

TEACHING DULL AND
RETARDED CHILDREN

TEACHING DULL AND RETARDED CHILDREN

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WITH AN INTRODUCTION

BY

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INTRODUCTION

With the extension of compulsory education requirements during recent years and with the stricter enforcement of these requirements more children came into the schools. Many thus forced in had not come because the school was not attractive to them. This was owing largely to the fact that they were not adapted to do successfully the work which the school offered them. These are the dull children of the school.

It so happened that during the period of increasing compulsory educational requirements the scientific means for analyzing and diagnosing children were greatly improved and refined. The application of these means has done much to enable schools to organize children into groups upon the basis of ability and to provide educational advantages to meet the needs of each group.

Every teacher finds the dull child a problem. He moves more slowly in his work, consequently he must stay in school longer. The effort of the schools, however, should be to enable pupils of this type to progress each at his own proper rate and acquire such mental, moral, and physical health as will enable him to adjust his life as successfully as possible even though it be only in a very simple environment.

Much more attention is being given, therefore, to the problem of making the school a happy, profitable place for dull children to be. It is not enough merely to know who the dull and retarded are, or even to segregate them into classes. The great need is to know what they should be taught and how.

This book is an effort to supply definite help and guidance to teachers in the interest of the better education of all handicapped children. While fundamental in its approach and scientific in its treatment throughout, it is primarily a practical handbook and guide in the details of the types of work which should be attempted with the dull child and with the procedures which should be employed in carrying this work forward.

Starting with the conception, developed in Chapter I, that each child, whatever his ability, should strive for such measure of all round socialization as may be possible to him, the text proceeds to set forth in Chapter II those teaching procedures which well tested practice has revealed are effective in educating such pupils. This chapter reminds the teacher of the objectives determined upon in Chapter I, shows the types of procedures which should be used to achieve such ends, and then sketches the outcomes to be sought.

Following these two introductory chapters are chapters dealing with the various subjects of study and the various activities of the school which it is believed should possess large socializing value for the dull children. What is so socially valuable that even the dull child should acquire it, what are the difficulties involved in his mastery of it, and what is the technique of procedure in helping him over these difficulties are basic questions which are raised and answered in these chapters dealing with the various subjects of study and the different types of educative activity.

Anyone who has had opportunity to observe Dr. Inskeep at work in her own classroom, as it has been my pleasure to do as her superintendent of schools, finds in this volume an expression of the best which she has been able to achieve in her several years of experience in guiding and educating

handicapped children. To her task she has brought the gift of scholarship and an infinite patience to concern herself with every important detail as revealed in her experience. The volume is not only the result of Dr. Inskeep's classroom teaching of children, but much of the material in it has had the further testing of presentation by her in lectures to hundreds of teachers in summer session classes at the University of California.

The result is that she produced a manuscript which will be of great inspiration and guidance to the classroom teacher of dull and retarded children. Not only should it furnish helpful guidance to the teachers of children who are typically dull, but likewise to any teacher of any type of child who is seeking to understand him fundamentally and to serve him adequately.

I predict that the book will be found of great value in the training of intending teachers. Students in normal school classes, as well as in university classes in education, who seek to understand in all round ways their total responsibility with the various types of children to be found in the public schools, will certainly have occasion to use this book and to find in it a profitable source of information.

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FOREWORD

A larger recognition of the needs of dull and retarded children and more and better provisions for teaching them present a problem of far reaching economic and social significance. This volume is concerned with the objectives that should be kept in mind when planning school work for dull and retarded children and the teaching procedures that should be used in carrying out this work.

In the decades that are past, elementary education was carried on at the pace which the average child was supposed to travel along the road of learning. Each child was expected to keep up with this mythical average child. And yet, all this time, in every school, there were children who were getting little or nothing out of attending school — children who often in the course of their school lives failed of promotion, not just once, but several times. Then slowly, very slowly, the educational world began to recognize that a grade as a measure of yearly progress was not a mental diagnosis, but merely a piece of administrative machinery used for expediency's sake. The question was asked as to whether it might not be a mistake to make all children move at the educational pace that had been set for the average child. Then students of educational psychology sought to find out why children lagged behind. Intelligence was rated, children with mental defects were distinguished from mentally defective children, and here and there provision was made in school systems for the various forms and degrees of retardation.

Also for many years America admitted indiscriminately certain foreign elements that did not represent the average

type of mental ability even in their own countries. For this reason teachers have found that in spite of improved educational conditions and an improved teaching force, it has been difficult to maintain the average standard of attainment which formerly held for the rank and file of children attending school. Even in the high schools teachers testify to this fact. The reason is (1) that a great many of our foreigners are not of average mental stock, and (2) that we have increased our demands for compulsory education, in some cases, like California, even to the eighteenth year, so that there is a persistence of the inept minds all through the grades and sometimes through the high schools. It is not surprising to find, therefore, that so great a percentage of dull or retarded pupils should be found among the school children in our large cities, industrial centers, or even in the country where foreign labor is employed. They have always been in the world, but just now through the agency of the school we are trying to make them self-supporting and self-controlled citizens fitted to a higher type of civilization. The problem is, therefore, a much more common one than one would think when he first hears or reads the expression "retarded children." This book will be found helpful then by those who instruct children from the lower immigrant families as well as native dull and retarded.

Who are the dull and retarded children within the meaning of the title of this book? They are those who clog the wheels of normal progress, the repeaters who succeed at times in being promoted, but who always take an undue share of the teacher's time; they are the children whose abilities are mechanical rather than academic;¹ the children who are not getting the education to which all the

¹ STENQUIST, JOHN L. — "The Case for the Low I.Q." *Journal of Educational Research*. Nov., 1921.

children of all the people are entitled. They are not imbeciles, that is, those whose adult mental age will never be over seven years. They are the children whose adult mental age will be, according to our present methods of testing, somewhere from eight to fourteen years. Stated in the form of grades, they are the children who can do at least third-grade work and some few of whom may even finish vocational high schools. Measured in terms of current mental hygiene, they are *morons of the various classifications, border-line-deficiency cases, and dull-normals*. In the school world they are generally spoken of as *retarded*. Designated in terms of possible industrial adjustment, they are those who will probably be the unskilled, semiskilled, and, in some cases, skilled laborers and ordinary clerical workers.¹

These are the children who, under the regular grade system, are costing more than any other children in the elementary school system. It has been estimated that "ten per cent of the school budgets for this country are spent in reteaching children what they have been taught once and failed to learn."² Nor does the expense involved under the usual grade system of teaching retarded children with normal children, end there. In a survey of the prison population of the State of New York, for each two prison inmates who made normal or accelerated progress when in school, there were over seven who were retarded.³ No one, probably, has any conception of the economic loss to the community, the individual loss of self-respect, and the mal-

¹ Terman, Louis M., Dickson, Virgil E., Sutherland, A. H., Franzen, Raymond H., Tupper, C. R., and Fernald, Grace. — *Intelligence Tests and School Reorganization*, page 27.

² Farrell, Elizabeth E. — "The Unclassified Child," *Ungraded*; Feb., 1923.

³ Lewisoohn, Alfred, Chairman — *Report for 1920 of the New York State Prison Survey Committee*.

adjustments that have resulted from past attempts to make children of varying degrees of retardation keep pace with normal children.

It is because of the breadth of application and the loose use of such terms as defective, subnormal, feeble-minded, and retarded, that much misconception has arisen as to how children who have failed to keep pace with the grades should be taught. Those who advocate practically no academic work for retarded children are seeing only one side of the shield and are usually thinking of imbeciles, while those who believe that retarded children should be given the same work as normal children are looking at the other side of the shield and forgetting that retardation results in a large proportion of cases from a structural condition and is a definite mental defect.

There is growing to be a nation-wide desire to give the child the largest possible opportunity. This is showing itself, among other ways, in a distinct trend toward providing classes for so-called slow, dull, limited, or retarded children. These children cannot profitably be taught by the same methods or by using the same curriculum provided for normal or supernormal children. Whatever work is done with dull and retarded children must take into consideration the avenues of approach to the retarded mind and should also adjust the child of limited mentality as far as possible to normal life situations.

The teaching procedures that follow are not theories about what should be taught, but classroom experiences as to what can be taught. They are suitable for use in slow, limited, ungraded, and special classes in work that would correspond to a certain extent to the first, second, third, fourth, fifth, sixth, and in some cases, the seventh and eighth grades. Education is not so much what you put

into a child's mind, as it is how he reacts on what you do put in. No amount or kind of teaching will create brain cells or modify brain structure. The organism, though, as it exists can be quickened to its uttermost capacity.¹ Learning can be made to function with living, and many a boy and girl can be trained to put up a winning fight by making good use of poor brain power.

It is not expected that the classroom work that is given in this book can all, or even in any considerable part, be given to any one child or group of children. The book is so arranged that selections can be taken from any of the chapters and adapted to the individual child, the individual environment, class and equipment. In all of her work the teacher should have a thoroughly prepared plan of her own. There are many specific suggestions in the pages that follow which will aid in the planning of new and original teaching procedures that will interest and appeal to the dull and retarded mind.

The suggestions, games, plans, methods, and curriculum content in this book owe much of their value to the fact that they are a record of procedures worked out in actual everyday classroom teaching. This was made possible to a large degree by the opportunities for experimentation and the helpful encouragement afforded the author by her superintendent, Mr. H. B. Wilson, and her principal, Mr. A. J. Hamilton.

A. D. I.

¹ CASSAMAJOR, DR. LOUIS — "Millions of twelve cylinder brains are only hitting on one cylinder," from an interview, printed in *The American Magazine*. Nov., 1922.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER I

	PAGE
THE GOAL	I
The needs of retarded children	I
Approaches to a goal	3
Graphic presentation of the goal	6
Results	8
Problems	8
Selected References	9

CHAPTER II

TEACHING PROCEDURES	10
The approach to the retarded mind	10
The objectives	12
Natural teaching methods adapted to the retarded children	15
Outcomes	24
Texts and helps	25
Problems	26
Selected References	27

CHAPTER III

READING	29
Preliminary considerations in teaching reading	29
Why children do not learn to read	31
Preprimary work	41
When the child is ready to learn to read	44
Phonetics	49
After a beginning has been made in reading	55
Fundamentals in teaching reading	56
Making reading into a useful tool	61
Devices and suggestions for teaching reading	68
Problems	76
Selected References	77

	PAGE
CHAPTER IV	
LANGUAGE	78
The importance of language work in teaching retarded children .	78
Preprimary language work	79
Fundamentals in language work	80
Unifying and reviewing the fundamentals	101
Language projects	102
Problems	112
Selected References	113
CHAPTER V	
SPELLING	114
Different ways of learning to spell	114
Teaching procedures adapted to retarded children	117
What words should be taught?	120
Problems	122
Selected References	123
CHAPTER VI	
ARITHMETIC	124
Present-day tendencies and their relation to arithmetic for re- tarded children	124
The approach to arithmetic	126
Elementary number processes	130
More advanced number processes	147
The relation of processes to problems	158
Arithmetic projects	165
Problems	173
Selected References	174
CHAPTER VII	
HANDWRITING	175
The vocational objective	175
The preprimary approach to handwriting	176
The beginning of handwriting	178
Teaching procedures in handwriting	179
Left-handed children	183
Problems	185
Selected References	186

CONTENTS

xvii

CHAPTER VIII

PAGE

THE SOCIAL STUDIES	187
The value of an interrelated study program	187
The school yard	189
The neighborhood	192
The state	194
The world	197
North America	199
South America	203
Asia	205
Africa	209
Europe	211
The United States	213
Citizenship	216
Problems	219

CHAPTER IX

SOCIAL STUDIES — CONTINUED	221
Teaching procedures in social studies	222
Projects that can be used in teaching social studies to retarded children	223
Devices and suggestions for nature study	259
Problems	261
Selected References	261

CHAPTER X

HEALTH	263
Concrete teaching in relation to life adjustments	263
Daily health inspection	265
Classroom health records	268
Safety first and first aid	272
An outline for an elementary program in hygiene	275
Health projects	280
Problems	291
Selected References	292

CHAPTER XI

THRIFT	293
The value of a thrift program	293

	PAGE
An outline for a thrift program	294
Devices and suggestions for teaching thrift	300
Thrift projects	302
Problems	312
Selected References	313
 CHAPTER XII 	
THE APPRECIATION STUDIES	314
Value of appreciation work	314
Music	315
Drawing, coloring, and modeling	322
Literature	329
Problems	330
Selected References	331
 CHAPTER XIII 	
THE EDUCATION OF THE HAND	333
Do the mentally retarded excel in handwork?	333
The approach to handwork for the mentally retarded	336
Teaching procedures in handwork	339
The outcomes	341
Practical suggestions for teaching various types of handwork	346
In Conclusion	382
Problems	382
Selected References	383
 CHAPTER XIV 	
GAMES	385
The educational value of play	385
The technique of games	387
The value of sense-perception games	390
Games for developing the sense of touch	393
Games for developing the sense of hearing	395
Games for developing the sense of sight	399
Muscular coördination games	403
Color games	411
Memory games	414
Weight and location games	419
Problems	422
Selected References	423

CONTENTS

xix

CHAPTER XV

	PAGE
GAMES — CONTINUED	424
Reading games	424
Arithmetic games	434
Language games	441
Problems	445
Selected References	445

TEACHING DULL AND RETARDED CHILDREN

CHAPTER I

THE GOAL

THE NEEDS OF DULL AND RETARDED CHILDREN

The education of all the children of all the people is generally accepted as our present standard. Education to meet the needs of all the children of all the people should be the next step. What are the needs of dull and retarded children? What kind of teaching will meet these needs? Considering the dull and retarded as of all degrees of brain power above that of the imbecile and up to that of the normal child, what potential possibilities of discontent, failure, and crime lie in this group! Two things above all others will save children of this class from becoming failures: *the will to control themselves and the consciousness that they can succeed when they have used their best efforts.* Success in school work should be made possible for these children, though it be a success in limited undertakings; for there is a vast difference between failure and the confidence in self that comes from a modicum of success. A mind filled with the spirit of success is not a stagnant pool breeding noxious thoughts.

What should be taught. — Stated in broadest terms, the dull and retarded should be taught everything they are capable of learning that will function with life. But what will function in their lives? Before this can be answered