



Reading Horizons: A Journal of Literacy and Language Arts

Volume 33
Issue 1 *September/October 1992*

Article 12

10-1-1992

Reading Horizons vol. 33, no. 1

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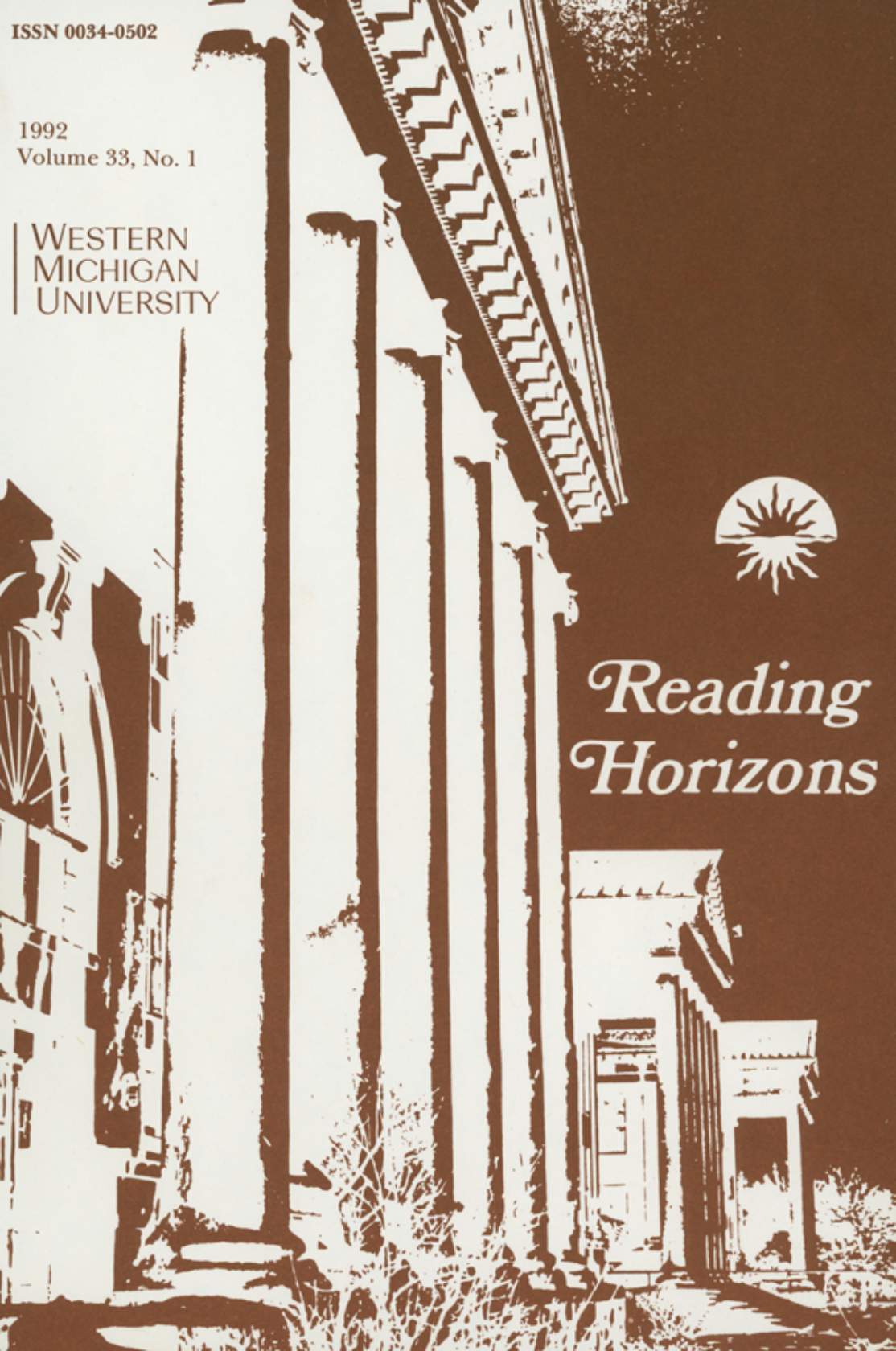
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(1992). Reading Horizons vol. 33, no. 1. *Reading Horizons: A Journal of Literacy and Language Arts*, 33 (1). Retrieved from https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/reading_horizons/vol33/iss1/12

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ISSN 0034-0502

1992
Volume 33, No. 1

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Reading Horizons



READING HORIZONS

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Reading Center & Clinic

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Kalamazoo, Michigan 49008

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

READING HORIZONS (ISSN 0034-0502) is published by the Reading Center & Clinic at Western Michigan University. Second Class Postage is paid at Kalamazoo. Postmaster: Send address changes to READING HORIZONS, WMU, Kalamazoo, Michigan, 49008.

TO SUBSCRIBE

Individual yearly subscriptions are \$18.00, \$20.00 for institutions (in Canada, add \$5.00 per year – \$10.00 per overseas shipment). Make checks payable to READING HORIZONS. Five issues a year are published bimonthly, from October to June. The final issue in each volume contains an Article and Author Index. Rates are determined by costs and subject to change.

TO SUBMIT AN ARTICLE

Manuscripts submitted for publication must be sent in quadruplicate, accompanied by two stamped, self-addressed business-size envelopes; manuscripts will not be returned. Manuscripts are evaluated without author identity. Manuscripts should be prepared following APA style guidelines. Address: Editor, READING HORIZONS, WMU, Kalamazoo, MI 49008.

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Instruction Meets Learner: Success of an Inner-City Learner in a Traditional First Grade Classroom

Ellen McIntyre

In my language arts methods courses at the university, I spend time demonstrating the efficacy of a meaning-based curriculum. Students spend time in my classes reading and writing for functional purposes. They collaborate on assignments and choose many of the projects from an extensive list. They even design their own exams. I try to engage my students in activities which are alternatives to traditional instruction, so that they will teach young children in similar ways. Yet, I always have some students who argue for traditional instruction. One student may say, "It worked for me," while another might question, "If it's so bad, why don't all children who receive traditional instruction fail?" These questions made me ponder Audrey, a child I observed closely for two years. Audrey was a low-SES learner in a traditional classroom who was a successful literacy learner.

Recently there has been a surge of research on children in urban schools, especially children of low socioeconomic status, as they are often the students reported to fail in school (Pallas, Natriello, and McDill, 1990). Much of the research has documented "traditional" or "conventional" instruction (Knapp and Shields, 1990; 1992) which is what most low-SES children receive. Although there may be

multiple reasons for the school failure of so many of these children, most educators look to traditional instruction as one of the main culprits (Purcell-Gates and Dahl, 1990; Knapp and Shields, 1990; 1992). There is some question as to whether traditional instruction encourages children to think.

Knapp and Shields suggest that even well-executed, well-planned traditional instruction limits children's critical thinking, creativity, problem solving, and self-sponsored learning. They suggest this instruction only serves children temporarily – that there is a “ceiling” on learning. Even when standardized test scores go up, literacy learning may actually be at a standstill. Yet, we know not all children who receive traditional instruction in inner-city schools fail to become literate. We know some poverty-stricken children do become independent learners who are responsible for their own learning. Some think critically and solve problems and choose to read and write. Some perform successfully in and out of school – even children from families with previous academic problems.

What is it, then, that allows some children of low-socioeconomic status who receive traditional instruction to succeed? What is it, specifically, about early literacy instruction that can or should occur in all instructional settings? This article addresses these questions by providing examples from one case study of a successful first-grader in an urban school with traditional instruction. Knowledge of successful instructional patterns can help educators further attempt to delineate the specific features of efficient, effective instruction in *all* settings. The conclusions drawn from examination of one learner can also raise questions for future research on a broader scale.

Observing and assessing the language learner

Audrey. This is a case study of Audrey, a white female learner of Appalachian descent. Audrey was observed for two years, at both her home and in her school from the beginning of her kindergarten year through the end of her first grade year. This report will focus on her first grade year. Her teacher, Miss Hinton, was in her fifteenth year of teaching first grade.

The classroom. The site for this study was a first grade classroom in Muller Elementary, which is located in the inner-city region of a midsized midwestern city. Muller serves a predominantly white population who have a history of Appalachian migration. Ten percent of the children are African-American. The families in this community generally live in multi-family houses or apartments. Just over 80 percent of the children are considered urban poor and qualify for the federal free lunch program. Many of the families, including Audrey's, are supported through public assistance.

There were three first grade classrooms in this school. Miss Hinton's classroom was the site for this investigation. There were 22 children in the room during the early part of first grade; 15 were white and seven African-American. The instruction in the classroom was labeled "traditional" or "conventional" (Knapp and Shields, 1990). It was characterized by a basal-driven curriculum which has an emphasis on the sequential mastery of discrete skills ordered from "the basics" to higher-order skills and a higher degree of teacher-directed instruction.

Procedures. At the beginning of her kindergarten year Audrey was administered several written language "tasks" to find out what she knew about print. The tasks assessed: intentionality of print, story structure, written

narrative register, alphabetic principle, concepts of writing, and Clay's (1979) Concepts About Print. (See Purcell-Gates and Dahl, 1990, for the exact scoring and analysis of these tasks.) These data were combined to determine Audrey's knowledge of written language at the onset of formal schooling, which will be described in the next section of this report.

To collect data on Audrey's school behavior in response to instruction, I observed her two mornings a week throughout kindergarten and first grade. Other periods of the school day were sampled to gain a complete understanding of what occurred in her classroom. I decided to affect the instructional/learning process as little as possible to garner information on the typical instruction received by Audrey and her responses. Thus, observations were primarily non-participatory. I sat very close to Audrey and took extensive and careful notes on the talk and actions of both the teacher and the child. When observed, Audrey wore a wireless microphone so Miss Hinton's instruction and Audrey's verbal responses were recorded verbatim. I probed Audrey about some of her print activities with immediate questions such as, "Tell me about what you read," or "How did you figure that out?" Every utterance was systematically recorded, noting intonation patterns, lengths of pauses, and subvocalizations. At the end of Audrey's first grade year, I formally interviewed her classroom teacher, which provided a check on the interpretations made of the instruction. This check provided insight into how and why Miss Hinton used particular instructional strategies.

I also visited Audrey's home to observe the environment and interactions she may have had with print and to conduct informal interviews with family members. These visits were used to augment the data found in school. In

summary, the methods used include: 1) administering six written language tasks to determine knowledge of print; 2) extensive observing and notetaking; 3) audio-tape recording; 4) probing about her reading and work; 5) collecting reading texts and other literacy documents; 6) structured interviewing; and 7) informal visiting at the home.

A search for patterns

I carefully examined field notes and other documents to determine consistent patterns of instruction, Audrey's interaction with print, and her reading strategies. To analyze the instruction and the responses, an adaptation of Glaser's (1969) constant comparative method and Bogden and Bicklen's (1992) procedures for qualitative analysis were used. First, each incident in the field notes was coded and constantly compared to each previous incident. This process led to characteristics of categories and conditions under which each characteristic occurred. When hunches about the categories emerged, I wrote a memo about the idea. Then I resumed the coding, paring off non-relevant material and reducing the data by collapsing categories into broader, more generalized sets of concepts (such as patterns of instructional interactions). This was done by examining underlying similarities of categories. As an idea began to emerge about the relationships among categories, I continued the coding by comparing incidents to well-defined categories. Finally, the memos written during the comparison process provided the main themes of the findings. The raw data provided examples for the themes, and enabled a close correspondence between the conclusions and the data.

Findings

Audrey's background and family. Audrey came from a family of five. According to her mother, who claimed she could not read at all, Audrey's older sister and brother had had difficulty in school. Audrey's father "could read anything he got his hands on" (although her mother said he did not usually *choose* to read). There were almost no adult literacy materials in the home during the period of the home visits, although there were a few children's storybooks as well as the older children's homework materials. Audrey's mother told me that on occasion Audrey liked to use these materials to play school and she often pretended to read from the storybooks before she was a conventional reader. In addition, her mother reported that Audrey's older sister read to Audrey on occasion (about once a week or so). Importantly, Audrey had (and took) the opportunity to sit in on her sister's tutoring sessions which took place twice a week in Audrey's home the summer before Audrey entered kindergarten. Although her mother tried to shoo Audrey away from these lessons, Audrey kept returning and her mother finally let her stay. This picture of one low-SES family is not unlike many families reported in recent research (Teale, 1986).

Print awareness of the onset of school. This case study focuses on Audrey's behaviors in first grade when she emerged as a conventional reader. Yet, it is necessary to examine what knowledge she held about written language at the onset of formal schooling and before first grade instruction began. This information is critical to understanding her success as a school participant as well as a language learner.

Audrey came into kindergarten understanding the intentionality of print. She commented that a sentence printed

on a page was “numbers and letters” and that they were for “counting and reading.” Audrey held some knowledge of story structure, shown by her ability to both generate and recall stories with some essential story elements. Audrey also knew some storybook conventions (lexical and syntactic features of written narrative), although still much less than many same-age middle-class children (Purcell-Gates, 1988; Purcell-Gates and Dahl, 1990). The only other concepts of print (Clay, 1979) Audrey knew were how a book is held, that the print in a book contains the story, and the general direction of print. She was not yet able to exhibit voice-print matching or identify capital letters or punctuation. She scored below that of other children her age on this task (Clay, 1979). On none of the tasks did Audrey exhibit any understanding of the alphabetic nature of print, nor did she distinguish between letters and numbers or letter-like forms.

In kindergarten, instruction involved a traditional readiness program which focused on learning the letters of the alphabet and sounds in isolation (one letter a week), a daily story time, daily arts and crafts, and a period of play and snack time. Seatwork included a ditto page on the letter studied that day. In March, sight words such as *the*, *was*, *it*, and *in* were introduced. By the end of the year these words were combined in short sentences for the children to read.

At the conclusion of kindergarten year, Audrey had learned the alphabet, the sounds some letters represent, a set of sight words and most of Clay's (1979) Concepts of Print. Audrey had also caught on to the alphabetic principle and could make some use of the graphophonic system when reading simple basalese sentences and names, although she was clearly not reading conventionally, as shown by her picture reading (Sulzby, 1985) when reading

on her own. She did not regularly focus on print during storybook reading time. Thus, Audrey's behaviors with written language upon entering first grade were somewhat similar to other children entering first grade (Freppon, 1991; McIntyre, 1990).

First grade success. The data from the home visits, the written language tasks given in early kindergarten, and the kindergarten data from school response all serve to augment the findings from Audrey's first grade year. The most salient conclusions as to why Audrey was a successful literacy learner in a traditional setting include the following: 1) although she did not have extensive experiences with print prior to school, Audrey entered first grade knowing what she needed to know about print to interpret instruction successfully; 2) Audrey was provided a balance of direct instruction and time to explore print on her own; 3) Audrey was given varied and positive feedback which reinforced successful learning.

Instruction meets learner. Audrey was lucky. She appeared able to understand successfully much of the instruction directly presented to her in first grade. In the early months, she was able to follow the print and "read" from memory sentences Miss Hinton had just read aloud. Unlike many of the other children in the class who merely mouthed words and looked globally toward the board or chart (McIntyre, in press), Audrey was able to follow the direction of print as she read. This seemed to enable her to learn the voiced words for the printed words, one key factor in learning to read (Ehri and Sweet, 1991). Later in first grade, when instruction focused on the more abstract aspects of written language and sounding out words, Audrey was one of the few children who seemed to interpret instruction successfully. When she came upon unknown words she

immediately focused on the graphophonics, which was intended by the instruction. She blended sounds together to make words, and used the visual aspects of words as her primary reading strategies (also emphasized in instruction). For example, in January she read, "The /pppplan/flew up" for "The plane flew up," and later, "The /trah tra tra tray train/ is coming... the train is coming," for "The train is coming."

In February of first grade when instruction emphasized lengthier texts, Audrey began a move toward more language-like reading, shown by her intonation. She was frequently observed self-correcting miscues and taking quick glances at pictures to cue herself or affirm unknown words. She continued to sound out words while Miss Hinton patiently waited. Her attempts were almost always meaning-governed and her eventual response syntactically appropriate or she waited for Miss Hinton to provide help or supply the unknown word. This meaning-governed reading occurred most often in reading group where it was emphasized, but it also occurred during independent reading time. Audrey continued to use and understand the skills Miss Hinton taught, and by mid- to late-first grade she seemed to "have it all together" (Sulzby, 1985) in her reading attempts.

Opportunity. Audrey had opportunities with print which many of the other children in the class did not have. Because she was able to interpret instruction successfully, she was afforded extended free time in which she could read books, work language puzzles, or play in the play center while other children finished worksheets. In traditional classrooms, this free time in learning centers often occurs only for those children who finish their real work (Deford, 1984). Such was the case in this classroom and it seemed to benefit Audrey. It seemed to give what some

educators advocate for children of low-SES, a balance of direct instruction and time to explore written language on their own (Delpit, 1986; Delpit and Teale, 1991). Audrey often chose to read books and engage in other print activities, which allowed her time to practice the skills learned during direct instruction time.

Importantly, Audrey also had the opportunity to begin writing before most children in traditional first grade classrooms do (Purcell-Gates and Dahl, 1990). Miss Hinton's conventional view (Knapp and Shields, 1990) of literacy learning dictated that first graders cannot usually write stories on their own until they can read independently. Yet Audrey began writing stories at home and bringing them to school. These stories were corrected by Miss Hinton (spelling), copied over neatly by Audrey and made into books which were put on the classroom shelf for all the children to read during free time. Miss Hinton praised Audrey's "beautiful work" and proudly displayed the stories to other teachers. Thus Audrey, unlike any of the other children, had the opportunity to learn about reading through her own writing during this period of first grade. Early writing has been shown to enhance young children's sense of the alphabetic nature of print (Gunderson and Shapiro, 1988) and their awareness of reading processes (Smith, 1986).

High expectations and positive individual feedback. Miss Hinton held high expectations for Audrey, noting that, "she always tried so hard, and she could read anything" (Interview, May 1989). Miss Hinton usually asked Audrey to read the most difficult parts of texts, such as the directions on worksheets or the social studies and science texts. Audrey responded to these high expectations by working at reading, puzzling over some texts and examining print around the room. She also seemed to have a sense of

herself as a successful reader as shown by her metacognitive responses when I probed her about her work or reading. For example, in December I observed Audrey “reading the pictures” of an advanced level basal text. When I asked her to tell me about what she had just read she said, “Oh, I didn’t really read this. It’s a second grade book. But I can read *this!*” and she pulled from her desk *Danny and the Dinosaur*, one of her favorite storybooks.

School seemed a pleasant place to be for Audrey, as shown by her engagement with the work of school, reading and play. She was respected and well-liked by both her peers and her teacher. Miss Hinton praised her work, attempts at reading, and behavior in the classroom. Audrey’s response to the praise was simply to work even harder. During seatwork time, Audrey put forth a lot of effort. She spent considerable time copying sentences from the board for neatness. She reread what she had written for accuracy. Audrey also took care to spell words correctly, copy all of the text and put in punctuation. On her worksheets, Audrey worked independently as she carefully read sentences to fill in blanks or match pictures with beginning sound letters. She worked for accuracy and nearly always achieved it. Audrey also took time to color the pages carefully when asked to do so. She rarely missed anything on any of her worksheets, often carrying a stack of stickered 100 percent papers home daily. Audrey certainly had the positive environment necessary for successful early literacy learning.

Discussion

Low-SES children in urban schools with traditional instruction can succeed in school and literacy learning if school instruction meets the learner. It is necessary for educators not to simply condemn traditional instruction and advocate alternatives, but to examine closely the instruction

which actually occurs and seek to identify the specific characteristics which allow for successful literacy learning. The instruction must match what the learner knows upon entering school, there must be extensive time for reading and writing texts of choice in order to try out skills or strategies learned in direct instructional contexts, and there must be regular and positive interactions with the learner about written language.

Children's prior experiences with print clearly determine whether there is a match between what the learner knows and the instruction. One reason Audrey benefited from the traditional first grade instruction was because she had the prerequisite knowledge necessary to function appropriately within that classroom. She exhibited understanding of the nature and functions of print and she understood there existed a principle which correlated sounds and symbols. Audrey understood there were exceptions and the system did not always work. She knew enough about written language to take from formal instruction its intended goals. Although not extensively, Audrey was read to at home and she sat in during her sister's tutoring sessions. These two home experiences may have provided just the amount of print awareness and knowledge of how to "do school" (Dyson, 1984) necessary for success in traditional classrooms. If experiences with print prior to school are limited with some children, it is those children who need more "lap time" (Holdaway, 1979), storybook reading in the classroom and possible explicit instruction in how to go about completing school tasks (Delpit and Teale, 1991).

Educators who claim that traditional instruction is one of the main culprits for failure of low-SES children to succeed in literacy often view a high degree of direct instruction as contrary to what young children need. This research

would suggest the same, except to explain that a *balance* of both direct instruction and extensive opportunity to explore print on their own may be most beneficial for some children. Clearly, if children do not read a lot, they are not going to become good readers (Allington, 1980) and if children are not encouraged to write, they may not be able to benefit from all that writing teaches about reading (Gunderson and Shapiro, 1988; Dyson, 1982; Freppon and Dahl, 1991). Children need time to figure out the “written language puzzle” (Dyson, 1982). Opportunity to practice literacy in combination with some direct instruction may be exactly the combination necessary for children such as Audrey.

Finally, young children emerging as literate individuals will be most successful in positive, supporting environments in which there are high expectations for success and children’s attempts at literacy learning are praised and encouraged. Also, Audrey had the individual attention so critical for young children. It has been shown that some individual literacy instruction can help even the most “at-risk” children (McIntyre, in press). For Audrey, her environment provided both the affective and cognitive interactions necessary for success.

Is it enough?

Audrey was successful at learning to read and write in first grade. She was one of the lucky ones. The instruction met her developmental needs, she had opportunity to explore, and she had positive, individual feedback. Many children in traditional classrooms do not have these opportunities. Instruction may be too abstract, and there may not be enough time to explore print on their own. It is not that the very skills-oriented instruction is bad, it just may be inappropriate for the children who are not yet developmentally ready for the study of the abstract aspects of print. In many

classrooms this may include the majority of the children. Traditional instruction may be appropriate for the few children, like Audrey, who are developmentally able to transfer skills learned in highly controlled settings to more natural reading settings (such as independent reading time). It may be appropriate for those learners if they are provided enough time to practice these skills during school time.

Audrey was luckier than most of her classmates. But she may not remain lucky. Knapp and Shields (1992) suggest that traditional instruction only serves children temporarily. It is likely that without a lot more opportunity with print to practice both reading and writing in functional settings, Audrey may begin to fall behind. If her home environment does not offer her the kinds of opportunities found in many middle class homes (such as many children's books), then she may need more time at school. Unfortunately, if her subsequent instruction in later elementary grades is similar to her first grade instruction then she may be in trouble. A few minutes for independent reading, and a few opportunities a week to write while she is learning more and more skills which need application for understanding, may not be enough. It may be that more progressive, alternative instructional settings are most critical in the middle elementary years when so many children begin to fail.

Future research

This was one case study of one learner who was successful in her traditional first grade classroom. Although we can speculate about Audrey, it is impossible to make claims about children in general from these findings. A useful future study could examine children in the same way with a larger sample of learners. It would be interesting to see what happens with children in these settings later on in their

elementary years — to see if their early success continues to serve them, or if the traditional instruction eventually limits children such as Audrey.

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Reading Horizons typically publishes a reviews section in each issue. The review section for this edition begins on page 87.

Materials reviewed in the review section of the 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 with the reviews. 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.





How Can We Use What We Know About Questioning Skills to Develop Literate Thinkers?

Bonnie B. Thomas

As the critical thinking movement has developed and corresponding research has been reported, a wide body of knowledge has developed around the skill of questioning as a means of developing critical thinking. Effective teachers from Socrates to the present day have sought to do more than transmit facts to students. Teachers have tried to help students develop skills in problem-solving, analyzing, evaluating and interpreting information. A typical teacher does this by asking hundreds of questions on a given day. The prevalence of this type of teaching has been found in reviews of research on teachers' questions which include studies going back to the turn of the century (Gall, 1984).

In recent years the questioning skills of teachers have come under close scrutiny and wholesale criticism. The purposes of this article are to present a review of the research on questioning skills and to discuss possible reasons why these skills are not being used in the classroom as often as they should or could be used. Various questioning strategies are explored and ideas are offered about how these strategies can be used in the classroom to reach beyond the teacher's manuals to develop higher quality student thinking.

What we know about questioning

There has been sufficient research about questioning skills to establish a knowledge base which provides evidence that teacher questioning contributes significantly to student learning (Costa, 1985; Dantonio, 1990). We know, for instance, that teachers consider questioning, particularly higher order questions, to be highly important (Rosales, 1990), that teachers can structure educational environments which encourage students to question, which encourage risk-taking, and which model good questioning procedures; that this, in turn, fosters cognitive activity on higher levels within this environment. We know that there is a relationship between the level of questions and the syntax used by the teacher, and the quality of responses from the students. Probing student answers with appropriate response questions is also an effective questioning procedure resulting in greater depth in student responses.

Knowing this, why is it that teachers and students alike persist in using factual questions requiring little intellectual effort beyond memory? There are several reasons why teachers and students do not take the role of questioning as a serious part of the educational program, not the least of which are the testing procedures used in virtually all schools. A vast majority of standardized tests ask for responses that require memorization and recall, neglecting the higher thinking processes. Because they tend to be textbook oriented, many teachers emphasize the factual, low level questions found in the basal readers. The questions in these readers are often remarkably deficient in their attention to thinking. Although many teachers are frustrated by the script-type orientation of teacher's manuals which emphasize mastery of facts, they believe that in order for their students to perform well on the unit tests, which also emphasize knowledge level thinking, they

must themselves emphasize that level of questioning. Unfortunately, teacher-made tests often follow the same pattern, leading students to the notion that they need only attend to those concepts or items on which they will be tested. Moreover, teachers often indicate their preservice programs do not adequately prepare them for encouraging or appraising critical thinking.

The use of factual level questions has some merit, however. Studies have shown that teaching emphasizing factual questions about subject matter results in higher achievement when the achievement measures are based on answering factual questions about the subject (Gall, 1984; Strother, 1989).

In spite of the proliferation of tests and testing procedures, there has been a surge of interest in thinking skills since the mid 1980s. One reason for this is the influence of educational reports which came out in the early 1980s expressing concern about the readiness of our youth to enter adult life with an ability to reason. Another factor is the influence of corporate America through books dealing with the future of industry. This literature has emphasized the advantages possessed by students who are skilled in problem-solving, decision-making and creative thinking, and the need industry and business has for workers who can master changes that come with living in an information society (Pauker, 1987).

Educators are thus caught in a double bind. While on the one hand they are expected to produce critical thinkers who are comfortable with the processes of problem solving, creative thinking and methods of inquiry, at the same time their students must produce high achievement test scores, which is ordinarily an outgrowth of teacher-centered

strategies and fact-laden questions. Instead of putting teachers in this awkward position, thinking should be installed as a valid goal for education. Educators need to synchronize curriculum, staff development, instructional materials, evaluation measures, supervision practices and communication with parents to focus on this common goal.

In the absence of a district-wide thinking skills program, teachers who wish to do so can develop the skills necessary to improve their students' thinking by improving their own questioning techniques and developing their students' questioning techniques.

Questioning strategies for the teacher

Asking thought-provoking questions seems to come naturally for a few fortunate teachers. However, the great majority of us must learn the skill by practice and feedback. Until teachers have practiced questioning techniques and have been provided consistent feedback on the quality of their questions, they should write down the questions they plan to ask. Costa (1985) and Dantonio (1990) have developed questioning strategies that have merit, are applicable in the generic sense, and are easily adapted to lesson plans across the curriculum.

In his model of intellectual functioning, Costa (1985) describes three phases: input, processing and output. He maintains that there are appropriate questions that can be asked during each of these phases that cause students to think. By carefully constructing questions, teachers can design lessons which cause the students to perform intellectual functions appropriate for each of the phases.

Questions at the input phase would of necessity be generally factual. These are commonly found in teacher's

manuals and are easily developed by teachers. A simple list of the action words describing cognitive behavior at the input phase to prompt the teacher would insure appropriate questions at the input stage. Costa suggests these words: *counting, matching, defining, observing, reciting, selecting, describing, completing, naming, listing and identifying.*

During the processing stage the teacher, through appropriate questions, can help students make sense of the data gathered during the input stage. At this stage, the questions become higher level, producing greater depth in the responses. Using a classic piece of children's literature, Frances Hodgson Burnett's *The Secret Garden* (1910, 1962), the following are examples of questions which could be asked during the processing stage: 1) How do you think Mary's uncle will feel when he finds out she has been in the secret garden? (*synthesizing*) 2) What evidence did you find that would lead Colin to believe he would have the same affliction as his father? (*analyzing*) 3) How are Mary and Colin alike? (comparing) or different? (*contrasting*) 4) List the main points of the story from the beginning to where we are now. (*sequencing*) 5) Why was Colin unable to walk at first? (*determining causality*)

Other questions may be developed using such process words as *categorizing, explaining, classifying, inferring, experimenting, organizing, distinguishing, summarizing, grouping and making analogies.*

In the final or output phase, students apply the information and evaluate the situation. Questions that might be asked about *The Secret Garden* in this phase are: 1) What do you think would have happened if Mary had never met Dickon? (*hypothesizing*) 2) If everyone took on Colin's new philosophy or "magic," what do you think it would be like?

(*speculating*) 3) In your opinion, who was the most important person in this story? Why? (*evaluating*) 4) If you were to design your own secret garden, what would it look like? (*designing*) Other questions could be developed using the words *imagining, planning, judging, predicting, extrapolating, creating, forecasting, inventing, generalizing* and *model building*.

Dantonio (1990) has also introduced two interesting types of questions which lead to increased skill in critical thinking. They are *core* questions and *processing* questions. Core questions have three characteristics: 1) clarity – the question is easy to understand; 2) focus – it identifies the content and thinking process; and 3) openness – it allows for diversity of response. Dantonio maintains that it is important to limit the number of core questions to four or five per discussion period.

Processing questions, on the other hand, are follow-up questions which give the teacher the opportunity to help learners think through and extend their original responses, giving them fuller understanding of what they have said. Gall (1970) in his earlier work suggested this same type of question sequence and went on to emphasize that the follow-up or processing questions have a substantial impact on student learning. The importance of follow-up questions is further substantiated by Hare and Pulliam (1980) who stated in their study of teacher questioning that follow-up questions to student responses were as important as the initial questions.

Dantonio goes on to suggest that teachers attempt to prepare appropriate processing questions ahead of time, if possible, by speculating on students' most likely responses. She identifies six types of process, or follow-up, questions,

and includes an example of each. *Refocusing*: You've told us how these two fables are similar; now tell us their differences. *Narrowing focus*: What do you recall about (a particular passage)? *Clarifying*: I'm not sure I understood what you said. Could you say it a different way? *Verifying*: Can you substantiate your statement? *Supporting*: What makes you think Mary will do that? *Redirecting*: Someone else tell us another possible reason for (a specific detail in the story).

Processing or follow-up questions require active listening. Teachers cannot be thinking about the next question while the student is responding, but must assess the quality of the response, decide what is missing, and only then structure the next question to elicit the appropriate information. Strategic decisions are made by teachers as they formulate follow-up questions intended to shape quality student answers.

To strengthen the quality of the response further, teachers should make students aware what higher-level thinking skills are being taught. When they do, they are more likely to have students who practice these thinking skills actively. Students respond in greater depth when they perceive that their teachers emphasize thinking skills. It is imperative, therefore, that teachers draw students' attention to the cognitive process embedded in the questions they ask, as well as point out the type of thinking used by the student in their responses. This process of identifying the thinking skill reflects the essence of current efforts to improve students' thinking (Beyer, 1988).

Linguistic precision such as that described above is also advocated by Costa and Marzano (1987) who maintain that precise language on the part of the teacher stimulates

higher level responses from students. Teachers often can be heard admonishing a student to think, without telling the student what to think about or how to think. Instead, teachers should phrase each question so it is clear which type of thinking is required. They provide examples of linguistic precision using specific cognitive terminology, shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1
Increasing linguistic precision
 (adapted from Costa and Marzano, 1987, p. 30)

Instead of saying

Say

Let's look at these two pictures.

Let's *compare* these two pictures.

What do you think will happen when...

What can you *predict* will happen when...

How can you put ...into groups...

How can you *classify*...

Let's work this problem.

Let's *analyze* this problem.

What do you think would happen if...

What do you *speculate* would happen if...

What did you think of the story?

What *conclusions* can you draw about this story?

How can you explain...

What *hypothesis* do you have that might explain...

How do you know that's true?

What *evidence* do you have to support?

How else could you use this...

How could you *apply* this...

Developing student questioning strategies

Much of the research on questioning relates to teacher questioning techniques rather than teaching students to formulate their own questions. However, when students formulate questions, they become actively involved in learning (Marzano et al., 1988). If increased thinking skill development is the goal, a teacher's ultimate challenge is to teach student strategies that support effective thinking. The most basic strategy (which, unfortunately, is not as widely

practiced as it should be) is, as has been discussed earlier, that of modeling effective, precise questioning techniques.

Another strategy is Ogle's (1986) KWL strategy which begins with teacher-generated questions, then guides students into formulating questions themselves while continuously encouraging students to be linguistically precise. Since one of the characteristics of critical thinkers is the ability to use specific terminology, teachers also need to provide both formal and informal situations where students can practice linguistic precision.

Reciprocal questioning, a technique developed by Palincsar and Brown (1984), is another strategy for teaching students to ask questions. Using this method the student and the teacher take turns asking each other questions about a passage. Together they read a paragraph and, guided by the teacher's questions, identify and integrate what is happening. When they have identified and interpreted enough information, they predict what will happen next. The teacher and student then reverse roles. After several sessions, students become adept at constructing questions of sophistication, by imitating the teacher.

An informal setting can be created by using cooperative learning groups which provide students with the opportunity to develop questioning and problem-solving techniques. Holding discussions in small cooperative learning groups creates a setting where students can consider several points of view on a topic or engage in reciprocal questioning. This dialectic discussion strategy offers opportunities to question viewpoints, question implications and consequences, comment critically, and generate new information in a less threatening environment.

One area which may be of concern to teachers is evaluation of student growth in questioning strategies. Costa (1985) describes what we might see in a classroom where thinking is encouraged. We would find a room arrangement where students can see and hear each other, where students are engaged with one another and not merely talking to the teacher, and where the teacher is the facilitator for student ideas. In this classroom the teacher models the desired questioning strategies. This teacher uses one or more of the frequently used techniques to measure growth in development of thinking and questioning strategies. For instance, the teacher may observe and record in a journal occurrences of student-student or student-teacher interactions which are later analyzed for themes or patterns. Another technique is to tape classroom discussions systematically, again analyzing them over a period of time to demonstrate evidence of change and growth.

There are no clear standards by which student questioning strategies can be measured. However, systematically collecting and analyzing data will provide information which can be measured against criteria established by the teacher or the teacher and students together for demonstrating improvement in questioning strategies.

The implications of research demonstrate that judicious structuring of questions can cause students to think more clearly, critically, and divergently. Teachers can develop the skills and procedures known to improve students' thinking until such time as district-wide thinking skills programs are put into place. They can learn to assess the level and types of questions provided in teacher's manuals and add ones which elicit answers based on higher order thinking. By eliminating some factual questions and substituting questions which require divergent thinking, teachers can

address, if not overcome, the double bind in which they find themselves.

This article has attempted to encourage teachers to improve their questioning skills by providing examples of questions designed to elicit critical thinking and providing suggestions to assess when and whether critical thinking has occurred. Asking thought-provoking questions is not easy; it takes effort, time and practice. However, one of the ultimate outcomes of education is to produce citizens who are critical processors and consumers of information and who are committed to accuracy and clarity. The use of effective questioning strategies is one widely researched procedure available to assist teachers in their efforts to be successful in this endeavor. Teachers can and must create an environment where critical thinking occurs.

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What Is Important In Reading In Middle Level Classrooms: A Survey of Classroom Teachers' Perceptions

**Tom Davidson
George H. McNinch**

Should reading instruction in middle level schools be aimed at helping youngsters to acquire more specific, isolated skills of how to read? Or should the focus of reading in middle level schools be on assisting learners to become readers? An answer to both of these critical questions might be — yes. Middle level learners (10 to 14 years old) should grow both in their skillfulness as readers and in the process of becoming readers. Research data and current instructional practices can be found to support both of these positions.

Reading has long been viewed by teachers as consisting of a process of decoding graphic symbols into words (Hayes, 1991). It has been viewed equally long as the process of acquiring the skills of comprehension — getting meaning from what is read (Hittleman, 1988). Schools, middle level schools included, have consequently invested great amounts of time, effort, and money in the development of learner competence in the various collections of word identification, phonic and structural analysis, vocabulary development, and/or comprehension skills. In short, reading has been viewed by these schools as the

acquisition of the skills of how to read (Cecil, 1987) and schools in their instruction have responded accordingly.

Reading scholars have noted, however, that many middle level schools, as well as schools in general, place too much emphasis on the mastery of the skills of how to read (Anderson, et. al., 1985). They assert that mastery of the skills of how to read should be de-emphasized (Alexander and Fuller, 1976; Applebee, Langer and Mullis, 1987; Cecil, 1987; Fenwick, 1987; Veatch, et. al., 1979); that greater emphasis should be placed on involving learners in the process of becoming readers (Cecil, 1987; Speigel, 1981; Veatch and Acinapuro, 1978); and that practices in middle level reading programs which extend and enrich learner involvement in activities and experiences which will facilitate their growth in becoming readers should be expanded (Anderson, et. al., 1985; Applebee, et. al., 1987; Ciani, 1981; Davidson, 1987; Davidson, 1991; Pence, 1973).

The purpose of this study was to determine what reading practices are considered to be important in middle level classrooms (grades four through eight) according to what middle level teachers perceived to be most emphasized in their schools. The researchers sought to determine if these teachers believed that reading practices related to skills mastery were considered to be more important, or, if practices related to the process of becoming a reader were considered to be more important.

Procedures

For the purpose of this study the characteristics of skills mastery reading programs were considered to be concerns for learner scores on standardized achievement tests and/or "level" tests; the practicing of specific, isolated skills of reading and the use of skill practice workbooks and

worksheets; and the "covering" of all skills designated for specific reading levels and/or grade levels. While there are certainly other practices which are representative of skills based reading programs, the researchers took the position that these features were some of the most typical.

Programs designed to encourage students to become readers were characterized by concern for the availability of a wide variety of reading materials in each classroom; provision of a regular daily time for learners to read silently in materials of their own choice; the teacher reading aloud daily to learners from high quality, high interest literature; use of the creative and language arts by learners to share reading with others; and a reading environment in the classroom that promoted the use of reading for pleasure and as a vehicle for learning. There are other practices which are used in the process-oriented reading programs; however, these were thought to be common to most.

The instrument used to determine teachers' perceptions of reading practices in their middle level schools was a specially prepared research survey (see Figure 1) developed by the primary author. The questionnaire consisted of ten statements of belief about the implementation of the reading program — five statements of practice associated with skills mastery (items *a* through *e*) and five statements associated with the process of becoming a reader (items *f* through *j*).

Middle level teachers were asked to rank the statements of reading practice from 1 (the practice receiving the greatest emphasis) to 10 (the practice receiving the least emphasis), using as a base their perceptions of what received the greatest amount of emphasis in the reading programs in their middle level (grades four to eight) schools.

Figure 1

SURVEY: What Is Important In Reading

What is considered to be important in the reading program in your school? Below are listed 10 statements regarding reading practices in schools. This survey seeks to find out your opinion about the significance of each of these practices in the reading program in your school. To do this, you need to do the following:

1. Read all 10 statements of practice before doing anything else.
 2. After having read all of the statements, consider how important each one is *as you see it* in the reading program in your school.
 3. Rank all of the statements from the one you feel is considered *most important* in your school to the one you feel is considered *least important*. Give the one that is *most important* a ranking of 1; the next a ranking of 2; the next 3; etc.: to a ranking of 10 for the one that is *least important*.
- a. _____ setting aside a daily time for children to read independently in materials of their choice
 - b. _____ providing a classroom environment that promotes, and stimulates interest in, reading independently for pleasure and/or to learn
 - c. _____ practicing specific skills of how to read
 - d. _____ children achieving acceptable standardized test scores
 - e. _____ providing a well stocked classroom library
 - f. _____ setting aside at least one reading period a week for children to share books they've read through creative and/or language arts
 - g. _____ "covering" all the skills in your reading level
 - h. _____ having children complete workbooks and/or worksheets of skills practice
 - i. _____ children passing "level" tests
 - J. _____ reading aloud to children daily from high quality children's literature

The survey was completed by 59 middle level teachers enrolled, over a three year period, in graduate courses in the Middle Grades and Reading Education Department at West Georgia College. Only certified middle level teachers (grades four to eight) participated in and completed the survey. The responses of the teachers completing the survey were tallied according to the rankings given to each reading practice statement. The tallies for each statement for each

ranking were totalled to yield an over-all total score for each statement which yielded the over-all rank order found in Figure 2.

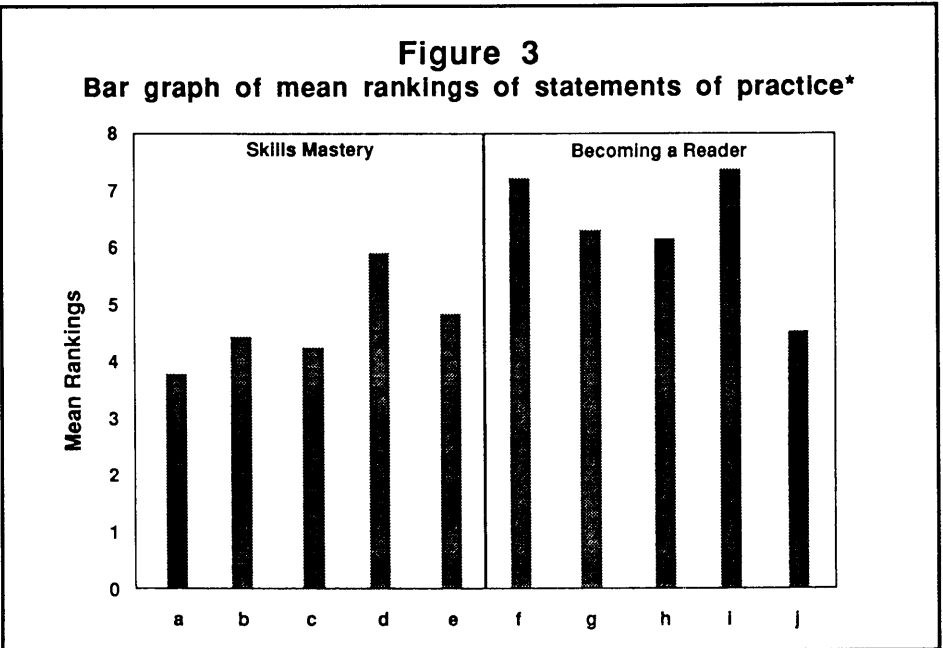
Figure 2
**Overall Ranking of Statements of Reading Practice
by Middle Level Teachers**

<i>Rank</i>	<i>Statements of Practice</i>
1	Children achieving acceptable standardized test scores
2	"Covering" all the skills in your reading level
3	Practicing specific skills of how to read
4	Providing a classroom environment that promotes, and stimulates interest in, reading independently for pleasure and/or to learn
5	Children passing "level" tests
6	Having children complete workbooks and/or worksheets of skills practice
7	Reading aloud to children daily from high quality children's literature
8	Setting aside a daily time for children to read independently in materials of their own choice
9	Providing a well stocked classroom library
10	Setting aside at least one reading period a week for children to share books they've read through creative and/or language arts

Results

Analysis of the final rankings of the 10 statements of reading practice by the middle level classroom teachers surveyed was done in two ways. First, the final rankings themselves were examined to determine what patterns were apparent in the teachers' responses. Second, the ranking of the 10 statements was statistically analyzed to determine the differences between the sets: the five statements of practice which reflect skills oriented reading programs, and those five which reflect a focus on the process of becoming a reader. To do this inferential analysis, a dependent *t*-test investigating differences among sums of

ranks was used. In order to examine the rankings of the items on the survey, the mean rankings of the statements were organized as illustrated in the bar graph shown in Figure 3. Examination of the bar graph reveals that the middle level teachers identified the five statements associated with *skill mastery* emphasis as receiving greater emphasis in the reading programs of their middle level schools than did those skills associated with *becoming a reader*. Four of the five statements in the *skills mastery* cluster (items *a*, *b*, *c*, and *e*) had the lowest mean scores of all the items (thus indicating that they received the highest rankings). The exception within the *skills mastery* cluster, item *d*, had a mean rank which placed it sixth, only one position removed from being ranked among the five most emphasized practices as ranked by the middle level teachers surveyed.



* Note: Since items were ranked from 1 to 10, the lower the score, the higher the rank.

It is of particular interest to note that three practices — achieving acceptable test scores, covering skills and practicing skills (items *a*, *b*, and *c*) — most closely associated with skills oriented reading programs — were ranked first, third and second in emphasis.

The middle level teachers surveyed also consistently identified the five statements associated with the process of *becoming a reader* as less evident in their middle level schools. Four of the five statements (items *f*, *g*, *h*, and *i*) associated with the cluster *becoming a reader* had the highest mean scores indicating that these statements were perceived to be considered of less importance than the *skills mastery* cluster by these school programs. The exception in this group of statements, item *j*, had a mean rank which placed it fourth in the overall rankings.

It is of interest to note that in the group of practices associated with the cluster *becoming a reader*, three practices consistently identified as having a positive impact on the development of emerging and continued literacy with middle level youngsters (Davidson, 1991; Veatch, et al., 1979) were ranked in this second tier. These three skills — reading aloud to youngsters, independent silent reading and an accessible classroom library (items *h*, *g*, and *f*) — were ranked seventh, eighth and ninth in importance by the teachers surveyed.

To determine if the rankings of the five statements reflecting a perceived emphasis on *skill mastery* (statements *a* through *e*) were significantly different from the rankings of the five statements reflecting an emphasis on *becoming a reader* (statements *f* through *j*), a dependent *t*-test was computed. The mean rank for statements in the first cluster, *skills mastery*, was 4.627. The mean rank for the

statements in the second cluster, *becoming a reader*, was 6.383. The dependent *t*-test computed between the means of the two representative reading practice clusters was significant ($t(57) = -3.359$, $p < .001$). The significant *t*-ratio confirms that the teachers perceived the two sets of statements quite differently. Items that represented a *skills mastery* approach to reading received a significantly higher ranking than did items that represented emphasis on the process of *becoming a reader*.

Conclusions and recommendations

Reading instruction should, in our opinion, focus on both the acquisition and development of skills of becoming a reader as well as building the processes of emerging and developing literacy. However, according to the findings of this study, both areas are not perceived by teachers as having equal value or occurrence in their middle level classrooms. Skills mastery strategies which focus on the activities of how to read receive the greater emphasis in the middle level schools while those practices having to do with the process of becoming a reader receive significantly less emphasis. If this sample of middle level teachers is typical, then teachers of grades four to eight perceive that skill mastery strategies drive the reading curriculum at the expense of the strategies that foster reading and literacy. With the growing national emphasis and debate about whole language (Harp and Brewer, 1992), literature based reading (Speigel, 1981), and "becoming a nation of readers" (Anderson, Hiebert, Scott, and Wilkinson, 1985) this perception of dominance by skills over process suggests that it is imperative for schools to become more inclusive in their reading practices and strategies.

Insuring that middle level learners acquire the skills of how to read is, without question, an important part of the

reading program of the middle level school. But, it is only a part. Of equal significance is the process of the middle level learner becoming a reader. Sponsoring skills mastery to the exclusion of developing a reader is to fail in one of the major missions of the middle level school.

Given the findings of this study, middle level school educators need to rethink the perceived narrow focus and emphasis of current reading programs. Teachers must begin to shape reading practices to be more consistent with the broad inclusive definitions of middle level education. Reading must become a vehicle which contributes significantly to meeting the developmental literacy needs of the middle level learner. Reading must become the vehicle to empower the middle level youngster as a learner — an independent, self reliant, and self directed consumer of reading. Reading must be used as a strategy through which learners experience higher level thinking, decision making, and problem solving in their reading, and as a result become responsible learners and persons.

Administrators and curricular planners must expand the perceived narrow focus of the reading program. Schools must begin to use reading practices which engage middle level learners in reading for pleasure, use reading as a tool for learning, integrate reading into their values as persons, and ultimately become persons who are readers.

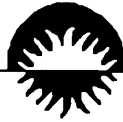
All those involved with middle level schools must work to see that reading becomes a process that goes beyond skills mastery and test success. Teachers must view reading as a life long literacy process as well. The reading program must prepare middle level learners for the language based world in which they will live and work as adults. Reading programs must expand in scope and

become a vehicle for information acquisition, information processing, information judging, and information using. Wide and varied reading must be used to open the world and its cultures to the mind of the middle level learner in order to prepare them for the smaller world of the future.

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Using Newspapers With Remedial Secondary Students to Improve Reading and Writing Literacy

**Deborah G. Phelps
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Literacy has gained national attention and continues to concern educators, parents, and a business community that relies on a literate work force. The use of newspapers in the classroom with secondary remedial reading students is a supplementary strategy that is worthy of attention. Newspapers provide special elements that have been well received by secondary students with reading problems.

Secondary students with reading difficulties typically have many problems. Repeated failures have embittered many, and are often the basis of negative attitudes, inappropriate behavioral responses and broken spirits unwilling to take risks which may lead to additional failures. Many prefer to assume roles of clowns or tough guys over being seen as students with reading problems. Changing this pattern can be a major task for even a seasoned teacher.

Discrepancy between theory and practice

Adding to the problem is the fact that few secondary schools have a systematic, consistent reading program. Current research suggests that secondary reading

programs should include reading instruction in content classrooms bolstered by integrated developmental and remedial programs that focus on content support (Roe, Stoodt and Burns, 1990). The authors of *Becoming a Nation of Readers* concluded that the most logical place for instruction of reading and thinking strategies is in social studies and science rather than in separated lessons about reading (Anderson, Herbert, Scott and Wilkinson, 1985).

However, current research and theory on reading is often not reflected in the educational practices in our schools. A study by Gee and Forester (1988) suggests that the majority of secondary schools either have no organized reading or offer reading instruction in a single class with a reading label.

A factor contributing to the problem appears to be some resistance by veteran content area faculty members to including reading strategies in their lessons. The focus predominantly continues to be on content mastery. Reading instruction is often viewed as a separate content area, or as being the responsibility of the elementary teacher who has had the training needed to give reading instruction.

Using the newspaper with disabled readers

The newspaper, which has proved to be an excellent source of instructional material for secondary remedial readers, is adaptable to a variety of teaching strategies (Lehr and Harris, 1989). Newspapers provide variety and fresh material with which few book publishers can compete. Even a discouraged reader may find an item of interest which may be in the form of a classified advertisement, advice column, sports event, weather report, horoscope, movie review, fashion/beauty announcement, sensational

occurrence, article involving teens, or news of local celebrities. Generally, at least one of the topics will interest most students.

Commercial reading materials tend to be a reminder of past failures and are often resented or branded as babyish. Many become dated quickly since teenage fads and interests change so frequently. These materials are often a source of embarrassment for the remedial reader because they are different from the typical high school textbooks. Criscuolo and Gallagher (1989) point out that for the hard to reach or troubled teenager, newspapers do not look like books, and have none of the negative associations that many students feel toward textbooks. In addition, they are not leveled. The remedial reader uses the same newspaper as the honor student.

Initially, students need to have the newspaper format needs clearly explained so that they can use it more efficiently. Once this is accomplished and students have been given adequate time to explore a few of their own interests, instructional strategies can be employed. Since poor readers are generally passive readers (Bristow, 1985) many self-monitoring strategies need to be taught, practiced and reinforced until students can experience their benefits.

Enhancement of comprehension. Comprehension can be fostered by introducing the journalistic approach to story copy. Students are taught to search for the answers to who, what, where, when, why and how as they read, helping them to categorize information mentally (Ammann and Mittlesteadt, 1989). The inference questions – how and why – may require more practice before mastery is achieved. Semantics can also be taught by helping students discover the meaning of new words through context.

Individual conferences are beneficial for monitoring student comprehension and fostering the development of personal rapport with students who may feel threatened by teachers. In addition, conferences can provide a forum for discovering particular student interests which can be accommodated with alternative materials (Brozo, 1990).

Critical thinking skills. The editorial page is excellent for encouraging development of critical thinking skills. Students may react either verbally or in writing to an editorial with agreement or disagreement, while supporting their individual viewpoints. Letters written to the editor are beneficial responses which allow students to express themselves in writing.

Vocabulary increased. Word knowledge can be improved through article context. Unfamiliar vocabulary can be put into word banks and used with special activities to sustain understanding. Students can then listen to television and radio broadcasts for additional reinforcement for the words they have learned. Often follow-up newspaper articles will appear helping vocabulary words to become an active part of their vocabulary.

Creative writing opportunities. Research offers strong support for the reading-writing connection (e.g., May, 1990) and many opportunities for creative and varied writing activities are present in every new edition of the newspaper. The advice column can be used by having students respond to write-in questions, or they can write their own questions. Responses to questions can then be shared with the rest of the class, or compared and contrasted with the advice columnist's counsel. Students may enjoy writing a review for a movie that they have recently seen and giving it

a rating. The class can then enjoy comparing student reviews with those found in the paper.

Graphophonic skills. Graphophonic skills can be improved by using vocabulary from the paper to structure a lesson around a subskill. Words can be cut out and placed in categories and spelling patterns compared. Structural analysis within context can also be taught based on examples that appear in the paper.

Increased general knowledge. Perhaps the most beneficial aspect of using the newspaper is the wealth of background information that students gain. Schemata are enhanced as students gain valuable insights into world events as well as their own lives, and develop a foundation for further learning. Many students are surprised and encouraged when they find that they are able to understand issues that previously seemed beyond their own understanding. Familiarity with the paper also provides the reader with a lifelong learning tool. Extension activities are numerous and special projects can be done in any area. Criscuolo and Gallagher (1989) report that students in one particular school made scrapbooks on topics of special interest and maintained them throughout the year. Conferences were scheduled with the teacher to share the information along the way.

Extension activities. Other extension activities include chart-making using weather forecasts to record the percentage of accurate predictions for a designated period of time. Research projects can be done when students desire more information on their subject; classes can publish their own paper; advertisements can be scrutinized for misleading statements; classified ads written; and employment possibilities examined.

Conclusion

The need for secondary programs that emphasize reading strategies is obvious. Those students hindered by inadequate reading skills are disadvantaged in nearly all of their subject areas because reading is an integral component of content literacy. The greatest differences in reading levels appear in the secondary school where it is not unusual for students reading at the elementary level to sit in the same classroom with students reading and comprehending at a college level. One technique that has proven successful in motivating and working with this population of students is that of using the newspaper in the classroom to improve reading and writing skills.

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Fostering Multi-Cultural Awareness: Books for Young Children

Doris Walker-Dalhouse

If the 47 million children in our schools are to function successfully as adults in the next century, they must grow up with more knowledge about our interdependent world, keener awareness of other people, and greater sensitivity to other people's attitudes and customs.

(Cogan, 1981, p. 8).

Parents are children's first teachers, and in this capacity the home provides the foundation for their later literacy development (Vacca, Vacca and Gove, 1987). Parents also transmit values and shape attitudes about people who function as the core for children's socialization in the school and larger community. Therefore attempts at multicultural education should, ideally, entail the active participation of parents. Thomas Sobol, Commissioner of Education and President of the University of the State of New York, believes that young children at home or in preschool need help at home and school in order to understand diversity. They must be helped to develop self-pride and to respect differences among people. It is my belief that the joint involvement of parents and teachers can provide support for a multicultural school curriculum and effective instructional practices, and data for subsequent research. Sobol (1990) seems to concur by stating that "teaching young children about the differences and similarities between people will

not singularly ensure a more gentle and tolerant society, but might act as a prerequisite to one" (p. 30).

A relatively easy way to facilitate cultural awareness in young children is by the incorporation of multicultural literature in the curriculum. This can provide a vehicle for expanding cultural awareness and decreasing negative stereotyping about children of different groups (Norton, 1983, 1984). While a need exists for more books about minorities in general, and African-Americans in particular, there are some books which are ideal for teaching cultural awareness of this group.

Another way that multicultural awareness can be taught to young children is for educators to provide leadership in recommending multicultural literature which parents can use with their children at home. To choose appropriate literature successfully, educators and parents must base their choices upon a concern and respect for diversity in the language and lifestyles of different people. They must look for quality in the characterizations and plot, and the accuracy of the perspective from which the story is told (Huck, 1976). Specific guidelines for selecting books about Asian Americans (The Council for Interracial Books for Children, 1977), Black Americans (Lattimer, 1972) and Hispanics and Native Americans (Norton, 1983) should also be consulted to aid in book selection.

The remainder of this article will focus on literature about African-Americans, who constitute one of the largest minority groups in the United States. Guidelines developed by Lattimer in 1972 for selecting literature to promote a pluralistic society are still appropriate today. Lattimer established criteria in the areas of theme and illustrations, word content, and tone and perspective of the author. The

essential elements of the criteria are that authors through their stories should demonstrate a knowledge of black people and an appreciation of the black experience; deal responsibly with problems and issues; and portray in their illustrations black characters as humans with realistic black features. They should also use language purposefully and without condescension; represent historical or factual events accurately; and not overvalue a stereotypical middle-class lifestyle (Lattimer, 1972).

These criteria are restated in Rudine Sims-Bishop's *Shadow and Substance* (1982), in which she has discussed ideal books about African-Americans and culturally conscious books that should be shared with young children. The essential dimensions of these books are that their elements, including pictures, make it clear that there is a conscious attempt to depict an Afro-American life experience. The major characters must be Afro-American; the story must be told from the Afro-American perspective; the setting must be an Afro-American community or home; and the text must include some means of identifying the characters as black — physical description, language, cultural tradition and so forth (p. 652).

As an elementary teacher and parent interested in finding books that can provide students and my four year old with a multicultural perspective, I began reviewing books which I believed adhered to the criteria established by Lattimer and Sims-Bishop, and that emphasized common cultural bonds with society in general, while showing the full range of feelings, emotions and circumstances of African-Americans (Jalengo, 1988). This article contains annotations of some of these books which I believe qualify them as worthy of recommendation to parents.

A culturally relevant and delightful book found for bedtime reading is *Tell Me A Story* by Angela Johnson (1989). A loving relationship between a mother and her daughter forms the core of the story. The daughter asks her mother to tell her the story about her childhood and the mother complies. However, as soon as the mother begins the story, the daughter takes over the telling with much embellishment. It is obvious from the extent to which the daughter can recall details of the story that the mother has used storytelling to teach her family history to her daughter. While clearly building upon the oral tradition of African-American culture, the book highlights the often under-emphasized tender dimension of the African-American mother. The book rises above the stereotypical representation of the African-American mother as either the sole support of her family or the matriarch of a hard-working lower socioeconomic family, a person who is always exhausted, angry or depressed. *Tell Me A Story* reflects a refreshingly different lifestyle and dimension of the African-American family.

Intergenerational ties and family history are explored and presented in *The Patchwork Quilt* by Flourney (1985). A grandmother's need to preserve family history by producing a quilt has produced conflict with her daughter. The daughter does not see the value in the old ways and has not shared this tradition with her own family. When grandmother becomes ill, her granddaughter Tanya recognizes the quilt's meaning to her grandmother. Tanya's love for her grandmother — along with a desire to continue her grandmother's project — acts as a catalyst to involve her mother in the project. It is through this involvement that the family comes to appreciate its life story.

A context for understanding African-American history and culture can be found in folktales and legends. The natural curiosity of children about people who talk or look differently can be explored in the story, language and pictures found in *Mufaro's Beautiful Daughters* (Steptoe, 1987); *Mirandy and Brother Wind* (McKissack, 1988); *Cornrows* (Yarbrough, 1979); and *The People Could Fly* (Hamilton, 1985). *Mufaro's Beautiful Daughters* (Steptoe, 1987) emphasizes African cultural ties, African beauty, and good versus evil, as two sisters, one vain and the other caring, compete for the King's attention and hand in marriage. *Mirandy and Brother Wind* explains the African-American tradition of "cakewalking" as it envelops the reader in a fun-filled quest to find Brother Wind — whose speed Mirandy thinks can help her win the cakewalking contest.

Cornrows by Yarbrough (1979) weaves a tale of African-American history, drawing on the prevailing practice of braiding hair in cornrowing style. It explains the origin of cornrowing and its significance as a symbol of African identification. During slavery, cornrowing was devalued and shamed, and the practice was diminished. Reading about the revival of cornrowing as a symbol of the rejuvenation of the black spirit after slavery can lead to further reading and discussion about African-American heroes. Names of African-American heroes and role models who have fought for freedom or distinguished themselves in a diversity of fields are highlighted in the book. The names can provide a good reference point for locating and discussing non-fictional accounts of their lives.

Virginia Hamilton's anthology to black folklore in *The People Could Fly* contains tales of fright, cunning, wit, slavery and oppression. The collection, which includes excerpts explaining the historical significance and origin of each tale

is appropriate for family sharing. *Flossie and the Fox* (McKissack, 1986) is another delightful tale which reflects southern ties and shows an African-American girl's thinking and cunning as she outsmarts an egg-poaching fox. Rachel Isadora's poignant illustrations — along with the straightforward use of southern dialect — makes this a wonderful book for sharing.

Other interesting themes such as occupational roles and sibling rivalry can also be explored through African-American literature. Perceptions of the occupational roles of blacks are challenged in the book *Grandpa's Face* (Greenfield, 1988). When a granddaughter overhears an angry conversation and witnesses a scene in which her grandfather's face is transformed from that of the gentle man that she loves to that of an angry stranger, she becomes upset and afraid. She later learns that her grandfather is a professional actor and what she had overheard and seen was his rehearsing for a play.

The topics of friendships, sibling rivalry, and families can be explored in three interesting books by Ann Cameron. Julian is a truly delightful character in *The Stories Julian Tells* (1981), *Julian's Glorious Summer* (1987), and *More Stories Julian Tells* (1986). Julian shares stories about hiding his fear of learning to ride a bicycle from his best friend Gloria, his fights with his brother Huey, his adventures with his friends, and life with his family. The characters are well-developed in all the books. A leading character is Julian's father, a strong role model who clearly disciplines his sons in a loving manner. He teaches Julian, Gloria and Russell many valuable lessons about meaningful ways to fill their time, and ways to get along with others. The portrayal of Julian's father as a hard-working garage owner and mechanic who understands and loves his sons does much

to provide a positive image of the African-American male who is too often depicted as a strong disciplinarian, but a weak role model.

A favorite book for providing insight into the world and family of African-American children is *Me and Neesie* (Greenfield, 1975). *Me and Neesie* deals with a little girl's relationship with her imaginary friend, Neesie, and her family's reaction to Neesie. Because of its positive reference to cornrowing hair, it might be followed up by reading *Cornrows* by Yarbrough. Other interesting books that can be used to explore family life are *Eat Up Gemma* (Hayes, 1986); *I Need a Lunchbox* (Caines, 1988), and *Just Us Women* (Caines, 1982).

Poetry is another literary form that can be used effectively with young children. An excellent book for doing this is the book *Nathaniel Talking* (Greenfield, 1989). The character Nathaniel emerges in the book as an articulate, sensitive and intelligent child who expresses his thoughts about life and his family in poetic form.

Multicultural literature has value as a literacy tool and mechanism for expanding cultural awareness and knowledge. It also has the potential of providing us with better educated students, and perhaps more humane children.

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Multiculturalism and Literacy

Reading Horizons is interested in publishing articles, anecdotes about teaching, and annotated bibliographies supporting the development of literacy through multicultural educational practices. Prospective contributors should follow guidelines for submission of manuscripts, given elsewhere in this issue.



Whole Language Collaboration Project: Implementing Change In One Elementary School

**Grace Shepperson
Robert J. Nistler**

The purpose of this article is to describe the impact of the initial phase of a long-term inservice program aimed at restructuring one elementary school's literacy program. It focuses on observed changes that occurred as teachers became active participants in staff development sessions designed around effective change principles. Fannin Elementary School in Grand Prairie, Texas, is a multi-ethnic, urban elementary school situated in a neighborhood changing from lower middle socioeconomic status to low socioeconomic status. Nearly seventy percent of the children enrolled in the school qualify for free or reduced lunch. At least half of the population is non-English speaking and comprised of first generation immigrants from Latin America and Mexico. During the past two years, informal discussions among the Fannin principal, teachers, and other district personnel had focused on whole language approaches to literacy instruction for meeting the changing needs of Fannin's student population. Traditional skills-based instruction was proving inadequate in meeting the needs of these students.

Teale (1987) and Goodman (1986) suggest that reading and writing are processes for making sense out of

and through written language. Meaning, rather than isolated skills, is emphasized, allowing students to be actively involved and enthusiastic about learning. Mindful of these ideas, the principal and teachers were in agreement: that adopting a whole language philosophy toward literacy instruction, schoolwide, held the greatest promise for eventual success. After consultation with two university researchers, the "Whole Language Collaboration Project" was established to produce educational change. In December, 1989, this study of learning, language, teaching and curriculum was initiated at Fannin Elementary School.

The program

From December 13, 1989, through May 3, 1990, fourteen 45 to 60 minute workshops were conducted with university researchers, 23 teachers and the school principal for the following purposes: 1) to identify current practices of teachers and administrators; 2) to study research-based, whole language strategies; 3) to select whole language literacy strategies to implement; 4) to provide for study and discussion groups to strengthen the knowledge base of the staff enabling the establishment of individual, grade level and whole school goals; 5) to establish collegial relations between university, district and school personnel. Teacher participation was voluntary throughout the entire project, and all classroom teachers chose to participate. In addition to the weekly sessions, the university researchers spent two half-days per week observing in classrooms to help foster a collegial learning environment and to determine what actually went on in classrooms at Fannin Elementary School.

Documenting current practices: Sessions 1-5.

Initial staff development sessions were designed to identify current practices in order to facilitate the assimilation or accommodation of new knowledge at later stages of the

program. During these sessions, participants identified, through writing in personal journals, what they did at that time to promote literacy development in their classrooms. Accompanying reflections and follow-up discussions resulted in the compilation of lists of current instructional practices at individual, grade and school-wide levels.

During the first inservice session, teachers completed the "Stages of Concern" questionnaire (Hord, Rutherford, Huling-Austin and Hall, 1987). This instrument focuses on the concerns of individuals involved in change and is based on research identifying three categories of concerns: self, task and impact. According to Hord, et al., "When a change effort is in its early stages, teachers are very likely to have self-concerns. They will want to know more about the innovation (whole language), what it is and how it is similar to and different from what they are already doing" (p. 31). Survey results revealed high levels of "self-concerns." One teacher's journal entry represents these concerns:

Right now, I am anxious to begin. I have been hearing Whole Language for quite a while. I feel I know so very little. Oh, I've gone to inservices and even to a Whole Language School... however, I've gotten bits and pieces. I just feel a little fragmented. I've tried to incorporate many ideas. But am I doing what and all I can? Will I influence my second graders positively? (second grade teacher, 1-16-90)

Such concerns dictated the need to "...help teachers see how the innovation [whole language] relates to their current practices, both in regard to similarities and differences" (Hord et al., 1987, p. 44). The university researchers wanted to be assured that each participant was in control of personal development as well as a participant in the development of the group as a whole. Each teacher's voice was unique and important; each was at a different level in the process of learning about whole language. Time for indi-

vidual reflection as well as talk was vital to each teacher's development. Therefore, activities promoting talk among teachers provided opportunities for new understandings and beliefs to be confirmed or rejected, so that a common knowledge base could be established by all.

Establishing a knowledge base: Sessions 5-8.

The teacher's initial expectations for this program were that the university researchers would conduct weekly "how to do whole language" sessions. They wanted to learn the strategies immediately so they could become whole language teachers overnight. The researchers knew that change takes time, and in order for teachers to become whole language teachers and for this school to become a whole language school, a common knowledge base had to be established among all participants. Whole language literacy instruction, a "philosophy of curriculum, of learning, of teaching, and of language" (Goodman, 1986, p. 69), had to be studied carefully and internalized by all participants.

Beginning with the fifth session, the teachers were guided through *What's Whole in Whole Language?* (Goodman, 1986). "Whole language: Not without a whole language teacher," the closing chapter in the book, was selected for initial study. This chapter discusses how a whole language teacher approaches literacy instruction. Information obtained from study of this chapter provided a means for each teacher to assess her current status in terms of an ideal. According to Hord, et al. (1987), "Change will be most successful when its support is geared to the diagnosed needs of the individual users. If change is highly personal, then clearly different responses and interventions will be required for different individuals. Paying attention to each individual's progress can enhance the improvement process" (p. 6).

Upon completion of Goodman's book psycholinguistics, the psychological study of how language is acquired, was explored as the basis for whole language instruction. Additional resources (Goodman, 1986; Canady, 1980; Newman, 1990; Ridley, 1990) served to broaden this philosophical base. In her discussion of whole language and whole language teachers, Newman (1990) states, "It requires that we engage in reexamination of our beliefs and assumptions about learning and teaching, and about using language to learn about the world" (p. 4). Emphasis in sessions now shifted from the personal and concrete to the abstract and theoretical.

After focusing on knowledge-based issues in sessions five through eight, the "Stages of Concern" survey was administered a second time. Analysis of results revealed that information concerns continued to be most prevalent. However, reflections in teachers' journals indicated a need for different information. This need for a shift from knowledge building to practical applications is illustrated in the following journal excerpt:

The "Whole Language" teacher idea was intimidating and frightening. The unknown is always a little frightening. I now feel more comfortable with the concept of whole language. It makes more sense to me now that I've read some literature on the subject. Sharing ideas with other teachers also helps. I would like to implement more of this learning process but am still a little unsure of what I should be doing. Hopefully, by the end of the school year I'll feel more confident and begin using more of the whole language teaching methods (third grade teacher, 3-6-90).

Planning for instruction: Sessions 8-14. At the end of session eight, participants were asked to provide a written response to the following question: Where are you now in relation to whole language/psycholinguistic theory? Participants' responses demonstrated varying levels of

understanding about whole language and its applications for the classroom.

I have done a radical change in my approach in teaching language. I have gone from teaching from texts to using good books. I now try to incorporate all my subjects in a whole language approach. I am trying to build units in many different topics and trying to build vocabulary and oral language. I still want more ideas and would like all day help to create more books. I want to do many things and it makes me more creative (bilingual kindergarten teacher, 3-6-90).

I feel more motivated about whole language and my teaching practices in general now. I'm glad to have the approval of the administration and other teachers to work with whole language. I was thinking about how important it is to keep learning and restructuring what we need to know and what we already know. I need more input on implementation, resources available and how to be accountable for what the students know (fourth grade teacher, 3-6-90).

Classroom observations, conducted by the university researchers, revealed few changes in classroom instruction during the initial year of the project. Use of student journals, time for sustained silent reading, and occasional use of trade books to replace basal stories were among the few observable changes. In some classrooms, no apparent changes occurred. Participants' articulation of their status as whole language teachers resulted in a change in the format of remaining staff development sessions. Grade level meetings, facilitated by the university researchers, replaced previous, school-wide sessions directed by them. The purposes of these meetings were to guide individual explorations into whole language instruction and to identify instructional themes/topics and accompanying children's literature by grade levels for the upcoming school year.

The final staff development session provided an opportunity for participants at each grade level to report on the

themes and supporting literature they had compiled. Participants discussed materials in regard to student interests, appropriateness for grade level, curriculum, quality of materials, integration across content areas and balance among genre. This discussion resulted in a school-wide plan to guide literacy instruction for the 1990-91 school year.

Evaluation of the program

On August 23, 1990, a four-hour staff development session was held with the participants of Fannin's "Whole Language Collaboration Project." During the course of this session, the "States of Concern" survey was administered for a third time. Information gathered from these surveys indicates changing concerns of participants. In agreement with Hord, et al. (1987), self-concerns diminished from the outset of the program, while task concerns increased. Task concerns refer to time and classroom management, and they tend to become "more intense as final preparations are made for beginning use of an innovation and during the early stages of use" (p. 31).

During this session, participants were also asked to reflect upon their previous involvement in the program. They responded, in writing, to the following prompt: "Enacting change in Fannin Elementary: Implementing a whole language perspective." Participants' essays and results of "Stages of Concern" surveys revealed that change *seems* to be occurring at Fannin Elementary School. The following excerpts from one teacher's essay illustrate the initial stages in the change process:

During the 1989-90 school year a major change began in the lives of about 30 teachers and 400 children. It started slowly and began snowballing as the months went on. The first meeting about implementing whole language into our classrooms was quiet and very "administrative." All of the teachers sat quietly and listened to people talking about

theories, literature, tape recorders and journals. It was overwhelming for the teachers...there were a handful of very enthusiastic teachers, but the rest were apprehensive, understandably...It was actually a gradual process for most of the staff, but in the spring other teachers began asking for help – for ideas. And they began offering them, too. It was a great thing that was starting to happen! Changing a traditional classroom into a whole language classroom is a slow, gradual process. But at Fannin Elementary it is happening. You can see it in the halls – lots of terrific work is displayed...And you can see change in the children. They are successful and they feel success. (I'm writing faster now because I'm excited just thinking about all of this.) And the teachers have changed. They are more receptive, open to new ideas. And they want to understand this thing called whole language. Fannin is changing. And it's a very exciting time around here!!! (second grade teacher, 8-23-90)

Voices of teachers

Researchers have identified factors associated with change in school programs (Oakes, Hare and Sirotnik, 1986; Hord, Rutherford, Huling-Austin and Hall, 1987; Henke, 1988). Researchers in the "Whole Language Collaboration Project" were aware of these factors and designed inservices which modeled these principles. In their journals, essays, concern surveys and conversations, participants' voices confirmed the efficacy of the following change factors.

Change is a process, not an event. *It was comforting to Doris when she realized whole language as a way of teaching could not, would not happen overnight. It is a step-by-step process to be accomplished over a long period of time as the teacher is comfortable and ready for change (second grade teacher, 8-23-90).*

Change is a highly personal experience. *I am experimenting lots more and I see that the kids are more relaxed and excited about reading, writing, etc. and that excites me!!! I know that I always have questions at the end of the day. That is something I didn't do in the past. I go home and reflect on the day and think about what worked, what the kids*

liked, etc. I guess I go home at night and tinker with my thoughts (second grade teacher, 3-6-90).

Change involves developmental growth. *We are implementing change gradually. Some teachers trained in whole language could implement this process more actively than those who resisted change...A lot of teachers resisted the new concept whole heartedly. Some used it exclusively. Those teachers who were successful used it exclusively...Slowly, ever so slowly some more were converted over to at least trying the whole language approach! Sometimes they were successful. Sometimes they were unsuccessful and very discouraged – even frustrated! These teachers would put it away and not use it again until they were encouraged again by the N.T. professors or a co-worker who was successful or wanted this teacher to try again; or learned more about it (whole language). They all can see that it would work – they aren't so sure how it will work (third grade teacher, 8-23-90).*

Change is best understood as it directly affects classroom practice, students and preparation time. *Last year was a year of change for Fannin Elementary and anyone coming into the building could see it. On the outside walls of each classroom were the writings, stories and thoughts of children being introduced to the whole language approach. They (kindergarten teachers) were excited about planning and integrating literature in all parts of the curriculum. They found that through the whole language approach their planning time was cut in half and their creative nature was nurtured by developing thematic centers for their classroom.*

Discussion

At the beginning of the Whole Language Collaboration Project, it was apparent that many teachers at this school had learned traditional, skills-based approaches to literacy instruction and tended to be unfamiliar with how interactive, child-centered philosophies can be implemented in practice. Initially, these teachers felt somewhat threatened and overwhelmed when challenged to modify their practices to reflect a new perspective. By recognizing and documenting

initial teacher concerns, the university researchers were able to consider all interactions with teachers for how they might contribute to an ever-increasing level of trust. Establishing and maintaining trust became the foundation of this change program. The university researchers insured that teachers were always in control of their classrooms, and monitored the frequency and duration of interactions with the university researchers and their degree of participation in this project.

The university researchers' own commitment of time to this project aided in diminished teacher concern for the demands this program placed already full schedules. During this first year, university researchers were at the elementary school one and one-half days per week. Time spent at the school contributed to building trust among participants. The university researchers made regular classroom visits, were available for individual and small group consultation and conducted weekly scheduled inservices.

Oakes, Hare and Sirotnik (1986) contend that failing to include practitioners in any but a consuming role during educational research limits the potential of that research for affecting change. Collaborative projects, such as the Whole Language Collaboration Project, demonstrate one means of bringing practitioners into active roles during educational research whereby, given time and provided with support, theory can be more readily translated into practice.

In this project, participants were actively involved in their personal explorations into different approaches toward literacy instruction. Individual needs were addressed through spontaneous conversations in addition to scheduled conferences. Unscheduled conferences, lasting only several minutes, tended to address immediate concerns. In

contrast, scheduled conferences, lasting 45-60 minutes, were pedagogical in nature. Teachers and/or groups of teachers arrived at these conferences with notebooks and prepared questions.

Carnine (1988) states that: "Improving instruction in urban elementary schools requires...down to earth staff training programs that meet teachers' and students' immediate needs. These...would have to be massive and sustained – not one day workshops or brief add on activities that last a few weeks" (p. 60). The Whole Language Collaboration Project represents the type of training program which Carnine supports. During the initial year of collaboration between the university researchers and elementary school teachers, benefits which Lieberman (1986) associates with school-university collaboration were apparent. Lieberman believes that the collaborative process can: 1) facilitate reflection about teaching; 2) unite teachers and promote collegial interaction; 3) close the gap between doing research and implementing research findings; 4) give teachers an opportunity to assume new roles and gain a sense of empowerment; and 5) legitimize teachers' practical understanding and professional concerns (p. 31).

Change in teachers' attitudes and behaviors occurs *very* slowly, even if change is desired. Change is occurring at this school. For those teachers who possess little knowledge regarding whole language, this change is most evident in an increased awareness of the need to modify literacy instruction and a developing knowledge base which facilitates *planning* for changes in classroom instruction. For those teachers with some knowledge of whole language, time to plan with others, to share ideas and directly learn from their experiences has provided the encouragement to implement and follow through on instructional applications.

For teachers who might be considered prototypical whole language teachers, change is represented by a growth of confidence in personal philosophy and instructional practice combined with a developing ability to work with fellow teachers as one of a community of learners.

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Trends in Statewide Reading Assessment: A Closer Look

**William A. Henk
Robert J. Rickelman**

In recent years significant changes in our thinking about reading have ushered in a much needed reform movement in reading assessment practices. The formal origins of this shift can be traced to exciting developments in statewide reading assessments that were rightly touted in the professional literature during the latter 1980s (Carbo, 1988; Illinois State Board of Education, 1988; Roeber and Dutcher, 1989; Wixson, Peters, Weber, and Roeber, 1987; Valencia, Pearson, Peters, and Wixson, 1989). Reports about truly innovative testing practices in pioneer states such as Michigan and Illinois seemed to signal the beginning of a national trend in reading assessment. In this paper, we report the results of a survey aimed at documenting the extent and nature of such a trend.

A new definition of reading and assessment

The assessment reform movement gained momentum as educators began to question existing beliefs about the reading process (Valencia and Pearson, 1987). The idea that effective reading hinged on a large number of separate, specific, and measurable subskills gave way to a holistic definition in which facile reading involved the orchestration of a number of related strategic processes, all intended to help a reader create meaning from a text (Henk, in press; Squire, 1987). In this new scenario, reading represented a

dynamic interaction between the characteristics of a particular reader, the attributes of a specific text, and the unique context in which the reading occurs (ISBE, 1988; Wixson and Peters, 1984). This new definition made it clear that existing reading tests, by emphasizing mastery learning of small, discrete enabling skills, failed to reflect recent advances in reading instruction and research.

In Michigan and Illinois, statewide testing took a dramatic turn away from traditional models of reading assessment. Factors such as reader prior knowledge (topic familiarity), the effective use of before, during and after reading strategies, and school and home reading habits and attitudes played a role in large scale reading assessments for the first time. The new statewide testing formats also included full length, authentic narrative and expository texts drawn from children's magazines, tradebooks, literature anthologies, and content area texts. These passages represented quite a departure from the short, contrived passages used in existing statewide assessment instruments. Students were even asked about their interest in the passage and how easy or difficult they felt the passage was to read (Roeber and Dutcher, 1989).

Comprehension questions on these unique tests centered on higher level thinking processes and were framed around key structural elements and ideas in the passages (ISBE, 1988; Roeber, Kirby, Dutcher, and Smith, 1989). Passages were mapped using story grammar formats (setting, characters, problem, key events, resolution, and theme) and graphic organizers to make sure that questions focused only on important ideas.

Interestingly, at roughly the same time as these statewide assessments were taking shape, the National

Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP, 1987) announced plans to measure reading performance in a similar manner. The NAEP tests planned to use a larger variety of reading materials, to assess complex processing of information, and to measure students' reading strategies and attitudes toward reading (Carbo, 1988).

Why take a closer look?

There are a number of important reasons why educators need to examine trends in statewide reading assessments. As Valencia and Pearson (1987) and Afflerbach (1990b) suggest, reading achievement tests serve not only to assess student achievement and teacher effectiveness, but also to evaluate programs, and to group and place students. None of these functions should be taken lightly.

Moreover, tests have been instrumental in shaping current reading instruction (Anderson, Hiebert, Scott, and Wilkinson, 1985). Teachers tend to emphasize the skills, processes, and content that they expect to be on the test. Many believe that test publishers can better define what is important to teach, and so, they look to tests to inform curricular decisions (Valencia, Pearson, Peters, and Wixson, 1989). Consequently, if statewide assessments remain mired at the skills level, reading instruction will continue to be driven by outdated mastery learning models. Instructional progress could be severely limited if this incorrect model is used to define and assess reading proficiency at the statewide level. Likewise, inappropriate or insensitive tests can lead to abandonment of effective instruction (Valencia and Pearson, 1987).

On the other hand, if tests emphasize such productive strategies as surveying the test, making predictions, determining genre and text structure, setting goals, monitoring

and fixing-up comprehension, and summarizing and evaluating, reading instruction will tend to follow suit (Henk and Moore, in press). For this reason, assessments at all levels should attempt to tap elements like prior knowledge activation, text structure awareness, metacognition, and critical thinking. Unfortunately, states that assess reading in such an enlightened manner seem to be in the minority (Afflerbach, 1987).

Our goal was to determine if statewide reading assessment practices had changed appreciably in light of current theoretical and applied developments in the field. The study reported here builds upon the work of other authors who have addressed the general topic of statewide assessment (Bowers, 1991; Glassapp and Poggio, 1991; Shepard, 1989). In particular, it expands upon other recent, related surveys of statewide reading assessment practices whose aims were somewhat different (Afflerbach, 1990a; Dillingofski, 1990; Steel and Meredith, 1991). We were specifically interested in knowing if (and how) states assessed unique elements such as prior knowledge, reading strategies, and habits and attitudes; what kinds of reading passages and comprehension questions were used; how test data would be employed; and what plans existed for future assessments.

The survey

To determine the status of statewide reading assessment practices, we developed a survey instrument that would be sent to state department of education officials in all 50 states. These individuals were listed in the Staff Roster of the Association of State Assessment Programs (Roeber, 1989) as coordinators, directors, or supervisors of statewide testing programs.

A cover letter explaining the study accompanied the survey instrument. Respondents were asked to reply to the survey within three weeks and to send supporting documentation if possible. When no response was received by that date, a second mailing of the survey and a revised letter was sent. If no response arrived within two more weeks, follow-up telephone inquiries were made. In some cases it was reported that the surveys had not been received, that the addressee no longer served in a coordinating capacity, or that another individual within the department should rightfully respond to the survey. We received verbal commitments from all states that completed surveys would be forthcoming. Ultimately, forty-nine states replied.

The survey instrument consisted of nine parts: 1) general statewide testing information; 2) information about reading passages; 3) test administration procedures; 4) comprehension assessment; 5) prior knowledge; 6) reading strategies; 7) reading habits and attitudes; 8) use of test data; and 9) future plans for statewide assessment.

In the first section we asked general questions about whether statewide testing in reading was done at all, and if so, what grade levels were assessed and what tests were used. Here we were trying to get a sense of what percentage of states assess reading at the statewide level, what grade levels tend to be tested, whether the test format remained the same across grade levels, whether certain standardized tests were used more often, and whether states took responsibility for their own test development.

The next section on reading passages asked about the use of narrative and expository texts and whether the passages were derived from real sources or were specially prepared for the test. Questions were also asked about

other text selection factors including passage length, interest, story grammar considerations, organization, and content area affiliation.

For test administration procedures, we wanted to know whether sample or practice exercises were part of the test format. Other items in this section inquired about: time allotments, the use of brief introductory material for schema activation, and the order in which major assessment elements (prior knowledge, passage reading, comprehension, reading strategies, and reading habits and attitudes) occurred during testing.

Section four on comprehension assessment queried respondents about the number and type of questions that were asked at each grade level assessed. Besides identifying the rough percentage of questions that fell into literal, inferential, and higher levels, we asked about the use of story grammar as a basis for framing questions about narrative passages; embedded versus post-reading questions, and other factors considered in questioning such as importance of ideas; the desired match between question and specific objectives; and relative ease of framing the question.

The prior knowledge portion of the survey first asked if topic familiarity was assessed at all. If it was assessed, then respondents were asked about the format (multiple-choice, open-ended short answer, extended free writing, vocabulary knowledge or other) and how the data were used.

The following section, which dealt with reading strategies, again checked to see if this type of assessment played any role whatsoever in the assessment, and if so, whether general strategies served as the focus or whether strategies

specifically tied to the passage tended to be highlighted. Next, respondents were requested to check off any strategies that were assessed from a thorough list of before, during and after strategies (e.g., surveying, predicting content, predicting text structure or genre, purpose setting, imagery, self-questioning and paraphrasing, other comprehension monitoring strategies, fix-up routines, summarizing, evaluating and studying).

The section on habits and attitudes was designed to indicate whether states asked their students about a range of school-based and home-based considerations. This part of the survey included several items that dealt with reading habits in school and at home, general attitude toward reading, students' perceptions of themselves as readers, purposes for which students might read, types of materials that are read, habits of others in the home, instructional techniques teachers use, writing-related activities, and students' willingness to discuss books and make use of the library.

Section eight asked how test data were actually used. Items centered on whether information from the tests were used for student placement, diagnosis, evaluating teaching effectiveness, certifying graduation eligibility, determining district funding, or comparing districts and schools.

The final section of the survey dealt with states' future plans for assessment. We were particularly interested in determining if states not currently assessing reading in a manner consistent with contemporary thinking about the reading process had plans to move in this direction.

The findings

The information received from each statewide coordinator was used to categorize testing practices into the

sections described above. While data from 49 states was collected, there are not always 49 responses in each section. The reason for this is that some states allow several methods of assessing students, and the description of the test itself varies according to the choices of individual school administrators. In other states, the methods do not easily break down into one clear category. At times, none of the categories from the survey adequately described the test situation. At other times, several descriptors were needed. Therefore, even with simple yes/no type questions, the number of responses may either add up to greater or less than forty-nine.

The survey generated a considerable amount of data. For practical purposes, however, only the highlights are reported here. Since our aim was to discern trends, information about individual states is not presented. Specific information about other characteristics of individual states' testing programs that fell outside the scope of our survey can be found in Afflerbach (1990a) or Dillingofski (1990). Our major findings were as follows:

- Reading assessment currently occurs in 43 of the 49 states that responded. The most common grade levels at which assessment occurs are eighth grade (30 states), third grade (28 states), and sixth and eleventh grades (23 states each). In large measure, these results concur with Afflerbach's (1990a) findings. However, according to our survey, six more states test at the eleventh grade level. All but two of the states mandate the same test for all children at a particular grade level. These states offer individual districts several options for reporting test data.

- As expected, many states use national level standardized test subscores to assess reading. For instance, six

states use the reading subtests of the most recent editions of the following achievement tests: the *California Test of Basic Skills*, the *Iowa Test of Basic Skills*, and the *Stanford Achievement Test*. Twenty-two states use their own tests developed within the state. Some use these self-made tests exclusively, while others use them in conjunction with national level standardized tests.

- Information about reading passages indicated that 36 states test reading ability using both narrative and expository types. In nine states, the pattern varies by grade level, usually by including more expository passages for older students. Roughly half of the states include passages from real sources, while the other half uses passages specially written for the test instrument. About 30 percent of the states include graphic aids with the passages.

- Just over half of the states use short passages to assess comprehension rather than longer passages. Twenty-nine states chose passages because they were interesting, while 22 states chose passages because they conformed to a story grammar. Only 14 states purposely included content-specific passages, and these were evenly divided between science and social studies. Several states listed other sources for choosing passage material such as consumer labels, timetables, and newspapers. Overall, the two criteria that seemed to be the most influential in choosing passages were interest and length.

- All but seven of the states provided practice examples on the tests. Twenty-nine of the 43 states give timed tests, with the time period ranging from 10 to 50 minutes. Only 33 percent of the states provide an introduction to the content of the reading passages. Other than the fact that comprehension questions consistently followed passage reading,

there were no consistent patterns as to when prior knowledge, reading strategies, and habits and attitudes were assessed in the few states that did so.

- Two factors that varied widely from state to state were the number of passages students read to measure comprehension and the number of questions asked relating to these passages. The median number of passages per grade level ranged from 5.0 for twelfth graders to 10.0 for eighth graders, with an actual range from only one passage per assessment to 40 passages. The number of questions asked showed similar variance. The median number of questions asked for a reading assessment ranged from 22 questions for first graders to 97 questions for twelfth graders, with the actual number of questions asked each student ranging from five to 400 questions.

- The types of questions asked were almost evenly divided among literal (38 percent) and inferential (36 percent) types. Higher level questions occurred 26 percent of the time. All but four states placed the questions at the end of the passages. These states included questions embedded within the reading passages. The major factors considered in developing the questions (regardless of placement) were that they tapped main ideas and that they measured statewide objectives.

- Prior knowledge of passage content is assessed by only six states. Prior knowledge items tended to be multiple choice although vocabulary knowledge items were also reported. Responses about how the prior knowledge data were used varied considerably. Some states tied the score directly or indirectly to an individual's comprehension performance, while others were concerned with programmatic, school and district comparisons.

•Reading strategies played a role in the statewide assessments of 11 states. In 10 of these states, students are asked to predict content and to reflect upon or to evaluate a passage after having read it. Nine states ask students to identify text structure and genre and eight states use items that measure readers' surveying of the text prior to reading. Only half of the states attempted to tap metacognitive strategies such as the comprehension monitoring techniques of self-questioning and paraphrasing, and various fix-up routines such as rereading, reading ahead, using context, and asking for help. Strategy assessment is tied directly to specific passages in six states and is measured in a general fashion in only one state. The remaining four states use some combination of general and specific strategy assessment.

•Nineteen states inquire about the reading habits and attitudes of students as part of the assessment. These states seemed to be most interested in school and home-based reading habits, general attitudes toward reading, readers' self-perception, and types of materials read. They were less interested in teacher practices and the habits of other individuals within the home.

•The ways in which test results are used vary widely among the states. Twenty-seven states report using the tests for diagnostic purposes. Other uses include: district comparisons (20 states), student placement (14 states), funding determination (10 states), and evaluating teacher effectiveness (three states).

•Five states have no plans for assessing reading in the future. The remainder have plans to either implement or continue statewide reading assessment. Of the states that

will be testing, roughly one third expressed an interest in formats aligned with contemporary research findings and theories of reading. Specifically, plans were reported to develop items for prior knowledge, reading strategy use, and reading habits and attitudes and to include authentic texts when possible. The particular provisions for these assessments had not, in many cases, been determined.

Discussion

According to Dillingofski (1990), there seems to be a positive trend emerging in statewide reading assessment practices. She reports that while 68 percent of the states use traditional standardized testing exclusively, fully 50 percent of the states already have some form of performance-based testing in place or have plans to change to this type of assessment in the near future. These tests are reportedly more holistic than their predecessors. The move away from standardized tests is indeed welcome, but the nature of the various performance-based tests that will be used is of critical importance. Unless these tests are genuinely more in line with current theories and practices of teaching reading, they may not represent a significant improvement.

On the basis of our survey, we are inclined to agree that a positive trend is occurring, but only in part. It is encouraging to note that one third of the states wish to remedy the mismatch between innovative instruction and traditional reading assessments. However, it is equally disappointing that two thirds of the states have no plans to move toward newer testing formats.

In our estimation, the trend toward enlightened statewide reading assessment is not nearly definitive enough. The typical state either uses an existing national standardized test or has created its own local standardized

version. Either way, the tests tend to be very traditional. Even when a local version has been constructed, it tends to resemble its national test counterpart. Shorter, inauthentic passages are used; no assessments are made of prior knowledge, reading strategy use, or habits and attitudes; and considerations of text structure and higher level reasoning are secondary at best.

In fact, only about 10 percent of the states presently qualify as being on the cutting edge of reading evaluation. These few states include provisions for the assessment of prior knowledge, reading strategy use, *and* reading habits and attitudes. Tests in these states are further marked by the use of authentic narrative and expository texts that are well structured and lend themselves to higher level thinking. Unfortunately, because so few tests tap prior knowledge and reading strategies, only a handful of states receive a fairly complete picture of children's reading performance.

It may be too soon to expect pervasive changes to occur in statewide reading tests. Despite the considerable notoriety of the Michigan and Illinois initiatives, the attention has been relatively recent. At the same time, though, dramatic changes are occurring in reading and language arts instruction nationwide (Monson and Pahl, 1991; Ridley, 1990) and these changes must be complemented by significant shifts in the way instructional outcomes in reading are measured (Henk, in press; Valencia and Pearson, 1987).

Our results suggest that at the statewide level, reading assessment has not kept pace with instruction. Apparently, the tests used to measure students' reading achievement are still primarily skill-based rather than broad-gauged assessments of reading ability. When instruction is based upon one view of the reading process and assessment is

based upon a contradictory view, educators and the children they serve both suffer (Anderson, Hiebert, Scott, and Wilkinson, 1985).

One related concern is that children will receive mixed messages about reading. Unless local, state and national assessment are in concert with one another, confusion will result. It would seem beneficial for state and national leaders in assessment to come together with the intent of establishing some common ground. In light of the current trend toward increased testing and accountability in all areas of education, such a consensus seems to be essential. If current trends toward testing are not consistent with theories driving the curriculum, and if these test scores are taken as measures of student achievement, a false perception of the reading ability and related problems in American education could easily result (Carbo, 1988).

Over the next few years, it will be interesting to monitor the changes that take place in statewide and national reading assessments. Hopefully, more states will begin to embrace the value of newer testing practices like those used in Michigan and Illinois. More states may come into the fold as better ways are found to measure prior knowledge and strategy use. Others may jump on the bandwagon as formats other than multiple-choice items are refined or when writing plays a greater role in responding.

Since this survey was conducted, there has been talk of creatively combining reading and writing assessments, getting children to integrate information across more than one passage, collecting individual oral reading samples, and even large scale portfolio assessment. All of these innovations are exciting, but the challenge of developing, administering and scoring these tests and convincing those

in power of their value rests squarely with literacy educators. We need to be up to the task.

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READING: THE CONFERENCES

Jeanne M. Jacobson

**International Reading Association
37th Annual Convention
Orlando, Florida, May, 1992**

Literacy: The Language of Freedom

At the International Reading Association's annual convention last spring, several presentations were devoted to the topic of literature-based themes. For a session on "Extending Students' Curiosity and Knowledge: Developing Interdisciplinary Expertise in Print Rich Environments," the featured speakers were Deborah Rowe and Charles Kinzer of Peabody College of Vanderbilt University, and Jeanne Peter from the Vanderbilt University Child Care Center.

The presenters pointed out that adult concern for time constraints can interfere with good learning, noting that teachers tend to *move right along*, whereas we should instead allow children time to explore a theme, and thus enable them to become expert on topics of their choice.

A year-long observational study of preschoolers who were provided with opportunities to explore themes related to their own interests yielded information about how children — including very young children — can indeed become experts on a topic and what such expertise is like. The children's program allowed them time to experience books repetitively, to

explore topics and materials at their own pace, and to have adult help in getting answers to their questions. One theme was Work Machines. Books and toys were provided in the same center, and were always available. Adults responded to children's interests rather than setting the pace themselves. The conference presenters stressed the importance of providing continuous access to materials; planning open-ended activities, encouraging sharing of expertise, and not following a teacher-developed, predetermined sequence of activities. "When we did not follow children's interests," Rowe noted, "they drifted away. Older children don't have this option."

The quality of children's responses to literature changed with increasing expertise. Early responses to a book, at the surface level, typically consisted of asking questions and retelling parts of the story. Eventually, these four and five year old children began to use one familiar book to interpret another, to compare and contrast books, and to ask insightful questions. Because they had internalized information from favorite books, studied illustrations which interested them, and learned the vocabulary of their field of interest, they were able, as Rowe pointed out, "to ask questions which benefited us all." She cited the example of a preschooler who asked, "Why do work machines that have caterpillar tracks not have stabilizers?" The children's expertise, presenters stressed, was built through reading, discussion, *and play*.

Those attending the IRA conference had the opportunity to hear featured speakers including Walter Dean Myers, Taffy Raphael and Jim Trelease, and to choose among a rich array of workshops, symposia, and meetings for special interest groups. Presentations describing current research in the areas of reading education focused on a wide range of topics. In one session, researchers discussed results of their studies of teacher characteristics. Sharon Arthur Moore, of Arizona State University, spoke on "Recalled Practices, Behaviors and Traits of Memorable Teachers," a topic related to the June 1993 themed issue of Reading Horizons: *Exemplary Teaching and Exemplary Teachers*.

Moore's work follows that of other researchers who have focused on teachers who have influenced their students positively, and also adds the dimension of parallel research about teachers who are perceived as memorable in a negative way. The salient behaviors of negatively recalled teachers, she finds, are humiliating students, losing personal control, and demonstrating a lack of interest in teaching. Personality traits of these teachers match their maladaptive actions. They are seen as disorganized, uncaring, and demonstrating dislike of, or disinterest in, children and teaching, and as boring and emotionally unsafe.

Future teachers, Moore notes, are strongly influenced by the teaching they themselves have experienced and observed during their years in school. "The apprenticeship of observation is the longest apprenticeship in the world," she noted. "We are learning how to be a teacher for thirteen years, by observing in the classrooms where we are taught."

Dr. Moore shared some of the quotations she has collected from students about teachers who had a significant positive effect on their lives. Here are the statements of three students about a teacher who influenced them.

I was not afraid to make mistakes because I knew she would help me and not criticize me.

She taught me what it was like to be a person, to feel joy and pain, to laugh and cry.

When I told her that my goal had changed since I met her and that I wanted to be a teacher just like she was, she stopped and looked at me. "Sit down," she said. She gave me a heart to heart talk. She said, "You know, teachers never quit learning and if they do, they stop growing — and once you stop growing yourself, you no longer have anything to offer your children."

Call for Manuscripts: 1993 Themed Issue *Exemplary Teaching and Exemplary Teachers*

The June 1993 issue of *Reading Horizons* will be devoted to the theme of exemplary teaching and the exemplary teacher, focusing on reading and language arts instruction. Contributions in the form of research reports, commentaries, case studies, and articles discussing theory and practice of exemplary teaching are welcomed.

Manuscripts should be submitted following *Reading Horizons* guidelines: send four copies and two stamped, self-addressed business-size envelopes; include a cover sheet with author name and affiliation; use a running head (without author identity) on subsequent pages; follow APA guidelines for references and use of gender-free language.

Manuscripts intended for the themed issue should be postmarked by March 1, 1993. Address all manuscripts to Dr. Jeanne M. Jacobson, Editor, *Reading Horizons*, Reading Center and Clinic, Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo MI 49008.

Guest editor for this issue will be Dr. Suzanne F. Davis. Dr. Davis is a faculty member in the Department of Education and Professional Development at Western Michigan University. Her background in education is wide ranging, with experience as teacher, counselor, child care director, and principal of a magnet school. Her teaching and research interests include school-university collaboration, classroom organization and management, and supervision and guidance of student teachers.



REVIEWS

Professional Materials

The Child's Developing Sense of Theme: Responses to Literature. Written by Susan S. Lehr. Teachers College Press, 1234 Amsterdam Avenue, New York NY 10027. ISBN: 3105-6. 216 pp. 1991. Paper, US\$17.95.

Reviewed by Christine Drikakis, M.A.C.C.C.
Lakeview School District, Battle Creek Michigan

In his theory of child development, Piaget asserted that children did not engage in a sophisticated process of critical reasoning until age seven or eight. Lehr's captivating studies of pre-school, kindergarten, second and fourth grade children challenge assumptions about what children can and cannot do, and how children think. In these studies, young children were asked open-ended questions in response to well-written children's literature and asked what they knew, thought, supposed, liked and learned. Through the use of narrative, they demonstrated a wonderful sense of theme that was consistent with the text. This interactive process suggests the importance of listening to what children say without judging it right or wrong, and reminds us that children and adults process information differently. Knowing this will allow educators to listen and perhaps understand the child's construction of meaning, no longer looking for an adult answer or adult point of view.

Lehr combines theoretical perspectives on child development, children's literature and literacy with practical suggestions for exploration of literature through the use of response journals, decision trees, brainstorming and writing new visions of familiar stories. She challenges educators to stretch their own sense of theme to see themselves as learners so that children will grow in return.

Teacher Effectiveness and Reading Instruction. Written by Richard D. Robinson. ERIC Clearinghouse on Reading and Communication Skills. 2805 East 10th St., Bloomington IN 47408. ISBN: 0-927516-25-X. 100 pp. 1991. Paper, US\$12.95.

Reviewed by Jeanne M. Jacobson
Western Michigan University

Each of the seven chapters in Richard D. Robinson's short text is rich with anecdotal observations illustrating what is known about exemplary teaching practices. A regular feature of each chapter is the presentation of research findings on teacher behaviors which have been shown to be effective; later these are to be reviewed by readers as they consider instances of typical educational practices which violate the principles of good teaching. Reflective analysis is fostered by personalized questions and a series of self-evaluation checklists on a wide range of topics, such as classroom reading practices, library experiences, and response to diverse students.

Reading instruction is treated as an integral part of the school program, with successful instruction dependent upon multifaceted teaching skills. Chapters focus on such topics as classroom management, the establishment of environments which promote reading, learners with special needs, and the development of relationships between school and home. An array of apt quotations enrich the text, and provide a background for the cover. The book concludes with an annotated bibliography of recent reports of research on teacher effectiveness which are available from the ERIC database. Fact-packed, well-organized, current, and eminently readable, Robinson's book would be an excellent choice for a supplementary text in preservice and graduate reading courses.

Readers with a special interest in the topic of teacher effectiveness should note that the themed issue for June 1993 will be devoted to the topic of *Exemplary Teaching and Exemplary Teachers*. Prospective contributors will find a call for manuscripts on page 86 of this issue.

Children's Books

Two for classroom or lap-time

Reviewed by Mary Radtke
Western Michigan University

Barnaby and the Big Gorilla. Written and illustrated by Alain Leonard. Tambourine Books, 1350 Avenue of the Americas, New York NY 10019. 1992. ISBN: 0-688-11291-9. 32 pp. US\$14.00.

Barnaby, a darling young rabbit, is tormented by his fear of the stuffed gorilla at his uncle's house. It is huge and furry and has BIG teeth. Barnaby won't go anywhere near the gorilla until the day he makes the decision to save his treasured horse, who rolls between the gorilla's paws. Barnaby speaks to the gorilla, tries a very clever trick and pushes the gorilla with a stick — but is still unsuccessful. It is only after Barnaby marches bravely up to the gorilla that he is able to save his friend horse, and also to conquer his fear of the big gorilla. The author nicely captures the perspective of a young child's fear, treating Barnaby with gentle respect and leaving the reader celebrating Barnaby's eventual success. The text is especially well formatted to be shared with beginning readers. Alain Leonard limits each page to single or double lines of text, consistently located at the bottom of the page. This feature allows the young reader to develop directionality, a critical early strategy. Illustrations are clear, expressive and consistent in size and placement.

Island Baby. Written and illustrated by Holly Keller. Greenwillow Books, 1350 Avenue of the Americas, New York NY 10019. 1991. ISBN: 0-688-10579-3. 32 pp. US\$14.00.

Island Baby is a jewel — another Holly Keller creation that should top the wish list of every picture book collector. Young Simon lives for the time he spends each morning with Pops, helping at the island bird hospital. It is always bittersweet when Simon's patients are returned to health and no longer need him, but he takes a special interest in Baby, the flamingo he rescues from the sea. Simon bandages Baby's broken leg and takes sole responsibility for daily feedings, exercise and care. As summer closes, and Baby regains strength, it is moving for the reader to share in the moment when Simon and the

flamingo both confront independence. The intergenerational relationship between Pops and Simon is sweet. They share a sense of devotion to the island birds and to each other. *Island Baby* paints a beautiful picture of a developing work ethic as well as a selfless sharing of time, energy and — most of all — compassion in a world that is all too often cold. Language in this text is rich; concepts are well-developed. The story is appropriate for classroom reading or an intimate lap-time at home.

Reissue of a classic

Through the Magic Mirror. Written by Anthony Browne. Greenwillow Books, 1350 Avenue of the Americas, New York NY 10019. ISBN: 0-688-10725-7. 1992. 32 pp. US\$14.00.

Reviewed by Sherry R. Myers
Kalamazoo Public Schools

The reissuing of Anthony Browne's *Through the Magic Mirror*, first published in 1977, is a happy occurrence. In the story, Toby is bored with everything... until he discovers he can step through his mirror. He finds himself outside, but it's not the outside he remembers. Dogs walk people, mice chase cats, painters paint the sky, choirboys fly, people dress outlandishly or they are invisible. Just as he is being chased by the zoo animals that are escaping from a poster, he finds the mirror, climbs back through, and hurries downstairs for tea. The story is simply told, but marvelously and intriguingly illustrated. Depending upon the view of child and adult, it can either be used to foster and validate a child's wonderful imagination, or to explore the absurdities we see around us in the real world every day — if we were to really open our eyes and minds. On a more simplistic level, the child can play "what is wrong here?" with each of the illustrations, but I must warn you that "what is wrong" is sometimes not so simple. A case in point is the cover illustration, where Toby is looking in a full-length mirror. What we see reflected is Toby's back, which at first glance seems normal and only with thought becomes absurd.

Classroom use of the book might include a chance for children to draw or to tell of the world they see through the mirror or to look for things in their surroundings that are really there

and yet are almost as amazing as tulip street lights. Children “go through the mirror” quite naturally and delightedly and will joyfully explore Toby’s world. Adults sharing the book with children may recapture the spirit of adventure with which children see the bizarre in the mundane. For all, a trip *Through the Magic Mirror* is a chance to turn their minds upside-down and let the sand run the other direction, a chance to experience and grow from Browne’s creativity.

Poetry Choices

Barbara Frietchie. Written by John Greenleaf Whittier. Greenwillow Books, 1350 Avenue of the Americas, New York NY 10019. ISBN: 0-688-09829-0. 32 pp. 1992. US\$14.00.

The Keys to My Kingdom: A Poem in Three Languages. Written and illustrated by Lydia Dabovich. Lothrop, Lee and Shepard Books, 1350 Avenue of the Americas, New York NY 10019. ISBN: 0-688-09774-X. 28 pp. 1992. US\$14.00.

In 1863, as the Civil War raged, poet and abolitionist John Greenleaf Whittier published a poem in the *Atlantic Monthly*, celebrating the heroism of one frail person daring to stand against armed troops. His protagonist was Barbara Frietchie —

*"Shoot, if you must, this old gray head,
But spare your country's flag," she said.*

— whom he pictured as the only person in Fredericktown (Frederick, Maryland) brave enough to display the American flag while Confederate troops marched through. In Whittier's poem the leader of the rebels was a gallant general who had recently died — Thomas Jonathan "Stonewall" Jackson, to whom he also gave a speech which is well-remembered:

*"Who touches a hair of yon gray head
Dies like a dog! March on!" he said.*

Whittier wrote the poem after hearing word of mouth accounts of the event, and though it illuminates history, the events described are not historically accurate. Nancy Winslow Parker's gentle, quasi-realistic illustrations match well with these ambiguities. She concludes the book with an illustration of the Civil War campaign medal, engraved with Lincoln's famous phrase, "With malice toward none, with charity for all," biographies of Stonewall Jackson and Whittier, and a page of military and historical notes. Inside covers and facing pages show eight

historical Union and Confederate flags. The handsome, well-balanced book is an excellent presentation of an illuminating historical vignette. Reading it can lead children (and adults) to further study of this period in US history.

In *The Keys to my Kingdom* Lydia Dabovich has chosen an elaborate, rhythmically repetitive nursery rhyme to present, line by line, in English, French and Spanish translations. Odd numbered pages are fully devoted to colorful, detailed illustrations; the facing pages contain a section from the illustration followed by a line of the rhyme in English (blue), French (purple), and Spanish (green):

In that kingdom there is a city;
Dans ce royaume il y a une ville;
En ese reino hay una ciudad;

Because each line of the rhyme builds on what has gone before, learning the words and phrases is made delightfully easy. Wonderful for multilingual classrooms, or for opening the world of languages to anyone, anywhere! (JMJ)

Quiet Loveliness

This Quiet Lady, written by Charlotte Zolotow. Greenwillow Books, 1350 Avenue of the Americas, New York NY 10017. ISBN: 0-688-09305-1. 1992. 20 pp. US\$14.00.

Once again Anita Lobel has collaborated with a celebrated author of children's literature to produce a modern classic rich in the beauty of words and ideas. Zolotow's text produces the voice of an unseen narrator describing photographs: *This baby smiling in her bassinette under the crocheted throw is my mother.* Lobel's illustrations do more than photographs could to make the family pictures ones with which all families can identify. In small illustrations we see a child pointing to a series of family photographs, which are then shown in bold color on the facing pages. Through them we trace the stages of a woman's life: *This untidy schoolgirl with her wrinkled stockings is my mother...* *This quiet lady, lovely and large, standing on our front porch is my mother.* Then finally: *And here is where I begin.* The last page of this beautiful, celebratory book is not the traditional "the end." The picture shows another baby; the text is *The Beginning.* (JMJ)

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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