

Summary Report on Special Project

A STUDY OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROGRAM  
AT THE OWATONNA STATE SCHOOL  
AS DETERMINED BY THE COMMUNITY ADJUSTMENT OF PLACEMENTS

by

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and

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I. FINANCIAL SUPPORT

This project was supported in part by financial grants amounting to \$165.00, received from the Minnesota Department of Public Welfare (\$100.00) and the Minnesota Association for Retarded Children (\$65.00). Other expenses incurred in completing the study were paid by the writers who undertook this project as a special project to complete requirements for graduate studies.

II. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The purpose of the study was to ascertain the extent to which the program at the Owatonna State School for students aged 16-21 years had prepared them for community adjustment (1) by studying community placements made from June 1, 1960, to May 31, 1961; and (2) by obtaining reactions of County Welfare Board Directors in the fall of 1962 to present programming and their recommendations for improving the program at the school.

III. NEED FOR THE STUDY

This project was undertaken because of the writers' recognition of the value of follow-up information in the development and improvement of program content, and also a recognition of the importance of observations and suggestions by those persons responsible for supervising students on placement to those persons responsible for education and training.

The instructional program at Owatonna for students aged 16-21 years had been modified so that academic skills would be related to and integrated with those areas identified as persistent life situations and there was a definite need to evaluate this phase of the program. It was believed that a more effective evaluation of this program could be made by obtaining information associated with the personal, social, and occupational adjustment of students who had participated in the revised program and who had then been placed in the community. It was also thought, that reactions to present programming and suggestions for future programming from those persons supervising students on placement would be valuable in making modifications and adjustments that would result in a program that would more effectively meet the life adjustment needs of those students whom it served.

#### IV. STUDY PROCEDURES

Questionnaire forms were developed by the writers in order to (1) study personal, social, and occupational adjustments of a group of students placed from Owatonna in the community between June 1, 1960, and May 31, 1961, and (2) obtain reactions from Welfare Board Directors concerning present programming and recommendations for improving future programming at the Owatonna State School. These program survey questionnaires were distributed, along with information about the school and endorsements by the Department of Public Welfare, to all Minnesota County Welfare Offices. The placement follow-up questionnaires were distributed to those Welfare Offices that were supervising the placement of those students included in the study group. Cooperation by Welfare Offices was excellent. The overall percentage of return on study questionnaires was 90 per cent, including 100 per cent of the follow-up questionnaires and 80 per cent of the program survey questionnaires.

#### V. NATURE OF THE STUDY GROUP

The study group used for the placement follow-up consisted of 54 students, including 34 boys and 20 girls placed in the community from the Owatonna State School during the period June 1, 1960, through May 31, 1961. It was decided to use students placed during this specific period because these students had been in the community from one to two years at the time the survey was conducted. Members of the study group had also participated for approximately two years in instructional programming directed toward preparation for community living.

#### VI. FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

The study actually consisted of two phases, namely (1) a follow-up on adjustment of a group of Owatonna students placed in the community and (2) a survey of opinions, reactions, and recommendations related to instructional programming at the Owatonna State School. Since the study consisted of two parts, the findings will be summarized in two parts.

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##### A. Summary of Findings in Placement Follow-up Survey:

1. Only four former students (7 per cent) had been restored to capacity.
2. Forty-nine former students (91 per cent) were single at the time of the survey.
3. Thirty-nine former students (68 per cent) were not living with their parents.

4. Twenty-seven former students (43 per cent) came from families considered by the County to be financially independent.
5. Only four former students (7 per cent) had been admitted to another institution after community placement.
6. Thirty-seven former students (69 per cent) were employed at the time of the study. Thirty-three of these were working full time and thirty-two held jobs considered to be permanent employment.
7. The area of largest employment was farm labor, in which thirteen former students were employed.
8. The total monetary value of all types of compensation for work ranged from \$17.00 to \$75.00 per week, with a mean value of \$39.40.
9. Thirty-one former students (57 per cent) had terminated at least one job since placement. Only seven had been fired from a job.
10. No member of the study group had been convicted of an offense other than minor traffic violations.
11. Twenty-seven former students (50 per cent) were, in the opinion of the caseworker, in need of continuous supervision by the agency.
12. The group was about evenly divided between those who generally spent their leisure time alone and those who generally spent their leisure time in group activities. When alone, the majority of the group spent their leisure time watching television. Activities and social functions associated with a church were the most predominant forms of group participation by the former students.
13. Thirty-eight former students (70 per cent) were considered to get along well with others generally.
14. Twenty-five former students (46 per cent) were considered to have realistic attitudes concerning their own strengths and weaknesses.
15. Seventeen former students (32 per cent) did not appear to use good judgment. The area most frequently reported was poor judgment in budgeting and spending money.
16. Twenty-nine former students (54 per cent) were reported to consider themselves as contributing members of the community.
17. Thirty-two former students (60 per cent) appeared to accept present supervision well.
18. The frequency of caseworker contact with the placement ranged from bi-weekly in one case to annually in fifteen cases.

19. The most frequent problem related to successful community adjustment was poor judgment regarding budgeting and management of money.
20. "Success on the job" and "the ability to make friends and get along with others" were most frequently reported as the former student's strongest asset in relation to community adjustment.
21. The age and IQ of the former student did not appear to be significant factors in differentiating between the group considered "likely to succeed" and the groups considered "questionable" or "unlikely to succeed."
22. Sex of the former student, social-economic status of the family, and the present employment status of the placement appeared to be factors in differentiating between the groups. Eighty per cent of the males and sixty per cent of the females were considered as "likely to succeed." Thirty-one per cent of the former students from the group "likely to succeed" and sixty per cent from the "questionable" or "unlikely to succeed" groups came from families considered to be marginal, or who were receiving financial aid from the county. Thirteen per cent of the group considered "likely to succeed" and sixty-seven per cent of the "questionable" or "unlikely to succeed" were unemployed at the time of the survey.

B. Summary of Findings in Program Survey:

1. Directors of county welfare boards considered the instructional area of social living to be the most important area in preparing students for successful community adjustment.
2. The development of good social relationships and the ability to get along with others was considered to contribute most directly to the student's ability to make a successful personal and social adjustment.
3. Job information and on-the-job training was considered to contribute most directly to the student's occupational adjustment.
4. Thirty-nine of the seventy responding directors felt that the focus of the job training program should include development of both general work habits and attitudes and specific job skills.
5. Domestic work and farm labor were reported to be the job areas offering the greatest employment opportunity for the educable mentally retarded in the counties surveyed.
6. Twenty-four directors reported that students placed from the Owatonna State School generally made a "good" adjustment, twenty reported that students generally made a "fair" adjustment, and six felt the students generally made a "poor" adjustment.

7. Thirty-seven respondents felt that the program at the Owatonna State School was realizing its primary objective, "For students to learn personal, social, and occupational skills essential to a successful community adjustment."
8. Twenty-seven directors felt it would be necessary for the Owatonna State School to adapt its program to serve the needs of a population different from that being served at the time of the survey. Twenty one directors felt modification would not be necessary.
9. Forty-five directors indicated that they had personally visited the Owatonna State School.
10. Forty-six respondents reported that some member of the agency staff had visited the Owatonna State School.
11. In forty counties special classes for the educable mentally retarded were reported to be in operation in some, but mainly the larger communities. In seven counties it was reported that no special classes were in operation.
12. In forty-seven counties classes for the educable mentally retarded were reported to provide for education at the elementary level. In nine counties education at both the elementary and secondary levels was reported.
13. Forty-nine respondents favored providing special education for the educable mentally retarded at the secondary school level.
14. Vocational school subjects were most frequently suggested for secondary special class programming.

#### VII. CONCLUSIONS OF THE STUDY

Data obtained in this study indicated that many students on community placement from the Owatonna State School have made a satisfactory community adjustment. It also revealed areas in which students were having problems. The following suggestions for programming at the Owatonna State School are based on data that appeared pertinent to this area;

- A. Results of this study suggest that all students should be provided experiences in independent living before community placement. These experiences would include getting to scheduled activities, providing their own leisure time activities, and seeking help when needed.
- B. It appears that the program should provide for full time work experiences for these students. They should choose their own job areas and be treated as they would be if employed by a community firm. This would include being removed from the job if their job skills or personal habits did not meet requirements in a satisfactory manner.

C. The expansion and mechanization of the farming operation as a specific training area should be considered. Consideration should be given to the possibility of expanding the existing programs in food service training and domestic work.

D. The possibility that students would be permitted to receive wages for work and be allowed to keep this money should be given consideration. They should be expected to use this money to buy some of their clothes and personal items.

E. The findings suggest that more emphasis should be placed on the role of the caseworker and the student's relationship with him.

F. Results of this study indicated that students should be encouraged and taught to participate in group activities and to develop hobbies. They should learn to depend less on watching television as a leisure time activity.

G. Consideration should be given to providing opportunities throughout the program for students to work in groups to solve problems and learn to work and get along with others.

H. It appears that students should be taught what their specific strengths and weaknesses are. They should know how to make the best use of these strengths and how to compensate for these weaknesses.

I. Data obtained in the study indicated that training in the area of money and budgeting should provide for the development of skills by emphasizing practical experiences in using money.

J. The increased use of the facilities and staff at the Owatonna State School for the purpose of providing training for more students at the secondary level should be considered.

K. It appears that more emphasis should be placed on vocational training at the secondary level.

#### VIII. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

The following recommendations for additional research are suggested by questions which remain unanswered by this study:

A. A study should be made to determine if the amount of supervision being given by caseworkers is based upon consideration of the need of the student or if some students are receiving more or less supervision than needed.

B. A similar study should be made to determine if the students who were employed at the time of this study are employed at a future date or if their employment was a result of the timing of this study.

- C. A study should be undertaken to determine if students who showed a lack of participation in group activities did so as a result of their wishes or if the reason was non-acceptance by the group.
- D. A study should be made to determine the criteria used by case-workers in predicting future success of students in the study.
- E. A follow-up study of the same groups should be made at some later date to determine whether there are any changes in the adjustment status of the population included in this study.
- F. A study should be undertaken to determine those characteristics of personality and behavior which were used by the professional workers in evaluating the adjustment of the mental retardate on community placement.
- G. A study should be made to determine the effect of experiences in independent living within the residential facility on adjustment in community placement.
- H. A study should be undertaken to determine ways in which better communication might be effected between those responsible for providing treatment and training for the mentally retarded within the residential facility and those responsible for placement and supervision on placement .

January 21, 1964