A prescriptive teaching program developed by the teachers of Madison Elementary School, Fargo, North Dakota, is described in the brochure. The students are from low income families; the majority of the teachers have received their training at the New School of Behavioral Studies, University of North Dakota. In determining what is best for each child the staff has four goals: 1) to develop a positive self-concept; 2) to develop enthusiasm for learning; 3) to develop a self-reliant, self-motivated, independent pupil; and 4) to develop personal responsibility. Teachers assess each student's learning skills and learning styles, and then use this evaluation to design a program for the child. The curriculum consists of teacher developed learning packages. The teacher chooses the package which best fits the student's needs. This basic instruction is supplemented by activity-oriented learning centers: the students choose activities and keep their own record of the work they do in the centers. The student's work is evaluated and new directions in his program are decided upon in a weekly conference between each student and his teacher. Because of the importance of the teacher role in the Madison program, continual teacher training is provided. With the new learning climate, attendance has improved, and many more Madison students are going on to complete junior high and high school. (Author/RM)
Caring Is Basic
at James Madison School

There's nothing overly formal here. At James Madison Elementary School, there's a sense of community, and the students are involved in the creative process. The school's art projects are showcased in the lobby, and the playground is the place to be for some quiet study.

These are just a few of the many activities open to students of all ages. At James Madison, all activities are an important part of the program, there is an emphasis on creativity. In fact, many teachers believe that which will not only help students learn, but will also lead them to success in school. The children who attend James Madison are from low-income families, many of whom have never attended an elementary school before. The school has only been open for a few years, and it has become a model for urban schools.

The majority of the students in James Madison School are white and middle-class. However, the school has successfully recruited students of all races and backgrounds. The school has a variety of programs, from arts and music to math and science, and there are opportunities for students to participate in extracurricular activities.

The Madison approach to student learning centers on the question of how the learning process is affected by differences in the environments. In determining what is best for each child, the Madison staff considers four goals:

1. Foster a positive self-concept.
2. Develop interpersonal relationships.
3. Develop personal responsibility, particularly relating to the functioning of the group. And for the specific relationships.
4. To accomplish these goals, Madison places a heavy reliance on traditional classroom instruction, supplemented by individualized instruction for students who require it.

DIAGNOSIS

The Madison staff believes that the purpose of any education is to help each child learn better. Therefore, the diagnostic process at Madison focuses on what is known about the child, including learning skills and their learning style.

The assessment of learning skills includes divided into four categories:

1. Attention Skills: The child can sustain attention. The child can maintain attention for short periods.
2. Visual-Spatial Skills: The child can maintain visual-spatial tasks, such as copying a figure, reproducing a drawing, or drawing on a grid.
3. Auditory-Perceptual Skills: The child can maintain auditory-perceptual tasks, such as repeating a sequence of sounds or remembering a list of words.
4. Intellectual Skills: The child can maintain intellectual tasks, such as solving a math problem or completing a word puzzle.

In summary, the Madison staff believes that each child is unique and that the goal of education is to help each child learn better. The diagnosis process at Madison focuses on what is known about the child, including learning skills and their learning style. The assessment of learning skills includes divided into four categories: attention skills, visual-spatial skills, auditory-perceptual skills, and intellectual skills.
6. Automatic Skills

Does the child have difficulty following oral instructions? Is his word order jumbled? Does he get directions confused, have poor rote memory, have poor rhythm and flow in speech?

From this assessment a teacher learns if a child has basic physiological or psychological impairments that will have to be considered in developing that child's program.

To assess a child's learning style, the Madison School personnel use a diagnostic teaching outline developed by Dr. Marshall Rosenberg in his book, *Diagnostic Teaching*. In this outline, Dr. Rosenberg describes four learning styles and characteristics of students exhibiting each style.

1. Rigid-Inhibited Style
   - Generally unresponsive, becomes confused easily, needs constant help; is upset by changes in routine; rigidly adheres to rules

2. Undisciplined Style
   - Negativistic, defiant, antisocial, disrespectful, destructive; has poor tolerance, breaks rules

3. Acceptance-Anxious Style
   - Tries too hard, shows off; is overly sensitive, a worrier, fearful of failure; excessively competitive

4. Creative Style
   - Thinks creatively, is persistent in problem solving, shows initiative; flexible, respectful, open to new ideas, applies knowledge

Along with Dr. Rosenberg's outline teachers also assess 14 other personality and behavior factors which have a bearing on how the child learns. (See the Diagnostic Teaching Summary Sheet in the box below.)

**PRESCRIPTION**

Once a diagnosis of the child's learning style is made, the teacher uses this evaluation to help the student improve his learning. The teacher does most of the prescribing for each child, but the school does have a full-time diagnostician who helps teachers plan programs or find materials for selected students.

Although the teacher designs a program for each child, this does not mean that each child has a completely separate program. If groups of children have like needs they can share programs. If a child's needs are unique, then he becomes a group of one.

A child's program includes two types of goals. First there are general goals which will help the child become a better learner. For example, if Johnny is diagnosed as an undisciplined learner, his teacher might decide that to help him develop the internal controls he lacks he needs to have immediate feedback on the social consequences of his behavior. So if Johnny does not finish an assignment, he might be required to stay after school that day to complete his work. If he disturbs other students, he may be socially isolated immediately. In all cases the teacher tries to provide logical and immediate consequences for Johnny's behavior.

Johnny's program also includes specific behavioral objectives. If Johnny cannot subtract, the teacher provides materials which deal with this skill. If Johnny is a more adept auditory than visual learner, she may provide him with tapes for the recorder so that he can listen as he reads certain materials. Whatever Johnny's needs are diagnosed to be, the teacher tries to provide specific remediation.

Students are diagnosed at the beginning of each year by their teacher, who uses the Diagnostic Teaching Summary. However, diagnosis is also a continual process at Madison. A student is not put into one category forever. As a teacher observes changes in a child's behavior, she reassesses that child's needs and makes necessary program adjustments.

**CURRICULUM**

One objection to a large-classroom, activity-oriented school is that it is difficult, if not impossible, to evaluate what the students are learning. Madison Elementary avoids this problem by following a specifically planned curriculum. In fact they follow the same curricular pattern as the other elementary schools in Fargo, using the same books and learning packages.

The learning packages used in the Fargo school system were developed by a group of 140 teachers working in a specially funded summer institute. The packages are groups of behavioral objectives that were written by the teachers for each subject area. They based the objectives on the textbook materials being used and drew up pre- and post-tests as part of each package. The learning packages cover each level of the elementary curriculum.

Although the learning packages are used as the basis for the curriculum, the way in which the packages are used at Madison is different from their use in more traditional schools. Rather than use a single-level package with the entire class, a Madison teacher chooses the package which best suits each student in her class. In any one class, students might be using as many as 20 different packages at one time.

Teachers at Madison work diligently to individualize the curriculum. Even in highly teacher-taught subjects like phonetics and mathematics, teachers fit the material to the child, not the child to the material. Language arts and math are the primary areas of individualization; social studies and science are started from a class position but are individualized later by involving students in special projects.
Madison is not unstructured. The curriculum learning goals provide a framework; within this framework students can make choices about the tasks they do. Dr. Dodge believes that within this structure of "choice within limits" students are meeting academic goals while enjoying learning and building self-esteem.

CLASSROOM LEARNING CENTERS

Madison classrooms do not look like traditional school rooms. In most cases desks are gone and the room is divided into areas by panels of vividly painted, heavy tri-wall cardboard. The areas are called learning centers, and they are designed to accommodate a limited number of students at one time. Most centers contain a table and one or two chairs, but children also sit on the floor to do their work.

The learning centers are not used for basic instruction; such instruction is given either to the whole class or in small groups. Learning centers are used for motivation, broadening of practical interest, enrichment, and a tie between home and school. There are learning centers for math, social studies, creative writing, reading, art, and science, as well as puzzle centers, sport centers, listening centers, and special project centers.

Each learning center contains many activities in which students can engage. The pupils keep their own record of the work they do in the centers, on booklets or sheets that are provided. If written work is done, it is placed in a cubby hole within the center so that the teacher can peruse the work later. The answers to problems and puzzles are frequently supplied to the students, since the purpose of the centers is not to test but to motivate.

To prevent students from congregating in one or two centers, teachers generally use a sign-up sheet which indicates the maximum number of students allowed in a center at one time. Students sign up on a first-come-first-served rotating basis. Generally not more than three or four students are allowed in a center at one time.

If a visitor were to enter a fifth grade class in Madison Elementary, he might see a scene something like this. In the Creative Writing Center, named "Write On," there is a Magic Pencil suspended from the ceiling, with ideas for creative writing enclosed. A bulletin board covered with unfinished sentences taken from advertisements suggests stories for student writers. A bulletin board containing titles for stories; another board has unfinished Haiku poems to complete; a third board is a "think box" for cartoon ideas.

The Math and Social Studies Center contains a mini-shopping center, Best Acres, built and run by students. With the help of the pupils, students shop, bake cakes, and bank. Every Monday, they also run a cleaning service and a booth in which students can buy stock in the center. Before the shopping center was constructed, the students went to a local bank, borrowed money for the initial investment, and signed a note with their teacher. By the end of the year they had made enough money to pay back the loan and split some profits.

Catalogue and Menu Math is a center designed to reinforce basic mathematical skills. Restaurants in Fargo contribute menus which students use in solving problems found in a list of various restaurants. A pupil chooses the restaurant and, for a certain amount of money to spend, he must decide what each one will eat, and how much the bill will be. There are also major commercial catalogues for solving other problems. One bulletin board, called "A Trip Across the United States," is used by students to compute mileage, food, room, and gas costs. A number of cribbage boards made by the manual training class are put to good use.

The Social Studies Center focuses on the United States. A huge map of the country is in the middle of the floor. The students create a "map of the first thing each morning, with their copies of the Fargo daily newspaper. News and weather items are discussed, using the map as reference. Later the "TV Station," staffed by students, does a 9:00 A.M. news and weather report which is either taped or presented over a microphone to the other students. Each state has a bow with activities placed on pieces of paper so students can work independently in the Center.

Animals are the current topic of the Science Center. An old washing machine serves as an aquarium for studying fish. Students have made a file about animals by drawing pictures on a large roll of paper. They also use the file by rolling the paper on broom handles through an old wooden T.V. frame. A tape recording provides the audio.

The Listening Center is equipped with a record player and tape recorder. A "menu" lists the week's offerings, some musical and some narrative; students listen and evaluate what they hear. "Mission Impossible" is the name for the Puzzle Center, where students find all sorts of puzzles and games designed to reinforce basic reading and math skills. A Special Project Center encourages learning between home and school. In this center students may work on projects which they bring from home, such as motors, clocks, knitting, or weaving.

Throughout the school, the center for motivating the children. There are platform "tree houses" for quiet study; there are "tree houses" for quiet study; there are "tree houses" for quiet study. A center used for motivation, broadening of practical interest, enrichment, and a tie between home and school. There are learning centers for math, social studies, creative writing, reading, art, and science, as well as puzzle centers, sport centers, listening centers, and special project centers.

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only do they make games and puzzles, they also make tables, chairs, storage bins, carrels, and magazine racks from heavy cardboard. Dr. Dodge points out, "We do not make these things because the Board of Education will not supply them, but because we think these children need to realize that everything does not need to be handed to them. They can make satisfactory things for themselves."

EVALUATION

Students at Madison are not given grades; however, they are formally evaluated. One of the hallmarks of the Madison plan is a weekly conference between each student and his teacher. These conferences are one way in which student and teacher evaluate the student's work and decide on new directions in his program. But the conferences are not confined to academic discussion. Sometimes personal problems are discussed. Teachers find these conferences a way of individualizing and of letting each student know that he is important and deserves to be heard.

To keep parents informed of their child's progress, Madison teachers hold two parent-teacher conferences each year and send home two check-list type report cards. The check lists are based on behavioral objectives. Most parents receive considerably more communication with teachers throughout the year, because the Madison staff feels parent cooperation is essential to the program. Many parents do volunteer work in the school. Parents are taken on tours of the entire school so they can understand the principles of the program rather than just view their child's classroom. By opening these channels of communication the staff can more easily discuss with parents their child's needs and program.

TEACHER'S ROLE

In summarizing the Madison School plan, Dr. Dodge has written:

"The most important single aspect is the teacher (training, readiness, and eagerness) in making a decision to move in this direction. The teaching personnel needs to have complete dedication and trust along with a supportive Principal, Superintendent, and Board of Education in order to achieve their goals. The personnel needs special training and creative capabilities in the use of various unique techniques, but, most of all, the teacher needs empathy, understanding, and love for each pupil."

The need for teacher excellence in the Madison plan is obvious, but it has not just happened. To help each teacher meet the school's goals, Madison provides continual teacher training. Teachers are encouraged to visit each other's classrooms to observe effective techniques. They are also encouraged to share their good ideas for approaches and materials with others on the staff. To evaluate her own performance, each teacher views a videotape of herself in the classroom and tries to determine how she can improve her non-verbal as well as verbal techniques.

Finally, the staff is expected to be supportive of each other. One of the teacher goals states, "Everyone gets tired and discouraged and needs the constant assurance that everyone else is interested and helpful."

Madison Elementary is not a rich school. Madison students are not intellectually gifted. Five years ago, before the Madison Plan was implemented, the school had a poor attendance record and a high drop-out rate. In fact, in 1970 only six former Madison students graduated from high school. With the new learning climate developed at Madison, attendance has improved and many more Madison students are completing junior high and high school. Perhaps the key to the program's success lies in a statement made by Dr. Dodge: "At Madison we would stand on our heads to get a kid to learn." Fortunately, with so many other things going for Madison students, headstands don't seem to be necessary.

### DIAGNOSTIC TEACHING SUMMARY SHEET

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FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, WRITE:

Dr. Vincent J. Dodge, Principal
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READ: