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## READING: THE CONFERENCES

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# **READING: THE CONFERENCES**

**Jeanne M. Jacobson**

**International Reading Association  
Fourteenth World Conference on Reading  
Maui, Hawaii, July, 1992**

Among the presentations at the International Reading Association's world conference held last summer in Maui were a series of round table sessions sponsored by the Organization of Teacher Educators in Reading (OTER). One focus of the papers shared by members of the OTER Special Interest Group was on issues in assessment.

In their paper titled "Authentic Assessment vs. Traditional Assessment: A Conflict in the Preparation of Preservice Teachers in Reading," Evelyn F. Searls of the University of South Florida, and V. Mil Searls of the Florida Reading Association contrasted assessment paradigms students encounter, through textbooks and from instructors, in courses on educational measurement and other courses in education. They called attention to problems raised by the conflicting views of what constitutes appropriate assessment, and presented a series of recommendations to achieve greater coherence in the instruction preservice teachers receive.

Referring to teacher educators, they noted, "We have moved away from an emphasis on the product of reading (e.g., the one right answer on an objective test) and writing (e.g., the technically perfect written composition on a topic assigned by the teacher) to an emphasis on the process in which readers

and writers engage," yet measurement courses and textbooks continue to stress so-called objective testing, advocating multiple choice, short answer testing of a series of subskills.

"Preservice teachers in our methods classes are being instructed in how to teach and assess reading and writing according to the model of literacy learning," the presenters pointed out. "They learn to use direct observations of behavior, portfolios of student work, logs and journals, student interviews, and other types of performance assessment to ascertain whether students are becoming active, strategic, meaning-making readers and writers. However, this model is in direct conflict with the model that underlies the current assessment practices that our preservice teachers are taught in their measurement courses."

Searls and Searls recommended five changes in the course content presented in preservice courses in educational measurement:

- Measurement courses should teach students to match assessment methods with differing instructional purposes. An emphasis on multiple choice testing can mislead students into thinking that all testing should be focused on the isolatable skills which multiple choice tests measure.
- Course instruction should emphasize the use and analysis of classroom performance techniques. Despite the widespread use of commercially prepared standardized tests, the preponderance of assessments are devised and conducted by classroom teachers.
- Students should learn, in their measurement as well as their methods courses, "to use authentic performance assessments whenever possible." Well-designed learning tasks can also serve as assessments.
- Students should be taught about administration of standardized tests, and interpretation of test results. Such tests will continue to be used, and teachers will be expected to use test information to plan instruction, and to explain test results to parents.
- Information should be included about national and state performance assessments, since teachers will be required to administer and score such tests.

## Multiculturalism and Literacy

### A Worldwide Pattern of Play

**Hopscotch Around the World.** Written by Mary D. Lankford. Illustrated by Karen Milone. Morrow Junior Books, 1350 Avenue of the Americas, NY NY 10019. 1992. ISBN 0-688-08419-2. 48 pp. US\$15.00.

Games which require only a playing area, an object to toss, and an energetic group of friends don't depend on parental affluence and access to a garish toy store featuring heavily advertised, plastic, battery-powered wanna-haves. They are played everywhere, and across time — so that they link memories across generations. Nineteen variations of hopscotch are presented in this delightful book, each with a full-page, full-color illustration showing children playing the game, coupled with a facing page presenting an explanation of the game's history and terminology; clear, child-oriented directions; and a map showing how the playing area is to be drawn.

A double-page map of the world highlights the countries, on five continents, where the intriguingly named games are played: *Escargot* in France, where children hop along a pattern like a snail's shell; *Gat Fei Gei* ("one foot jumping flying machine") played by Chinese children; U.S. versions ranging from Alaska to Texas. Karen Milhorne's painting of Aruban children playing *Pele* shows the island's twisted trees:

*The island of Aruba in the Netherlands Antilles is just twenty miles north of the coast of Venezuela. Many of the trees on the island have been bent into unusual shapes by the strong winds that blow across the island. Because of these winds, an object that will not blow or roll away must be used as a puck. A stone or coin makes a good puck for the children of Aruba.*

Learning about the games, from text and illustrations, introduces information about language, climate, costumes, and ways of life. In Nigeria, for example, *Ta Galagala* is played by tossing a *kwalo* into a series of circles called *kurtus*, and an inexperienced player can have just as much fun as the most talented hopper: "If you toss your *kwalo* and it doesn't land inside a *kurtu*," Lankford writes, "someone will put it in for you, and you can take your turn anyway." (JMJ)