A REVIEW AND EVALUATION
OF VARIOUS METHODS AND MATERIALS
TO PROVIDE SPECIAL EDUCATION
FOR THE EDUCABLE MENTALLY RETARDED

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INTRODUCTION

As in every other area of education, people in special education have various ideas on which method to use with the mentally retarded. Different schools of thought espouse different methods and/or methods and materials. Yet, one thought appears to be consistent—the educable mentally retarded do require a different type of education. These students cannot cope with the "regular" curriculum. Some students require more special help than others.

Programs have been designed for all levels of EMR's. Some are designed to help in all areas of the curriculum. Many concentrate on language and verbal skills. Others stress a perceptual-motor concept of learning. Yet, all have the same basic aim—to help the mentally retarded student to achieve to his fullest capacity. Some of these programs were not originally set up for mentally retarded individuals, but were easily adapted to serving their needs. Some of these programs were designed to help those who are learning disabled, or culturally disadvantaged, as well as the mentally retarded.

I have reviewed some of these programs and evaluated them. I have reviewed more of them than I shall report on in this paper. I have selected to evaluate those which I found most interesting. Some of these I had heard of before; I have seen some of them in use in special education programs. With others, I was completely
unfamiliar. The programs range from use with kindergarten and primary grades to use with high school level EMR's. Most would lend themselves to adaptations to all levels, if necessary.

My criteria for evaluation are as follows: (1) subject matter; (2) M.A. range (level); and (3) usefulness. I will also include a summary of each, and my personal feelings about the program. They are not presented in any special order.
PEABODY LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT KIT

AUTHORS: Lloyd M. Dunn and James O. Smith

PUBLISHER: American Guidance Services, Inc.

The Peabody Kit stresses overall language development. It can be used for the culturally disadvantaged as well as the educable mentally retarded. It is divided into 4 levels: Level P (3-5 years); Level 1 (4½ to 6½ years); Level 2 (6-8 years); and Level 3 (7½ to 9½ years). Adaptations can also be made for the trainable mentally retarded. The kit for each level contains a teacher's manual with 180 daily lessons and many suggestions for use of the kit. Materials include records, colorful stimulus cards, detailed posters, hand puppets, tape recordings, plastic fruit and plastic color chips. All lessons are programmed, sequenced, and designed for transfer to daily life. The kits stress receptive, associative, and expressive language development, yet requires almost no reading or writing skills, or traditional seat work!

I have seen the Peabody Kits used at all levels. Interest level is high, materials are unique and can also be adapted for use in other activities. Social skills are stressed as well as language skills. PKLD can be correlated very well with other language development programs. Cost of kit is well worthwhile.
It seems that this very versatile set of materials could be used with normal children as well as TMR's and EMR's from pre-school to about ten years of age. These materials seem to stress development of manipulative skills and visual perception with the following materials: lacing cards, Cuddly Kitty, Body Puzzle, People Puzzles, Animal Puzzles, Pegboards, Alphabet Cards, Stencils, Colored Cubes, and Picture Cards.

The different activities, as outlined, appear to be quite interesting and stimulating. It would not be necessary to purchase the DL materials, though. I have never seen the DLM used perse, but I have seen the same objectives achieved with use of dime-store supplies. It is not necessary to purchase expensive materials to have an effective program!
This course, which is correlated with HERO, is not designed for use with a particular grade level. The math and reading prerequisites have been kept to low levels. The materials are more or less a basic course in consumer areas, as well as consumer problems in health and law and how to handle money.

The course consists of 39 teaching units which are organized into 6 topic areas. Included are student record books, answer key cards for each unit, a classroom wall chart, an instructor's manual, 2 sound filmstrips, tape cassettes, and 18 tape units. The filmstrips and tape units are color-coded for pace -- yellow for normal, green for fast.

This program concentrates on individualized instruction; the units can be taken in any order. The topic areas covered are: Ways to Handle Money; Protecting Family in Health and Security; You and the Law; Food, Clothing, and Shelter; Ways to Shop; and Cars, Furniture, and Appliances.

This seems like a very good course. A teacher on a limited budget could probably not afford it, complete with filmstrips, tapes, etc. However, she could probably get the basic ideas for her own plan. I think it might be tough to individualize, though.
This course is designed to build reading and writing skills for primary readers and older children and adults who have not learned to read.

This approach is similar to the ITA in that it attempts to make English phonetic. It color codes each of the 42 different sounds of the English language. Writing, spelling, and other creative activities are worked on as well as reading skills.

Materials included are: Teacher's Guide, Phonic Code, Word Cards, and colored wall charts. In addition, each student has 3 books in phonic code, worksheets, word building books, and a book of stories. The entire program contains forty lessons, and is more or less individualized and flexible.
GOLDMAN-LYNCH SOUNDS AND SYMBOLS DEVELOPMENT KIT

AUTHORS: Ronald Goldman and Martha Lynch

The Goldman-Lynch Kit is similar to the ITA because both use a modified alphabet to teach the speech sounds. The materials are designed for use with normal children from 4½-8 years of age, but can be easily adapted for use in an EMR classroom. The kit is designed to help children develop phonic skills, correct articulation errors, and provide an introduction to experience in reading. The kit contains a teacher's manual as well as cassette tapes, records, puppets, flash cards, picture cards, story books, posters, magnetic symbols and easel, high hat stamp, word cards, workbooks, character cards, lesson file, high hat cane, pocket chart, and sentence strips.

All materials are brightly colored and stimulating, and also lend themselves to use in other classroom activities.
DEVELOPING UNDERSTANDING OF SELF AND OTHERS

AUTHOR: Don Kinkmeyer

This program was designed to help develop and understand social-emotional behavior in children in kindergarten and primary grades in both advantaged and disadvantaged areas. Designed for use with children with a mental age of 5-8 years, it can also be used with all types of students.

The materials are designed to help the child's self-concept and his attitude toward school and others. The materials that are included are group discussion cards, puppet props, puppets, puppet activity cards, posters, cassettes, story books, and role playing cards.

I was a teacher's aide this past summer in a classroom where the teacher used this program. The teacher utilized the different aspects of this program very effectively in all aspects of her curriculum. It worked very well, and the students especially enjoyed the group discussion cards, which were hung from the ceiling of the classroom.
HIGH-INTEREST, LOW-VOCABULARY MATERIALS

PUBLISHER: Field Enterprises

This is a series of books which are designed for use with students who have a very low reading vocabulary. The books are designed, however, to meet their interests. Books are accompanied by teacher's manuals, recordings, and (in some cases) filmstrips. Books are fully illustrated.

The seven series are: (1) Checkered Flag Series; (2) Deep Sea Adventure Series; (3) Jim Forest Series; (4) Morgan Bay Mystery Series; (5) Reading Motivated Series; (6) Time Machine Series; and (7) Wildlife Adventure Series. Each series contains between 2 and 9 titles; interest levels range from pre-primer to grade nine.

These books constitute a flexible program which can be easily correlated with other reading and language programs. Many of the topics lend themselves to further class discussions because of the subject matter.
In addition to the high-interest, low-vocabulary reading materials published by Field Enterprises, many other companies also publish such materials designed especially for the secondary student. Some are designed specifically for the mentally retarded student; others are designed for a variety of children—the culturally disadvantaged inner city children, minority groups, rural youths. All seem geared to helping these students enjoy reading in spite of their various handicaps. Most of the programs include non-textbookish books, with supplementary materials ranging from transparencies to filmstrips and other audio/visual aids.

Allyn and Bacon publishes the Breakthrough series. The New World Issues series is published by Harcourt, Brace, and World. These two series are geared towards the students who have difficulty learning to read, but who have sophisticated ideas and abilities.

Houghton Mifflin publishes the Action series and the Direction series, both of which are designed to reach various minority groups—including the inner city disadvantaged, blacks, Indians, and Orientals. The Living City Adventure series by Globe Book Company is directed towards the various ethnic groups which make up the inner cities.

There are also materials published which are designed to help the students understand himself, and to understand the world in which he lives. The Name of the Game series by NDE is one of the former. The Impact series by Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, and the Problems in America series by Washington Square Press are two examples of the latter. Topics for reading (and possible discussion) include Drugs, Racism, Freedom, and Justice, among others.
I'm sure there are also other high-interest, low-vocabulary materials available from other publishing companies. I would think that at least one such series would be a must in any secondary level EML classroom. There is a wide selection and the teacher would need to select the one which best suited the needs of her pupils.
PERCEPTUAL MOTOR PROGRAMS

Many perceptual motor programs have been developed. Many proponents believe that motor development is primary to and of more importance than perceptual development. Gross motor functions must be learned first to prevent distortions of perceptual motor learning. Motor is the most basic component of readiness development. Six developmental stages of learning are recognized and should occur in this hierarchy: (1) Gross-Motor; (2) Motor-Perceptual; (3) Perceptual-Motor; (4) Perceptual; (5) Perceptual-Conceptual; and (6) Conceptual. Each stage provides the foundation for the succeeding stages. If areas of gross-motor and perceptual motor learning are omitted, conceptual learning will be hindered.

Motor control is important for "accurate kinesthetic information." As his movement activities become more highly organized, the child is increasingly able to structure his perceptual input to make sense of it. Four educationally significant motor patterns are recognized: (1) Locomotion; (2) Balance and Maintenance of Posture; (3) Contact; and (4) Receipt and Propulsion. These motor patterns should provide "consistent and extensive interaction with the environment."2

During the Motor-Perceptual Stage, motor explorations are still controlling aspect, but the child's movements are becoming more efficient as he perceives more clearly the information he has obtained from his motor explorations.3

The ability to control his movements in terms of perceptual information is the primary feature of the Perceptual Motor stage.
Motor intervention is not necessary in the Perceptual stage, as the child manipulates one perception against another. Auditory discrimination, visual discrimination, auditory memory and sequencing, and visual memory and sequencing can be practiced and learned.

The Perceptual-Conceptual stage involves forming concepts from what the child perceives.

The child learns to group and to relate perceptual data into meaningful generalizations for future use in the Conceptual stage.⁴
This program is actually a test for motor impairment. Its development came from the "theoretical uncertainties surrounding the origin of behavior disturbance and learning disability."  

The areas of function which are tested are: (1) Control and balance of the body while immobile; (2) Control and coordination of the upper limbs; (3) Control and coordination of the body while in motion; (4) Manual dexterity with the emphasis on speed; and (5) Tasks which emphasize simultaneous movement and precision.  

This test is designed for children from below age 5 to age 13. Some of the exercises for testing include Heel-Toe Balance, Jumping Within Circles, and Track Rotating at the 13+ level. 

A variety of motor functions are tested from gross-motor movements to fine motor coordinations. 

This test has been standardized and seems quite valid and reliable. Once the test is administered and the results studied, the door is wide open to a variety of programs dealing with motor coordination and subsequent perceptual motor exercises. Kephart has designed a very good perceptual motor program, as have several others. The smart teacher can also improvise her own motor and perceptual motor programs to fit the needs of the students, as each student in the EMR classroom will have his own particular problems with motor and perceptual motor functions.
PERCEPTUAL MOTOR DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

AUTHORS: Firbanks and Robinson

This program is designed to help students with fine perceptual-motor problems. Most gross motor movements should already be acquired. It can be adapted for use with most children except possibly, TMR's or the more heavily orthopedically handicapped. They can be used effectively with those who have a central nervous system imbalance, emotional disturbance, or a general lag in development.

Materials include a teacher's guide with daily lesson plans and instructions for usage of the materials, stimulus forms, four 2" diameter crayons, with two pair of scissors and transparent covers.

Instructional objectives are clearly outlined, entry behaviors and terminal behaviors are clearly specified. Suggestions are also made on how to maintain the behaviors once they have been acquired and also after the program is completed. Skills which are necessary for academic functioning are those perceptual motor skills which are emphasized.

This program should be used on an individual basis with each student working directly with the teacher, not on his own. It would probably be very beneficial for EMR's with perceptual motor difficulties.
CONCLUSION

In the preceding pages I have presented facts and opinion on various programs and materials which have been offered for use with mentally retarded children. Some have not been specifically designed for this purpose, but nevertheless lend themselves to be adapted to this population.

I have learned a lot in my evaluations of these programs. I have come to see how segments of some programs lend themselves to use in different areas. I have also come to see the value of many of these materials. I have had a chance to come in contact with these materials, to see how they can be used, and to form an opinion on some of them. I have also come to see that some of these materials are not really necessary, if a teacher is on a small budget. With a bit of initiative and hard work, a teacher can come up with her own programs to teach what these programs are designed to teach.

I think that before a teacher selects any of these materials, she needs to evaluate her classroom needs; she needs to set up objectives she wishes to meet. She must then evaluate (or already be aware of) the various programs that are available and match a program to meet her needs. It is not always necessary to have an expensive kit to meet her purposes. Sometimes one kit can be purchased to cover several of the objectives.

I cannot pass a blanket judgment on the programs which I have reviewed. I am just glad that I had this chance to be exposed to them and become aware of how they can be used. I may someday decide
to use one or several in my classroom. Perhaps I may never use any of them. But at least I know about them!
FOOTNOTES

1 Ebersole, MaryLou, et. al. *Steps to Achievement for the Slow Learner*. Charles E. Merrill Publishing Company; Columbus, Ohio; 1968; p. 66.


BIBLIOGRAPHY

5. Ebersole, MaryLou; Kephart, Newell C.; and Ebersole, James B. Steps to Achievement for the Slow Learner. Charles E. Merrill Publishing Company; Columbus, Ohio; 1968.
17. Much of the information was gleaned from manuals accompanying the various materials, and from my "looking them over."