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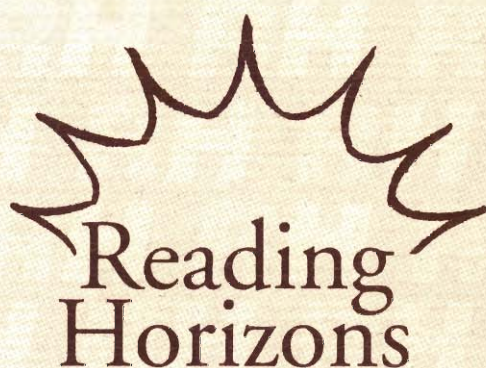


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## **Who's in charge here? Ownership issues with literature study guides**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This article presents a rationale and procedure for evaluating literature study guides based on Langer's model for literature study and Cambourne's conditions for learning. Guides for three books are then compared using the evaluation procedure. The evaluation of five publishers' guides shows great differences in treatments of the same books.

Open most of any professional journal related to literacy, and the ads for literature study guides jump off the pages. Perhaps these guides sell because they are of high quality. Or maybe the hectic pace of the elementary school leaves little time to come up with creative lessons on a day to day basis. Or perhaps the guides sell because administrators or teachers feel little confidence about teacher-developed literature-related lessons. Regarding the latter point, Scharer, et al. (1993) report that 45% of the teachers disagree with the statement that "I feel confident about teaching literature without benefit of a published program" — this in the State of Ohio which for over ten years has had an annual literature conference attended by over 2,000 educators and which has a State curriculum emphasizing the use of children's literature. If experienced teachers sometimes feel the need for the support of guides, such would certainly be expected of prospective teachers. In a book critical of basal readers, authors Crawford and Shannon (1994) cited prospective teachers. In a book critical of basal readers, authors Crawford and Shannon (1994) cited prospective teachers who, desiring "to develop a whole language curriculum," still found a teacher's manual to be helpful: "I want it there where I can get at it when I need it" (p. 15) and "I wouldn't mind having some support or resources for certain books" (p. 17). Even as teachers become increasingly proficient in the instruction of literature and as decreasing numbers of elementary classrooms rely solely on basal materials

(Goodman, 1994), history gives us little reason to suppose that the use of commercial guides will not continue.

Educators' positions on the very notion of purchasing guides will undoubtedly differ. Apple (1982), in introducing a notion of deskilling, noted problems when the planning is separated from the execution. Some literature study guides may be said to deskill teachers by providing decontextualized decisions, a concern voiced for basal manuals (Goodman, et al., 1988). Baumann (1992) makes a counter argument in which one of his conclusions is that there is no "simple cause and effect relationship between the materials of literacy instruction ... and teachers' freedom, or lack thereof, to direct literacy lessons." I believe it fair to say that the degree to which deskilling occurs varies by publisher and by user. Ideas published in commercial guides can be sparks just as can ideas from any other source. Educators tend to value ideas shared by teachers in professional conferences, books, and journals, yet we are more leery of ideas published in commercial guides, even though some of these may well be written by teachers. It seems to me that we all profit from idea sharing and that no blanket statement can be made for literature study guides as a whole.

A key question in evaluating these guides is ownership of the reading. Is the process owned by the author of the guide? Does it use the imperative, telling teachers not only what to do, but also what to say, as do many basal manuals (Crawford and Shannon, 1994)? Or does the guide suggest flexibility for the teacher? And what about study ownership of the reading experience?

When I was a reading supervisor for a large urban school district, I was frequently asked about the relative quality of literature study guides. It is in response to these queries that I wrote this article. I here outline and use an evaluation procedure for three titles: the chapter books Julian's Glorious Summer (Cameron, 1987) and Maniac Magee (Spinelli, 1990) and the picture book *The Legend of the Bluebonnet* (DePaola, 1983). In selecting titles common to more than one publisher, I was able to find no nonfiction titles. The titles selected do, however, represent varied difficulty levels, multiple cultures, and the genres of realistic fiction and legend. My evaluation procedure is based on two frameworks: Langer's (1990) model of literature study and Cam-bourne's (1988) conditions for learning. I critically evaluate both models as frameworks for literature study.

## LANGER AND CAMBOURNE MODELS

In searching for models to evaluate literature study guides, several came to mind. Rosenblatt's (1938, 1968) transactional theory first brought into our vocabulary the terms "reader response" and "aesthetic" and "efferent" responses, and her work remains a cornerstone of literature study today. A person or aesthetic stance, while solidly grounded in the text itself (Rosenblatt, 1989), addresses responses such as, "I felt... when..." or "I had a similar experience when..." whereas an efferent stance focuses more on measuring comprehension of the text itself. Teachers are often encouraged to find opportunities to adopt an aesthetic stance which has been associated with an intense level of engagement.

A second possible lens for literature study is that of Moffett (1968), who focused on post-reading rhetorical tasks, e.g., different forms of written response. A third possible lens is that of psycholinguistics, the marriage of psychology and linguistics. Reading as a psycholinguistic behavior, a psycholinguistic guessing game (Goodman, 1970), goes beyond decoding and processing language to "interpreting the deep structure data relative to an individual's established objectives" (Ruddell, 1969, p. 61).

Langer (1990) went on to establish a literature study model which builds on all this prior work. Her model also takes us beyond concerns about poor practice in literary response. For example, Mehan (1979) found that, too often, story discussion consists of a repeated pattern of teacher questioning focused on a story detail, a brief student response, and then teacher evaluation. Similarly, Applebee (1989), after reviewing several studies on the topic, concluded that literature is often taught in an informative manner, as if there is one correct interpretation, and that, even when teachers indicate use of reader response approaches, they often move discussion quickly beyond any personal probes for motivation toward a quest for the "right" answer. Langer's four stances help guide literature study in broader directions:

- Being out and stepping in — Readers make initial contacts with the genre, content, structure, and language of the text by using prior knowledge and surface features to begin to build an envisionment or a fluid understanding about the text. Readers make initial acquaintance with the characters, plot, setting — and how they interrelate.
- Being in and moving through — Readers use both text and background knowledge to develop meaning and ask questions as they read.

- Being in and stepping out — Readers use their text knowledge to reflect on personal knowledge.
- Stepping out and objectifying the experience — Readers distance themselves from the text world. They objectify the text, judge it, and relate it to other texts or experiences.

Langer's model provides a framework which teachers can adopt for any piece of literature, whether they have a study guide or not. The model goes beyond typical directed reading lessons to make writing an integral part of the experience. The model is appealing in its student-centered focus. It is the readers who are to relate to text to personal knowledge, pose questions, build an envisionment. The flowing nature of the model keeps the reader focused on the literary experience. The communal nature of the process invites readers to join the literacy club (Smith, 1988). This is in contrast to study guides which fragment attention as they move from one activity to the next.

The second model which I chose to use is that of Cambourne's (1988) conditions for learning, conditions which he originally observed in homes of young children who were developing strong literacy skills. His conditions seem to apply to all learning, and I have seen them used effectively in many contexts, from handwriting to spelling to general language arts instruction. Applied to literature study, these would be:

- Immersion — Readers are immersed in the piece itself and in connection with other readings.
- Demonstration — Modeling occurs from teachers who demonstrate both aesthetic and analytic responses to the literature and from peers who engage in literary conversations.
- Engagement — Readers see themselves as performers of literacy tasks, e.g., making predictions, relating the literature to their own writing.
- Expectation — Readers are expected to respond both aesthetically and efferently through written and oral conversations.
- Responsibility — Readers are responsible for doing much of the question-asking, the envisionment building, the bringing in of prior knowledge and experiences.
- Approximation — Readers are allowed the freedom to approximate without anxiety, e.g., in decoding and in modeling their writing after that of the author.
- Use — Readers engage in tasks with authentic purposes and audiences.

- Response — The teacher responds orally and in writing, e.g., serving in a facilitative role with literary conversations.

I find particularly appealing the authenticity of purpose, activities, and audience inherent in Cambourne's model. Literary conversations in the classroom emulate those used by adult readers. As with Langer, the model is student-centered, yet with a strong component of teacher facilitation through demonstration and through the scaffolding in approximations. And Cambourne's lens places literature study in the context of conditions which apply to all learning. His model is based on careful research and has proven to be robust over time.

### EVALUATION PROCEDURE

The literature guide evaluation procedure makes use of a four-step model for comparing textbooks (Muther, 1988; Radencich, 1995): a) conduct needs assessment; b) become familiar with the research; c) define the idea; and d) conduct the review and make the decision. The procedure is lengthy but can be shortened by reducing the ideal to a few critical elements. The time spent serves not only for evaluation but also as an opportunity for professional growth. This procedure should help both educators who are selecting and modifying study guides or using a study guide as a model for teaching other titles, and publishers of guides looking to improve their products. Following is a summary of the procedure:

1. Conduct Needs Assessment — A needs assessment relates to questions such as: Are the teachers and students experienced in literature study? Is there a desired guide length-tight and well-focused OR longer and full of creative ideas? What components are needed for the teacher and for the students?
2. Become Familiar with the Research — Knowledge of what to look for should precede the examination of the materials.
3. Define the Ideal — Identifying an ideal before examining materials will result in a focused examination helping to bring consensus of any involved educators and avoid selection of materials merely based on attractive packaging or "cute" ideas.
4. Conduct Review and Make Decision — Avoid a "flip test" and allow time to conduct the review. Consider the range of titles available through a publisher. Locate guides for the same title(s) from different publishers; comparing guides for



the same title results in a much clearer comparison than is possible otherwise. Rate each guide as per your ideal (See Table 1). If not already part of your ideal, consider also the teacher- and student-friendliness of the materials' design.

The review process can be fascinating. Finding out that different guides for the same book select different vocabulary words or highlight different elements of authors' craft helps lead to an understanding that guides are not etched in stone but are simply one source of ideas. This experience can help free teachers to see their own ideas as equally or more worthy.

*Table 1.*

Evaluation Form for Literature Study Guides

	Desired	Publisher 1	Publisher 2	Publisher 3
Length				
Components	1. 2. 3.			
Design	1. 2.			
Langer Stances				
Cambourne Conditions for Learning				

Note.

Considerations for Desired Elements

Length — Short, tight, and well-focused? Long, with many creative ideas from which a teacher might choose?

Components — Suggested pacing? Suggested classroom organization? A detailed summary? Graphic organizers? Interdisciplinary connections? Information about the author/illustrator? Lists of supplementary sources? Parent component? Assessment options? Suggestions for special needs students?

Design — Logical progression? Format which is appealing and user-friendly?

Langer Stances — The feel of a process through the stances?

- Being out and stepping in — Invitations to make initial contacts with the genre, content, structure, and language of the text? To use prior knowledge and surface features to begin to build an envisionment of a fluid

understanding about the text? To make initial acquaintance with the characters, plot, setting — and how they interrelate?

- Being in and moving through — Invitations to use both text knowledge and background knowledge to develop meaning and ask questions during the reading?
- Being out and stepping out — Invitations to use text knowledge to reflect on personal knowledge?
- Stepping out and objectifying the experience — Invitations to readers to distance themselves from the text world — to objectify the text, judge it, and relate it to other texts or experiences?

Cambourne Conditions for Learning — Immersion? Demonstration? Engagement? Expectation? Responsibility? Approximation? Use? Response?

Evaluation of Innovations (Scholastic, Novel Ties (Learning Links), Novel Units, Passports (Harcourt Brace), and Theme Connections (Perfection Learning)

I used the evaluation procedure to examine Julian's Glorious Summer as developed in Learning Links Novel Ties and Harcourt Brace's Passports; The Legend of the Bluebonnet as developed in Novel Units and Innovations; and Maniac Magee as developed in Innovations, Novel Units, and Theme Connections. The Passports guide is part of a "problem solvers" theme, but is also available separately. Passports also has a teacher's handbook for the program as a whole which was not included in this evaluation.

Three comments will clarify my decision-making. First, I left out the needs assessment portion of the procedure because there was no one setting for which my evaluation was to apply. Second, I felt that the amount of detail in my parallel evaluations of guides for the same selection could be cumbersome to readers, and so have chosen to simply summarize findings for each series rather than show the details comparing each part of each model for each selection reviewed. Third, to generalize with some degree of security beyond a guide to the series of which it is a part, I went beyond the basic procedure and carefully compared at least two guides for each publisher. I found formats to be quite consistent within each series.

The sequence for the evaluation is: a) presentation and organization; b) congruence with each model, and c) conclusions. Congruence with each model as a whole and with its components is evaluated for each guide with a X if there is some congruence, or a X+ or X- respectively if the congruence is better than average or not in evidence.

## PRESENTATION AND ORGANIZATION

Presentation and user-friendliness can, of course, “sell” a product. Thus, my evaluation begins here. One aspect of presentation can be of special concern, and that is the excessive length of some guides. As Edelsky (1994) notes in complaining about 32 pages of activities for a basal story of 20 sentences, “It practically screams the message: The stories don’t count” (p. 31). Following is a sketch of each series’ page length, appearance, and organization:

1. Page length, Innovations, 24; Novel Ties, 22-31; Novel Units, 33-36 + 45-page packet of ditto masters for some titles; Passports, 24; Theme Connections, 9 + 27 pages of theme connections.
2. Appearance, Passports, and Theme Connections have sophisticated design and color. The other three guides have black-and-white presentations.
3. Organization.
  1. Innovations is user friendly with a Table of Contents, brief overview chart of skills/strategies and literary concepts, brief management system of grouping options, use of oversized section titles, thorough book summary, bibliography, and sections about the genre and the author and illustrator. Instructional sections for picture books are: before reading, read-aloud, during reading, and after reading. Chapter book support is organized in groups of two or three chapters, with each set accompanied by a synopsis of the chapters, a three to four page spread with instructional suggestions, and clear sections for before, during, and after reading. The guides include a sign-up sheet on which students record their progress on a selected activity. The guides end with a five-page Model for Writing and three to four duplicating masters with writing prompts.
  2. Novel Ties includes a story synopsis, related bibliographies, and a For the Teacher page with suggestions for pacing (three to six weeks), grouping, and general organization for instruction of all Novel Ties packets. The study of the book is divided into eight or nine sections, with two to three pages of suggestions for each. The

guides suggest activities to return to, but with no later reminder.

3. Novel Units provides no Table of Contents. It begins with a brief summary followed by a series of initiating activities. Some guides provide information about the author. Chapter books are addressed one chapter at a time with a few discussion questions and sometimes vocabulary and two or three supplementary activities. I was able to discern no organizational pattern for guides to picture books. In many instances, activities are presented which teachers are asked to return to, e.g., a prediction chart, a story map, an Anticipation Guide, other charts, and the “what ifs” after each chapter with no later reminder or, if there is a reminder, no teacher’s guide page number for reference.
4. Passports has multiple aids: a Table of Contents, story synopsis, related bibliographies with short annotations and labeling of book difficulty, an Options for Reading page with grouping suggestions, author and illustrator information, a chart of the guide’s skills and mini-lessons, sidebars for teachers (e.g., on theme connections, a piece of art, use of literature journals, connections to a teacher’s handbook, and suggested mini-lesson), sidebars for students (e.g., “just for fun” suggestions and a “sum it up” activity), and family project page. As with the previous two guides, teachers are invited to return to activities at a later time, but no later reminder is provided. Novel study is divided into four sections, with a two-page spread for each, the left for the teacher and a parallel right page for students. This same two-page format is used after the section studies, for a Writer’s Workshop, a Language Arts Workshop, and Cross-Curricular Projects, the latter with a four-page spread. Clear sections for “before,” “during,” and “after” reading are positioned similarly on each spread. Throughout the teacher pages are one idea each for four special populations — all listed in the Table of Contents. Placement of these ideas was apparently contingent on space availability — a tradeoff in a short guide with a clear teacher side/student side format.
5. Theme Connections is a teacher-friendly packet of manageable length consisting of a folder with laminated cards

and a soft-cover guide. It begins with five pages on teaching with Theme Connections and three pages of introduction to the theme before going into support for each of the three theme novels. Each book is treated as a whole rather than in chapter groupings. Included are interview conference questions, activity evaluation forms, and anecdotal record forms for use in ongoing assessment, as well as an annotated list of additional suggested books, magazine articles, software, and videos.

#### LANGER COMPARISON

Just as there was much variety in the presentation and organization of the guides, so too do the guides differ in their match with the four stances of the Langer model of literature study (see Figure 2). Picture the difference between studying the Newbery-award winning Maniac Magee, a present-day tall tale, with Theme Connections and in Novel Units. In the former, there is a definite flow and authentic purpose as readers a) step in after the first two pages by examining mood with consideration for the genre, the setting, the time period, and the author's style, b) move through the text completing a mood chart and analyzing the effect Spinelli's writing style has on their mood as they read, and c) step out and decide on a mood to use when writing their next story. On the other hand, in Novel Units the presentation is disjointed. Activity suggestions for stepping into the text are: read and discuss the elements of a myth, folk tale, or legend; make up some tall tales after reading an example; start the book on April Fools Day; discuss the meaning of "maniac" and generate ideas about a book entitled Maniac Magee and read the Before the Story section, focusing on the word "legacy." Only if this latter suggestion is followed is there any flow thereafter; the guide does provide later suggestions for building on the concept of a legacy. Langer's model is very much in evidence in the former guide but not in the latter.

There are some definite strengths in some study guide presentations, particularly in the student ownership of the process encouraged by Innovations, Passports, and Theme Connections. All three guides expected a) that students should engage in grand conversations (Peterson and Fields, 1990) about their reading, e.g., really take charge of discussion as would occur in a book club (Raphael et al., 1992), and b) that students should ask questions of their own volition, a strategy which is central to current understanding of research and practice in literature. It

is of interest to note that those series which lacked these expectations at the intermediate level continued similarly with study guides for the middle grades (Radencich, in press). Each series is now evaluated in turn.

Innovations engages readers when they are Out and Stepping In through means such as predictions, genre study, and background building. It provides a smooth flow in the Moving Through stance and invites personal response as readers Step Out. The flow is lost somewhat with the multiple post-reading options, but some reading and writing options do allow readers to Step Out and Objectify the Experience, judging the text and relating it to other texts and experiences. Overall, Innovations meets both the letter of the law and the soul of Langer's model, the fluid understanding of the text, with a model teachers can follow in teaching other pieces of literature.

Novel Ties is a poorer match to Langer's model. It begins with no clear focus; teachers are encouraged to use several of the Stepping In activities. Activities are often those of traditional workbooks. Readers are invited to use text knowledge to reflect on personal knowledge while In and Stepping Out. But the guide ends with no invitations to judge the text or to relate the book to other texts and experiences. It could do more to help users move through the stances and relate to the work as a whole. Even when a particular theme is addressed periodically, each activity stands alone, with little attempt at cohesion.

Novel Units has ways of engaging readers when they Step In, but, as noted earlier, most of these have no follow-through. As in Novel Ties, a theme is sometimes addressed periodically, but with no explicit tie-ins and no attempt at cohesion. In a guide with a small number of activities, a teacher would see the connections without explicit linkage, but this is a guide with a lengthy and unfocused list of suggestions to wade through. Edelsky's (1994) metaphor of "exercise wolves dressed in 'literature-based' and 'process writing' sheepskins" (p. 21) comes to mind here. One further problem is inclusion of activities which I have to assume are untested in classrooms such as poorly designed graphic organizers and vocabulary lists and activities which seem to be inordinately difficult for the designated grade levels.

In Passports, the "before" and "after" reading sections for each set of chapters provide some continuity to the reading process, but the guide is, overall, not a close fit to the Langer model. The Being Out and Stepping In stance could be stronger by inviting personal connections. Readers are not invited to use personal experiences here nor are they encouraged to use text knowledge to reflect on personal knowledge. Readers do objectify the text by engaging in cross-curricular connections, but

they are not invited to judge the text. Aside from needing greater fluidity through the stances and personal connections to the work as a whole, *Passports* could also make a more explicit connection to the theme of which each book is a part.

**Theme Connections.** Engaging ways are provided for readers to step in to the text through study of areas such as genre, story elements, and author's craft. The movement through Langer's stances is fluid, with during- and after-reading suggestions for reading and writing activities building on those used for prereading. Questions, some of which relate to personal experience, are posed for journal writing and discussion. Students are also expected to raise questions on their own and to self-evaluate how their ideas about the theme changed during the reading.

#### CAMBOURNE COMPARISON

All four guides provide ways into the books which are likely to engage students. Beyond this similarity, however, treatments again show considerable differences (see Figure 2). In Cambourne's framework the lack of literature circles and of student inquiry again play a role, this time with lost opportunity for authentic language use. Following are comparative examples of suggestions which do and do not fit the model. I question whether immersion, engagement, or use are likely when there is no real audience as with *Novel Ties*' suggestion that students write a letter to the author of *Julian's Glorious Summer* about a specifically provided topic when no author address is provided, or with *Passports*' suggestion that students create greeting cards from one character to another. Perhaps one can expect more immersion, engagement, and use with *Innovations*' personalized suggestion that students follow the reading of *The Legend of the Bluebonnet*, a Native American legend about the origin of the bluebonnet flower, with learning about the flower of the student's state or learning about Native Americans from the local area. Users will decide. My evaluation of each guide's match to Cambourne's model follows.

**Innovations.** Options are provided throughout the guide, giving a flavor of respect for teacher and students alike. The guide uses all of Cambourne's conditions for learning. Because of its careful attention to writing process, the conditions of use and engagement are particularly well represented. Immersion, responsibility, and expectation are evident as students sign up for one of four suggested reading activities, select their prewriting strategy, participate in peer conferences, choose when to

share drafts, and identify audiences. Authentic use appears not only in writing, but also in oral language and in reading. Demonstration is in evidence when story situations are used to help students understand similar situations in their own lives. Demonstration and approximation occur when students use the reading as a model for their own writing. Response is specifically built into each stage of the writing process including the use of peer and teacher columns on an editing checklist. Response is also built into the reading at times, with discussion of student responses.

Novel Ties. This guide begins with ideas which are likely to engage students as long as teachers select among them and not try to use them all. Engagement is not likely to follow with Novel Ties' basal-like activities, but may well occur at times, with varied vocabulary activities including student guessing of meanings and then checking these guesses; attempts to make the learning pertinent to students, e.g., with the comparison of a flashback in the book to flashbacks in other media; and personal response writing prompts. Novel Ties places little responsibility on the student. Language use is always in response to prompts and questions and never with process writing. The highlighting of author's craft several times in Novel Ties would be an ideal place for the conditions of demonstration and approximation, but little is done with students using the models in their own writing. The final condition of response is not addressed but could have occurred naturally with a return to the prediction statement for each chapter.

Novel Units. As was the case for Langer's model, Cambourne's conditions are poorly represented in Novel Units. Some, but not all, of the suggested activities may engage students, but engagement is likely to suffer when the basic role is one of passively acting as recipients of analytic questions and activities doled out by the teacher. Again, although there are group projects, there is no clear expectation for grand conversations or for other types of response. Approximation and use are two conditions which are represented. Students are invited to examine the author's writing as a model (approximation) for their own writing.

Passports. This guide promotes engagement through cooperative and paired activities, role play, debate, and art activities. It encourages immersion in literature with suggested related readings. Although the guide is generally teacher directed, there is sometimes the expectation that students be made responsible for making choices when a) they select roles in cooperative groups; b) they participate in the Writer's and Language Arts Workshops (within the parameters of the assigned tasks); and c) (only) the gifted and talented students are challenged to write with



some self-selection allowed. Three conditions little utilized are approximation, demonstration, and use. There are no demonstrations through think-alouds and no suggestions that students take advantage of demonstrations of the author's craft to use in their own writing. There are no authentic audiences for student writing, except for the suggestions that speeches be delivered for classmates and that story sequels be read to or by others. The final condition of response does not occur with any clear suggestions for teacher response, but Passports does invite readers to tell their families about the story and to have peers respond during writer's workshop. The guide misses what could be excellent opportunities for implementing the conditions for learning. Response could occur with the class developing evaluation criteria for the student-written speeches and then using these criteria as the speeches are delivered in character roles. Approximation could occur with directions to follow the author's development of character in their writing of these speeches and of a story sequel.

Theme Connections. As with Langer's model, Cambourne's conditions for learning are represented well in Theme Connections. Students may become immersed not only with the theme structure, but also with an annotated list of additional print and technology resources. Engagement permeates the guide's philosophy. Students are empowered to take charge of some of their learning. They think of themselves as authors and work with partners in decision making. It is suggested that students might choose which book to read, select a strategy(ies), bring materials for the theme center, engage in an inquiry process and choose the materials they need to research their questions, select words which they find interesting or unfamiliar, decide how they will communicate to others what they have learned, assess themselves, and develop criteria for quality work. Expectations are high throughout this guide. Student serve as facilitators for book talk sessions, mark off completed stages in their inquiry process, and respond in interview conferences to questions about their learning process and goals. Student responsibility is concomitantly high. Students are encouraged to use vocabulary they have selected in their speaking and writing. They are responsible for quality responses in their journals, active participation in theme and book discussions, maintaining a bookmark checklist of active reading strategies used, keeping products for portfolios, and monitoring successes.

Demonstration is not provided for most of the activities, but the teacher does participate in a book talk and does use the author's craft as a model which students can approximate in their own writing. Authentic use is represented through suggestions that students attend to specific

aspects of oral language in their surroundings, consider their audience when making decisions about sharing the results of their inquiry research, create products for audiences beyond the school, and share writing and other projects with the class for varied purposes. Cambourne's final condition is response. This guide not only suggests that teachers, along with students, be a part of ongoing assessment, but also provides tools for use in this process.

## CONCLUSION

My title for this article questioned ownership: "Who's in Charge Here? Ownership Issues with Literature Study Guides." Are publishers in charge when they produce literature study guides? Only, of course, if teachers allow them to take on this role. According to Venezky (1987), early basal publishers worried that teachers would reject the few suggestions they provided because of their intrusion into teachers' responsibilities. We have moved from that stance to a world which, from one point of view, offers reading as a thing to sell, a commodification of reading instruction (Goodman, et al., 1988). Yet from another point of view (Allington, 1993), the market research which guides publishers to produce teachers' guides is research which is attentive to teachers' requests and thus merits attention.

The guides reviewed here differ markedly in their match to the Langer and Cambourne models and in the degree to which they encourage ownership of the reading by teachers and students. Overall, such ownership was granted most often with Innovations and Theme Connections. A most appealing aspect of Innovations is the rationale given teachers for each instructional suggestion. The rationales are professional in tone and not patronizing. A particularly strong point for Theme Connections is the fact that it is almost a mini-textbook for teachers. Teachers not familiar with, e.g., the inquiry process behind this guide would learn much that they would be able to transfer to future literature study.

Passports provided ownership in areas such as grand conversations and study inquiry. Yet it had activities which were sometimes disjointed and thus unlikely to engage readers in wanting to make use of these opportunities. The guides which provided the least amount of teacher and student ownership were Novel Ties and Novel Units. The latter might improve its fragmentation by addressing groups of chapters at a time and its organization by listing in one place options for ongoing activities to allow for easy evaluation and selection.

Novel Ties and Passports might better serve a teacher experienced in teaching literature than a novice. Both, but especially Novel Ties, present more ideas than can be developed in full in a guide of reasonable length. Thus, a teacher new to teaching literature may well not take maximum advantage of these ideas. Durkin's (1979) cautions come to mind. Just as "mentioning" did not constitute learning for children, mentioning may often be insufficient for teachers as well. However, a teacher experienced with teaching literature might expand on given ideas. I would recommend that users make a "less is more" approach, with fewer activities which are well developed and which tie together for a unified whole. Supplementary activities could then be listed more briefly. Passports approaches such a plan, with concise "before reading" and "after reading" sections for each chapter set, "alternative" activities throughout the guide, and Writers' and Language Arts Workshops at the end of the guide, but without a cohesive linking of the before- and after-reading sections.

Do the guides basalize the literature? On a holistic level, they did tend to be teacher-dominated, as one would find in many basal manuals. And critics would argue that the literature study guides replicate what basals do with three-art lesson plans (Goodman, 1994), phony lesson plans and phony projects (Edelsky, 1994), and pushing students through a linear writing process (Maras, 1994). Indeed, an argument can be made that real literature provides sufficient material and of itself (Fox, 1994), and that our money should be spent only on "real books written for children" (p. 141). I am less critical perhaps, glad to see guides with expectations for grand conversations and for student inquiry, glad to see some examples of the fluidity expected with Langer's model of literary study and of Cambourne's conditions for learning. On a more atomistic level, there are several problems often found with basal study which warrant a look here.

1. Excessive amounts of passive ditto masters? Novel Ties and Novel Units are completely reproducible, but most Novel Units pages are intended for the teacher. Innovations and Passports had few reproducible pages. Instead of reproducible pages, Theme Connections provided a few laminated cards on which students might write.
2. Slow pacing with excessive time spent on vocabulary words, low level questions, and questionable activities? This was a problem only for Novel Units.
3. Fragmentation of a book into too many parts? This was a problem only for Novel Ties.

Despite shortcomings, each guide had creative ideas which could be selected by the discerning teacher.

To what degree the guides should resemble basals really goes back to the needs assessment and the definition of the local ideal. The desired length of a guide and the necessary components are largely contingent on the level of teacher and student experience with literature study. Some scaffolding may be necessary for teachers used to a high degree of structure.

### SUMMARY

Literature study in the elementary school has come a long way in the last two decades. Prior to the work of pioneers such as Goodman and Rosenblatt, we were not talking about the reader's objectives or reader response, much less literature circles or grand conversations. In this article I began with some of this history in establishing a framework for an evaluation procedure for literature study guides. I then established what would be, for me, an ideal guide, one based on Langer and Cambourne models. Finally, I used the evaluation procedure to compare literature study guides for three selections.

Any procedure for materials evaluation must recognize that it is the teacher and the classroom context which are primarily responsible for quality instruction. Nonetheless, reliance by busy teachers on commercial guides warrants an examination of the contents of these materials. I hope that the procedure outlined here can be used or adapted to help educators with their evaluations and help publishers as they produce new generations of teacher support materials.

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*Marguerite Cogorno Radencich lost her battle against lymphoma on October 19, 1998. For all that she has done with and for colleagues and students in literacy, she will be missed.*





## **Developing young authors: Collaborating in a supportive community**

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### **ABSTRACT**

When a classroom provides an environment that promotes writing, students have the resources, time, and opportunity to create collaborative stories. In a third grade classroom, three girls unite to write a series of humorous stories through group negotiation and class prompting. The classroom's instructional design and its sharing, encouraging climate promoted writing.

*The original reason to be in Room 8 was to observe the influence of a genre of humorous material on the children's writing through a qualitative study designed to examine reading-writing connections. The variety of interactions and responses in the classroom allowed for phenomena to surface which could not be foreseen when the study was originally designed. Within the classroom community of writers, a collaborative effort emerged among three girls who created a series of stories, a relationship and process worthy of examination.*

What does a classroom promoting collaboration in reading and writing look like? Let's visit Room 8, a third grade class in a suburban school district in the Midwest. Spending mornings with this class, you see children participating in reading, language, and writing instruction in large blocks of time. You see the children investigate a genre of humorous materials in a variety of formats and media for their reading and language period.

The children read and discuss literature, view and discuss humorous material, and explore personal interests among genre materials in whole class, small group or individual activities. They follow a similar practice in writing workshop. Some children write on their own; others



work in small groups. The students in the groups talk about ideas for or in their writing, share their writing for responses, or work on group projects.

On most days Heather, Maria, and Rebecca (pseudonyms), write together at a table toward the side of the room. Sometimes they write individually, but they also collaborate on stories. The girls discuss ideas and write group stories that they enjoy sharing with the class for feedback. Over several weeks they create and share a series of humorous stories. As we view the girls' writing group, we have an image of how a community spirit develops in a reading and writing environment that promotes collaborative learning and encourages authors.

### *The 'Rose' Stories*

At the end of writer's workshop one day, the girls share the first story. Rebecca introduces the story by saying, "It's romantic and gross."

*Hi, my name s Rose. I'm in the fourth grade. On the day before Valentines I got a love letter. It was taped to my crayon box. This is what it said...*

*Dear Rose*

*You are like a rose blossen in a big garden. I love you.*

*Love Your*

*Secret admire*

*P.S. Your Next love letter will be in your favorit spot.*

*I didn't know were it came form. But I was soon to find out.*

Thus begins the tale of young Rose as she searches for her admirer. As Rebecca reads the story, the class responds with laughter. The laughter tells the writer that the audience perceives the message and purpose of the writing. But we also sense a community feeling of well-being as children share laughter (Fakih, 1993).

*The next day I got to school an hour early. But when I looked on the teacher's desk I couldn't find it. Do you want to know why I couldn't find it? Don't tell but SHE THROUGH IT AWAY! When I looked in the trash can there it was all crumbled up. This is what it said...*

*Dear Rose,*

*I love you dearly. So it is time for us to meet.*

*Love Your*

~~Clayton~~

*I could not beleave who it was. And why he would like me. The next day I went to see him were he said he would meet me. I got so carryed away that I acedently got him cornered in the corner... and pushed him...*

Classmates respond with praise for the content and suggestions for more jokes to be done to the boy. The laughter and suggestions motivate the girls to add to the adventure.

*If you want to find out what he is going to do next. Find our next book called PART TWO SIXTH GRADE.*

### *Writing Time*

As Nancy Atwell (1998), among others, has suggested, students need regular blocks of time to think, to write, to confer, to read, to change their minds, and then to write some more. It is within those large blocks of time that young students form a community of writers, a community based on mutual trust and encouragement.

For Room 8, writer's workshop occupies the first hour of each day. Following an initial mini-lesson on a specific writing skill, the children spend 35 minutes writing while the teacher and aides wander the room, interacting with students who might ask for help or advice and having writing conferences with students. During this time, the children are free to write individually, with partners, or in small groups. For the last ten minutes of writer's workshop, children share their writing.

The teacher creates a relaxed atmosphere in the class by allowing the children freedom to move around the room as they work. Students choose various places in the room to write and conference. Some choose to stay at their desks; some move into groups to work. Some choose to sit at the tables in the room, even though they are writing individually.

Children at the table become a support or resource group. They ask each other for feedback on sections of their writing, ask for a word

that means..., or ask for an idea to include in their topic. Peer and teacher conferences occur at various places in the room — at desks or tables, on the floor, in the reading center. Although there is a great deal of movement and grouping, the noise level of the class is never overbearing. Writers are busy crafting their pieces, which is the focus of the class.

The day after the class response to Rose's adventures in fourth grade, Heather, Maria, and Rebecca are at the table writing a sequel about Rose being in sixth grade. The girls are deciding what will happen to Rose and what will be done to the boy. The story takes on new characters and strange twists. When they share this in-progress story, their classmates again laugh at the situations written.

*All of a sudden Anthony walked up and said, "Do you want to go out?" I don't like him so I said "NO" My friends saw me and started to tease me about him.*

*The next day I was so embarrassed that I pushed him in the pool at school. And he was so excited that he lost his undershorts and everyone found out that he wore Barney underwear.*

As the girls consider writing more, they ask the class to vote on a continuation of the saga. One student comments, "This is a series," and this assures the next episode. Classmates comment on the funny situations in the story and comment that the time order in the story does not seem right. After sharing the second 'Rose' story and receiving constructive comments, Heather and Rebecca revise some content with Maria's ideas. The story had Valentine's Day and the Fourth of July occurring at the same time. So the girls decided that since the boy was pushed in a pool, the time of the story had to be summer. The story was revised to include a meeting to watch fireworks.

### *Writing with Reading*

Because learning to write is a complex process, teachers recognize the need to use multiple approaches to help students develop this ability. In an integrated curriculum where reading and writing are taught in relationship to one another, as Louise Rosenblatt (1976) points out, readers gain diverse insights and satisfactions from the text material by actively creating meaning. Such reading and writing activities involve children in meaningful learning experiences that enhance the ability of students' awareness of language and language use.

During the language arts period in Room 8, the teacher reads *Ramona Quimby, Age 8* by Beverly Cleary aloud for 15-20 minutes each day. Heather, Maria, and Rebecca enjoy the read-aloud book so much that they select other Beverly Cleary books for individual reading. Rebecca chooses *Ramona Forever* for a literature set book, and both she and Maria check out other Ramona books from the school library. As the next class read-aloud Heather requests *Beezus and Ramona* by Beverly Cleary.

Just as Beverly Cleary created situations for humorous events, the girls create situational humor. The girls' stories are a verifiable writing form, because as Wilde (1985) explains, it exists in a trade book which provides structure for the writing. As Heather, Rebecca, and Maria write their stories, they discuss how Ramona had "all those things" happening to her. They want the girl and boy in their story to be doing things that appear silly to others.

Reading and writing are process-oriented thinking skills. In reading and writing, ideas are constructed and reconstructed while comprehending and composing text. As children experience a genre study, Phillips (1986) found that they began to produce the genre form (or structure) in their writing. They assimilate words and more global and substantive aspects of a genre into their writing (Tierney and Shanahan, 1991). What is known and thought is revealed through their writing.

While in their group the girls have opportunities to explore and work out differences about story ideas and actions. They are able to negotiate among different perspectives of situations to include in the stories. Hanssen (1990) reported that in groups of three or four people, when topics and perspectives are introduced and shared, participants are able to develop their perspectives more fully. For the first story Heather and Maria want the boy and girl to play together at recess. Rebecca has different ideas. She wants something to happen to the boy. Ideas are battered around until the group decides on having the girl accidentally push the boy in her excitement of discovering her secret admirer.

When collaborating on writing tasks, the girls exchange, examine, and expand ideas. The discussion provides them opportunities to engage in problem-solving for unclear content (Leal, 1993). Heather, talking about the advantage of the group writing, said, "they were able to talk things out."

### *Continuing Saga*

As you watch Heather, Maria, and Rebecca over several weeks, you see them writing long stories which express complex ideas. Features

from their reading give the girls many forms of humor to experiment with in their writing.

*You now that boy named, Anthony, well he is getting cutier everyday.*

*The next day I went to the Max [a store] and saw that Anthony and Kelly were sipping a shake together. That really got me mad and I went over there and said "You are a no good dirty double crosser!!!" Then I knocked over the table and she got milkshake all over her new white blouse. She was so mad that she sprayed mustard all over my new jeans. I started getting really rough, so I threw an egg at her head. Then Anthony got up and said "I don't remember you liking me," and he tried to brake us up, but instead he got knocked out.*

As Graves (1983) expressed, time for thinking and shaping ideas is an important factor in developing writing. When the girls present the full story of Rose in eighth grade at sharing time, the class erupts in laughter. The girls' writing is a huge success as classmates enjoy the surprise, slapstick, and verbal humor. You would hear comments like "My favorite [story] is the 'Secret Admirer' series."

The class provides a supportive environment for the girls to write. Without the laughter and comments of the group, the young authors would not experience the thrill of positive response to their writing.

### *Community*

You see in Room 8 a classroom climate that promotes writing in a supportive, daily, concentrated workshop. This format contributes to writing development, because a feeling of community exists in which children feel comfortable sharing incomplete writing and receiving constructive suggestions. From this encouragement children write more. And when humor is involved, children are even more relaxed and receptive to learning.

The real value of collaborative writing is in the peer interaction as groups concern themselves with the whole writing process (Dale, 1994). One student might begin a story with another adding a sentence or part, while the third student finishes the piece or evaluates the others' work. During the whole process students are actively engaged with each other and the writing task. While writing, each member learns to communicate thoughts as the group works to create a story (Brockman, 1994). From topic selection to final revisions, students talk and negotiate in order to write.

As their stories develop, the girls decide on a division of labor. Heather begins to draft the next sequel from the ideas brainstormed. She often stops to ask for opinions about a section or to check what was in the previous story. Rebecca revises the previous story and often asks for help with a word or some other editing point. Maria decides to illustrate the boy's letters in the first story. As she draws, she asks for opinions about what to include in the drawings or if they think her ideas are okay.

Working with others gives writers ideas and interpretations beyond their own ability. The response of others provides stimulation and encouragement to improve, continue, or produce alternate forms of writing. Later the girls convert the stories into a play to present at the end of the genre study. The girls negotiate converting story description into dialogue and narrator parts. They decide which parts will be left out and add parts to clarify the story for the audience. They add a final episode to the sequence that has the boy and girl in high school and becoming engaged.

Although writing is highly idiosyncratic, the girls follow a pattern of prewrite, draft, revise, and edit. During the writing process, the girls assume responsibility for their own writing and become, in the root meaning of the word, "authors." They comment, "[Writer's workshop] makes you feel like you can do a lot of stuff."

### *Developing Authors*

The classroom and classmates are important to the girls. The community within the classroom offers a social setting that allows the girls to join together to develop stories. They talk, negotiate, and expand ideas. Freedom to choose with whom, where, and what to write enhances their freedom to create.

The girls draw on collective knowledge and construct new ideas to create stories as they work together. When classmates perceive the message in the girls' stories and provide feedback, the girls are encouraged to write more. As Rebecca said, "You get inspired by something and want to write."

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## **Allocation of time in reading**

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### **ABSTRACT**

How teachers allocated instructional time in reading classes served as the focus of this study. Twenty teachers were observed during reading sessions to answer two research questions. For question 1, how do teachers allocate time, observations indicated that teachers used class time in the following increments: reading and responding 35.47%; listening and discussing 24.89%; waiting 8.36%; completing skill development activities 20.28%; telling, writing, and narrating 7.52%; and devoting 3.47% of the remaining instructional time to other activities. Question 2, does time allocated for reading coordinated text exceed more than 50% of the total time designated for reading instruction, answer appeared to be "no." Teachers observed in this study allocated only 35% of instructional time for children to read and respond to concentrated amounts of coordinated text. Recommended time allocations that stated that time reading should exceed the time allocated to all other reading class activities was not observed.

There is an adage that equates proficiency with practice; e.g., before one can become truly proficient doing something, one must perform the desired behavior or action until that activity is done automatically



and without much conscious thought and attention. Assuming this adage is true, then it may be expected that the more time learners spend in the active process of reading, the more proficient they will become in their growth and acquisition of reading ability.

The amount of time pupils spend actually reading in primary level reading classes is quite small according to a documented report by Anderson et al., (1985). Children typically spend less than 10% (7 to 8 minutes) of reading class time actually reading text while they may spend up to 70% of time practicing or extending through "seatwork." These "seatwork" activities that dominate lessons, further contend Anderson et al., (1985), do not foster literacy; nor, does this "seatwork" time usually require any extended writing.

Fielding and Pearson (1994), in a significant review of reading research designed for administrators, suggested that time in instruction was the critical factor in reading program success. "We contend that a successful program... [should include]... large amounts of time for actual text reading" (p. 62). While these authors did not indicate the amount of instructional time that was most likely to lead to successful instruction, they did conclude "At present research offers no answers..., (but) students should have more time to read than the combined total allocated for learning about reading and talking or writing about what has been read" (p. 63).

In a synergistic algorithm designed to convey the idea that reading is greater than the sum of its activities, Blair (1995) suggested the following equation:  $A > B + C$ . In Blair's equation  $A$ =reading,  $B$ =skill instruction, and  $C$ =discussion and extension of text. Blair contended that in properly balanced reading instruction, children should spend more time reading coordinated text than they should spend time practicing or extending reading skills. Blair followed his recommendation with a limited observational report of actual reading practices in Florida primary classrooms. His observations of Florida classrooms suggested that his hypothesized distribution for successful instruction was not found in either the traditional or whole language environments. In fact, reading coordinated text accounted for approximately 36% of classroom instructional time while skill instruction and discussion or follow-up about what had been read accounted for 48% and 15% of reading instruction time, respectively.

When queried by McNinch, et al. (1996) as to how much time should be dedicated to different instructional activities in a reading session, elementary school teachers from three states reported through a survey the following ideal allocations. Primary level teachers reported

that pupils should read coordinated text from 33% to 58% of a typical lesson. During the lesson, pupils should discuss and react from 16% to 33% of time devoted to a typical lesson. Teachers reported that their pupils should write, narrate, and retell from 8% to 33% of a typical one hour reading lesson.

Teachers from the McNinch, et al. (1996) report appeared to support and give theoretical agreement to the instructional recommendation of Blair (1995) and Fielding and Pearson, (1994) that time reading coordinated text should exceed instructional time practicing or extending reading skills. However, it is not clear if teachers' perceptions of the ideal amount of time necessary for each instructional activity are actually translated into classroom practice. How much time do teachers allocate to different instructional routines in reading sessions?

### *Question*

If there is instructional value in the notion that time allocated to direct reading of coordinated text should exceed time spent practicing or extending reading skills, (1) then how do teachers actually allocate time to these areas during instruction, and (2) does time allocated for reading coordinated text exceed more than 50% of the total time designated for reading instruction?

## METHODOLOGY

### *Sample*

Twenty elementary school classrooms (eleven 3<sup>rd</sup> grade, four 4<sup>th</sup> grade, and five 5<sup>th</sup> grade) engaged in reading instruction were used as the sample in this study. The classrooms under observation were in Georgia, Mississippi, and North Carolina. The schools in the study would be described as representing suburban and small town environments adjacent to metropolitan areas. The cooperating teachers were all volunteers who consented to be observed after hearing a request to assist in reading research aimed at improving the delivery of reading instruction. Specifics of the study, e.g., what was to be observed, were not revealed. All of the teachers were female and would be described as experienced teachers. Their teaching tenures ranged from a low of 3 years to over 10 years. Average teaching longevity for the sample was approximately 7 years. Sixteen of the teachers held or were currently pursuing advanced degrees in education.

*Procedures*

The focus of the study attempted to determine the amount of time that teachers devoted to the different areas of classroom reading instruction. The amount of reading class time that the teachers allowed for each area of reading was determined by collecting data through direct observation of classes by the researchers involved in the study. The observers entered the classrooms prior to the onset of the instruction to be observed and recorded observations of the reading activity taking place at one minute intervals (see Figure 1). Observation protocols were coded minute-by-minute to profile the teacher and related pupil activity actually occurring in the observed reading sequence. The researchers coded pupil behavior prompted by teacher direction or instruction as belonging to one of six categories. After teachers' directions or prompts, the pupils' behaviors were coded as follows:

1. Reading and responding;
2. Listening and discussing;
3. Waiting;
4. Completing skill development activities;
5. Telling, writing, narrating;
6. Other.

---

*Figure 1. Sample Observational Record Sheet*

Minute-by-minute intervals

	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>67</u>	<u>68</u>	<u>69</u>
Read/respond	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Listen/discuss	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Wait	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Skill Dev.	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Tell/write/ Narrate	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Other	—	—	—	—	—	—	—

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In order to create the time variable for the study, session lengths were recorded by use of a stopwatch. Percentage scores were then computed by dividing the observed time of each of the six instructional categories by the total time of the classroom observation. Six scores represented the allocation of time in reading.

To ensure consistency among the researchers' evaluations and classifications, several practice classroom reading sessions were videotaped, observed, and jointly scored. This preliminary activity did not involve any teacher who would later be observed as a volunteer in the study. This instructional training activity for the researchers was repeated until there was agreement in evaluating and marking teacher behavior. When classrooms were observed, it was assumed that this agreement was still present and observations were recorded consistently across the researchers.

All the cooperating, volunteer teachers gave advanced permission to be observed and selected the time and date of observation. No teacher was observed by a "surprise" visit. Teachers were asked to present a typical reading lesson that presented their usual classroom activities. For the sake of uniformity, teachers were asked to prepare lessons that would last approximately 60 minutes. Accordingly, observations lasted from a short lesson of only 32 minutes to a long lesson of 67 minutes. The average lesson length was 51.4 minutes long.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The amount of classroom time devoted to reading coordinated text was investigated by the first research question. Specifically, the study asked in Question 1, how do teachers actually allocate time to different instructional routines (reading and responding; listening and discussing; waiting; completing skill development activities; and telling, writing, and narrating) during a reading class? Results from the classroom observations in all of the 20 classrooms can be seen in Table 1 as the percent of the classroom hour that was allocated to each of the instructional categories. It does appear that the 20 teachers in the sample diversified their instructional time during their reading lessons and included multiple activities or assignments. There was quite a range of difference among the classes regarding how time was allocated for the different routines. One teacher devoted 100% of her time to reading and responding. Another devoted all, 100%, of her time to listening and discussing. Five teachers did not include reading and responding to coordinated text at all. Their lessons were filled with activities removed from text reading. Ten of the classrooms did not reflect telling, writing, and narrating activities, which one would assume as important in a whole language environment, at all.

Table 1.

Percent of time observed in each instructional routine at each target school.

School	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
read/respond	68	0	19	35	0	0	36	55	13	56
listen/discuss	06	26	08	33	48	13	0	13	04	23
waiting	0	22	03	0	18	06	07	27	05	21
skill develop	0	52	47	22	18	81	50	0	47	0
tell/write/narr	26	0	23	10	16	0	07	05	31	0
other	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
TIME OBSERVED	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

School	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
read/respond	48	34	0	100	38	72	0	42	40	53
listen/discuss	52	40	100	0	29	22	19	22	32	07
waiting	0	0	0	0	03	06	33	08	03	06
skill develop	0	26	0	0	30	0	0	0	20	13
tell/write/narr	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	11	0	21
other	0	0	0	0	0	0	48	17	05	0
TIME OBSERVED	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Averaging the percentages across the 20 classrooms for each category from the Table presents a depiction as to how time is allocated by teachers and demonstrated by pupils in these monitored reading

classes. In the reading classes observed in this study, it was observed that teachers direct and pupils react by:

1. Reading and responding 35.47% of the instructional time;
2. Listening and discussing 24.89% of the instructional time;
3. Waiting 8.36% of the instructional time;
4. Completing skill development activities 20.28% of the instructional time;
5. Telling, writing, and narrating 7.52% of the instructional time;
6. Devoting 3.47% of the instructional time to other activities.

Question 1 addressed the use of time in reading classes as directed by the teachers. On the average, teachers devoted almost one-third of their instructional class time to having children read and respond to coordinated text under guidance. On the average, the least amount of reading class time was devoted to having children retell, tell, write, or narrate about the stories or materials used in the reading sequence.

Question 2 investigated the suggestion by Blair (1995) and Fielding and Pearson (1994) which posited that effective reading instruction would involve children in reading concentrated amounts of coordinated text during daily reading lessons. Specifically, the study sought to answer the question, does time allocated for reading coordinated text exceed more than 50% of the total time designated for reading instruction? The answer appears to be "no." Teachers observed in this study allocated only 35% of instructional time for children to read and respond to concentrated amounts of coordinated text.

The perceptions of teachers participating in this study relating to how much time students should devote to reading and responding to text does not appear to match actual recorded classroom practice. The amount of time allocated to actual sustained text reading is a full 15 percentage points less than would be recommended by Blair (1995). This level of sustained reading, approximately one-third of class time, is well below the upper limits of their own projected perceptions which revealed their beliefs that as much as 58%, more than half, of the class time should be devoted to reading and responding to text (McNinch, et al., 1996). Teachers clearly perceive substantial amounts of text reading as being important and beneficial to children, but they are unable to fit this vital routine into the compressed daily curriculum that demands quantities of time be spent in skill development and language extension activities. If reading promotes reading and there is instructional merit in the pedagogical recommendations, then teachers must do more to increase the time their pupils devote to reading coordinated text.

If children grow in reading by reading, as suggested by Fielding and Pearson (1994), then teachers may be falling short in their planning and implementing responsibilities. It appears that children spend about equal amounts of time in the areas of reading and responding, skill development, telling, retelling, and narrating. This equal distribution of effort and activity may not be ideal for reading development. Teachers have the responsibility to plan instructional lessons that require more reading of coordinated text.

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## **We love to read — a collaborative endeavor to build the foundation for lifelong readers**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This qualitative research study targeted fourth grade at-risk children in a culturally diverse elementary school in a mid-sized city in the southwestern United States. The purpose of the study was to describe the nature of social interactions within the context of tutorial sessions and to identify common characteristics of highly-effective tutors in their interactions with older, at-risk readers.

“My favorite part was setting the goals. I liked that part the best because then with the goals, I had a reason to read!” remarked Kati. Kyle was equally enthusiastic about goal setting, “I think the best part about our reading project was accomplishing 50,000 minutes as a class. It really made the class and me feel good,” he commented. Eleni just plain enjoyed digging into good books and affirmed, “I want to read as much as I can so that is why I liked this part the best.”

While these remarks are representative of the majority of students in Kathi’s fourth grade classroom at the conclusion of their special reading motivation project, this enthusiasm had not always been the case. Teaching in a middle class community that comprises students from blue collar to professional households, Kathi sensed that her class had not consistently been “turned on” to reading. “While there were a handful of students who loved to read, the majority of kids only read what I assigned,” she explained.



Working together in a professional development school collaborative effort, Marjorie Hertz (assistant professor, Muhlandberg College) and Kathi Swanson (teacher, Lincoln Elementary School) felt it was important to encourage more students to read beyond obligation. This article will describe the reading motivation project they developed. The project was designed to encourage intermediate grade students to choose to spend more time reading beyond the classroom walls. Margie and Kathi were anxious to see if the use of goal setting and self-monitoring techniques would motivate students to read more frequently on their own. The project used largely observational techniques to assess the impact of the motivational program on the reading lives of the students.

### DIMENSIONS OF MOTIVATION

Research provides insight into how to engage and motivate children, specifically how to plant seeds for lifelong reading. Teachers have long maintained that motivation is crucial if we are to set our students on the road toward becoming lifelong readers (Gambrell, Palmer, Codling and Mazzoni, 1996).

Children's motivations for literacy are multidimensional and complex. Motivation is based on both internal as well as external factors. Internal or intrinsic motivation relates to inherent interest in a task-engaging in an activity due to natural interest in the activity itself. On the other hand, external or extrinsic motivation relates to doing something in order to earn a reward or a grade. Extrinsically motivated students are not necessarily interested in the activity for its own sake.

It is important to encourage intrinsic motivation, as the quality of task engagement is higher when students are involved in a task for their own reasons. However, extrinsic motivational strategies can also be effective under certain conditions (Brophy, 1987; Fulk, 1994; and Tripathi, 1992). Opportunities to compete can add excitement to the classroom, and when used judiciously, rewards can motivate students to try that much harder. Brophy proposes guidelines for supplying extrinsic motivation. Rewards should be used in ways that support learning. In addition to drawing attention to the reward itself, teachers should encourage students to value their growing knowledge. Therefore, when integrating competition into instruction, Brophy suggests that teachers stress the content being studied rather than highlight who won and also lost. Teachers must also make sure that the rewards are used as incentives for everyone; all students must have at least an equal chance of winning.

Educators should recognize examples of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, specifically as they relate to the field of reading. The dimensions of children's reading motivations have been identified (Wigfield and McCann, 1996/1997) and a number of them relate to the amount of reading that students engage in during a school's reading program. Those dimensions relating strongly to the frequency with which children read include both intrinsic and extrinsic factors: social reasons for reading, reading efficacy, reading curiosity, reading topics aesthetically enjoyed and recognition for reading. Wigfield and McCann point out that overall, the intrinsic factors for reading correlate most strongly with the frequency with which students read.

Motivating children to engage in sustained literacy activities is a continuing challenge for teachers. Many students feel they are 'too busy' for free-choice reading (Whitney, 1991). Others are regularly attracted by modern technology, involved in outside activities and frequently have no one with whom to share books (Lange, 1994).

### GOAL SETTING STRATEGIES

Goal setting and self-monitoring of behavior are effective strategies to help motivate children. Locke, Shaw, Saari and Latham (1981) describe a goal as what an individual is trying to accomplish. A key premise of goal setting theory and research maintains that human actions are directed by conscious goals (Locke and Latham, 1990).

A powerful tool, goal setting directs students to focus their attention, motivates them to persist in meeting the objectives and helps them to formulate strategies to accomplishing a goal (Locke, Shaw, Saari and Latham, 1981). As students progress toward their goals, their sense of self-efficacy or belief that they will be successful increases. Students who feel that they will be successful often choose to engage in tasks, put forth more effort, and persist when they encounter difficulties (Schunk, 1994).

Two types of goals are identified: product goals and process goals. Product goals emphasize what will be accomplished, whereas process goals stress the steps that students will take toward achieving their goals (Johnson, 1990). Teachers should encourage students to consider how they will achieve their product goals. For example, they might have them plan how to attain their goal by first answering the questions "how, where, when and who" (Piirto, 1987).

The positive effects of goal setting are influenced by the types of goals that students set. Goals exert their influence through three properties: specificity, difficulty and proximity (Locke, Shaw, Saari and Latham, 1981; Schunk, 1991). Specific goals provide clear indications of what is required. Goals that are difficult or challenging require effort or skill to accomplish. Finally, proximal goals can be reached relatively quickly whereas distal goals are accomplished farther in the future.

In addition to providing specific, challenging and reachable goals, there are several other factors that make goal setting effective. One is for teachers to be certain that students receive feedback. Feedback can be given by the teacher or monitored directly by the students (Johnson, 1990). Secondly, for goals to be effective, students need to accept them and commit to them. Teachers can promote goal acceptance by supporting students in the goal-setting process, listening to their thoughts about the goals, and encouraging them to ask focused questions (Johnson, 1990).

Teachers need to encourage students to establish their own appropriate goals and then fully support students in their efforts to meet their objectives (Marzano, 1992). Goals that students set themselves are often more effective than those mandated by the teacher (Spaulding, 1992). Once students have set their own goals they must be shown how to monitor their progress. Self-observation combined with appropriate goal setting has the potential to change student behavior (Mace, Belfiore and Shea, 1989).

Goal setting gives students a purpose as learners. Studies have also shown this intervention to provide a positive influence on students' academic motivation and learning in the classroom. Recently, Jenkins (1997) describes how she incorporated goal setting into her fourth grade classroom reading program by asking students to set goals as they read from books each month. Jenkins reports that when the students designed goals for themselves, their reading became more intentional as they learned about themselves in the process.

Carroll and Christenson (1995) describe a fifth grade classroom where student goal setting and self-evaluation are an integral part of the language arts curriculum. In the beginning many students had difficulty setting appropriate goals. The classroom teacher realized that she needed to help students by modeling those goals that she felt were important. In time, the fifth grade students found that they could set reading and writing goals for themselves and attain them. The goal setting process brought a focus to their learning. The students were increasingly motivated to meet the very goals that they had set themselves.

Schunk (1985) finds that participation in goal setting enhances the self-efficacy and skill development of learning disabled children. The subjects were sixth grade children who received subtraction instruction and subsequent practice over five consecutive school days. The children were assigned randomly to one of three treatment groups. One group set their own proximal performance goals; the second group had comparable proximal goals assigned; student in the third treatment received the training but no goal instruction. Participation in goal setting led to the highest self efficacy and subtraction skill for students. Schunk concludes that allowing children to participate in setting their own goals may enhance both their skills and sense of efficacy as they apply these skills.

A study by Bandura and Schunk (1981) demonstrates the advantage of setting proximal goals. Elementary school children ranging in age from 7 to 10 years old were given seven sets of subtraction problems to work on over seven sessions in a self-directed learning format. These children had been identified as individuals who displayed both a deficiency and low interest in math. In the proximal goals group, the examiner suggested that the children complete one set of problems for each session, whereas in the distal group the examiner suggested that the students complete all seven sets by the end of the project. Children in the third group were asked to work on the problems with no mention of goals. Bandura and Schunk found that providing children with proximal goals increased their motivation, self-efficacy and subtraction skills when compared to children who were given distal goals or no specific goals. In their discussion they noted how children who set attainable goals not only became more proficient academically but also became more engaged in activities for which they initially had little curiosity.

Schunk and Rice (1989) investigated the effects of setting process and product goals on fourth and fifth grade remedial reading students' self-efficacy and skill performance during comprehension instruction. Subjects were randomly assigned to one of three experimental conditions: process goal of learning how to use steps of the reading strategy; product goal of answering questions; general instructional goal of simply doing your best. All the students received 35 minute training sessions over 15 consecutive days. Analyses showed that students in the process and product goal conditions judged self-efficacy significantly higher than did students in the control condition. Those students who pursued a learning process goal had the highest comprehension. The authors speculate that the product goal students did not place as much emphasis on learning to use the steps of the reading strategy and therefore might not have applied it as diligently on the skills post-test.

## READING MOTIVATION PROGRAM

The research details successful reading motivation programs at the elementary level. If teachers are committed toward having their students' become lifelong readers, they must adjust their programs in order to motivate students to read for pleasure both in school and at home. Teachers might consider serving as reading models, building on experiences with familiar books and providing appropriate reading-related incentives (e.g., the books themselves). They can also provide opportunities for students to interact socially with others as they share books, and create environments in which a variety of books are readily accessible in classroom libraries (Gambrell, 1996; Palmer, Codling and Gambrell, 1994).

Another set of suggestions to promote literacy engagement includes: giving new attention to independent reading time; having students share responsibility for arranging the classroom library; inviting students to leave stick-on recommendations on the covers of books; and setting up partnerships of student readers to discuss the pages they read at home the night before (Calkins, 1996).

## THE PROJECT — AN OVERVIEW

Our four month reading motivation project was implemented in a fourth grade class of 24 students. The program incorporated child-centered strategies shown by research to promote engagement in literacy: opportunities for choice, reflection and social interaction (Zemelman, Daniels, and Hyde, 1993). A distinct feature of the project was the incorporation of metacognitive activities where students set weekly goals and monitored their progress as they reflected upon how they were growing as readers.

Each Monday morning from February through May, students spent approximately one hour in class participating in project activities. At the beginning of the class period, they were asked to evaluate their success in reaching two goals they had chosen on their own. Their goals fell into two general categories: time goal (minutes spent reading) and "who, what, where, when, and how" goal (the specific manner in which one reads). See Figure 1. The students were asked to read a minimum of fifteen minutes for at least four days of the week, yet they were free to go beyond the minimum requirement whenever they desired. In line with goal setting research (Johnson, 1990; Piirto, 1987), the goals chosen by

our students included both product and process goals. Students could strive toward accomplishing objectives relating to content (e.g., books chosen and minutes spent reading) as well as process (“where,” “when,” “with whom,” and “how” strategies to use when reading at home).

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*Figure 1. Possible Weekly Goals*

Time Goal

I will read for – minutes for at least four days this week.  
(15 minutes or more)

Who, What, Where, When How Goal

Who I will read to/with my mom, dad, brother, pet etc.

What I will choose a new type of book to read at home.  
I will read – (e.g., mystery) books for the next few weeks.

Where I will read where no one can find me!  
I will read outside on my back porch.

When I will read when I have dessert each night.  
I will read right before I go to bed.

How I will read with more expression.  
I will write about what I have read by filling in a post-it slip from my teacher.  
I will P-mail my teacher.  
I will tell my mom/dad about what I have read each day.  
I will call up my friend/grandparent and talk to them about what I am reading.  
I will write a short letter to my friend telling him/her why I like my book.  
I will draw a picture of the favorite part of my book.

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The fourth grade students recorded their two weekly goals on a specially formatted sheet that they kept in their reading journals, (see Figure 2). Students were asked to circle the days on which they read and indicate the number of minutes they read on each of those days. Their journals and books remained at home throughout the week. Each Monday morning they carried them back to school in their personally designed canvas reading bags which they had made as the kickoff to our project.

Figure 2. Kristen's Goal-setting Sheet

Week	Goals	Accomplished
2/24-3/2	1. I will read <u>40</u> minutes for at least four days this week. <u>MTWTHFS*</u>	<u>9/94</u>
(5) <u>DA.</u> Parent Initial	2. <u>I will write a few sens. on a post-it for my teacher.</u> 240	<u>RKH</u>
3/3-3/10	1. I will read <u>35</u> minutes for at least four days this week. <u>MTWTHFS*</u>	<u>RKH</u>
<u>CH.</u> Parent Initial	2. <u>I will read a poetry book for the week.</u> 210	<u>RKH</u>
3/16-3/17	1. I will read <u>40</u> minutes for at least four days this week. <u>MTWTHFS*</u>	<u>RKH</u>
<u>DA.</u> Parent Initial	2. <u>I will talk to my parents about what I read</u> 360	<u>RKH</u>
3/11-3/14	1. I will read <u>40</u> minutes for at least four days this week. <u>MTWTHFS*</u>	<u>RKH</u>
<u>CH.</u> Parent Initial	2. <u>I will call up a friend and tell them about my book.</u> 360	<u>RKH</u>

The students fell into a predictable routine for each session of the project. Without having to be told, they distributed calculators among themselves in order to determine the minutes spent reading that week. The students posted their cooperative groups' reading minutes on the board, and these were then totaled. Having students count and graph their reading minutes provided a natural way to integrate the mathematics curriculum with language arts instruction. By the second week of the project, the students decided that they would try to attain a collective goal of reading for 50,000 minutes by the end of May. A huge paper

bookworm was posted with each segment of its body representing the amount of minutes the students had read that week. The suspense had begun!

Next, the students shared their successes in achieving their individual “who, what, where, when or how” goals. Volunteers discussed the manner in which they had read at home that week. They occasionally displayed a visible product that they had created (e.g., posters, pictures, letters, poems, etc.).

A vital component of our project was allotting time for students to think about their at-home reading. They were given the opportunity to reflect upon their reading experiences by responding in their journals to a specific prompt. Some of the prompts that we used were: “Why would you recommend your book?”; “How did you accomplish your goal this week?”; “Why is reading a good thing?” and “What happened when you read with someone at home?”.

The students took turns sharing their responses orally by participating in what was termed the “hot seat.” Small groups took turns sitting in the hot seat by forming a circle with their journals in hand to discuss their written reflections. The rest of the class gathered around the inner circle and were encouraged to submit their own questions written on small index cards. Toward the end of the activity, hot seat members took turns responding to these questions.

Students selected their books for the reading motivation project in various ways. The fourth grade students either read selections that were in line with the monthly book theme promoted by their teacher, or they chose another selection that interested them. Kathi exposed her students to such themes and genres as historical fiction, nonfiction and biographies. Students were free to choose books from the classroom, school or public libraries, or from their own homes. Kathi made time to conference with her students in order to guide them to appropriate books based on their interests and abilities.

Throughout all segments of the weekly project both Kathi and Margie served as role models as they demonstrated how they participated in the very same activities. During each session they shared their own at-home reading goals. With time for reading at a premium, both explained that they read professional journals along with the newspaper, newly published children’s books and other personal selections. To personalize their outside interests Kathi brought in her cooking magazines and Margie shared anecdotes and illustrations from David Halberstam’s *The Fifties*.



At the close of each weekly session, the students were asked to choose a new set of personal goals. They either chose their goals from those listed on several large charts posted on the walls or they were free to choose a separate goal of their own. We allotted time to discuss the selection of appropriate and realistic goals. Likewise, we shared our own goals for reading in the coming week.

#### METHODOLOGY — HOW WE ASSESSED THE PROJECT

We were anxious to learn the extent to which fourth graders would become more committed toward reading at home and therefore examined their attitudes and thoughts about reading throughout our four-month project. In our study we collected data by drawing upon the written and oral comments of students, the classroom teacher, along with the students' responses to a reading motivation survey.

Each week, we asked students to respond in their journals to one of the "specific prompts" that we supplied. Using information obtained through these weekly written reflections, as well as class discussions, we gained a well-rounded picture of the students' thoughts about reading. We regarded the students' written reflections as an indicator of their mind-set towards at-home reading and of their understanding of the best ways to approach this activity. Additionally, student comments shared during the hot seat and panel discussions helped us gauge the classroom climate for independent reading.

Kathi, the classroom teacher, kept anecdotal records containing her observations of the reading motivation project. She conveyed her ongoing analysis of project events during weekly discussions with Margie.

At the beginning and end of the reading motivation project, we administered the Motivation to Read Profile (Gambrell, Palmer, Codling, and Mazzoni, 1996) to the class. This survey is a self-report, group-administered instrument that assesses two dimensions of reading motivation: students' self-concept as a reader and value of reading.

#### STUDENTS RESPOND TO PROJECT ACTIVITIES

The students' desire to read for pleasure along with their understanding of how best to approach at-home reading can be gauged by their responses to the various activities of the reading motivation project. Goal setting and reflective journal writing were at the heart of the project's endeavors. However, students also participated in "hot

seat” and panel discussions and responded to open-ended questions and surveys.

### Types of goals chosen by students

As documented on their goal setting sheets, students chose a variety of goals throughout the project. Over the four month period the “where” goal was the most preferred, although the “what” and “how” goals were close favorites. A popular example of the “where” goal, picked by virtually every student was, “I will read where no one can find me!” Curiously, in examining the goals chosen by students from the first through the second halves of the project, there was a considerable increase in the use of only one particular goal — the “what” goal. The incidence of “what” goals nearly doubled from being chosen 25 times (18% of the goals) during the first half of the project to being chosen 45 times (32% of the goals) during the project’s second half. Later in the project there appeared to be a greater interest in choosing goals relating to the types of books being read. Frequently appearing examples of “what” and “how” goals were: “I will look for something different to read, like an adventure story”; “I will read a chapter book, a good one”; “I will e-mail my teacher”; “I will call up my friend and tell him/her about my new book.”

### Journal reflections

The students’ weekly journal reflections served a dual purpose. First, they encouraged the students to think for themselves about the “what, where, why, when and how” of reading at home. Second, the written reflections gave us a feeling for their attitude toward and understanding of this endeavor.

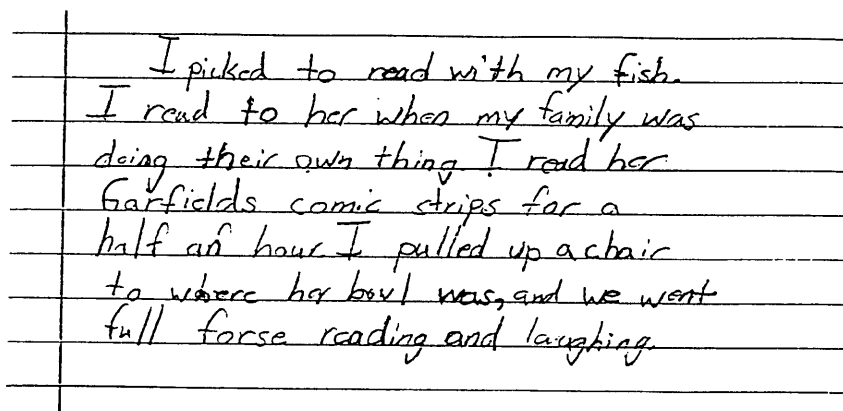
One series of prompts asked the students to think about goal setting: what goals worked well for them, how they actually attained their goals’ and how their goals changed over time. The students responses were quite revealing. Some students felt that the goals they chose were just right. Savannah claimed, “My goals were perfect for me. It was easy to read 35 minutes. It was also easy to keep a log. After reading I went into my journal and wrote what happened in the story.” On the other hand, other students realized that they needed to modify their goals. Nate explained, “One goal was hard for me because I can’t read a “grown-up” book. I didn’t understand some of the words in it... I think I just went too far.” (This led to a class discussion of choosing appropriate books.)

Journal writing heightened the fourth grade students' awareness of how best to read at home. Responding to the prompt "How did you accomplish your goal?", the students relayed how they had maneuvered to find the best place and right time for their at-home reading. Kim seemed to enjoy companionship while reading, at least in the form of a family pet (See Figure 3). On the other hand Kyle explained, "I usually read at nighttime so no one will bother me. I read in my room because I have a sign, 'Do not come in without knocking!'"

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Figure 3.

Kim's Journal Response: How Did You Accomplish Your Goal?



I picked to read with my fish.  
I read to her when my family was  
doing their own thing I read her  
Garfield's comic strips for a  
half an hour I pulled up a chair  
to where her bowl was, and we went  
full force reading and laughing.

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Several students realized the value of changing their goals occasionally. Kim put it this way, "I have been picking goals that have been too easy for me... Since we were having a long weekend I picked harder ones. I am selecting more challenging books and they are much more interesting."

We realized the importance of encouraging the students to assess the content of their stories in addition to the processes they used when they wrote in their journals each week. Of interest, during the project the students frequently chose books in keeping with the literary theme of the month. Historical fiction was clearly the most popular theme. Specific

titles that truly engaged the students were: *To Be a Slave* by Julius Lester; *Runaway to Freedom* by Barbara Smucker; *Year of Impossible Goodbyes*, by Choi SookNyul; *Behind the Attic Wall* by Sylvia Cassedy; and *Number the Stars*, by Lois Lowry.

Two of our journal prompts relating to story content asked the fourth graders to respond to the questions: “Why would you recommend your book?” and “Tell us about what you read.” The students’ genuine enthusiasm for the stories came through loud and clear in their responses. For example, in keeping with the monthly theme of historical fiction, Scott read *To Be a Slave* and explained why he couldn’t put his book down. “I liked this book because I love history and slavery is fun to learn about. History is cool because you get to learn about what you couldn’t explore because you weren’t born yet,” he said.

Kristen was equally enthusiastic about her book, *Behind the Attic Wall*. She recommended it because, “It will keep you in suspense until you hear chattering behind the wall. It gets really exciting when an orphan girl named Maggie moves in with her two aunts and meets their talking dolls named Miss Cristabell, Timothy John and Juniper.”

The students wrote honestly about what they had been reading and supplied logical reasons for why they did or did not like their selections. They defended their opinions in an intelligent manner. For example, after reading *Runaway to Freedom* Stephanie claimed, “I don’t like the book so far because it is sad. People ran away to freedom from slavery and got caught, whipped or shot. Then the people were lonely because they were getting hurt. That’s why the book is sad in the beginning. Now at the end it’s not sad anymore. Lots of slaves are running to freedom.”

In their discussion of why they would recommend their books, the fourth grade students explored what they had learned while at the same time citing details showing knowledge of content. After reading a section of *My Side of the Mountain* by Jean Craighead George, Brian explains, “So far this is a really good book. I read a part that told me that a boy lived in a treehouse with a fireplace and a hawk and he called him Frightful. It’s very exciting because Sam and Frightful are trying to survive after Sam ran away and captured Frightful. I did not finish my book but so far it is really good. I even learned how to season my food.”

In her journal entry Danica seemed impressed with what she had learned when she stated, “I read half of *Come This Far to Freedom*, by Angela S. Medearis. It told a lot about when Rosa Parks was arrested for not giving up her seat for a white man to sit and when Martin Luther King was shot... and a whole lot more.”

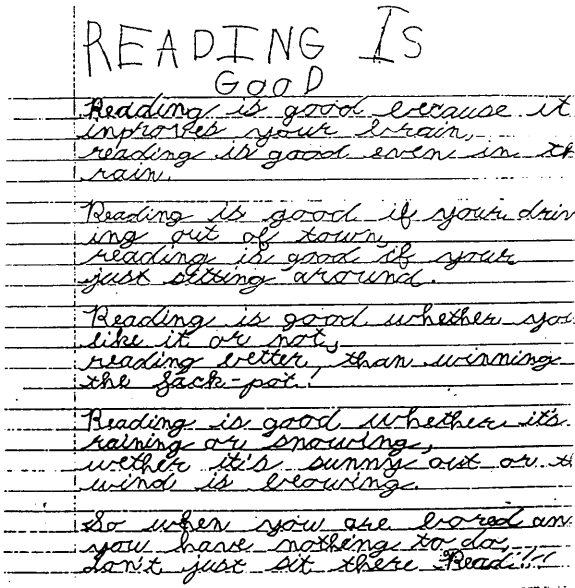
Panel discussion: Why reading is a good thing.

Midway through our project we felt that student interest might be waning. Instead of merely telling the students why reading is so important, we decided it would be more helpful to ask them to consider "why reading is a good thing." To cultivate intrinsic motivation, we wanted the students to search within themselves and decide what they truly valued about reading.

The students responded with numerous ideas of their own. Many shared that they loved the time "to be alone with yourself"; "to improve your work skills... and get another 'wrinkle' in your brain"; "to learn how to make things"; "to learn about new people, places and things in history"; and "to have a chance to relax." Shane's poem, "Reading is Good" said it all (See Figure 4).

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Figure 4.

Shane's Journal Response: Why Reading is a Good Thing

We also asked the students to identify four of their classmates whom they considered to be the most interested in reading. This afforded the students an opportunity to choose role models from among their peers. We assembled a panel of the top four vote-getters to discuss their ideas about why they valued reading. The panelists discussed quite frankly why they liked to read, while acknowledging the distractions of television and after-school activities. They also offered their advice for readers who were “on the fence.” In the words of one of the panelists, “Just start and try to read more and more. Maybe you’ll like it!”

### Hot seat activity.

One aspect of our project that the students particularly enjoyed was the hot seat activity. This gave them an opportunity to chat about the ideas that they had first written about in their journals. While the inner circle shared their responses, many enthusiastic questions emanated from the outer circle of students as well. These questions included: “Why did you want to pick harder goals?”; “Can you explain more about your book?”; “Why did you finish the book when you just said you didn’t like it?”; and “Are you going to read more books by this author?”.

Kristin expressed her classmates’ sentiments regarding this activity when she stated, “I liked this part the best because you got to share interesting or exciting things you learned. Also if you were in the middle circle you were the only ones who could talk?”

### Students’ overall attitude toward reading and goal setting.

At the beginning and end of the project, the students completed a survey, the Motivation to Read Profile (MRP), a measure of their self-concept as readers and their value of reading. Their response on the MRP showed no significant difference between pre and post-test means ( $t=1.31$ ,  $p=0.205$ ). Eleven students (approximately half of the class) did increase their scores on this survey. However, statistical analysis revealed normal fluctuation of data (See Table 1).

We felt, however, that the students’ ongoing written and oral responses were more indicative of how their interest in reading had grown. Toward the end of our project, we wanted to give the students a chance to describe how they felt about reading for pleasure at home. We asked them to consider the question, “Has our project made you want to read more, the same, or less than before. Tell us why.”

*Table 1*Pre-Post Test Comparison of Total Scores on Motivation to Read Profile

Pre Test		Post Test		P
Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean	Standard Deviation	
63.04	(7.38)	61.57	(10.22)	0.205

Approximately three-fourths of the class (17/24 students) replied that they now thought they were reading more. They provided a variety of explanations. A number of students cited the “push” to reach their goals as their prime reason for reading. Goal setting seemed to give the vast majority of the fourth grade students a sense of purpose. As they met with success, many felt empowered to “climb higher” by reading more minutes, choosing different books or finding new places to read. Explained Danica, “Reading at home has made me read a lot more than I did before. I’m trying to reach my goals. We started reading at home because we were supposed to read four days a week and now I do!”

Others noted that by choosing interesting goals, they now had some compelling reasons to pick up a book. Tiffany remarked, “I read more because I pick fun goals. I have a rope swing that I love to read on.” Some students seemed to realize that reading can actually be a viable alternative to the numbing distractions of modern technology. Stated Davin, “I hated to read. Now it is OK because of the goals I pick and the fun we have here. I think this project helped a lot. Now I understand that reading books is better than just sitting around and watching TV!”

We noted that a few students appeared a bit anxious about the requirement to set weekly goals. They preferred to read only what and when they wanted to read. As Bethany expressed, “Setting goals hasn’t helped me much. I do plan to continue reading but not setting goals.”

Many students in the reading motivation project became enveloped in the world of books. Two examples follow. Hubert maintained (accurate or not), “Now I’m reading ‘millions’ of books. I bring more books home and don’t want to stop. Last night I stayed up till 12:00 reading *George’s Marvelous Medicine*.” In the same vein Mark shared, “I’m reading more in bigger books like *White Horses Running*. I really get into bigger books. They get so interesting and I can’t stop reading them.” Hubert’s and Mark’s realization that they could successfully

complete several books and read “bigger books” appeared to impact on their reading attitudes and habits. The two boys’ growing sense of self-efficacy seemed to hasten their desire to read for pleasure.

Yet, there were a handful of students who felt they were still reading the same amount by the end of the project. One student actually claimed that she was reading less. The explanations were two-fold. Some felt that they had always read a lot in the beginning. So it’s hard to read more than I had.” Others specified that they did not like feeling that reading was required. Explained Eleni, “I read a lot before... it’s like you’re making me do something I am already doing.”

#### Record-keeping snags.

While the students as a whole felt that they benefited from keeping a record of their weekly goals, they needed to be reminded to return their journals with a complete and accurately recorded goal sheet each week. Even with class discussions about the importance of being prepared for class, there were invariably a few students who either forgot their journals or only completed part of their goal sheets.

### CONCLUDING REMARKS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

All in all, we felt that the “I Love to Read Project” was a positive experience that impacted on the reading lives of the fourth grade students in Kathi’s class. The project involved several requirements along with incentives to instill motivation. Students were expected to set weekly goals and record the minutes read. Of importance, we were very careful to build opportunities for choice within the structure of the project. Each week students chose their own two goals. The class also decided to set a group goal of reading for 50,000 minutes. Indeed, what better endorsement for student choice than the fact that many students established time goals that exceeded the 15 minute requirement!

We maintain that under certain circumstances carefully selected external requirements and incentives are necessary to pave the way for more intrinsic reasons to read. There simply are times when nine and ten year old students may need some external structure and incentives to pique their curiosity before they willingly tackle new projects on their own. Clearly, Kathi’s students would not have read to such a degree and enthusiastically reported their reading had it not been for the parameters we established through our project. As Brophy (1987) explains, well-conceived extrinsic motivational strategies can be effective under certain conditions.



By the end of our project many of Kathi's students were showing signs of reading for intrinsic reasons. This was quite evident in a number of ways: students' weekly journal responses and "hot seat" discussions; "Why Reading is a Good Thing" panel discussion, the end-of-project poll and the accompanying open-ended question, "Has our project made you want to read more, the same or less than before? Tell us why." By the conclusion of our four-month endeavor almost three-fourths of the students reported that they were reading more than they had been at the beginning of the project. Furthermore, the fact that the "what" goals were chosen almost twice as frequently during the second half of the project is potential testimony to the heightened interest students showed in the content of their books. The students' journal responses also demonstrated genuine excitement for their books and when applicable, frank interest in the subject matter — certainly intrinsic reasons for reading (Wigfield and McCann, 1996/1997). Many students were able to discuss the plot knowledgeably and analyze thoughtfully why they did or did not enjoy their books.

Equally important, virtually all of Kathi's students had a clearer personal understanding of why it is important to read and a more defined approach toward how, when, where and with whom they might read at home. Their journal responses and oral discussions were indicative of more reflective readers who understood and valued the activity in and of itself. The students were able to articulate why they felt they should read for pleasure, note the types of books they enjoyed and explain how they preferred to read at home.


By the conclusion of the project, Kathi felt that her students' literacy growth was evident when she cited what her students were actually doing, not merely saying, about reading. Kathi explained, "By the end the students were beginning to select their own books based on content and author as opposed to the number of pages (e.g., the shorter, the better). When they came to me asking for suggestions of books on a particular topic or author, I knew that they were developing an interest in reading for its own sake. I could see my students beginning to become more mature, self-directed readers."

We cannot help but refer to the research cited earlier that refers to the value of goal setting as a powerful motivational tool (Locke and Latham, 1990; Locke, Shaw, Saari and Latham, 1981). When students set their own goals, they are more focused, assume more responsibility for their own learning and enjoy themselves in the process. Among our students perhaps Kristin is the best example of how goal setting can have

such a powerful effect. In response to the end-of-project question, she explains what the project meant to her (See Figure 5).

Figure 5.

Kristen's Explanation: What the Project Means to Me

Goals help or encourage you by letting your imagination run free. If you just read because someone tells you to, you're not really going to be happy and you will not enjoy your book. By using goals it lets your mind come out on paper. It's also fun to make goals. You can read outside, inside, in the car, and anywhere you can think of. I  keep reading over the summer with my handie reading bag.

We were initially puzzled by the results and the lack of a significant difference on the mean scores of the Motivation to Read Profile. However, we soon recognized that a large percentage of students had initially responded in February with surprisingly high scores to many of the questions on the profile and that there might not have been much room for improvement. Of note, the initial survey was administered during a particularly high-interest literature unit on slavery which might have inflated the students' "pre-project" responses. We also wonder if the fourth grade students had sufficient maturity to respond reliably to a survey instrument. We feel strongly that the students' journal responses

and discussions expressed over time are more indicative of their changing attitudes and commitment towards at-home reading.

We wish to address the concerns of the few students who reported feeling pressure to meet their goals. In retrospect, perhaps we overemphasized asking students to record the exact amount of time they read in the program. Instead, we could have asked students to focus more regularly on an aspect of reading that is intrinsically motivating — the content of their books. We might direct them to describe in their journals one episode of their story that they could discuss at the following class session. In keeping with the success of our hot seat activity, we feel that allowing additional time for oral discussion is warranted. Namely, future reading motivation projects should allot even more time for students to share the content of their books with each other.

Based on our experiences we offer the following recommendations for future reading motivation projects:

We wholeheartedly propose that a form of goal setting and reflection be incorporated into future reading motivation projects.

- We recommend that students record their thoughts about a story episode in their reading journals that they would subsequently like to discuss in class.
- We suggest allotting additional time for students to share the content of their at-home reading books with each other via oral discussion.
- Although we do feel that students should read at least four days per week, we do not favor having them record the amount of time they read at home each evening.

Our reading motivation project fulfilled our hopes of building a foundation for reading for the students in Kathi's classroom. In a project of but four-months time, we felt we were able to shape many enthusiastic, knowledgeable, committed young readers. We sensed that we heightened the students' awareness of paths that can lead to fulfilling experiences. Hopefully, Kathi's students will choose these paths, the ones that point in the direction of lifelong reading.

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## **Children's literature: What's on the horizons**

**Lauren Freedman**  
*Western Michigan University*

Lipinski, Tara. 1997. *Tara Lipinski: Triumph on ice an autobiography* as told to Emily Costello. NY: Bantam Books. ISBN: 0-553-09775-X. 116 pp.

This is a wonderful book written by a teenager particularly for teens. The collection of color photographs from infancy to world championship gold is not only fascinating but has the potential to connect with the reader in ways that the text alone cannot do. The story traces Tara's figure skating career through a number of personal anecdotes. It also includes an introduction by Todd Eldredge, a list of important dates, a list of "my favorite things," a guide to scoring in figure skating, and a glossary of skating terms.

Dingle, Derek T. 1998. *First in the field: Baseball hero Jackie Robinson*. NY: Hyperion. ISBN: 0-7868-0348-7. 48 pp.

This book, written in chronological order, places Jackie Robinson squarely within an historical context which includes both the discrimination all African Americans faced during this time and World War II. The book is organized into chapters each describing a time in Jackie Robinson's life that coincides with an historical event(s). The story shares not only Jackie's life, but also describes those people he held as role models. The book gives a listing of Milestones in Black Sports, and a selected bibliography of books, films, newsreels, and articles for further investigation. This is an excellent book for reluctant older readers as it has enough text to give interesting information and sufficient support material.

Krull, Kathleen. 1996. *Wilma unlimited: How Wilma Rudolph became the world's fastest woman*. Illustrated by David Diaz. San Diego: Harcourt Brace. ISBN: 0-15-201267-2. 32 pp.

The beautiful acrylic, watercolor and gouache illustrations painted by Caldecott winner, David Diaz, enhance the power already inherent in this life story of Wilma Rudolph. This is a book which will be grabbed up and read by younger children as well as older children and adults. Wilma Rudolph's story is indeed inspirational and will connect with the lives of many of our students who have major issues in their lives they are working to overcome.

Horenstein, Henry. 1997. *Baseball in the Barrios*. San Diego: Gulliver Books. ISBN: 0-15-200499-8 (hb); 0-15-200504-8 (pb). 36 pp.

This book is a photo essay narrated by a fifth grade Venezuelan boy who loves to play baseball. He talks about his team and how the game is played in the barrio. He also tells us what a barrio is and talks about his daily life. The reader also meets the members of his family. The text makes use of Spanish words and names. It should be of interest to young baseball fans; it will be especially welcomed by hispanic students. The color photographs are abundant and sharp. At the end of the book is a world map that shows the location of Venezuela. There is also a double page spread of four categories of baseball terms in English and Spanish pronunciation in parentheses.

Blackstone, Margaret. 1998. *This is figure skating*. Illustrated by John O'Brien. NY: Henry Holt. ISBN: 0-8050-3706-3. 32 pp.

The cartoon-like illustrations demonstrate the simple, straightforward text descriptions. The book follows two girls as they walk to the ice rink in the park where they see "experts" doing the moves which are talked about in the text. For several of the moves, the readers also see one or both of the girls trying the technique. While the text is limited, it might be an excellent book for developing a beginning interest in ice skating.

Erlbach, Arlene. 1997. *Sidewalk games around the world*. Illustrated by Sharon Lane Holm. Brookfield CT: Millbrook Press. ISBN: 0-7613-0008-2. 64 pp.

Using an attractive, inviting and easy to use format, this book introduces a popular children's game from 26 different countries described on a double page spread with a brief paragraph about the country. A world map on each double page spread shows the location of the country. Occasionally there is a language box with a pronunciation key of the terms (usually numbers) used by the children as they play the game. Each set of directions begins with the number of players, what they'll need, and how to play. Directions for play are clear and easy to understand and include useful illustrations. There is a broad representation of countries. Games are indexed by continent, age, indoors/outdoors, and number of players required. An extensive bibliography is included at the end. This would be an excellent book to use in a study of diversity.

Lankford, Mary D. 1996. *Jacks around the world*. Illustrated by Karen Dugan. NY: Morrow Junior Books. ISBN: 0-688-13708-3. 40 pp.

This book includes "jack" games from fourteen countries. The name of each game is given as it is used in that country. For example, in South Korea the game is called Kong-Keui and in Israel it is called Hamesh Avanim. The book is organized in two page spreads. The opening spread contains a map of the world with the continents in green and the water in blue. The countries with "jack" games that are represented in the text are numbered and shown in yellow. A corresponding list of the countries is given on the left hand side of the two page spread. The rest of the book has the text on the left hand page and a painting of children playing the game on the right. There are details in each illustration which are pertinent to the country being shown. The text gives a bit of history and background and then a numbered list of rules for play.

Egan, Terry, Friedman, Stan, & Levine, Mike. 1997. *The good guys of baseball: Sixteen true sports stories*. NY: Simon & Schuster. ISBN: 0-689-80212-9. 111 pp.

Though slim on illustrations and photos, this book presents biographies of baseball players who exemplify virtuosity and strong work ethics. A wide range of ethnicities are represented in the biographies



which run approximately ten pages. There are references for further reading given at the end. The stories have a great deal of substance. Some of the players depicted are not among the most famous or those with the most name recognition which makes this book unique. The players were chosen for their contributions as role models.

Cooper, Elisha. 1998. *Ballpark*. NY: Greenwillow. ISBN: 0-688-15755-6. 40 pp.

This story describes, in few words and a series of cartoon-like watercolors and pencil illustrations, the activities that occur in a baseball stadium in preparation for the game and during the game. The text is printed on the pages in ways that enhance the illustration and almost become part of the illustrations. This picture-based book details the behind-the-scenes happenings of a major league baseball stadium, from the laundry room to the grounds-keeping crew.

Ross, Kathy. 1997. *Crafts for kids who are wild about... series*. Illustrated by Sharon Lane Holm. Brookfield CT: Millbrook Press. 48 pp.

The attractive books in this series may be used as much by teachers as by students. The format is inviting and well organized, but the directions for most of the projects are lengthy and detailed. Kids will enjoy making most of the items, but they will need adult/teacher guidance. The topics all have child appeal. They can easily be incorporated into units on the topic. Twenty projects are included in ...*dinosaurs* and ...*outer space*. Thirteen projects are included in ...*rainforests*.

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