*. Boston: Allyn & Bacon, Inc., 1970.

A year's subscription and our sincere appreciation go to Gary W. Scharff, Teacher of Hearing Impaired, University of Northern Colorado Laboratory School, Greeley, Colorado.

#### PROBLEM 28

*I will have an entirely new class of young EMR students this fall. Can you offer suggestions for getting off to a smooth start?*

All readers are invited to send in their solutions to Problem 28. The September 1973 issue will summarize contributions by readers. Complimentary subscriptions will be awarded each month for the best solutions. Send your response to the Editorial offices, *FOCUS ON EXCEPTIONAL CHILDREN*, 6635 East Villanova Place, Denver, Colorado 80222.