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ABSTRACT

AN EVALUATION OF THE READING LABORATORY CLINIC AT THE SULZBERGER JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL, PHILADELPHIA, IS REPORTED. ON THE BASIS OF A GROUP INFORMAL READING INVENTORY (IRI) 120 FROM A TOTAL OF 467 GRADE-7 STUDENTS WERE ASSIGNED TO THE CLINIC. PUPILS WHO SCORED BELOW THIRD-GRADE SECOND-SEMESTER BOOK LEVEL WERE CONSIDERED ELIGIBLE FOR THE CLINIC PROGRAM. THE IRI WAS BASED ON THE SCOTT, FORESMAN SERIES. AN ECLECTIC APPROACH, UTILIZING ALL TYPES OF READING MATERIALS, WAS USED TO PROVIDE INTENSIVE INDIVIDUALIZED READING INSTRUCTION. STUDENTS ASSIGNED TO THE CLINIC AND NONASSIGNED STUDENTS WERE COMPARED AS TO THE AMOUNT OF GAIN SHOWN BY A GROUP IRI AND THE IOWA TEST OF BASIC SKILLS. EACH STUDENT'S PREVIOUS YEAR'S SCORE ON THE IOWA TEST WAS USED AS A COVARIANT. THE CLINIC GROUP DID NOT SHOW SIGNIFICANTLY GREATER GAINS THAN THE CONTROL GROUP ON THE IOWA TEST OF BASIC SKILLS. THE EXPERIMENTAL GROUP SHOWED SIGNIFICANT GROWTH IN BOOK READING LEVELS ON THE GROUP IRI FROM THE BEGINNING TO THE END OF THE PROGRAM. RECOMMENDATIONS, CHARTS, AND TABLES ARE INCLUDED. (WB)

THE SCHOOL DISTRICT OF PHILADELPHIA

AN EVALUATION OF THE
SULZBERGER READING LABORATORY CLINIC
1968 - 1969

OFFICE OF RESEARCH
AND EVALUATION



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AN EVALUATION OF THE
SULZBERGER READING LABORATORY CLINIC
1968 - 1969

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SUMMARY

During the 1968-69 school year, the Sulzberger Junior High School conducted a Reading Laboratory Clinic for its entering 7th grade class in an effort to remediate reading problems which might interfere with success in school.

Objective

To improve achievement in reading.

Procedures

One hundred and twenty seventh grade students out of a total of 467 were selected for the program on the basis of a Group Informal Reading Inventory. Children were rostered to the laboratory in groups of ten and assigned to a reading teacher. An eclectic approach was used, and instruction was geared to the needs of each child. The experimental and control groups were compared as to amount of gain as measured by a group IRI and the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills.

Results

- .The experimental group did not show significantly greater gains than the control group on the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills.
- .The experimental group showed significant growth in book reading levels on the group IRI from the beginning to the end of the program.

Recommendations

1. An effort should be made to extend the influence of the Reading Specialists to as many pupils as possible.
2. When this program is repeated, care should be taken to assure proper controls so that the effectiveness of the program can be accurately determined.

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THE PROBLEM

The Sulzberger Junior High School had an entering seventh grade student population of 467 youngsters in 1968-1969, coming from schools in Districts One and Two. The reading specialists found that more than twenty percent of these children were at reading levels between primer level and book two.

Table 1

Sulzberger Jr. High Compared with the District,
City and National Scores on the Iowa Tests of
Basic Skills - (Spring 1968)

7th Grade

	<u>Sulzberger</u>		<u>District</u>		<u>City</u>		<u>National</u>	
	<u>G.E.</u>	<u>%ile</u>	<u>G.E.</u>	<u>%ile</u>	<u>G.E.</u>	<u>%ile</u>	<u>G.E.</u>	<u>%ile</u>
Reading	5.2	10	5.8	18	6.3	25	7.8	50

8th Grade

	<u>Sulzberger</u>		<u>District</u>		<u>City</u>		<u>National</u>	
	<u>G.E.</u>	<u>%ile</u>	<u>G.E.</u>	<u>%ile</u>	<u>G.E.</u>	<u>%ile</u>	<u>G.E.</u>	<u>%ile</u>
Reading	5.9	11	6.5	17	7.2	26	8.8	51

Table 1 illustrates that Sulzberger children scored lower than the national and city norms in reading on the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills.

The principal and staff, recognizing this reading problem, established a Reading Laboratory Clinic for their entering 7th grade class. The primary aim was to provide intensive individualized reading instruction for 7th grade students requiring this help.

The reading specialists used an eclectic approach, utilizing all types of reading materials in order to fit the needs of the individual child.

This report evaluates the results of this Reading Laboratory Clinic at the end of its first year of operation.

OBJECTIVE

As a result of receiving special remedial assistance at the Reading Laboratory Clinic at Sulzberger Junior High School, students will make significantly ($p < .05$) greater gains on the Reading, Vocabulary, Total Language, and Work Study subtest scores of the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills than comparable students not receiving such help.

PROCEDURES

1. Selection of Pupils

In October, the reading specialists administered the Group Informal Reading Inventory (IRI) to 467 seventh grade pupils (237 boys, 230 girls) out of a total population of 524 pupils in fifteen classes. Pupils who scored below a 3² book level were considered eligible for the Reading Laboratory Clinic. (See Table 2)

Table 2

Scores of Incoming Seventh Graders in the
Group Informal Reading Inventory (October 1968)

	<u>Book Levels*</u>	<u>Boys</u>	<u>Girls</u>	<u>Total</u>
	Primary	22	8	30
	First Level	32	9	41
	2 ¹	25	22	47
Eligible	2 ²	20	20	40
	3 ¹	28	26	54
	3 ²	<u>26</u>	<u>29</u>	<u>55</u>
<u>Total Eligible</u>		153	114	267
	4	46	42	88
Ineligible	5	20	57	77
	6	16	14	30
	6+	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>5</u>
<u>Total Ineligible</u>		<u>84</u>	<u>116</u>	<u>200</u>
<u>Total Tested</u>		237	230	467

*The IRI used by the reading specialists in this study was based on the Scott Foresman Series.

As noted in Table 2, there were a total of 267 potential candidates. Of these, the reading specialists selected 140 pupils for the Reading Laboratory Clinic. These pupils were rostered to the laboratory in groups of ten and assigned to a reading teacher. The children were classified as either non-readers, (i.e., those reading from pre-primer level to book two, and unable to write a legible or meaningful sentence), or readers, (i.e., those who read at book level two and above).

2. Instructional Procedures

In order to meet the remedial needs of the students, the reading teachers geared the instruction so that each student could progress at his own speed. The reading specialists who worked with the non-readers stressed word attack skills and vocabulary building. The more advanced group stressed skills needed by the students in order to read for inferences, comparisons, and analogy. Students were given extensive practice in dictionary skills. Emphasis was also placed on vocabulary building and word attack skills. Children were taught to recognize a topic sentence and to become proficient in using text books and related library materials.

It should be noted that a greater number of boys read at lower levels than girls. (Figure 3)

3. Evaluation Procedures

The achievement scores of the experimental group were compared to the achievement scores of the remaining students in the seventh grade on the subtests of the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills in May, 1969. For each student, his previous year's score on the same test was used as a pre-measure or covariant, i.e., to compare each student with himself in order to get a measure of progress. If both of these scores were not available for a particular youngster, his record was not considered.

RESULTS

A. Iowa Tests of Basic Skills

As noted in Figure 1, there was a significant difference between the two groups before the program began and this significant difference maintained itself after the program was in progress for a full year.

Figure 1

Comparison of the Experimental (N=80) and Control (N=298) Groups
on the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills (May 1968 and May 1969)

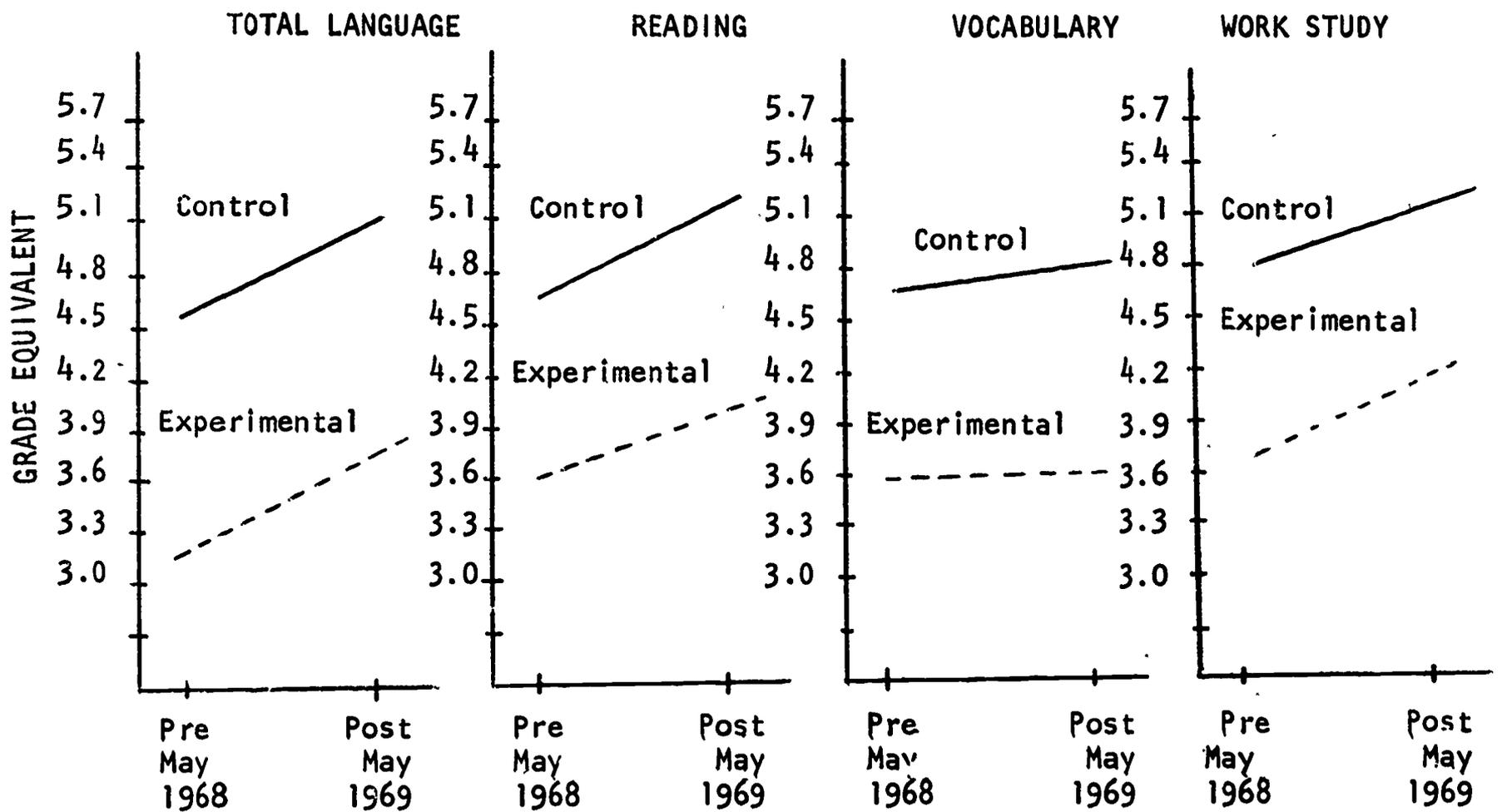


Figure 1 illustrates that though there were advances by both groups after a year, there was no difference between the experimental group and the control group in the amount of gain.

B. Group Informal Reading Inventory

The scores of only those students who had been tested both in the fall 1968 and in the spring 1969 on the Group IRI were included in this analysis. This was done in order to determine the amount of growth for the group as a whole.

Table 3 and Figure 2 illustrate that the students receiving tutoring at the Laboratory Clinic made a vast improvement from October 1968 to May 1969 on the Group IRI. We note that a significant number of students previously reading at the primer, first, and second book levels have improved so that they now read at the book three, four, five, or six levels.

Whereas in October 1968, only 9% of the participating students were at the 3rd grade book level or above, in May 1969, 55% were at the 3rd grade level or above. The median for all the students was at the 2¹ book level in October 1968. In May 1969, the median level was at the 3¹ book level, or one year growth based on book levels.

Table 3

Performance of Experimental Group on Group IRI

<u>Book Level*</u>	<u>Percentage at Level</u>	
	October 1968	May 1969
Primer	22%	2%
1st	24	10
2 ¹	31	14
2 ²	<u>14</u>	<u>19</u>
Subtotal	91%	45%

3 ¹	6	11
3 ²	1	7
4	2	17
5	0	13
6	<u>0</u>	<u>7</u>
Subtotal	9%	55%
Grand Total	100%	100%

*Based on Scott-Foresman Series.

Figure 2

Group IRI Scores of Seventh Graders Before and After the Reading Laboratory Clinic Experience

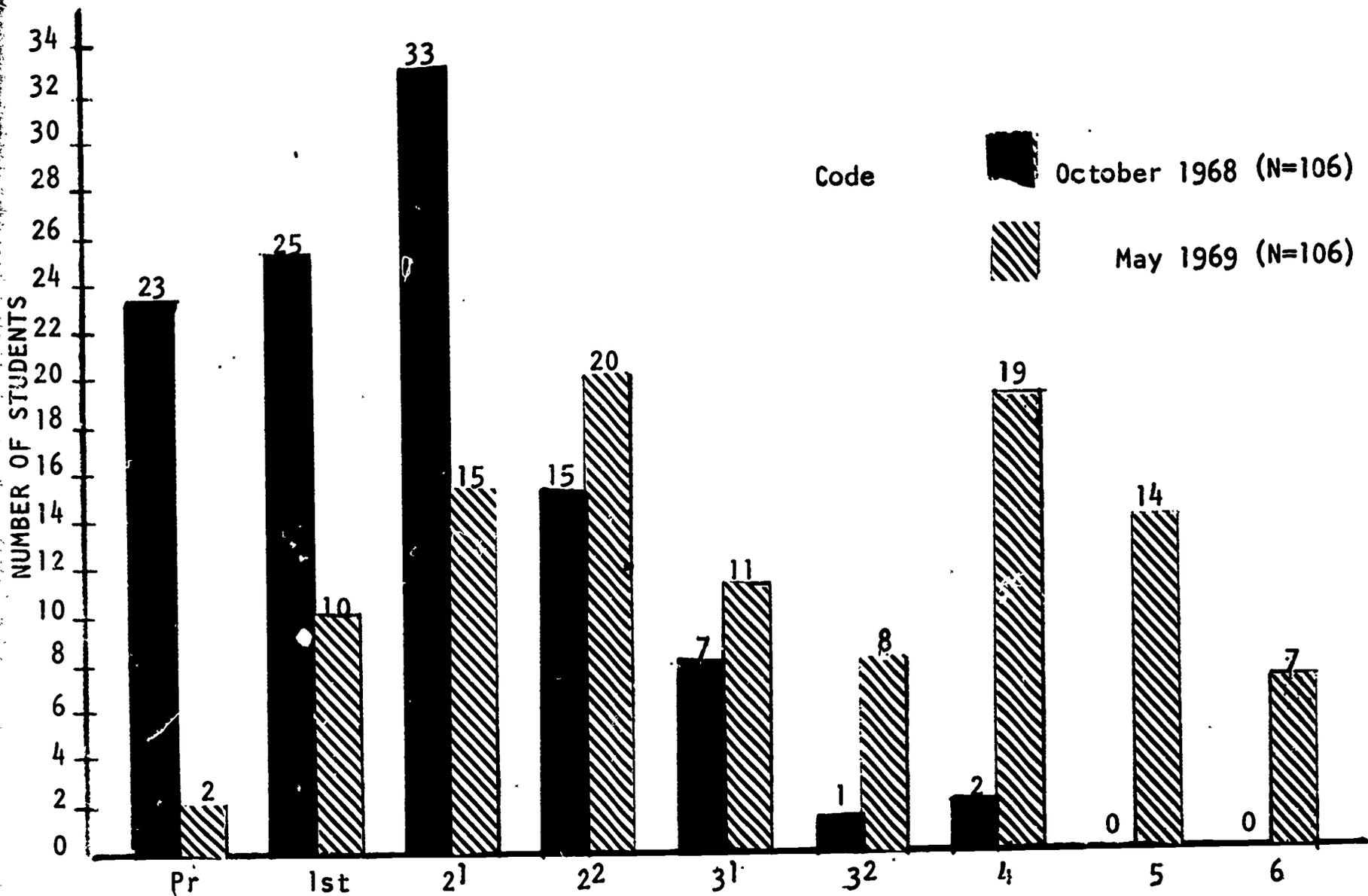
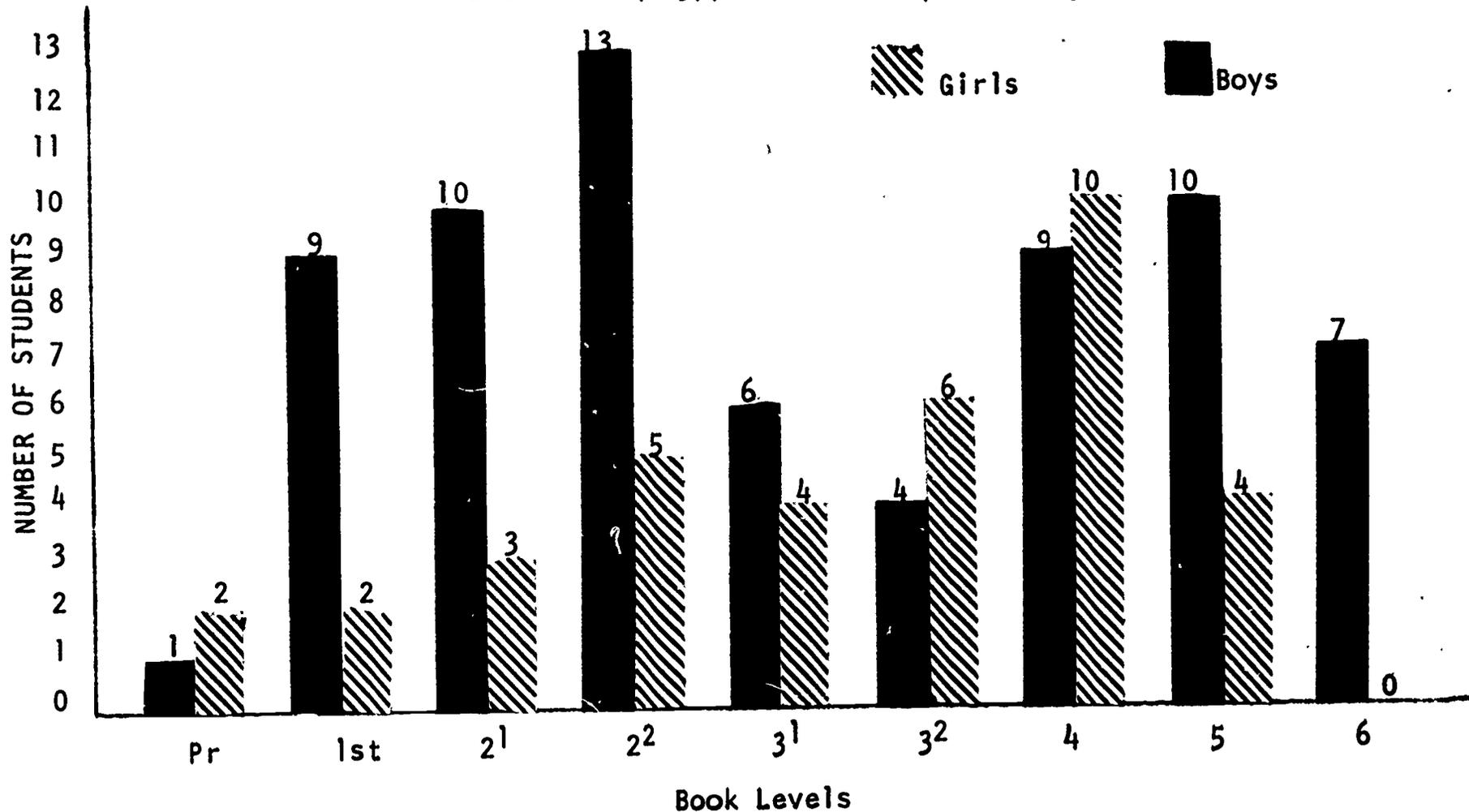


Figure 3

A Comparison of the Performances of Boys (N=69) and Girls (N=37) on the Group IRI (May 1969)



The reader should note that several raters administered the Group IRI, and no effort was made to determine inter-rater reliability. The possibility has not been ruled out, therefore, that differences found were differences in raters rather than differences in children. Furthermore, there is no comparable IRI data available for those children who did not attend the Reading Laboratory Clinic. Any improvement in the IRI scores might be due to other causes, such as maturation or community and peer stress on reading (which might affect both groups equally) rather than the Reading Clinic.

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

The results of the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills indicate that the Reading Clinic had no demonstrable effect on the experimental group. The results of the Group IRI for only the experimental group show that many children moved to a higher book level. However, the lack of proper controls and a correct research design prevent us from resolving this conflict. In addition, we are unable to generalize beyond the population studied.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Since there was some progress as measured by the I.R.I., it may be worthwhile repeating this study with adequate controls so that the effectiveness of this approach can be accurately tested.
2. The data collected for this study brings to light the magnitude of the problem that the administration and faculty of Sulzberger Junior High School are facing. When a large number of pupils are below grade level in reading, this is bound to affect performance in other subjects. Indeed, it was awareness of this problem that prompted them to initiate this program.

Even had this project been optimally successful, however, it would have touched only a limited proportion of the student body. It would take a number of years before its effect could be felt throughout the school. Unless many more reading specialists can be made available, a way must be found to enable the expertise of the existing reading specialists to benefit as many pupils as possible.

One approach to this problem, found successful elsewhere, is the temporary modification of the role and function of the reading specialist.

The reading specialists might direct all of their efforts toward working with the staff in a training capacity. By going into classrooms, demonstrating lessons, and conferring with teachers, reading specialists would be able to upgrade faculty skills in the area of developmental reading. Their influence, then, would extend beyond their own teaching

efforts. After the initial impact is made, reading specialists would be able to return to clinical activities.

It might also be possible for the reading specialists to continue to run the Laboratory Clinic for the severe reading problems while conducting in-service training activities. This, however, can be determined when the project is planned.