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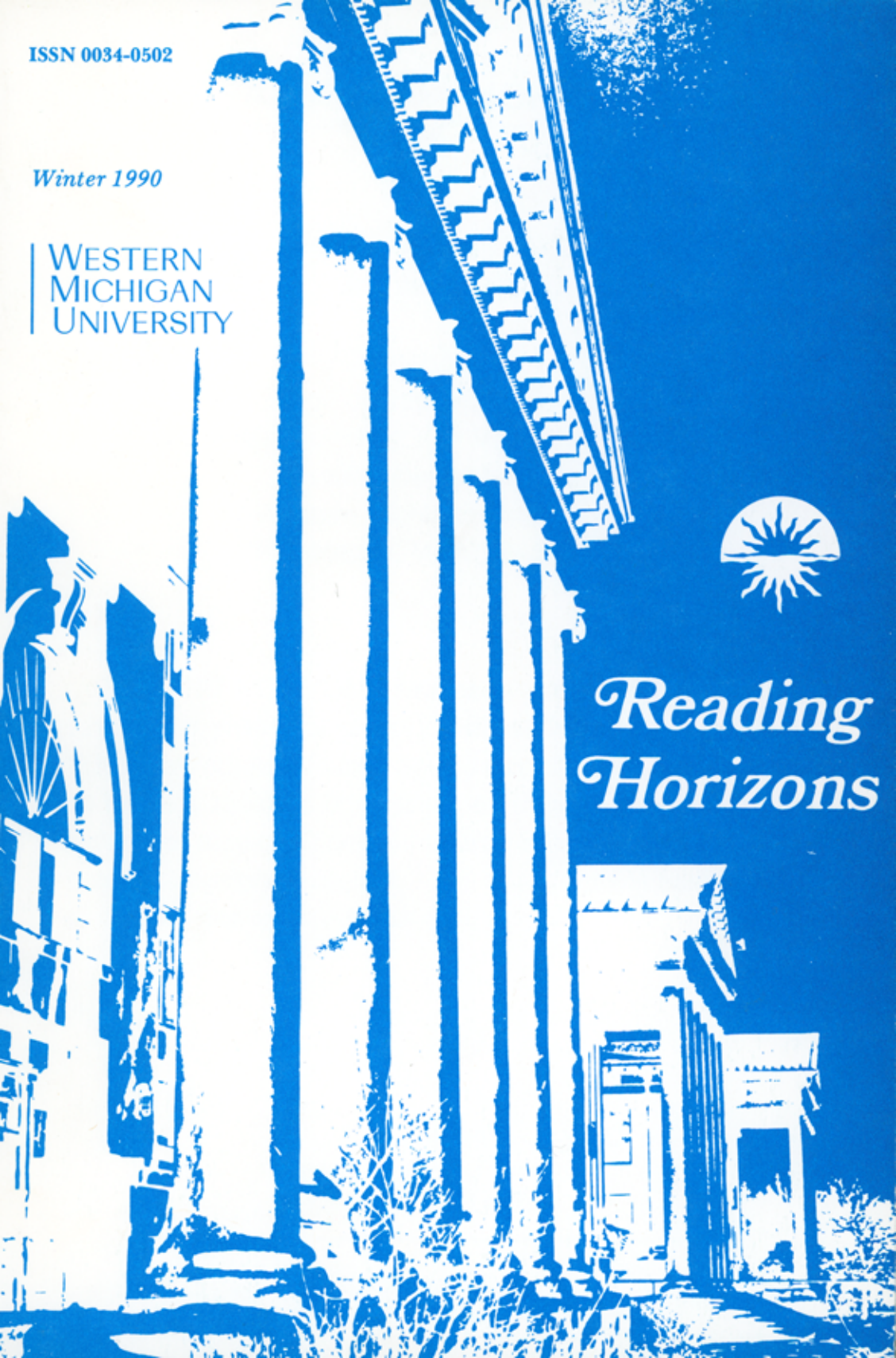
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Kalamazoo, Michigan 49008

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A Whole Language Flight Plan: An Interview with Three Teachers

**Priscilla L. Griffith
Janell Klesius**

Implementation of a whole language program is many times a solo flight for a teacher. In preparation for a flight the pilot (teacher) must be aware of obstacles that may be encountered and must have a vision of the intended destination. This knowledge will enable the pilot to chart a safer course and prepare for any turbulence en route, thus increasing the chances for a successful journey.

The purpose of this descriptive study was to provide teachers who are planning to implement a whole language program with some suggestions for a flight plan. We interviewed three whole language teachers to collect the information. Specifically, the following areas were the focus of the interviews: a) support for the whole language program, b) decisions about curriculum and evaluation, c) development of vocabulary and comprehension, d) strengths and weaknesses of whole language, and e) preparation for whole language instruction.

Background information

The three teachers selected to participate were implementing whole language programs at kindergarten, first, and third grade level in three central Florida counties. They were selected as participants because they adhered to the whole

language philosophy as exhibited by their instructional program, they represented a range in years of experience teaching whole language (one, two, and four), and they worked with children from varying socioeconomic and ethnic backgrounds.

Betty was a first grade teacher of low to middle socioeconomic status (SES) children. After learning about whole language at a state leadership conference on reading, she initiated a whole language program at her school. It subsequently became part of a pilot study for her county. While Betty had integrated literature into her reading program during previous years, this was the first year that she had not been required to use a basal reading series. Betty had 13 years of teaching experience.

Alice taught kindergarten children from minority and low SES homes. A number of the children's parents did not read English and all of the children in her class were on free or reduced-price lunches. This was Alice's fourth year as a teacher and as a whole language teacher.

Carol taught third grade and in contrast to Alice's class, not any of her students were eligible for free-or reduced-price lunches. This was Carol's seventh year in the same school and her second year as a whole language teacher. She had a total of 13 years teaching experience. She taught language arts/reading to her homeroom class, but math, social studies, and science were departmentalized. Carol taught social studies.

Support for the whole language program

- *How did you get the approval of your principal to implement a whole language program?*

During my second year of teaching I taught first grade level, and my principal supported my decision to teach without basals. Even though it went well, she was hesitant at the beginning of the year to just let me go. She came in a lot; I gave her articles to read and she took a university reading course. My current principal was formerly the assistant principal at that school, and he hired me as a kindergarten teacher because of my whole language program. *Alice*

I came when the school opened seven years ago, and my principal has gained respect for me as a teacher. I think before you can do something out of the ordinary you have to prove excellence in the ordinary to get credibility. *Carol*

- *What kind of support has your principal given you?*

He's supportive about anything I want to do as far as attending workshops and conferences. He is complimentary of my program. *Alice*

My principal has been over to see the program, talks to the children, and listens to them read. Also, during a parent meeting she commended my work in reading. *Carol*

I have been bothered by the fact that the principal, who in previous years was frequently in and out of my classroom, didn't come in this year until he came to evaluate me in February. I have wanted his reaction to the program, but he just stayed away. *Betty*

- *What difficulties have you encountered implementing a whole language program?*

As a kindergarten teacher I implemented a whole language program the first year I taught. The principal thought I was doing things that kindergarten children were not ready to do.

I persisted all year and tried to educate him, but it wasn't accepted. Finally, I decided to interview for another position.
Alice

I've had some criticism from peers, because I was not teaching skills. *Carol*

Lack of materials has been my biggest problem. I only had basal materials and language textbooks, no big books, or multiple copies of children's literature. *Betty*

Decisions about curriculum and evaluation

- *Does your school district have a set of basic skills that a student must master before being promoted? If so, how do you teach those skills?*

I have it in my head, all the skills. Just as I know my children, I know what I'm accountable for, so I can do a lot of spontaneous teaching. Teachable moments are where I "plug in" skills. When I taught my first grade my children's standardized tests performance was as good or better than the performance of children in the traditional classes. *Alice*

I have included skill development in the natural course of writing or reading. The knowledge seems to stick with the children better now than it ever did before. We just worked on question sentences, because a story we were reading lent itself to writing questions. *Betty*

As a result of the peer criticism, I have given the basal reading level tests all year. All my children have passed. I'm not concerned about their performance on standardized tests. I don't have their tests results yet, but I have confidence that the children will do well. *Carol*

How do you decide which units to include in your program?

I reviewed the county objectives in social studies and science and then planned units to cover those objectives. For example, a number of objectives dealt with plants, so I planned a unit on plants incorporating language arts objectives and children's literature. *Betty*

When I choose themes, I take into consideration the children's prior experiences and the materials that I have available. I select themes that are broad, so the children can become involved in the planning activities. Children's interests are wide and varied; often we have a theme and we also have mini-themes that small groups work on cooperatively within the class. *Alice*

This year I have based my themes on literature and I've also made an effort to integrate literature with social studies units. *Carol*

• *How do you determine students' grades?*

It's very subjective, but I must have numerical grades. The children know when I am going to grade them because I tell them, "I want you to think about your language skills; I'm going to take a language grade today." I'd rather not have to grade children. But, I don't think we're going to see that in reality, so I do what I have to do. *Carol*

Development of vocabulary and comprehension

• *How do you develop new vocabulary?*

We learn new vocabulary through children's literature, big books, and units. We studied different environments, not just farms or seasons, but wild and nocturnal animals. I try to create situations that expose my children to new words. *Alice*

We've done a number of book innovations. As we plan the innovation, we discuss the new nouns or verbs we will use in our story. Students write to each other, to me, and to story-book characters. I think their vocabulary is enhanced with our dialogue journals. The wonderful thing is that I know they "own the vocabulary," because it is included in their writing. In a unit approach, the number of words they are exposed to is much greater than when I used basal readers. *Betty*

- *How do you handle comprehension instruction?*

Comprehension is constantly going on in a whole language classroom. The children transfer story meanings onto paper with drawings that tell the sequence of events. They role play. Each time a story is presented to them in a different way, their understanding increases. *Alice*

My children do book talks; I conference with them about their books; and they include in their dialogue journals the setting, plot, and characters of the book they are reading. I teach comprehension strategies such as Question-Answer Relationships and ReQuest in social studies. *Carol*

Sometimes my students prepare a mural of a literature story they have read in a small group. In planning the mural, they must retell the story to determine how to depict the events. Frequently, they write about stories they have read. Sometimes they retell the story by drawing and writing answers to story grammar questions: Who? Where? What was the problem? How was it solved? *Betty*

Strengths and weaknesses of whole language

- *What specific strengths do you see in your program compared to more traditional methods of teaching reading and the other language arts?*

The children learn what reading is about and that we read for different reasons. Every child is a winner. Children succeed at their own level without any stress. They know there is a purpose for coming to school. Their purpose right now is to learn about the jungle — we're reading and writing about wild animals. This week they're "turned on" to learning about hippos. In whole language classrooms the children feel like they're learning for themselves more than for a grade or to get their good work put up under a smiley face. *Alice*

My students' attitudes about reading, writing, and school in general are different. Their enthusiasm for writing is wonderful. They don't feel like failures in first grade. *Betty*

I've had no criticism from parents. I believe the reason is because their children are reading and writing. The children don't get upset when they select a book that is too hard; they just take it back and get another. I think it eliminates the stereotyping of some as slow readers. If some children finish an activity that may take the others longer, they automatically take out a book and start to read. They read between math problems, and the science teacher has said that they read between science activities. *Carol*

• *What do you see as potential weaknesses of a whole language program?*

Weaknesses could result if teachers were not using materials, managing time, or organizing the classroom well. The children need to become active participants, and to master their own language in order to want to come to school and learn all that they would like to learn. *Alice*

I don't have the security of knowing that I have taught every skill the children are going to be required to know. At the

beginning of the year, I found a child who told me he had read a book, but when I conferenced with him, I could tell he hadn't read it. I thought, "Oh gosh, maybe this really isn't going to work." I had to find ways to overcome that, so I had a sixth grader partner read with him. They took turns reading to each other. They did that for about two months, and gradually he became able to read by himself. *Carol*

I believe it requires more time for planning; however, I'm not spending as much time grading papers. In many ways it is a different use of my time. Instead of grading, I spend time locating appealing literature for the units I am planning. *Betty*

Preparation for whole language instruction

• *How did you learn to implement a whole language program?*

My undergraduate program in early childhood was based on whole language and the writing process. At a pilot school, we saw it put in practice while we were learning the theory. *Alice*

I worked with a university consultant, our reading supervisor, and two reading specialists in the county to develop a literature-based reading program. Also, I had taken a children's literature class at the master's degree level and became excited about using literature with children. *Carol*

• *How would you recommend an individual go about preparing to be a whole language teacher?*

Professional reading and going to workshops are helpful if a teacher is not in the position to study at a university. Mostly, I would say learning from peers and reading, reading, reading — educational journals with articles about whole language, literacy, and the writing process. *Alice*

I think your appetite is whetted by attending workshops or conferences on whole language. Avail yourself of information on different ways children learn to read. *Carol*

• *What suggestions, cautions, and warnings do you have for a teacher just beginning a whole language program?*

A teacher must know the curriculum, as well as know the children: their background, prior experiences, reading levels, and strengths. Know the philosophy of whole language and be familiar with child development. You will be asked to explain your program to peers, administrators, and parents. Start off slowly, don't get in over your head, and continue to learn while you implement new ideas and new activities. I would caution against believing that whole language is the answer to all that is wrong in education, and by all means, don't believe that whole language works for every child or for every teacher. You have to find your own niche, organize, and manage to fit your style of teaching, but know the basic foundations of whole language. *Alice*

Record keeping is important. If your program is criticized, you must be able to show in black and white that the children are learning. I also think you must have some training. You can't diagnose if you don't know what you're looking for, and you can't organize if you don't know what you need to organize. *Carol*

Conclusions

After interviewing these teachers we concluded they have a number of characteristics in common. First, they are all learners themselves. They read professional literature and children's literature, they attend workshops and conferences, and they enroll in university courses to stay current. Second, they believe that it is important to model reading and writing.

For example, Carol said, "I read while they're reading and on Fridays during sustained silent reading, I lie on the floor and read with them. At the beginning of the year, my husband came in and read the newspaper in a bathtub located in our class library (clothed, of course)." Third, these teachers are risk-takers. Initially, two of the three were the only teachers in the school implementing a whole language program. Furthermore, they create a classroom environment that is conducive to risk-taking. Fourth, they are in charge of the curriculum planning in their classroom. They do not depend on teachers' manuals to guide their instruction. Moreover, it was apparent all three were capable of assuming that responsibility. For example, Alice said, "I have it in my head, all the skills." Fifth, all three, through the use of children's literature and their own enthusiasm for learning, instilled within their students a love for reading, writing, and learning.

These teachers were test pilots in their school districts. They were, at times, blown a little off course. But before beginning their journey they knew they would encounter storms and the sky wouldn't always be friendly. They have now found a safe spot to land but will continue to explore their new environment.

Priscilla L. Griffith and Janell Klesius are faculty members in the Department of Education at the University of South Florida in Tampa, Florida.

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A Holistic Reading and Language Arts Approach for the Intermediate Grades

**Susan P. Homan
Herbert G. Karl
Vilma Vega
Doretha Edgecomb**

The recent push to use a whole language approach in the classroom has generally focused on the primary grade level. However, the integrated reading/language arts model described in this article was designed to meet the needs of Chapter I sixth grade students. The program provides for the integration of reading with the other language arts: speaking, writing, and listening. One of the basic tenets of this model is that children learn best by actively participating in language activities, not just reading about language skills. The IMTC (Integrated Model for Teaching and Conferencing in Reading/Language Arts) was developed specifically for use with Chapter I students; however the heart of the model, activities and patterns that successfully integrate reading with the other language arts, has ramifications for all classrooms.

Several conditions were taken into account before the program was designed. The first set of conditions included:

- the observation that the students enrolled in the program would be those whose past achievements in reading and language arts had been minimal at best;
- the realization that many of the students came from low income, sometimes single parent, families.

It was further presumed that such conditions tend to create other problems. Consistently poor achievement, for example, reduces the motivation of students to try harder. Conditions of poverty are likely to be associated with nutritional and general health problems, as well as feelings of insecurity on the part of the children.

There were other conditions considered by the program developers. Among these were (a) the training and commitment of the Chapter I teachers; (b) the pupil-teacher ratios for the reading/language arts classes; (c) the availability of teacher aides; (d) patterns of scheduling within the target schools; and (e) the availability and use of materials and instructional media such as textbooks, TV cameras and recorders, and personal computers.

The five day sequence

A unique feature of the Integrated Model for Teaching and Conferencing in Reading/Language Arts (IMTC) is its organizational structure — a structure built around certain activities which recur each week. While this arrangement may appear rigid, in practice quite the reverse appears to be the case — insofar, at least, as the results of a recent pilot study indicate. In point of fact, the five-day sequence allows for a great variety of individual activities within the weekly pattern. The sequence, which is presented graphically below, can be summarized as follows:

- Day 1: Reading Focus - pre-reading activities
Writing Focus - pre-writing activities
- Day 2: Reading Focus - silent and oral reading
Writing Focus - drafting/informal conferencing
- Day 3: Reading Focus - silent and oral reading
Reading Aloud - literature selection read aloud by teacher

- Day 4: Reading Focus - silent and oral reading
Oral Language/Related art Activities -
dramatic & art activities designed to extend and develop reading/writing abilities.
- Day 5: Individual Conferences - pre-scheduled
“tutorials” designed to focus on reading
and writing matters which are unique to
individual students

The reasoning behind the five-day sequence began with the belief that an approach was needed which would restore the target students' self-confidence — the kind of self-confidence capable of reversing a pattern of low achievement. It was felt that each student needed to see a pattern and purpose for daily learning tasks. The five-day sequence, by providing a sense of what to expect, was intended to create such a pattern.

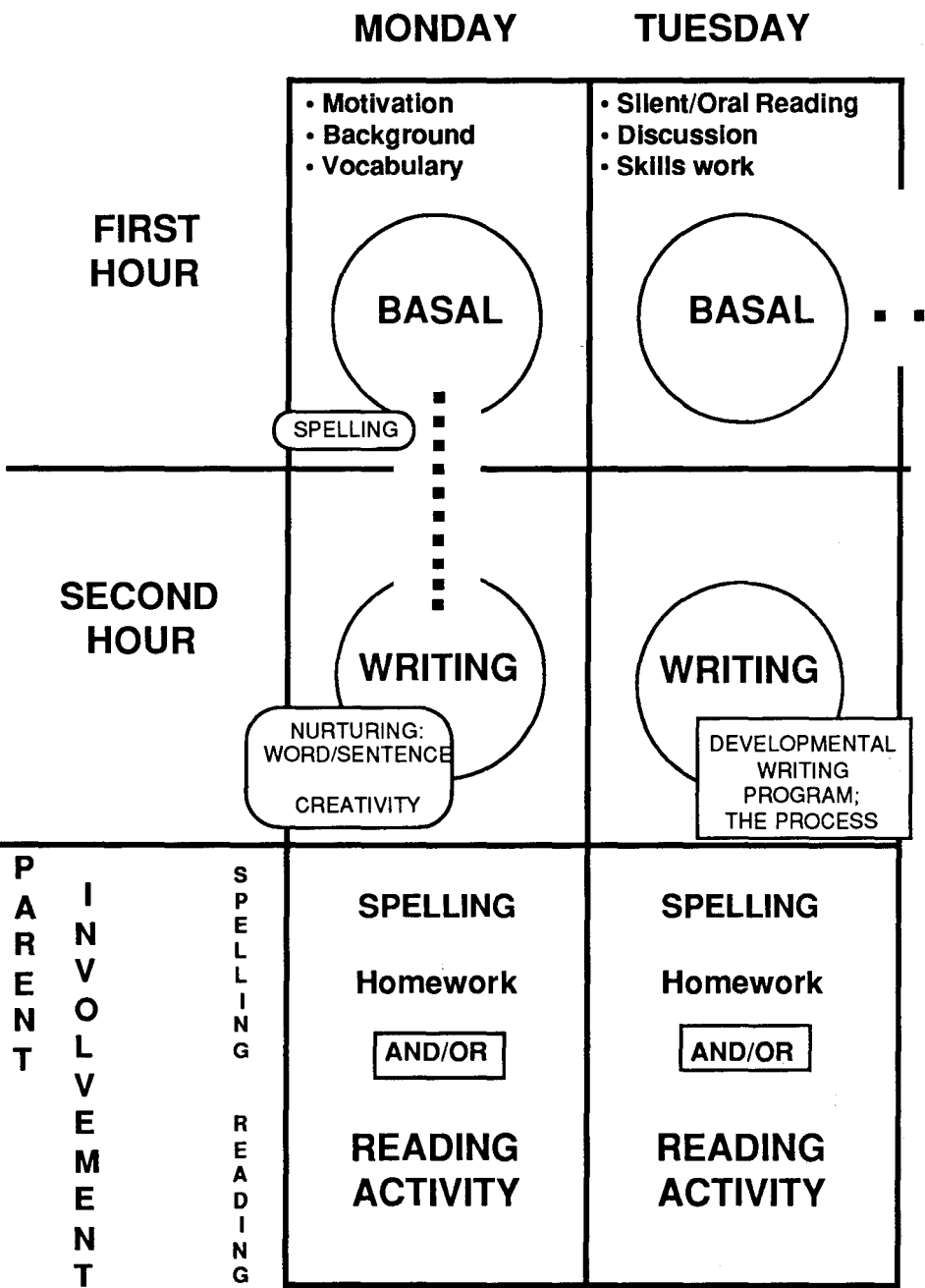
Providing a sense of purpose

In addition to creating a sense of what to expect, the program developers wanted to give both students and daily activities a sense of purpose.

The daily activities typically evolve from a simple and direct purpose: children learn language by using it. They learn to speak by speaking, to write by writing, and to read by reading — but more importantly, they gain significant knowledge from any one of these experiences, which extends to all the others.

In order to convey this sense of purpose, the program is designed to engage students in activities which show the relationship or connection among the language arts. Knowledge about structure and meaning underlies all language — oral or printed; spoken, heard, read, or written.

THE INTEGRATED MODEL FOR TEACHING AND



CONFERENCING IN READING/LANGUAGE ARTS

WEDNESDAY

THURSDAY

FRIDAY

<div><div><div><div>• Silent/Oral Reading</div><div>• Discussion</div><div>• Skills work</div></div></div><div><div>BASAL</div></div></div>	<div><div><div>• Silent/Oral Reading</div><div>• Discussion</div><div>• Skills work</div></div></div> <div><div><div>BASAL</div><div>LITERATURE</div></div></div>
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To compartmentalize language learning activities is to risk creating a misunderstanding about language learning. It has become quite natural, therefore, for the program developers to arrange activities during the five-day sequence so that reading, writing, and speaking are viewed by the students as connected or integrated experiences.

Curriculum elements

Still to be addressed are the specific elements which comprise the pattern of language learning activities over the five-day sequence. At this point, we might do well to ask and answer some “what” and “why” questions. Three programmatic questions are:

- Why retain a basal program as the first element of the IMTC?
- Why begin writing activities on the first day?
- What is the purpose and function of conference day?

The answers to these questions are intended to complete the description and justification of the IMTC.

Why retain a basal program as the first element of the IMTC? The attention to reading instruction on a daily basis is a common, though changing, educational practice in elementary schools. County and state-wide testing — and precedent — have combined to make it an inescapable reality of the classroom.

To integrate reading with, or connect it to, other elements of a total reading/language arts program requires that the teaching of reading (even within a basal program) be viewed much more broadly than the basal program typically demands. In other words, a great deal more attention is given in the IMTC to discussion of story content *before* reading

begins. It means that preparation for reading assumes a new and more vital position in reading instruction.

Silent and oral reading are still practiced, but with the aim of expanding knowledge of meaning — which in turn serves to generate opportunities for thinking about what has been read, talking about it, and writing about it. In short, a great deal of effort is being made to develop literature-based routines within the basal program.

Why begin writing activities on the first day? Writing begins on the first day because it is expected that, frequently, tasks will grow naturally from the reading or pre-reading activities which will have already taken place. The kind of writing (expressive, informative, literary) will vary. And whether the writing is done individually or as a group activity, the focus is on preparation — the first step in what teachers have come to know as the writing process.

What is the purpose and function of conference day? The conference day is uniquely suited, both academically and logistically, to the five-day sequence. It is a day devoted to individual, private conferences. It is a time for nurturing the writing process, for providing editorial assistance, for teaching directly to the individual language needs of each student. It is a tutorial in the best sense of the word — a time in which the teacher gives undivided attention to every student for ten or fifteen minutes every week. Small classes (12-15 students) and the availability of an aide to assist the teacher during conference time makes this vital activity possible.

Theoretical considerations

There are two theoretical questions which also need to be answered:

- What relationship does a read aloud day have to an integrated curriculum?
- Why is oral language given its own special place in an integrated curriculum?

What relationship does a read aloud day have to an integrated curriculum? Aside from the research which confirms the value of "read aloud" as a means of cultivating emotional involvement and a positive value for literature, "read aloud" has a very practical relationship to an integrated reading/language arts curriculum (Johnson and Louis, 1987). It gives a group of less-than-skilled readers (the target students) an opportunity to observe the reading techniques of a highly skilled reader (the teacher). The program developers share the belief that there is a rub off effect—that students can learn important qualities of skilled reading by listening to a teacher who is modeling these qualities.

Such qualities include, for example, the teacher's ability to chunk the passage being read into meaningful units and to reveal this process through the smooth and cohesive rendering of text with the kinds of intonation patterns and pauses which collectively allow for a clear understanding of what has been written.

The literature selections used for the read aloud day will be part of an in-class library. The library will be accessible to students for independent reading. And while the selections which are read by the teacher will, from time to time, extend a topic or theme introduced in reading and writing activities begun earlier, this kind of content integration is not a stated intention of the IMTC. The purpose of read aloud, as has already been noted, is to give students an opportunity to acquire knowledge about language and meaning that is only

possible while attending to the performance of a skilled reader.

Why is oral language given its own special place in an integrated curriculum? The phrase *oral language* is intended to describe a variety of activities — from small group discussion, to speech-making, to drama. Drama activities, ranging from role playing to Readers' Theater to the enacting of short plays (even some created by members of the class), will receive particular emphasis in the IMTC. The purpose of oral language activities harkens back to the premise that one learns language by using it. This can be especially true of activities in which students are required to speak expressively, and to make themselves clearly understood to an audience that is close at hand.

Through dramatic activities, teachers can create insights into the nature of language that are impossible to achieve in other ways. In a manner which, in a sense, reverses the possibilities of read aloud, students can begin to see, through the process of bringing a playscript to life, how print and oral language are related, how the ability to speak a line naturally and effectively to an audience requires the same kind of knowledge it takes to read naturally and effectively. Clearly, such undertakings shift emphasis to meaning — an essential aspect of all language activities.

Oral language activities will frequently take on a life of their own — a single play spreading out over several weekly drama days, culminating with a live or videotaped performance. At other times, the oral language day will become an opportunity for teachers to have students transform a writing activity into a series of individual recitations — giving students time to read their own original works aloud to classmates.

Pilot program

A two week pilot program of the IMTC model was successfully implemented in March, 1988. Twelve teachers participated in the pilot program. Teachers reported that the five day sequence was a positive experience for their students. Both teachers and students were most enthusiastic about the oral language days. Chapter I students were thrilled to be able to work on play production, while teachers appreciated the change of tone and attitude in their classrooms. Teachers noted that the conference day was extremely helpful. All aspects of the IMTC were well received. Several teachers asked if they could continue using the model for the rest of the school year. Plans were made for an intensive three week training institute to facilitate IMTC implementation in the fall.

By providing this sequence of activities, the developers of the IMTC sought to bring about increased student confidence through both pattern and purpose: one learns language by using it. Teachers agreed that the IMTC activities provide opportunities for students to use language in all its forms, spoken and written, and the activities enabled students to discover and benefit from the interrelatedness of language.

Reference

Johnson, T. D., & Louis, D. R. (1987). *Literacy Through Literature*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

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Novice Teachers: Do They Use What We Teach Them?

**Karen S. Daves
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Teacher educators frequently engage in some rather agonizing soul searching regarding their effectiveness in preparing preservice teachers. Students pass through their classes, go on to other classes, and eventually they are in the real world of the classroom. Teacher educators seldom get direct feedback from students as to the relevance or the value of the instruction they received. Lacking this feedback, teacher educators who teach from a whole language perspective frequently question whether students actually use the instructional strategies they were taught in their reading courses, or whether they choose the more traditional basal reader approach. To answer this question, the researchers designed a survey to gain insight into the relationship between what novice teachers were taught and how they are actually teaching.

Background

For many years the basal reader was firmly entrenched in our schools as the only reading program, and most teachers accepted this without question. In 1982, Shannon reported that 77% of the teachers surveyed perceived that basal readers and worksheets were mandated by their schools. This perception should have changed as the whole language philosophy became widely accepted. Yet Woodward (1986)

reported that observations in both elementary and junior high school reading classes revealed strict adherence to the script in the teacher's manual to the point of no spontaneity whatsoever. Based on more recent observations in classrooms, several researchers report that such activity does indeed exist. Duffy, Roehler and Putnam (1987) reported that many teachers were expected to follow the directions and procedures outlined in the teachers' guides rigidly. Apparently some administrators are fearful that if teachers do not adhere to the guides, the children will not learn.

This strict reliance on teacher's guides and basal readers is inconsistent with the teacher training programs many new teachers have been through. These programs emphasize the importance of structuring effective reading instruction utilizing alternative teaching methods. Duffy, Roehler and Putnam (1987) suggest that these teachers may be faced with a conflict between the way they were taught and what their administrators expect.

How do new teachers who have just completed their teacher education programs teach reading? Do they employ the "whole language" instructional practices advocated by their reading methods instructors? If not, why not? What are the influencing factors? A survey of new teachers was designed to answer these questions.

Method

The research instrument was a survey form using a sentence completion format. Respondents were asked to rank order applicable choices of ten variables in response to sentence stems. The sentence stems were designed to elicit answers to the following questions: Which instructional practices were cultivated by their teacher education programs?

Which instructional practices were encouraged by co-teachers, administrators and/or parents? Which instructional practices did new teachers select to emphasize in their classrooms? Which, if any, of these selected instructional practices they would like to change? And finally, from whom would support be needed to facilitate any desired changes? (See Appendix I.)

Surveys were sent to 110 new teachers graduated and certified during the 1986-87 academic year from three universities in Colorado, New Mexico and Texas. The survey was conducted during the spring of the sample's first year (1987-88) of teaching. Fifty-two surveys were returned of which forty-five were complete and submitted for analysis.

Results

As perceived by this sample of novice teachers, the five top-ranked instructional practices cultivated in undergraduate reading courses at the three universities were in ranked order: 1) language experience, 2) writing activities, 3) children's literature, used instructionally, 4) learning centers, and 5) free, silent reading. (See Table 1.) In contrast, the majority of the respondents indicated that much of their reading instructional time was spent using basal readers and workbooks/skillsbooks. (See Table 2.)

Respondents indicated a concern that they were relying too much on basal readers and workbooks/skillbooks, while not spending enough time on language experience and learning centers. (See Table 2.) The respondents indicated they would place more emphasis on language experience, writing activities and children's literature, used instructionally, to improve their teaching methods. (See Table 3.)

Table 1: Instructional Strategies Encouraged

Instructional Practice	<u>Cumulative Percentages of Rankings 1-3</u>			
	Undergrad. Courses	Administrators	Co-Teachers	Parents
Basal Readers	33.5	77.8	72.7	70.4
Language Exp.	88.8	26.7	27.3	20.4
CAI	4.4	15.6	6.8	9.0
Round Robin Rdng	4.4	8.8	22.7	18.2
Free, Silent Rdng	33.4	13.2	11.3	6.8
Workbks/Skillbks	8.8	62.2	66.0	59.1
Writing Act.	66.6	44.5	45.5	31.8
Learning Centers	35.6	8.8	20.5	4.5
Children's Lit.-T	31.1	19.9	15.9	6.9
Children's Lit.-I	37.8	24.4	20.5	20.4

As reflected in Table 1, the five top-ranked instructional practices encouraged by school administrators were in ranked order: 1) basal readers, 2) workbooks and skillbooks, 3) writing activities, 4) language experience, and 5) children's literature, used instructionally. The encouragement given by co-workers and parents was very similar to that of school administrators.

Table 2: Time Spent on Instructional Practices

Instructional Practice	<u>Number of Respondents Ranking Practice 1 or 2</u>		
	Much Time Spent	Too Much Time	Too Little Time
Basal Readers	39	30	2
Language Experience	11	2	24
Computer Assisted Instr'ct'n	3	1	6
Round Robin Reading	4	6	1
Free, Silent Reading	5	2	8
Workbooks/Skillbooks	23	30	1
Writing Activities	9	2	12
Learning Centers	4	0	17
Children's Lit.-Teacher Read	3	0	4
Children's Lit.-Instructional	9	1	11

Table 3: Desired Changes in Instructional Practices

Instructional Practice	<u>Number of Respondents Ranking Practice:</u>			
	First	Second	First & Second	Not Selected
Basal Readers	0	0	0	35
Language Exp.	25	6	31	8
CAI	2	2	4	30
Round Robin Rdng	0	0	0	39
Free, Silent Rdng	3	6	9	19
Workbks/Skillbks	2	3	5	36
Writing Act.	7	15	22	10
Learning Centers	4	4	8	20
Children's Lit.-T	4	5	9	21
Children's Lit.-I	9	4	13	21

When asked to rank order those from whom they would need support in making any desired adjustments in instructional reading practices in their classrooms, the respondents indicated the need for support from the following in order of greatest need to least need: 1) principals, 2) fellow teachers, 3) resources for ideas, 4) parents and additional materials, 5) curriculum director, 6) reading consultant, 7) additional services and schoolboard, 8) graduate courses in reading, and 9) librarians. (See Table 4.)

Based on this survey, it appears there is a low correlation between the instructional practices cultivated in the undergraduate reading courses and the instructional practices actually employed by novice teachers in their classrooms. The instructional practices novice teachers do choose to employ seem to be those perceived to be promoted by administrators, fellow teachers, and parents. Additional training through graduate courses in reading and support from librarians were ranked as the least needed in order to improve instructional practices.

Furthermore, the data indicate that these novice teachers are cognizant of the discrepancy between what they were taught and what is being promoted within their particular educational setting. The need to align daily instructional practices with the instructional practices cultivated in undergraduate reading courses seems apparent. While these new teachers expressed a desire to make adjustments in their reading instructional practices, they seemed hesitant to do so without the support of their principals and fellow teachers or without additional materials and resources for new ideas. One of the lowest ranked resources to which they would turn for support in order confidently to make an adjustment in the way they teach reading was a graduate course in reading.

Table 4: Structures of Support Needed for Change

Source of Support	<u>Number of Respondents Ranking Practice:</u>				
	First	Second	Third	1-3 Cum.	Not Selected
Principal	17	6	6	29	7
Curriculum Director	5	6	3	14	25
Reading Consultant	4	5	4	13	16
Fellow Teachers	6	8	6	20	12
School Board	3	5	3	11	24
Librarian	0	3	1	4	22
Parents	4	3	8	15	15
Additional Inservice	2	5	4	11	15
Graduate Course in Reading	1	1	3	5	17
Resource for New Ideas	3	10	4	17	9
Additional Materials	5	7	3	15	7

Conclusions

This study was designed to gain insight into the practices of new teachers. Novice teachers are not employing the reading instructional practices which are being cultivated in undergraduate reading courses. Such practices are not congruent with the instructional practices they perceive to be

expected of them by the administrators, teachers and parents in to their educational setting.

Additional questions must now be considered. Are the perceptions of the novice teachers accurate? Even though the respondents perceive the basal reader and workbooks/skill-books to be encouraged and preferred by administrators, co-teachers and parents, are they *required* to use them or is there simply an absence of encouragement to change? Are educational institutions providing the novice teacher with the knowledge base and the confidence to pursue aggressively a change in the status quo? Have novice teachers been prepared to be educational decision-makers?

If the perceptions of the respondents are correct, why is there such a discrepancy between the instructional practices being cultivated in the teacher education institutions and those being actively promoted in the schools? There appears to be an obvious need for communication and collaboration among administrators, practicing teachers, parents, university faculty, and novice teachers.

University faculty *must* continue to seek to increase visibility outside the university classroom in promoting current reading research outlining the most effective ways to teach reading. Administrators, practicing teachers and parents *must* seek actively to become more knowledgeable about the current developments in reading instruction. Teacher education institutions *must* work more closely with administrators and teachers in order to recognize and overcome the difficulties of translating research into practice, and they *must* nurture professional educational decision-makers, while school administrators *must* actively encourage teachers to use their knowledge base to make instructional decisions. If

there is to be a positive impact on reading achievement in the schools, all participants must demand a solid knowledge base and engage in professional collaboration.

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Appendix I

SURVEY OF NEW TEACHERS

Please answer questions one through nine by **rank ordering only** those variables which affect you. For example, do not rank all the variables for each question, rank only those which apply to your situation. Use the rank of 1 for your most important teaching variable, and mark all teaching variables that are not applicable with an N/A.

Example: When I was in first grade, my teachers used

- | | | |
|--|---|--------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> basal readers | <input type="checkbox"/> workbooks, skillbooks | <input type="checkbox"/> other |
| <input type="checkbox"/> language experience | <input type="checkbox"/> writing activities | (list) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> computer assisted instruction | <input type="checkbox"/> learning centers | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> round robin reading | <input type="checkbox"/> children's lit-read by teacher | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> free, silent reading | <input type="checkbox"/> children's lit-instructional | |

1. To teach children to read, my undergraduate reading courses strongly encouraged me to use

- | | | |
|--|---|--------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> basal readers | <input type="checkbox"/> workbooks, skillbooks | <input type="checkbox"/> other |
| <input type="checkbox"/> language experience | <input type="checkbox"/> writing activities | (list) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> computer assisted instruction | <input type="checkbox"/> learning centers | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> round robin reading | <input type="checkbox"/> children's lit-read by teacher | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> free, silent reading | <input type="checkbox"/> children's lit-instructional | |

2. Administrators encourage me to use

- | | | |
|--|---|--------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> basal readers | <input type="checkbox"/> workbooks, skillbooks | <input type="checkbox"/> other |
| <input type="checkbox"/> language experience | <input type="checkbox"/> writing activities | (list) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> computer assisted instruction | <input type="checkbox"/> learning centers | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> round robin reading | <input type="checkbox"/> children's lit-read by teacher | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> free, silent reading | <input type="checkbox"/> children's lit-instructional | |

3. The majority of my fellow teachers think it is best to use

- | | | |
|--|---|--------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> basal readers | <input type="checkbox"/> workbooks, skillbooks | <input type="checkbox"/> other |
| <input type="checkbox"/> language experience | <input type="checkbox"/> writing activities | (list) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> computer assisted instruction | <input type="checkbox"/> learning centers | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> round robin reading | <input type="checkbox"/> children's lit-read by teacher | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> free, silent reading | <input type="checkbox"/> children's lit-instructional | |

4. The parents of my students seem to think it is best to use

- | | | |
|--|---|---------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> basal readers | <input type="checkbox"/> workbooks, skillbooks | <input type="checkbox"/> other |
| <input type="checkbox"/> language experience | <input type="checkbox"/> writing activities | <input type="checkbox"/> (list) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> computer assisted instruction | <input type="checkbox"/> learning centers | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> round robin reading | <input type="checkbox"/> children's lit-read by teacher | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> free, silent reading | <input type="checkbox"/> children's lit-instructional | |

5. I find that I spend much of my reading instructional time using

- | | | |
|--|---|---------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> basal readers | <input type="checkbox"/> workbooks, skillbooks | <input type="checkbox"/> other |
| <input type="checkbox"/> language experience | <input type="checkbox"/> writing activities | <input type="checkbox"/> (list) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> computer assisted instruction | <input type="checkbox"/> learning centers | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> round robin reading | <input type="checkbox"/> children's lit-read by teacher | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> free, silent reading | <input type="checkbox"/> children's lit-instructional | |

6. I am concerned that I may be spending too much time using

- | | | |
|--|---|---------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> basal readers | <input type="checkbox"/> workbooks, skillbooks | <input type="checkbox"/> other |
| <input type="checkbox"/> language experience | <input type="checkbox"/> writing activities | <input type="checkbox"/> (list) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> computer assisted instruction | <input type="checkbox"/> learning centers | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> round robin reading | <input type="checkbox"/> children's lit-read by teacher | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> free, silent reading | <input type="checkbox"/> children's lit-instructional | |

7. I am concerned that I may not be spending enough time using

- | | | |
|--|---|---------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> basal readers | <input type="checkbox"/> workbooks, skillbooks | <input type="checkbox"/> other |
| <input type="checkbox"/> language experience | <input type="checkbox"/> writing activities | <input type="checkbox"/> (list) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> computer assisted instruction | <input type="checkbox"/> learning centers | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> round robin reading | <input type="checkbox"/> children's lit-read by teacher | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> free, silent reading | <input type="checkbox"/> children's lit-instructional | |

8. If I could improve the way I teach reading, I would place more emphasis on

- | | | |
|--|---|---------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> basal readers | <input type="checkbox"/> workbooks, skillbooks | <input type="checkbox"/> other |
| <input type="checkbox"/> language experience | <input type="checkbox"/> writing activities | <input type="checkbox"/> (list) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> computer assisted instruction | <input type="checkbox"/> learning centers | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> round robin reading | <input type="checkbox"/> children's lit-read by teacher | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> free, silent reading | <input type="checkbox"/> children's lit-instructional | |

9. In order to confidently make an adjustment in the way I teach reading, I would need the support of (don't forget to rank responses)

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> my principal | <input type="checkbox"/> parents |
| <input type="checkbox"/> my curriculum director | <input type="checkbox"/> additional inservice |
| <input type="checkbox"/> a reading consultant | <input type="checkbox"/> a graduate course in reading |
| <input type="checkbox"/> fellow teachers | <input type="checkbox"/> a resource for new ideas |
| <input type="checkbox"/> school board | <input type="checkbox"/> additional materials |
| <input type="checkbox"/> librarian | <input type="checkbox"/> other (list) |

On the back, please list additional insights and comments you have about the way you teach students reading. For those teachers who see the need to make changes in your classrooms but who hesitate to do so, please explain your situations.

Did you remember to rank order all your responses? Thank you.

The grade I teach is _____

The state in which I teach is _____

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.... Expanding Horizons....

"From Trash to Written Treasure"

*This teaching idea is shared by Jo VanderLaan,
a student in the College of Education at Western Michigan University*

An intriguing writing center, "From trash to written treasure," can be based on the poem "Sarah Cynthia Sylvia Stout Would Not Take the Garbage Out," from *Where the Sidewalk Ends*, by Shel Silverstein. Prepare for the center by collecting varied, clean items which might be found in the trash — empty boxes, discarded envelopes, and so forth. Read the poem to the class, and brainstorm a list of items that might be found in the trash. Ask the students what they might discover about people from their trash. Then set up the writing center by putting out the trash collection in a plastic bag, where students will have room to sort through the items, and to write.

Here are sample writing starts for the writing center. Put each on a separate card. Choose an imaginary street address and substitute it for (street # and name) on the cards. Each * indicates the beginning of a new card.

- * How many people do you think live at (street # and name)? Who are they?
- * What do you think the people who live at (street # and name) like to do? Why do you think so?
- * What does this family like to eat? Prepare a menu they'll enjoy.
- * What do you think this family does for fun?
- * Are all of the people who live at (street # and name) healthy? Why do you think they are or are not?
- * Write a story about one of the people who lives at (street # and name).
- * What can you find out about this family's friends from their trash?
- * Choose one piece of trash. Tell six ways it could be used.
- * Write a careful description of one piece of trash, but do not mention its name. See if someone else can tell which piece of trash it is.
- * Choose one piece of trash. Describe its size, shape, smell, feel, color and use.
- * What trash from this trash bag would you like to keep? Why?
- * Which piece of trash is worth the most? Write ten reasons why it is the most valuable.





Underestimating Capable Readers

**Martha Combs
Jimmie S. Russell
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Capable and gifted readers are often held back in grade level basal reading texts, regardless of their reading ability, for fear that essential skills may be missed (Allen and Swearingen, 1987; Carr, 1984). The abilities of these students are often underestimated (Bennett and Desforages, 1988).

Basal reading series, which are so widely utilized in this country, continue to present comprehension skill development as a series of separate skills, arranged in a hierarchical fashion, suggesting a definitive order to skill acquisition and mastery. However, research does not clearly support the identification of any one set of comprehension skills (Davis, 1968; Downing, 1982; McNeil, 1976; Spearitt, 1972; Thurstone, 1956).

In classroom instruction, unfortunately, basal series skill hierarchies seem to have been accepted as a list of essential skills and therefore students are held accountable for mastery of these skills at each level (Allen and Swearingen, 1987). Placement test manuals for at least two basal reading series further complicate instruction for capable students by cautioning teachers against initially placing students above grade level and against skipping subsequent levels for fear that essential skills may be missed (Aaron, Jackson, Riggs,

Smith and Tierney, 1981; Fay, Balow and Arnold, 1986). A review of the literature in comprehension skill development reveals that it is not clear whether all, or even any, of the comprehension skill exercises which students are asked to perform are essential (Rosenshine, 1980).

Do we, indeed, underestimate the skills of capable readers when we require them to progress systematically through basal reading programs? By examining the comprehension skill development of capable readers in two basal reading series it was our intention to understand more fully how these prescribed basal skill hierarchies might impact upon such students and their teachers.

Both basal reading series selected for this study cautioned teachers against initially placing students above grade level or skipping levels for fear that they might "miss the important reading related skills that are introduced at each level of the program" (Fay, et al., 1986). In addition, the manner in which skills had been carefully sequenced within each series was stressed, serving as a second caution against moving students ahead (Aaron, et al., 1981).

Identifying capable readers

The students in this study were 46 second and 49 third graders who met the following criteria: (1) scored at the 50th percentile or above on the Metropolitan Achievement Test (1986), (2) scored above grade level on either or both of the placement tests, a measure of silent reading comprehension, for two basal reading series, and (3) had not received instruction in reading above grade level.

Students scoring above grade level on either or both of the placement tests were then given the end-of-book mastery

tests in comprehension for their current grade placement and for the next three grade levels. These tests would typically be utilized by classroom teachers following the completion of a text to identify levels of skill proficiency before progression to the next text level, according to the identified hierarchy for a particular series. The criterion for mastery of individual skills which had been established by both of the series under examination was 80%.

Describing capable readers

The capable second and third grade readers in this study were aware of, and had mastered, a large number of the comprehension skills tested in the two basal reading series examined. Without benefit of instruction, students demonstrated mastery of skills as much as three years above their present grade placements. The percentage of second and third grade students mastering individual skills at each level tested can be seen in Tables 1 and 2. We were impressed by what these students already knew or were able to figure out.

As the level of difficulty of text increased, the percentage of capable readers who could apply the skill sometimes decreased but seldom did the percentage drop completely to zero. Levels of skill usage and mastery did not consistently decrease as reading material became more difficult. It appeared that these readers may have been able to draw upon other known skills or thinking processes when faced with a difficult task, one for which they had not received direct instruction. They seemed to be exhibiting the flexibility that is characteristic of good readers (Anderson and Pearson, 1984; Mason, 1984; Paris, Lipson and Wixson, 1983).

Overall, third grade readers were more accurate than second graders in their responses, particularly in series B

Table 1
Percentage of Capable Second Grade Readers
Mastering Comprehension Skills

<u>Level</u>	Series A (N=46)					Series B (N=44)				
	2 ²	3 ¹	3 ²	4	5	2 ²	3 ¹	3 ²	4	5
<u>Skill</u>										
Main Idea	89	—	76	41	—	—	20	—	—	18
Details	65	—	28	20	—	—	68	—	—	—
Sequence	91	—	30	—	—	—	36	64	59	27
Draw'g C'ncl's'ns	87	—	—	—	74	—	—	—	—	—
Pr'd'ct'g Outc'm's	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	77	—
CauseEffect	—	83	—	—	—	—	70	68	64	34
at level 5: Cause=39; Effect=24								83		
Fact	—	—	—	—	52	—	—	—	30	—
Opinion	—	—	—	—	52	—	—	—	45	—
W'd Referents	—	83	—	—	—	—	—	—	50	—
Compare/Contrast	—	—	—	—	—	84	—	—	—	—
Sensory Lang.	—	—	—	—	—	—	48	—	—	—
Figurative Lang.	—	93	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	5
Elements of Style	—	—	—	59	80	—	—	—	—	—
Bias	—	—	—	—	9	—	—	—	—	—
Foreshadowing	—	—	—	—	17	—	—	—	—	—
Plot	—	65	43	—	35	100	—	—	—	39
Theme	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	9	50	—
Setting	—	—	76	61	57	86	—	—	—	—
Characters	83	63	65	74	67	—	36	36	23	25
Conflict/Resolut'n	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	66	59	39
Story Problem	83	57	—	78	—	—	—	—	—	—
Story Solution	76	89	—	72	—	—	—	—	—	—
Literature	—	—	—	57	11	—	—	—	—	—
at level 3 ¹ : Fiction=57; Nonfiction=74										
at level 3 ² : Fantasy=98; Reality=98										
Vocab. (Isolation)	100	—	—	—	—	80	36	9	16	0
Context Clues	—	—	—	80	—	82	—	—	—	23
Analogy	—	—	83	61	—	—	—	—	—	—
Antonym	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	14	—
Idioms	—	—	—	57	—	—	—	—	—	32

— = not tested

Table 2
Percentage of Capable Third Grade Readers
Mastering Comprehension Skills

		Series A (N=49)					Series B (N=44)			
	Level	3 ²	4	5	6		3 ²	4	5	6
<u>Skill</u>										
Main Idea		94	59	—	29		—	—	64	—
Details		61	53	—	29		—	—	—	—
Sequence		67	—	—	71		82	87	45	—
Time Relat'nships		—	—	—	73		—	—	—	—
Draw'g Conclus'ns		—	—	96	—		—	—	—	—
Pred'ct'g Outc'mes		—	—	—	—		—	98	75	—
Cause/Effect		—	—	—	—		93	86	82	84
at level 5: Cause=71; Effect=61										
Fact		—	—	92	—		84	—	—	—
Opinion		—	—	90	—		91	—	—	—
Word Referents		—	—	—	—		77	—	—	—
Figurative Lang.		—	—	—	—		—	—	25	—
Elements of Style		—	82	96	80		—	—	—	—
Bias		—	—	27	—		—	—	—	—
Foreshadowing		—	—	45	—		—	—	—	—
Author's Purpose		—	—	—	—		—	—	—	39
Mood		—	—	—	—		—	—	—	23
Personification		—	—	—	82		—	—	—	—
Plot		80	—	78	69		—	—	—	80
Theme		—	—	—	—		59	91	—	50
Setting		94	76	53	47		—	—	—	48
Characters		90	86	96	72		68	43	59	73
Conflict/Resolut'n		—	—	—	—		93	93	77	—
Story Problem		—	90	—	—		—	—	—	—
Story Solution		—	84	—	—		—	—	—	—
Literature		—	73	47	35		—	—	—	—
at level 3 ² : Fantasy=100;Reality=98										
Vocab. (Isolation)		—	—	—	—		73	61	16	5
Context Clues		—	96	—	88		—	—	43	14
Analogy		96	94	—	—		—	—	—	—
Antonym		—	—	—	—		—	82	—	—
Idioms		—	78	—	76		—	—	70	—
Connotat'n of W'ds		—	—	—	96		—	—	—	—

— = not tested

where the format assessed several types of comprehension skills through one piece of text. We wondered whether the third graders' longer experience with reading (increasing the potential for flexibility and fluency) and the shifting focus of instruction in third grade (moving from an emphasis on word identification skills toward an emphasis on comprehension) might account for the grade level differences we observed. These differences suggested support for the conception of stages of reading development and the shift in reading ability that appears during second and third grade (Duffy and Roehler, 1986; Gray, 1937).

What we learned

By receiving instruction in grade level reading materials, the capable readers in this study were, indeed, being underestimated as suggested by Bennett and Desforges (1988). These second and third grade students possessed knowledge of many aspects of the reading process that might be virtually untapped during grade level reading instruction.

Placement of capable readers and instructional decisions made for them, which assumed a lack of knowledge of skills at and above the assigned level and, consequently, moved students through virtually all skills in the assigned level, resulted in underestimating students. This underestimation was potentially holding them at an independent, rather than instructional, reading level. Powell (1984) suggests that this practice may retard potential reading growth.

The inconsistent sequences of skills between the two basal reading series in this study and the pattern of student performance across reading levels confirmed our uncertainty about the existence of a true hierarchy of comprehension skills. If such a hierarchy existed, it could not possibly be the

basis for the skill sequence in both reading series because there was too much variation between them. Therefore, it would seem that at least one of the basal reading series under examination was based upon a hierarchy that was not valid.

When the two basal series were compared, it was also evident that the format of assessments impacted upon student performance. Students performed better when applying a skill for understanding was the object of the assessment, rather than identifying the term for the skill. For example, students would read and respond with understanding to the meaning of a simile but were not as successful at identifying which statement was a simile.

Second grade students also performed better when the format of the test was fairly consistent with the format of their daily classroom instruction, i.e., skills practiced separately. This suggested that students' reading performance was responding to more than the skills being assessed. Type of test, topic of text, perceived purpose of task, and type of thinking process being assessed were among other factors that could have been impacting on reading performance, as present definitions of reading suggest (Anderson and Pearson, 1984; Duffy and Roehler, 1986).

What can be done

Capable readers who are being instructed in a basal reading series must be allowed to move beyond the grade level text. Capable readers do generalize from their reading experiences, both personal and instructional, and inappropriate placement may retard future growth.

Since the hierarchies upon which basal series are built are questionable, merely moving capable readers through each

reading level faster, but still requiring the completion of most tasks, is time wasted, according to the results of this study. We must adapt basals to the skill development of capable readers as we often do for less capable readers.

If capable readers remain in basal reading materials, we suggest that the basal program be approached as two separate components: a literature strand and a skills strand. We suggest this because, in reality, there is often little match between story demands and skills placement in the basal readers that capable readers are using.

The basal reader selections, at the appropriate levels for capable readers, should be reviewed and selected for use only if they represent quality literature, either fiction or non-fiction. These quality selections should then be studied to determine the thinking processes and skills required by the reader to comprehend and appreciate the text. The thinking processes and skills required by the basal texts should then be matched to the needs of the capable readers.

The skills which capable readers already possess should be assessed, at the very least by using the end-of-unit and end-of-book assessments provided by the publishers as a pretest rather than a posttest. Teachers should feel free to include other types of assessments, however. Skills which remain to be mastered should be clustered by similarity for instruction since these students have the ability to generalize from previous instruction and experience. The clustered skills should then be matched to basal texts which make use of those specific skills or thought processes. Supportive instructional materials, such as workbook pages and duplicating masters, should be rearranged to accommodate the skill clusters derived from the assessment process.

The organization of the directed or guided reading activities should also be reexamined. Because skills have been clustered together and matched to stories which utilize those skills, the reading lesson should begin with a study of the skill or thinking process and proceed to application in the text, moving into the text in a natural manner as proficient readers usually do for themselves. Instructional time will be most beneficial if application of skills in authentic text is the focal point of the lesson. Vocabulary study, in the context of the story, will also be more meaningful.

Capable readers, such as those described in this study, deserve appropriate instruction especially if they remain in basal reading materials. Teachers should follow a three-faceted procedure: selection of reading material which has value as literature, assessment of readers' skills so that they are not required to study what they have already mastered, and analysis of reading selections to insure a match between the selection and the skills which are taught. We cannot let our management systems limit our students' growth as readers.

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Collaborative Learning: Gifted Students in the Regular Classroom

**Dennis M. Adams
Mary Ann Rotondi**

Unique collaborative learning possibilities exist when there are a few academically talented or gifted students in a class. Under the right conditions they can advance socially, develop intellectually and make a contribution to the regular classroom. The research evidence from related fields is overwhelming: students of all ability levels learn more and have better attitudes toward others when they work together as a group (Wang and Walberg, 1985). Cooperative learning activities can help the gifted avoid boredom — while assisting regular students.

By providing the right kind of learning activities the classroom teacher can build on the power of collaborative peer learning to help students work together actively and democratically to develop ideas and solve problems. As regular and gifted students talk and work together, the teacher facilitates learning by maintaining a good learning scene, monitoring group progress and demonstrating the unique power of peer collaboration. The extensive field of the language arts — reading, writing, speaking, listening — is an appropriate area for cooperative activities across ability levels.

Concepts to consider

Classroom teachers need to be aware of learning style characteristics of gifted children. Once their needs and

leadership qualities are understood, the regular classroom teacher can develop organizational patterns and make use of collaborative learning strategies which benefit everyone in the classroom. By collaboration with other students, the gifted student can help everyone move forward while preparing for leadership roles that are so important to our society's future.

Problem-finding is one of the most important skills for the gifted learner. The ability to look at specific events and decide which ones are worthy of further analysis is a socially useful skill that we squander at our own risk. Working together, all children in the classroom can move from absorbing facts to thinking of solutions to the problems and, ultimately, to deciding which problems are most urgent to solve.

There are many high-quality models for gifted programming. The difference such programs make to gifted students should not be underestimated. High grade point averages, test scores, honors, self-concepts, and vocational goals are demonstrated among students in special programs for the academically talented. Gifted students benefit most if they are placed with an instructor who has special expertise and a proven track record in working with the gifted. Such teachers may be regular classroom teachers rather than specialists; therefore it is particularly important to have inservice programs. It is also useful to form school enrichment teams of interested faculty and parents.

Some practical suggestions

- The fine arts provide an excellent area in which to develop collaborative activities between regular and gifted students. The qualities of good art, like good science, are rigor, enthusiasm, uncompromising standards to measure performance, and demand for long hours of disciplined practice. "School

enrichment" teams can help bring students to art museums — and take art museums to students through speakers and videotapes. Mentors can also offer programs allowing the artistically gifted student opportunities to work directly with artists or museums.

- The study of myths, folk tales, legends and fairy tales can be used to examine similarities and differences between people and cultures. Particular themes such as those of Faust and Prometheus inspire discussions of major cultural traditions and ideas.

- Biographies can provide information about values, motives and accomplishments — and provide role models for students. Historical fiction enables students to gain an appreciation of various authors' works and an understanding of the fact that literature is not written in isolation.

- Even though many teachers below the high school level have had limited science instruction, emphasis on inquiry training and the teaching of the processes of science has made a significant difference to student knowledge, skills mastery and attitudes. Problem-solving and critical thinking can be taught in the science curriculum in which the teacher continues to be a learner. Helping regular and gifted students develop an understanding of the scientific method as an important intellectual tool will prove to be a lasting contribution as they move toward higher education.

- To keep gifted children from concluding that everything worth knowing in mathematics has already been discovered, teachers can take historical views of the subject. Teaching probability as a mathematical concept is important; applications of probability are made in insurance, biology, physics,

weather forecasting, psychology, social science, medical research, politics, and numerous other areas.

- A common collaborative learning strategy is to divide a partnership into a “thinker” and a “writer.” One partner reads a short concept or question out loud and gives an opinion about what the answer should be. The writer writes it down if they agree. If not, the writer tries to convince the “thinker” that there is a better answer. If agreement cannot be reached they write two answers and each partner initials one.

- In pairs, students may brainstorm a topic, e.g., list many things that move, things that are deep, sharp, white or soft — with a three minute time limit. Count a fluency score by giving one point for a common response and three points for a creative one.

As a follow-up, each student may choose one creative response and expand on that idea by writing a paragraph. Students then share paragraphs with classmates and include them in a class book for others to read. This activity develops students’ ability to think divergently, a skill which many academically gifted students do not have.

- Take a situation in current events or from literature and have the children work in small groups to generate ideas for ten minutes with judgment deferred. Then take ten minutes to evaluate the ideas, choosing the five best and the five silliest. (Explain that the most unlikely ideas frequently result in the best solutions.) For example, adapt the situation of Daniel Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe*: a person is washed ashore on a desert island with nothing but a large belt and belt buckle. How can these be used to survive? For ten minutes, groups generate as many ideas as possible. Then for ten minutes,

groups evaluate ideas and at the end of this time bring their choices for their best and funniest ideas back to the whole class.

Suggestions from the research

Our experience suggests that active learning activities can result in cooperation between gifted and regular students. Research on effective instruction suggests a number of points of agreement. Good instructional practice respects different interests, abilities and learning styles; uses active learning techniques to relate what's being learned to a student's personal environment; develops collaboration and reciprocity; and communicates high expectations.

Involving gifted students in cooperative work lessons or classroom projects can help develop reflective thinking skills and active decision making skills across student ability levels. Developing high interest strategies that are based on fluency, flexibility, originality and elaboration in creative thinking profits everyone.

Conclusion

Gifted children are different from others because they have outstanding abilities and are capable of high performance. Nevertheless both they and their classmates can benefit from collaborative learning in the regular classroom. When working with others on the basis of equity across ability levels becomes a natural part of regular classroom life, teachers have a constant opportunity to increase the rate of academic success while making learning more stimulating for each student. If gifted and talented students receive both mainstream and differentiated educational possibilities they will make a better contribution to themselves and society (Adams, 1988).

However, it does take more than deciding that cooperative learning for students with vastly different abilities makes sense in an increasingly interdependent society. Teachers need to be aware of how they can help students — across ability levels — to develop collaborative learning skills. Once students see that peers look collectively to all members of the group for advice on various processes and products, collaboration will flourish. With practice teachers become more adept at forming groups, setting tasks and monitoring progress.

The notion that "none of us is as smart as all of us" is essentially true. We can learn to do as individuals what at first we could do only with others. Collaboration between gifted and regular students can help both groups learn by assimilating and generating knowledge through group interaction and individual accountability.

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The Teacher-Parent Partnership: Helping Children Become Good Readers

**Celeste A. Resh
Marilyn J. Wilson**

Teachers recognize the importance of parental involvement in children's learning. If children are to learn most efficiently and effectively, the home and the school must work in conjunction with each other. No other time for parent-school involvement is more critical than the early years of a child's educational experience when the patterns and habits of literacy are evolving and developing, a fact recognized by educators and supported by the findings of various national commissions on education.

The role of parents in helping children become good readers is stressed, in particular, in *Becoming a Nation of Readers: The Report of the Commission on Reading*. This 1985 survey of major studies on reading from the past twenty years concludes that "parents play roles of inestimable importance in laying the foundations for learning to read" (p. 27). In order to succeed in that role, parents must be aware of what their children can learn and how this learning can occur. Further, according to one of the studies cited by the Commission on Reading, children who came to school knowing a lot about written language were children whose parents "believed that it was their responsibility to seize opportunities to convey information about written language to their children" (p. 25). This suggests that some children who come to school

knowing little about written language may have parents who are unaware or unsure of their potential role in helping their children succeed in school.

That one of the causes of reading problems may indeed be related to lack of knowledge or uncertainty on the part of the parents rather than to socioeconomic factors, as is often assumed, receives support from a 1982 report on home environment and school learning (Iverson and Walberg, 1982). This quantitative synthesis of eighteen studies indicates that parental socioeconomic status indicators such as occupation and amount of education are not as closely related to children's academic ability and achievement as are measures of sociopsychological environment and intellectual stimulation in the home. Iverson and Walberg conclude that "home environment variables, unlike socioeconomic status, are changeable and are worth not only further experimentation but merit constructive efforts to improve them as well" (p. 151). If factors such as uncertainty or inadequacy are part of the problem, active intervention on the part of teachers and administrators is certainly merited.

Two decades of research on the importance of parental involvement show that children whose parents support and encourage their school activities do have an academic advantage, according to Joyce Epstein of the Center for Social Organization of Schools at Johns Hopkins University. Epstein sees the problem as one of effectively involving parents in their children's education. She notes that few teachers make frequent use of parent involvement, but when they do, 85 percent of the parents asked spend at least fifteen minutes a day helping their children at home (Epstein, p. 127). Teachers can play a significant role in involving parents in their children's learning, and parents who lack a strong

educational background or who have feelings of inadequacy may be more willing to get involved if they are provided with some specific suggestions.

With this in mind, we developed and distributed a pamphlet to elementary teachers and administrators in our local areas as a way of aiding school-home interaction. The pamphlet, with simply written, easy to understand suggestions for parents, encourages them to help their children read, not by teaching reading skills, but by providing activities and materials that will create interest in reading and in books. The activities suggested are intended to support basic reading strategies that children need to become successful readers. We see these activities as complementary to, rather than duplicates of, classroom reading instruction.

The pamphlet covers these five major categories of home activities:

- 1) helping young readers become aware of print meaning in their environment by encouraging them to read ads, signs, billboards, maps, newspapers, cereal boxes, letters, etc.;

- 2) using reading activities that include reading aloud to children and encouraging them to join in; helping them figure out unfamiliar words; helping them develop good predicting strategies that focus on meaning and that help them deal with relationships between print symbols, words, and meaning;

- 3) making children's magazines and books available;

- 4) encouraging a variety of language experiences such as telling stories; writing down stories and experiences that can be used as reading material; encouraging children to write notes, letters, songs, signs, and greeting cards; encouraging them to read directions and instructions for recipes, games, and so forth;

- 5) encouraging thinking and questioning.

These strategies all involve environmental print and readily available materials that can be used to encourage sound assumptions about the relationships between print and meaning. Based on current research in reading, they give interested parents some direction and guidelines for helping children develop interest and ability in reading without requiring great expenditures of time.

Teachers can provide support for these activities in the classroom as well. Some of the activities, such as figuring out unfamiliar words, encouraging thinking and questioning, and providing different language experiences, can be introduced in the classroom prior to or immediately following parental use of the pamphlet.

Excerpts from the pamphlet appear in Figure 1. Master copies of the pamphlet are available upon request from the authors free of charge. We encourage duplication of the master copy for distribution at parent-teacher conferences or at PTO meetings, in school newsletters sent home to parents, or with year-end reports to parents as suggestions for summer reading activities. Its most effective use, we believe, involves teachers providing the pamphlet to parents directly, usually during parent-teacher conferences. Teachers can ask parents to use the pamphlet, identifying the two or three most appropriate activities. Many parents have been delighted to take an active role in helping their children develop good reading habits and attitudes. Schools have reported that parents have expressed appreciation for receiving the information and have found the pamphlet's suggestions useful in working with children at home.

When there is real cooperation between the teacher and the parent, and when the parent feels capable of supporting

Figure 1
Excerpt from *Reading in the Home:*
Helping Children Become Good Readers

ENCOURAGE DIFFERENT LANGUAGE EXPERIENCES:

Tell stories to your child and let your child tell stories to you or to siblings:

- Family experiences
- Holiday events
- Fairy tales
- Scary stories
- Nursery rhymes
- Stories they've read before



Write down things your child says to you, and encourage your child to try to read them back to you:

- Stories
- Songs
- Nursery rhymes
- Events, such as a trip to the zoo

Encourage children to write:

- Stories
- Songs
- Signs
- Posters
- Notes to each other and to you
- Letters to friends and relatives



When grocery shopping with your child:

- Read some labels and point to the labels and words as you read them.
- Give your child some coupons and have your child help find the items on the shelves.

the school's efforts, the gap between parents and schools may begin to narrow. It is even more important that, as parents engage in their children's learning experiences, they are positively affecting the sociopsychological environment and intellectual stimulation that are so closely related to their children's academic success. A simple pamphlet cannot accomplish all of this, but it can provide a start.

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A new feature — "Expanding Horizons" — enables *RH* readers to share exciting teaching ideas with one another. In this issue, a writing center theme is presented on page 34, and scrapbook journals for preschoolers are described on page 78.

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, Michigan, 49008.





Biographies in the Basals: Which People Are Featured?

**Teri S. Lesesne
Lee Mountain**

Whenever educators choose selections for a series of basal reading textbooks, they include some biographies. But they always face a problem of priorities and space. There is only a little room in a basal series for biographical selections but there are many famous people who could be featured, so they have to decide which people get to occupy the limited biographical space.

The people who are chosen are brought to the attention of youngsters in a uniquely powerful way, since basals are the most widely used textbooks. Basals determine the content and form of much of the reading instruction delivered in grades 1-8 (Shannon, 1982; Durkin, 1978-9). Each selection in a basal usually receives extensive classroom treatment. The potential impact of the biographical selections, therefore, is great.

These selections often entice eager students into reading full-length biographies of the people presented. The same short selections, which are mere appetizers for the eager readers, may be the whole biographical meal for students who read very little beyond their textbooks. Both eager readers and reluctant readers, however, do encounter the people who occupy the biographical space in the basals. Therefore, being featured in a basal biography means being presented to millions of youngsters.

The message we are sending to these youngsters is clear: the people featured in basal biographies are important. Therefore, teachers need to know which people are being presented to our youngsters in the basal textbooks.

Is there a common core of famous persons who are regularly presented in today's basals? Or does each series feature a different set of people in its biographical selections? In either case, who are these people? And what are their characteristics? Are the majority of them female or male? ...living or dead? How are they distributed by ethnicity? ...by areas of achievement?

To answer these questions, a content analysis was done on the series of basals currently distributed by these five publishers: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich; Houghton Mifflin; Macmillan; Scribner's; and Scott, Foresman. These five series, adopted in Texas and widely used across the nation, are representative of basal series as a whole.

The contents of the texts for grades 1-8 were examined to identify the selections that were primarily biographical in nature and to record relevant items of information about each of these selections. The items of information included grade level, publisher, title of selection, author of selection, topic descriptors, gender and race of main character, and setting.

These biographical selections, ranging from a page or less about a person to a sizable excerpt from a book-length biography, were analyzed, and the information about them was entered into a data base program. An alphabetical listing of the people presented in these biographical selections, by publisher and grade level, is presented below, in Table 1.

Findings

All together, there were 125 people who received biographical coverage in these five basal series. Of those 125 people, only two, James Ramsey Ullman and George Washington, received some form of biographical coverage in three series.

Only the 19 people listed below were featured in two of the five different series. These people had little in common. They ranged from an Olympic ice skater to a television star to a painter to an inventor:

John James Audubon, Alexander Calder, George Washington Carver, Tiffany Chin, Bill Cosby, Juan dePareja, Benjamin Franklin, Jean Fritz, Helen Keller, Martin Luther King, Abraham Lincoln, Harriet Quimby, Paul Revere, Eleanor Roosevelt, Eric Shackleton, Anne Sullivan, Laura Ingalls Wilder, Orville and Wilbur Wright.

Clearly, the great majority — 83% — of the biographical selections were single appearances. According to this data, there is not a common core of famous people frequently featured in biographical selections in these five series.

Additionally, many teachers find quite a few names in Table 1 that they cannot readily identify. Not all of these names are household words, by any means. Each series seems rather individualistic in the type and degree of fame required of the people chosen for basal biographies, people who range from Galileo to John Madden.

The publishers differed also in the grade level placements of the subjects of their biographies. Bill Cosby, for example, appeared at the second grade level in one series and at the

Table 1
People Presented in Biographical Selections
in the Five Basal Series

Abrams, Polly, SF, 5	Cosby, Bill, SF, 2,
Alcott, Louisa May, HM, 7	HM, 8
Ali, Muhammad, MCM, 7	Dahl, Roald, MCM, 7
Alioto, Michelle, HBJ, 6	Davidson, Robyn, SF, 8
Appleseed, Johnny, SF, 5	daVinci, Leonardo, MCM, 8
Audubon, John, HBJ, 5,	deMagnon, Leonor, SCR, 7
SCR, 6	dePaola, Tomie, HBJ, 3
Auriol, Jacqueline, SF, 6	dePareja, Juan, HM, 7,
Baker, Russell, SCR, 7	HBJ, 7
Banneker, Benjamin, SF, 5	deSaint Exupéry, Antoine, MCM, 6
Bannister, Roger, HBJ, 6	deVarone, Donna, HBJ, 5
Barrera, Elma, SCR, 5	Dolson, Hildegard, HBJ, 8
Baylor, Byrd, HBJ, 4	Durham, Katherine, HBJ, 8
Beethoven, Ludwig, SF, 1	Earhart, Amelia, MCM, 1
Bell, Jocelyn, HBJ, 8	Ebright, Roger, SF, 8
Benoit, Joan, HBJ, 6	Ederle, Gertrude, HM, 7
Benson, Benny, HM, 3	Forten, James, HM, 6
Bird, Isabelle, SCR, 8	Frank, Anne, SF, 6
Bourke-White, Margaret, HM, 6	Franklin, Benjamin, HBJ, 2,
Bradbury, Ray, HBJ, 7	SF, 5
Brooks, Gwendolyn, HM, 8	Fritz, Jean, HBJ, 6,
Buford, Gulon, HBJ, 4	SCR, 6
Byars, Betsy, HBJ, 4	Frost, Robert, HM, 8
Calder, Alexander, HBJ, 1,	Gallaudet, Thomas, HBJ, 8
MCM, 1	Galilei, Galileo, HBJ, 3
Calle, Chris, HBJ, 5	Garza, Ernesto, MCM, 7
Carson, Rachel, HBJ, 7	Giovanni, Nikki, HBJ, 7
Carver, George Washington,	Graham, Bette, SCR, 8
SCR, 6, HM, 7	Hacken, Scheila, MCM, 7
Chagall, Marc, HM, 5	Haley, Alex, SF, 6
Chin, Tiffany, MCM, 1,	Hamilton, Margaret, SF, 8
HM, 7	Hautzig, Edna, SF, 8
Cisneros, Henry, SCR, 8	Herriot, James, HBJ, 8
Clark, Eugenie, HM, 4	Heyerdahl, Thor, SCR, 8
Clemente, Roberto, HBJ, 8,	Hill, Cassie, MCM, 4
SF, 6	Hodges, Margaret, MCM, 6
Columbus, Christopher, SCR, 2	Houston, James, SF, 6
Conford, Ellen, HBJ, 5	Hyman, Trina Scharf, HBJ, 4
Cooney, Barbara, HBJ, 3	Inouye, Daniel, SF, 8

Keller, Helen, SF, 8, SCR, 7	Rudolph, Wilma, HM, 7
King, Martin Luther, MCM, 7, SF, 6	Sacajawea, SCR, 5
Frantz, Louis, SCR, 6	Santillippo, Margaret, HBJ, 8
Lawrence, Jacob, HM, 8	Saukini, HM, 5
Lawrence, Mary, HBJ, 7	Savage, Augusta, SCR, 8
Levenson, Sam, MCM, 7	Sensah, Hannah, HBJ, 8
Lewis and Clark, SCR, 5	Sequoyah, MCM, 2
Lincoln, Abraham, SF, 5, HM, 8	Shackleton, Eric, SF, 5, HM, 5
Lindbergh, Charles, SF, 6	Standish, Miles, SCR, 7
Madden, John, HBJ, 6	Stinson, Katherine, SCR, 7
Matisse, Henri, HBJ, 2	Sullivan, Anne, SF, 8, SCR, 7
Monet, Jean Baptiste de, HBJ, 3	Tharpe, Twyla, HM, 7
Morse, Samuel, HBJ, 5	Toussaint, Cheryl, SCR, 7
Muir, John, HM, 7	Tubman, Harriet, SCR, 7
Nagenda, John, MCM, 6	Uchida, Yoshiko, HBJ, 6
O'Dell, Scott, MCM, 6	Ullman, James Ramsey, SCR, 6, HM, 6, HM, 8
O'Keeffe, Georgia, SF, 8	Valenzuela, Fernando, SCR, 8
Ortega, Katherine, SCR, 6	Ward, Lillian, HM, 8
Pepe, Maria, SR, 6	Washington, George, HBJ, 5, SCR, 3, SF, 5
Perlman, Itzhak, HBJ, 4	Webster, Noah, MCM, 7
Price, Leontyne, HBJ, 7	Wheatley, Phyllis, HBJ, 5
Quimby, Harriet, SF, 5, SCR, 6	Whyte, Edna, HBJ, 7
Revere, Paul, SCR, 5	Wilder, Laura Ingalls, SF, 4, HM, 4
Ride, Sally, HBJ, 3	Wonder, Stevie, SCR, 6
Riis, Jacob, HBJ, 7	Wright, Orville & Wilbur, MCM, 1, HM, 4
Rodgers, Bill, HM, 7	Zaharias, Babe, SCR, 8
Rodriguez, Paul, HM, 7	Zenger, Anna, HM, 8
Roosevelt, Eleanor, HBJ, 3, SF, 1	

KEY

The name of the person is followed by initials
indicating the publisher of the basal series
in which the biography appears
and a number indicating the grade level.

HBJ=Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich

HM=Houghton Mifflin

MCM=Macmillan

SF=Scott Foresman

SCR=Scribner's

eighth grade level in another. That span of grades, however, was unusually wide. The majority of the publishers placed most of their biographical selections in the upper half of their series, so the majority of the subjects appear in the grade four to grade eight range.

Another difference among the series centered around the number of people chosen for biographical coverage. The HBJ series, which featured many children's authors and illustrators, included a total of 47 biographies. The totals for the other basal series ranged from 19 to 28 biographies.

What are the characteristics of the people featured in these basal biographies? Here are a few descriptors:

Of the people featured, 57% were males and 43% were females. The analysis by race showed 58% Caucasian, 26% Black, 6% Hispanic, 3% Oriental, and 7% members of other groups. The distribution in terms of current versus historical personages showed that 41% of the featured people were living, 59% dead.

Additionally, some areas of achievement received much more attention in basal biographies than did others. Book-connected people (authors and illustrators) fared the best. They dominated the biographies, representing over a third of all selections.

In descending order, other areas of achievement were service-providers (e.g., inventors, politicians); adventurers (e.g., explorers, aviators); and entertainers (e.g., stars, athletes). So, while there was some agreement that book-connected people were most worthy of attention, the variation among the series denied any appreciable commonality.

Discussion

Some of the best minds in reading instruction are involved in work on basal series. But these people are surely not unanimous in their thinking, at least not insofar as basal biographies are concerned. The divergence of the experts emphasizes the fact that there is no common ground, no core of agreement about who receives biographical coverage in basals. This situation can be viewed as a case of good news/bad news.

On the positive side, this situation allows for the inclusion of some high-interest "newcomers to fame," such as Bill Cosby and Sally Ride, who might serve as excellent role models for today's students. It also enables the basals to respond quickly to current concerns and to reflect the impact made by such groups as feminists and ethnic minorities. The content analysis of these five basal series revealed that women occupy 43% of the biographical space and that ethnic minorities account for 42% of that same space.

On the negative side, however, the lack of a common core may be viewed as weakening the transmission of our cultural heritage. *The Closing of the American Mind* (Bloom, 1987) and *Cultural Literacy* (Hirsch, 1987) are recent books which deplore the lack of background knowledge of our cultural heritage evidenced by today's students. The deficit is alleged to be especially severe in the areas of history and literature (Ravitch and Finn, 1987).

Biographies enrich the areas of history and literature, so they can make a contribution to the cultural literacy of today's students. However, if these five series are any indication, the disparate coverage from one series of basals to another may weaken the transmission of a common cultural heritage.

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's poem, "The Psalm of Life," (here quoted in a slightly altered version) provides us with this answer for the question: Why read biographies?

*Lives of great ones all remind us
We can make our lives sublime,
And, departing, leave behind us
Footprints in the sands of time.*

Some of the people featured in basal biographies are making footprints in the sands of today. And some, who have died, achieved a degree of fame in their time. But not all the subjects currently featured in basal biographies have made recognized, historically significant contributions.

So we return to the initial considerations of priorities and space. There is limited room in a basal series for biographies; there is a vast array of people who might be featured. The judgments have been made for the current series of basals, and Table 1 shows the results of those judgments. For each new edition, however, the question arises again: which people will occupy the biographical space?

Voices on both sides of the Atlantic are calling for the return of more "heroes of legend and history" (Rae, 1988; Ravitch and Finn, 1987). In the past, biographies of such giants as Moses, Ulysses, Florence Nightingale, and Joan of Arc were standard fare for young readers. According to Rae (1988), reading about magnificent heroes and heroines helps children learn that people can triumph over misfortunes and that the first defeat need not be final.

We want today's young people to know that they can struggle against life's difficulties and emerge victorious, like

the heroes of history and legend. If the basals of the 1990's reflect the groundswell of interest in preserving our cultural heritage, we are likely to see those basals contain more biographies of people who have made significant footprints in the sands of time.

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Fact and Fiction: Personalizing Social Studies through the Textbook-Tradebook Connection

**Maria Ceprano
Eleanor B. English**

Long ago when I was just learning to read and the world was on the brink of war, I discovered that if I wanted to look for the truth of what was happening around me and I wanted to know what made people tick, who made the events I couldn't control, the place to look for truth was in a story. Facts simply told me what things were. Story told me what they meant.

Madeline L'Engle (Norton, 1988)

Writing of her response to people and events brought about through fiction, Madeline L'Engle, renowned author of books for children and young adults, suggests the contrasting effect of expository and narrative writing on the students' understandings about what they have read in the social studies. Exposition is the explicit, reportive-type writing in which a large number of facts and concepts are compactly presented in an unembellished, depersonalized style; social studies textbooks contain this style of writing. Students often find it difficult to react to exposition, because this mode fails to provide the personal and meaningful connection to a world and a people with whom the students can identify.

Narration or story-type writing, as found in historical and multi-ethnic fictional tradebooks, on the other hand, is that artistic form created for evoking images, ideas and feelings in

addition to presenting accurate facts and settings. In *Literature for Today's Young Adults*, Donelson and Nilsen (1989) note that literature, used within the social studies context, frees students to travel vicariously to other times and places, and helps them to recognize that members of the human race, regardless of where or how they live, have more similarities than differences. In the narrative model, readers approach the facts of history by involving themselves in a personal way with the lives of people in the pages: "...it is through exciting adventures, life-and-death struggles, heroic, tragic and heart-warming incidents, that they move towards an appreciation of the external facts" (Britton, 1965).

In addition, fiction allows the readers to share the thoughts and feelings of another person; the character seems to speak to them with a "personal voice" (Britton, 1965). Provided with a perspective of the inner sentiments of the main characters, usually individuals like themselves, the students can more closely identify, internalize, and empathize with the characters and their efforts to cope with or resolve problems forced upon them by the events within the historical or ethnic situation. This concern for the characters makes the surrounding contextual events more illuminating and more interesting to the students. The personal interaction with the fictionalized characters is the key in facilitating the students' knowledge and attitudes about the past and the peoples of other cultures. Personalizing the expository facts of the social studies through literature can make the unembellished facts more meaningful to students of all ages.

Illuminating facts through fiction

It is suggested, therefore, that teachers provide students with opportunities to bridge facts — the textbook — with fiction — the tradebook — to foster a clearer understanding

of social studies concepts, such as culture, empathy, pluralism, and interdependence, and skills, such as gathering and using data, recognizing cause and effect, and developing constructive attitudes toward diversity (Weaver, 1988; Fleming and Weber, 1980; State University of New York, State Education Department, 1982, Elementary; 1987, Secondary).

A passage from a recently published social studies textbook for middle grade students illustrates the value of the textbook-tradebook connection. The authors present the important concept of segregation, as it related to school segregation in the South during the late 1930s, with a brief mention and a limited development:

In practice, separate facilities were almost never equal. School buildings for black children, for example, were often old, poorly equipped and supplied with out-of-date books. Even if the facilities were exactly equal, Marshall pointed out, "the very fact of segregation establishes a feeling of humiliation and deprivation in the group considered to be inferior." (Brown and Bass, 1986)

This allusion begs for elaboration of a heartfelt understanding of the concept of segregation and the effect on the lives of the individuals who were, and are, the victims of prejudice. The tradebook, *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry* (Taylor, 1976), vividly dramatizes the concept as it portrays the effects of segregation on the character, Little Man, with whom the reader can identify. We pick up the story as Little Man ponders over the soiled and time-worn textbook his teacher has only moments earlier forced him to accept:

...as he stared at the book's inside cover, his face clouded, changing from sulky acceptance to puzzlement. His brow furrowed. Then his eyes grew wide and he sucked in his breath and sprang from his chair like a wounded animal, flinging the book onto the floor again. "Now, just what's

gotten into you, Clayton Chester?" But Little Man said nothing. He stood staring down at the open book, shivering with indignant anger. "Pick it up," [the teacher] ordered. "No!" defied Little Man. "No? I'll give you ten seconds to pick up that book, boy, or I'm going to get my switch..."

Reading further, students discover that inside the cover was a record of the date of issuance, the condition of the book, and the race of the student to whom the book was issued. From 1922 to 1933, the book, which was judged from new to average to poor, was given to a white student. Eleven years later, when the book was assessed as *very poor*, it was deemed proper for the "nigra" student.

In this passage, the readers can recognize the cause of Little Man's anger because they come to empathize with his frustration over the insult to his self-worth and dignity. Little Man's encounter with forces beyond his control makes the concept of segregation become alive and meaningful to the readers.

Historical and multiethnic literature abounds with opportunities to personalize the facts presented in social studies textbooks throughout the grades. The concept of war, when taught utilizing the fact and fiction bridge, can answer the critics' demand "for a more enlarged view of history that will teach how everybody lived, not just soldiers and statesmen, not just the winners, but ordinary people..." (Donelson and Nilson, 1989). The tradebook *When Hitler Stole the Pink Rabbit* (Kerr, 1971), presents a view of the social upheaval of the World War II years which elementary students can understand. Anna, the main character, is only nine years old when she begins to face the effects of an oppressive government. Following the detainment of her father by the Nazis, she and her brother are rushed out of Germany by their mother to Switzerland, a strange country with a strange language.

Eventually the family is united, but they are now poor. All of their possessions have been confiscated by the Nazi government. What this feels like, from the viewpoint of a nine-year-old, is described most effectively in the episode in which Anna realizes that even her most treasured toy, Pink Rabbit, has been taken along with all the family possessions. The book shows how events of that era affected those Jews who, though fortunate enough to escape the worst horrors of the holocaust, still suffered from the consequences of war. Since these events center around a character with whom the children can associate, content information is reinforced and critical evaluation regarding the events can be enhanced.

Middle school students can easily relate to the problems that beset Elvira, the twelve-year-old heroine of *Summer Of The Zeppelin* (McCutcheon, 1985). The story is set in a small village in Suffolk, England during the spring of 1918. Elvira is burdened with responsibilities stemming from her father's departure to fight in the "war to end all wars." Elvira's mother must take an outside job to support the family, and she expects the young girl to take over extra chores. The carefree life of childhood has gone; she finds herself catapulted into the adult world, facing adult decision-making situations. This is brought clearly into focus when Elvira and her friend discover a young German soldier hiding in an abandoned house. Although he is friendly, he is still the enemy, and Elvira is faced with a dilemma. Should she report him to the authorities or not? Reading this story, students gain insight about the effects of war on the personal lives of those on the home front, and also come to the realization that good people, worthy of esteem, can be found on both sides of a conflict.

To accompany the textbook's factual recounting of armies and battles, secondary students may read historical "war

novels," in which the authors are interested in the physical and psychological results of war on the characters (Donelson and Nilson, 1989). *The Last Mission* (Mazur, 1979), for example, follows teen-aged Jack Raab who, filled with dreams of personal heroism and glory as a pilot, lies about his age in order to join the Air Force. Jack's delusions are shattered when he is shot down and captured, and sees his buddies die. Reflecting about his war experiences, Jack tells a group of high school students that war is not like the movies, filled with fun and songs, but is about violence and death, with millions of ordinary people besides the combatants being killed. This action-packed narrative, with its sensitive treatment of the major character's change of attitude, can capture students' interest while providing accurate background facts concerning World War II.

An emotional response to a fictional character's experiences can illuminate factual accounts of an era. The devastating effects of the Civil War on the people and the countryside of the Confederate South have been dramatized for readers over the years through the account of Scarlett O'Hara's escape from the burning city of Atlanta in *Gone With the Wind* (Mitchell, 1936).

Textbook-tradebook resources

The first task that teachers face in bridging fact and fiction is the selection of an appropriate matching tradebook that complements important concepts from the textbook. While this may seem a discouraging obstacle to social studies teachers who are unfamiliar with the literature for children and young adults, a variety of reference materials are available in most libraries which can aid in the search and selection of appropriate tradebooks. For the young reader, these may

include various editions of *The Bookfinder* (Dreyer, 1988) which is published every three years, and such indices as *A Guide To Subjects and Concepts in Picture Book Format* (Yonkers Public Library Children's Service, 1979); *Children's Books of The Year*, published annually (Child Study Children's Book Committee, 1987); *Gateway to Readable Books* (Withrow, Carey and Herzel, 1975); and the bimonthly *Horn Book Magazine* (Horn Book, Inc.), which also includes a section on "Stories for Older Readers."

Some sources that could help in the selection of books for older readers include: *Booklist* (American Library Association, published monthly with book reviews, see "Books For Young Adults" section); *The ALAN Review* (The National Council of Teachers of English, published three times a year); *Your Reading: A Booklist For Junior High and Middle School Students* (James and Davis, 1988, annotated according to students' interests); *Junior High School Library Catalog* (Isaacson and Bogart, 1985, published every five years); *Books For The Teen Age* (Office of Young Adult Services, 1988, published annually); *Books For You: A Booklist For Senior High School Students* (Abrahamson and Carter, 1988, published every five years, with each title accompanied by a brief annotation). Of course, the most important and readily available source of information about books specific to grade levels is the school librarian.

Criteria for book selection

Once a book which matches textbook content has been found, the teacher must assess the book in relation to these criteria: Are the time, location, and people authentically recreated through dress, speech, modes of housing and transportation, and correctly depicted for the historical period? Are the book characters three-dimensional and so

believable that they come alive as humans with whom the readers can identify? Are the beliefs and values of the characters true to the time period? Is the theme as worthwhile and relevant in today's society as it was in the historical period being represented? (Norton, 1988). Are the illustrations detailed and historically accurate? The students "...must come away with the feeling that they know a time and a place better. It is as if they lived in it for at least a few hours" (Donelson and Nilson, 1989).

Tradebooks can expand upon textbook content which calls for knowledge of peoples in different cultures. Books in the multiethnic literature genre must also be evaluated using these criteria: Does the book extend the students' view of the world and the diversified people around them? Does the book project people as unique individuals with their own thoughts and emotions rather than as representatives of a particular racial or ethnic group? Is the culture of a racial or ethnic minority group accurately portrayed? Are the characters from a variety of socioeconomic backgrounds, educational levels and occupations? When a multiethnic book is set in America, are the characters, both in the text and in the illustrations, recognizably African-American, Hispanic, Asian, or Native American? (Norton, 1988).

Guidelines for using tradebooks

Teachers who are unaccustomed to the process of integrating literature with textbook readings may find these general guidelines to be useful. At the elementary level, begin reading the tradebook to your class several days before initiating a textbook unit. Make special note of main characters, emphasizing those human strengths and frailties with which students can identify. Refer to the illustrations that give the students a visual image of the setting of events to be

studied. This will create interest in the unit topic as well as provide background knowledge of the content to be studied.

When reading longer books, do so in installments that are appropriate to the attention spans of the students. With youngsters in the primary grades, this may translate to five to ten minutes per reading, one or two times a day; older children may have a fifteen to twenty minute reading, usually until the end of a chapter so as to pique their interest for the coming installment.

Intermediate grade, middle school and secondary school students may be directed to a variety of books dealing with the topic that are available in the library. The books chosen would be read before entering into a formal unit lesson. Sufficient time should be provided to allow the students to read and discuss their chosen books.

A Character Grid is a useful technique which may be employed with each book read. Students note on the grid all the qualities of each major character under headings such as physical and emotional characteristics, education, occupation, strengths/weaknesses, likes/dislikes, conflicts, resolutions. Preparation of the grid helps students become more adroit at character analysis, and illuminates the historical background and the social forces that influence the characters and their actions as well.

Once instruction from the text begins, it is useful, at all levels, to design a series of questions to guide textbook-tradebook discussions. The questions should emphasize not only recall, but higher level thinking: questions which require analysis, synthesis and evaluation. This will help the students make the connection between the facts presented in the text

and the more detailed events and characters presented in the narrative. Discussions should foster the development of inferencing as well as critical thinking skills.

Since the foundation of social studies understandings are laid at the elementary level, emphasis should be placed on a variety of activities that can extend and reinforce the textbook-tradebook connection. To promote reading comprehension, encourage pupils to do further independent reading by creating a reading center in the classroom that features other tradebooks centering on the unit topic. Reports on these books may be given orally so that all the students can share the learning. Listening and speaking skills can be enhanced by having the pupils formulate questions they might ask the characters encountered in the text and tradebooks. These questions can be employed in mock interviews with different students cast in the roles of interrogator and historical or ethnic character. Interviews may be staged as radio broadcasts or television talk shows where all the students can participate as questioners or reactors. Book reviews can be written, collated and bound in book form to keep permanently in the reading center. Pictures of the characters and the setting can be drawn accompanied by pertinent captions. Original sequel stories, created as a whole class, small group, or individual activity, can describe how the tradebook character would react when faced with other situations. Poems and plays may also be written about the character and the historical events.

Both the text and the tradebook can be used as sources of information about the traditions of ethnic groups. In addition to the activities noted above, an ethnic fair may be planned, based on the readings, with students recreating the customs, songs, dances, art, and foods of the groups under study.

Consultants from ethnic groups should be involved in the planning for such an activity. In teaching about native Americans, teachers should select tradebooks that emphasize the unique lifestyles, customs, and tales of the varied tribes. *The Gift of the Sacred Dog* (Goble, 1980) and *The Friendly Wolf* (Goble and Goble, 1974), and de Paola's *The Legend of Bluebonnet* (1983), among others, are appropriate choices.

Conclusion

To personalize the social studies for students, textbook units of study should be accompanied by well-chosen related fictional readings, through which character identification can illuminate historical events and provide understanding of our multiethnic culture. This textbook-tradebook connection will result in a better understanding of textbook facts. Teacher-directed activities focusing on the fictional stories can reinforce concepts, attitudes, and skills in the social studies for students at all grade levels.

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....EXPANDING HORIZONS....

Preschool Scrapbook Journals

*This teaching idea is shared by Cynthia Kelly,
preschool teacher, Sara Swickard Preschool, Kalamazoo, Michigan.*

Journals can be used across the grades to encourage whole language development — reading, writing, speaking, listening. During the time that I've been a preschool teacher many people have asked me whether preschool children are capable of keeping a personal journal considering the fact that they are only able to write a few words, even using invented spelling. My answer is that preschool journals work very well — in the form of "Scrapbook Journals."

Each child is provided with a scrapbook. These are some of the items which children can paste in their scrapbooks: their own drawings; photographs, postcards and other small items brought from home; items from the preschool environment, such as leaves collected on a leaf walk during the fall. Sometimes the children choose something to paste in their scrapbooks individually; sometimes all the children add to their scrapbooks at the same time.

When something is pasted in a scrapbook, the child is encouraged to write or dictate a narrative about it. Each scrapbook item provides a personal motivation for writing, and — later — the pasted-in items serve as cues to help the child recall the meaning of the written words, so that the journal can be "read" and "reread" and shared with others.

Often a whole class works together on their scrapbook journals. After a nature walk, tables will be set up for pasting and for writing, and children move from table to table. While some are working on placing their chosen items in their scrapbooks, others dictate their stories to a teacher. Others write their own stories using invented spelling, and tell what they've written to a teacher or aide, who may transcribe it using standard spelling if the child wishes.

When the stories are written, teachers or aides join small groups of children to read their journal entries aloud. This can also be a time for several children to review their whole scrapbook journal. When entries are reviewed and read often, the text becomes familiar to the children. They can read and enjoy their scrapbooks by themselves.

The scrapbook journal is a wonderful learning tool for preschool children. The activity builds upon children's natural desire to use language, and to become readers and writers. They are motivated by their own interests, and work at their own pace. They learn naturally, and realize that they are capable learners.





REVIEWS

Professional materials

Using Literature in the Elementary Classroom, revised edition. John Warren Stewig and Sam Leaton Sebesta, editors. 1989. National Council of Teachers of English, 1111 Kenyon Road, Urbana, Illinois 61801. ISBN 0-8141-5618-5. Softcover. 132 pp. US\$ \$8.95.

*Reviewed by Kathryn Welsch,
Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo, Michigan.*

The editors of this concise but densely-packed work note that the first edition of *Using Literature in the Elementary Classroom* (1978) stemmed from a concern with the fragmentation of reading into isolated skills and a commitment to integrating reading instruction across the curriculum. The stated purpose of this revised, enlarged edition is to help teachers implement the changes that will move elementary programs toward a literature based curriculum.

The collection of chapters contained in this volume range in topics from the nature of our language and the use of picture books in early reading experiences to a focus on development of visual literacy through book illustrations and creative drama in the classroom. All contributing authors have been practitioners in elementary classrooms, and the emphasis is on what works in the classroom to develop literacy through literature.

The authors take care to incorporate the latest research in support of their recommendations. Two chapters particularly complete in this area are *The Tradebook as an Instructional Tool* by Helen Felsenthal, describing her work on metacognition, and Richard Kolcynski's chapter *Reading Leads to Writing*.

Practical suggestions for implementation in the classroom are the core of these chapters. These suggestions are not a packaged set of activities, but rather starting points for teachers upon which to build a program.

Perhaps the most useful feature of this volume is the inclusion of three lists at the end of each chapter: Recommended Books for Classroom Use, References, and Related Readings. These three collections of references for teachers provide lists of materials and a complete program implementation outline for each chapter topic.

The underlying rationale for this work as well as the inclusion of practical suggestions and professional resources serve to make it a useful addition to a professional library.



Adventuring With Books, 9th edition. Mary-Jett Simpson, editor. 1989. National Council of Teachers of English, 1111 Kenyon Road, Urbana, Illinois 61801. ISBN 0-8141-0078-3. Softcover. 549 pp. US\$ \$16.50.

Reviewed by Jeanne M. Jacobson

The most recent publication in NCTE's rotating series of booklists is this ninth edition of an annotated bibliography of approximately 1800 books published between 1985 and 1988, recommended for children from infancy through sixth grade. Selections are categorized by genre, content, subject area, and age-level of interest. In major categories a list of recommended books published before 1985 is also included.

A useful feature is the inclusion, with some content summaries, indicating study units and themes which the book would enhance. The final chapter provides descriptions of major book awards with chronological lists of past award-winning books. This is an invaluable resource for teachers and librarians.

Books for children

Addie's Dakota Winter, Losing Uncle Tim, and All About Asthma

reviewed by Peggy Lee,

Parchment Middle School, Parchment, Michigan

Addie's Dakota Winter. Written by Laurie Lawlor; illustrated by Toby Gowing. 1989. Albert Whitman & Company, 5747 West Howard Street, Niles, Illinois 60648. ISBN: 0-8079-0171-9. Hardcover. 160 pp. US\$10.50.

Addie's Dakota Winter is set during the late 1800's, and is reminiscent of Laura Ingalls Wilder's well-known books about life on the prairie during that period. The story teaches the value of friendship between two people even when they come from different cultural backgrounds and countries.

In her new home, Addie experiences cruelty from school bullies, and the hardships of a terrible winter blizzard, but she is strong enough to befriend a boisterous Norwegian girl who is an even more recent newcomer to the prairie. This is an excellent book for children in the intermediate grades to read or have read to them. The story will assist them in understanding themselves, as well as people of different races, countries, and language backgrounds. Children might also enjoy another book by Lawlor, *Addie Across the Prairie*, which tells about Addie's first few months on the Dakota frontier.

Losing Uncle Tim. Written by Mary Kate Jordan; illustrated by Judith Friedman. 1989. Albert Whitman & Company, 5747 West Howard Street, Niles, Illinois 60648. ISBN: 0-8075-4756-5. Hardcover. 28 pp. US\$12.95.

Adults do not like to discuss death with children because they want to protect them from unnecessary pain, or they think that

children aren't experienced or old enough to understand death. Children's literature is one route to enable children to separate truths from fantasies about death and dying.

Losing Uncle Tim is a story about the death of a boy's favorite uncle from AIDS. Through this fictional account, children will read about how a young boy handles the dying and death of a close relative and also they will get factual information about the disease called AIDS.

The story does not dwell on the death of Daniel's Uncle Tim but tells about the good times they had together, such as the times they played together outdoors, the wooden ducks they sailed on the river, and the times they would wrap up in quilts and drink hot cider as they rocked back and forth with their toes pointing towards a fire in the old wood stove.

As the story progresses, Daniel's incorrect ideas about AIDS — such as his belief that you will catch the disease if you take care of a person who has it — are corrected. This book, suitable for children in the intermediate grades to read or hear read aloud, is one way to help alleviate children's fears about death and disease.

All About Asthma. Written by William and Vivian Ostrow; illustrated by Blanche Sims. 1989. Albert Whitman & Company, 5747 West Howard Street, Niles, Illinois 60648. ISBN: 0-8075-0276-6. Hardcover. 40 pp. US\$10.95.

Children's capacity to function zestfully in their environment typically depends on health and vigor. Some children lack this physical stamina because of ill health. *All About Asthma* describes a young boy's bouts with asthma, and explains, from a first-hand perspective, facts and fallacies about the problem.

The book includes a list of famous people who have suffered from asthma: Olympic star Jackie Joyner-Kersey, movie star

Elizabeth Taylor, former Vice-President Walter Mondale, Christopher Reeves (alias Superman), and former President Theodore Roosevelt.

This is an excellent book for the home or school library shelf, and would be a useful resource in pediatrician's offices. As the dedication page suggests, it may help in getting children with asthma "on the right road to breathing easier."

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*Princess Furball.* Written by Charlotte Huck; illustrated by Anita Lobel. 1989. Greenwillow Books, 105 Madison Avenue, New York, NY 10016. ISBN 0-688-07837-0. Hardcover. 40 pp. US\$13.95.

*Reviewed by Jeanne M. Jacobson*

In retirement, Charlotte Huck has turned from teaching and writing about children's literature, to the retelling of classic tales. Her version of the story of the motherless princess whose father seeks to sell her in marriage to a wealthy ogre, and who uses her wit and energy to escape first into cruel hardship, then into a happy-ever-after future as queen and mother, is wholly elegant.

Huck knows the questions children will ask — But who took care of the princess when she was a baby? How did a princess learn to make soup? — and she has built the answers into her story. Human sadness and human joy are interwoven here, even in the beautiful dedication: "In memory of Ginny, who loved this tale as much as her twin sister does."

Anita Lobel's drawings are a magnificent parallel telling of the story, which can themselves be "read" again and again, from the bleak frontispiece of a burial scene to the concluding family portrait in which carved images reminiscent of mother and nurse appear as part of the frame. This book is a treasure.

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