A New Effort To Teach Johnny How To Read

By JOHN B. BARRETTE

GARY, Ind. (UPI) — You remember Johnny. He couldn't read. He still can't. Johnny's now at a school here, acting as a guinea pig in an innovative educational program.

Johnny is a mythical child, but he symbolizes 800 pupils at Gary's all-black Banneker Elementary School.

Banneker has become what is called a contracted curriculum center. That means a private company has contracted to teach Johnny and his friends reading, writing and arithmetic. If it does not, the company will lose money.

Behavioral Research Laboratories, Palo Alto, Calif., runs the school. BRL is no different from any private firm; it detests losing money, and $800 a year per pupil is at stake.

Projects read, math and learn — developed by BRL researcher M. W. Sullivan — form the backbone of the program materials. Other firms' materials are also used.

The heart of the program is the concept of individualized instruction in an ungraded structure.

After three years, each child will be tested by an independent evaluator to determine if he is up to national norms in subject areas.

BRL will refund to the Gary School Corporation the $800 per year it might owe for each pupil still behind in the three R's.

* * *

The firm this fall pre-tested Banneker's pupils for placement. Each pupil was placed in a skill group rather than a grade.

Each works at his own level and speed, according to 3-3-year-old Donald Kendrick, manager of the school. The child advances to faster groups as he gains proficiency.

Kendrick said each pupil receives individualized instruction from certified personnel aided by para-professionals.

The certified teachers are called curriculum managers and the para-professionals are known as learning supervisors.

* * *

So far, Johnny is responding well.

Frances Butcher, curriculum manager, cited two of her pupils as examples.

Leslie Lloyd, 8, was a special education pupil under the graded system.

"He's doing a beautiful job," Miss Butcher said. She also mentioned Rodrick Hightower, 8, who was slated for special education under the old system.

"They're progressing now, although they are with younger children," Miss Butcher said.

"I think it's a beautiful program. A 3-year-old could learn the alphabet."

* * *

Mrs. Ray Scott, another curriculum manager and a teacher at Banneker for almost a decade, agreed the program works for children having difficulty.

One boy and one girl she teaches — both 8 years old — would have been lost in the third grade, she said.

They now read well at the first grade level and are improving daily, according to Mrs. Scott.

"The average child is moving by leaps and bounds as far as reading and math are concerned," she said.

Mrs. Scott transferred her son, Marlon, to Banneker this year.

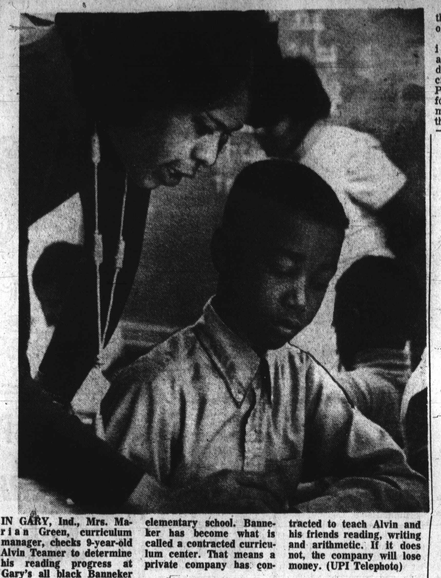
Marlon, a little above average according to his mother's assessment, "likes school now. He was somewhat indifferent before except for music, art and gym."

Now, she said, "math doesn't seem like drudgery to him any more."

* * *

Curriculum manager Mrs. Dorothy Ford said BRL is "providing us with something we've needed for a long time."

They have done something for the slower children; the (other) books are designed for the average child. This program has provided us with something we can use for the slower child."



IN GARY, Ind., Mrs. Marian Green, curriculum manager, checks 9-year-old Alvin Teamer to determine his reading progress at Gary's all black Banneker elementary school. Banneker has become what is called a contracted curriculum center. That means a private company has contracted to teach Alvin and his friends reading, writing and arithmetic. If it does not, the company will lose money. (UPI Telephoto)

Mrs. Ford, who formerly taught sixth grade, now has children in her skill group ranging from 7 to 12.

She sees benefits not only for the slower pupil, but also for the bright child who was often bored under the old program.

* * *

Despite all this praise, not everyone is overjoyed with the program at Banneker in this steel city.

Robert L. Thornberry, executive director of the Indiana Federation of Teachers, said if "threatens our public school system."

He charged the program threatens to break teacher-school board contracts, substitute corporate for public policy, introduce a strong element of vested interest in the use of corporate products in public schools, and ignores the "Hawthorne effect". — the theory that new programs produce good results at first which wane with exposure.

* * *

Charles O. Smith, president of the Gary Teachers' Union believes the program violates the contract signed by the school board.

"We just can't accept the position of the board that they may unilaterally change any portion of their agreement with us," Smith said.

He objected to alleged differentiation in pay for Banneker personnel and the number of teachers there.

Smith said the program engaged in "hidden merit pay." The para-professionals reduce the number of certified teachers at Banneker, he said.

A strike was threatened at one point, but the matter has since been put to arbitration.

* * *

Two former school board members also object. Don Belec said BRL's takeover "has caused turmoil" among teachers in other Gary schools.

Andy White said, "The Gary School Board is definitely in violation of (the) contract."

Ted Nering, a current board member, questioned whether the program meets state requirements. Will BRL "teach to pass or teach to learn?" he asked.

"There has been too much rote learning — I think this will only extend it."

More criticism came from the office of Richard Wells, lame duck Indiana Superintendent of Public Instruction. Wells said he doesn't like the Gary school administration's "attitude, which shows a lack of fiscal responsibility." He appointed a committee to investigate the program.

* * *

John Hand, a member of Wells' staff, said he has found nothing really new in the program but did have one good word:

"The skill groupings are done a little more accurately, a little less by rule of thumb and a little more by objective means."

School Manager Kendrick, a former systems analyst in the aerospace industry, shrugs off the criticism. He and Banneker Principal Clarence L. Benford, both black, are committed to achieving higher than average pupil responses on national norm tests.

* * *

"Le think we've seen progress," Kendrick said. He envisions an educational system which can teach Johnny to cope with his life, not just perform tasks and answer questions.

He mentioned drug abuse, crime, unwed mothers and other problems which show many young persons are incapable of handling life.

"First, they've got to have pride which stems from accomplishment — that only comes from learning basic skills and using them," he said.

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Athole is a small town in the craggy mountains near Perth, Scotland.

Brose is the Scottish word for brew.

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1 cup honey (preferably heather honey from Scotland)
1½ to 2 cups heavy sweet cream
2 cups Dewar's "White Label" Scotch Whisky

Heat honey, and when it thins slightly, stir in cream. Heat together, but do not boil. Remove from heat and slowly stir in whisky. Athole Brose may be served hot or chilled. Makes 4 to 6 servings. (If you would like even a little more touch of Scotland, soak 1 cup oatmeal in two cups water overnight. Strain and mix liquid with other ingredients.)

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AFRO TV-VIEWING

Saturday, December 19

WMAR-TV (2)
7:25: The Early News
7:30: Dastardly and Muttley
8:00: Bugs Bunny Road Runner Hour
8:05: Sabrina
8:30: Groovie Goolies
9:00: Hardy Boys
10:30: Harlem Globetrotters
11:00: The Archie Fun House, featuring the Giant Jackpot
12:00: Scooby Doo, Where Are You?
12:30: / The Woman's Day
1:00: Football — The Sun Bowl
4:00: This Week in Pro Football
5:00: To Rome With Love
5:30: Saturday's Top Movie: "Battle Hymn" Rock Hudson, Martha Hyer
8:30: My Three Sons
9:00: Arnie
9:30: Mary Tyler Moore
10:00: Mannix
11:00: Newswatch
11:30: Big Movie of the Week: "The Nude" Sylvia Catherine Koscina
1:20: Bonus Feature: "Hans Brinker" Richard Boone, Tommy Kirk
2:30: Late News
2:55: Lord's Prayer
3:00: Sign Off

WBAL-TV (11)
7:15: Sign-On and Devotions
7:30: Journey Home
8:00: Learning to Read
8:30: At Home in Maryland (c)
9:00: Garden Living (c)
9:30: Opportunity Line (c)
10:00: Dr. Dolittle (c)
10:30: The Pink Panther (c)
11:00: H. R. Pufnstuf (c)
11:30: Here Comes the Grump (c)
12:00: Hot Dog (c)
12:30: Jambo (c)
1:00: The Tomfoolery Show (c)
2:30: A Child is Waiting (c)
3:00: Woody Woodpecker (c)
3:30: "March of the Wooden Soldiers" (Laurel and Hardy)
4:00: Kerby Scott Show (c)
5:00: Pinbusters (c)
7:00: TV 11 News (c)
7:30: Adam-12 (c)
8:00: Saturday Night at the Movies: "The Tiger Makes Out" (Tom Ewell)
11:00: TV 11 News: Sports Wrap-Up
11:20: Movie Critic
11:30: Late News
11:45: Bible Reading
11:50: Sign Off

WJZ-TV (13)
5:30: Inspiration
6:00: Faith for Today (C)
6:30: Your Government (C)
7:00: The Active Ones (C)
7:30: Cartoon Festival (C)
8:30: Skippy (C)
9:00: Lancelot Link: Secret Champ Hour (ABC) C
10:00: Hee Haw (CBS) C
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WMAL-TV (4)
6:30: Sunrise Semester: "Urban Man, His Work and His Society"
8:00: Bugs Bunny Road Runner Hour
8:05: Sabrina
8:30: Groovie Goolies
9:00: Hardy Boys
10:30: Harlem Globetrotters
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WTTG (5)
7:15: Sign-On and Devotions
7:30: Journey Home
8:00: Learning to Read
8:30: At Home in Maryland (c)
9:00: Garden Living (c)
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10:30: The Pink Panther (c)
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10:00: Hee Haw (CBS) C
11:00: Hot Wheels (ABC) C
11:30: 4-H Science Series
12:00: The Hardy Boys (ABC) C
12:30: A Matter of Pride (C)
1:00: Westerner (ABC) C
4:30: The Silly Challenge
5:00: Wide World of Sports (ABC) C
6:30: Eyewitness News (C)
7:00: Twilight Zone (C). The Glenn Miller Story (1954) James Stewart, June Allyson
9:30: The Most Deadly Game (ABC) C
10:30: From A to Zenker (C)
11:00: Eyewitness News (C)
11:30: The Late Show: Man From Colorado (1948) Glenn Ford, Ellen Drew
1:30: Weekend News (ABC DB) C
2:00: The Late Late Show: Gorgo (1961) Bill Travers, William Sylvester
3:15: The Answer
3:45: Sign Off

WMET-TV (24)
4:00: Kids, Fran and Ollie No. 15 (C. R). Bill Tilly Bill Bob.
4:30: The World We Live In No. 2 (C. R)
5:00: Nader Report No. 6 (R)
5:30: Realities No. 9 (R). The Idea of North.
6:30: Homewood No. 11 (C) Of Beat Down Beats.
7:00: Folk Guitar Plus Ruff Duo: song stylings of Wells'Lewis. Gospel Doubleism Among other Children's Songs. Joe Morris, Janet Salner, David Wells'Lewis. Gospel Groups and Soloists; hosted by Ballard Brown and Jerry Wanek and Bill Bishop)
12:30-1:00 p.m.: Think Pink (C R). Think Pink
1:00-2:00 p.m.: Roller Derby. Bay Bombers vs. Detroit.
2:00-2:30 p.m.: Pauline Wells'Lewis. Gospel Groups and Soloists; hosted by Ballard Brown and Jerry Wanek and Bill Bishop)
2:30-3:30 p.m.: Pauline Wells. Mrs. Pauline Wells
3:30-4:30 p.m.: Buyer Beware. Consumer Protection series on Consumer Fraud
4:30-5:00 p.m.: Kids Klub. A half hour children's program with puppets, games, with puppets.
5:00-6:00 p.m.: Newsroom. Reviews and Interviews. John Steele hosts a half hour discussion and interviews about the Contract signed by the school board.
6:00-7:00 p.m.: Newsroom. Reviews and Interviews. John Steele hosts a half hour discussion and interviews about the Contract signed by the school board.
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