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### A Glimpse into Another World: A class of mentally retarded children

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A GLIMPSE INTO ANOTHER WORLD:  
A class of mentally retarded children

A Special Studies Paper  
In Honors H-291  
Prepared for Mrs. Sandford

By Carol Kimbrough  
1967 Fall Semester

Soph

## A GLIMPSE INTO ANOTHER WORLD:

### A class of mentally retarded children

For my special studies paper in honors, I chose as my subject, mental retardation. Although this is a rather broad area, I limited my research to a class of mentally retarded children in an elementary school in Southwest Arkansas.

Now, let's take a glimpse into another world--one we seldom see. This class, from all external appearances, seems to be just an ordinary classroom filled with fourteen smiling faces; loving, and eager to learn. As you step inside, you are greeted by each one and quickly sense their curiosity. They are all very friendly and want very much to have your friendship and try very hard to gain it; each one in his own way. This class consists of nine boys and five girls. There are four Negro children in the class--two girls and two boys. The children range in chronological age from 6 to 13 years, but the average mental age is between 3 and 8 years. All the children get along splendidly and there is no friction between them at all--not even between the races. The Negro children bicker among themselves but this is probably just their nature and what they experience at home.

Their daily schedule is very different from that of

the other classes in the school and emphasis, by necessity, is placed on different things. They eat lunch alone in the cafeteria and the entire playground is theirs for recess. At lunch, as well as at other times during the day, manners and simple behavior skills, such as brushing teeth, combing hair, etc. are stressed.

I work with this class on Wednesday and Friday afternoons from 12:30 until 3:30. My arrival usually is the signal for rest period to end and to begin to put away the towels. Then comes the highlight of the day, especially for me. This is the time set aside for us to share our experiences from the preceding day--excitements, disappointments, joys, sorrows, and problems. Each child is given equal time to share.

After sharing, we go outside for recess, weather permitting, where we all participate in the activities. The things we do may seem rather simple and elementary to a casual observer, but they are aimed to stress group participation, to learn to get along with others, and to improve coordination. We do such things as jumping rope (the most popular of all), walking the rope as if it were a tightrope, running races, and playing action games. When we have recess inside, we usually play such games as "Who's got the bone?" and "Seven Up."

When we come in from recess, we go to the restroom and get a drink of water. Then we have phonics and reading lessons. The highest reading group is a second grade, second semester

primer. There are three non-readers in the class. One child can do simple arithmetic but cannot read and another one can read but cannot do any arithmetic. The length of time spent in this kind of activity varies depending on their attention span. The week before Christmas was spent singing carols, coloring, and glittering Christmas decorations because that was all they could think about.

Each day a paragraph of about five sentences is written on the board for the children to copy. They also have an arithmetic lesson each day. Each child works at his own rate.

I have written a short summary on four of these children, which includes information on their home life (to the extent of my knowledge of this information), their attitudes, and my evaluation and the opinions I hold after working with each child, after reading his folder, and after conferring with the teacher. I have chosen two Negro children--one boy, one girl--and two white children--one boy, one girl. Since I am not permitted to reveal their identity, I will use the symbols NB to represent the Negro boy's name; NG for the Negro girl; WB for the white boy; WG for the white girl. I also have samples of their work, both written and coloring.

Let me say now that in all but one (WB) the environment is, I feel, a major cause of the children's retarded state.

Name: NB Reading level: 1<sub>1</sub> primer  
Age: 9 years Math level: 6 year old  
Mental Age: 6 years

NB is a medium-sized, big eyed, smiling, nine year old boy, full of energy and very friendly. He has the mental age of a six year old. NB is a stutterer. No one knows what has caused or is causing his stuttering. After reading the information in his folder, the only incident that could have caused it is a time when his house burned. He was inside, had to be rescued from the house, and then had to stand by and watch it finish burning. Last year he was sent to a speech clinic on a nearby college campus several times a week, but has not been back this year. During my work with NB I have noticed that he does not stutter all the time. On the playground when he wants my attention and wants it right then, or even in the room when he really has something to say--it comes out loud and very clear. But if he walks up, taps you on the shoulder, and knows you have plenty of time to hear what he has to say, he will stutter and stutter profusely.

NB is in one of the higher reading groups, reading in a first grade, first semester primer. He seems to try very hard. He does fairly well in arithmetic and is presently working on a six year old level. Samples of his work can be found on the following few pages.

I feel that his home life plays a big part in contributing

to his retarded state. He lives with his mother and his step-father and several step-brothers and sisters. He seems to resent this and is always talking about his "real" daddy. He anxiously awaits the seemingly once a month nightly visit with his father. Whether he is mistreated at home or not, I cannot say.\*

\* Any knowledge concerning the home life of any of this children is based purely on information taken from them. The present teacher has made no home visits whatsoever and knows nothing beyond the name and address of the family.



NB

Today is Friday.

Connie has new shoes.

Ricky gave Mrs Donaldson a surprise.

Mark and Lindy are a party.

Three people are absent.

We had music today.

This is an example of the paragraphs we write each day.



Uu Uu Uu Uu.

NB

I put up my umbrella.

On a rainy day.

My umbrella keeps me dry.

When I work or play.

Umbrella  
UP

us

uncle

under

This is one of our phonics lessons. We learn the sound, a poem about it, and list five words that have that sound.



NB

$$10 + 1 = \boxed{11}$$

$$12 + 7 = \boxed{19}$$

$$10 + 5 = \boxed{14} \times$$

$$10 + 6 = \boxed{16}$$

$$10 + 3 = \boxed{13}$$

$$14 + 4 = \boxed{15} \times$$

$$16 + 2 = \boxed{18}$$

$$12 + 3 = \boxed{15}$$

$$14 + 3 = \boxed{17}$$

$$13 + 4 = \boxed{17}$$

$$17 + 1 = \boxed{18}$$

$$11 + 7 = \boxed{19} \times$$

$$13 + 5 = \boxed{18}$$

$$12 + 6 = \boxed{18}$$

This is a sample  
arithmetic lesson.



Santa Claus



Name: WB Reading level: 2<sub>1</sub> primer  
Age: 11 years Math level: 6 years.  
Mental Age: 6½ years

WB is a small, thin, shy, uncoordinated, eleven year old boy. WB has a considerable amount of brain damage and has been declared legally blind. But this does not dampen his quest for knowledge. He loves to read and reads quite a large amount of books. Seldom does a day go by that he doesn't check out a book to take home with him and read. In the classroom, he reads in a second grade, first semester primer. He has large copies of the readers used by the other children that have large print and no colored pictures. These books have been borrowed from the blind school. He has never missed a single word in any of the times that he has read for me. WB is by far the best reader in the room.

Due to his eyesight, it is not unusual that he has trouble with his writing--especially staying on the lines. WB experiences some difficulty with his arithmetic, in that, he can add, but can do no subtraction. WB is not expected to attain any level of mentality above that of an eight year old due to his brain damage.

He has a remarkable memory. He knows the names, ages, and birthdays of every one in the class--a feat I have yet to master. He brought a Christmas album to school and knows every word of every song and the order that the songs appear on the record.

He has two seemingly wonderful parents (whom I have met)

that spend much time with him and are deeply concerned about him. They have many educational materials in their home and work with WB to increase and aid in his advancement.

WB recently is going through a rather difficult time for any child but especially for a mentally retarded one. His body is beginning to change into that of a man, but his mind remains that of a child.



~~Today~~ is Friday WB

CONNIE has new shoes

RICKY gave Mrs DONALDSON

SCOTT IS.

Mark and LADY are as usual  
a party

These people are absent

we had music today

Daily Paragraph -



U U U

I put up my umbrella

on a rainy day

my umbrella keeps me dry

When I work of play

UP umbrella umbrella

Uniron Uncle

WB

Phonics.



$$10 + 1 = 11 \quad 12 + 3 = 15$$

WB —

$$12 + 7 = 19 \quad 14 + 3 = 17$$

$$10 + 4 = 14 \quad 13 + 4 = 17$$

$$10 + 6 = 16 \quad 17 + 1 = 18$$

$$10 + 3 = 13 \quad 11 + 7 = 18$$

$$14 + 14 = 28 \quad 12 + 5 = 17$$

$$10 + 2 = 12 \quad 12 + 6 = 18$$

Arithmetic



Santa Claus



Name: NG Reading level: 1<sub>1</sub> primer  
Age: 8 years Math level: 6 years  
Mental Age: 6 years

NG is a sweet, well-mannered, friendly, medium-sized eight year old girl. I truly feel that the only cause of her retarded state is her environment. Her father (by what she says in class) apparently stays drunk the majority of the time. As if this were not enough, it also seems that her parents are partial to her younger brothers and leave her to look after them most of the time. She resents this responsibility and this may be a cause of her present emotional state.

In her first year of school she attended the all Negro elementary school and made S's (satisfactory) and several O's (outstanding) in all her work. Her second year she transferred, due to the wishes of her parents, to the White elementary school. Here she was the only Negro child in the class. Her grades were all N's (needs improvement) and U's (unsatisfactory). Now, she is in the special education class where her work is, on the average, good. She reads in a first grade, first semester primer and does 6 year old arithmetic. Somedays her work will be excellent, while on other days she will not even be able to add 0 and 2. She seems to slide back and forth between these two extremes. The cause of this is most likely her home life.



Today is Friday. NG

Connie has new shoes.

Ricky gave Mrs. Donaldson a surprise.

Mark and Lindy are going to a party.

Three people are absent.

We had music today.

Paragraph



NG

I put up my umbrella

on a rainy day.

My umbrella keeps me dry

when I work or play.

US UP UNION ION ONE

Usually

uncle



Unless

Comics



NG

$10 + 1 = \boxed{11}$

$\textcircled{1} 2 + 3 = \boxed{5}$

$12 + 7 = \boxed{19}$

$14 + 3 = \boxed{17}$

$10 + 5 = \boxed{74}$

$13 + 4 = \boxed{17}$

$10 + 6 = \boxed{16}$

$17 + 1 = \boxed{18}$

$10 + 3 = \boxed{13}$

$11 + 7 = \boxed{18}$

$14 + 4 = \boxed{18}$

$13 + 7 = \boxed{20}$

$16 + 2 = \boxed{12}$

$12 + 6 = \boxed{18}$

Arithmetic



NG

Santa Claus



NG

Name: WG Reading level: none  
 Age: 6 years Math level: none  
 Mental age: 3 years

WG is a thin, frail, blonde haired, blue eyed, six year old girl. WG is by far the most severe case of environmental retardedness that I have ever seen. Her mother is in her early twenties and her step-father is in his late sixties. Immediately after her birth, WG was given to an orphanage and remained there for the first four years of her life. In the orphanage she received practically no care and no supervision. Then the mother decided that she wanted WG back. Leaving the orphanage at the age of four, she was still wetting her pants just like a tiny baby. Now at home she has been deprived of any kind of educational materials and receives little if any love. She is hated by her step-father who resents her and refuses to accept her. (This is a fact told to the school officials by the mother.)

Here is just one example, taken from an unlimited number that I have seen, of how her uneducated mother behaves. On the coldest day of the year that we've experienced, she sent WG to school wearing a spaghetti strap sundress. The dress was on backward. And she had a brand new pair of shoes--two left ones!

WG cannot write, she cannot read, and needless to say can do no arithmetic. But she has learned within the time that I have been working with her to count to ten. She has a good memory and can name innumerable objects when pictures

of them are held before her.

I do feel that WG can learn but she needs much attention, love and careful supervision. At present, she is rather moody and shifts from one mood to another at the slightest thing.



WG

Santa Claus



WG

During my work with these children, I have felt that the teacher has not done as much as she should have. She has made no visits to the home. This should be considered a very essential part of this job due to the fact that the majority of the problems these children face begin in the home environment. Of course, it should be taken into consideration that this is her first experience with this type of job and that she has not yet fully determined how to handle this huge responsibility.

Most of these children are capable of learning and will do so when they receive the proper special attention and understanding that they have previously been denied in their home and in previous school years. I feel that they are in the best possible place at the time being due to the fact that this is the only opportunity they have other than the regular classroom. A more efficient and fruitful approach might be the employment of another teacher and the beginning of another special education class. This would give the teacher more time to devote to the individual child.

To me this is the most rewarding type of work one can do and I have enjoyed every moment of it.