

BEHAVIOR DEPARTMENT  
Walter E. Fernald State School  
Waverley, Massachusetts

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ANNUAL REPORT

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## 1.0 ADMINISTRATION

### 1.1 Support from grants and institutional sources

- 1.11 Support for our educational endeavors has come primarily from Title I (P.L. 89-313). Four Title I positions (three teachers and a clerk) have enabled us to provide daily classroom instruction for a total of 54 residents. Mr. McCormack continues his able supervision of this direct service to Fernald residents.
- 1.12 Grant MH-14880 from the Applied Research Branch of the National Institute of Mental Health continues to be our major source of funds. This grant is due to expire on 31 August 1971. At present we have a new grant application pending in Washington.
- 1.13 Last fall we acquired a principal psychologist position, for which we are currently considering a person who is getting his Ph.D. this fall. Meanwhile, an in lieu position of assistant staff psychologist has been covering half of the salaries of our two most indispensable staff members who were formerly on our NIMH grant.

### 1.2 Expansion of physical facilities

- 1.21 The fluorescent lighting was finally installed in our main classroom area. We are now able to use the space for its intended purposes during both afternoons and evenings throughout the dark winter months.
- 1.22 A second classroom (former men's locker room, GBU), acquired last October, suffers from a very inadequate electrical supply, but it has enabled us to nearly double the number of residents in our classroom programs.
- 1.23 A storage area near the lab (also acquired last October) has eased the congestion in our classrooms and corridors.
- 1.3 Assistance to residential units. Communication with residential units is increasing. We have discussed our investigative and habilitative programs with staff in several buildings, including Wheatley, Farrell, East, West, Dowling, and Kelley Hall halfway house. In West and Farrell, these efforts have resulted in adoption of several of our programs within the wards, and in individual training sessions which were requested by West staff members.
- 1.4 Laboratory capabilities continue to expand. We have begun to program a new apparatus that will enable us to use many classroom instructional materials in the more controlled laboratory environment.

## 1.5 Personnel

### 1.51 Regular staff

Linda Meistrell, B.S., is secretary, replacing Elsa Berenberg who resigned to return to college.

Timothy Barash, B.A., replaced John Hoover as instrumentation engineer. Steve Hanley, B.A., is laboratory assistant.

Thomas Severns, B.A., is now photographic assistant. Barbara Colby, B.A., continues as data analyst, and Judith Rosenberg, A.B., as information-retrieval and editorial assistant.

James E. McCormack, Jr., M.Ed., continues as director of training. Warren Hofstra, B.A., and Lee Vorderer, B.A., continue as teachers. Hara Bouganim, M.Ed., continues as program analyst. Linda Schwabe recently resigned as teacher; she has been replaced for this summer by Jessica Weld. Joanne MacClary, on half-time loan from the Department of Education and Training, resigned to move to the West coast. Melissa Armstrong resigned as part-time teacher last summer.

1.52 Student staff on co-op assignment were Heidi Dolgoff and Barbara Campagna from Northeastern University.

1.53 During the past year 131 volunteers from Boston College, Boston University, Northeastern, Brandeis, Wellesley, Lesley, Radcliffe, and Simmons, as well as Concord-Carlisle and Lincoln-Sudbury Regional High Schools, contributed a total of 2,528 hours to the department's educational programs.

## 2.0 BEHAVIOR EVALUATION

Most of the past year was devoted to summarizing laboratory data and to writing grant applications for future funding of our work in both the laboratory and the classrooms. A comprehensive paper describing our work to date was prepared as a supplement to our most recent grant application. We are enclosing this document rather than reiterating what has already been reported.

Since 1 July 1970, one child (RC69) and two adult (R4 and RF1) residents have joined our laboratory group bringing the total to 106.

## 3.0 HABILITATION OF FERNALD RESIDENTS

Our department's educational programs are described in the enclosed proposal supplement. Although we are pleased with the tremendous progress we have made this year, we have become increasingly aware of the need for consolidation of programs into more carefully coordinated sequences. Maintenance of learned behaviors must also be given more emphasis. Parts of some programs are

now being rewritten. Speech and attention to auditory stimuli, major gaps in our pupils' skills, need more detailed analysis.

This year we were able to instruct other Fernald personnel -- both teachers and attendants -- in use of our methods in their buildings. With even more valid behavioral sequences and techniques, we hope to expand our consultant role next year, while providing even better educational opportunities to our pupils.

- 3.1 A total of 54 residents have participated in our educational programs in the past year. Their ages range from 11 to 43. They come from Wheatley, East, Kelley, Dowling, West, Farrell, Chipman, Warren, Wallace, and Dolan. Since September, residents have spent a total of 20,942 hours in classroom activities. Our volunteer program has allowed us to reach a larger number of residents during both daytime and evening. Our volunteers were welcomed by the directors of several buildings, and we have had our first requests from building personnel for programs designed especially for particular residents.
- 3.2 Regular classroom sessions were described in last year's annual report and in the enclosed proposal supplement.
- 3.21 Daytime sessions have 23 residents enrolled.
- 3.22 Evening sessions have 21 participants.
- 3.3 Preclassroom sessions held in Wheatley Hall offered 15 residents training in following simple commands, paying attention to instructional materials such as crayons, pegs, and puzzles, distinguishing colors, playing catch, and making simple vocalizations preparatory to speech training. The appeal of various reinforcers (e.g., candy, Kool-Aid, bread, ice cream, crackers with peanut butter) was explored.
- 3.4 Vocational habilitation opportunities for adult residents
- 3.41 Eight residents from Warren, Chipman, Dowling, West, and Wallace were trained as tutors and teaching aides. They spent a total of 1,978 hours in the classroom. Their responsibilities included carrying out a travel program, supervising group activities, conducting tutorial sessions, assisting with record sorting and filing, and helping to run the "store" at the end of morning and afternoon classroom sessions.

The enthusiasm of these older residents for their work was well expressed by the mother of D.B. In a recent letter to Mr. McCormack, she wrote: "Thank you for the invitation to visit with you next Sunday. We shall be unable to attend on that day but we visited with D. there just recently after he had been at home for a few days vacation. At that time D. was quite pleased and enthusiastic about his 'filing job' in your department. He said he was 'so glad to get away from [his dormitory] and to be doing something for some one who needed him.' I was concerned about the long wheelchair trip for him but he insisted he could do it as long as the chair did not collapse. Try to think of the long months and years that D. has had little or no attention and you can realize how much he appreciates his assignment. We are indeed grateful to all of you who

desire to help D. and to make him happy. May God bless you all in your endeavors and associations with our most cherished children."

- 3.42 One resident (P.S.) is continuing to improve his janitorial skills. His appearance is neater, and he seems to have more self-confidence. He is participating in a travel program and can now find his way to Harvard Square, shop there, and get back to Fernald on his own. In addition to skills mentioned last year, he has learned to write legible, accurate telephone messages.

D.G. is now doing clerical work for the FLOW workshop during his afternoons in the laboratory. One of his autobiographical pieces was published this year in the Fernald Communique.

- 3.43 Another five adult custodial residents have been enrolled as pupils in our classroom.

- 3.44 J.S., whose progress was outstanding, died last summer as a result of consuming a large quantity of disinfectant left out at Lavers Hall.

#### 4.0 TRAINING

- 4.1 Institution personnel. The department's programs have been included regularly as part of each new employee's orientation program. Since 1 July 1970, 71 new employees have visited us, observed the residents in laboratory and classroom, and received a brief slide presentation on our work. The descriptive handout prepared last year by Mr. McCormack and Dr. Barrett is being updated.

- 4.2 Participation in CARVE training program. Since September, 48 inmates of the Concord Reformatory in three groups have visited our department. Staff members described our various research and educational programs, and several of the men conducted tutorial sessions with our pupils.

#### 4.3 University and high school students

- 4.31 Students from several Greater Boston schools have continued to volunteer their services to our department as noted in section 1.53. Two volunteers, as a result of their experience in our classroom, applied for jobs at Fernald and were hired.

A preliminary study of the effectiveness of volunteer training is currently under way.

- 4.32 Graduate practicum student. Cydney Stoler, a special education student at Northeastern University, spent several weeks observing activities in our classroom at the recommendation of her teacher, Dr. William Fraenkel.

- 4.33 Undergraduate co-op students from Northeastern University continue to receive training as teaching assistants under the supervision of Mr. McCormack. The Northeastern students, as well as Julie Jackson, a Wellesley student, have competently augmented our small teaching staff (see section 1.52).

## 5.0 COMMUNICATION

### 5.1 New article:

- 5.11 Behavioral differences among an institution's back ward residents. Mental Retardation, 1971, 9(1), 4-9.

Severely and profoundly retarded Fernald children were studied over many months. Rates of working for various consequences were recorded, and disrupting behaviors were noted. The children were drawn from two custodial buildings reported to house similarly retarded children. Unexpected behavioral differences between the two groups proved to be associated with differences in characteristics and practices of building employees. This finding raises important questions for habilitators, researchers, and administrators seeking to improve residential services for retarded people.

### 5.2 Publication anthologized:

- 5.21 Deficits in acquisition of operant discrimination and differentiation shown by institutionalized retarded children. American Journal of Mental Deficiency, 1962, 67, 424-436. (with O. R. Lindsley)

Reprinted in: Edwards, D. (Ed.) The experimental analysis of behavior. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1971.

- 5.3 Distribution of articles: Since 1 July 1970 we have filled 188 requests for reprints and descriptions of our work, and we have distributed a total of 435 articles and reports.

### 5.4 Presentations to parent and community groups:

- 5.41 Barrett, B. H. "Behavability" among severely retarded people. Middlesex Association for Retarded Children. Framingham, Mass., October, 1970.
- 5.42 Vorderer, L. The Behavior Department Classroom. High school group, University Lutheran Church, Cambridge, Mass., May 1971.
- 5.43 Vorderer, L. The Behavior Department Classroom. Ladies' group, University Lutheran Church, Cambridge, Mass., May 1971.

- 5.5 Parent meetings: On 4 October 1970 the Behavior Department held an open house attended by 26 parents and other relatives of classroom pupils. On 6 June 1971, 30 parents and other relatives attended a second open house in the department.

- 5.6 Laboratory and classroom tours: Since 1 July 1970 the laboratory has had 447 visitors, including 104 professionals. There were 439 visitors to our classrooms.
- 5.7 Attendance at professional meetings: Dr. Barrett attended the annual conventions of the American Psychological Association and the Eastern Psychological Association. In addition, she participated in a Precision Teaching Workshop sponsored by the Division of Educational Psychology of the American Psychological Association, and she attended the second Annual Symposium on Behavior Analysis in Education at the University of Kansas.
- 5.8 Special assignment; In August 1970 Mr. McCormack served as an investigator on the Assistant Commissioner's Committee on Restraints (Mass. Dept. of Mental Health).
- 5.9 Descriptions of our work by others:
- 5.91 "A Light for Debra," produced by the Bureau of Education for the Handicapped, U. S. Office of Education, 1971. Although no credits were given, a large part of this film shows the progress of one of our department's severely retarded pupils.
- 5.92 "Eager student volunteers work hard at Fernald for few rewards," by Sally Oatis, Waltham News-Tribune, March 17, 1971. This article describes the work of volunteers in our department's classroom.
- 5.93 "Puppetry more than just child's play," by Lucinda Smith, Boston Globe, April 25, 1971. Included in this article is a description of the use of puppets in our classroom by Barbara Campagna, a Northeastern University student who had returned for her second period of co-op employment.
- 5.94 "New hope for the retarded," by Judith Linn, Sunday Magazine of the Boston Herald Traveler, May 23, 1971. This feature article is a comprehensive description of our research and instructional programs.

## 6.0 PLANS FOR FUTURE WORK AND NEEDS FOR NEXT YEAR

Four areas of development were outlined in last year's annual report. We have made significant strides in the first three of these largely because we received assistance from the institution in two of the three categories of needs listed last year. With additional training and storage space and with adequate lighting for our first classroom (needs 6.21 and 6.22, Pp. 17 & 18 of our 1970 annual report), we were able to offer educational programs to a larger number and variety of residents. We were also able to double the number of volunteer teachers, which gave our salaried staff more time for developing instructional programs, enriching the curriculum, and giving pre-classroom training to severely and profoundly retarded residents whom we were unable to accommodate during previous years (developmental areas 6.11, 6.12, & 6.13, p. 17 of last year's report).

Our plan to extend laboratory evaluation procedures to the Wheatley wards had to be delayed because of Dr. Barrett's involvement in the administrative problems of funding and because of the lack of a qualified professional person to supervise this new area of study.

A principal psychologist position acquired through Dr. Moser's efforts on behalf of our research will enable us to proceed with our plan to use our portable, automated device for detecting trainability among custodial residents. We have begun negotiations with a highly interested and qualified man who will receive his Ph.D. in the fall.

It is clear that our requests of the institution are directly related to the progress we are able to make in serving the needs of its residents. We are heartened that our efforts are found deserving of increased support. We hope this trend will continue in future years.

### 6.1 Work planned for next year

With the termination date (31 August) of our NIMH support fast approaching, we must necessarily devote the year to

- fulfilling our remaining obligations to NIMH,
- securing funds to permit us to build upon the considerable progress we have made thus far in our work at Fernald,
- arranging for the most feasible cutbacks in our activities in the event that continuity of funding is impossible to obtain.

At the same time, we are hopeful that we will be able to continue

- to develop and evaluate methods of assessing trainability in severely and profoundly retarded residents,
- to develop instructional sequences which will bring them to new levels of competence,
- to increase our consultative and direct service to staff and residents who seek our help.

6.2 Cutback of Title I support for our educational program. Just recently we were informed that our teaching staff currently supported by Fernald's Title I grant will be cut by 50% if the grant is approved for next year. This news is especially discouraging in view of the fact that our NIMH grant expires simultaneously with the current Title I grant and therefore cannot be used to retain any of our loyal and competent teachers.

### 6.3 Aid requested to sustain our educational services to Fernald residents

6.31 Personnel. Our progress over the past two years in developing an increasingly integrated program of direct service to residents at all



levels of retardation has been due in large part to the creative organizational and supervisory abilities of James E. McCormack, Jr., M.Ed.

Mr. McCormack began teaching severely and profoundly retarded residents in 1965. Since September, 1969, he has ably directed our educational program which has served over 60 residents, and he has supervised five other teachers, provided instructional programs for ward personnel, trained nearly 200 volunteer teachers, and supervised the practicum and co-op training of six students from nearby colleges and universities. An uncommonly dedicated educator, Mr. McCormack has been working some 60 hours per week throughout the calendar year. His work has received public attention in two recent newspaper articles. Mr. McCormack has performed these innovative services for Fernald while in the position of Institution School Teacher.

We hope that Fernald will recognize the contribution Mr. McCormack has made in an area where it is difficult to find people who are not only qualified by training and experience but also heavily committed to educating severely and profoundly retarded people. We firmly believe he deserves a position commensurate with his training, his proven organizational skills, and his supervisory experience.

Therefore, we ask that the position of Supervisor in Education be provided for Mr. McCormack. We have requested this position for three consecutive years. We are deeply concerned about losing an individual who would be extremely difficult to replace.

- 6.32 Fluorescent lighting and electrical outlets for our second classroom were also listed on our budget request submitted in April. We currently have only one dual receptacle box to accommodate projectors, tape recorders, and a teaching machine. A few old fixtures do not provide adequate lighting for either instructional or data analysis activities. We have seen how much greater use we have been able to make of our first classroom since the new lighting was installed. We have given Mr. Bailey a layout, and he has reported to us that the item was submitted as part of Fernald's budget for fiscal '73. We hope Fernald will provide this very basic requirement for productive use of our new classroom space.
- 6.33 Once again we have requested vinyl asbestos sheet flooring for our classrooms. The cracked cement slab houses a variety of small insects and catches dust and grit, making it impossible to keep clean.