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Experimental High School Is Opened in Brooklyn

By M. S. HANDLER

An experimental high school opened in Brooklyn yesterday with 1,130 pupils who were given an almost free choice of courses, will receive no grades and will attend school eight hours a day.

The John Dewey High School, named after the pioneer in progressive education, was in the planning stage for nine years and educators hope it will provide long sought answers about the learning process.

Each pupil's program of study will be based on a computer analysis, indicating not only his talents but also his general placement in any given field. This means that a pupil who has proven his proficiency may not have to study freshman English, mathematics, science or any other subject, but will enter a more advanced class in accordance with his accumulated knowledge.

At the end of four years—or less, if the pupils enroll in summer school—they will be required to submit a thesis on their favored subjects to obtain a diploma.

Dr. Joshua Segal, principal of the John Dewey High School, said the computer would re-

view the programs six times a year to evaluate the work of the pupils and keep the experiment moving in the right direction.

One of the innovative features of the experiment is the great amount of time allowed for independent study in "resource rooms" instead of formal classes.

\$12-Million Investment

The school, on Stillwell Avenue between Avenue X and Avenue Y, represents a \$12-million investment by the Board of Education. This amount includes the cost of the site.

The 1,130 pupils were enrolled in the ninth and 10th years. The register will eventually rise to 3,000 through the 12th year. The initial teaching staff, personally selected by Dr. Segal, consists of 72 persons, including nine black teachers.

Asked why he had volunteered to attend the John Dewey High School, one boy, who said he had previously been a pupil in a private school on Long Island replied:

"My parents believe that a non-competitive school would be better for me and that's why I am here."

Another boy gave a similar reply, but added that he felt

attracted by the time allotted to independent study.

Several girls said the flexibility of the programs pleased them. They apparently were dissatisfied with the rigid system of required courses in the schools they had come from.

Dr. Segal said sequential courses in many fields, compulsory programs and fixed classroom periods were scrapped in favor of ungraded courses, and a program consisting largely of electives chosen by students in accordance with their talents and interests.

Dr. Segal said he had relied on the computer center of Brooklyn College to program his pupils but that the job would be done in the future by the school's own computer when it is delivered. The computer and other "hardware," including tape recorders and electric typewriters have not yet been received.

The high school will be the only one in the nation functioning on an eight-hour basis and the only one in the city open all year.

The principal and his supervisors interviewed many of the pupils who represent a socioeconomic cross section of Brooklyn's population.

Dr. Segal selected the teaching staff, interviewing each candidate for "love of children, learning, knowledge of the subject matter, and for being experimentally minded." Having selected his staff, he said the teachers were given an intensive orientation course on the new program.

Four foreign languages—Spanish, French, Italian and Hebrew—will be available to the students. Dr. Segal said books and tapes would be given to pupils who desired to study a foreign language other than these four. He said that one-third of the teachers of foreign languages were natives of the countries where these languages were spoken.

While attempting to eliminate the traditional system of required courses, the principal said this would not be altogether possible in some areas, including mathematics and foreign languages, where sequential studies may be necessary.

Dr. Segal said he was aware of the hazards involved in the experiment since all the pupils came from traditionally organized schools and their response to the new freedom would merit close study.