

North Carolina Association of School Librarians Conference Highlights

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The Biennial School Media Work Conference held its LOVE-IN (Learner-Oriented Vibrant Education-Individualized Network) November 9-11, 1972, at the Durham Hotel and Civic Center.

When our keynote speaker arrived at the hotel by 2:00 p.m. Thursday, we all breathed easier, recalling the last minute arrival of the former keynote speaker. Thursday afternoon was filled with the hurry and scurry of registering, moving in, setting up displays and renewing old acquaintances.

The First General Session was held at 8:00 p.m. on Thursday evening. Our keynote speaker, Mr. Thorwald Esbensen, introduced to us another dimension in the growth and development of Individualized Instruction — *Family Designed Learning*. Parents and children look over subject matter catalogs which contain individual performance contracts. Selections are made, and then parents and child have a conference with faculty members who made recommendations based upon what they know about the child's performance. Learning centers are guided by teachers with specialized competence in certain areas of study. Children in the upper level of elementary school plan each schedule of the day, a day in advance. Students play a

"bid-point game" by making a commitment as to a completion date for their contracts. Each contract has a certain value in bid points, which are accumulated as contracts are finished on time. These points can be used to "buy time" for such special activities as playing chess or attending a school movie. Parents receive weekly progress reports. Mrs. Esbensen's rationale is that in a democratic society, every family should have the right to mess up its own affairs. At the close of his presentation, Mr. Esbensen asked the audience to leave questions that they might have regarding this innovative idea for later discussion.

The Second General Session was held Friday morning at 9:30 a.m. Mr. Esbensen was introduced to present his follow-up address. It could not have been more relevant or practical. It consisted of answering questions left by the audience at the end of the First General Session, some of which were:

- Do children have tests?
- Do they fail?
- Do teachers instruct groups?
- How, more specifically, do you play the bid-point game?
- Suppose a child just does not complete his contracts?

Mr. Esbensen explained that punishment for "goldbricking" is assigning students to a regular school day.

Group coordinators for the afternoon group meetings were introduced. During the first group meeting for elementary educators, the Davie County Schools introduced a multi-media presentation by Alexander Central High School which showed ways in which they are making learning a unique experience. The presentation was produced by students with the advisory assistance of faculty. Following these presentations, the audience participated in small group discussions. These discussions focused on ways to develop and implement individualized instruction.

Feedback from these discussions was varied according to the experience of participants and included the following information:

- It might have made a more significant difference in our schools if more superintendents, principals and teachers had attended.
- A main concern was the "selling" of the concept of individualized instruction to significant people.
- Individualized instruction results in greater use of media center resources.
- The media specialist has a responsibility to be a part of curriculum-planning sessions.



"Big Bird" of Sesame Street fame made his pitch for new memberships in NCASL from his vantage point in the lobby of the Durham Hotel during the recent Biennial School Media Work Conference.

The bird, a creation of the art students at Neal Junior High School where Mrs. Paul M. Williams, membership chairman, is media specialist, helped obtain the more than three hundred new association members. (Photo by Hugh Hagaman, UNC-G)

- Many recognized a need for more staff members.
- Attitudes play a key role in change.
- Visiting others who have begun to individualize would help those interested in beginning.
- Inservice training and workshops are helpful.

Participants who were seriously interested in initiating a program of individualized instruction were given the opportunity to raise further questions with Mr. Esbensen from 2:30-4:00 p.m. The response was tremendous. He finally had to excuse himself from a room full of questioners in order to meet his return flight.

Time was set aside for conference participants to attend "Media in Action," brief visual presentations of outstanding media programs now in progress in Lenoir,

Moore, and Wilkes counties; to chat with Reta Richardson, Chief Consultant for Television Services; and to visit the 41 exhibits.

At 7:30 p.m. Friday evening, participants attended a banquet in the University Ballroom. The after dinner speaker, Suzanne Newton, author of *Purro and the Prattleberries*, had a refreshing manner of presenting what actually turned out to be good advice for all of us. This North Carolina author encouraged us to become "enablers" . . . stimulating those with whom we come in contact. Following the banquet, she autographed copies of her book as they were sold in the Wedgewood Room.

This conference was most successful. A total of 670 people registered. There were nearly 1000 in attendance. The banquet was enjoyed by 315 people. Plans are already in the making for the 1974 conference.

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