

New School

U. S. INDUSTRIES, INC.

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VICE PRESIDENT

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Dr. Seelig Lester
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High School Division
Board of Education
110 Livingston Street
Brooklyn 1, New York

RECEIVED
HIGH SCHOOL DIVISION
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SEELIG LESTER
ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENT

Dear Seelig:

I have just finished reading the report of the Committee on Experimentation and, as you predicted, found it most delightful. As you know, my own thinking has been very much along the same lines and I therefore take the liberty of making a few comments.

I believe that you would find it desirable to do pre-testing as such students came into school in order to find out what they already knew and to avoid duplication of teaching in such areas. I think also you will find that students do not necessarily fit into the one, two or three track in toto and that you will want to set up the tracks by subject as well as by curriculum.

While I very strongly agree with the specific position which the report takes on intramural programs, I do think that experience has shown us that intramurals alone are not enough to provide adequate experiences both of winning and losing for the youngster who stands out from the rest. I would therefore be inclined to use intramurals as my core program in athletics in very much the same fashion as the report suggests, but I would somewhat prefer to enable youngsters or groups of youngsters who showed outstanding ability to the point where they were always winners in intramurals, to participate in a discreet amount of interscholastic competition.

And lastly, I think the testing program in such a school will be considerable and must be reduced in large part to machine tabulation. In this connection I know that the New York Institute of Technology has developed an electronic test board which it hooks up with computers for the purpose of validating programs and, I guess to some extent, for actual testing. The device is a very simple one in which the student pushes a stylus into a hole to indicate his choice on multiple choice examinations. Within a matter of minutes after the test is over, the instructor thus has a complete breakdown of the performance of the class, question by question, with totals, tabulations, etc. all available. He posts the grades by number together with complete information on his bulletin board outside the class

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within ten or at most fifteen minutes after the test is completed. This kind of up to date, constantly current examination evaluation, while it may not cover all of your testing needs, certainly would take the drudgery out of a great part of it.

In general terms I could not help but think as I went through the description of the school, that there were two areas in which AutoTutors could be of tremendous help. Page 11, for example, makes reference to the fact that "adequate mastery of reading, writing and arithmetic" would be required of all students for introduction to the program. This kind of criteria, of course, is much easier to state than it is to measure and many of those who meet the concept in general terms, having learned under our present system, will still have areas of weakness. There is no doubt in my mind that programs could be written covering the disciplines mentioned in whatever detail seemed appropriate and that students could then be expected to bring themselves up to level by use of AutoTutors and programs wherever weaknesses appeared.

Similarly, I would be inclined to prepare programs in each of the subject matter areas covering the basic minimum which we would expect a pupil to learn. This would make available to the slow pupil an opportunity to put in additional time and so to know thoroughly the minimum basics required of him without confusing the organizational pattern of the school. This, it seems to me, is most essential since the basic concept of the school is that there would be no failures but that the variations in the amount of time put in on a subject would adjust for differences in the rate of learning.

I do not know, of course, from the report what plans the High School Division has, but I wondered some if it might not be worthwhile to try to bring together one of the leading teacher colleges, the High School Division, ourselves and perhaps a foundation in an attempt to get such a school rolling. I suspect we would have difficulty on the building end but, if we kept the school relatively small, this might be handled. I would think with our help that your people could write programs and I feel certain that on a major proposal of this sort our corporation might well be willing to help in the matter of machines. I would think the role of the college would be basically one of validation and perhaps some guidance for administration and faculty as the result of evaluation. The High School Division would, of course, be responsible for the basic planning and operation of the program.

I think you can see from my comments that the report excited me greatly and I do hope in any event that it is not allowed to die.

Cordially yours,

Seelig