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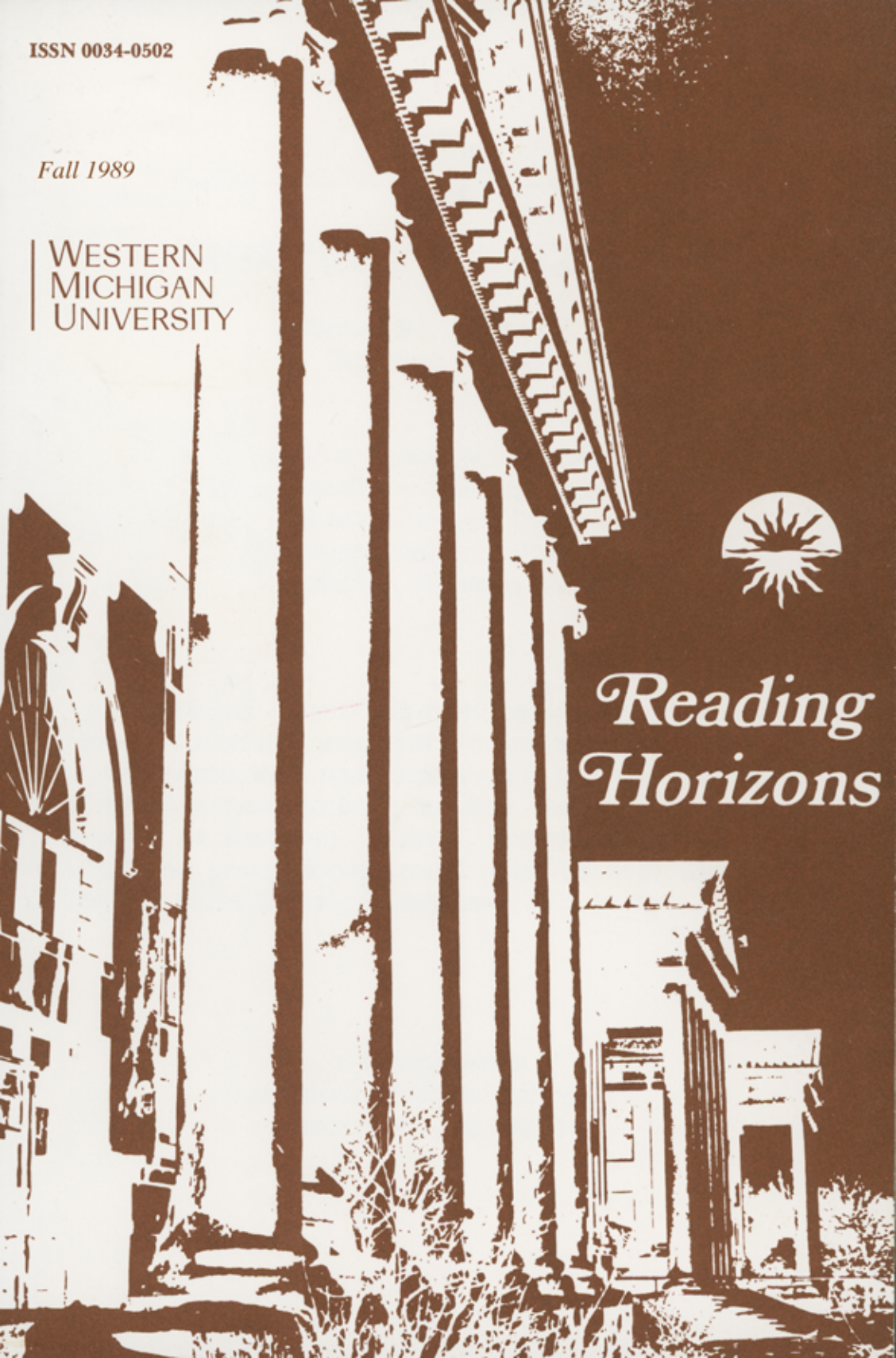
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The Case Method Approach in Reading Education

Timothy V. Rasinski

Imagine sitting in on a course in reading education where the class is engaged in a lively discussion of the application of some method of reading instruction. The discussion focuses on a real incident that the students had read about the evening before. Some students agree with the approach taken by the teacher in the case in handling the instruction. Others approve of the general methodology employed but disagree with the teacher's instruction and timing. Still another group of students questions the entire approach chosen by the teacher to teach reading. From a general discussion about method the class begins to deal with issues of theory and instructional philosophy. Students are active participants in the class. The instructor has her hands full simply moderating the discussion and tossing in points to consider.

Unfortunately most classes in reading education do not generally follow this pattern. Perhaps a more common description of a course in reading education, especially at the undergraduate level, would involve the teacher lecturing to the class while the students attempted to fill up their notebooks with the knowledge poured forth by the instructor. Occasionally the students might be involved in a demonstration of method or in a micro-teaching experience in which they attempt to teach a lesson or a portion of a lesson to a small group of peers. However, for the most part, students are passive participants in the classroom activities that unfold in their college level coursework.

It seems rather odd that the type of pedagogical orientation that teacher educators attempt to instill in their students is one that places the learner in an active, participant role in learning. Even in reading education we speak of the reader actively engaging personal schemata in the reading act. We speak of the reader as an active participant in the unfolding of the text and the construction of meaning. The irony here is that the teaching method most often used to convince college level students of the logic and merit of this activist orientation places those novice teachers in a passive position of intellectual subjugation to the instructor. In effect, reading teacher educators do not practice what they preach. In this respect they are not modeling the type of teaching that they will expect from their students when those students go out into the field.

A new approach to the teaching of reading education is needed, one that is not focused totally on method but sensitive to the situations and contexts in which methodologies are to be applied. A new approach to reading education is needed that encourages the active participation of students and values their views about reading pedagogy. We need an approach that creates a forum in which ideas grounded in the real world of the classroom are free to be expressed and forced to be examined critically. A method that allows for this to happen is also one that is highly suited to coursework in reading education. It is the case study or case method approach.

The Case Method Approach

The case method approach I propose is based upon one developed at the Harvard Business School and employed in the curricula of numerous business schools across the United States. The centerpiece of this approach to learning is the individual "case." It has been defined by Megginson (1980)

as “. . .a real life situation researched and produced by scholars with such detailed, sufficient care and fidelity that it permits the inclusion of sufficient environmental information of a situation.” The case presents a situation or a problem that is real in terms of nature, players, and setting and for which there are a number of alternative courses of action, each with its own set of positive and negative effects. The case, then, becomes the document that is the focus of class discussion. Class members are asked to decide on a course of action and be ready to provide a rationale and defense of the action based on theoretical and pragmatic grounds. Other class members critique the students' analyses of the problem and offer their own solutions.

The case study approach to learning requires students to know more than just the facts. Students are forced to use the knowledge gained from teacher and textbooks, to make decisions, to predict outcomes, and to think critically and creatively. Romm and Mahler (1986) have identified from the literature three advantages of the case method over more traditional teaching methods. These are: (1) the ability to lend itself to theoretical understanding and insight, (2) success in inducing motivational and psychological involvement, and (3) the ability to foster self-directed learning in students. Inasmuch as we wish teachers to develop an articulated theory of education, to be motivated and involved in solving problems related to schooling, and to become self-sustaining learners, the case method approach may be well-suited to teacher education in general and reading teacher education in particular.

The Case Method in Reading Education

Most college level textbooks treat their subject matter as if it was a set of static facts or principles abstracted from the

hazy world of real life and presented in the "sanitized" format of the book. Shulman (1986), however, has argued that the learning of propositional knowledge (facts and principles) by itself is an insufficient knowledge base for teachers. Two other knowledge forms are necessary. These are case knowledge and strategic knowledge. Case knowledge involves the application of principles to specific classroom events and contexts. Strategic knowledge involves the application of multiple and contradictory principles. Shulman argues that these two higher forms of knowledge required for effective teaching are best learned through a case method approach.

Reading education lends itself very well to a case method approach. Currently there exists no consensus in the field as to the best approach to the teaching of reading. Optimal reading instruction occurs when teachers make informed decisions based upon the multitude of factors that impact on the various outcomes that are demanded of reading instruction.

Becoming a skilled teacher of reading involves having an extensive knowledge of the child as a reader and of the various principles of reading instruction. However, in addition to being knowledgeable about children and reading, skilled teachers need to be able to make informed decisions about the application of reading methods in the face of particular classroom contexts in which conflicting principles, values, and/or goals exist.

For example, a familiar principle of reading instruction is that teachers should act as models of reading for their students. One highly advocated method for expressing this principle is through reading trade books to the class as often

as possible. Most novice teachers are aware of this principle and method. Yet how might teachers react when this principle brings on conflict?

How should a teacher react when the school principal or a parent takes issue with the overuse of reading to the class? How does a teacher respond to a principal's taunt that reading aloud to the class is a waste of instructional time and that it conflicts with the principle of maximizing student engagement in productive reading and writing activities? Students are supposed to enjoy naturally the read aloud activities. But what does a teacher do with a child who does not appear to be listening to the story and, in fact, appears intent on disrupting the read aloud session?

Problems such as these are not trivial. These are the irritations and frustrations that are the bane of the reading teacher's classroom life and are the types of problems that may cause a teacher to give up on reading aloud after only a few tries.

Yet one will find no mention of real life problems such as these in any textbook on reading instruction. Nor is it likely that such problems could be dealt with easily through a class lecture or other highly structured teaching approach. The solution to problems such as the ones described above are based upon a variety of contextual factors such as teacher style and pedagogical orientation, nature of the school and classroom, type of student(s), etc. No one solution is best in all cases.

A case study approach allows a creative discussion and analysis of possible solutions to problems. Constraints to certain courses of action are noted, underlying causes and

principles at play are considered. Students see and learn the *process* of decision-making as it occurs in the classroom. This knowledge of the process will help them in the classroom dilemmas and problems that they will inevitably have to face on their own.

Criticism of the Case Method Approach

Potential criticism of a case method approach to reading education seems to fall into three categories: (1) most students in reading education courses will probably have a real field experience in which they will have real opportunities to try out their knowledge, (2) a case study approach, with its open-ended discussion format, takes too much time away from regular class activities, or (3) many reading education courses already incorporate a case study approach. A brief response to each criticism follows.

It is true that a significant component in most teacher education programs is a field experience in which students assume the roles of teacher and teacher aide in real classrooms. The purpose of such experiences is to allow novice teachers opportunities to put into practice the knowledge gained in the various methods courses taken. Critics of a case study approach may claim that the field experience component makes the use of a case methodology redundant and unnecessary.

On the contrary, the case study approach is an excellent bridge between learning teaching methods and having to employ them. In many field experiences students are under minimal supervision with little chance to contact, and discuss concerns with, colleagues and teachers save their coordinating teacher. With a case study approach students are able to

try out methods and decisions under the supervision of a trained teacher educator and the critical inspection of their peers. Moreover, decisions made in a case study do not carry the same ramifications as those made in the classroom. The consequences of decisions made in a case study are hypothetical, not real. They do not involve the potential of impacting on real people. Finally, the case approach allows students the time to deliberate over courses of action. Decisions made in a field-based classroom are often made under duress and with minimal deliberation time. Certainly the training in decision-making under the case approach will help teachers make better decisions when faced with the constraints of the real classroom.

A second potential criticism of the case study approach is that the open-ended discussions take too much time, time that could have been used in dispensing pedagogical knowledge. My reply to this assertion is simply that you get what you pay for. If we desire teachers who are informed decision-makers, who are reflective in choosing courses of action, then it is necessary to invest time in allowing students practice in being reflective and making informed decisions. If more time is required to present the knowledge base for reading education, then the curriculum may be expanded accordingly.

Indeed, calls for reform of the teacher education process advocate giving longer periods of time to teacher education training. Perhaps a portion of this extra time could be used to accommodate both the presentation of basic pedagogical knowledge and the hypothetical implementation of such knowledge through the consideration of case studies.

A third possible criticism of a case study approach to reading education points to the fact that some reading educa-

tion courses already incorporate case studies, usually either brief scenarios described by the instructor or written up within the textbook itself. While not denying that such "case studies" do appear in reading education courses, those cases usually suffer from one or two major drawbacks. First, the cases are usually too brief to give the case a flavor for the contextual environment around which the topic is addressed. The cases do not permit strong consideration of factors other than ones about which the case is written. Second, cases of this sort are often written for illustrative rather than deliberative purposes. Authors of these cases write them to illustrate a point or to demonstrate how an instructional method might work in a classroom. There is no point at which students are forced to consider alternatives and make informed choices. There is no dilemma presented. These kinds of case studies are not well adapted to critical discussions of issues in reading education, nor do they encourage growth in decision-making skills.

It should be noted that case studies as envisioned in this paper are not at all like the case reports that are often the result of clinical diagnoses of children with reading problems. Case reports tend to be a static description of one child. Case studies in a case method approach are more global and descriptive in choice of topic, subjects, and context and do not suggest or lead to any one particular course of action.

Using the Case Method

I have used a case study approach as a supplement to several undergraduate and graduate level courses I have taught in reading education over the past two years. In the graduate level classes, I have asked students who are currently teaching to develop case studies based upon a critical issue they have had to deal with in the teaching of

reading. After a model case in which I lead the discussion, the students lead the class in discussion and analysis of their own cases. For undergraduates, I have developed case studies based upon problems I encountered as a classroom teacher of reading and I have also used some of the cases developed by students in the graduate classes. With the undergraduates I lead the class discussion of the case studies.

The cases I have used and seen used in my courses have usually incorporated multiple parts. In the normal routine of doing a case study, the first part (Part A) of a case would be passed out to the students to be read and analyzed at the class prior to its scheduled discussion. On the day of the class discussion the discussion leader asks one person to summarize the case and a second person to fill in any missing details. Then the class settles into a lively consideration of the issues and potential courses of action.

The cases can focus on a variety of issues. In my own classes I have seen cases dealing with parents, disinterest in reading among students, diagnosis of reading problems, reading instruction in kindergarten, and creating an environment conducive to reading. After Part A has been discussed thoroughly (usually between 15 and 40 minutes) a second part (Part B) of the case is presented. Part B is usually shorter in length and describes a course of action chosen by the teacher in the case and the response that was encountered. It is not unusual for Part B to conclude with the teacher facing another set of related problems. A short discussion of part B is normally followed by a conclusion in which statements of principles and generalizations, if appropriate, are abstracted from the case and discussion.

My experience with the case method approach, as described here, has been singularly positive. Usually after a

short period in which students are either reticent or trying to find the one and only correct solution, students become lively participants in the discussions. They have expressed enjoyment at the challenge of taking a position, providing a principled rationale, and defending the position against critical analysis. Students have expressed a renewed sense of worth and self confidence as they find that their ideas have value in the eyes of their course instructor and peers. They are more willing to discuss actively problems in the classroom with their peers from a more critical, creative and professional point of view. Best of all, students participating in case study discussions seem more prepared for and confident in dealing with the instructional dilemmas of real classrooms in intelligent and thoughtful ways.

The case study approach is certainly not a panacea for all the difficulties inherent in teaching reading education courses. However, it opens up many possibilities for actively engaging students in their own learning. I have found it well worth the effort.

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Assistance Models in Reading Instruction

Martha Grindler

There is general agreement that it is not possible within the constraints of undergraduate programs and the limited time frame for preservice teaching experience to train highly professional teachers before the first year of teaching (McDonald, 1980). Thus, professional education should be considered a continuous process (Feiman-Nemser, 1983).

One obvious problem with the profession of teaching is that it is a very isolated one (Lortie, 1975). One study in the Southeast showed that 85% of experienced teachers had never seen another teacher in their own school teaching a lesson (Glickman, 1986). Teachers find themselves in their classrooms all day long with a room full of students, a situation which prevents them from being able to collaborate with peers, and drastically reduces the possibility for them to learn from each other.

What assistance is available for teachers who need additional skills and training in the teaching of reading? Two distinct opportunities occur. One model serves to fill a deficit; i.e., the teacher is experiencing a void and the goal is to fill that void. Another model tends to be developmental; i.e., the teacher has a specific set of skills but these skills need to be refined, extended, or modified (Kester and Marockie, 1987).

Excellent teachers can assume the important role of assisting other teachers in the improvement of identified instructional problems. They are particularly effective in observing

and coaching other teachers in a far less threatening context than is possible in an administrative observe-and-evaluate model (Bushing and Rowls, 1987). The purpose of this article is to identify five assistance models which rely on formal support systems for classroom teachers as they engage in the teaching of reading.

The individual assistance model

This model, which is utilized in a school district in the rural Southeast, follows the pretest-posttest design in experimental research. During preplanning week, an "Inventory of Teachers' Knowledge of Reading" is administered to teachers as a pretest measure to identify any deficiencies in competencies in teaching reading that may affect student achievement. The test can be administered in a group setting and scored like a criterion-referenced test, with feedback provided in terms of lists of the competencies achieved and not achieved.

Test results are used as a basis for planning both individual and staff development for the next school year. When staff development is completed, competencies previously considered deficient are reassessed. Specific staff development workshops are designed to meet the individual needs of each teacher. Some teachers may need to attend only a few conferences while others may need to complete all the learning opportunities.

This pretest-posttest model serves as a needs assessment. Since the items on the inventory can be grouped according to specific areas in reading (such as structural *analysis, context, vocabulary, and comprehension*), it is easy to determine in what specific areas a teacher needs assistance. An example of a question taken from an assessment

inventory in the phonic analysis- consonant section might be:
In the word *black*, the *bl* is considered:

- a) a consonant digraph
- b) a speech consonant
- c) a phoneme
- d) a consonant blend

with the correct response being *d) a consonant blend*. When teachers miss similar questions on the inventory it is an indication that they need additional assistance in the area of phonic skills.

An approach similar to the model — one which does not require a testing instrument — is to offer a questionnaire to reading teachers to chronicle the problems most often perceived in their teaching. This approach, however, has the disadvantage of being static and retrospective, and it has the possibility of yielding self-report data that may be unreliable.

The resource teacher model

This model is more informal than the previous one. A resource teacher, one who holds at least a master's degree in reading, may serve a number of schools or only one school in the district. The job of the resource teacher is to offer assistance when needed or when asked by the principal or the classroom reading teacher. Another job is to serve as a demonstration or model teacher for the classroom teacher. Under these circumstances, the resource teacher does not serve as an evaluator but more as a teacher advocate, a primary purpose of assistance.

These are among the areas in which the resource teacher may provide individual assistance. The resource teacher may:

- examine student records and determine where weak

areas occur, and then offer suggestions, materials or support to the classroom teacher;

- supply materials, set them up in the classroom, and help the reading teacher begin to use them with the students;
- teach a demonstration lesson in the classroom — an effective way of helping a new teacher in the system or assisting when a new basal series has been adopted;
- help with diagnosis for individual students and make recommendations to the reading teacher;
- use student records on a specific reading level to determine the objectives which need remediating, and then conduct workshops on these specific areas — at which, for example, each classroom reading teacher might demonstrate one activity used to teach the objective;
- serve as a coordinator for workshops in specific areas, such as test construction and time management;
- use time at faculty meetings to discuss various topics, such as the time-on-task literature;
- conduct a survey of staff development needs, with the aim of improving student achievement through promotion of teacher effectiveness.

The reading needs assessment model

This model can be used as a total school system project. A trained committee goes into the classroom during reading instruction with a check sheet in hand to determine if instruction is taking place in the specific areas designated on the checksheet. Examples might include “establishing purpose” and “coming to closure.” This model needs to be viewed as an assistance rather than an assessment model. Once the data is collected, appropriate measures may be established to assist the classroom teacher in areas where discrepancies between district goals and classroom observations have been noted.

The learning community model

This model (Dodd and Rosenbaum, 1986) depends on two key concepts: small groups of teachers working together, and process being emphasized over product. Curriculum and staff development become vehicles to encourage all teachers to become active learners, to share what they learn, and to support one another in growing professionally.

The first requirement for implementing this model is to set goals which are individualized to meet the needs of various groups. Group meetings are then scheduled, focusing on specific aspects of reading instruction. After sharing teaching ideas and brainstorming new possibilities, each teacher in the group decides on a new method or activity, or a refinement of one presently used, to try with students. The learning community model allows teachers to grow professionally and personally because they learn more by learning together.

The team coaching model

This model has been described by Neubert and Bratton (1987). The coaches in this model are school-based language arts coordinators, resource teachers, or lead reading teachers who have flexible schedules, and previous experience and training in the teaching methods to be learned. They are relative experts in the methodology to be taught.

The coach in this model does not simply observe the reading teacher but rather team-teaches the lesson in partnership with the reading teacher. The coach and teacher plan, execute, and evaluate the lesson together.

According to Neubert and Bratton, there are five basic characteristics which the coach must exhibit to promote an effective coaching partnership:

- *knowledge* The coach must know more than the reading teacher about the methods being learned.
- *credibility* The coach must demonstrate success in the classroom as a participating teacher, not merely as an observer.
- *support* The coach must encourage the efforts of the reading teacher and offer constructive criticism with praise.
- *facilitation* The reading teacher should continually maintain ownership of the classroom, lessons, and students. The coach's purpose is to facilitate, not dictate.
- *availability* The coach must be accessible to the reading teacher for planning, team teaching, and conferencing.

Certain factors must be taken into consideration when an assistance model is to be developed:

- Support personnel must be trained in the process of evaluation, observation, and clinical supervision. They are typically veteran teachers who possess high levels of teaching competence in reading and are capable of sharing this competence with others.
- Continuous feedback must be given to the reading teacher.
- Released time will be necessary for support teachers during assistance time.
- Supervisors should be given only limited case loads so that they can be effective. The responsibility of making assignments often falls to local school district administrators.
- Information must be provided to administrators from both the support supervisors and reading teachers seeking assistance.
- A non-evaluative atmosphere of openness for the reading teacher seeking assistance is necessary.

Finally, characteristics of a support teacher need to be carefully scrutinized (Odell, 1987):

- To achieve credibility with reading teachers, it is important that the support teacher have recent classroom reading experience at a comparable grade level.
- The support teacher should be drawn from the ranks of current excellent teachers of reading.
- The support teacher should also have had success in working experiences with adults.
- The support teacher should be sensitive, responsive to the ideas of others, and should possess an open personality.
- The support teacher should have the ability to offer unconditional support to people experiencing trouble in the teaching of reading.

The assistance models described in this review adhere to the basic assumption that peers are a valuable resource in the learning process. Many experienced teachers do not have much opportunity for discussion with peers about learning and instruction. In a study of experienced teachers (Glickman, 1986), 50% reported that they had never been observed and given feedback about their teaching. Although someone did enter their classrooms with a checklist to tell them if their teaching was adequate or not, they never had a serious dialogue about the decisions they were making in their teaching process. Assistance means *teachers helping teachers* — cooperative learning at its finest.

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.... Expanding Horizons ...

This teaching idea is shared by Barbara Mumma, Gifted and Talented Coordinator, Plainwell Schools, Plainwell MI.

When I was a fifth grade teacher, I assigned a variety of projects to substitute for traditional book reports. The most popular by far was the "Book Report Floats" project. Each student created a Book Report Float based on a non-fiction book. Floats were made from shirt or shoe boxes, and labeled with the title and author of the book represented. The floats were designed to illustrate interesting facts.

Students mounted their boxes on toy trucks, roller skates, skateboards, or anything small with wheels. Eventually the project was so popular that on the day the reports were due, other classes assembled in the gym to see the parade of floats. Each student took the microphone to share title, author and "most interesting fact" as the float passed.

This activity was a great motivator for students who had difficulty with book reports or speaking in front of groups. We displayed the floats in a safe place for a week to allow students to examine each other's floats, and we also held small group discussions about the books represented. Some students had difficulty completing the project at home. I kept updated on their progress and provided materials and extra time to work on the project in school.





From Basal Reader to Whole Language: Transition Tactics

Pamela J. Farris

Ever since William McGuffey introduced his famous reading series, the basal reader has been relied upon as the prominent means of teaching children to read. As recently as 1980, between 80% and 90% of the nation's elementary teachers used basal readers as the primary instructional method (Koeller, 1981). During the past few years, the whole language approach has become popular and is threatening to unseat the basal from its longtime bastion in reading instruction.

The whole language approach focuses upon the learning process rather than the product. Listening, speaking, reading, and writing are taught as closely integrated subjects. Because of their interrelationship, growth in one language arts area leads to growth in one or more of the remaining areas. Thus, the instructional emphasis should be upon integrating the language arts whenever possible (Cooper, Warnicke, and Shipman, 1988).

In addition to emphasizing process over product, the whole language approach emphasizes "empowerment," through which both the teacher and the student have great input as to what will be taught and the materials and activities to be used. Rather than assigning a story from the basal reader along with accompanying skill pages contained in a workbook, the teacher in a whole language program involves students in the

planning of relevant activities designed around their interests, needs, and abilities. Largely, these activities incorporate children's literature and writing. This follows the underlying philosophy of the whole language approach in that children are expected to learn to read and write naturally, just as they learned to listen and speak. Children learn to read by reading and to write by writing.

As school districts move away from the basal reader to whole language, teachers find themselves in a tenuous position — the structure and security of the basal program is set aside for the less structured and unfamiliar whole language approach. The following suggestions will assist in making a smoother transition from the basal to the whole language program.

Classroom Management

In the whole language classroom, the teacher serves as a facilitator of learning. Students are encouraged to pursue their interests, make decisions, and evaluate their learning progress. This is accomplished within a setting of cooperativeness in that both teacher and classmates serve as learning assistants for the students.

Many teachers are uncomfortable in such a classroom environment because their own teaching style is in conflict with the whole language philosophy. This is particularly true of teachers who use direct instruction aimed at skill acquisition. School administrators should not attempt to force such teachers to adopt the whole language philosophy; participation should be voluntary. In view of the fact that effective teaching research strongly supports direct instruction (e.g., Clark and McCarty, 1983; Corno and Snow, 1986; McCormack-Larkin and Kritek, 1983) while research on the whole

language approach is sparse and inconclusive, to coerce a teacher to adopt the whole language approach would be a mistake in terms of faculty morale.

For those teachers who prefer a more structured classroom environment, incorporating whole language activities in addition to the basal program can offer an opportunity to experiment within their own classroom, and determine for themselves the effectiveness and efficiency of the whole language approach.

For those teachers who find the nonthreatening atmosphere of the whole language approach appealing, caution must be given that building trust and cooperation among students requires much support, effort, and guidance on the behalf of the classroom teacher. Students can be allowed to make choices and help each other but ultimately the classroom teacher is held accountable for the learning that takes place.

Instructional Strategies: Grades K-3

A variety of instructional strategies are included in a whole language program for grades K-3. Typically these include shared book experiences, sustained silent reading (SSR), and journal writing.

Shared book experiences are utilized in kindergarten through grade three, and beyond with remedial readers. An entire class is involved in reading a "big book" which contains print large enough for all of the students to see when they are gathered on the floor around the teacher.

The shared book experience was developed by Holdaway (1979) and involves the following seven steps:

1. The teacher briefly introduces the book to the class.
2. The teacher then asks the students to make predictions about what they believe the book is about and what they think will happen in the story.
3. The teacher reads the book to the class, pointing to the text while reading so that the students are able to follow along visually.
4. The teacher may stop reading at preselected points and ask students to verify their original predictions and to make new ones based upon the information gained from the story to that point.
5. The book is then reread with students being encouraged to read along with the teacher.
6. Individual students or pairs of students may volunteer to read the book aloud to the class.
7. The book is read to the class every day for a week.

Sustained silent reading (SSR) allows students to read books of their own choosing for a set period of time each day. The teacher also reads during this time (McCracken and McCracken, 1978), serving a reading model. SSR permits children to practice reading without undue pressure.

In grades two and three, students may incorporate journal writing as part of their whole language experiences. Journal writing includes writing in personal logs on a regular or daily basis as well as academic learning logs in which the students write down their interpretations and reactions to content area text. Both types of journals emphasize content rather than specific writing skills such as spelling and grammar.

Instructional Strategies: Grades 4-6

While some of the instructional strategies appropriate for the primary grades may also be used at the intermediate

level, additional strategies may be added. For instance, SSR and journal writing can continue, with the length of time for SSR being extended and the journal writing going into greater depth and detail. Other instructional strategies which are appropriate for the intermediate grades include discussion groups and dialogue journals.

Discussion groups are utilized in the whole language classroom to develop listening, speaking, and thinking skills. Typically, discussion groups are formed to report upon specific topics within a thematic unit of study. For example, a thematic unit about life in Massachusetts in the 1600's might include discussion groups on the Salem witch trials, whaling, education, and colonial life. After reading about their topic, the students share and discuss their findings within their group before presenting their final report to the class.

Dialogue journals are a form of written conversation about a book between the student and the teacher. At least once every two weeks, students write a letter to the teacher in their notebook or journal about the piece of literature they are currently reading. They may write about thoughts, ideas, feelings and beliefs, in their reaction to the book. What is liked or disliked about the book may also be included. The teacher then writes a response to the student's ideas in the same journal, with the purpose of sharing in the written conversation about the book, rather than correcting technical aspects of students' writing. According to Atwell (1987), dialogue journals permit students to analyze and critique literature as well as to articulate what they like or value.

These instructional strategies can be slowly incorporated in a basal reading program during the transition period or used in addition as supplementary activities should the basal

reader program be retained as the primary instructional program.

Evaluation

Unlike the basal reader program which contains unit skill tests, evaluation in the whole language program relies heavily upon teacher observation, so informal checklists and anecdotal records should be incorporated into the evaluation process. Dated writing samples for each student should be collected and filed on a monthly basis. Likewise, dated records of each student's free reading selections and completed books should be maintained. In addition, each student should have a personal self-evaluation checklist.

Standardized achievement tests continue to be the yardstick by which achievement is determined in most school districts. For those students in a whole language program which utilizes informal evaluation in terms of checklists and anecdotal records, the idea of having to take a time-restricted, computer-scored, objective test can be somewhat traumatic. In order to be fair to students, they must be exposed to similar time-restricted, paper-and-pencil measures prior to the administration of the standardized test battery. While students may still be anxious about taking the standardized achievement battery of tests, the format and rules will not be completely new to them, thus insuring a more accurate measure of their abilities.

Conclusions

These suggestions are designed to assist teachers in making the transition from a basal reading program to a whole language program. Plunging into a whole language program and abandoning the basal program is not advisable. Gradual implementation allows teachers and students to become

confident in using this instructional method.

In order for a successful transition to be made, teachers must be knowledgeable in the fields of language arts and children's literature. In addition, teachers must not only know but trust their students. Without these essential ingredients, the transition to a whole language program will fail.

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Correction

The correct title of the article by Dr. John H. Warren, which appeared in the summer issue of *Reading Horizons* (Volume 29, #4) on pages 244-256, is "Classroom Oral Reading and Its Need for Restraints."



Success in Reading: Four Characteristics of Strategic Readers

David L. Brown
L. D. Briggs

Reading is a complex process which involves the coordination of a multitude of skills. Strategic readers can be distinguished from the less-skilled readers by their methods of interacting with text. The mental processes of good readers must be understood in order to make assumptions concerning the nature of reading.

In the primary grades, most students are taught word attack skills and vocabulary. However, Durkin (1978-1979) found that adequate instruction was not being given to comprehension. Without instruction, many children do not develop the advanced strategies needed for fluent reading.

Several significant differences between fluent and less-skilled readers have been identified. This article will list and discuss four characteristics of strategic readers.

Effective Readers

Brown (1982) referred to effective readers as those students who have some awareness of and control over their cognitive reading skills. Interviews with children concerning their reading knowledge revealed vague and often inaccurate conceptions of reading (Clay, 1979). The less-skilled readers showed little awareness of the need to use different strategies for variations in reading purposes and texts. On the other

hand, the good readers used the knowledge of structure and content to increase reading efficiency.

Strategic readers have the following four characteristics;

- They establish goals for reading.
- They select reading strategies appropriate for the text.
- They monitor their reading to determine whether comprehension is occurring.
- They have a positive attitude toward reading.

Establishing Reading Goals

Establishing a goal for reading is a prerequisite for monitoring the reading process and planning appropriate strategies for understanding the text. By setting goals, students are able to generate hypotheses and formulate expectations which will guide their reading. Anderson and Armbruster (1982) suggested that surveying the text and determining the goal can improve both enjoyment and comprehension. Seeing a definite need for goals, Stauffer (1969) emphasized the importance of goal setting in his Directed Reading-Thinking Activity. As a result of setting goals, students gain experience in structuring the specific objectives which will guide and aid them in reading.

Reading must be goal-directed because readers must determine strategies for utilizing texts in various ways and must establish appropriate goals. Once goals are formulated, students will be able to make use of their knowledge of the topic. These goals, either explicit or implicit, general or specific, can influence children's understanding of text.

In general, good readers are constantly determining reasons for reading, then reading to achieve these purposes,

and, finally, rereading to confirm understanding of text. This cognitive process requires readers to depend heavily upon their experiential background to comprehend what they are reading.

Appropriate Reading Strategies

Thorndike (1917) recognized the need for developing reading strategies:

Understanding a paragraph is like solving a problem in mathematics. It consists in selecting the right elements of the situation and putting them together in the right relations, and also with the right amount of weight or influence or force for each. The mind is assailed as it were by every word in the paragraph. It must select, repress, soften, emphasize, correlate and organize, all under the influence of the right mental set or purpose or demand. (Thorndike, 1917, p. 329)

Children need to be taught various reading strategies that can be utilized for different texts.

In a study of fourth-grade readers, Myers and Paris (1978) found that good readers asked more questions and used more aids in reading than poor readers. Poor readers usually asked only about the pronunciation of new words. This study found that poor readers failed to realize the need for being strategic readers.

Strategic behavior is essential for the comprehension of difficult texts. Therefore children should be taught when to skim for main ideas or scan for particular information. They must recognize the need to read quickly or slowly, carefully or casually, silently or aloud (Kleiman, 1982), and when to apply these reading strategies. Selecting appropriate reading strategies is a skill that good readers learn to utilize effectively.

Monitoring Comprehension

Recently there has been growing interest by cognitive psychologists in readers' metacognitive knowledge. Metacognition is a knowledge of and a conscious attempt to control one's own cognitive processes (Flavell, 1979). During the reading process, the pupil, the task, and the strategy used are key factors to be evaluated according to the metacognitive model (Baker, 1979). In analyzing reading comprehension, teachers must give consideration to what readers know about the gaining of meaning, how readers self-regulate the search for meaning, and what strategies to employ if the reader fails to understand. This process is known as comprehension monitoring.

Baker (1979) has described monitoring:

Comprehension monitoring involves the evaluation and regulation of one's own ongoing comprehension processes. To evaluate is to keep track of the success with which comprehension is proceeding and to regulate is to ensure that the process continues smoothly, including taking remedial action when comprehension fails. (Baker, 1979, p. 365)

Good readers appear to be more proficient at monitoring their understanding of text than poor readers. For example, Swanson (1988) found that better readers were more likely to use higher level strategies, such as inferencing, to obtain meaning from text than less skilled readers. When failing to comprehend text, good readers begin to employ subconsciously a number of strategies to self-regulate their search for meaning. Common strategies include rereading of the text and drawing from prior knowledge to assist in obtaining meaning. According to Johnston (1983), the failure to gain meaning can occur at the word, sentence, or discourse level.

In order to become successful users of comprehension

monitoring, readers must have three competencies. First, they must be able to assess the present state of their knowledge, including what they know and what they do not know about the encountered text. Next, they must be knowledgeable about various elements of text. Finally, they must have the strategic knowledge to select the necessary information to reach meaning (Baker, 1979).

Some techniques have been identified that can be used to determine whether comprehension monitoring is occurring. For example, Baker (1979) recommended three strategies: 1) ask readers to imagine hypothetical reading situations and how they would perform; 2) ask readers what they are doing while actually reading; 3) assess the ongoing comprehension monitoring by using a variety of performance measures.

Children "who successfully monitor their comprehension of text know when they understand, when they don't understand, and when they partially understand" (Baker, 1979). Markman (1979) studied comprehension by presenting third, fifth, and sixth graders with passages containing incomplete or inconsistent information. When awareness of comprehension problems was assessed, the younger children were found to be less likely than the older children to realize the extent of their understanding.

Myers and Paris (1978) surveyed a group of second-grade pupils to determine the strategies utilized when an unknown word was encountered. The most common action was to skip the word. Other strategies included looking back at the text, rereading, and asking for assistance. Comprehension monitoring does not seem to be a skill that automatically develops with maturity; rather, this monitoring tends to be highly dependent on the children's knowledge and experience in

dealing with texts. In a later study, Paris and Myers (1981) found that poor readers remembered less than good readers from stories read aloud and were not even aware of their failure in comprehending text. Surprisingly, Baker (1979) found that many college students also lacked this essential skill.

Successful comprehension monitoring requires the detection of unknown or inconsistent information and an awareness of strategies that can be utilized to alleviate the problem. Effective readers are able to monitor their own comprehension and take the necessary steps to cope successfully with difficulties encountered in comprehending text.

A Positive Attitude Toward Reading

The children's attitudes toward reading can influence achievement. The parents play a major role in promoting and sustaining children's enthusiasm for reading. Regularly, children observe their parents and other individuals reading. Therefore "by observing their parents and others interacting with print, children learn that reading and writing have functional environmental uses" (Brown and Briggs, 1987, p. 278). The children easily ascertain the attitude that others have toward reading and the importance of reading in daily life. Therefore, "over a period of time, children gradually assimilate attitudes [toward reading] from the actions and beliefs of those with whom they regularly come in contact" (Briggs, 1987, p. 203). Children who develop positive attitudes toward the value of reading will approach reading instruction with a greater possibility for success.

Extensive research has been conducted on the teacher's influence in helping to foster children's attitudes toward reading. Schofield (1980) found that teachers who value reading tend to promote positive attitudes and higher

achievement among their students. Obviously, when learning to read, children are also developing attitudes toward reading and their own reading proficiency.

Children are also affected by the instructional behavior of their teachers. Allington (1980) discovered that teacher-pupil interaction was different for good and poor readers. He found that teachers are more likely to interrupt poor readers who err when reading aloud than good readers who err similarly. As a result, the actual instructional time allocated for reading tasks is much less for the poor readers.

In general, research (e.g., Kennedy and Halinski, 1978) has shown that good readers have a more positive attitude toward reading than poor readers. The poor attitude of disabled readers may have a negative effect on reading achievement. High interest in reading tends to be associated with high achievement, and low interest in reading tends to be associated with failure in reading.

Summary

What are four characteristics of strategic readers? Strategic readers establish goals, select appropriate strategies, monitor comprehension, and display a positive attitude toward reading. Reading is a major academic skill that is introduced to children during the early school years. Therefore reading instruction should prepare students to interact in a meaningful manner with a variety of texts. Good readers focus their attention on the major ideas as they incorporate the metacognitive skills needed to accomplish the task of understanding text. Consequently, good readers are strategic readers who have developed the necessary skills to profit fully from the decoding process of reading.

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.... Expanding Horizons ...

This teaching idea is shared by Pat Vanderbilt, English teacher at Hudsonville Junior High School, Hudsonville, MI.

My eighth grade class of academically advanced students studied Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* in a modern translation. We learned about and discussed the historical setting of the tales, the purpose for the pilgrims' journey, and the identities of the vast variety of pilgrims. We read several of the tales and noticed that the pilgrims told their tales out of their own identities and interests.

After our reading was completed, I set up the following hypothetical situation:

As a group we will go to Lansing to watch a basketball game in which Magic Johnson is going to be playing. The weather is favorable and we plan to hike on the back roads from Hudsonville to Lansing. We are going to camp along the way and in order to make the trip more fun, we will be telling stories along the way as well as around the campfire.

We brainstormed possible topics, discussed a variety of formats and the style and length of the tales, and students were assigned to come to class on Monday prepared with written stories ready to relate to the group.

Monday arrived. I had slipped out between classes and had built a "campfire" in a vacant inner room, from crumpled red tissue paper piled over flashlights. We left our classroom, destination unknown to the students, walked down the hall and entered the darkened room to a whispered chorus of "Oooh, neat!" We read our various tales by the light of a flashlight which was passed around, and found that, as the pilgrims, we had many and diverse tales to tell.

The experience was worthwhile and enjoyable for us all. Each student had a chance to shine, and the class had an opportunity to transcend the "here and now" through their writing.





The Multi-faceted World of the Reading Teacher

-- or --
this vs. that
vs. empowered choices

Richard D. Robinson
Jeanne M. Jacobson

Whole language vs. the basal

If I use the basal reader, am I too traditional? ...not attentive to the latest research? If I use a whole language approach, will my program seem revolutionary? ...too non-traditional?

I have choices. I can explore ways to use a whole language approach. I can incorporate whole language ideas into a classroom where the basal is used, or I can use a basal system imaginatively, to meet the needs and interests of my students.

Workbooks vs. student developed materials

If I use the workbook for supplementary activities, does that mean I have limited creativity? If I use student developed materials, am I ignoring the district's traditional program?

I might ask to spend money allotted for workbooks on multiple copies of tradebooks. I might laminate some top-notch workbook pages for learning center activities. I'm certainly going to develop my ability to teach reading skills through mini-lessons based on students' ideas and students' writing.

Combining writing with reading: yes vs. no

If I have my students write along with their reading activities, am I diluting my language arts program with extras? If I don't combine writing with reading, aren't I ignoring current research?

Who says writing is an extra, and not an essential part of the language arts? Not me! Of course writing and reading go together — and this year I've got some brand new ideas to try. I keep in touch with current research and practice.

*In fact, I'm reading **Reading Horizons** this very moment!*

Test results: to use vs. not to use

If I use results of standardized reading tests, am I being controlled by a batch of numbers? If I don't, am I ignoring useful information?

Here's a problem I know how to handle. I'll spend time reading cum folders and looking at test results — and I'll also do some informal testing (what about some cloze exercises?) as well as just watching my kids in class — and make my own intelligent judgments about my students' strengths and needs.

Collegial interaction vs. independence

If I work with the special reading teacher, will people think I'm ineffective as a classroom reading teacher? If I don't, will people think I'm provincial, and afraid to let anyone see what I'm doing in reading?

Well, what other people think depends a lot on what I think — and I know I'm a good teacher who still has more to learn. If I want to use cooperative learning with my students, I ought to be ready for some cooperative learning myself. Our special reading teacher has some terrific ideas — and so do I.

**Back to school at night
vs. my school day is long enough already**

Are teachers who continue their education in reading just interested in getting more money? Are those who don't just too set in their ways to change?

This is a tough choice, that depends on so many things. But even if this year isn't the right time to take university courses, I will go back someday — and meanwhile, I'll see if I can't help plan for some good inservice, right here in the district.

Professional development: yea vs. nay to IRA

If I join IRA, people may think I'm just trying to impress the principal with what I know. If I don't, people may think I'm being shortsighted, and unwilling to share new ideas with my teaching colleagues.

Professional development is a strong point with me — I love getting new ideas; my students profit from what I learn and do. It's good to meet with other teachers too. (Am I glad to be a teacher? You bet I am!)

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Curriculum Dilemma: The Early Reader *"Mom, I never READ in school"*

Sarah L. Dowhower

"My child read before he started kindergarten. Now he only reads at home at night, because they don't do much reading in school, just letters and sounds. It is very discouraging for him and me." These are the words of a frustrated parent. Could it be that teachers are ignoring the literacy knowledge children bring to school?

A kindergarten teacher readily talked about the problem: *"I had three readers begin the school year. I was required by the district to put the children in Alpha-Time letter instruction. It is mandated that all children have to go through the same set kindergarten curriculum. By November the parents of the three students were complaining — and I don't blame them! Besides I don't really know what to do with these kids anyway. I have very little material and I can't use the basals since the reading specialist and the upper grade teachers get upset."*

In this paper evidence will be presented that validates these comments. Dilemmas and constraints faced by today's kindergarten teachers in trying to bridge home and school learning will be explored, and some possible resolutions to these dilemmas will be suggested.

Evidence of the dilemmas

Results from a recent research study supported the dilemma of the early reader in our schools. The literacy

environments of two experienced teachers' kindergartens were investigated during the first month of school. Several questions were addressed in the study: What reading and writing opportunities were available to the students the first few weeks of school? Did the teachers provide multiple opportunities for development of various types of written language skills that many researchers (Harste, Woodward, and Burke, 1984; Mason and Au, 1986; Schickedanz, 1986) claim are critical? Did the curriculum build on what the children already knew about language?

Each teacher was videotaped four half days. In total, eight kindergarten sessions (approximately two and one-half hours long), were filmed. (The teachers had two split kindergarten sessions — one group in the morning and another in the afternoon. Each teacher repeated the same morning activities with the afternoon children.) Data collection began the first day of school and continued once a week for the next three weeks. Instructional activities, called events, were identified and counted for each of the eight sessions. Specific literacy events (defined as activities involving reading, writing, or listening to text) were identified as a subset of the total events and counted. Literacy events were divided into those involving single words and those involving sentences or continuous text.

Several consistent findings were evident across the videotaped sessions:

- 1) Each teacher provided 18 literacy events during the four sessions, averaging 4.5 literacy events per half-day session (Table 1). Sixty-one percent of these events involved working with children's names or single words. As for exposure to continuous texts, teacher read-alouds were the most popular activity. Teacher A had a free choice library time in two

sessions and Teacher B had a large group one-sentence daily message, such as "We are the Red Apple Gang," for three sessions. Thirty-nine percent of all the literacy events in both classrooms were at the sentence level or above.

Table 1			
Reading/Writing Events in Two Kindergarten Classrooms			
Four Half-Day Sessions			
	Names/Words/Labels	Sentences/Continuous Text	
<u>Teacher A</u>			
Lesson 1	5	2	
Lesson 2	2	2	
Lesson 3	3	3	
Lesson 4	1	0	
Total	11	7	18
<u>Teacher B</u>			
Lesson 1	3	4	
Lesson 2	2	1	
Lesson 3	3	1	
Lesson 4	2	2	
Total	10	8	18

- 2) There were no student writing activites in either of the two classrooms other than children writing their names on papers.
- 3) For each teacher, the literacy events averaged approximately one-fifth of the children's classroom activities over the four days. (See Table 2.)
- 4) There was no evidence of grouping for reading ability. All instruction was done in large groups and followed the curriculum content required by the district.

After each videotaped session, the teacher was interviewed for approximately an hour. In these interviews the teacher and researcher reviewed the tapes and discussed

the rationales for the activities that were chosen and also the reading skills of the children. The district did not attempt to assess reading ability of the students before entrance to kindergarten. Children were tested for traditional readiness skills, but these tests involved no words or continuous text. Thus teachers had no information on the first day of school as to students' reading abilities and could not identify the reading levels of children entering their classes that fall.

Table 2			
Percentage of Reading/Writing Events in Two Kindergarten Classrooms Four Half-Day Sessions			
Half-day Sessions <u>2 1/2 hours</u>	No. of Reading/ <u>Writing Events</u>	No. of Total <u>Classroom Events</u>	% of Reading <u>Writing Events</u>
<u>Teacher A</u>			
Lesson 1	7	25	28%
Lesson 2	4	17	24%
Lesson 3	6	21	29%
Lesson 4	1	22	5%
Total	18	85	21%
<u>Teacher B</u>			
Lesson 1	7	27	26%
Lesson 2	3	19	16%
Lesson 3	4	23	17%
Lesson 4	4	23	17%
Total	18	92	20%

By the end of the first month of school, the two teachers were only able to *estimate* which children had reading skills and only in vague ways such as "I think _____ might be reading." Both teachers did individual student testing during that month; however, the tests were traditional readiness surveys involving knowledge of colors, numbers and letters, cutting ability, etc.

At the end of the first month of school, all students in Teacher A's and Teacher B's classes (N=101) were surveyed as to the number of words that they could write independently (Dowhower and Frager, 1988). Ten percent of the children could *write* and *spell* correctly 15 or more words as assessed by the *Test of Writing Vocabulary* (Clay, 1979). Another 15% could spell 10 to 14 words correctly. In other words, approximately one-quarter of the students could read to some extent.

Before drawing conclusions from this study, several *caveats* are in order. The two teachers in the study are excellent kindergarten teachers, highly regarded by parents and staff in the district. They each have many years of teaching experience. The classroom dilemmas described in the next section do not result from poor teaching, but from district policies, higher literacy levels of the entering students, perpetuation of an outdated view of readiness, and lack of a pre-first grade instructional model.

The findings suggest three conclusions: 1) the teachers are following a curriculum that exposes the children to very little print or the chance to interact with print; 2) many children may engage in reading and writing more often at home than at school; and 3) children's reading and writing skills are being virtually ignored in the first month of school. Those who already are emerging readers and writers are given the message that their reading and writing competence is not valued. There is little opportunity in the classroom to build on the wealth of language knowledge brought from home.

Early reading dilemmas

Several dilemmas are implicit in the parent and teacher comments presented at the beginning of this article and the findings in this study: tension between district policies and

children's needs; conflict between current readiness and emergent literacy positions; and a clash between two approaches to early reading instruction.

- **District policies vs. student needs**

The National Association for the Education of Young Children recently published a position statement on developmentally appropriate practices in early childhood emphasizing the importance of meeting the wide range of needs in the classroom. The statement notes that "it is the responsibility of the educational system to adjust to the developmental needs and levels of the children it services; children should not be expected to adapt to an *inappropriate system*" (Bredenkamp, 1986, p. 13). By requiring that all children be put through the same curriculum (as in the case of the teacher required to teach Alpha-Time), many children are being asked to adapt to an *inappropriate system* and teachers are being told by district administrators to choose content over students. Children are the losers in this choice, especially our early readers. Could it be that some children learn to read *in spite* of the school and its curriculum?

Connected with this dilemma is another. As we become a more literate society, our children will be exposed to many opportunities to develop reading and writing skills before entering kindergarten. Two decades ago, Durkin (1966), in her early reader studies suggested that about one percent of entering first graders could read. In 1980, according to a study by Tobin and Pikulski (1987) one percent of entering kindergarteners could read. Data from the study reported here suggest that one percent might be a conservative figure. Few kindergarten curriculums address the existence *or* the increasing number of early readers.

• **Readiness vs. emergent literacy**

A second dilemma is the conflict between traditional and more developmental/cognitive theories of early reading instruction. Some reading educators (Kline, 1988; Mason, 1984; Teale, 1982) believe that the traditional view of readiness, including the social, physical, and emotional maturational view, should be replaced with a more powerful developmental view that learning to read is a continuum from infancy to adulthood and that the concept of “readiness in reading” no longer makes sense. Advocates of this emergent literacy perspective suggest that children learn to read by reading and by being read to by good readers. Children do not sit around and get *ready* to read — just as they do not wait to get *ready* to talk. Typical readiness skills such as coloring, cutting, learning shapes, numbers, etc. do not facilitate reading as effectively as reading-specific tasks.

The theoretical rationale behind the building of print-rich classroom environments in which there is an abundance of writing and reading materials and literacy events is not something we have traditionally emphasized in training our kindergarten and preschool teachers. Potter (1986) suggests that the unfortunate famine of wide literacy experiences before first grade is based on the beliefs that literacy experiences do not occur before that time — a notion that is dramatically changing.

• **Formal vs. informal reading instruction**

There is at this time no prevailing instructional model for teaching reading in kindergarten. Because of this, teachers are caught in the dilemma of what to do with children who *are* reading. Often the first grade basal curriculum is moved down to kindergarten or, worse, readers have no opportunity to read.

Table 3
Summary of Early Reader Dilemmas and Their Resolutions

Dilemma: District policies vs. individual student needs

<u>Contradictions</u>	<u>Classroom Realities</u>	<u>Resolutions</u>
Schools should meet unique needs but teachers are required to ignore differences because of a set curriculum.	Teachers get little support to meet ER needs from the district. Skills and growth of ERs are ignored. ERs must adapt to an inappropriate system of instruction.	Early literacy workshops/courses need to be given to administrators. More formal and informal tests of reading and writing skills need to be given in kindergarten.

Dilemma: Traditional readiness vs. emergent literacy views

<u>Contradictions</u>	<u>Classroom Realities</u>	<u>Resolutions</u>
Teacher feels readiness skills (with little or no written language involved) are necessary before reading is learned. Yet some students who have not mastered them are reading.	Students do more reading and writing at home than at school. Competence is discounted and not cultivated at school.	Merge traditional readiness strengths and new evidence of how children learn to read into a workable theory for pre-first grade reading instruction.

Dilemma: Informal vs. formal instruction

<u>Contradictions</u>	<u>Classroom Realities</u>	<u>Resolutions</u>
Formal reading instruction is to be given in first grade yet many students enter kindergarten already reading and have had no formal instruction.	Kindergarten teachers use first grade reading programs or no reading instruction takes place. Many kindergarten teachers do not know what is appropriate instruction for ERs.	Early literacy workshops and courses on reading methodology and research need to be offered to preservice and inservice teachers.

Note: ERs = Early Readers

We can learn a lot about how to teach early readers from the research findings collected in the last few years. We have evidence that four- and five-year-old children know far more about reading and writing than we realize (Harste, *et al.*, 1984) and that informal approaches to reading work. We know from observations of early readers with no formal instruction (direct, systematic intervention and intentional teaching of skills) that they grow up in print-rich environments, they are read to by competent readers, they experience high interaction with these readers, they write, and they talk about reading (Clark, 1976; Durkin, 1966; Lass, 1982, 1983; Teale, 1978). More informal naturalistic ideas of instruction are beginning to filter into the kindergarten curriculum of schools, but the trend is not widespread.

In sum, teachers are bound by the constraints of their district curricula and lack of a comprehensive methodology in early reading. Fellow teachers and curricula encourage the old notion of pre-reading readiness skills, and see formal reading instruction as the only way reading can be learned. Teachers are not prepared to identify or teach early readers and their districts give them little help.

Resolutions

Table 3 contains a summary of dilemmas, associated classroom realities, and suggested solutions. Reading educators and researchers have clear challenges in resolving the dilemmas. First, we need to give early childhood teachers a comprehensive theoretical and instructional framework that addresses the early reading process and how it should be taught particularly in kindergarten and preschools. That framework needs to be grounded in research and observation of how children learn best. The growing number of research studies reported and journal articles published on

early reading and writing in the last few years is indicative of this dynamic process of change. We are witnessing and supporting the birth and evolution of the exciting notion of emergent literacy!

A second challenge is the retraining of administrators and teachers. Both district administrators and inservice teachers need to be brought up to date on current research, thinking, and ways to promote early literacy. Teachers need to learn viable and appropriate methods that promote literacy — possibly melding the best aspects of formal and informal instruction.

Finally, attention must be given to the kindergarten curriculum and to testing policies. School districts have the challenge of revising their kindergarten testing procedures to include evaluation of the children's reading and writing achievement. Curriculum supervisors, working together with teachers, need to develop a more appropriate curriculum for kindergarten children — one that builds on the literacy knowledge brought from home.

"Mom, I read a lot in school."

Exciting words to hear from a pre-first grader!

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With this issue, *Reading Horizons* has added a new feature -- "Expanding Horizons" -- to enable readers to share exciting teaching ideas with one another. Ideas for a parade of book reports, and a pilgrimage for writers, appear on pages 22 and 38.

Have you a suggestion to submit to "Expanding Horizons"? Send two typed copies of your idea, with a self-addressed stamped envelope, to: Editor, *Reading Horizons*, Reading Center & Clinic, Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo, MI, 49008.



Expository Text Structure and Student Learning

David Hayes

Upper elementary teachers may wonder why some of their students with no history of comprehension problems suddenly struggle with understanding their social studies, science and health texts. These teachers might correctly point to the more difficult concepts presented in these texts and to the more technical vocabulary that their students will now encounter. Yet these factors are only part of the problem that students face when they move from stories to content material. Upper elementary teachers need to understand that their students are meeting a new type of text, structurally different from the stories used in the basal readers and trade books that have comprised most of their students' prior reading experiences. Teachers can make their students' transition to this type of text smoother by guiding their interactions with the specific structural patterns of content texts. This article deals with the text patterns commonly found in social studies books.

It is through story that children first engage in the reading act. "Once upon a time," "the third time she came to the giant's castle," and "they lived happily ever after" are surface representations of the conventions of story of *narrative* structure. Stories follow a similar pattern: *a character in a situation* (Cinderella being abused by her stepmother), *an initiating event* which propels the story forward (the prince will hold a ball), *a series of events* (the fairy godmother's help, the meeting with the prince, the shoe-losing departure, the

search for the shoe's fit), and a *climax* (the shoe fits Cinderella's foot).

As children hear and begin to read stories, they come to internalize this sense of story structure (Applebee, 1976; Stein, 1979). Teachers know that they can make story structure more accessible to children by asking questions directly linked to the unfolding of a particular story. Once children have gained an expectation that any story they confront will develop in a predictable way, they can turn their attention to the events of the story being read and thus comprehend it. Although students will continue to meet narrative text for the rest of their literate lives, they will by sixth or seventh grade be expected to learn mainly from books which are not written in a narrative format. As children needed time to internalize the structure of story, so they will need time and instruction in internalizing the newer structures in which information will be communicated in their content books.

Expository text patterns

In fourth, fifth and sixth grade, children begin to learn about state, national, and world history through reading their social studies books. Historical information found in social studies textbooks is presented in a number of explanatory or expository patterns. Teachers who use social studies texts need to be able to identify the three most common patterns that their students will meet and to help their students become aware of these structures.

Historical events unfold in a pattern called *chronological* (or time order): First this happened, then this, followed by that. Chronological structure is similar to the familiar narrative (a series of events) but lacks its closed structure because

history is a never ending story. Embedded in this chronological structure is a second pattern called *cause-effect*: Because that happened, this followed. A third type of pattern is used when an issue crucial to the understanding of historical events is presented with a set of clarifying or supporting statements. This pattern is called *enumeration*.

An example of these three types of patterns can be found in the following excerpt from a popular fifth grade social studies text (Berg, 1979):

Lesson 3: Women Fight For Their Rights

Life for American women greatly changed with the growth of factories. Growing numbers of women took paying jobs. Some went to work in factories. A few went to work in offices. A large number began sewing clothes for money in their homes.

In looking for jobs, women found they were not allowed to do certain kinds of work. Most of the jobs that women could get paid low wages. None of them offered much hope for the future. A poor boy could hope to be a rich businessman when he grew up. But in the 1800's, a poor girl had no hopes like these. State laws worked against women. They said that if a woman married, her husband controlled all she earned.

Beginning in the 1840's, women formed groups to work for more rights. One woman, who wanted to be a printer, explained why in this way:

"We women did more than keep house, cook, sew, wash, spin and weave, and garden. Many of us had to earn money besides. We worked secretly, because everyone had the idea that men, not women, earned money, and that men alone supported the family. Most women accepted this as normal. But I do not believe that there was any community anywhere in which the souls of some women were not beating their wings in rebellion. I can say that I sat and sewed gloves. The few pennies I earned could never be mine. I wanted to work, but I wanted to choose my job and I wanted to collect my wages."

The women's groups grew much larger after the Civil War. As more and more women took paying jobs, they saw why women needed more rights. The groups especially wanted women to be able to vote. They believed that if women could vote, they would be able to get rid of some of the laws that hurt women.

Leaders like Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton led the efforts to get women the vote. They tried to get each state to change its voting laws. Women won the vote in Wyoming, Utah, Colorado, and Idaho before 1900. (Berg, Roger, 1979, "Lesson 3: Women fight for their rights," Scott, Foresman Social Studies, Fifth Grade, pp 265-266. © Scott, Foresman Publishing Co. Used by permission.)

This lesson focuses on women's changing position in 19th century America, a period of industrial expansion, and the information presents the unfolding of a series of historical events:

1. Life for American women greatly changed with the growth of factories.
2. In looking for jobs, women found they were not allowed to do certain kinds of work.
3. Beginning in the 1840's, women formed groups to work for more rights.
4. The women's groups grew much larger after the Civil War.
5. Leaders like Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton led the efforts to get women the vote.
6. Women won the vote in Wyoming, Utah, Colorado, and Idaho before 1900.

If we examine this chronological structure, we see that its pattern is similar to narrative:

character in situation: women in a changing America
initiating event: women are not allowed to do certain kinds of work

series of events: groups are formed, groups grow larger, efforts are made to win the vote

climax: women win vote in several states

Of course, no true climax is reached here because the issue of women's rights in the US is far from being resolved.

We can see that chronological structure basically taps the memory level of recall. (When did women's groups begin to grow larger? Who led the efforts to get women the vote?)

In looking for the second type of expository structure, the cause-effect pattern, we must integrate memory (what the text explicitly tells us) and interpretation (what we might logically infer from the text information and analyze from our own experiences, evaluating as we read). In the second paragraph we read, "In looking for jobs, women found they were not allowed to do certain kinds of work." This condition will cause some response from women. They might accept the situation as it is, or they might follow any of a number of paths to enter these job fields. They might get training to qualify for these jobs, might try to change the laws through the existing legislative system, or work for the right for women to vote so that they can directly exert an influence on the laws. Whatever the responses, we can view them as the effect of the condition. This is *cause-effect*. In this "evolving story," women chose to work for some more rights, including the right to vote.

Children need to be let in on this historical secret that is part of the way their history texts are written: historical events are a series of conditions and responses (causes and effects, initiating events and a series of response events leading to climax).

There are other cause-effect patterns within the text. Another occurs in the fifth paragraph: "They believed that if women could vote" (cause), "they would be able to get rid of some of the laws that hurt women" (effect).

Now the text, in the interest of space, will often leave out some of the details of these responses or effects. In the last paragraph, we read, "They tried to get each state to change its voting laws." Certainly, there is much more to the battle than this. In preparing the lesson teachers need to learn more about this battle. They should become familiar with children's books about this time period which they want to encourage their students to read.

The third type of expository text structure observed in these pages is *enumeration*. An issue crucial to the understanding of historical events is presented with a set of clarifying or supporting statements. In the first paragraph we read, "Life for American women greatly changed with the growth of factories." The rest of the paragraph describes, or enumerates, those changes.

Another example occurs in the second paragraph: "In looking for jobs women found they were not allowed to do certain kinds of work." Now here the rest of the paragraph leads us a bit astray. We would expect it to tell us the kinds of work women weren't allowed to do. Instead it clarifies or enumerates the condition of work itself (the jobs women obtained paid low wages with no hope for advancement, and state laws worked against change in this situation).

Students' understanding of text presented in an enumeration pattern means that their thinking must move beyond a literal recall of text data. In the second paragraph, for

example, we read, "In looking for jobs, women found they were not allowed to do certain kinds of work." As students read the clarifying paragraph, they'll need to consider what these conditions might mean for anyone so unjustly treated by relating the text to other experiences they've had. (What do people do when unjustly treated? How might one respond to this situation? What might one do to promote changes?)

A teaching pattern for expository text

Recent studies in expository text by Berkowitz (1986), Meyer, Brandt, and Bluth (1980), and Taylor (1980) all indicate that the awareness of a particular text structure positively influences students' learning of the material. The text lesson presented above may be taught to help students both understand the material and increase their awareness of the text patterns through an approach which is a modified Content Directed Reading-Thinking Activity. The DR-TA, first developed by Russell Stauffer (1969) and elaborated by Vacca and Vacca (1986), has been a major strategy in content instruction for the past 15 years. It is a prediction/verification reading activity which encourages students' thinking about a topic under study prior to, during, and after reading.

The teacher must first orient the students to this lesson by reviewing what they have learned about the period of history under study. Preceding lessons in this chapter dealt with the growth of big business, the coming of the industrial age and the forming of unions during nineteenth century America. This lesson (Lesson 3) deals with how these changes affected women and their roles during this time.

The first major statement in this lesson begins the first paragraph: "Life for American women greatly changed with

the growth of factories.” The teacher knows that the information in the paragraph that follows supports that statement (enumeration pattern). Thus, the teacher will want to ask a prediction question which draws attention to the specific changes communicated: “In what kinds of places do you think women worked?” The teacher then directs students to read the first paragraph to verify their predictions.

After the paragraph is read, the teacher asks the students to justify their predictions in light of what they have read. In many cases, the text may not address all of the students’ predictions and the teacher must be ready to direct attention to other sources of information. Further, the teacher takes the opportunity to point out that this paragraph gave more information about what its first sentence proposed. With experience, students will internalize how enumeration pattern structure works.

A second structure used in this lesson is an implied cause-effect pattern. The second paragraph deals with *cause*: “State laws contributed to the described unjust conditions.” The third paragraph relates *effect*: “Women formed groups to work for their rights.” Here the teacher will want to use the terms *cause* and *effect* in formulating a prediction question. “These unfair conditions supported by state laws *caused* women to react in some way. What *effect* do you think these conditions had on women’s actions? What do you think they did about these things?” In response, students may predict any number of things, from women just accepting this plight to their taking assertive action to correct the wrongs. Again, students will read the next two paragraphs and then discuss among themselves how their predictions matched what really happened.

The teacher continues in this predict/read/discuss format by dividing the text into its major points of information and asking prediction questions which are specifically linked to the expository pattern which has been identified. Students can make their own individual predictions or, for variety, they may be assigned to work with a study partner or small group to formulate predictions.

In this lesson the teacher has related the historical events through an overall *chronological* structure, with both *enumeration* and *cause-effect* patterns embedded within it. When students have completed reading and discussing this lesson, the teacher will wish them to have a time-order concept of the sequence of events. If, in the preparation state, the teacher has recognized the narrative-like chronology of events, a series of review questions may be asked which will reinforce this pattern for students, for example:

- “Describe how life changed for women during the period of the growth of factories.” (More women entered the work force.)
- “What conditions did women face as they entered the job force?” (Unfair labor practices were supported by state laws.)
- “What did women do as a consequence of these conditions?” (They formed groups to work for their rights.)
- “What was a major goal of these larger groups of women?” (winning the vote)
- “When and where did women first successfully gain the vote?” (Wyoming, Colorado, Utah and Idaho — before 1900)

Over time, children will come to internalize how expository text works to communicate its information. They will come to expect supporting or clarifying statements in enumeration paragraphs; they'll be able to predict possible cause-effect relationships, and they'll follow the chronological flow of any

series of historical events. Teachers can guide students toward that goal through questions that help students actively interact with expository text. Expository writing is not as familiar to children as is narrative writing, but teachers can help their students become sensitive to its patterns and learn from it efficiently.

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Rereading to Enhance Text Understanding in the Secondary Classroom

Samuel A. Perez

*One cannot read a book: one can only reread it.
A good reader, a major reader, an active and creative reader
is a rereader. Vladimir Nabokov*

Young elementary school children, and especially poor readers, are often given the opportunity to read and reread easy material for the purpose of increasing their reading fluency. This practice is designed to give them the feeling of moving smoothly through text, instead of continuing their habit of labored, word-by-word reading. For teachers this is simply a matter of selecting easier-to-read texts and giving children the chance to develop reading habits more like those of older, better readers. In fact, an instructional procedure, the method of repeated readings, has been developed to promote reading fluency (Samuels, 1979). In the method of repeated readings, children read a short, meaningful passage several times until they can read it fluently. They then move on to a new passage. This procedure enables readers to experience ease in reading and improve their word identification ability. Each time children reread the text, they find it easier and easier to recognize the words. Because little attention is then required for word identification, more attention can be devoted to comprehension. Therefore, Samuels argues, repeated readings can also lead to improved comprehension of text.

But do older, secondary school students who do not have a reading fluency problem ever engage in rereading? Schallert and Tierney (1982) believe that rereading is an uncommon experience in most classrooms. Their observations of secondary students reveal that most readers view reading competency as the ability to read rapidly a single text once with maximum recall. As Tierney and Pearson (1983) state:

It seems that students rarely pause to reflect on their ideas or to judge the quality of their developing interpretations. Nor do they often reread a text either from the same or different perspective. In fact, to suggest that a reader should approach text as a writer who crafts an understanding across several drafts, who pauses, rethinks, and revises, is almost contrary to the well established goals readers proclaim for themselves (e.g., that efficient reading is equivalent to maximum recall based upon a single fast reading). (p. 577)

The value of rereading

If most secondary students do not engage in rereading, and their teachers do not encourage the practice, should this be the case? Several writers and educators believe that rereading should be an integral part of instructional practice, and student behavior, for several reasons. The novelist Vladimir Nabokov (1980) writes the following about the necessity for rereading:

When we read a book for the first time the very process of laboriously moving our eyes from left to right, line after line, page after page, this complicated physical work upon the book, the very process of learning in terms of space and time what the book is about, this stands between us and artistic appreciation. When we look at a painting we do not have to move our eyes in a special way even if, as in a book, the picture contains elements of depth and development. The element of time does not readily enter in a first contact with a painting. In reading a book, we must have time to acquaint ourselves with it. We have no physical organ (as we have one in regard to the eye in a painting) that takes in the whole

picture and then can enjoy the details. But at a second, or third, or fourth reading we do, in a sense, behave toward a book as we do toward a painting. (p. 62)

Another argument for rereading is provided by Broyard (1985) when he writes how during a first reading of a book we are often distracted by pleasure, excitement or curiosity. The book may actually so seize us that we rush through it in what he refers to as a "kind of delirium." If we only read a book once, we may only remember the main outline of the work. The beautiful sentences and heartbreaking scenes may be either missed or forgotten, not necessarily because we are careless readers but because a book, especially a good or great book, can often be a very subtle, intricate and demanding experience.

New insights through rereading

Perhaps the strongest case for rereading made by educators comes from Tierney and Pearson (1983). They believe that readers are more likely to gain new insights into a variety of perspectives, or in their words: "try out different alignments or stances" as they read. Eleanor Gibson's description of how she approaches the work of Jane Austen provides an example of the different stances a reader may take toward a text:

Her novels are not for airport reading. They are for reading over and over, savoring every phrase, memorizing the best of them, and setting an even deeper understanding of Jane's "sense of human comedy"... As I read the book for perhaps the twenty-fifth time, I consider what point she is trying to make in the similarities and differences between the characters ...I want to discover for myself what this sensitive and perceptive individual is trying to tell me. Sometimes I only want to sink back and enjoy it and laugh myself. (Gibson & Levin, 1975, 458-460)

In order to read in this way, students must take the time to

rethink, reexamine, and review what they read. And this will not happen during a single reading; rather it occurs only after engaging in rereading the text several times.

Tierney and Pearson also suggest that we think of a reader as someone who revises in the same way that a writer is a reviser. They consider revising as important to reading as it is to writing. Students are only able to construct models of meaning for a text if they approach the text with the same degree of deliberation and reflection that writers engage in when they revise a text. Readers should examine their developing interpretations and view the models of meaning they build as draft-like in nature, subject to revision that emerges through subsequent rereading.

Encouraging rereading

David Wyatt (1986), in describing the draft-like quality of our interpretations of a text, notes that we take what we need from what we read, and what we need changes. The meaning of a text should be located less in a particular interpretation than in the history of our return to it. Wyatt is making a point about what he refers to as the “unfixedness” of the reader and the reader’s interpretation which, in Shakespeare’s words, “alters when it alteration finds.” The alteration found is alteration of the reader, and it has the effect of conditioning any interpretation a book has for a reader. As readers, we are only finished reading a book when we stop second-guessing it, and that means that we are probably never finished with it.

Once teachers accept the value of rereading, and students are convinced that they should engage in rereading, how can teachers encourage rereading? Tierney and Pearson (1983) remind us that we should not assume that merely allowing time for rethinking, reexamining, reviewing or rereading will

guarantee that students will revise their readings. Students should receive instructional guidance when they are asked to go through a text a second, third, or fourth time. They need to be given reasons for another reading of a text, such as to get a general feel for the topic, to find specific information, to appreciate the author's use of language or imagery, or to read from another point of view or perspective. And students need the support and feedback that can only come from having an opportunity to share and discuss their different interpretations of the text with thoughtful teachers and interested peers.

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Ending the Great Debate in Reading Instruction

Jon Shapiro
James Riley

For decades, reading educators have put forth various definitions of reading and theories related to processes which occur during the reading act. Classroom teachers must understand what reading is if they are to teach effectively, yet it is easy for confusion to set in because of conflicting views of the reading act. Depending upon which speaker is heard, or which article is read, or in which professor's class they were enrolled, teachers may be exposed to many differing views of reading.

The confusion which can arise as a result of the heavily promulgated and conflicting views of the reading process may result in the desire to throw up one's hands and hope that a particular program ensures that children will become proficient readers. However, we believe that teachers must know more than their programs in order to become effective teachers of reading. Teachers need to recognize that an overemphasis on any one view of the reading process is likely to produce problem readers (Riley and Shapiro, 1987). Teachers should also be familiar with the characteristics of readers who are proficient so that they may determine which areas of difficulty their problem readers are encountering (Shapiro and Riley, 1989).

Our ability to analyze what takes place during the reading process is severely hampered because the reading act

involves complex functioning of the human mind (Huey, 1908). Over the past two centuries educators have tried to define the process and their efforts have continued to fuel the Great Debate over various instructional methodologies (Chall, 1983) and cause teachers to feel "caught betwixt and between" the conflicting views (Mosenthal, 1989).

This Great Debate has usually pitted proponents of a "code-breaking" emphasis point of view against those who believe that meaning should receive instructional emphasis from the very beginning of the schooling process. We have characterized the first view as data-driven or text-driven because the focus of instruction falls on the visible surface structure of the passage. There have been two branches of this school of thought. In the first, reading is seen merely as the pronunciation of words. In the second, the identification of words and their meaning are of paramount importance.

Examples of this school of thought can be found in the work of a synthetic phonics advocate, Rudolph Flesch, who defined reading as "...getting meaning from certain combinations of letters" (1981). Advocates of what are known as "subskill" theories also contend that reading is a process of mastering small units of printed data before integrating them into larger units (Laberge and Samuels, 1974). Whether the unit of instruction is a letter or word, these definitions are reflected in instruction which initially and rigorously emphasizes the data on the page rather than the meaning of the passage.

Holistic definitions of the reading process, on the other hand, maintain that reading is but one of the language arts and therefore should not be taught in isolation from its counterparts. Holistic definitions emphasize that readers

must bring concepts to written material if they are to comprehend the material. That is, readers utilize deep structure, or their personal knowledge, to understand surface structure, or the words (Smith, 1982a). We have labelled this view as concept-driven reading.

Concept-driven views of the reading process are most clearly represented by psycholinguistic and whole-language perspectives of reading instruction (Goodman, 1976; Harste, Woodward and Burke, 1984). Proponents contend that data-driven instructional strategies can distract readers from actually reading. Frank Smith (1982a) argued that beginning readers should not memorize letter names, "...phonic rules, or large lists of words all of which are... taken care of in the course of learning to read, and little of which will make sense to a child without some experience of reading" (p.179). Kenneth Goodman (1976) maintained that proficient readers utilize their prior knowledge to reconstruct an author's message; thus the processing of print begins with hypotheses or predictions about meaning rather than with small units of language -- the letter and word.

A modest proposal to end the Great Debate

We propose that it is time to end the Great Debate between the proponents of data-driven approaches and the proponents of concept-driven approaches. The demise of this debate is advocated for two major reasons. First, neither group perceives the negative effects of overemphasizing one aspect of reading. Children may acquire strategies as a function of instruction that have a negative impact on reading performance (Dank, 1977; DeFord, 1981; Rasinski and DeFord, 1988). The proponents of data-driven approaches may tend to focus on the short term improvements in word recognition that are produced by data-emphasis programs. While

it is true that such programs may produce impressive gains in some children, these gains may be at the expense of the development of effective reader strategies aimed at comprehension (Riley and Shapiro, 1987).

For example, one of the authors recently conducted an assessment of the reading performance of an 8-year-old boy. His performance on the pronunciation of isolated words indicated that he could pronounce 80 percent of the words on a second-grade level word list. In addition, his miscues (words misread or omitted while reading connected text) placed him at approximately the second-grade level in oral reading. But his oral reading was laborious. He rarely self-corrected any of his miscues.

Typical of his decoding strategy was his approach to the following portion of text: "...without his flower shop, Tony would be unhappy..." (Bader, 1983). He read, "...ou ...out ...ou ...out ...wa ...wa ...wa ...his fl ...floor ...To ...Tommy ...would be unhappy." He was only able to pronounce correctly the word *his* and the phrase *would be unhappy*.

For this reader, reading appears to be a ritual of attempting to pronounce words — a ritual devoid of meaning. During his first-grade experience, he had been taught with an intensified phonics program popular in the school district. A part of this particular program provides extensive practice in writing and pronouncing the ending parts of words first. Then the reader is asked to attach the first part of the word to the appropriate word ending. The program teaches the necessity of sounding out every letter sound according to the corresponding rule. Because of the difficulties which this student was having, the school's prescription was to place him back in this program to make up the skills in which he was deficient!

In reality, his application of acquired phonics knowledge is quite skilled as seen from the brief example provided above. Almost all of his original miscues were phonic approximations even though his miscues do not make sense within the context of the passage. One might reflect that his reading performance is a result of an overemphasis on data-processing and a lack of emphasis on meaning or concept processing.

This interpretation was partially confirmed through diagnostic teaching. As a part of the instructional program, he was guided to ask "Does it make sense?" whenever he produced a miscue. With the change of focus of the reading lesson to producing meaningful responses, this student began to self-correct his miscues spontaneously by supplying words that made sense within the context of the passages he read.

The proponents of concept-driven approaches, or those who advocate an emphasis on meaning, may tend to focus on short term improvements in reading attitudes and the aesthetic quality of student reading behaviors. Such programs may actually mask readers' deficiencies. This overemphasis may also mask deficiencies in the school program. For example, one new first-grade teacher was recently criticized by some of her colleagues for producing "happy creative children who can't read." The colleagues were the second grade teachers in her building who apparently perceived many of her students to be non-readers.

The first grade teacher had labored very hard to create a classroom in which students were involved in creative writing, chart stories, and reading and listening to children's literature. She believed that immersion in a language and concept-rich environment would produce gifted and literate children.

Unfortunately, her students received no instruction in the application of decoding skills. While the stories they dictated were creative and interesting, the children lacked the strategies which would have helped them engage in accurate data-processing in order to comprehend what they were reading.

One of her students read "...without his flower shop, Tony would be unhappy..." as "...without his warm coat, Tony would be unhappy..." Another part of the story had mentioned "snow;" the reader apparently made a meaningful connection but one which was an inaccurate representation of the text. The second grade teachers were able to supply evidence that indicated that this approach to reading was typical of many of the other students who had received instruction in the first grade teacher's classroom. One might speculate that students' inaccurate representation of the meaning of printed text was a result of the overemphasis on concept processing.

Despite the difficulties produced for these students by the overemphasis on a single aspect of the reading process, neither of the two teachers was aware of the negative effects of this overemphasis because the effects did not appear until after the children had left their respective first-grade classrooms — when they encountered instructional expectations which differed from their initial experiences.

The second major reason for our proposal to end the Great Debate relates to the lack of conclusive evidence supportive of either of the opposing positions in the debate (Stanovich, 1980). Neither group of proponents has definitive evidence that their approach produces proficient readers in the long term, readers who comprehend what they read. Actually, there is simply no way to collect empirical evidence that

proves the efficacy of either approach over a long period of time. Attempts to do this, such as the massive First Grade Reading Studies during the 1960's (Bond and Dykstra, 1967), have not yielded support for any particular approach. Most readers are exposed to many programs and approaches throughout their school careers. Typically, most of the students with whom we come into contact have attended more than one school in the first three years of their school life or they have received instruction in more than one program.

Even in those programs which purportedly are based on one philosophical approach, there are often elements of the opposing philosophy. For example, in one of the basal programs which purportedly emphasizes a synthetic phonics approach (emphasizing the sounding out of individual letter sounds), there are as many memory words presented in the introductory portion of story reading as there are in other basal programs.

The potential for undesirable long term consequences for the reader is the foundation for our call to reassess the utility of the Great Debate. We see approximately the same percentages of reading problems arising regardless of the approach taken, and therefore we propose that the proponents of opposing points of view end their Great Debate. We further propose that proponents in both camps consider two major principles and their related minor principles:

1. Basic characteristics of proficient readers can be identified.

- a. They can apply their prior knowledge to the printed page — they can engage in effective concept processing (Duffy, Roehler and Mason, 1984; Meyer, Brandt and Bluth. 1980; Vernon, 1971).

b. They can apply their knowledge of language structure, including the phonic, syntactic, semantic cueing systems, and they can engage in effective data processing (Adams, 1980; Goodman, 1976; Gough, 1972; Smith, 1982a; Vernon, 1971).

c. They monitor their own reading; they can adjust their reading strategies when they do not comprehend (Brown, 1978; Garner and Kraus, 1982).

d. They can adjust their reading strategies to the demands of a variety of situations and a diversity of text (Riley and Shapiro, 1987; Vacca and Vacca, 1986).

e. They possess a "cognitive clarity" about what reading is (Bobrow and Norman, 1975; Downing, 1984).

f. They learn reading and comprehension strategies by applying them in reading which, in turn, encourages them to read more (Stauffer, 1975).

2. Basic principles of effective reading instruction should be based on the characteristics of proficient readers and such instruction should:

a. present reading strategies in a meaningful context (Harste, *et al.*, 1984; Stauffer, 1975);

b. provide students with a variety of strategies for reconstructing a representation of the message of the author (Duffy, *et al.*, 1984; McNeil, 1984; Smith, 1982a);

c. provide instruction that links reading and writing (Graves, 1983; Harste, *et al.*, 1984; Shanahan, 1984, 1988; Smith, 1982b; Stauffer, 1975);

d. provide opportunities for readers to enjoy reading without direct skill instruction (Fox and Allen, 1983; Lamme, 1981);

e. provide direct instruction in decoding skills when such instruction is aimed at improving comprehension (Leu and Kinzer, 1987; Spache and Spache, 1986);

f. provide opportunities to apply strategies in a variety of situations including independent reading (Richek, List and Lerner, 1983);

g. be grounded in the teacher's ability to understand reading through the eyes and mind of the child (Harste, *et al.*, 1984; Tovey and Kerber, 1986).

It is evident from these principles that reading is essentially a communication process between the writer and the reader, albeit an imperfect one. It must be noted, however, that the research and literature underlying these basic principles are not applicable in all situations. Research into processes of reading will never prove the absolute truth relative to any principles or principle. Research can only suggest the strong likelihood of the utility of principles. However, adhering to these principles may avoid too narrow an approach to reading instruction. Consciously ignoring specific principles may reflect the biases of the proponent more than the conclusions in the body of literature.

An adherence to these principles will allow an end to the Great Debate. As those responsible for developing literacy, we must be aware of the impact of instructional decisions on producing mind-sets, in our students, about how reading occurs. Data-driven techniques, which do not encourage readers to utilize their own knowledge, can produce readers so intent upon decoding that comprehension does not occur or is incomplete. Concept-driven techniques which encourage readers to guess, without using their knowledge of language structure to minimize alternatives, can produce readers who cannot read independently if prior knowledge is not sufficient to reconstruct the author's message. Moreover, failure to provide the environment where students gain a sense of the multiplicity of strategies and the need to match

these strategies with the situational context will impede reading development for some readers. Adherence to the principles we have listed will prevent the development of inaccurate perceptions which lead to biased, distorted styles of processing text, which in turn leads to faulty comprehension and ultimately to reading difficulties.

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