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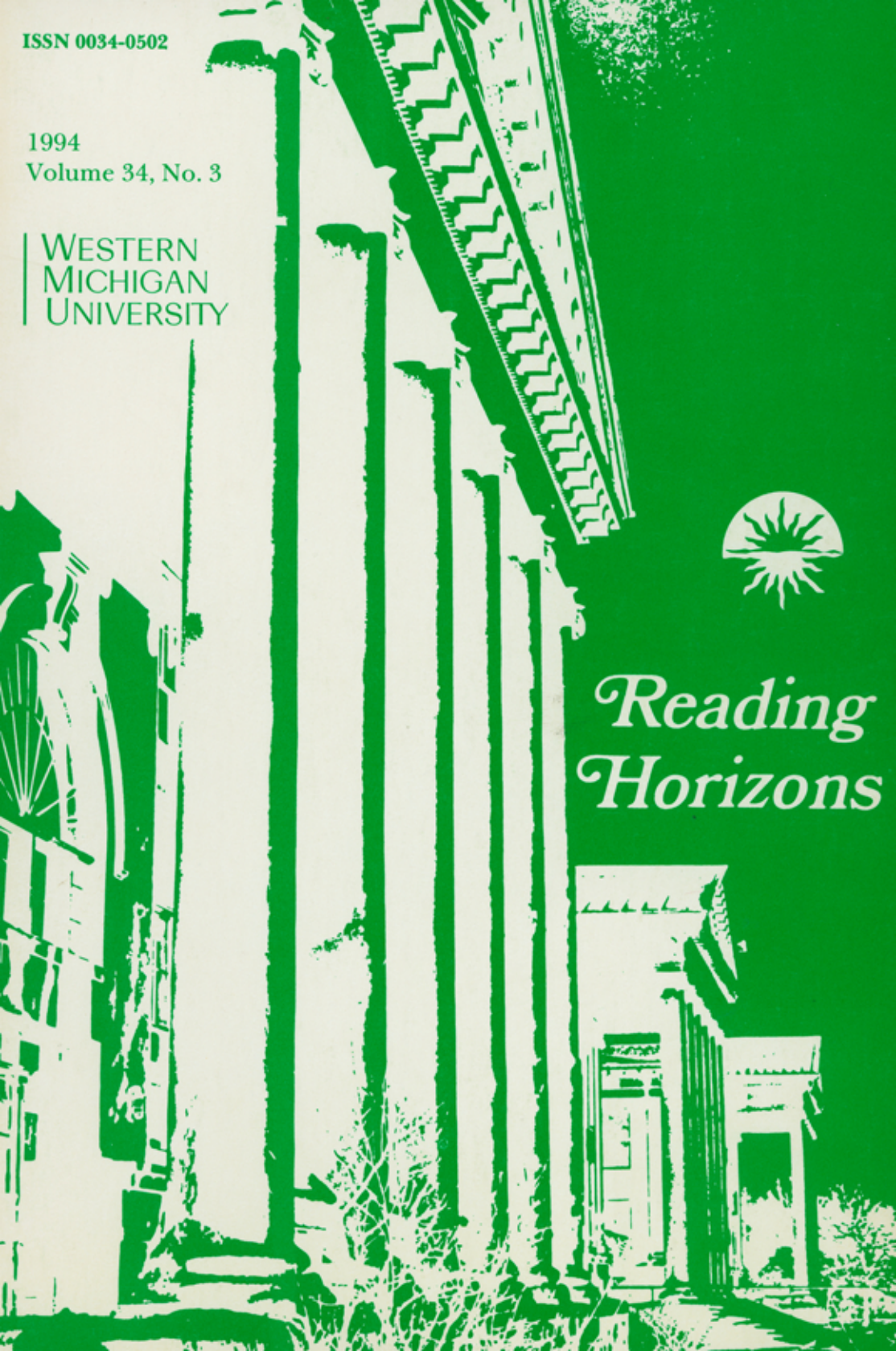
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Reading Horizons





READING HORIZONS

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READING HORIZONS has been published since 1960, on the campus of Western Michigan University in Kalamazoo Michigan. As a journal devoted to teaching reading at all levels it seeks to bring together, through articles and reports of research findings, those concerned and interested professionals working in the ever widening horizons of reading and related areas of language. READING HORIZONS (ISSN 0034-0502) is published by the College of Education at Western Michigan University. Second class postage is paid at Kalamazoo. Postmaster: Send address changes to READING HORIZONS, WMU, Kalamazoo MI 49008.

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**READING HORIZONS
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Implementing a Holistic Reading Series In First Grade: Experiences With A Conversation Group <i>Martha Combs</i>	196
Their Own Story: Literature for African-American Children <i>Jeanne McGlinn</i>	208
The Effects of Teacher Training On Pre-Service Elementary Education Majors' Conceptual Framework of Reading <i>Patricia A. Shaw</i>	216
Holistic Analysis of Basal Readers: An Assessment Tool <i>Arne E. Sippola</i>	234
Fluency in Children's Writing <i>V. Andree Bayliss</i>	247
Generating Response To Literature With At-Risk Third Grade Students <i>Kathy Everts Danielson</i> <i>Patty Tighe</i>	257
REVIEWS	
Professional Materials <i>Jennifer Rae Stell</i>	279
Children's Books	281

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Implementing a Holistic Reading Series in First Grade: Experiences With a Conversation Group

Martha Combs

A local school district has adopted a reading series which is described by the series' authors as a whole language approach (Booth, 1984). In comparison to the three previously adopted reading series (Lippincott, Open Court, and American Book), this adoption decision represents a dramatic philosophical and instructional shift. This decision also represents an attempt to mandate holistic literature-based instruction, rather than to let it emerge as a grassroots, teacher-initiated change, which is considered by Goodman (1986) to be a more successful way to implement whole language. The adoption committee — spending the better part of a year reading and studying together — represented less than five percent of the district's elementary teachers. Nearly one third of the elementary schools did not have teacher representatives on the adoption committee. Ninety-five percent of the teachers, then, had only one summer to prepare to implement a holistic reading program.

To be successful, change of this nature must address the issue of the meaning of the change for participants (Fullan, 1993; Maeroff, 1988; Marris, 1975). Almost two decades ago Marris (1975) suggested that new experiences are always

initially reacted to in the context of some "familiar, reliable construction of reality" (p. 22) in which people must be able to attach personal meaning to the experiences regardless of how meaningful they might be to others. Marris went on to state that any innovation "cannot be assimilated unless its meaning is shared" (p. 121).

Since so many teachers who were expected to implement the whole language series had not been direct participants in the decision making process, it seemed important to establish a dialogue with a group to understand the impact of such a mandated change. During the first year of implementation, a group of 18 first grade teachers, who had not been involved in the adoption decision and expressed concerns about the change, were drawn together to form a conversation group. The remainder of this article addresses the concerns of those teachers about the implementation of a holistic literature-based reading series, and in many respects whole language.

The conversation group

The 18 teachers in the conversation group had teaching experience ranging from 2-21 years. Four teachers were in their first year as first grade teachers. Three pairs of teachers were in their first year of team teaching. Their schools represented all socioeconomic levels. As a part of the conversation group, each teacher agreed to meet bimonthly during the first semester and monthly during the second semester to discuss the changes they were observing in themselves and their progress in implementing the new series and whole language. At monthly meetings, which were audiotaped, I tried to provide support for the teachers' concerns. The teachers also kept journals focused on their personal concerns.

At the onset of the conversation group, the predisposition of each teacher to the adoption and to whole language

was determined through an instructional autobiography. Of the 18 teachers, only two were strongly opposed to the change. The remaining teachers represented a range of attitudes, from strongly in favor of the reading series and whole language to accepting the change as something beyond one's control. One factor did bind the group of teachers — they had all taught skills-based reading, in some form, for at least two years.

Slightly more than half of the group, or 10 teachers, already had begun to include more literature in their classrooms prior to the implementation because they felt that enjoyment was lacking in the skills-based series. The use of literature took the form of reading aloud to children at least once a day, a short sustained silent reading time of 10-15 minutes, and the frequent use of Big Books in shared group experiences. The Big Books, however, were primarily used for another form of reading aloud and for enjoyment, but not to support instruction directly. For many of these teachers, adding literature to their language arts program was difficult due to a shortage of resources in their schools, especially multiple copies of books, Big Books and predictable materials.

The remaining eight teachers had been satisfied with the previous basal series. They believed that their children were learning to read in a manner that they had come to expect. The sequence of the skills-based basals was familiar and most of the children progressed as the teachers expected, with benchmarks of achievement that were familiar. From the teachers' perspective, there was a certain sense of security that skills were "covered," and that most children had learned to read using the skills-oriented basals. These eight teachers read aloud sometimes, but not consistently. In the past, children in these classes had not been encouraged to read real books as frequently as children in the other 10 classrooms.

The teacher's manual

Format and content. The entire group expressed concern about the format of the holistic teacher's manual, which was dramatically different from the skills-based series. Regardless of predisposition, each of the 18 teachers found the difference with the format and content of the manual to be an initial concern. The front portion of each manual contained a number of pages devoted to general philosophy and techniques that support the reading program and whole language. The individual lesson plans did not specifically integrate these techniques, but rather seemed to assume that the teacher would be knowledgeable enough to select activities appropriately to fit the content of the lesson and the developmental level of the learners. Thus, the teachers were confronted, early on, with making many new instructional decisions.

Decision making. These teachers were not used to making the types of decisions about lesson components that the new series expected of them. Their experiences with the skills-based manuals had been dramatically different, even to the point of being scripted for their talk with children about a story. It became very apparent that the immediacy of teaching the new series made it quite difficult for the teachers to step back from the materials long enough to determine effective ways for them to make decisions for children.

Skill development. The new teacher's manual presented skill development in a very general manner, not at all like the scope and sequence of the skills-based series that the teachers had previously used. It seemed to be an issue of mentioning vs. scripting. The new series mentioned some choices for activities, without elaboration for teachers who might be new at holistic instruction. The skills-based series had provided scripts and while most of the teachers did not want scripts, they certainly felt like they needed more than the mentioning of an idea.

It was also observed that, because of the highly sequenced and detailed format of the skills-based series, these teachers did not seem to have a sense of how to systematically go through the first grade books in the new series to determine the scope and sequence of skills. In previous implementations — there had been three in the past 15 years — the organization and language of each text had been similar enough that the teachers became familiar with it by teaching the lessons. They had not felt the need to analyze the previous series, since an adequate number of familiar benchmarks were readily apparent.

The new series, however, was different. Familiar aspects of the skills-based series, such as a core vocabulary list that builds from story to story, were not present and the teachers did not realize that initially. When we completed a hand tabulation of word use frequency, almost no repetition was found in the first three books (equivalent to preprimers). The skills-based series had always controlled the introduction of words and provided practice through stories and worksheets. After tabulating frequencies, teachers felt they could then explain to themselves and others why many students did not seem to be making progress in developing a core sight vocabulary. The conversation group decided to trace other skills so that they could teach themselves about the organization of the new reading series and become more able to detect areas where they would need to make decisions differently.

Phonics. Phonics was the major area of concern for skill development and an issue that was difficult for the group to resolve entirely. The teachers discovered that the sequence of phonics skills in the new series did not seem to be organized or presented in a manner that they readily understood. They felt that the new series did not provide much support to children who were struggling with concept of word in print and letter/sound relationships. Here, again, all of the teachers in

the group seemed to be on equal footing. The teachers who had supplemented with literature had still relied on the skills-based series to teach children the phonics skills required. All of the teachers in the conversation group had to reexamine their beliefs about the development of knowledge of words and letter/sound relationships. They taught each other what they had come to know about developmental spelling stages and techniques that they knew for supplementing children's word knowledge. The techniques they used, for the most part, kept word knowledge separated from connected text, but that was consistent with their skills-based background. I shared professional readings with the teachers to challenge their thinking, but left the details of the issues until they had more experience with their children for us to build on. I wanted them to discover the children who were learning sight words and generalizing letter/sound relationships from those words, because we could use these children to teach ourselves about strategies for supporting the development of phonics knowledge.

Reading stories. Another skill area that caused great concern for these teachers was the reading of stories. In the skills-based series, stories had been read orally in small ability groups and discussion could be guided by the script of questions and answers in the teacher's manual. The new manual merely encouraged teachers to read the story aloud to children first, then have children chorally read until the text was familiar. The new manual also gave similar suggestions from story to story and the teachers soon felt that they were being far too repetitious to keep children's interest.

Here is where the teachers who had begun adding literature to their programs responded somewhat differently from those teachers who had been almost entirely skills-based. The teachers who had supplemented with literature found it easier to think of various ways to engage children in a story.

They seemed more comfortable with the literature, to the point of being playful with the stories. These teachers were better able to generalize the use of ideas they had received from workshops and professional readings in their work with children. Their predisposition to literature was an asset to them and they were able to support and encourage the other teachers in the group.

Whole group instruction

As the teachers were able to address their concerns with the new teacher's manual, a second broad concern emerged. The series encouraged teachers to provide most instruction in a whole group setting, a stark contrast to the ability groups most frequently used in skills-based instruction. The new manual offered general whole language philosophy, but these teachers, many with long histories of teaching with ability groups, found it difficult to believe that reading stories primarily through whole group techniques could reach their children. As a group, they were not prepared for this shift. While they had always read aloud to their entire class, they had not really thought of it as instruction and, consequently, did not think they knew instructional strategies for whole group reading instruction. They knew behavior and lesson management strategies, but did they know instructional strategies for reading with a group of diverse learners? Of particular concern was how they would know if they were meeting the needs of the obvious range of readers that they had observed in their classrooms.

After this concern surfaced in the conversation group, I encouraged the teachers to tape record themselves during some of their whole group reading activities, then listen to their interactions with children. What patterns of response did they notice? Did they respond to all children in a similar manner? In an effort to reduce their anxiety about recording

themselves, they were not required to share the recordings with anyone. Some of the teachers who had been supplementing their programs with literature were surprised to find that they were responding differently to children during story reading. They found that they did not single out children who lacked confidence. They cued children to help them be successful in responding. They encouraged anticipation of events and accepted group responses. They also found that they modeled word identification strategies and included responses of more advanced children as a way of sharing information about reading.

As teachers were willing to share these insights from the audio taping, they were also encouraged to share their decision making processes that others might find helpful. Decision making was difficult for them to talk about. They seemed to lack the language to describe their decision making processes, as well as the knowledge of whole language philosophy that might help them explain such processes to themselves and others. At this point, the conversation group found it helpful to break up into smaller literature study groups to read and discuss a number of articles and portions of books that described emergent reading and holistic strategies. The readings in the study groups allowed the teachers to focus on someone beside themselves as they wrestled with new concepts. As they became able to use themselves as examples, we moved away from reading materials and back to their lived experience for our conversation material.

Personal concerns

Feeling confident and competent. One of the major differences that seemed to separate the teachers in this conversation group over the entire year were their feelings of confidence and competence in teaching the new reading series. Those who had been able to risk already, and had

into using more literature in their classrooms before the change to the new reading series seemed more confident initially. Their talk in the conversation groups was more positive toward the change and they encouraged others in the group to be patient. Without verbalizing it explicitly, they seemed aware that the time they had spent in trying things out on their own was a good learning experience. The conversation group did provide the support that several teachers needed to be able to allow themselves to accept frustration and uncertainty as normal feelings in the midst of change. One technique that we used in the conversation group, the personal tape recording, proved to be quite a confidence builder for a number of teachers. When they heard themselves talking with children, no one else needed to tell them that they were making progress in using literature effectively.

As I mentioned at the beginning, three pairs of the teachers were in teams for the first time. Two of the teams were working very well; one team, however, was not proving to be beneficial to either of the teachers. For the two teams that were working well, the addition of the daily collaboration significantly enhanced the feelings of confidence expressed in the group. Another area in which I noticed a difference in confidence was for teachers who were working in high and low socioeconomic (SES) schools. Teachers in high SES schools felt pressure from parents with traditional views of instruction. These parents expressed concerns about changes in grouping patterns and phonics instruction. Concerns about phonics instruction caused teachers to question their personal knowledge of phonics in a whole language context. In contrast, teachers at the low SES schools felt a lack of confidence that seemed to stem from a combination of children with less experience in written language and lack of knowledge about strategies to use holistically in developing concepts about words and print over time.

Impact of experience. For members of this conversation group, years of experience in teaching did not appear to be a factor related to sense of self, feelings of adequacy, or level of skill conveyed through our discussions. Rather, willingness to risk and try something new seemed more closely related to positive verbalizations in the group. Conversely, years of experience in teaching first grade did seem to be a factor related to concerns expressed in the group. The four teachers who were new to first grade lacked the background of experience with this age group to judge children's progress in reading. New first grade teachers asked more questions than any other identifiable group during our conversations and were quick to defer to others that they considered more knowledgeable about the age group.

Are conversation groups worthwhile?

After spending the first year with the teachers I realized that, in responding to their concerns, the conversation group served several very important functions for change and growth. The conversation group helped the teachers 1) learn to watch and respond to children differently, 2) to understand that the nature of learning for children is whole to part, rather than part to whole, and 3) to move toward teaching as an intellectual pursuit — as it should be — by reading and studying together. These functions are consistent with the desired outcomes suggested by whole language advocates (Goodman, 1986), experts in change processes (Fullan, 1993), and teacher empowerment advocates (Maeroff, 1988).

Learning to watch children. While the teachers had worked in the skills-based series they assumed that the worksheets and book tests told them most of what they needed to know about children's progress. The format of the new reading series and whole group instruction immediately made the teachers feel uncomfortable about judging student progress. They came to discover that one of the major

differences between skills-based and holistic teaching is emphasis on children. They had not learned to watch children closely in their skills-based work and, consequently, made decisions more as a result of what the teacher's manual suggested than what children's behavior suggested.

Through the concerns they expressed for learning to work with the new series, the conversation group was able to refocus concern on what the children's behaviors told teachers. First the teachers had to understand how the new series was organized. Then, using their overall sense of the series, the teachers could turn their attention to the specifics of what the children were doing. Until they understood the series, they were unable to understand the significance of what children said and did. Learning to watch children was very slow to come, especially for the teachers who had not begun to supplement with literature before the new series was adopted.

Whole to part vs. part to whole. As the teachers began to see how watching children could teach them about what to do next in their classrooms, they also began to verbalize examples that showed how children learned from whole to part and not vice versa. This realization came from many of our discussions on word knowledge and the reading of stories. The whole to part philosophy caused these teachers to redefine their ideas about what they had always called merely "memorization." Their understanding was by no means complete, but they did challenge their long held beliefs about constantly needing to break things down in little pieces for children before learning could take place.

Study groups. Probably the most significant and powerful part of the year was spent together in the study groups. When teachers come together to talk concretely about relevant theories and practice that are of concern to them, they teach themselves and each other things that no transmission

model could ever hope to teach. Addressing their concerns, when the concerns became important, was the key to the study groups. These teachers also came away with a new understanding and appreciation for their own abilities and those of their colleagues to be the "experts." Many of them, but not all, came to see how powerful the social side of learning is for adults, and not just for children.

Reflections

Personal meaning is essential to the change process. The teachers in this conversation group clearly illustrated the importance of the development of personal meaning, if instructional, as well as personal, change is to be effective and sustained. As Fullan (1993) suggests, materials and practices can be impacted through a mandated change, but until one finds personal meaning in the philosophy of a mandated change, the change will not be complete. In addition, the conversation group enabled teachers to assimilate the change through the sharing of the implementation experience.

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Their Own Story: Literature for African- American Children

Jeanne McGlinn

The literature that African-American children read has the power to transform their vision of themselves and their culture. According to a report issued by the National Black Child Development Institute (1991), "Children's books that present accurate and realistic images of Black people and our culture are a major vehicle for generating high self-esteem and a positive self-concept in Black children" (p. 5). If the literature also focuses on the experiences of the child, then African-American children will be more likely to choose to read it. As stated by Carlsen (1971), "... young people want to read about people like themselves, with whom they can identify" (p. 208). This motivation is very important to a child's development as a reader. To become willing readers, children have to see that they have something to gain personally from reading. If this recognition never occurs, then it can have a detrimental effect on their reading ability: "If children are provided reading texts which do not elicit favorable responses their attention may dwindle and their comprehension may suffer" (Mathewson, 1976, p. 672).

Even though the importance of children being able to read books that reflect their experience is widely recognized, too few books reflect the contemporary experiences of African-

American children today. Less than two percent of the children's books published each year are about African-Americans (Bishop, 1991). Reimer (1992) surveyed trade books and basal reading programs for third graders. She found that although basal readers include ethnic diversity in their stories, there is not much diversity represented in the trade books. The great majority of trade books published for children do not reflect the experiences of ethnic minorities. Some see this as indicative of racism in the United States:

Children's books are not merely frivolous entertainment. They are part of a society's general culture. U.S. culture is white-dominated and racist. Children's books in the U.S. reflect our society while at the same time reinforcing and perpetuating its racism (Slapin and Seale, 1992, p. 2).

Candy Dawson Boyd (1991), an African-American author of children's books, asserts the need for authentic depictions of the lives of African-American children written with the "richness and power of ethnicity" (p. 50). She says of her own childhood experience on the south side of Chicago that, although enriching, it was not enough for her to read the usual literary fare for children:

I never saw myself or my mama or my daddy in books. But as children, we blew bubbles on sunny summer mornings on the back porch, played school, worried about doing well on the long division test, and avoided broccoli and spinach and liver... We lived rich, vibrant lives despite all of the adversities. I never saw any of that in books. Did I notice? Yes. Did it make me feel bad? Yes. (p. 52).

Although currently more African-American books are being published, much of the literature available to children

does not show characters who are part of the mainstream of American society, living in relatively secure home situations, and engaged in the normal activities of children. The African-American literature in school libraries is often limited to reading African or American folktales, histories of life during slave times, or else contemporary stories that focus on the problems that children face such as poverty and racism. No one would deny the importance of folk literature which reflects the accumulated wisdom and mores of a people, but folktales by their nature put the reader in another world outside of the ordinary time and place. Characters in folktales are stereotyped and the emphasis is on a quick, decisive resolution of the plot. Readers do not get a sense of a complex person engaged in working out a real life situation. So too with historical fiction which emphasizes the struggles of a person or group during a particular crisis. As authentic expressions of African-American history and culture there is much of value in these works for young children. However, if the coverage of African-American life is limited to these kinds of subject matter then this literature does not really meet the needs of children to see images of African-Americans in ordinary life. But research shows that many teachers are unfamiliar with the wide range of children's literature and choose some "standards" whenever they are looking for a multicultural text (Thompson and Meeks, 1990).

The need for teachers to make available a wide selection of African-American literature is described in Eleanora Tate's (1990) recent novel, *Thank you, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.!* Mary Elouise, a fourth-grader at Gumbo Grove Elementary School in Gumbo Grove, South Carolina, feels nervous whenever her white teacher, Miz Vereen, begins to talk about blacks as those "wonderful Negro Americans" who have risen "from such lowly beginnings." Mary Elouise, busy with the typical concerns of any nine year old — fitting in with the

popular girls and looking like the images which she sees on television — is embarrassed by references to blacks. She doesn't want the teacher to draw attention to how she is different. She says:

February is when almost everybody in school and at church and on TV pulled out stuff about Black History. Black, Black, Black everywhere! And then we don't hear hardly anything about it until the next February. That stuff is okay with me if it's about us doing what everybody else does... But sometimes Miz Vereen shows pictures of real poor Black folks with great big teeth sitting on old broken down front porches with their hair messy, eating watermelon and grinning... I want to crawl under my desk when stuff like that comes around... It makes me think there's something wrong with those Black people in those books and on TV to make them get such a lowdown deal... and then I get scared. Does that mean there is something wrong with me? Will bad things happen to me too? (p. 49-50).

Mary Elouise's question could be echoed by many school children in the United States today who come from ethnic, cultural, religious or regional subgroups. Instead of developing an appreciation for their unique cultures, many children are receiving the message that they are different and somehow inferior to the dominant white culture. Sometimes teachers send this message in spite of their best efforts not to do so, because of lack of understanding of the attitudes and feelings of their students — like Mary Elouise. Teachers choose books without thinking about the wide range of experiences of African-Americans. Not all African-Americans are in crisis; their lives encompass all social and economic strata in contemporary American society (Banks, 1991, p. 214). Multicultural literature, like all quality literature, should

create a complex view of the individuals who are members of a particular ethnic group, showing their various aspirations, socio-economic levels, occupations, and human characteristics. The problems of poverty and racism do exist, but images of African-Americans enjoying life in the United States should also be available to children. A balanced choice of literature will be a vehicle to convey the history, culture, diversity and richness of human life.

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This annotated bibliography is offered to teachers as a guide to some of the books which show African-Americans engaged in a wide variety of activities and reflects the richness of their family life and culture.

Contemporary fiction

- Bang, M. (1983). *Ten, nine, eight*. NY: Greenwillow. This father and daughter number book deals with aspects of getting ready for bed.
- Bonsall, C. (1980). *Who's afraid of the dark?* NY: Harper & Row. This book helps children consider bedtime fears (multicultural illustrations).
- Bradman, T., & Browne, E. (1990). *Wait and see*. London: Methuen. Jo and Mum go shopping while Dad stays home to make lunch. Illustrations show a racially-mixed family.
- Cameron, A. (1981). *The stories Julian tells*. NY: Bullseye. Recommended in *The read-aloud handbook* by Jim Trelease and an ALA Notable Children's Book, these stories are about all the things that happen to two little boys — Julian and his brother Huey.
- Cameron, A. (1986). *More stories Julian tells*. NY: Bullseye. Here are more adventures for Julian, but sometimes his "big mouth" gets him in trouble.
- Cameron, A. (1988). *Julian, secret agent*. NY: Random House. Julian, Huey and Gloria are super sleuths who find their way into lots of trouble.
- Cameron, A. (1990). *Julian, dream doctor*. NY: Random House. Julian wants his father to have the gift of his dreams for his birthday.
- Carlstrom, N.W. (1987). *Wild wild sunflower child Anna*. NY: Macmillan. Anna enjoys a day in the outdoors.
- DeVeaux, A. (1987). *An enchanted hair tale*. NY: Harper & Row. Sudan learns to accept himself.
- Flournoy, V. (1985). *The patchwork quilt*. NY: Dial. Tanya's grandmother is making a patchwork quilt using bits of cloth. When her grandmother becomes ill, Tanya finishes the quilt by herself.
- Greene, B. (1974). *Philip Hall likes me, I reckon maybe*. NY: Dial. Beth Lambert, 11 years old, growing up in rural Arkansas, deals with the emotional ups and downs of a first crush. Greene creates a portrait of a loving and strong family and community.
- Greenfield, E. (1975). *Me and Neesie*. NY: Crowell. Neesie is an invisible friend of Janell's. Things change when Aunt Bea comes to visit.
- Greenfield, E. (1981). *Daydreamers*. NY: Dial. Greenfield's poetry is illustrated with portraits of African-American children.
- Greenfield, E. (1988). *Grandpa's face*. NY: Philomel. Tamika loves her grandfather, who is an actor, but is frightened that she may lose his love when she sees him rehearsing an angry face. Her grandfather discovers what is troubling her and soothes her fears.

- Greenfield, E. (1992). *Koya Delaney and the good girl blues*. NY: Scholastic. Koya Delaney is the class comedienne; her classmates all know about her laughing fits. But when her cousin Del, a rock singer, comes to town Koya has to deal with a fight between her sister, her best friend, and some unhappy fans who won't leave Del alone. Koya learns how to express anger in a healthy way.
- Hamilton, V. (1967). *Zeely*. NY: Dell. An ALA Notable Book. Eleven year old Geeder Perry, who lives in a fantasy world, spends the summer at her uncle's farm. She makes up stories about Zeely, the hog farmer's daughter, imagining her to be a great queen. Zeely teaches her that royalty has everything to do with what is inside and not with appearances.
- Hamilton, V. (1976). *M.C. Higgins, the Great*. NY: Collier. (Newbery Award winner). Fifteen year old M.C. lives near a strip mine in Ohio where his family struggles to make a good life.
- Hamilton, V. (1990). *Cousins*. NY: Philomel. Cammy faces her grandmother's death and other family trials — cousins that are hard to take for a variety of reasons. When a tragedy occurs, Cammy learns about the power of family love.
- Hamilton, V. (1992). *Drylongso*. NY: Harcourt. A mysterious boy named Drylongso comes to Lindy's family during a time of drought. He shows them where to plant and renews their hope.
- Hayes, S. (1986). *Happy Christmas, Gemma*. NY: Lothrop, Lee & Shepard. Gemma and her family celebrate Christmas.
- Hoffman, M. (1991). *Amazing Grace*. NY: Dial. Grace refuses to let others' expectations keep her from being all she wants to be.
- Howard, E. (1988). *The train to Lulu's*. NY: Bradbury. Two sisters travel on the train to their great aunt's home in Baltimore.
- Howard, E. (1991). *Aunt Flossie's hats (and crab cakes later)*. NY: Clarion. Aunt Flossie shares family stories with her two nieces.
- Hudson, W. (1993). *Pass it on: African-American poetry for children*. NY: Scholastic. A collection of poems selected by Wade Hudson which includes poems by Langston Hughes, Nikki Giovanni, Gwendolyn Brooks, Lucille Clifton, and Elouise Greenfield.
- Keats, E.J. (1962). *The snowy day*. NY: Viking. A story about a small boy's adventures in the snow.
- Keats, E.J. (1972). *Pet show*. NY: Collier. It's time for the neighborhood pet show, but Archie's cat is missing.
- Mathis, S.B. (1975). *The hundred penny box*. NY: Viking. Michael loves his great-great-aunt, Aunt Dew, who lives in her memories. He tries to explain to his mother why she can't replace Aunt Dew's old hundred penny box even though it is all beaten up and always under foot.
- Mendez, P. (1989). *The black snowman*. NY: Scholastic. Jacob learns about the *kente's* magic. *Kente* is a brightly colored cloth which brings magic to the people of the Ashanti tribe.

- Pinkney, G.J. (1992). *Back home*. Ernestine Avery Powell returns to Lumberton, North Carolina — the place where she was born — to visit her Uncle June and Aunt Beula's farm and to become friends with her cousin Jack.
- Sebestyen, O. (1979). *Words by heart*. NY: Little, Brown. Lena tries to get her white classmates to notice her and not her skin.
- Spier, P. (1980). *People*. NY: Doubleday. This book illustrates all the infinite variety of people in the wide world.
- Tate, E.E. (1987). *The secret of Gumbo Grove*. NY: Franklin Watts. Raisin Stackhouse lives in Gumbo Grove, South Carolina, "The Number One Family Vacationland." When she helps old Miss Effie Pfluggins clean up the old church cemetery, she discovers a mystery about the past which leads her in search of the true history of Gumbo Grove.
- Tate, E.E. (1990). *Thank you, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.!* NY: Franklin Watts. Mary Elouise learns about her heritage with the help of her loving grandmother and a storyteller who teaches her about African history.
- Thomas, J.C. (1986). *The golden pasture*. NY: Scholastic. Carl Lee, 13, finds a wild Appaloosa horse that he tries to tame.
- Walker, A. (1988). *To hell with dying*. NY: Harcourt. The love and attention of children revives Mr. Sweet when he feels near death.
- Williams, S.A. (1992). *Working cotton*. NY: Harcourt. Based on the author's memories of childhood experiences in the cotton fields of Fresno, this is the story of Shelan who is not yet old enough to pick her own cotton. The story describes a day in the fields.
- Yarbrough, C. (1979). *Cornrows*. NY: Coward McCann & Geoghegan. This story explains the hairstyle of cornrows and the heritage of African-Americans.



The Effects of Teacher Training on Pre-Service Elementary Education Majors' Conceptual Framework of Reading

Patricia A. Shaw

What is known about the training of teachers? Does training make a difference? If training makes a difference, what type of training? What variables influence the training? What guarantee is there that training will transfer to the actual teaching situation? These are questions that were asked before, during and after the studies presented in this article. The purpose of the studies was to investigate whether a reading methods course and/or student teaching can influence an individual's conceptual framework of reading.

Vacca, Vacca and Gove (1987) define a conceptual framework of reading as an individual's belief about how students learn to read. They maintain that an individual's conceptual framework of reading lies "... on a continuum between concepts that reflect bottom-up models of reading and concepts that reflect top-down models of reading" (p. 16). Their research defines teachers with bottom-up and top-down conceptual frameworks in the following manner:

Teachers who have a bottom-up conceptual framework believe that students must decode letters and words before they are able to derive meaning from sentences, paragraphs, and largest text selections.

Teachers who hold [a top down] framework consider reading for meaning an essential component of all reading instructional situations. Therefore, they feel that the majority of reading/language arts instructional time should involve students in meaningful activities in which they read, write, speak and listen (p. 20-21).

An individual's conceptual framework of reading may fall anywhere on the continuum between these two extremes. A belief system that falls between these two extremes may reflect an interactive model. "Interactive models suggest that the process of reading is initiated by formulating hypotheses about meaning *and* by simultaneously decoding letters and words" (p. 16). The studies presented here investigated the belief systems prospective teachers hold toward teaching reading, and the effects of a reading methodology course and student teaching on these belief systems.

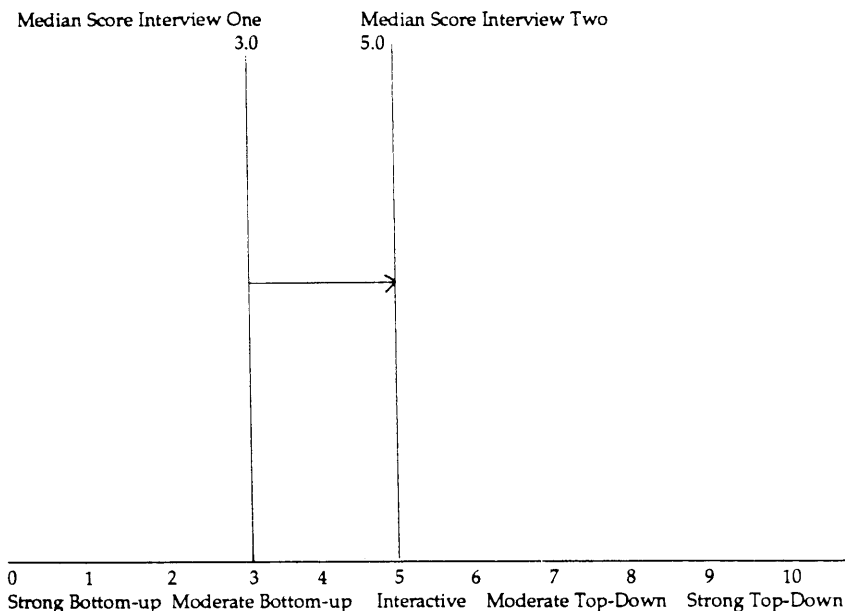
Study one

Methods and materials. The subjects for the first study were 94 elementary education majors who were enrolled in a course entitled "Elementary School Reading Teaching Strategies." The subjects were divided among four sections of the reading course taught by three different instructors. The three different instructors used the same text, course outline, course requirements and evaluation scale during the semester the study was in progress. All three instructors focused on a top-down model of reading; however, all three models of reading — top-down, bottom-up and interactive — were introduced to the students. A variable that was not controlled was the teaching style of each of the instructors.

Interview instrument and design. At the beginning and end of the semester, students were given the "Conceptual Framework of Reading Interview: Form A, Pre-service Teachers" (Vacca, et al., 1987). This interview helps a preservice or inservice teacher see "... how specific practices are theoretically related" (p. 23). The interview required the subjects to respond to a series of questions such as: "Suppose a student is reading orally in your class and makes an oral reading error. What is the first thing you will probably do? Why?" (p. 18). After the subjects responded to a total of 10 questions each, their responses were coded by checking them against sample responses in the "Guidelines for Analyzing the Conceptual Frameworks of Reading Interview" (pp. 485-488). The "Guidelines" were validated in a study by Gove in 1981 (p. 17). Each response was coded as *bottom-up* (BU), *top-down* (TD), or *not enough information* (NI) to determine which conceptual framework category was appropriate (p. 17). The columns were tallied and each student was categorized as *strong top-down*, *moderate top-down*, *moderate bottom-up*, or *strong bottom-up*. The specific procedures for using the "Conceptual Framework of Reading Interview" were taken from Vacca, et al. (1987, pp. 17-22). An ordinal scale was devised to use in place of the nominal scale because more data can be collected using an ordinal scale. On the ordinal scale students were given the rank of *one* if they gave one top-down response, a rank of *two* if they gave two top-down responses, etc.

The reliability of the ranking criteria was determined by taking a random sample of 30 interviews and having them coded by two reading educators who were also instructors of the reading methods class. Reliability was determined by using the Spearman ρ correlation coefficient. Reliability was considered significant at the .01 level.

Figure 1
Continuum of beliefs: Study One



Results. In the first study 94 students were matched on pre- and post-interviews. The Wilcoxon *t*-test was used to test the null hypothesis: there is no difference in the conceptual framework of reading, of the population of elementary education majors, after taking a reading methodology course. In this study the hypothesis of no difference was rejected; there was a significant change in the conceptual frameworks of these subjects. Figure 1 shows a very obvious shift to the right of the median scores, between interview one and interview two. At the beginning of the semester the median rank was 3 (*moderate bottom-up*) and after the semester the median rank

was 5 (*interactive*). The course seems to have altered the belief systems of the subjects. Adding to the descriptive analysis are some interesting differences and similarities of responses that occurred between interview one (pre-methods course) and interview two (post-methods course). In several instances subjects were found to be using "buzz" words more frequently in the second interview. An excellent example of a buzz word term that was used was "whole language." The use of the term, *whole language*, however, was not always backed up with the instructional strategies subjects suggested. Subjects would indicate whole language and individualized instruction as goals of instruction; however, with regard to vocabulary instruction would state that *all* vocabulary needed to be introduced prior to reading because of the need for correctness — subjects were basically contradicting themselves. There were also misconceptions among subjects as to what they were taught to do in a particular situation. In response to the question of *what would you do if a student made an oral reading error* (Vacca, et al., p. 18), Subject A responded:

Interview one — "Correct the student."

Interview two — "I would have corrected the student in the past... due to information in class I know better... correct error in private."

Basically, Subject A is still concerned with correctness in the second interview response. This subject gave no indication of using more holistic strategies such as *Don't correct if the error doesn't affect the meaning of the passage* or *If the error affects the meaning of the passage, ask students to reread the passage, tell the students the word, and ask "Does that make sense?"* (p. 486). The subject probably did not get the information for the response in interview two from class; the subject may have gotten the information from field experience. The following scenario is proposed, concerning Subject A's response, based on many observations of field experience

students. Subject A, using the strategy proposed in interview one, *correct the student*, found out that either she was constantly correcting students and/or that her corrections embarrassed the students, so she began correcting them in private. The strategy reinforced itself because the subject no longer felt uncomfortable in an oral reading situation. The problem with this strategy is that it completely isolates the word from meaningful context. The positive side of this strategy is that the subject was no longer interrupting the flow of reading. Subject A did change from a rating of 2 on the first interview to a rating of 6 on the second interview. Subject A's bottom-up beliefs on interview two dealt with correctness. Goal questions regarding ongoing activities in the classroom, however, revealed more top-down beliefs. There seems to be a dichotomy between goals and practice.

Another interesting set of interviews occurred with Subject B. Subject B, in response to the question that asked *what type of activities should the majority of instructional time be spent on* (p. 18), responded:

Interview one — Language experience.

Interview two — Phonics is important because it helps you decode words.

Subject B went from a rating of 5 on interview one to a rating of 4 on interview two. Subject B's response in interview two is interesting because phonics is not stressed in methods classes but language experience activities are stressed. Phonics is basically taught in the methods classes as a strategy to use when context does not help you determine a word that is necessary to meaning. Students are also shown how to teach phonics within meaningful reading situations (e.g., language experience stories, repeating favorite stories). Students are also shown research as to how students learn conventional spelling and phonics rules through their

inventive spellings. It is difficult to ascertain why this change in Subject B's instructional goals took place. One reason might be that the subject had heard the term "language experience" from some previous experience or class and wrote it down as a response without thinking whether or not the methodology would be used.

Another possible scenario for Subject B's change in instructional goals comes from observations of students and comments students have made concerning language experience activities attempted during their field experience. Students commonly state that their first experiences with language experience activities are a failure. Common complaints are: "The students keep shouting out," "I couldn't control the students," "Students fought over which ideas were to be included in the story," "I couldn't get the students to respond," "The story didn't make sense," etc. In most of these cases, the students have only tried one type of language experience activity — the group dictated language experience story. Some students who make initial negative comments will continue trying to hone their skill in using language experience activities; others will not, assuming it is a strategy that does not work well in the reality of the classroom. The students who do not try to use language experience activities seem to define language experience activities narrowly and see something wrong with the strategy rather than with their implementation.

Subject C indicated in the first interview a "teach as I was taught" philosophy. Subject C stated that "If a child doesn't know a word I would have him sound out the word, and possibly assist him... Those are the types of strategies I learned with and I think I'm okay." This response excerpted from Subject C's interview was a response to two interview questions similar to *What would you do if a student didn't*

know a word in oral reading? and *What do you think are the most important instructional activities?* (Vacca, et al., p. 18). In response to the first question in interview two, the subject responded: "I would let the child continue the rest of the sentence." The subject also suggested using context. In response to the second question the subject retained bottom-up views. Subject C stated "I would start out with very basic things and work up to more difficult (letters and words — word recognition)." Subject C went from a rating of 1 to a rating of 2. Subject C's responses also suggested that prior school experiences may be a variable to consider in teacher training.

The majority of subjects did change their bottom-up perspectives about teaching reading. There were some drastic changes between interview one and two. For example, Subject D went from a rating of 0 to a rating of 9. In interview one, Subject D indicated that word recognition and word knowledge were the most important activities in which to engage students. In the second interview, Subject D stated:

I will utilize the strategies suggested in the Language Experience Approach for teaching my students to read. I will use a continuous strategy of reading to the students, group dictated stories, creative writings and Directed Reading Thinking Activities. I believe there should be a lot of student teacher interactions. I believe students' interest should be considered and utilized to encourage independence...

It is apparent from this study that the reading course did have some effect on changing the subject's perspective about teaching reading. The question that arose next was *Will this change in perspective survive student teaching?* The answer to this question was investigated in Study Two.

Study two

Methods and materials. In this study 60 students who student taught immediately after Study One were asked to fill out an interview sheet. All the student teachers were placed in elementary schools within a 30-40 mile radius of the university. University supervisors made a minimum of four visits to individual sites. No feedback was obtained from university supervisors unless they were part of this study. There was also no control over the placement of student teachers so any change in conceptual frameworks may be due to a variety of variables.

Interview instrument and design. The interview instrument used in this study was the same as Study One — the "Conceptual Framework of Reading Interview: Form A, Pre-Service Teachers" (pp. 18-19). Of the original 60 students contacted, a total of 24 interviews were returned. The interview scores of this subsample, prior to and after student teaching, were compared. The low response rate, however, may have biased the findings because the beliefs held by respondents may not be beliefs held by non-respondents.

Results. The null hypothesis to be tested was: *That there is no difference in the conceptual framework of reading, of elementary education majors, after student teaching.* This null hypothesis was tested against the directional alternative hypothesis: *the conceptual framework of reading of elementary majors will change towards a more bottom-up conceptual framework of reading.* The results of the Wilcoxon test were that the null hypothesis was accepted and the directional hypothesis rejected. There was no difference in the conceptual framework of reading, of elementary education majors after student teaching. In order to get a clearer picture of the change in this subsample, the interviews of these 24 subjects prior to and after the reading methodology course were tested.

The hypothesis was the same as Study One. The results indicated that there was no difference in this subsample's conceptual framework of reading after the reading methods course. So neither the reading course nor student teaching had a statistically significant effect on these subjects' conceptual framework of reading. As with Study One, descriptive analysis added further information as to what occurred over the student teaching semester. A shift in beliefs can be observed in Figure 2.

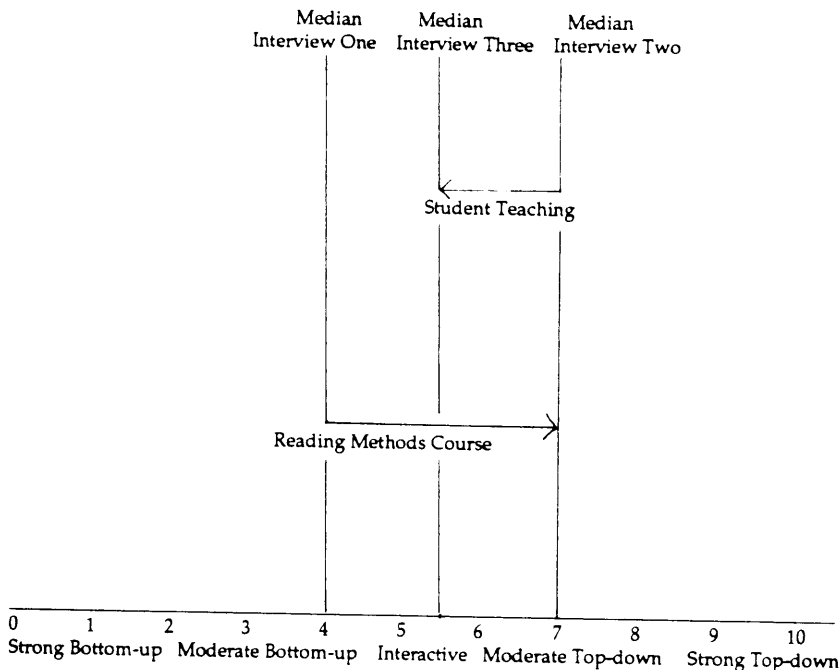
The median rank for interview one was 4 (*moderate bottom-up*), for interview two the median rank was 7 (*moderate top-down*), and the median rank for interview three was 5.5 (*interactive*) — exactly equidistant between the median ranks of interviews one and two. This shift back towards the middle seems to indicate the abdication of at least some top-down beliefs for more bottom-up beliefs. As with Study One, there are some interesting statements made by the subjects on interview one (pre-reading course), interview two (post-reading course; pre-student teaching), and interview three (post-student teaching). Subject A's beliefs seem to have been affected by the environment. In response to the question regarding a teacher's response to oral reading errors (p. 18), the subject responded in the following manner:

Interview one — Ask the class if anybody can help this person out.

Interview two — I would ignore it. By calling attention to it you make the student feel more self-conscious and it slows down the flow of the story you are reading orally.

Interview three — correct them, because that's what I've been trained to do and have become used to it.

Figure 2
Continuum of beliefs: Study Two



With regard to the subject's statement in interview three, the way the teacher was trained in reading class was to ignore the error, don't interrupt the flow of the reading unless the error disrupts the comprehension of the passage, and then ask if what they just read makes sense. So, obviously the subject was trained to correct oral reading errors during student teaching, not during reading class. This response of correcting oral reading errors probably had substantial ecological congruence (Copeland, 1980); it was an acceptable response to both the cooperating teacher and the students. The students were used to being corrected. The cooperating teacher

probably modeled the behavior and now the subject has "become used to it." This will probably be a difficult habit to break. Subject A's ratings were 4, 10 and 8 on the three interviews respectively.

The next two subjects' interviews were interesting because of additional knowledge about their student teaching placements. This included first-hand knowledge about the cooperating teachers, classroom environments, and school. Subject B rated the same on both interviews one and two; a rating of 4 was given on each interview. With regard to the question concerning the most important instructional activities (p. 18), Subject B responded in the following manner:

Interview one — Activities that deal with sounds and word pronunciation would be most important to me. Once the child has these basic tools, they can become more independent which is the primary goal of reading.

Interview two — The most important strategies and activities to use in teaching students to read would be ones that help them become independent readers. Through the use of context clues, phonics skills and word structure knowledge, a child is able to make educated guesses. I also like the analytic approach used in most phonics activities. When students are first given the examples, it makes sense so the learning sticks.

After student teaching, the subject responded to the same question in the following manner:

Interview three — Pre-reading activities. Try to bridge the gap between the material to be read and the student's personal experiences and backgrounds.

Subject B received a ranking of 7 after student teaching. In the classroom where the subject was placed the basal reader was used only half of the time. When the basal was used, the

student teacher (Subject B) was required to supplement with stories from the same author or books on the same subject. The responses to the basal stories and related literature came in the form of creative writing, art, and music activities; no worksheets were used. Many student-authored stories or reports were always displayed in the classroom. When the students were not using basals, they were reading tradebooks, doing research in the library, or engaged in some type of cooperative learning activity. In the case of Subject B, it appears that the reading class had little effect on changing her conceptual framework; however, the student teaching experience did modify her beliefs. Subject C was not only observed during student teaching, but also during field experience, which was completed the semester prior to student teaching.

Subject C ranked 4 on the first interview and 3 on the second interview. Knowledge of Subject C's field experience sheds some light on the first two rankings. Subject C had severe management problems, and every time the subject was required to do any type of experience where students would read and write their own stories, the subject had difficulty motivating and managing the group. It was a continuous effort to keep worksheets out of the subject's hands. The subject maintained that the students liked the worksheets, were comfortable with worksheets, and that worksheets were easier to use than asking students to do anything imaginative. The subject was then placed, for student teaching, in a classroom where the following activities took place: continuous basal round robin reading; two-three worksheets to be done after workbook pages; no free reading time, etc. It comes as no surprise that Subject C received a rank of 1 on the third interview after student teaching. It cannot be proven statistically that the subject was influenced by the teaching environment; intuitively, however, this assumption seems to have some validity. In summary, Subject C's interview rankings went from a

4 (pre-reading class) to a 3 (post-reading class) to a 1 (post-student teaching).

Subject D is a subject who changed beliefs drastically over the course of the reading class and remained constant after student teaching. The subject's rankings for interviews one, two and three were 1, 8, and 8 respectively. An example of Subject D's responses to the question regarding the instructional activities in which students should be engaged the majority of the time (p. 18) are:

Interview one — Phonics; processing word meanings. They need to develop these basic skills in order to be successful readers later.

Interview two — I believe in the multi-sensory approach to reading... because it exposes children to listening, reading, speaking and writing, which should all be an integral part of the reading process.

Interview three — Hands on activities (learning centers, computers for story writing) enhance their oral and silent reading (skills are important to a point but children need practice actually reading).

For the purpose of this study, there was no knowledge of this subject's student teaching experience. However, there is knowledge of the subject's field experience. Subject D's are stated as integrated reading, writing, speaking and listening activities. The students in Subject D's group wrote and performed plays from stories and wrote ads and recorded them on tape, etc. Subject D was very successful with these activities and this success may have served as reinforcement for doing these types of activities.

In summary, through Study One, it was determined that the reading methodology course had a statistically significant effect on the subjects' conceptual framework of reading. These results have to be interpreted carefully, however,

because of the lack of a control group. In Study Two, it was determined that neither the reading methodology course nor student teaching had a statistically significant effect on a subsample's (24 subjects) conceptual framework of reading. What may be more interesting to note from Study Two, though, is the shift in median ranking from 4 (*moderate bottom-up*) to 7 (*moderate top-down*) to 5.5 (*interactive*). Even though the subsample may not be representative of the entire sample, the shift in ranking after student teaching makes one question the effectiveness and transfer of knowledge from teacher training in the long run.

Discussion

There is a concern about the transfer of training and in particular the reversion of some subjects to more bottom-up theoretical positions. The bottom-up theoretical position is one that translates into instructional practices that require the teacher to be a technician rather than a professional. Duffy and Ball (1986) state that "... the technician uses the science of instruction in relatively inflexible ways..." (p. 165). Instructional strategies that represent a bottom-up theoretical position would maintain that the smallest units of written language must be mastered prior to introducing larger units. On the other hand, the top-down theoretical position is one that translates into instructional practices that require the teacher to be a professional. "...The professional adapts scientific knowledge to meet the shifting demands of the instructional situation" (Duffy and Ball, 1986, p. 165). Teachers with a top-down theoretical position tend to choose among alternatives, and teach children to choose among alternatives, in the reading process. The top-down theoretical position translates to teachers making many more instructional decisions. Duffy and Ball (1986) maintain that "reading educators are particularly attracted to the concept of instructional decision making" (p. 164). They give two reasons for this attraction:

One lies in the complexity of reading and of reading instruction. Reading educators believe that reading is not a one-dimensional skill that can be taught with scripts. Instead, reading involves a variety of cognitive processes, abilities, skills and affective conditions which lead to a variety of outcomes... When the complexity of reading interacts with the complexity of students, a variety of potential instructional alternatives becomes possible... The second reason why reading educators are drawn to the decision making model is their belief that teachers are professionals rather than technicians (p. 165).

The relationship between theoretical position, decision making and professionalism may be futile if teachers do not make decisions based on their beliefs. The variables, beyond instruction in the reading methods course, that had an effect on the subjects in these studies were prior school and student teaching experiences. The role of prior school experiences was not as obvious a variable — however, it warrants some attention. A statement made by Subject C in Study One identified prior school experience as a variable that had influence. Subject C indicated that "to teach as you were taught" was an acceptable instructional decision. Barnes (1987) documented the influence of prior school experience and stated that:

The preconceptions and images of teaching that prospective teachers bring to their formal study of teaching frequently remain unexamined in traditional teacher education programs and persist in spite of exposure to contradictory models (p. 14).

It could be an assumption from the findings of Study One that the role of prior school experience had been sufficiently dealt with because of the significant change in the subjects' conceptual frameworks. When the findings of Study Two, however, are taken in concert with Study One certain

questions arise. For example: "Does the classroom environment in which the subjects were placed for student teaching more closely parallel their prior school experiences and thus reinforce these prior experiences as a possible knowledge base for instructional decision making?" and "Did prior school experiences have anything to do with the reversion to more bottom-up beliefs after student teaching?" or "Was there a more complex series of variables responsible for the reversion of beliefs (i.e., prior school experiences, the classroom environment and/or the cooperating teacher)?" The effect that the student teaching experience had on the subjects in Study Two was a reversion to more bottom-up beliefs about teaching reading. Copeland (1980) states that this may be attributed to ecological incongruence. Copeland describes the ecological system of the classroom in the following manner.

...patterns of teaching and learning behavior are part of an interrelated ecological network in the classroom and the exhibition of some types of behaviors "fit into" that network while other behaviors do not (p. 195).

Using the idea of ecological congruence or incongruence, an understanding of the reversion to bottom-up beliefs in Study Two begins to emerge. Subjects in the study who entered their student teaching assignment reflecting more top-down beliefs may not have had their beliefs reinforced. More specifically, if these beliefs were not part of the ongoing instruction in the classroom they would not have been modeled or reinforced by the cooperating teacher. This ecological incongruence may have caused subjects to abandon their beliefs. On the other hand, if the subjects' beliefs were congruent, they would have been reinforced. Findings of Study Two indicate, however, that the ecological incongruence supposition may have been the more common situation. Copeland suggests that to overcome this problem

we need to train students to have "a clearer and more integrated understanding of the realities present in classrooms" (p. 194). Copeland further suggests that classes in which student teachers are placed should be "more congruent with the skills we wish them to practice" (p. 198).

Cohn and Gellman (1988), with regards to student teachers, state "... that the ability to analyze one's own teaching is a crucial inquiry skill needed to continue growth..." (p. 6). As teacher educators we too must continue to inquire in order to grow. To tell our students to question, to inquire and then not to model this behavior ourselves creates a credibility problem. In order to address the problem of transfer of training, as identified by the studies presented, we must first look to ourselves and analyze our own teaching and take responsibility for finding some of the answers. We cannot expect our students to do what we ourselves are unwilling to do.

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Holistic Analysis of Basal Readers: An Assessment Tool

Arne E. Sippola

Authors of contemporary basal readers make many claims as to the whole language-like nature of their programs. Their advertising literature contains assertions such as "full spectrum of the language arts," "literature based," and "integrated, whole language approach." Indeed many recent basals contain components that could be considered holistic in nature. The inclusion of authentic children's literature featuring many well-known children's authors using the real language of literature is undeniably more whole language-like than the old basal stories featuring fractured basal-ese. A number of the newer basals also focus less upon a strict hierarchy of skills and attempt to teach strategies to children. Their publishers' efforts are to be applauded. However, if one makes careful analyses past the advertising literature, it is evident that some basal programs are considerably more whole language-like than others. One series I have scrutinized appeared to be a bottom-up theoretician's delight, yet their advertising would lead one to conclude that they were state of the art whole language-friendly.

This discrepancy between advertising and actuality and differences between basal reading series led me to develop an assessment tool intended to appraise the degree to which particular basal programs adhere to the characteristics of whole

language. Although some have argued that speaking of basal readers and whole language in the same breath is antithetical (Goodman, 1986; Goodman, Shannon, Freeman, and Murphy, 1988), it can be argued that a good many basal series contain elements that seem quite like whole language (Wiseman, 1992).

Whole language is a philosophy — a set of beliefs about children, teaching, learning and literacy. Characteristics of programs and materials can only be whole language-like (or conversely, not whole language-like). Programs and materials cannot be whole language. Teachers make programs and materials either whole language or not. Thus, I have taken care to suggest only that particular elements of basal programs may be "whole language-like."

In order to develop criteria to be used in the assessment tool, a review of relevant literature written by whole language proponents was conducted. This review revealed a considerable number of characteristics of materials, programs, and practices that could be considered to be whole language-like. The following section will provide a brief synopsis of whole language characteristics that could be germane to analyses of basal programs.

Integrated language arts. One characteristic of whole language programs is the attempt to integrate the four language arts (Goodman, 1986; Reutzel and Cooter, 1992; Vacca and Rasinski, 1992). It has been argued that reading, writing, speaking and listening should be seen by children as related forms of communication. All contribute to the sharing of thought. Particular attention has been focused on the importance of writing in an integrated language arts curriculum (Goodman, 1986; Harp, 1987; Holbrook, 1987; Vogt, 1991).

Writing and reading in combination is thought to lead to greater achievement in reading (Shanahan, 1988).

Basal programs attempting to use whole language would include materials and uncontrived suggestions as to how to integrate the language arts. Additionally, the basal series would contribute suggestions for using writing to reinforce reading, and reading to reinforce writing.

Integration with content areas. Curricular integration goes beyond the language arts. It has also been thought that many of the content areas can and should be integrated with the language arts program (Pappas, Kiefer, and Levstik, 1990; Routman, 1991; Sebesta, 1992). A main vehicle by which teachers can integrate throughout the curriculum is the thematic unit (Goodman, 1986; Pappas, Kiefer, and Levstik, 1990; Vogt, 1991; Vacca and Rasinski, 1992). A thematic unit, as it is broadly used, usually does not deal with a literary theme, but rather a central focus of study (Sippola, 1993). For example, in the case of integrating language arts and the content area of social studies where American pioneers are of central focus, a teacher would plan and structure many language activities dealing with the pioneers. Beyond this, the teacher could also integrate math, science, health and art activities into the study of pioneers.

A basal program attempting to provide for integration of the different content areas into its reading/language curriculum cannot, in all likelihood, provide all of the materials, and should provide suggested activities and resources available to teachers to foster such integration. Providing workbook/worksheet activities is, in my estimation, not a productive way of providing for integration.

Use of children's literature. A whole language-like program would feature authentic children's literature (Goodman, 1986; Weaver, 1990). Stories presented to children should be of interest (Hittleman, 1988; Vogt, 1991) and unabridged (Huck, 1992). It would be reasonable for teachers to engage children in the reading of award-winning books and works by notable authors (Pillar, 1992; Wiseman, 1992).

Children would not only read children's literature, but have related children's books read aloud to them (Vogt, 1991; Cullinan, 1992). For primary children, the sharing of books would include the use of Big Books for shared book experiences (Goodman, 1986; Holdaway, 1982; Routman, 1991). Predictable books would also be presented to children for sharing or reading (Goodman, 1986; Huck, 1992).

A number of whole language theoreticians have advocated that children be exposed to a variety of genres of literature (Cullinan, 1992; Hittleman, 1988; Vogt, 1991; Wiseman, 1992). The study of genres might be thought to foster metaliterary awareness — the ability to think about the different categories of literature.

A basal program attempting to use the whole language characteristics of children's literature would provide a wide variety of interesting, authentic, non-abridged stories written by notable children's authors. The story collection would include many award-winning stories. The basal program would also suggest and/or provide children's books related to the story of focus which could be read aloud by the teacher. The basal program would provide big books at the early primary level to facilitate shared reading. The collection would also include stories that are predictable. Care should have been taken to ensure that a wide variety of genres of literature were included in the literature collection.

Phonics. A common misconception about whole language advocates is that they are vehemently opposed to phonics. It is less an opposition to phonics than to the way in which it is taught. Overemphasizing the use of a legion of phonic rules taught in isolation is not considered to be in the best interest of the reader (Goodman, 1986; Weaver, 1991). Rather, phonic skills are better taught in the context of real stories (Newman and Church, 1990; Trachtenburg, 1990; Vogt, 1991) and through writing (Goodman, 1986; Weaver, 1990).

A basal program teaching phonics in a whole-language manner would, first of all, not teach phonic skills in isolation. Rather, phonic skills would be taught within the context of real stories containing those phonic patterns. The basal program would not attempt to teach children a multitude of phonic skills. Instead, high utility and high frequency phonic skills would be taught. The basal manual should suggest a variety of writing activities so that children might use their knowledge of phoneme-grapheme relationships.

Skill sequences. Rejecting behavioral psychology, whole language advocates have asserted that the skill sequences delineated by many basal programs are quite arbitrary (Goodman, 1986; Goodman, et al., 1988). It has been further contended that skill sequencing exists not because children learn to read in a linear sequence, but to facilitate the offering of a series of lessons in a sequential fashion (Commission on Reading, 1988). Skills instruction is not ignored, however. Skills are taught within the context of real literature and as needs arise (Weaver, 1991).

A basal program adhering to such precepts would not, as is done traditionally, organize a hierarchy for the teaching of

skills. Rather, skills would be taught as facilitated within the context of the literature.

Workbooks/worksheets. Whole language advocates have little use for workbooks and worksheets. Succinctly, Goodman (1986, p. 33) has called them inappropriate for whole language programs. Workbook and worksheet pages have traditionally been used to reinforce specific and often isolated skills (Routman, 1991), which is contrary to whole language beliefs.

A basal program adhering to such beliefs would either not provide or pare to the minimum the number of workbook and worksheet pages available for use. Alternatives to seatwork would be suggested in the basal manual.

Extension activities. In lieu of workbooks and worksheets, whole language advocates have suggested that students engage in meaningful extension activities (Johnson and Louis, 1987; Routman, 1988; Yopp and Yopp, 1992). Devices such as literature response logs and activities like story mapping would replace traditional seatwork. These activities are thought to give students "unlimited options to integrate skills in a meaningful context and have fun while doing so" (Routman, 1988, p. 70).

A basal program which integrates whole language would provide suggestions, if not materials, that extend literature in an open-ended, creative and thought provoking manner. The extension activities would also take into consideration the interest of the children.

Assessment

Rebelling against traditional specific skills and standardized testing, whole language advocates have suggested that

assessment of literacy be more open-ended (Anthony, Johnson, Mickelson, and Preece, 1991; Johnson and Louis, 1990; Johnston, 1992). It has been argued that children's responses to literature are more ecologically valid than specific skills testing (Au, Scheu, Kawakami, and Herman, 1990; Goodman, 1986; May, 1990; Vogt, 1991). Additionally, portfolio assessment is thought to represent a child's learning better than traditional assessment measures (Anthony, 1991; Au, et al., 1990; Goodman, 1986; Johnston, 1992; Pils, 1991; Vogt, 1991). Basal programs adhering to such assessment beliefs would diminish the importance of end-of-section skills tests and rely more upon children's responses to literature and portfolio assessment. Children's authentic work would be considered at least as valid as formal tests.

The assessment tool. An assessment tool, the *Holistic Analysis of Basal Readers* (see Appendix), was developed to assist teachers, administrators, and curriculum adoption teams in evaluating the degree to which commercial basal reader programs adhere to whole language characteristics. The assessment tool was tested and critiqued by classroom teachers. Revisions based upon their feedback were made accordingly.

The assessment tool is best used to contrast basal series by comparing the scores derived from their analyses. This should especially assist a school district in their adoption considerations should it be interested in adopting a basal series possessing whole language qualities.

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APPENDIX
Holistic Analysis of Basal Readers
Arne E. Sippola, 1993

SCALE — *High degree = 2 points; Moderate degree = 1 point; To some degree/not applicable = 0 points; Few/not many = -1 point; Not at all/none = -2 points*

Integrated language arts

1. Are suggestions made as to how a teacher might extend the literary selection into the other language arts?

2 1 0 -1 -2

2. Do the suggestions seem authentic rather than contrived?

2 1 0 -1 -2

3. Are suggestions made regarding how to incorporate writing activities with the reading activities?

2 1 0 -1 -2

Integration with content areas

4. Are suggestions made as to how a teacher can integrate reading materials with content areas?

2 1 0 -1 -2

5. Do the suggestions seem authentic rather than contrived?

2 1 0 -1 -2

Children's literature

6. Are the majority of stories contained in the basal series written by children's authors (versus in-house writers)?

2 1 0 -1 -2

7. Do you believe that the majority of the stories in this basal series would be of interest to children?

2 1 0 -1 -2

8. Are the stories presented in an unabridged form?

2 1 0 -1 -2

9. Are the stories in the basal series written by notable children's authors?

2 1 0 -1 -2

10. Does the basal series contain numerous award-winning books?

2 1 0 -1 -2

How many award winners? -----

11. Are a substantial number of correlated read-aloud books suggested for the teacher?

2 1 0 -1 -2

12. Are a substantial number of correlated read-aloud books provided for the teacher?

2 1 0 -1 -2

13. Are Big Books provided for use in the early primary grades?

2 1 0 -1 -2

14. Are a substantial number of stories presented to early primary students predictable in nature?

2 1 0 -1 -2

15. Are a variety of genres of literature presented in the basal series?

2 1 0 -1 -2

Phonic instruction

16. Are phonics taught within the context of real stories?

2 1 0 -1 -2

17. Are the phonic skills selected for teaching possessing high utility and high frequency?

2 1 0 -1 -2

Skill sequences

18. Are specific skills taught within the context of real stories rather than in isolation?

2 1 0 -1 -2

Workbooks/worksheets

19. Does the basal series "pare to the minimum" the use of workbooks and worksheets?

2 1 0 -1 -2

Extension activities

20. Does the basal series provide suggestions that extend literature in an open-ended, creative, and thought provoking manner?

2 1 0 -1 -2

21. Are materials provided that extend literature in an open-ended, creative, and thought provoking manner?

2 1 0 -1 -2

22. Do you believe that the extension activities would be of interest to children?

2 1 0 -1 -2

Assessment

23. Are open-ended assessment procedures (e.g., open-ended writing activities; discussion questions requiring critical, creative, appreciative, and inferential thought) suggested for the teacher to use?

2 1 0 -1 -2

24. Are suggestions made as to how portfolio assessment can be used with the basal series?

2 1 0 -1 -2

Call for Manuscripts for the 1994 Themed Issue:

The 1994 themed issue of *Reading Horizons* will be devoted to efforts that promote literacy through university-school collaboration. Guest editors are Janet Dynak and Ronald Crowell of Western Michigan University. Contributions in the form of research reports, commentaries, case studies, and articles discussing the area of literacy relating to university-school collaboration are welcomed. Preference will be given to manuscripts co-authored by classroom teachers and university faculty. Manuscripts should be submitted following *Reading Horizons* guidelines appearing on the inside cover of this journal. Manuscripts intended for the themed issue must have a March 1994 postmark. Address all manuscripts to Dr. Jeanne M. Jacobson, Editor, *Reading Horizons*, WMU, Kalamazoo MI 49008.



Fluency in Children's Writing

V. Andree Bayliss

Ask local elementary teachers which children in their classrooms are their best writers, and, usually, they will spontaneously name three or four students. Teachers know their best writers. They also know some of the contributing factors. These children are often good readers, who love a good story and seem to have a natural talent for telling one themselves. Where writing is concerned, they are a teacher's joy.

On the other hand, the teacher's challenge is knowing how to nurture the writing development of the majority, the students for whom writing comes less naturally. Teaching these children requires more than intuitions about writing. Teaching these children requires understanding the writing process and recognizing the signs of writing maturity. The intent of this article is to focus on the latter — signs and characteristics of maturity in children's writing.

These signs of maturity are not easily described. They are neither readily quantifiable nor necessarily sequential (Graves, 1983; Calkins, 1986). Children gain maturity in writing as they conscientiously work to incorporate newly learned ways of thinking about things and as they learn more about the needs of their audience. Their increasing maturity is identifiable, though often characteristically personalized. However, there are signs of maturity basic to children's writing that are distinguishable. These signs of maturing fluency have been identified (Bayliss and Walker, 1990) in the

following order: 1) providing details; 2) elaborating on the subject; 3) varying sentence patterns; 4) deepening the presentation; 5) unfolding the presentation; 6) sustaining focus of the topic, often with insight or liveliness of imagination.

Children begin to write, much as they begin in their ability to tell a personal experience, by merely listing events. Take for example Paul's piece (first grade) about his experience at his uncle's farm:

The Funniest Thing That Ever Happened To Me: I went to my unklc house. I got to ride his hrs. I had fun. I got off the hrs. I got to melch the cou. I got to fead the cou. The End.

Paul's readers can easily read into his story and imagine the fun he had in riding the horse, not to mention feeding and milking the huge Jersey, or perhaps Guernsey, cow. At this point, however, Paul is only able to remember and list the basic events that occurred in his exciting day.

This simple listing is by no means restricted to the abilities of first grade children. Tammy, a grade three student, writing an imaginary piece about being two inches tall, limits her story to a few facts about herself and the brief telling of an experience:

The Day I Was Two Inches Tall: I am two inches tall. I live in a mushroom. I have lots of small friends. I have brown hair and I am a girl. I have an ant. Lets stop talking about what I am and lets me tell what happened yesterday. Well yesterday I went to go to the meadow and a tiger started running after me. I was scared but an elephant all most steped on me but fianlly I got in the house and in bed with soup.

Tammy demonstrates that she can imagine herself as being two inches tall. However, she provides minimal details and does not elaborate. She leaves her readers wondering such things as what the mushroom house looks like, who her small friends might be, and whether or not her ant is her pet.

Providing details and elaboration

Young writers signal efforts toward fluency by providing details for a reader. They know that details make a piece more interesting and understandable. At the simplest level, beginning writers merely use modifiers to enhance a description, such as "my black and white cat," or "the poor old woman." As they move beyond this simplest level it is usually in combination with the next characteristic of maturity in writing — elaboration. A grade one child, Kelly, shows a beginning awareness that by elaborating, she helps her readers to understand why her family loves the kitchen.

My Family: I have a tall house. I have five people in it. I have a sister of course, thats me. And to brothers who are pretty sweet. My Mom is a teacher. My Dad is a pulmer. My family play's with me. I play with my family. We go out. And other stuf. We love the kitchen it's food. And dosert's are deleshes. We have turkey and dresing, too. Boy are they good. And I love it.

Two authors from grade six, also telling about their families, share their family members' characteristics through elaboration. Jill's excerpt about her half sister is an example of what could be described as simple elaboration.

My Family: I have a half sister, she is always busy. She goes to college. When she has time, she doesn't spend it with me. She sunbathes when it's sunny and

she's always with her boyfriend. She likes to go to bars at night. My sister has blond hair and green eyes.

Jill provides her readers with a few details about her sister and through simple elaboration makes it quite clear she feels her sister neglects her. Sharing this emotion with her audience makes this the strongest part of her piece.

Sentence variety

By comparison, Jill's classmate John is a stronger writer. His discussion of his father shows an increased level of fluency not only because of greater elaboration, but also for other reasons. First, John's excerpt about his father:

My Family: My Dad grew up in Plad on a farm. He had seven brothers and sisters. He had a twin brother, but he died as an infant. He learned how to work hard as he grew up. He had to quit school early to help support his family because they weren't very well off. He helped his dad at a sawmill and then began working at Stiles Roofing where he has worked for the last twenty-two years. My dad's favorite pastime is pulling his Belgian draft horses. My dad is honest and hardworking. He teaches us kids how to work and makes sure we behave properly. My mom...

John demonstrates greater fluency than Jill because he shares more information (Nathan, Temple, Juntunen and Temple, 1989) about his father and includes several specific details: "My dad grew up in *Plad* on a farm... began working at *Stiles Roofing*, where he has worked for the last *twenty-two years*... and he has *Belgian draft horses*."

Additionally, there are other qualities that make his writing more sophisticated. John uses non-basic sentence patterns to build his message. Through the sentence, "He

learned how to work hard as he was growing up," he introduces the point that his dad is hard working. John also communicates that this quality developed early in his dad's life. Further, by writing "... as he grew up," John uses foreshadowing to alert his reader that more elaboration about this quality is forthcoming. His next sentence is also well beyond the basic level, "He had to quit school early to help support his family because they weren't very well off."

These two sentences are worthy of even further analysis because they exemplify another characteristic of maturing fluency. Through these two sentences, John explained what caused his dad to learn hard work early (a family necessity) as well as the consequences of the necessity (his father having to quit school). These ideas represent substantive qualities of thought. Through cause/effect discussion, John helps his readers understand a quality of his dad's character he admires. His readers recognize his ability to analyze his dad's circumstances and respect his ability to communicate this analysis in writing. Calkins (1983) describes this as an executive function. Characteristics such as these mark higher levels of writing and indicate children are truly maturing in fluency.

Even at grade two, children demonstrate the ability to communicate an analysis in their writing. Kevin has done this in his description of not being able to find his dad in a hide and seek game.

*The Stranges Thing That Ever Happened To Me:
One night I was playing hide-and-seak with my dad and
my brother. I was it. I counted to ten. My brother was
esey to find. He was in the closet. It was dark so I
couldn't see in the dim light. Dad was in the simpelst
place in the whole house! He was in the corner and I
couldn't find him!*

Deepening and unfolding a presentation

Carla, grade four, demonstrates her ability to deepen a presentation as she analyzes her feelings about her best friend, her grandmother.

My Best Friend: My best friend is my Grandma, Bessie Naugle. She died when I was in first grade, but she helped me look at things differently. Like when I was four I was afraid of the doctor, but I had to go so she helped me see there was nothing to be afraid of. I've always wanted to be like her, so I put on her apron, her bonnet and her snow shoes. That was when I was three...

Young writers demonstrate the ability to control a presentation of ideas much as does the captivating storyteller. They are aware their audience prefers that they select ideas and use descriptive vocabulary to reveal events and evoke clear mental images. Carla's classmate, Jennifer, has done this as she begins her story about reading people's minds:

The Day I Could Read Everyones Mind: One morning I woke up feeling awful. I told Mom. All she said was "You'll probably feel better when you eat." Well I didn't. But, I went on to school. When I go there I could read peoples minds, it was absolutly wierd. All the girls were thinking about boys. Trish was thinking about Shawn. Elsa was thinking about Bobby S., and Misti L. was thinking about Justin L. The boys were thinking about kick ball and racing. I was too...

Andy, grade five, also demonstrates this ability to control his presentation of ideas. He also demonstrates a beginning ability to select image provoking vocabulary (*big stud, froze, and strike*).

The Funnies Thing That Ever Happened To Me: I was playing my first baseball game and it was going O.K. I was playing centerfield and the last pitcher we had just got called off the field by our coach. I watched him walk off the field. Then I heard my name, "Andy come in and pitch" the coach was calling me. I walked in like a big stud. The coach told me to go warm up. I warmed up for about two minutes then walked out on the field and threw a couple of pitches. Then the first batter got up to the plate. He was real big. I froze, right there on the pitchers mound. It took me awhile to get back to earth, but then finially I threw the first pitch. Strike, I heard the umpire call...

Sustained focus

At the highest level of fluency, children demonstrate the ability to maintain control through sustained focus on their topic. This requires attention and consideration of all of the characteristics: analysis of situation, selection of ideas, selection of vocabulary, and a controlled presentation to create a clear picture in the reader's mind. Two students demonstrate they understand this quality of sustained focus. First, a grade three student, Jake.

The Day I Was Two Inches Tall: One day I woke up and found myself two inches tall! I got a tiny piece of paper and parachuted down to the floor. Ouch! Hard landing! I went to the clock in the hall to see what time it was. But right when I got there it went off! It blew me right into the laundry shoot! Wow! This is fun! Wee! I went up and down. Finally I hit the bottom, right into a pile of dirty underware! Yuk. This smells terrible! Just then my mom come in. She put me into the wash. When the water came out I began to grow larger! But just then it stopped. The lid got opened up. My big brother picked me up and put me in his mouth! He thought I was bubble gum. He sucked me in! I

grabbed his tongue and held on tight. That made him choke, I flew out of his mouth and landed on his hand. I said "Gabe I'm Jake!" "Your not Jake, your bubble gum." "Just take me to Mom" I said. He brought me to mom. After Mom saw me she said "My heavens!" I said "Mom I was in the laundry machine when" "You were what?" "I was in the laundry machine. When the water came out I grew bigger. So you better put me back in the barrel." Mom put me back in the barrel and filled it with water and I grew back to normal size.

With a few less exclamation marks, Sara, grade six, tells her story about reading minds.

The Day I Could Read Everything's Mind: As soon as I woke up that morning I knew it wouldn't be normal. The sun was shining unusually bright, even for Florida. You see, I was on vacation and sharing a rented house with Mom and Dad for the summer. When I trudged down the stairs for breakfast a tingling started in my fingers. As soon as I entered the kitchen my mind was full of little voices. I just shut them out and asked "Mom, when will the pancakes be done?" "How did you know what was for breakfast" she asked. "I have no idea" I replied, and I didn't. I was baffled. As soon as Mom placed the orange juice on the table I heard "Don't drink me, I've already been squeezed." At that point I thought I had really gone off the deep end, I didn't know what to think.

The rest of the morning went fine, but when we entered Disney World it was a whole different story. When I first got in I saw a person in a Micky Mouse suit. In my mind I heard "It sure is stuffy in here, I hope I don't have as long today as yesterday." Just then I realized what had been happening. I had been reading minds. Throughout the day I tried this out on the people that looked like they were foreign. One Chinese

lady wanted a rice cake and to be back in Hong Kong. A little French boy hoped Micky Mouse would pick him up. I had never had so much fun.

A teacher's challenge

These children demonstrate they are developing their understanding of how writers craft a good story. Working with writers such as these is a challenge because writing is a highly personalized process. It is the highest form of literacy and as such is built on a foundation of learning one's language and a maturing use of reading as a tool for learning. Therefore, the teacher's role in guiding young writers is, first and foremost, a secure professional belief that children can and will write in a supportive classroom environment. Next, this supportive environment should be based on guiding beliefs such as those Atwell (1987, pp. 17-18) evolved to understand:

Writers need regular chunks of time...

Writers need their own topics...

Writers need response...

Writers learn mechanics in context...

Children need to know adults who write...

Writers need to read...

Writing teachers need to take responsibility for their knowledge and teaching...

Helping children gain fluency requires the view of writing as a process, a craft. As craftsmen, the children and teacher work at writing — appraising their own work and the work of others, and learning about themselves as writers and about other writers. As they go about this process, fine tuning their understanding of the differences between talking and writing (Calkins and Harwayne, 1991), they learn the importance of details, elaboration, selecting vocabulary, explaining reasons, reactions and insights.

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Generating Response To Literature With At-Risk Third Grade Students

Kathy Everts Danielson
Patty Tighe

Response to literature is an important aspect of reading and comprehension (Hansen, 1987). As readers read quality literature they are more apt to respond in a personal nature to the text. Rosenblatt's (1983) response theory suggests that reading is a transaction between the reader and the text. It provides for the unique response to literature that an individual might have, depending upon the text and the context of reading. This individual response is important:

Researchers in literary response have tended to conceptualize each reader as a 'universe of one,' thus challenging the notion of the normative response to literary texts (Beach and Hynds, 1991, p. 453).

Literature discussion groups enable students to comprehend at many different levels (Eeds and Wells, 1989). Discussion that focuses on a shared reading experience allows children to hear varying views of the piece that all have read.

The use of literature for reading instruction has been advocated by many (Cullinan, 1987; Goodman, 1986; Harste, 1989). Eldredge and Butterfield (1986) compared a traditional basal approach to a literature-based approach with second

graders and found significant differences in children's scores on standardized tests, favoring students who were taught with literature. The Ohio Reading Recovery Program, as described by Boehnlein (1987), regularly included literature in its work with at risk first graders and found significant gains among these children's reading successes as measured by Marie Clay's Diagnostic Survey (Clay, 1990).

These studies did not assess students' attitudes regarding reading, nor the varying levels of response to literature of at risk students described in this article. At risk children are defined as students lacking self-esteem and the motivation to learn. The former United States Secretary of Education describes at risk youth as those who:

live on islands of cultural and economic isolation far from the world of school, books, and learning. They cannot leap in a single bound from one world to another. They need bridges to help them span that gap, strong bridges built from innovative plans, with whatever tools can be found, by any and all who will help (Cavazos, 1989, p. 7).

It is imperative that these children have successful reading experiences so that they are motivated to stay in school. Quality literature and the diverse possibilities of response can provide these positive reading experiences.

Project explanation

A third grade class of 18 at risk students was divided into two literature discussion groups. These discussion groups met and talked about the children's books they were reading twice a week from January 1991 through May 1991. The authors of this article served as facilitators of the two groups.

These students are considered at risk because they live in an inner city neighborhood and do not have the literacy support from their families that many other children do. All students had copies of the book that their group was reading. The literature discussions were often begun by the quick rereading of the book and then the spontaneous comments of the students and the teacher. These discussion sessions were tape recorded and responses examined to determine if any emerging themes of responses occurred. Before meeting in discussion groups, students also wrote comments about the books they read in literature logs. They were to answer one of the prompts that encourage response (Kelly, 1990; Bleich, 1978). These responses were recorded in an entry in their literature logs and were written for every book. The prompts were: 1) What did you notice about this book? 2) How did this book make you feel? 3) How did this book relate to your own experience?

McKenna and Kear's (1990) reading attitude test was given as a pre-test (at the beginning of the semester) and post-test (at the end of the semester) to determine if students' attitudes toward reading changed during the course of the semester while students were reading and discussing the trade books. Table 1 shows that in general students' attitudes regarding reading improved. A *t*-test was done comparing the pre-test scores with the post-test scores. Post-test scores were significantly higher for items 10, 11, and 14. Students were more interested in reading a variety of different books after being exposed to them. In addition, students were less hesitant to answer questions about books, and felt very positive about reading in general. Their overall attitudes regarding reading were enhanced by the use of quality literature.

Table 1
Elementary Reading Attitude Survey
(McKenna and Kear, 1990)

(n = 18)

Range: 1.00 (*very unhappy*) TO 4.00 (*very happy*)

<i>Item</i>	<i>Pre-test</i>	<i>Post-test</i>
	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Mean</i>
1 How do you feel when you read a book on a rainy Saturday?	2.78	3.05
2 How do you feel when you read a book in school during free time?	2.67	2.67
3 How do you feel about reading for fun at home?	2.67	3.28
4 How do you feel about getting a book for a present?	2.56	2.83
5 How do you feel about spending free time reading?	2.94	2.67
6 How do you feel about starting a new book?	2.83	3.17
7 How do you feel about reading during summer vacation?	2.50	2.61
8 How do you feel about reading instead of playing?	1.94	1.78
9 How do you feel about going to a bookstore?	3.22	3.22
10 How do you feel about reading different kinds of books?	2.67	3.44*
11 How do you feel when the teacher asks you questions about what you read?	2.00	2.78*
12 How do you feel about doing reading workbook pages and worksheets?	2.33	2.50
13 How do you feel about reading in school?	2.94	3.22
14 How do you feel about reading your school books?	2.44	3.11*
15 How do you feel about learning from a book?	3.06	3.50
16 How do you feel when it's time for reading class?	2.61	2.61
17 How do you feel about the stories you read in reading class?	2.94	3.11
18 How do you feel when you read out loud in class?	2.67	3.06
19 How do you feel about using a dictionary?	2.39	2.17
20 How do you feel about taking a reading test?	2.95	2.50

* p < .05

Table 2 indicates the results of a comparison of the total means of the pre-test and the post-test between males and females using a *t*-test. The boys' pretest scores were significantly lower than the girls' pre-test scores. Thus the boys started out with a less positive view of reading than did the girls. The boys' post-test scores were significantly higher than the boys'

pre-test scores. Their attitudes about reading were significantly improved, according to this attitude assessment. The girls' post-test scores were higher than their pre-test scores, but not to a significant level.

Table 2
Elementary Reading Attitude Survey
(McKenna and Kear, 1990)
Total Means by Sex (n = 18)

Range possible: 20 (*all responses very unhappy*) —
80 (*all responses very happy*)

<u>Sex</u>	<u>Total Pre-test mean</u>	<u>Total Post-test mean</u>
Boys	46.13 *, **	53.75 **
Girls	59.70 *	61.20

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

Excerpts of either the literature discussion groups or the literature logs from the third graders are included. The excerpts are grouped according to the types of comments that emerged from both oral and written responses to literature.

Excerpts

Own related experiences. Students often made comments in writing or orally that showed how they related personally to the themes in the stories or to the actions of the characters. This personal response to literature is an important aspect of comprehension.

In *William's Doll* (Zolotow, 1972), William's grandmother eventually buys him a doll when no one else will. This character caused one student to reflect upon her own experiences with her grandmother's gift giving: "I wanted a

Nintendo game and my grandmother ended up giving me a Nintendo shirt. I said, 'Grandma, I wanted a Nintendo *game*.' And then she ended up giving me Nintendo stickers."

In the discussion of *The Piggybook* (Browne, 1986), students noticed that the characters wore uniforms and since these students wore uniforms and went to a Catholic school, they assumed the characters did too:

Student: They go to a Catholic school.

Teacher: What makes you say that?

Student: 'Cuz they both got the same thing on.

Teacher: They do have uniforms on.

Student: I think they're twins.

Student: Just because they wear the same things doesn't mean that they go to a Catholic school.

The Piggybook (Browne, 1986) deals with the issue of the overworked mother, who in addition to having a job outside of the home, also does all of the housework. One day she leaves and the family has to fend for itself without her. Meanwhile, her family has literally turned into a family of pigs. One student related to the part of the story when the mother left. She wrote in her literature log: "My mom left and I thought she wasn't gone to come back for a long time." Another student felt as if she were overworked like the mother in the story and wrote: "It is like me. I all ways do that but I iron and I cook and I wash the clothes and make my bed and I wash my famiyes dish and clean up the house." Another student (who was a bit chubby) wrote that another student had called him a pig: "I didn't like the book because Edward said I was a pig." The book *Weird Parents* (Wood, 1990) is about a young boy who is very embarrassed by the behavior of his parents. In this discussion, students talked about how their parents embarrassed them too:

Student: When she was in the back of the bus and said "bye bye, honey cake" — I'd be embarrassed if my mom did that.

Student: My mom calls me her "honey" or "dear."

Student: My mom calls me "sweetheart."

Student: My mom calls me "chicken legs," "pencil legs," "turtle legs."

Student: Every morning my mother says, "Give me some sugar."

Illustrations. Some students noticed various aspects of the illustrations that gave the picture books added meaning. Characters became more real or the pictures added to the plot or the theme of the story. In the discussion of *The Magic School Bus Inside the Human Body* (Cole, 1987), the clothes of zany Ms. Frizzle sent students back to the books to pore over the illustrations:

Student: Oh, look at her dress! It's got hands and ears and eyeballs.

Student: And look at the funny shoes!

In the discussion of *Owl Moon* (Yolen, 1987), students talked about whether the main character was a girl or a boy:

Student: This looks like a boy.

Teacher: Is it a boy or a girl?

Student: A boy.

Student: A girl.

Teacher: Is there a place in the story that tells you?

Student: You can look at her face when she puts her knees down, watch. Right here, see? It looks like a girl.

Teacher: It's kind of hard to tell.

Student: Boys don't wear pink coats.

Student: Paul and I do.

In the discussion of *The Piggybook* (Browne, 1986) students noticed all the different pig images throughout the book. They also noticed the color changes:

Teacher: Do you notice anything about how these illustrations are different from these?

Student: They're different colors.

Teacher: What do you mean by that?

Student: That is yellowish and there it's white.

Teacher: Okay, so this is darker and this is brighter?

Student: His chin looks like a pig.

Student: His face looks awful fat.

Student: And he's too big.

Student: It looks like he's getting ready to bust out of his clothes because he looks like a pig.

Student: Right here it looks like the mom don't got no eyes.

Teacher: You're right. The mom doesn't have any facial features, does she? She doesn't have any eyes.

Student: How come she looks younger in the end of the book than the beginning?

One student wrote about *The Terrible Thing That Happened At Our House* (Blaine, 1975), noticing the shoes in the illustrations: "I noticed they all got big shoes." Students also noticed that the characters' faces weren't shown in this book.

Student: How come they're not showing the mother's or the father's face?

Student: At the back of the book it shows them all.

Teacher: Why do you think they did that? Why do you think they didn't show their faces?

Student: Because they're too busy?

Student: Maybe the mom refused.

One student noticed the details in the illustrations of *William's Doll* (Zolotow, 1972): "I like the part when he played basketball because his belly was showing."

Higher level thinking. Students focused more on their own feelings and emotions about the book, rather than just recalling the details. They also discussed the genre of the story and the validity or believability of the story.

During the reading of *The Magic School Bus Inside The Human Body* (Cole, 1989), students questioned the validity of a school bus shrinking in size:

Student: A school bus can't go in nobody's body. It's too big.

Student: Unless it was a little school bus, a micro-machine.

Teacher: Then if you put it in your mouth, you might choke, wouldn't you?

In *The Mitten* (Brett, 1989), many different animals get inside of a mitten and students questioned the feasibility of this:

Student: I felt kinda funny — because how could all the animals fit in the mitten?

Student: I felt weird because that many animals can't fit in a mitten like that.

Teacher: So even though it was just a make-believe story you didn't like that part of it?

Student: Even though it's make-believe, if animals really try and fit in a mitten like that, they'd bust it open.

Students called upon their own feelings after reading *The Picture Book of Martin Luther King* (Adler, 1989):

Student: I felt sad.

Teacher: Tell us about it.

Student: Because Dr. Martin Luther King got shot.

Student: I was sad and happy because he helped everybody, black people not to hurt the white people and he died.

Student: I felt sad when they was making the black people sit in the back of the buses and stuff.

Student: Black people should be treated fairly.

Student: I was happy because he worked with some black people and sad because he died.

Student: I was mad because there was a lot of violence.

Student: A lot of people weren't treating him fairly. They didn't let him use the restroom.

Student: I felt bad that he died. He was a brave man.

Student: I noticed that if he was never born we wouldn't be here like this. We would be in slavery.

One student wrote in her literature log about *The Picture Book of Martin Luther King Junior* (Adler, 1989): "Sad. Sad. Sad. He work hard to lead us from killing are self." One student wrote about another biography of Martin Luther King, Jr. — *I Have a Dream* (Davidson, 1986): "I think I like this book because he was a man of freedom and justice."

With *The Wednesday Surprise* (Bunting, 1989), students thought about the theme of the book. In this book a young girl teaches her grandmother how to read.

Student: I noticed about this book that it was somebody that cared for people. They cared for each other.

Teacher: They did care for each other because they had a birthday party for each other.

Student: And she helped her grandmother.

Student: It made me happy 'cuz the old lady didn't know how to read and now she does.

Student: I wrote that I really loved the story. I'm glad she can read now. I'm so happy!

Student: I wrote I felt good when her grandma visited her. 'Cuz it was nice to have her come over every week.

Student: I wrote "I think it was a lovely book because she was teaching her grandmother how to read."

Student: I like it because they read all the time.

The genre of the story was often debated, as with *The Magic School Bus Inside the Earth* (Cole, 1987).

Teacher: What kind of story is this?

Student: Non-fiction.

Teacher: It's fiction or non-fiction?

Student: It's both. It tells some true things, but her dresses are really ugly.

Teacher: Why is it not true?

Student: Because how can a bus go right through a volcano?

Student: This is the fiction part — they'd be burnt by now.

The students also discussed genre when talking about *Gregory the Terrible Eater* (Sharmat, 1980). Gregory is a goat who eats all sorts of unhealthy food in this book, including a car.

Student: How could he eat a car?

Student: He couldn't eat the tires made of rubber. He would choke.

Student: The goat couldn't hold a glass of orange juice.

Teacher: *What else can a goat not do?*

Student: *Can't cook. Can't talk.*

Teacher: *So what kind of a book would you call this?*

Student: *Fantasy, fiction.*

One student even wrote a song about a character after reading about his sulking manner in *Spinky Sulks* (Steig, 1988): "Spinky sulks, sulks a lot, and I don't blame him either. He likes to sulk and I do too!"

Sense of author. A sense of author was evident in several discussions and actions of the children. They talked about how an author could be an authority on science subjects, as in *The Magic School Bus* series. While discussing *The Magic School Bus Inside the Human Body* (Cole, 1989), one student started a discussion of how the author had the authority to write about the subject:

Student: *But I wonder if they know anything about people's bodies?*

Student: *Who's that?*

Student: *The people who made this book.*

The teacher then went on to direct the students to the beginning of the book where the author and illustrator thank a doctor for his help in preparing the book. When the teacher suggested that students could write their own Amelia Bedelia stories, two students took her literally and copied the book verbatim. They proudly showed it to her at their next session and said that they had written the book!

Predictions. Students made predictions about what the story would be about both in their written and oral comments. They hypothesized and risked their own ideas of what would happen in the stories. In discussing *The Mitten* (Brett,

1989), students noticed how the illustrations gave clues as to what animal would come next:

Student: In those mittens, each one knew what was gonna happen next on the next page.

Teacher: It's a preview, isn't it? Like when you go to the movies and they show you a preview of coming attractions, the little mitten over on the side is a preview. It shows you what'll happen on the next page.

In the discussion of *The Wednesday Surprise* (Bunting, 1989), students talked about what they thought the surprise would be when they read the book:

Student: I thought the surprise was going to be for the girl — her birthday.

Student: I thought that the little girl would learn to read.

(The book was actually about the way a young girl taught her grandmother to read.)

Book construction. Students thought about how the books were made, what the medals and stickers on the covers stood for, and so on. They truly examined the books. During the discussion of *The Jolly Postman* (Ahlberg and Ahlberg, 1986), which includes actual envelopes and letters, one student questioned how the book was made:

Student: It had all kinds of letters to other people and they don't even write back and how do they write those typed words?

Student: The author must've did it.

Teacher: When they made this book, they put these envelopes in instead of pages, right? And then they made the things they wanted you to read and this is like a typed letter, isn't it? It's a copy of a typed letter.

So there's a copy in everybody's book. But it looks just exactly like a real letter, doesn't it?

Students also found out and talked about dedication pages, title pages, and the information about the author on the back flap of the book. They also noticed lists of books that the author had written included on the back or the front of some books. They noticed Reading Rainbow stickers and Caldecott Medals and discussed with their teacher what these meant.

They noticed that *The Picture Book of Martin Luther King Junior* (Adler, 1989) was a picture book, while another book about Martin Luther King — *I Have a Dream* (Davidson, 1986) — contained more text and fewer pictures. They noticed that the picture book had watercolor pictures while the other book had black and white photographs, prompting one student to say that some of the watercolor pictures "weren't true" like the photographs.

Language. Students noticed nuances of language in the books, they questioned vocabulary, and noticed abbreviations. During the rereading of *Weird Parents* (Wood, 1990) one student noticed the R copyright sign next to the word *parcheesi*.

Teacher: What do you suppose that R means there?

Student: Nobody else can use the word. You gotta ask the company.

During the discussion of *Teach Us, Amelia Bedelia* (Parish, 1977), one student modeled the type of homonyms they had been reading about:

Student: The kids were driving her nuts.

Teacher: Were they?

Student: No, they can't drive.

Teacher: That's a good one. That's something Amelia Bedelia would say!

When discussing the homonyms in *A Chocolate Moose for Dinner* (Gwynne, 1976), one student related his own experience with language confusion:

Student: My brother, he said go get the flour for Mom and I accidentally went outside and picked some flowers. I got mixed up!

Another student incorrectly predicted the meaning of a homonym:

Teacher: What's an undertow?

Student: That means when you take a bath you have to wash under your toes.

During the reading of *The Jolly Postman* (Ahlberg and Ahlberg, 1986), many opportunities to discuss abbreviations came up:

Teacher: Does anyone know what H.R.H. Cinderella stands for?

Student: Home sweet home?

Student: Home rich home?

Teacher: Her Royal Highness.

Student: I know what B.B. Wolf is — Big Bad Wolf.

Some terms in *The Picture Book of Martin Luther King Junior* (Adler, 1989) brought in students' predictions:

Teacher: What does bias mean?

Student: It means when people go by you.

One student noticed the rhyming words in *Tacky the Penguin* (Lester, 1988): "They had rhyming words like *fox* and *locks*, *rough* and *tough*." They also noticed the unique language that Tacky used.

Student: Tacky greeted him with a hearty slap on the back and loud, what's happenin', boy?

Teacher: Why is that funny?

Student: Because it's like talking slang like some people do on the streets.

Another student commented that he liked the names of the penguins: *Goodly*, *Lovely*, *Angel*, *Neatly*, and *Perfect*. The same student wanted to reread the refrain of the robbers: "We'll march with a switch and we'll sell 'em for a dollar and get rich, rich, rich."

During the discussion and rereading of *The Owl Moon* (Yolen, 1987), one student noticed that the owl's cry of *Whooooooooo* on one line had seven o's and the *Whooooooooo* on the next line had eight o's.

Student: 'Cuz if he wasted all his breath on the first one, then he still waste his breath on the second one 'cuz he can't have more energy than he had the first time.

Teacher: So you think they should have more o's the first time than the second time?

Student: No, I'm talking about he should have the same o's 'cuz if he would've lost breath in the second o's and he did it again, then he should've lost breath at the same time.

The same student noted that he liked the way the story began.

Student: It was like a true story, like you know, on the "Wonder Years" when he'd be talking in his mind, that's what it was like to me.

Teacher: Because you thought the character was talking in his mind?

Student: Yes, talking to himself.

This same student had written in his literature log: "I liked the begening because what they said."

Story comparisons. Some books had similar themes or characters, prompting students to make connections between them. One student noted the similarities between book characters in the books *Tacky the Penguin* (Lester, 1988) and *A Picture Book of Martin Luther King Junior* (Adler, 1989):

Student: I think Tacky and Dr. Martin Luther King was the same.

Teacher: Why?

Student: Because Tacky saved his friends' lives and Dr. Martin Luther King he died, it was peace on earth.

Teacher: Okay, so you're saying Dr. Martin Luther King also helped people, didn't he? That's a really good observation.

When discussing *The Terrible Thing That Happened At Our House* (Blaine, 1975), students made connections with other books:

Student: I thought that she was going to get in trouble a lot like the guy who got gum in his hair.

Teacher: What story was that in?

Student: The Terrible, No Good, Very Bad, Horrible Day.

Teacher: You mean Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day?

Another student noted that the mother in this story dressed a lot like Ms. Frizzle in *The Magic School Bus* series.

Importance of teacher modeling

A teacher can play an important role in the modeling of appropriate and diverse response to literature. For instance, during a discussion of *William's Doll* (Zolotow, 1972), in which William desperately wants a doll, the teacher offered this related comment during the literature discussion group:

The very first toy that my son got when he was little was a doll. That was the very first thing I bought him — a doll, a real soft one that had yarn hair. It didn't have very much hair, come to think of it. It was kind of made out of terrycloth and when he was really little he could suck on it like babies do on toys. And you could put it into the washing machine and get it clean again after he got it all yucky and dirty. But he loved that doll. He still has it.

The teacher also talked about language, especially when referring to *Owl Moon* (Yolen, 1987):

There's some really nice language in this book. I liked some of the words that they used — some are very descriptive. They really tell us about the story and about the night. They kind of make me feel maybe how the people might have felt out there looking for an owl and waiting for it.

Tacky is an individual in the truest sense of the word in the book *Tacky the Penguin* (Lester, 1988). When discussing *Tacky the Penguin*, the teacher talked about how she sometimes felt like Tacky:

Teacher: I've felt like Tacky lots of times.

Student: How?

Teacher: When everybody else that I was around wanted to do things a certain way and I didn't feel like doing it that way. So I really identified with this book because I have felt like Tacky lots of times in my life. For instance, one of the things I do here at school that's different from the other teachers is that I don't like to eat lunch in the teachers' lounge. But I usually bring food that you have to heat up in the microwave and so like today when I have recess duty I'm in the lunchroom with you guys and then I go into the teachers' lounge and heat up my food and then I come in here and eat. And I think all the other teachers think I'm kind of strange sometimes because all the other teachers eat together in the teachers' lounge. But I don't like to do that so I come in the room by myself and eat. So that's one of the many things that I do that makes me feel like Tacky a lot of times.

Student: One thing you do is sell tickets.

Student: And you take us to McDonald's.

Important elements to encourage response

It is important to consider the following in fostering and eliciting response to literature. They are especially true of working with at risk children who may not have the literacy support at home that other children enjoy.

Children need to have their own copies of the books so that they feel they have some ownership of the process. They also need to see the illustrations up close and reread sections of the book. They develop more of an interest in books if they know what it is like to read and hold one of their own. Paperback copies of books are affordable, especially if the book clubs are used.

Children should feel free to discuss the book and voice their own opinion. There is no one correct response to a book. Children need to feel comfortable enough to say what they really think about a book. This group sharing is an important aspect of becoming a "warm, literate family" (Leitstein, 1991, p. 14).

Students need time to respond to literature. Students can't be expected to just automatically think of something to say about a book. They need time to reread or reexamine the book, peruse the illustrations, write in literature logs and think about the story. They also need time to talk to each other about their ideas and observations.

Quality literature is a prerequisite for response to literature. Students can't be expected to discuss plotless or trite stories. To encourage a love of reading and the diversity of response to literature, the best quality books should be used.

Some guidelines for responding to literature may be necessary, especially with children who are used to a more structured reading program. The three prompts mentioned earlier are very helpful for eliciting a variety of responses from children.

Teacher modeling of the love of literature and the diversity of responses possible is also important. Teachers must also read, discuss, and write about books if they expect students to do the same. The teacher's enthusiasm about books and reading in general is an important part of developing life-long readers.

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Professional Materials Review

Whole Language: Practical Ideas. Written by Mayling Chow, Lee Dobson, Marietta Hurst, and Joy Nucich. Pippin Publishing Limited, 150 Telson Road, Markham Ontario L3R1E5. ISBN: 0-88751-032-9. Paperbound. 108 pp. 1991.

While it is the policy of *Reading Horizons* to only review the most current materials, the professional resource reviewed below is one title from the Pippin Publishing series we have featured in recent issues.

Jennifer Rae Stell
Plainwell Community Schools

Professionals in education are aware of the current need for the evaluation of teaching practices. In the area of literacy, it is clear from research that it is not enough to teach reading and writing skills to students. Today's world demands literate people who can think and solve problems independently. *Whole Language: Practical Ideas* is a well-organized, easy to read book about strategies for literacy instruction that can help students become more responsible for their own learning. The ideas presented throughout the book are research-based yet easily applicable to classroom situations.

The book is divided into sections covering shared reading, independent writing, independent reading, shared writing, and evaluation. Each section begins with a brief description of the component and its purpose in the curriculum. This is followed by well-explained strategies and ideas for use in each curricular area. It is not written as a cookbook of

activities. Its focus is on a few specific ideas to further children's understanding and knowledge of each subject.

Influenced by stimulating research in literacy, encouraged by administration, and dissatisfied with their students' progress, these authors gradually evolved in their thinking and practicing of literacy development. They show the importance of integrating reading and writing as one component is always influencing another and as learning is integrated across the curriculum. Before the authors began their new approach to teaching they determined some principles upon which they structured their learning environments. These principles are clearly outlined in the text and are closely aligned with the practical ideas suggested.

There are good illustrations of actual children's writing, showing examples of each stage in written development from prephonemic through conventional writing. There are examples from the students of letters, messages, advertisements, and articles. Graphs and charts demonstrating how the teacher can keep records of students' progress are also included. Particularly useful is a long example of a reading miscue inventory. The authors demonstrate specifically how they mark and evaluate miscues. It is a useful reminder for those already familiar with such inventories and an understandable example for those who are not.

Throughout the book the authors discuss the responsibilities for creating a good learning environment. These responsibilities are shared by both teachers and students, and should be followed for optimum learning to occur. By shifting focus the teacher can help students take more responsibility for their own education as independent learners.



Children's Books

Truck. ISBN: 0-688-12611-1. 1993. 32 pp. US\$18.95 (Big Book Edition). *School Bus*. ISBN: 0-688-12267-1. 1993. 32 pp. US\$4.95 (paperback). Each of these books is written by Donald Crews. Published by Mulberry Books, 1350 Avenue of the Americas, New York NY 10019.

Janet Chupka
Battle Creek Public Schools

Hop on board the big red semi-truck and take a trip through the cities and across the countryside to deliver a load of tricycles to its destination. In *Truck*, a Caldecott Honor Book, Donald Crews uses vivid, graphic illustrations to capture the reader's attention. Although this book does not have traditional narrative text, it is full of signs, symbols, and words young readers will enjoy.

In *School Bus*, young readers will travel to school and back home again on the bright yellow school bus. Donald Crews uses large simple text appropriate for preschool and primary students.

Both of these books are full of environmental signs, symbols, and words we see along our streets and highways. *Truck* is available as a big book, a particularly useful format in helping children make the transition from environmental print to text. Together, *Truck* and *School Bus* would be a great way to introduce a unit about transportation.

Stone Men. Written by Nicki Weiss. Greenwillow Books, 1350 Avenue of the Americas, New York NY 10019. ISBN: 0-688-11015-0. 1993. 32 pp. US\$14.00.

Sherry Myers, Kalamazoo Public Schools

Stone Men is a folk tale told to Arnie by his grandmother. In it we meet Isaac, a quiet peddler who traveled from village to village pushing his cart. Although the villagers were happy to see him, they thought he was a little peculiar. Occasionally, he would give a little stone man to a child, but he never spoke to the villagers. After he left the village — when no farmhouse was in sight — he would stop and pile up stones and a branch or two to make a stone man. This man would be his friend, a quiet one who would listen to the messages of Isaac's heart. He would look back at the stone man as he traveled on. When he could no longer see his creation, he would stop and build another. So he continued, day after day, week after week, year after year.

One night, however, Isaac overheard some voices in the woods and went to investigate. He discovered a group of the czar's soldiers who were planning to attack the nearby village of Bruria at dawn. Isaac ran back to alert the villagers, but since they were exhausted by their preparations for Passover, none woke to his pounding on their doors. As the climax to this tale unfolds, the reader is caught up in wondering, along with the villagers, what miracle will save their village.

Stone Men will be a welcome addition to any home or library. Weiss tells her story simply but enchantingly, for it is a story of a simple but enchanting man. Isaac is a hero, but a very different kind of hero from the ones most children envision with today's emphasis on sports figures and super heroes. There are some lovely messages within the tale about

acceptance of others and human potential. Opportunities abound for critical thinking: Is Isaac a hero? Why would you say that? Why did he return to his normal routine rather than staying in the village? Why did he talk to his stone friends rather than to the villagers? Art follow-up, inspired by Weiss' attractive four-color illustrations, would also follow naturally from a reading of this tale..

Materials appearing in the review section of this journal are not endorsed by *Reading Horizons* or Western Michigan University. The content of the reviews reflects the opinion of the reviewers whose names or initials appear. To submit an item for potential review, send to Kathryn Kinnucan-Welsch, Reviews Editor, *Reading Horizons*, Reading Center and Clinic, Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo MI 49008.



The Rose In My Garden. Written by Arnold Lobel. Illustrated by Anita Lobel. Greenwillow Books, 1350 Avenue of the Americas, New York NY 10019. ISBN: 0-688-12265-5. 1993. 40 pp. US\$4.95.

Sherry Myers
Kalamazoo Public Schools

Anyone familiar with the song "There's a Hole in the Bottom of the Sea" will catch on quickly to the same style in *The Rose In My Garden*. The story starts simply with "this is the rose in my garden," and on the facing page a beautiful, intricately drawn rose. With each succeeding page, more is added to the drawing and to the story, until there is a full and splendid garden with a bee on the rose. Intrigue is added as a

frightened mouse and pursuing cat enter the picture. The cat chases the mouse, tramples the garden and wakes up the bee. Finally, we are left where we started — "this is the rose in my garden."

Each left-hand or text page also includes a small pen and ink drawing of the element being added in full-color to the right hand page. The last page varies from this motif in that the small drawing shows the cat with a bandage on its nose, confirming our prediction that the bee stung the cat.

The Rose In My Garden is a clever book further enhanced by Anita Lobel's beautifully detailed, framable art. The lush textures and colors seem to grow right off the page. The repetitive and lengthening rhyme makes the story a treat for the ear, and the illustrations make it a delight for the eye. With a little creativity, the enjoyment has only begun with the first reading of the story. Pre-school and early elementary classes could have fun turning this story into a play, using drawings or headpieces to transform the children into their roles.



Reading Horizons seeks to publish descriptions of practice and research supporting the development of literacy through multicultural education.

Prospective contributors should follow guidelines for submission of manuscripts, given on the inner front cover of this issue.

Nana's Birthday Party. Written by Amy Hest. Illustrated by Amy Schwartz. Morrow Junior Books, 1350 Avenue of the Americas, New York NY 10019. ISBN: 0-688-07497-9. 1993. 32 pp. US\$15.00.

Shelly Schragg
Harper Creek Community Schools

Nana throws herself a birthday party every year between Thanksgiving and Christmas. Each year, guests can always find Nana's special rules tacked to her front door.

Nana's Rules For Her Birthday Party

NO jeans
NO gum
NO presents (except the kind you make yourself)
NO fighting
NO whining

It is the eve before Nana's birthday party, and Maggie and Brett, Nana's granddaughters, are spending the night with her. Maggie admires Brett's talent for being able to make Nana the most memorable birthday presents ever. This year Maggie aspires to write a story for Nana and to make this gift extraordinary. Brett has not a clue what to make Nana for her birthday. The two cousins, with Nana's help and the simple phrase "pictures tell a story," discover how much easier and fun it is to work together to create an unforgettable gift. The eve of Nana's birthday party is memorable for both of the girls. Author Amy Hest employs colorful language that brings text to life for the reader. This book is a wonderful choice for read aloud and subsequent classroom art projects.

SUBSCRIPTION INFORMATION

READING HORIZONS is a unique publication which serves as a forum of ideas from many schools of thought. Although it began in 1960 as a local newsletter, **HORIZONS** is now written by and for professionals in all the United States and Provinces of Canada. It is an eclectic venture in sharing reports, research and ideas on the teaching of reading at all levels.

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