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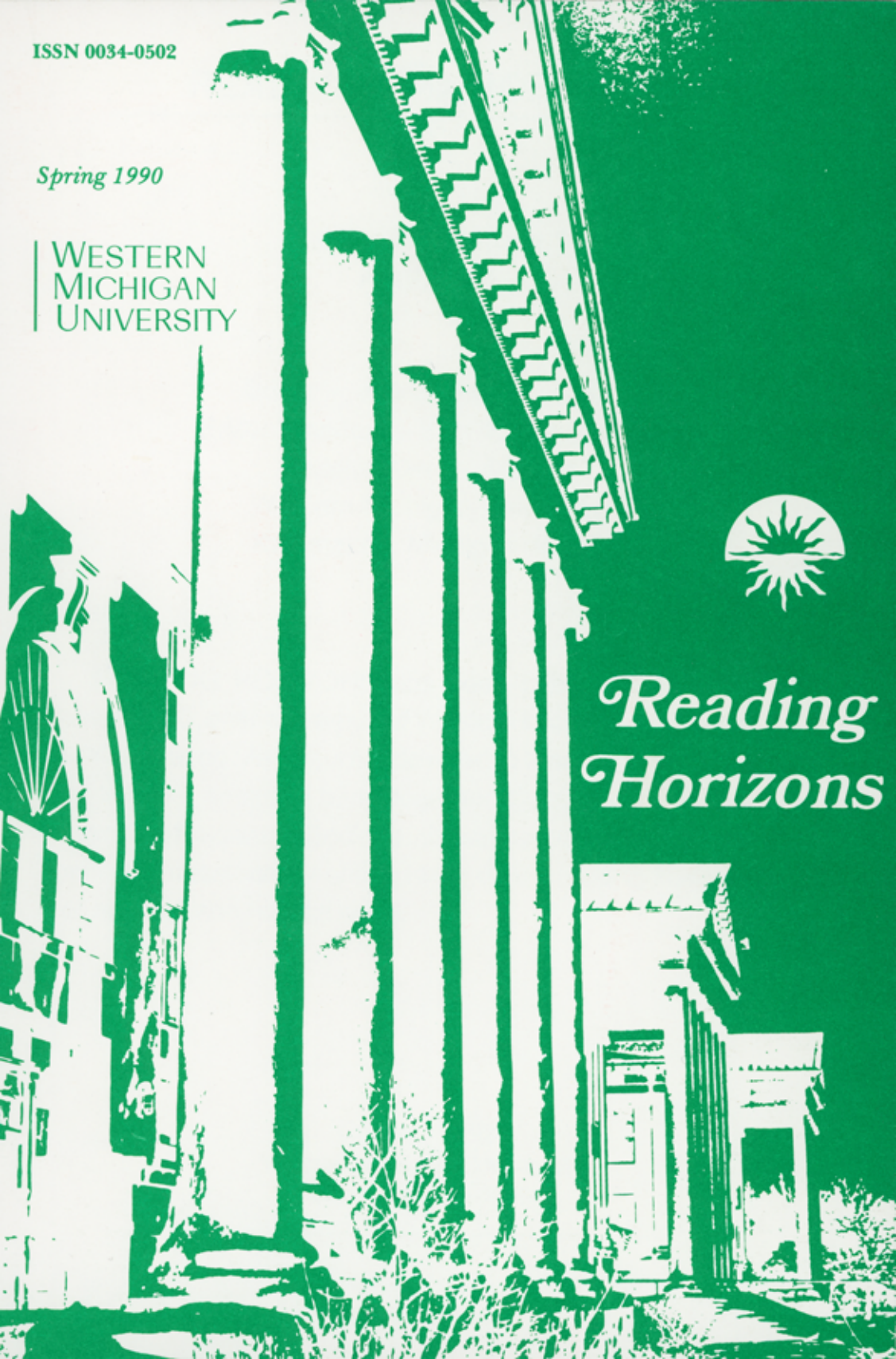
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Alternatives to Ability Grouping in Reading

Terrell A. Young

Ability grouping, which has long been a controversial subject in American education (Slavin, 1987a), is commonly used for reading instruction in American schools (Au and Mason, 1985; Hiebert, 1983). Classroom teachers often discuss the topic of ability grouping, and at times, the conversations become arguments. There are often three positions taken in these discussions.

Position one: "I prefer interclass grouping since it is easier to meet the needs of students when all of the students are of similar ability. Teachers can address the individual needs of their students by dividing the students into high, average, and low groups for the entire grade level. Then the teachers can do a better job since they have only one group to prepare for. Furthermore, the children don't have to spend so much time doing seatwork while the teacher works with other students."

Position two: "I can better meet the needs of my students in intraclass reading groups. It is easier to get to know the children and know what to expect from them. Besides, the students have good role models in the stronger readers, and this won't occur with interclass grouping. I can make sure that my students don't 'fall through the cracks.' Too much time is lost when children go from teacher to teacher. I like my students to see themselves as a group working together."

Position three: "Whole class instruction works best for me. Since I teach fifth grade, all of my students should be exposed to fifth grade reading material. It doesn't hurt the bright students to review and students who have difficulty in reading need the opportunity to see what they should be doing."

While teachers may hold one of the positions as the ideal, they don't always have a choice. Many teachers teach in schools where instructional patterns are firmly established. Each position has advantages and disadvantages for teachers and students.

It seems logical that ability grouping should make it possible for teachers to meet the needs of individual students more successfully. However, the research has not been conclusive in the findings related to ability grouping. For example, Slavin (1987a, 1987b, 1988) found that assigning students to a classroom by ability was ineffective, regrouping by ability for reading and math may be effective, and grouping across grade levels (as in the Joplin Plan) for reading was effective. Kulik and Kulik (1987) question Slavin's findings and conclude that ability grouping is most effective only for high ability students. Likewise, Hiebert (1987) challenges Slavin's findings and states the findings are inadequate for guiding future research, policy, or practice. Further analysis of issues relating to grouping for instruction is needed.

The purposes of this article are to discuss problems associated with ability grouping in reading, including issues relating to group placement, inequality of instruction and treatment, and classroom management; to consider the affective consequences of grouping; and to suggest alternatives to ability grouping in reading.

Group placement and movement between groups

When students are placed in a reading group, there is very little movement from group to group after the first month of school (Hiebert, 1983; Shannon, 1985). In fact, in some schools, children stay in the same groups from year to year (Eldredge and Butterfield, 1986). Teachers often group children for reading only on the basis of the basal that was last completed. Thus the phrase "once a bluebird, always a bluebird" is more accurate than one would wish (Anderson, Hiebert, Scott, and Wilkinson, 1985).

Inequality of instruction

Inequality in the quantity and quality of instruction provided to poor readers presents another problem. Students placed in low groups often receive "second-class" instruction (Slavin, 1988). They spend less time learning, are taught lower level skills, and are exposed to fewer types of instructional materials (Au and Mason, 1985; Durkin, 1989; Trimble and Sinclair, 1987).

These readers spend most of their time reading orally while their counterparts in the "high" group spend most of their time reading silently. Time spent in oral reading is negatively correlated with achievement, while time spent reading silently is the most potent predictor of school reading achievement (Allington, 1983; Hiebert, 1983). During oral reading there is often only one child actively engaged while the others are passive listeners. Because children get tired of listening, they often misbehave, and therefore the teacher must spend instructional time managing the group (Hiebert, 1983). In contrast, during silent reading all of the children take an active role. Silent reading enables good readers to read substantially more text per day than the readers assigned to groups which concentrate on oral reading (Allington, 1983).

While the good readers are reading silently, the emphasis of their instruction is on meaning; they are reading words in a meaningful context. On the other hand, students assigned to low reading groups are often reading isolated word lists (Allington, 1983; Gambrell, Wilson and Gantt, 1981; Shannon, 1985). As teachers listen to their students read, they are more apt to interrupt (or allow another student to interrupt) a poor reader than a good reader. The teacher encourages good readers to finish the sentence to figure out the pronunciation of the word. Yet the poor reader is either told to "sound out" the word or is given the word by the teacher (Allington, 1983).

Differences in questioning

A further difference exists in the questions that are posed to students of differing abilities (Young, 1988). Teachers ask students with higher abilities more questions (Cornbleth, David, and Button, 1974; Rosenthal, 1973) and more higher level questions than their peers with less ability (Anderson, et al., 1985; Brown, Palincsar, and Armbruster, 1984; Guszak, 1983; Hiebert, 1983; Meyer, 1984; Morrison, 1987; Pearson, 1983; Shake, 1988; Shake and Allington, 1985). Not only do teachers pose more questions and more higher level questions for students whom they expect to achieve, but they also give them more time to answer, more prompts and clues, and thereby communicate the belief that they can answer the questions (Brophy and Good, 1970, 1986; Cooper and Good, 1983; Good and Weinstein, 1986; Rosenthal, 1973).

Seatwork

Seatwork creates another problem that seems to be inherent with intra-class reading groups. Unfortunately, many students spend up to 70% of their instructional time doing seatwork (Anderson et al., 1985). The seatwork that students

do while the teacher is working with another group often consists of fill-in-the-blank worksheets or workbook pages. Such seatwork activity is a type of indirect reading that does not facilitate reading achievement (Allington, 1983; Anderson et al., 1985; Hiebert, 1983). Furthermore, seatwork is expensive financially. Jachym, Allington, and Broikou (1989) found that the average annual expense for seatwork, per second grader in their study, was \$59.98, with a range from \$29.09 to \$101.84 (in U.S. dollars).

Affective consequences

Finally, ability grouping has negative affective consequences. Students of average and low ability tend to have a lower self-concept when they are in ability groups (Eder, 1983; Hiebert, 1983; Trimble and Sinclair, 1987). Children who are regularly placed in low groups may be discouraged about their progress and their capabilities and therefore less motivated to learn. These affective consequences alone are sufficient reasons for abandoning or at least modifying the use of ability groups.

Although there are many problems associated with ability groups in reading, some form of ability grouping may be needed. If all children receive the same instruction the poorer readers will never be given a chance to catch up (Bloom, 1976). The poor readers need more instruction and reading opportunity than the good readers (Allington, 1983). Yet there are many ways to avoid or at least lessen the problems of ability grouping in reading.

Alternatives to ability grouping

Just as the problems associated with ability grouping in reading are many, so are the alternatives. Among them are unlocking group membership; using whole class instruction;

offering additional instruction for poorer readers; modifying seatwork; and using needs grouping, interest grouping, peer tutoring, cooperative learning, or flexible grouping.

Unlocking group membership

A solution to the problem of children being locked in a reading group is provided by periodic diagnosis and observation. When children are progressing and can successfully work at a higher level, then they should be given the chance, and moved to a higher group even if they haven't read all of the book or completed all of the workbook assignments (Anderson et al., 1985). On the other hand, children who are not succeeding in a group should be given a chance to work in a group in which they can find success. Teachers need to make it clear to children that grouping is for the purpose of providing instruction and group membership will change during the instructional process (Devine, 1989).

Whole class instruction

Also, whole-class instruction when teaching to meet the needs common to all members of the class can provide a positive alternative to ability grouping (Goodlad, 1984; Oakes, 1986a, 1986b; Oliver, 1970; Robinson and Good, 1987). Phonics, comprehension, and vocabulary building exercises can be appropriate for whole-group instruction (Anderson et al., 1985). Moreover, teacher directed activities tend to promote on-task behavior, and the most effective teachers use a combination of whole-group and small-group instruction (Rosenshine and Stevens, 1984). Mason and Au (1986) present additional advantages of whole group instruction: one can have longer lessons, only one lesson and set of materials is needed, supervision is for one group, private help can be provided to individuals while students are working, and children who need extra time to learn do not lose self-

respect by being identified as lower ability learners.

Additional instruction for poor readers

Teachers often say, with some justification, that poor readers need help with developing decoding skills. Since these students need to develop decoding skills and need the opportunities for silent reading with emphasis on meaning, Allington (1980) suggests that poor readers meet with the teacher twice daily rather than once. Students can spend one period with instruction based on meaningful silent reading and the other on decoding activity. Teachers often have time at the end of the day that might be used more productively in reading time than in other activities.

Seatwork modification

The seatwork problem can be solved, in part, by giving students opportunity for reading in place of all but the most useful worksheets and workbook pages (Allington, 1977; Jachym, et al., 1989). Increased contextual reading, as opposed to work on isolated skills, can produce significant gains in reading achievement (Allington, 1983). This contextual reading should be relatively easy, in order to develop fluency and maintain on-task behavior.

Furthermore, writing is a form of seatwork that affects reading in positive ways (Anderson, et al., 1985). Students can respond to their reading in writing or write about some other topic. Kirby and Liner (1981) recommend getting students' reactions to their readings through writing reactions to stories, letters to authors, advertisements for the book, a continuation of the story, newspaper interviews with characters in the story, letters to a character in the story or letters from one character to another, or a brief version of the story from another character's point of view. Moreover, integrating

reading and writing instruction helps students understand the structure of text material and how to use that structure in their own writing (Cunningham and Cunningham, 1987; Raphael, Englert, and Kirschner, 1989).

Needs grouping

Another alternative to ability grouping is needs or skills grouping. Students are placed by ability for reading groups, but they only meet in those groups two or three days a week. Since children of differing abilities may have the same skill needs, the teacher also assigns students to needs groups (Devine, 1989). A skills management system may be utilized in determining the skills to be taught (Otto, Wolf, and Eldridge, 1984). Students are given diagnostic pretests to determine which skills and strategies they should be taught. Children who have common needs are grouped together. As children demonstrate mastery of the skill, they are dropped from the group and placed in a new group according to their needs.

Interest grouping

Grouping by interest provides children of differing ability with an opportunity to work together. In this method, children who have common interests share reading materials and cooperate on reading-related projects. Children can often leap ability hurdles when sufficient interest and motivation exist (Anderson et al., 1985). Allowing children to read material that interests them leads to a better attitude towards school and reading (Vaughan and Estes, 1986). Interest grouping also provides an opportunity for functional reading where students are able to apply what they are learning (Leu and Kinzer, 1987).

To change the pace, the teacher might announce the titles or topics of the stories or books to be read in the reading

groups and allow the children to sign up for the story or book that appeals most to them. Or children may collect and read information to use in a group report to the class or making a bulletin board display. Devine (1989) has suggested that children can create anthologies, book reviews, or newsletters to share with their classmates.

With interest grouping, the number of groups and number of students in groups is not as important as in skills groups (Leu and Kinzer, 1987). One reason for this is the teacher's role. Rather than providing direct instruction, the teacher serves more as a guide and a resource.

Peer tutoring

Peer tutoring provides yet another alternative to grouping by ability. Studies of peer tutoring have found positive achievement and affective gains for both the tutor and the tutee (Anderson et al., 1985). Since there are often thirty students for every teacher in the classroom, the reading program can be multiplied many times over if the teacher includes peer directed activities. Hiebert (1980) suggests three ways in which to implement peer tutoring in the reading program: 1) pair activities in which children work together to read stories or review vocabulary words; 2) parallel activities where children work on comparable tasks independently at a common location; and 3) use of resource people (students) who can help children having problems while the teacher is working with other students.

Cooperative learning teams

Another solution might involve the use of cooperative learning teams (Johnson, Johnson, Holubec, and Roy, 1984; Madden, 1988; Slavin, 1982, 1984, 1988; Stevens, Madden, Slavin, and Farnish, 1987). In these teams, the teacher

teaches a skill or a concept to the entire class. When the children have some understanding of the concept, they then work in heterogeneous groups or teams of three to five to practice the skill, study together, complete some activity or project. The children not only practice together but they are also rewarded together. Cooperative learning activities offer incentives for group effort and not just to the individual. Students, including those who are having difficulty in reading, not only learn more in cooperative teams (Slavin, 1982, 1984; Slavin, Madden and Stevens, 1989-90; Stevens et al., 1987), but they also develop improved self-esteem, better inter-group relationships, and better attitudes towards learning (Slavin et al., 1989-90; Madden, 1988).

Stevens et al. (1987) suggest activities that students can do cooperatively. The recommended activities are based upon reading and writing, and include partner reading, story retelling, story related writing, spelling, and collaborative writing.

Flexible grouping

A final alternative to ability grouping is flexible grouping. With flexible grouping, groups are formed for different purposes and exist only until that purpose is achieved (Ransom, Lamb, and Arnold, 1988; Veatch, 1978). Varying the types of reading groups adds variety and interest (Ransom, Lamb, and Arnold, 1988).

A teacher may have students work in basal groups two or three times each week. In the basal groups, children would be taught only the strategies necessary for successful reading of the stories. On the other days, the students meet in research groups, interest groups, needs groups, project groups, friendship groups, or visiting groups (Young, 1986).

The interaction would provide struggling readers with stimulation and good academic and behavior models that may not exist in low reading groups (Unsworth, 1984).

Summary

A variety of problems are associated with ability grouping in reading. Students are often placed in ability groups on the basis of criteria other than ability. Once students are placed in ability groups there is little movement from group to group. Students in low groups often receive instruction that focuses on decoding, oral reading of words in isolation, and lower level questions. Meanwhile, the students placed in high groups receive instruction that focuses on comprehension, silent reading of contextual text, and higher level questions; teachers communicate their expectations that these students can answer the more challenging questions. Students assigned to low reading groups often spend a great deal of their time doing seatwork that doesn't promote year to year reading gains. These factors contribute to lack of reading achievement and to low self-esteem.

There are many alternatives to ability grouping in reading that may facilitate improved reading achievement and self-esteem. Needs grouping can be used to help children with similar strategy and skill needs. Interest grouping utilizes students' personal and group interest as a motivational tool. Peer tutoring and cooperative learning teams benefit both the students being helped and the students who are helping, and these collaborative techniques have many positive affective outcomes. Flexible grouping strategies can add both variety and interest to reading instruction.

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Using Quality Literature with "At-Risk" Secondary School Students

Leslie McClain-Ruelle
Richard Telfer

*Why should students who are less able or motivated
have to 'earn' the right to engage in interesting work?*

Grant Wiggins, 10 'Radical' Suggestions for School Reform

This comment by Wiggins (1988) goes to the heart of the issue of working with at-risk secondary school students. Too often, at-risk students are required to work their way through to interesting, worthwhile work, a situation that only exacerbates the problems of the at-risk students. Wiggins goes on to suggest a general solution to the problem that he has identified. "The establishment of firmer 'scaffolding' would help less able students. Rather than ignore their needs, we should respond to them by simplifying work that is interesting but challenging. Shakespeare can be read profitably by anyone if the right kind of support is provided" (p. 20).

This article has two purposes: to present a rationale for using quality literature with at-risk students and to present effective strategies with which to do so. Instruction for at-risk students is often inappropriate for two major reasons. First, at-risk students are often mistakenly assumed to be students with low abilities and low levels of experience. Second, the educational goals for at-risk students are often inappropriately low.

At-risk students have been identified in several ways, often by listing factors associated with at-risk students. Druian (1986) and Green (1987) each listed characteristics associated with at-risk students.

These characteristics include:

- coming from single parent homes
- coming from families with low socioeconomic status
- exhibiting behavior and discipline problems
- receiving low grades
- displaying poor command of basic skills
- being one or more grade levels behind their classmates in achievement
- experiencing low self-esteem, boredom, alienation

Moreover, within the population of at-risk students, there is a disproportionate representation of Black, Hispanic, and Native-American students. Although these factors do not necessarily cause failure, they are associated with failure.

State agencies have also created definitions of the at-risk students. Children at risk have been defined as “dropouts and other students whose school achievement, progress toward graduation, or preparation for employment is in serious jeopardy. These children are usually one or more years behind their age or grade level in basic reading and mathematic skills. At-risk students in grades 9-12 are typically three or more credits behind their grade level in credits for graduation. Children at risk may also be chronic truants, school-aged parents, or adjudicated delinquents. In addition, alcohol or drug abuse, family trauma, and physical, sexual or emotional abuse may be present. Children at risk may also be ethnically, economically or culturally disadvantaged” (Wisconsin Department of Instruction, 1986, ix).

While these characteristics suggest students of diverse backgrounds, they also suggest students with strong experiential backgrounds. Educators have often overlooked these experiences, without using them to the students' advantage. Rather than activating backgrounds to enhance understanding of quality materials, materials have been simplified and backgrounds have been ignored.

Simplified materials fail to take advantage of at-risk students' relevant backgrounds, since they are often designed with the assumption that these students have no prior experience which is relevant to an understanding of literature. The educational goals which accompany these materials are consequently set too low. In the resulting mismatch, students' turned-off attitudes may be reinforced.

In addition, use of simplified materials alone may be detrimental because of the characteristics of the resulting materials. Materials are typically simplified by reducing the complexity of the vocabulary and the sentence structure or by deleting whole sections of the text. Either method may result in simplified materials that are devoid of substance and interest. The following excerpts from versions of *A Tale of Two Cities* illustrate important differences between original and adapted versions. The first example is from the original.

It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair, we had everything before us, we had nothing before us, we were all going direct to heaven, we were all going direct the other way — in short, the period was so far like the present period, that some of its noisiest authorities insisted on its being received, for good or for evil, in the superlative degree of comparison only.

Charles Dickens, *A Tale of Two Cities*, 1859

The next example is from an adapted version:

On a Friday night late in November 1775, the stagecoach that carried passengers and mail from London to Dover was toiling slowly up Shooter's Hill, just outside of London. The hill was steep and the road was muddy, and even though the three passengers had alighted from the coach to lessen its load, the horses had several times stopped as if refusing to go farther. A steaming mist, cold and clammy, shut out from the coach lamps everything but a few yards of road.

Dickens, adapted by M. D. Holmes, 1978

The original and adapted versions differ in use of language and choice of content. The adapted version eliminates an important passage and instead treats *A Tale of Two Cities* as if it were simply an adventure story.

As a result of adaptation, materials may be especially inappropriate for at-risk students who already have a weakened interest in school-related activities. Rather than simplifying materials for at-risk students, educators' efforts should be spent in helping these students relate their individual experiences to more substantial materials.

At-risk students' disenchantment with simplified content and their strong experiential backgrounds suggest a need for an alternate approach to instruction which encourages the use of quality literature in conjunction with a scaffolding of learning strategies. With such an approach students use what they already know and are helped to bridge the gap for work with rich, meaningful, quality material.

Quality Literature

Adler and VanDoren (1972) help to define quality literature when they repeat Francis Bacon's comment, "Some books are to be tasted, others to be swallowed, and some few to be chewed and digested." Quality literature is that which is

meant to be chewed and digested. From this perspective, Adler and Van Doren identify two possible goals of reading: reading for instruction and reading for understanding. Quality literature is crucial to the second of these goals, reading for understanding. The authors suggest that in reading for understanding, "The mind passes from understanding less to understanding more" (p. 8). They further suggest that in order to accomplish reading for understanding, readers need to use material that requires that type of reading. Quality literature serves this function; it deserves and demands the kind of reading that leads to "understanding more."

While Adler and Van Doren's description is helpful in considering appropriate materials and goals for the at-risk students, Early (1960) reminds educators of the need for teacher intervention. Intervention can help move the students toward accomplishing such goals. According to Early, students move from a stage of self-conscious appreciation into a stage of conscious delight when learning to appreciate quality literature.

At a self-conscious appreciation stage the reader lives vicariously through books. This stage usually corresponds with the egocentric adolescence and the search for self. Self-conscious appreciation is a necessary prerequisite to the next stage, conscious delight which includes aesthetic appreciation. Thus, at-risk students as readers in the self-conscious appreciation stage must be encouraged to read materials which are relevant to their immediate lives. Then, with teacher guidance, students may be nurtured through a transition into reading quality materials for aesthetic appreciation and understanding. Quality literature will be useful in both stages, provided students are given support in their use of these materials. Specifically, at-risk students can benefit

from learning strategies which help them bridge the gaps between their reading proficiency and the demands of the materials and which help them build upon their own rich experiences.

Strategies

As readers, specifically at-risk students, move to higher levels and stages of reading, teacher intervention is valuable. At-risk students should be allowed to encounter quality literature while the teacher is bridging the gap with the appropriate scaffolding. Learning strategies used to support at-risk students in reading should be selected with a consideration of those students' unique characteristics. Specifically, the strategies should fit the following criteria:

- Students must be *active participants*. By having the students participate actively, the students' disenchantment with school is directly countered.
- Strategies must help students *overcome gaps* between reading ability and difficulty of materials. While these students may be capable, their reading skills may be weak, with the result that they are likely to be incapable of reading the quality literature without help.
- Strategies must *give control* to students. By giving students a measure of control over their learning, disenchantment, and alienation from school-related activities, can be overcome.

Using these three criteria, two teaching techniques -- LINK and the anticipation guide -- can be recommended as suitable for teaching at-risk students. The success of these strategies results from their effectiveness in bridging gaps between

students' experiential background and the content of the text, and between students' reading ability and the difficulty of the text. In addition, both strategies involve students actively in the reading process.

- **The LINK strategy**

LINK is a prereading strategy based on brainstorming that serves to activate students' backgrounds (Estes and Vaughan, 1986). The four initials in the strategy stand for the four steps, List, Inquire, Note, and Know. First, the teacher selects a term and displays it using an overhead projector. Then students list associations on paper, usually for two or three minutes. Next, responses are solicited from each student and listed. All responses are written on the overhead without being evaluated. Once all responses have been recorded, students inquire about the terms on the screen. That is, they ask each other why they put certain items on the board. Although the teacher may participate in the discussion, the focus is on students asking and answering questions about unfamiliar terms and unfamiliar relationships. Once the discussion has ended, the overhead projector is turned off. Students turn their papers over and note what they learned by listing everything they remember. Finally, students are encouraged to recognize what they now know based on their past experiences and the class discussion.

LINK is a particularly effective strategy in working with at-risk students. The following two examples may help illustrate the success of the strategy. The first example involves the use of LINK as an introductory activity before reading an article in the school newspaper. The class consisted of E.D. (emotionally disturbed) students in an alternative school. The teacher's goal was to enable the students to work together. In order to do this, he selected an article written by a high school

senior entitled "From a Student's Notebook" in the style of Dostoyevski's *Notes from Underground*. The article focused on whether the author had identity and on how he related to school. Before distributing the article, the teacher put the word *school* on the chalkboard and asked students to contribute other words that they associated with this word. Initially students responded with a series of negative comments and reactions (e.g., "school sucks"). After the initial rush of negatives, however, students started looking seriously at reactions to the word and the idea of school. After finishing the introductory LINK activity, the teacher distributed the article and conducted a discussion about what it meant to be a student. The students decided that the article showed understanding of what it meant to be a student and the author must indeed have identity because he was able to question so effectively whether he had identity. Following the discussion one of the students in the class requested a copy of *Notes from Underground* and read that as well as other related works.

The power of this approach is best shown by contrasting the reaction described above with the reaction of a different class. In a second class, the same student-written article was used. However, no prereading preparation was provided. The students simply read the article. There the response was quite different (e.g., "What geek wrote this?"). The students were not helped to connect intellectually or emotionally with the article; therefore they did not.

A second example applies LINK to *Romeo and Juliet*. The procedure focused on the word *feud*. Students listed related words and phrases: *argument, hate, long-term, dispute, get-even, Hatfields and McCoys, Contras, gangs, blood*. In the inquiry step, students asked other students why they included

various words. For example, "why was *blood* listed?" Another student asked why *Hatfields and McCoys* was listed. After the explanation students again listed associations with *feud*. These lists were both more extensive and more clearly organized. The teacher then related the discussion to *Romeo and Juliet*, pointing out the feud between the Capulets and the Montagues. The main effect of the LINK strategy in both examples was to help bridge the gap between students' experiences and the quality literature.

• The Anticipation Guide strategy

A second strategy, the anticipation guide, is also appropriate for at-risk students. An anticipation guide is "a series of statements to which students must respond individually before reading the text" (Vacca and Vacca, 1986). Anticipation guides can be of two basic types. The first type, the cognitive anticipation guide, stresses what readers know or think they know. The second type, the affective anticipation guide, stresses how the readers feel about a topic related to the reading selection.

Both types of guides can be effective with quality literature and at-risk students; the affective guides are particularly suitable. An affective guide used with *Romeo and Juliet* included the following statements:

1. Someone can be in love with one person and then suddenly be sincerely in love with someone else.
2. A person should allow a deep love to develop for someone from a family or a group that is a mortal enemy of his or her own family.
3. It is okay for someone to "tempt fate" in this way (#2).
4. "Love at first sight" is bound to be superficial.
5. "Love at first sight" can be the real thing.
6. A person must be a certain age before feeling true love.

7. A young girl should have the right to marry someone she loves regardless of whether or not her parents approve.
8. A young boy should have the right to marry someone he loves regardless of whether or not his parents approve.
9. It should not make a difference whether such questions are asked about a boy or girl.
10. It should make a difference whether such questions are asked about a girl or boy.

Students responded by agreeing or disagreeing with each of the statements. The use of this anticipation guide brought out students' feelings towards themes addressed in *Romeo and Juliet*. Rather than seeing *Romeo and Juliet* as an old story written in difficult language, students saw that it addressed their real concerns.

A cognitive guide over *Romeo and Juliet* emphasizes specific knowledge related to the story. A guide was used with the balcony scene in which readers were asked to predict things to which Juliet would be compared. For example "Was Juliet compared with a glove?...the stars?...the moon?" Students made predictions and then read the scene to confirm or disprove their predictions.

Overall the anticipation guide works well in assisting at-risk students in appreciation of quality literature because it allows the students to interact with the concepts they will encounter in the readings. It allows them to bring personal values, emotions, and judgments to the reading.

Conclusion

These two strategies are among many that help at-risk students move toward aesthetic appreciation and understanding of quality literature. These strategies draw upon rich

experiential backgrounds of at-risk students, encourage them to become more actively involved prior to the reading, and provide a sense of control. As Wiggins indicated, "Shakespeare can be read profitably by anyone if the right kind of support is provided" (1988, p. 20). The use of quality literature, in conjunction with appropriate support strategies, can serve as a source of motivation and interest for at-risk students. Led by a teacher equipped with appropriate support strategies and heightened educational goals, these students may experience a renewed sense of satisfaction and an increased feeling of confidence. When they perceive themselves as capable they may be motivated to approach quality material and struggle with it until it becomes their own.

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Creating Classroom Contexts for Readers: Linking Children With Books

Susan Lehr

Earlier in this century John Dewey proposed a view of the child as an active learner involved with meaningful content; he regarded the reading instruction of his day as being passive and mechanical. In 1908 Huey, a student of John Dewey's, wrote about the natural literacy environments of the preschool child at home and contrasted that to the unnatural way in which reading was taught in the school.

The premise that learning is an active process has been at the core of many theories of learning and today these theories find broad support in reading programs as well as in content areas. A growing body of research which informs educators as to how children learn optimally is appearing across the content areas and has at its heart the notion that the child must learn to think critically rather than by rote, actively rather than passively, while at the same time interacting with meaningful content. In other words, reading skills are necessary tools to be used with content rather than a separate content area to be studied in isolation. How can teachers begin to create contexts in which reading excites children and links them effectively with books in a variety of genres?

SSR and fluency

Frank Smith (1988) has told us for years that children learn to read by reading. One cannot assume that children who do

not read at school will read at home, nor can one assume that children will be encouraged or given the time to read at home. This may occur if it is perceived as being valuable by the child and/or the child's family (Durkin, 1966). *Becoming a Nation of Readers* (Anderson, Hiebert, Scott and Wilkinson, 1984) reports results of a study in south Chicago which found that 50% of the fifth graders read four minutes or less each day when they were not in school. Thus the children in this study spent about 1% or less of their free time reading books. In the classroom the primary age subjects spent an average of 7-8 minutes a day in silent reading and their middle-grade counterparts spent about 15 minutes a day reading silently. Compare this to 130 minutes a day spent watching television as reported by the same children.

Allington (1983) discusses the importance of producing fluent readers. This will not occur in a vacuum: practice is essential to building reading fluency. Children need to read widely and deeply (Britton 1978) if they are to become fluent readers, and need diversity in reading materials to make this happen. Genre variety is the key to this wide and deep reading. Children can be exposed to realistic fiction, historical fiction, poetry, information books, newspapers, diaries, fantasy, folklore, picture books, biographies — a rich and extensive list.

One fifth grade child read *The Witch of Blackbird Pond*, a tightly written historical fiction about life in a puritan village, by Elizabeth Speare (1958), and then immediately read about Nancy Drew and her escapades. At first the teacher was puzzled by the complex book and the easier series book both being read by the same child. This child was sampling new thought in the former, experiencing life under difficult times in the 1700's, and building skills of fluency in the latter. In

essence, she was reading for mere enjoyment with the second title, whereas she had to work harder with the content of the first. Fluent readers do this constantly and teachers need to be aware of children's needs for variety with topics, difficulty of material and genres.

Huck (1987) has suggested that sustained silent reading should occur daily in the classroom, perhaps 10 minutes in kindergarten which builds up to 20-30 minutes a day and by the fifth grade builds to 45 minutes a day. Reading stretches the imagination and helps the child sort out the world. It also has the capacity to extend the child's perceptions about other people and their problems and dilemmas. A variety of perspectives can be presented if there are many books available for discussion and comparison. This richness can be the springboard for writing and displays. This is less likely to happen, however, if there is only one reading text in the classroom. With the many well written pieces of literature available today it is difficult to conceive of a classroom which uses only one or two books as the basis for its reading program.

And what about the exciting literature connections that can be made with other content areas? *Rose Blanche*, a picture book by Roberto Innocenti (1985), is about a little German girl who discovers the people behind barbed wire out in the woods and brings them her gifts of bread. Sadako, in *Sadako and the Thousand Paper Cranes*, by Eleanor Coerr (1977), tries to fold 1000 paper cranes after she discovers that she is dying of leukemia, contracted because she was a victim of the bombing of Hiroshima ten years earlier. Twelve-year-old Matt must tend the cabin in the wilderness of 18th century Maine while his parents are away in the exciting survival book by Elizabeth Speare, *Sign of the Beaver* (1983). These are

all examples of historical connections waiting to be made between social studies and literature. Using substantial books with substantial plots can help children make connections with history.

Children become excited about what they read and have a need to share what they are reading with others. Susan Hepler's study with a fifth and sixth grade class showed us that reading is a social act and that a community of readers can build in the classroom (1982). All of the readers in this classroom read between 25 and 122 books during the school year, from the slowest reader to the most voracious reader. They were not limited by one or two texts and the less active readers read much more by becoming book consumers than they would have if limited to one text.

The word "silent" during SSR is a misconception. Hepler's community of readers were lively, talkative and shared titles constantly with each other. They laughed together over funny bits and passed exciting episodes along to peers. One thing is clear: the children in this fifth and sixth grade classroom read constantly every day and clamored for more. A key concept in pulling all children into the act of reading is modeling. A teacher who reads throughout the SSR session is sending a loud and clear message to the children. What the teacher values will be valued by the children.

How can kindergarten children read for 10 minutes or longer? Children who perceive themselves as readers and take on literate behaviors are building successful self images. They will begin, as Moira McKenzie writes, by approximating to text (1977). This means that they understand that the message is contained in the print, they can tell about the story and thus have a sense of how stories operate, and that they

can sequence the events of the story by retelling it. This means also that kindergarten children need to hear lots of stories and have opportunities to tell stories to each other. Literate behaviors develop over time. In my own research with the child's developing sense of theme, I found that children with a high exposure to children's literature were able to talk about the stories they heard at higher abstractive levels than their less well read counterparts, suggesting that familiarity with a wide range of stories impacts on critical thinking skills as early as kindergarten (Lehr, 1988). The children with a higher exposure to literature, ranging in age from 5-10, were familiar with folktales, fables, poetry, nursery rhymes and picture books and were able to discuss themes of books heard.

Reading strategies

What can a teacher do to facilitate the reading strategies which fluent readers employ? The goal of reading instruction is to create independence in reading. Much has been written about the role of phonics in reading instruction. Children need to understand the sound/symbol relationships between letters and words. This is quite different from learning 149 phonics rules which Hanna, Hanna and Hodges (1982) have told us work only 49% of the time. Awareness of sound/symbol relationships means, for example, that the reader understands that certain words contain certain sounds which are clustered together, and can apply this knowledge when new words are encountered. It also suggests an awareness of some of the patterns found in words and development of spelling ability.

How teachers encourage students to develop this knowledge in a whole language format may be different from traditional methods which drill children with cards and focus

on rote memorization and isolated rules. Instead, the teacher may read a story about Mrs. Wishy-Washy (Cowley, 1989), and within the context of that highly entertaining, rhythmic and predictable story may point out the sound /sh/ found in the middle of her name and have the children signal when they hear the sound read. Note that this type of instruction still focuses on the story and that the sound is highlighted within the context of the story. This kind of activity should only be undertaken after children have listened to the story several times, so that the story is familiar.

Another strategy used by fluent readers is the ability to focus on meaning rather than mere word calling; therefore, when a child substitutes 'a rabbit' for 'the rabbit,' a knowledgeable teacher will ignore that miscue, tuck away the information for future reference and let the child continue reading. In this example the child has successfully substituted the article 'a' for the article 'the' and is apparently reading for meaning. If, on the other hand, the child makes a mistake which makes no sense, disrupts the passage and continues reading, the teacher may stop and encourage the child to explore the surrounding context. Teacher and child may talk about the meaning that should be building as the child reads the story. For example, a child reading *come* with a long vowel is using sounding out as a strategy; if this miscue is left uncorrected the child will not create a meaningful segment of text, and may need to be shown how to focus on context clues.

Meaning getting is the goal of reading and the use of context is one of the earliest strategies exhibited by emergent readers (Biemiller, 1970). When correctness in word identification is the focus of instruction, one of the child's strongest reading strategies, that of interacting meaningfully with a story, is ignored. A focus on meaning has implications for the

quality of materials selected for use with emerging readers. The stories must be well written and interesting, and should be somewhat predictable.

In order for meaning-making to occur a child must have a well developed sense of story and must be encouraged to use that sense of story to predict. Mandler and Johnson (1977) discuss the importance of story grammar and Rhodes (1981) emphasizes the importance of providing young readers with predictable stories. Children need well written texts which enable them to make logical predictions. Emergent readers also need extensive experience with stories so that they understand their conventions, which include beginnings, middles, endings, protagonists, antagonists, settings, and other literary devices.

Marie Clay (1985) has developed Reading Recovery, a program of remediation with readers at risk. The program, which has at its core a one on one approach to working with at-risk first graders, has a high success rate. Central to this program is the concept of self correction; children learn to monitor their own reading. Books used in the program are well written and invite the child into the reading process.

Self correction is a powerful reading strategy because it fosters independence. It allows children to analyze and use context to read new vocabulary words. Mistakes are important and young learners should not be deprived of the opportunity to make them, and ultimately learn from them. Self correction is a powerful device for learning — at the basis of learning language, taking the first steps in walking, learning to ride a bike. Word perfect reading is not the goal of reading instruction. The goal is for children to become independent readers, capable of monitoring their own mistakes.

Matthew effects in reading

From the Gospel according to Matthew: "For unto every one that hath shall be given and he shall have abundance; But from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath." Keith Stanovich (1986) uses the term *Matthew effects* to emphasize the increasing disparity between good and poor readers. The more a child reads in the classroom the more the child is allowed to read, and the more vocabulary develops and background knowledge is built, which in turn improves comprehension of harder materials. Conversely, poorer readers are allowed to read very little, and therefore, have a slower development of vocabulary knowledge, which inhibits further growth in reading ability.

Nagy and Anderson (1985) estimate that for in-school reading the least motivated children in the middle grades may read 100,000 words a year, while the average children at this level may read 1,000,000 words a year. A voracious middle grade reader may be reading as many as 50,000,000 words per year. We need to allow time for reading in the classroom if we expect children to become fluent readers.

The reading/writing connection

Writing develops in a parallel fashion along with reading. Writing and reading are most effective when used across the curriculum as a means of learning interesting content. Teaching reading and writing as separate subjects is not as effective or as interesting as using reading and writing skills during thematic studies in the classroom. In this manner the writing arises naturally out of the themes the children are exploring.

For example, if children are studying the life cycle of certain insects in science, the writing program can be based on the

studies of the children. Writing in a variety of formats and for a variety of purposes, some children can keep charts or diaries about the real insects which are being kept in the classroom, a chrysalis, or forms of life found in a small section of a school yard (Reed, 1987). Other children can devise informational reports about the insects being studied and also include labeled diagrams of insects and their habitats. *A Little Book of Little Beasts* (Hoberman, 1973) can provide models for factual bug poetry and at the same time introduce children to well written poetry. In these lively and rhythmic poems Hoberman introduces readers to the sounds, sights and traits of insects, even including a poem told from a spider's perspective which clearly proves that spiders are not bugs. A nonfiction selection entitled *Bugs* by Nancy Parker and Joan Wright (1987) provides a model for creating factual bug cartoons, coupled with accurate information. The illustrations also include clearly labeled insect parts. Texts in both genres are written accurately yet with a humorous stance. Both have high appeal to young readers, and also provide excellent experiences with literature and models for young writers.

For additional experiences with writing, children can be encouraged to write insect adventures, treating their individual traits as William Kotzwinkle did in the well written fantasy, *Trouble in Bugland: A Collection of Inspector Mantis Mysteries* (1986). This book could be read aloud by the teacher, thereby integrating the theme of insects into the reading program, or multiple copies could be used in literature groups. The book can inspire many types of writing by the children, including sequels to adventures, new episodes, diary entries from characters' points of view, letters from one character to another, maps and timelines of events and journeys. Children can also be encouraged to illustrate and label scenes and sequences from the story.

Why is it crucial to provide well written texts for children in a balanced reading and writing program? DeFord (1981) found that the type of reading program affects the writing of first grade children. The following three samples of writing indicate the type of reading program that children experienced in three different first grade classrooms:

- *I had a gag. I had a dad. I had a cat. (phonics)*
- *Bill can run. Jill can run. Jeff can run. I can run. (basal)*
- *Iran is fighting us. 19 bombers went down. 14 fighters.*

We only have 3 bombers down 6 fighters. we have dropped 9 bombs over iran the hostages have been ther to long. Now we head twards them. It's like a game of checers. (whole language)

As evidenced above by the child who is writing about the conflict in Iran, the focus of the whole language approach is on content, on using skills to talk about world events rather than using skills to read meaningless text. Writing skills are used to teach content. Therefore, the curriculum is dictated by teaching content, not premised on a set of workbooks and skill sheets that students must work their way through over the course of the school year. It is worth mentioning that the child's writing shown above indicates a wealth of rich experiences, a depth of background knowledge and the ability to think critically about world events. Can anyone doubt that this six year old child will eventually be able to sort out the conventional spelling for *towards*, *dropped*, *there* and *checkers* or supply a missing capital letter?

Topics for classroom writing can arise out of the activities and good literature being used in the classroom more effectively than from artificial story starters. Daily journals are effective, but only if teachers respond to content. Children need audiences when they write.

Reading aloud

Children need to hear stories and books read aloud on a daily basis. The academic benefits are many, but the main advantage children cite is that they like to hear stories. What does a daily read aloud program do for children?

Hearing books read aloud exposes children to a variety of genres, genres that they may not typically encounter on their own. We can offer children challenging books by Betsy Byars, Katherine Paterson, Cynthia Voigt, Philippa Pearce, Nina Bawden, Gary Paulsen, Jean Craighead George, Nancy Bond, Virginia Hamilton, Beverly Cleary, Carol and Donald Carrick, Lucille Clifton, Jane Resh Thomas, Tomie dePaola, Maurice Sendak, Audrey and Don Wood, Eloise Greenfield, and Chris Van Allsburg — to name a few!

Well written books stretch children's minds and expose them to books they may not be able to read independently. Hearing stories allows listeners to focus on content and attend to comprehending, not decoding. Consider the possibilities for poor readers who may not be able to read a novel independently. Reading aloud on a daily basis stimulates new vocabulary and improves vocabulary scores on achievement tests, as well as developing comprehension. Research also indicates the importance of oral language during read aloud time to extend the book and help the child consider various aspects of the book (Cohen 1968; Cullinan, Strickland and Jaggar, 1974). Pearson (1981) tells us that books are where children gain knowledge about the world, which in turns improves comprehension.

Children also need to listen to each other; the teacher should not be seen as the only source of information in the classroom. Direct instruction is useful but is not the only way

of conveying information in the classroom. Book discussions are necessary to extend critical thinking skills. Asking open ended questions which ask for evaluations and interpretations of what is read can richly extend the comprehension processing of information. If the focus is on clear, logical thinking, which is supported by information both in the story and in the child's head, children will be operating at abstract levels of thinking. The notion of right or wrong answers is less important than encouraging children to share their responses to what is read. Children can also become mini-experts when they are working on themes and can share information with each other and with other classes. Children need experiences listening to each other and accepting information from peers.

Sostarich's study (1974) of sixth graders found that active readers were children who had been read aloud to as young children. Some were still being read aloud to. Reading aloud to children on a regular basis contributes to the formation of lifelong reading habits!

Conclusion

Children become competent readers and language users in situations that encourage the use of language in a variety of ways during the course of the school day. Silence is not always golden.

Gregory Anrig, the president of the Education Testing Service, recently spoke to a gathering of educators (1988) and said that scores on tests for basic skills in reading have never been better, but critical thinking skills, he pointed out, need improvement. Children know the basics, but are frequently unable to apply that information in abstract learning situations. Educators need to create contexts for students in

which reading facilitates intellectual growth and encourages diversity in thinking. Literature is an effective vehicle for accomplishing this aim.

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Erratum

In the winter issue of Reading Horizons, pages were incorrectly numbered. Pages should have been numbered from 81 to 164. The numbers in the spring issue are ordered as they would be if the numbering in the winter issue had been correct; thus the first page of this issue is 165.



Emergent Literacy: A Comparison of Formal and Informal Assessment Methods

Rebecca Harlin
Sally Lipa

Young children enter school with individual and divergent literacy experiences. Considerable disagreement exists concerning how best to assess children's competence and utilize the results of instruments designed to provide this information for educators.

Since large groups of children need to be screened prior to formal reading instruction, group standardized tests are presently used to differentiate those children in need of preventive intervention from those in need of more formal reading programs. As the age level for school entry becomes younger there is a strong tendency to use the same measures for assessing four year olds as for five and six year olds, and the same measures for an identified language delayed population as for a normal population. This policy ignores differences in literacy development and the requisite program opportunities that may be essential for younger and high-risk children.

Standardized reading readiness tests, used in a diagnostic manner are known to "drive the curriculum." These tests which assess skills such as auditory discrimination, letter identification, letter-sound association, following directions and copying letters result in a readiness program designed to

master these skills. They do not include items which reflect emergent literacy research (Day and Day, 1986). Instead, the tasks provide the teacher with fragmented data such as how well the child copies geometric forms and matches initial sounds to representative pictures, but not how well the child understands the reading process. Recent editions of these tests show that no significant alterations have been made to measure children's conscious awareness of the form, use and function of written language prior to formal literacy instruction.

The predictable value of standardized reading readiness tests has long been questioned by researchers. For example, Karlin (1971) summarizes various reports of the predictive validity of reading readiness tests and reports the correlations range from .40 to .60 with later reading achievement. Coltheart (1979) and Glazzard (1977) show that variables tapped by reading readiness tests are not predictively successful nor theoretically informative. Other researchers account for the variable predictive efficiency of such tests by noting that the variables, either predictor or criterion, have been conceptualized in very general or restrictive terms (Feshbach, Adelman and Fuller, 1977). Although it has been known for some time that the best predictors of reading achievement are those tests that most closely resemble tasks involved in reading (Karlin, 1971), schools continue to use group standardized measures to identify high-risk children, establish individual and group baseline information and make curriculum decisions (Hiebert, 1986).

In recent years efforts have increased toward the construction of more efficient prediction instruments, i.e., instruments in which individual differences in acquiring emergent literacy can be observed. A better understanding of emergent

literacy has heightened awareness of the need for early identification of at-risk children as well as providing the means for fostering literacy.

Among the techniques which have contributed to our knowledge of emergent literacy behavior are the *Concepts About Print Test* (Clay, 1979), the *Book Handling Task* (Goodman and Altwerger, 1981), the *Rhyme Reading Task* (Morris, 1983), and the *Metalinguistic Inventory* (Evans, Taylor, and Blum, 1979). While none shares a common task format, each of these instruments measures a discrete aspect of literacy behavior. All of these instruments employ a concrete stimulus for the child, examine print-related situations, and measure aspects of emergent literacy behaviors found to be related to reading success. The data from such instruments provide teachers with reliable information for grouping children, planning instruction, and reporting children's progress to parents and administrators. In spite of research results which show their effectiveness, informal assessment tasks are not commonly used as screening instruments at the preschool or primary levels.

The purpose of this investigation was to examine a number of literacy measures in light of their task demands, and their contribution to a composite picture of a child's literacy development. Answers to the following questions were sought:

1. Does an informal measure of print awareness, the *Concepts About Print Test* (CAP) estimate the level of reading achievement a) for first graders, b) for high-risk primary grade students?

2. Does a standardized reading readiness battery, the *Metropolitan Readiness Test* (MRT) estimate the level of reading achievement a) for first graders, b) for high-risk students?

3. Does the combination of effective predictors of literacy development differ a) for first graders, b) for high-risk students?

Thus, the major focus was on comparing the effectiveness of informal and standardized readiness measures in assessing the literacy development of both normal first graders and high-risk, primary grade children.

METHOD

Sample

For the purposes of this study, 87 subjects from primary grade classrooms were chosen — four classes of first grade students and three classes of high-risk students. Selection of both groups of subjects involved intact classrooms. The 60 first grade students were from a suburban school in upstate New York. The 27 high-risk primary grade children were from three intact classes of language-delayed students — one each of six year olds, seven year olds, and eight year olds from a suburban school serving only language-delayed children.

Instruments

Three informal instruments were used to evaluate the literacy development of the subjects. These instruments included the *Concepts About Print Test*, the *Writing Vocabulary Test*, and the *Sentence Dictation Test*. In October, each of these instruments was administered individually to the first graders following the procedures outlined in Clay's *The Early Detection of Reading Difficulties*. The high-risk children were given the *Concepts About Print Test* and the *Writing Vocabulary Test* by one of the investigators. Scoring for each item was completed following the guidelines outlined by Clay.

The *Concepts About Print Test (CAP)* was selected for use in this study since it allowed the researchers to obtain information about the children's understanding of print concepts in a most efficient manner. A 24-item checklist of questions was asked while the storybook, *Sand*, was read to the child. Among the concepts assessed were those of letter, word, print direction, and uses of punctuation. The *Writing Vocabulary Test* was chosen as an inventory of the words of which each subject has control, i.e., can spell correctly. This instrument consists of an open-ended task in which children are given ten minutes to write all the words they know, starting with their own name. As an evaluation of the child's ability to analyze and record the phonemes in individual words, the *Sentence Dictation Test* was administered. Two simple sentences were read to the subject, then repeated, one word at a time, as the child attempted to write them. Each of these instruments has been normed and used with primary grade children. It was felt that since writing ability and reading ability both result from experiences with letters, words, and stories, the three tasks provided an opportunity for children to show what they have learned about written language.

Readiness is commonly evaluated using a paper and pencil test. Thus, all subjects were given a formal assessment battery of readiness, the *Metropolitan Readiness Tests*. For the first grade subjects, the *MRT*, Level II, was group-administered by their classroom teachers in May of their kindergarten year. Subjects' scores were obtained from the school's printout. Following the guidelines for handicapped children, the *MRT*, Level I, was administered individually to each language-delayed subject by one of the researchers. Each high-risk subject's battery was hand-scored, following the directions in the *MRT* administration handbook. Local norms were established for this out-of-level test. In addition,

each subject was also given the *Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test* as a measure of language capacity, a frequently used predictor of reading achievement.

For the first grade subjects, the *Stanford Achievement Test*, Primary I, was administered by their classroom teachers in May. This battery was used as the measure of reading achievement. All test booklets were machine-scored and results for each subject were obtained from the school's printout. For the high-risk subjects, there were no comparable scores available because no standardized reading battery was administered in their school. The *Letter Identification Test* from Clay's Diagnostic Survey was administered to each language-delayed subject as a measure of reading ability. This task was administered by one of the researchers following the procedures outlined in Clay's *Early Detection of Reading Difficulties*.

RESULTS

Print awareness and reading achievement

To determine the relationship between print awareness and reading achievement, the scores on the *CAP* were compared to the subtest scores and the total reading scores on the *SAT* using a Pearson product-moment correlation. For the first graders, the *CAP* was found to have significant correlations ($p < .001$) with the *Word Recognition* subtest (0.494), the *Reading Comprehension* subtest (0.512), the *Word Study* subtest (0.564), and the Total Reading Score (0.531). For the high-risk subjects, their *CAP* scores were compared to the scores on the *Letter Identification Test* (0.550). Thus, for both groups, normal and high-risk, the informal measure of print awareness, *CAP*, was found to estimate the level of reading achievement.

Readiness Battery and Reading Achievement

Does a standardized reading readiness battery, the *Metropolitan Readiness Tests*, predict the level of reading achievement? Through two different analyses, the answer to this question was found. Using the Pearson product-moment correlation, the coefficients for the May administration of the *MRT*, Level II (for first graders), with the *SAT* subtests were 0.570 for the *Word Recognition* subtest, 0.579 for *Reading Comprehension*, 0.564 for *Word Study*, and 0.554 for the Total Reading score. All correlations were significant at the .001 level. A linear regression analysis of *MRT* scores on the Total Reading scores was computed, resulting in an R-square equal to 0.306 ($F=5.148$, $p<.001$).

For the high-risk subjects, the results of the *MRT*, Level I, were compared to those of the *Letter Identification Test* using both a Pearson product-moment correlation and a linear regression analysis. The Pearson product-moment correlation for the *MRT* and the *Letter Identification Test* was 0.651 ($p<.001$). The linear regression analysis yielded an R-square equal to 0.423 ($F=4.285$, $p<.001$).

Comparison of Predictors

To compare the effectiveness of each informal and formal instrument in estimating reading achievement, Pearson product-moment correlations were calculated. For the first graders' *SAT* Total Reading Score, the strongest predictors were the *Sentence Dictation Test* (0.71) and the *Writing Vocabulary Test* (0.653). While the *Sentence Dictation Test* was also the strongest predictor for each of the three reading subtests, *Word Recognition* (0.709); *Reading Comprehension* (0.676); and *Word Study* (0.646), the *Writing Vocabulary Test* was a strong predictor of the *Word Study* subtest,

(0.584). The standardized readiness battery, the *MRT*, was the second strongest predictor for the *Word Recognition* subtest (0.570) and for the *Reading Comprehension* subtest (0.579). The *Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test* was not a significant predictor of any of the reading achievement subtests. The *CAP* showed significant correlations with the Total Reading and subtest scores, but was not as strong as the other informal instruments (See Table 1).

TABLE 1								
Intercorrelations Between Predictor Variables for First Grade Subjects								
	PPVT	CAP	DIC	WVC	SAT TOTAL	WORD REC	READ COMP	WORD STUDY
MRT	.381	.602	.748	.593	.561	.570	.579	.571
PPVT		.402	.275	.281	.193	.192	.226	.277
CAP			.650	.700	.531	.494	.512	.564
DIC				.741	.710	.709	.676	.646
WVC					.653	.523	.521	.584

Next, multiple regression analyses were run to determine the effectiveness of different combinations of the informal literacy instruments in predicting the Total Reading scores for the first graders. The best combination of predictors was the *Sentence Dictation Test* and the *Writing Vocabulary Test* which resulted in an R-square of .528 ($F=39.21, p<.001$). The second best combination was the *CAP* and the *Writing Vocabulary* with an R-square of .513 ($F=36.88, p<.001$). While the weakest of the combinations was the *CAP* and the *Writing Vocabulary* with an R-square of .369 ($F=20.52, p<.001$), it was stronger than that of the six subtests that comprise the *MRT* battery (R-square = .306, $F=5.148, p<.001$). Thus, as predictors of first graders' reading achievement, the informal literacy measures were more effective than the formal readiness test battery.

TABLE 2				
Intercorrelations Between Predictor Variables for High Risk Subjects				
	MRT	WVC	CAP	LET
PPVT	.202	.497	.471	.472
MRT		.443	.582	.651
WVC			.631	.568
CAP				.688

Similarly, in order to establish the strongest predictors of reading achievement for the high-risk students, Pearson product-moment correlations were calculated (See Table 2). For their *Letter Recognition* scores, the strongest predictors were the *CAP* (0.688) and the *MRT* (0.651). Next, multiple regression analyses were run to determine the effectiveness of different combinations of informal and formal instruments.

The best combination of predictors was the *CAP* and the *MRT* which resulted in an R-square of 0.549 ($F=14.66$, $p<.001$). While the second best combination was the *CAP* and the *Writing Vocabulary Test* with an R-square of 0.481 ($F=11.16$, $p<.001$), it was a stronger predictor than the six subtests of the *MRT* battery (R-square equal to 0.423, $F=4.285$, $p<.001$). Therefore, for both groups of students the informal literacy measures yielded the best results. The *Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test* was not an effective predictor of reading achievement for either group (See Tables 1 and 2).

DISCUSSION

While the effectiveness of the *Concepts About Print Test* for prediction of reading achievement in normal populations has been shown in past research (Day and Day, 1986; Freebody and Rust, 1985; Harlin, 1983), this is one of the first studies to support its efficiency as a predictor for high-risk

children, and to demonstrate the combined predictive qualities of the *CAP*, the *Sentence Dictation*, and the *Writing Vocabulary Tests* of Clay's *Diagnostic Survey* for first graders' reading achievement. While the standardized battery, the *Metropolitan Readiness Tests*, was found to be somewhat effective in identifying children at risk, its results were not sufficiently powerful to justify the time, effort, and expense of its administration. Therefore, this study's results support the use of informal, concrete tasks to assess the literacy development of both young and high-risk learners.

For teachers of primary grade children, as well as reading clinicians, the *CAP* has been shown to be an effective indicator of the child's knowledge and understanding of print concepts. Its ease of administration should recommend its use in the classroom as well as the reading clinic. The close correlation between the *CAP* and the measure of reading achievement, the *SAT* demonstrated the *CAP*'s predictive qualities. As part of a preventive strategy, the *CAP* may be used to identify at-risk children early in the school year, thus facilitating intervention strategies. For the reading clinician, the appropriateness of the *CAP* as a diagnostic tool for young disabled readers has been shown.

Although the program emphasis for high-risk children was different from that of normal first graders, in that it emphasized letter name knowledge, both the *CAP* and the *Writing Vocabulary Test* were sensitive to changes in their literacy development. These children are at a stage of literacy development similar to the preschoolers studied by Mason (1982), who found that preschoolers acquired an increasing knowledge of letter names as they approached formal reading instruction. Thus, for this study, letter names were used as an indicator of print control.

The high correlations between the *Sentence Dictation Test* and the *SAT* show that not only is the informal task an accurate predictor of reading achievement, but also underscores the strong role writing plays in reading acquisition. Like the *CAP*, this instrument is easy to administer and interpret. Within a ten to fifteen minute period, a teacher can acquire powerful data about the child's ability to encode written language, a skill that is known to be related to reading success.

The high correlations between the *Writing Vocabulary Test* and the *Letter Identification Test* support the contention by many researchers (Goodman and Goodman, 1983; Springate, 1983) that reading and writing are related tasks. Implications for including both "reading and writing" measures in pre-literacy assessments and program development for both normal and high-risk populations can be drawn from this information.

According to one theory of linguistic awareness, there is an interaction between reading acquisition and print awareness. As children learn to read, they become more sensitized to print (Ehri, 1979; Ryan, McNamara, and Kenney, 1977). While most of the children included in this study were not readers when pretested, the data revealed that they knew a great deal more than one would expect about the functions of print, and possessed a working knowledge of those functions as demonstrated by their performance on the writing tasks. This was true for the high-risk children who were not in a formal reading program, but who could write several words and name alphabet letters. Previous studies (Mason, 1980; Hiebert, 1979) revealed increasing reading readiness skills across normal preschool groups. The data from this study reveal a similar pattern for the high-risk group, but at a slower

rate and more limited progression than in the normal population. While Mason (1982) found emergent literacy behaviors occurring naturally among normally developing preschoolers, VanKleeck and Schuele (1987) suggest that emergent literacy behaviors do not develop naturally among language-delayed, high-risk children. Instead, they need active teaching both at home and school to foster the development of these concepts.

Analysis of the data obtained from the informal measures, *CAP* and *Writing Vocabulary*, and the *Metropolitan Readiness Tests (MRT)* reveal that while both are good predictors of letter name knowledge, the informal tests have several advantages.

The nature of the *CAP* measure allows the examiner to obtain individual profiles of children's print awareness. These profiles provide the teacher with usable information for instruction. For example, if a child does not know the left to right progression for reading, direct modeling and specific teaching can be incorporated in the child's program.

The *Writing Vocabulary Test* provides a measure of how children approach writing, their use of the alphabet and invented spelling patterns, and their formation of letters and letter sequences. Handicapped children should be offered the opportunity to develop a writing/reading relationship. Too often, these children are provided with oral instruction requiring oral feedback. Writing as a form of communication is often neglected because of predetermined notions that oral language and reading are precursors to writing. This relationship was not supported by the correlations of the *Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test* and the reading achievement measures.

For teachers, another advantage of informal measures is the opportunity to observe early emergence of oral/written language behaviors. In contrast, while administering group standardized reading readiness tests, which probe for the mastery of a skill, teachers have no indication of the strategies children are using to respond to those items. Informal measures provide a description of the emergent behavior and are more suitable indices for intervention needs. For example, the data from the *CAP* includes book handling tasks; basic concepts, e.g., front of book, first, last, etc.; identification of print containing the message; and reading terms such as *letter* and *word*. These data cannot be obtained from traditional standardized tests.

Rather than testing high-risk and normal children to determine if they are "ready" for formal reading, informal assessments should be periodically conducted to determine the extent to which emergent literacy behaviors are developing. This diagnostic information should not be used to "sort" children, but rather to enable meaningful intervention activities in which children have many experiences with print. No child should be deprived of print experiences. On the contrary, rich experiences with literature, shared reading, language experience stories, writing, and reading simple messages should be the program emphasis.

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Professional news

A recent themed issue of the *Ohio Media Spectrum*, published by the Ohio Educational Library/Media Association has as its topic, "Reading: Key to the Past, Present, Future." Copies of the issue are available for \$6 from OELMA, 40 South Third Street, Suite 230, Columbus, Ohio 43215.

The fifth World Conference on Computers in Education (WCCE/90), will be held in Sydney, Australia, July 9-13, 1990. Sponsors of WCCE/90 note that it will be "a conference for all aspects of computer-related education in all education environments." Those interested in receiving further information should write to: WCCE/90, PO Box 319, Darlinghurst, NSW, Australia 2010.

The thirty-fifth annual convention of the International Reading Association will be held in Atlanta, Georgia from May 6-11, 1990. The conference theme is "International Literacy Year: Celebration, Inspiration, Dedication," and the featured speaker at the opening general session will be Coretta Scott King.



Readability of Children's Periodicals Yesterday and Today

Betty J. Glass
M. Kathleen Cook

Children's periodicals are experiencing renewed popularity among today's young readers. Much to the amazement of parents and teachers, children's periodicals are successfully competing with television and other attractions for children's attention (Zuckerman, 1989). More than 100 years ago, periodicals also entertained and taught young people. With the current concern over the illiteracy of today's children and a reported decline in quality in the nation's schools, it seemed appropriate to make a comparison between the readability level of children's periodicals published today and that of similar publications from approximately 100 years ago. The authors hoped to determine whether any significant differences have occurred between the reading ability expected of today's children and those of almost a century before the advent of television and videogames.

Periodicals studied

Four periodicals were chosen for inclusion in the study, two from the 19th century and two currently being published. The 19th century periodicals chosen were *St. Nicholas* and *Harper's Young People* (*Harper's*). *St. Nicholas* was the most popular literary magazine of its time and was published for 70 years, absorbing other children's periodicals throughout the years. Its readership included children between the ages of 5 and 18. *Harper's* was a competitor of *St. Nicholas*.

It had a worldwide readership but a much smaller circulation in its 20-year history (Roggenbuck, 1977). The publishers of both periodicals emphasized the necessity of literary and artistic excellence for children and respected their intellectual capabilities. The magazines sought to be "morally uplifting."

The two current periodicals selected for the study were *Highlights for Children* (*Highlights*) and *Cobblestone*. *Highlights* is intended for children 3-12 years. Its goals include the development of thinking, reasoning, moral sensitivity, basic skills and creativity (Thomas, 1987). *Cobblestone* is a social studies magazine with each issue providing a wealth of information on a particular topic. The magazine is intended for intermediate and middle school students (Moore and Moore, 1983).

All four of these periodicals include fiction, nonfiction, poetry and letters to the editor as part of their content. Because all four titles have poems and letters to the editor written by children, it was decided to test the reading levels of those two categories of material as well as the fiction and nonfiction material written by adults for young readers. Three sample passages in each of the four categories were randomly chosen from the four periodicals for a total of forty-eight samples. Issues of *St. Nicholas* from November 1886—October 1887 and of *Harper's* from October 1882—June 1885 contain the 19th century sample passages chosen for testing. Issues of *Cobblestone* and *Highlights* from 1988 provided the contemporary sample passages for testing.

Readability formulas used

Gamco Industries, Inc., of Big Spring, Texas, has developed a software package called *Readability Analysis* (Gamco, 1987). This program consists of three well known

readability formulas which cover the span of grade levels appropriate for the study. Therefore, it was chosen as the testing instrument. The *Readability Analysis* program was run on an Apple II microcomputer. Each passage chosen for testing was run against all three of the readability formulas described below.

The first of three tests, the Spache Primary Reading Formula, is considered accurate for grades 1.3 through 3.9. This formula is based on sentence length and proportion of hard words. It uses a revised word list of 1,041 words representative of the vocabulary currently present in basal readers and supplementary books for the primary grades (Spache, 1978).

The second test is the Dale-Chall Readability Formula. It is most often used for grades 4 through college level. It uses sentence length and percentage of unfamiliar words as the basis for its readability estimate. It also uses the Dale list of approximately 3,000 words that are in the reading vocabulary of at least 80% of children in the fourth grade (Dale and Chall, 1948).

The third test in the software program is the Fry Readability Formula. It encompasses the grade level ranges of both the other two tests, 1.3 through college. The Fry test uses average sentence length and average number of syllables for its predictions rather than a set word list to determine difficulty (Fry, 1977).

One problem is inherent in attempting to compare the readability of text from two different time periods. George Spache has noted that using a dated word list in a readability formula will result in an overestimation of the difficulty of text from a different time period (Spache, 1978). Applying 20th

century readability formulas to sample texts from the 19th century inevitably creates some degree of overestimation of difficulty. Similar inexactness may also apply to the 1988 samples, however, due to the dates of the word lists in two of the formulas. The original word list for the Spache Primary Reading Formulas was published in 1953. A revised word list for this formula appeared in 1974, predating the 1988 samples by 14 years. The Dale-Chall Readability Test became operational in 1948. Application of its 40-year-old word list to samples from 1988 may also result in some overestimation of difficulty when assigning grade levels. The inclusion of the Fry Readability Formula in the study provides compensation for the dated word list factor. No controlled vocabulary is used with this test. Therefore, it assigns grade levels to sample texts without a time period bias.

Given the growing concern over the effectiveness of the United States' education efforts, the authors set forth a simple hypothesis: the content of young people's periodicals from 100 years ago required a higher reading level than the content of young people's periodicals being published today. Language skills used by young people, themselves, to submit poetry and letters to the editor should also translate into higher reading levels for 100 years ago than for young readers today.

When comparing the 19th century samples of poetry and letters to the editor to the corresponding 1988 samples, the average reading level ranges are very similar (See Table 1). *St. Nicholas* and *Harper's* had an average reading level range of 3.2-6.1 for poetry and 3.3-6.5 for letters to the editor. *Cobblestone* and *Highlights* had an average reading level range of 3.2-6.1 for poetry and 2.6-7.0 for letters to the editor. Therefore, the basic hypothesis is not supported in these two

categories where young readers, themselves, used written language skills to provide reading material for their peers.

TABLE 1 Average Reading Levels			
Grade Level Ranges:	Readability formula		
	Spache (1.3-3.9)	Dale-Chall (4-College)	Fry (1.3-College)
<u>Type of Material</u>			
Poetry			
<i>St. Nicholas</i>	3.5*	6.1	4.6
<i>Harper's Young People</i>	3.2	5.5*	3.6
<i>Cobblestone</i>	3.6	6.1	4.0*
<i>Highlights for Children</i>	2.7	5.5*	2.3
Letters to the Editor			
<i>St. Nicholas</i>	3.6*	6.1	6.5*
<i>Harper's Young People</i>	3.3	5.5*	6.0
<i>Cobblestone</i>	3.0**	6.1	7.0
<i>Highlights for Children</i>	2.6	5.5*	2.6
Fiction			
<i>St. Nicholas</i>	NA#	7.5	8.6
<i>Harper's Young People</i>	NA#	6.8	8.3
<i>Cobblestone</i>	2.1**	5.5	5.6
<i>Highlights for Children</i>	3.0	5.5*	4.0
Nonfiction			
<i>St. Nicholas</i>	NA#	8.3	9.6
<i>Harper's Young People</i>	NA#	8.1	8.3
<i>Cobblestone</i>	NA#	11.0	10.3
<i>Highlights for Children</i>	3.9**	6.1	6.6
* One or more samples below test range			
** One or more samples above test range			
# All samples above test range			

The fiction and nonfiction samples were written by adults for young readers. The fiction samples in *St. Nicholas* and

Harper's had an average reading level range of 6.8-8.6. *Cobblestone* and *Highlights* had an average reading level range of 2.1—5.6 for fiction. Thus, the hypothesis is supported for the fiction category.

The situation is not as straightforward for the nonfiction category, however. *St. Nicholas* and *Harper's* had an average reading level range of 8.1—9.6 for nonfiction. *Cobblestone* and *Highlights* had an average reading level range of 3.9—11.0 for nonfiction. The broad span for the two modern periodicals seemed to call for a closer look at the nonfiction results.

Individually, the four titles' average reading ranges were as follows: *St. Nicholas* = 8.3—9.6; *Harper's* = 8.1—8.3; *Cobblestone* = 10.3—11.0; *Highlights* = 3.9—6.6. The two 19th century titles had comparable ranges. The range for *Highlights* matched that of its intended audience of intermediate elementary grades. Based on these findings, the nonfiction hypothesis was supported in the case of *Highlights*.

The unexpected finding is the 10.3—11.0 range for *Cobblestone*. Intermediate and middle school students are the target audience for this periodical. The average readability level of the samples was 11.0 according to the Dale-Chall formula and 10.3 according to the Fry procedure, and the range grade scores across the two formulas was 7—15. All of *Cobblestone's* nonfiction samples tested beyond the range of the Spache test.

To understand the *Cobblestone* results, the raw scores for each of its three nonfiction samples were examined. One sample had a grade level range of 7—8, another had a range of 9—12, and the third had a range of 13—15. The text of the

third sample from *Cobblestone* was then retrieved in an effort to understand why two readability tests placed the passage so far above the intended reading level of the periodical. This sample was about art in the South during the Civil War. It consisted of four long sentences. Both the Dale-Chall and Fry tests use sentence length as a factor in their computations of reading level. This may partially explain the results for the third sample. Vocabulary must also be considered, however. The sample's discussion of lithographs and engravings to decorate parlors probably resulted in a high percentage of unfamiliar words for the Dale word list, and an equally high average number of syllables for the Fry test.

It has been noted in the literature that a limited word list in a readability formula can result in overestimation of the difficulty of specialized subject material. Common words in various specialized subject areas often are not included in the basic word list for readability formulas (Tekfi, 1987; Davison, 1988). This observation certainly applies to the nonfiction samples taken from *Cobblestone* for this study. *Cobblestone* specializes in nonfiction for young people, and two of its three randomly chosen samples tested at a higher reading level than the nonfiction samples in the 19th century periodicals. All of these factors contributed to lack of support for the basic hypothesis for nonfiction in *Cobblestone*.

Summary

The findings indicate that the language skills used by children themselves in writing poetry and letters to the editor have not declined over the last 100 years. If an adjustment is made for time bias, the written language skills for modern children are at a slightly higher level than those of 19th century children.

Nonfiction articles in one of the modern periodicals were found to be more difficult than those in the 19th century periodicals. While vocabularies of basal readers declined from 1920-1960 (Chall, 1983), and there has historically been a trend toward shorter sentences (Flesch, 1974), it is encouraging to note that authors of nonfiction articles in children's periodicals do not seem to have purposely lowered the reading level of their material.

The purely recreational fiction category supported the original hypothesis that the content of 19th century young people's periodicals required a higher reading level than the content of modern young people's periodicals, even with an adjustment for time bias. Perhaps this difference reflects an attempt to reach a larger number of children with a wider range of reading abilities. It is to be hoped that publishers of modern children's periodicals do not have lower expectations for their readers than the publishers of yesterday.

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.... EXPANDING HORIZONS

More Letters from the Jolly Postman

*This teaching idea is shared by Ruth Hook,
a graduate student at Western Michigan University*

Janet and Allan Ahlberg's delightful children's book, *The Jolly Postman, or Other People's Letters* (Boston, MA: Little, Brown, 1986) can be the inspiration for inventive writing and drawing by young authors. The book is a long rhyme about the postman's travels, interleaved with envelopes addressed to the fairytale characters who live on his route, and each envelope contains an appropriate letter, pamphlet or advertisement — such as a letter of apology from Goldilocks to the Three Bears, and a business letter from the Three Little Pigs' attorney to the Big Bad Wolf.

After the book has been read and enjoyed many times, devote a week to a follow-up writing activity. Time is important to insure that children will have ample time to plan, to write, to revise. Begin by discussing the types of mail we receive. Reread the book again, and compare the class list to the mail the Jolly Postman brings. At the next discussion, consider the pattern of the Postman's adventures, and list the beginning phrases: "Once a Jolly Postman... Off went the Postman... Soon the Jolly Postman..."

Start the children off on their own, deciding who their postman is going to see, and what kind of mail will be received. Some children will want to use rhyme in their writing; others will not. Most will want to add their own illustrations, and some will decide to create the very thing a fairytale character might be needing, such as a catalog for Cinderella so she can have new clothes.

Supply envelopes and postcards for the final writing; and collect the mail!





Reading Instruction and the Language-Impaired Child: Means to What End?

Esther Feldman Levary

The faculty of language stands at the center of our conception of mankind: speech makes us human and literacy makes us civilized.

David Olson, *Harvard Review of Education*, 1977, p.257.

This simple statement alludes to the important relationship between speech and literacy that has come to intrigue and perplex many in recent years. Speech and literacy have been recognized as two complex processes that are conceptually and practically intertwined in the great tangle called "language" (Snow, 1983; Vellutino, 1977; Mattingly, 1972). Language, "a system of communication that employs spoken or written symbols" (Harris and Sipay, 1984, p. 247), is defined as a single phenomenon having receptive and expressive modes. The receptive (i.e., receiving) mode is listening and the expressive mode is speaking when the oral code is used; the receptive mode is reading and the expressive mode is writing when the graphic code is used (Athey, 1983).

Most children naturally and effortlessly develop oral language skills under the informal tutelage of parents who are uninformed but intuitive about language development. At age six, they generally begin formal instruction in the area of reading. In the normal course of development, the relationship between oral and written language is often overlooked. Nonetheless, it is generally expected that children bring to the

reading process not only “a wealth of experience, informal training in reasoning, an extensive grasp of the language and its uses, but also familiarity with books and writing implements as communication tools” (Athey, 1983, p. 200). In the optimal situation, all proceeds smoothly and children learn to read.

In some instances, however, the process does not progress smoothly. Reading problems arise and the whole process demands scrutiny. Considerable research has been conducted in an effort to understand reading difficulty. Until quite recently, reading problems were typically seen as distinct from speech problems. Reading specialists dealt with the one and speech/language pathologists dealt with the other. For the most part, speech/language professionals thought reading problems to be the result of visual perception difficulty and viewed the reading process as a curricular concern (Catts and Kamhi, 1986). It was primarily in the 1970's that reading researchers accorded serious interest to the relationship between reading and oral language (Velutino, 1977). Interest in the relationship continues today and professionals in both fields are now exploring the connection.

Relationship between oral language and reading

If language is a central factor in reading difficulty, educators must better understand the relationship between written and oral language. They must learn to foster all facets of language development more efficiently and effectively if they are to remediate and prevent reading problems. Furthermore, if educators are concerned with maximizing the overall intellectual development of young students, they must explore the relationship between language and cognition (i.e., intellect) as well. Pflaum (1986) suggests that emphasis in education might shift from reading and writing to thinking if it were known

with certainty that cognition drove language learning. If it were believed that language drove cognition, however, emphasis might well be on specific language instruction.

While all of these complex relationships are being explored, the educational system continues. While goals and methodology may change over time, educators must use existing information to help those children currently having trouble. There are many children who begin reading instruction with seemingly adequate oral language and yet develop reading problems. There are numerous other children, however, who begin instruction without the requisite foundation. Regardless of an identified problem in oral language development, most children participate in a daily program of reading instruction. Although literacy is a worthy goal, is it a reasonable one for those children having significant language impairment? Some researchers suggest that language problems predicate reading problems (Stark, 1984; Levi, 1982; Jansky, 1972). Is reading instruction destined to be more than an exercise in frustration? Professionals involved with language impaired children, be they regular classroom teachers involved with minimally impaired students or speech/language specialists involved with more severely impaired students, must consider these questions if they hope to use educational time judiciously.

Researchers exploring the relationship between oral language and reading recognize the impact of oral language knowledge on reading. "Children who know more words understand text better" according to Nagy and Herman, who surveyed the literature (1987). Comprehension is related to schema (Athey, 1983). Menyuk (1983) suggests that the relationship of oral language to reading varies both with the nature of the reading task and with time. At later stages of

development, "as children become literate, the two systems become interactive, and children use each to support the other when they need to" (Goodman and Goodman, 1979, p. 150). Does this postulated interaction exist at early stages of reading development as well? Does reading impact positively on oral language development in the primary grades? For children who are significantly language impaired, oral language development is the primary concern. Can primary reading instruction impact positively on the oral language development of the language impaired child?

Until recently, it was generally accepted that listening, talking, reading and writing developed more or less sequentially, with oral language consistently preceding written language and with reception (i.e., comprehension) consistently preceding expression. Recent literature related to emerging literacy, however, suggests that this developmental progression is not necessarily fixed (Hall, 1987; Durkin, 1970). It has been suggested that writing precedes reading in some circumstances and that the precursors of real writing often provide the inspiration for reading. If writing can precede, or, at least, impact positively on reading, it is reasonable to suppose that reading can somehow impact positively on oral language. The directionality of the developmental sequence is no longer sacrosanct.

Language impairment

Before exploring the particular effect of reading instruction on the oral language development of the language impaired child, it is first necessary to characterize the language impaired child. Language disordered youngsters fall along a continuum. They will all, however, have marked deficits in oral language development despite normal hearing, normal nonverbal intelligence (Stark, 1984), and parents who speak

English as a first language.

Types of language impairment

Language disorders are typically categorized according to a three part classification system. Children exhibit difficulty in one or more of the areas: content, form, or use of language (Johnson and Reed, 1985). *Content* refers primarily to vocabulary and concept development, the semantic aspect of language. Disorders in the content area may be in the receptive and/or expressive mode. Children who don't follow a direction such as "stand behind Joe" because they have no understanding of the word "behind" are demonstrating some evidence of a receptive problem in the content area. Children who talk around a topic because they lack specific vocabulary (e.g., "I threw up last night in the, you know, where there's water") are demonstrating some evidence of an expressive problem in the content area. *Form* refers primarily to grammar, the morphological and syntactic elements of language. Both the child who omits word endings indicative of past tense or plurality (e.g., "My two dog runned away") and the child who confuses word order (e.g., "Where you is going?") show some evidence of difficulty with language form. Use of language, *pragmatics*, refers to the way language is used as a communicative tool. Children with words at their disposal who do not demonstrate understanding of the unspoken rules of conversation, (e.g., I speak, you listen, you respond to my comment while I listen...) show some evidence of a problem in the area of pragmatics. A child's language behavior is referenced to developmental norms.

Origins of impairment

Verifiable language disorders that appear superficially similar may stem from different sources. Causative factors are variable and often hard to pinpoint. While it is not difficult

to understand the language problem of a deaf youngster, it is often quite difficult to understand the language problem of a seemingly bright child having no hearing problem. Why is it, for example, that certain children cannot retrieve simple everyday words when trying to express themselves? Sometimes, one suspects that auditory perception problems (e.g., inability to notice the difference between "coat/code" upon hearing the words) have thwarted vocabulary development. Other times, one suspects that transitory and unnoticed hearing losses (the kinds that accompany colds and ear infections) have occurred at critical periods of language learning.

On occasion, one considers insufficient early stimulation or inadequate opportunities for practice (e.g., brothers and sisters speak for the child). On rare occasions, one even suspects over-stimulation. If the parents typically speak in long, convoluted sentences rather than in abbreviated, developmentally appropriate sentences when the child is young, the child may be incapable of handling the input (e.g., "You need to give Daddy a kiss now before he leaves for the meeting because you will be fast asleep in your snug little bed by the time he arrives home later this evening"). Regardless of the cause, the child arrives at age six missing many basic skills in oral language.

Reading and the language impaired child

Experience shows that despite oral language deficits, many language impaired children, during the early grades, progress in reading. That is, they learn to recognize and/or decode words and they participate in reading lessons. Menyuk and Flood (1981) suggest that "success in the first components ...does not necessarily predict success in later components" (p. 17), and that different reading materials

require different levels of oral language knowledge to be brought to conscious awareness" (p. 18).

Chall's theory of reading stages (1983), which distinguishes learning to read from reading to learn, seems to explain the language impaired child's early reading "success." Kamhi et al. (1985), however, found that many language impaired youngsters (aged 3-6 years) had "difficulty segmenting sentences and words into smaller units" (p. 50). This information suggests that even the decoding stage of reading should be difficult for many language impaired children. Perhaps success or failure at decoding can be explained somehow by the origin of the language problem or by the determination and expectation of the teacher. Perhaps, if Rumelhart's interactive theory is accurate (1985), language impaired youngsters learn to read because they take advantage of any feature available to them. Few children will exhibit a deficit in every conceivable dimension.

Despite all of this information, educators might consider delaying reading instruction if it is suspected that language impairment was related to a maturational lag. Satz et al. (1971), in a study of "specific developmental dyslexia" postulated and supported a theory of maturational deficit. Such a theory might be applicable to the language impaired youngster as well. Stark et al. (1984) in a follow-up study of young language impaired children found that those children developed language skills over time but seemed to acquire them "at a slower than normal rate" (p. 65). Although all children had had some form of language intervention, evaluation indicated that most maintained their language impaired status over time. Most also developed reading difficulty over time. Of the few younger, less impaired children who tested in the normal range eventually, half exhibited significant

reading difficulty. Thus, it would seem that maturational problem or not, early reading and language instruction is advisable. Given the limited amount of time available for education, early instruction is necessary if children are at least to achieve their potential. Early education is even more essential if one suspects neurological deficits. Neither the neurological hypothesis of Hynd and Hynd (1984), which postulates developmental abnormalities for dyslexics, nor any theory related to brain damage, eliminates the need for early intervention. As Geschwind (1972) suggested, recovery in cases of brain trauma is sometimes accounted for by the plasticity of the young brain. When "children have been known to make a much better recovery than adults with the same type of brain lesion" it is suggested that one part of the brain still has the capacity to take over the function of the damaged part (p. 83). In such instances, it is clear that early intervention is a must.

The discussion thus far has been quite theoretical. Given some of the deficit areas of language impaired children, however, it is possible to speculate more specifically about the impact of reading instruction on their oral language development. If the child has difficulty in the area of auditory perception, for example, it may be beneficial to present stimuli through a more "intact" modality (i.e., present material in the manner that the child most typically grasps). While the neurological process is not fully understood, it is known that the auditory and visual centers for receiving messages are in different spots of the brain. It is known, too, that a deaf child learns little about the world through the auditory (i.e., hearing) channel. If language impaired children have an auditory perception problem, it is possible that they also are incapable of using the auditory channel effectively. "Because most verbal communication takes place by auditory speech signals, a

child who is unable to attend to speech sounds or to differentiate speech sounds from the remainder of the auditory stimuli in the environment will probably experience difficulty learning to comprehend and in acquiring language as a communication system" (Chalfant and Scheffelin, 1969). In that case, the language impaired child would undoubtedly benefit from the visual input afforded by reading instruction.

While listening is generally an unconscious, natural process that is taken for granted, it is nonetheless quite complex. The "auditory cues are not discrete events well separated in time or frequency" (Mattingly, 1972, p. 136). Usually, the process of listening is made less complex by the redundancy of spoken language (e.g., "he" and "his" in the same sentence give similar information about gender of the subject) and by the inflectional and phrasing cues (i.e., stress and pauses) afforded by the speaker.

It must be recognized, however, that the cues that make language learning so natural for the majority of children may not be so functional for language impaired children. If they were, it would seem logical that these children would be learning language as easily as their peers. Mattingly (1972) points out that "in printed text, the symbols are discrete units" (p. 136). Furthermore, in the written form, words are static. With reading, language impaired youngsters have the opportunity to focus on a word, to refer back to it, and, in general, to set the pace. To the contrary, a word in conversation simply disappears into the proverbial thin air. Mann et al. (1984) studied normal and reading impaired third graders and found that poor readers appeared to have "a less effective means of retaining the words of sentences in working memory" on a sentence repetition task (p. 640). The study postulated that "ineffective phonetic representation [would...] give rise to

comprehension difficulties whenever language processing stresses working memory" and found that poor readers did less well than good readers on both the repetition task and the comprehension task (p. 639). If language impaired children experience similar difficulty with word memory, it is likely that many oral words will be missed. Without the child expecting the word, the word may simply fly by. In reading, attention can be redirected.

Once words become more obvious to the language impaired child, it is possible that metalinguistic awareness will grow. Mattingly (1972) suggests that "...sight words and the writing system are matters of convention" which "must be more or less deliberately learned..." and are never inaccessible to awareness in the way that much primary linguistic activity is (p. 142). Thus, if *-ing* or *-s* become apparent in written language, perhaps they will subsequently become more obvious in oral language, the primary linguistic activity, as well. The written cue may provide the stimulus necessary for critical language learning.

Many speak of the decontextualized nature of reading (i.e., the separation of word from experience). Reading in primary texts, however, is accompanied by many pictures and cannot be considered totally decontextualized. Language teachers recognize the importance of experiential learning and provide that type of instruction whenever possible. Written language accompanied by pictures can, however, provide reinforcement for a particularly established concept. While language impaired children are deficient in many areas, they usually have pockets of strength as well. It seems reasonable that these strengths should be encouraged. It may be that the printed word is the next level of experience that the impaired child needs for certain elements. Snow (1983) suggests that

while physical context is important, "historical context" (i.e., "experience with some event, place, word, or text, which can support ...current interpretation or reaction" p. 175) becomes important as well.

Additionally, reading can broaden the child's experience both inside and outside the classroom. It is obvious that texts can bring experiences to children which they would otherwise miss. It is equally obvious that the written word is crucial to experiences outside of school. How can a "thank you note" be understood, for example, without the written word? Even a grocery visit has more meaning when a child is familiar with written symbols (labels, signs, etc.). "New and different experiences laden with vocabulary, challenge children to think, talk...about their impressions" (Stewig, 1980, p.52).

Carroll (1977) considers the interrelatedness of cognition, language and reading and suggests that development in one area is circumscribed by development in the preceding area. Primary reading materials designed to promote simultaneous development of these related areas would integrate phonics and meaning and thereby impact positively on oral language development. Meaning, after all, is a basic shared element of reading and oral language (Hall and Ramig, 1978).

Nagy and Herman (1987) reviewed studies of vocabulary development in the normal child and concluded that direct instruction alone cannot account for the tremendous growth in vocabulary that the normal child experiences. They noted further that each exposure to a word enhances understanding and cautioned that "one should not underestimate the value of any meaningful encounter with a word, even if the information gained from that one encounter is relatively small" (p. 32). If a normally developing child needs many encoun-

ters with a word to establish deep understanding, how many more encounters must be needed by the language impaired child with a content problem?

Miller and Gildea (1987) suggest that "mastering the mechanics of uttering and recognizing a word and mastering the concept that it expresses are separate learning processes" (p. 94). Carey (1978), whose research inspired their conclusion, postulated that the first part of the process happens quickly and efficiently while the second part, which requires restructuring of the cognitive domain, happens slowly. Miller and Gildea (1987) suggested that arbitrary drill often presents words at a time when students have no desire to learn them. They asserted that reading provided both a natural opportunity for word exposure and a natural opportunity for the teacher to present information at a critical time. In normal development of oral language, children must use words as well as hear them. Snow (1983) found that at the level of sentence production planning ...children get better partly as a product of practice with talking (p. 183). Perhaps reading words aloud in grammatically correct sentences is analogous to using the words in conversation. It is possible that reading material — and the teacher — provide the scaffolding (Bruner, 1978) necessary for language development.

"Written language tends to be more complex than speech and children who read benefit from a range of linguistic inputs that are unavailable to the child who has no access to a book" (Chomsky, 1980, p. 57). In a study of normally developing children who ranged in age from 6-12 years, Chomsky observed that the development of several higher order elements of syntax correlated with measures of reading exposure and material complexity. Both children who read to themselves and children who were read to showed gains.

Chomsky (1972) concluded that children should be "permitted access to books well above [their] level to get out of them what [they] may" (p. 33). If challenging language materials stimulate the syntactic development of normally developing children, they might also stimulate the syntactic development of the language impaired child. Even the simplest text might provide challenge to the child with a syntactic deficit. When one considers Chall's theory (1983) that challenge is necessary for development, the withholding of written material could be considered an impediment to the achievement of linguistic potential.

Schuele and Van Kleeck (1987) suggest that language awareness in language impaired youngsters might be deficient due to lack of word play opportunities. They feel that caregivers may "simplify language demands and experiences ...while emphasizing the use of oral language to communicate" (p. 40). "The language-disordered child's exposure to literacy also needs to be considered to ensure that the child is gaining an understanding of the functions and conventions of written language" (Schuele and Van Kleeck, 1987, p. 34). Gillam and Johnston (1985), in a controlled study of normal and language impaired preschoolers, found that language impaired children trail their peers in the development of general literacy before formal instruction even begins. If language impaired children are denied basic language experiences, they simply add one disadvantage to another. Gillam and Johnston's study of print awareness, which showed that oral capability (i.e., naming an item) was "not a prerequisite for success on a print-to-product match for the same item" (p. 525), strongly suggests that language impaired youngsters can benefit from such exposure to the written word.

As most children between the ages of 6-7 years are learn-

ing to read and write, the language impaired youngster wishes to learn as well. Because of strong motivation, the language impaired child may learn more of both written (and subsequently oral) language than anyone expects. Furthermore, if the impaired child is denied the opportunity and thus, removed further from the peer group, the social consequences may be disastrous.

Language impaired children walk a tightrope. Despite their deficits, they seem in some ways to be average children. If their differences become more noticeable (i.e., they are not expected to read and write) and they, as a consequence, are excluded from social interaction with peers, their deficits may compound themselves. Missed experiences, coupled with the lowered expectations of disheartened parents, only add to the problem.

Beneficial types of reading instruction

While speculation and observation suggest that reading instruction benefits the oral language development of the language impaired child, it is difficult to determine the type of instruction that stimulates such growth most effectively. A teacher's philosophy must enter into the choice of approach. A teacher who sincerely believes that cognition drives language learning (as mentioned earlier) may want to incorporate elements of a top-down approach. Many educators see value in the experience story strategy (Hall and Ramig, 1978; Lamoreaux and Lee, 1943). Such an approach provides motivation and allows for "normal" language learning with the help of a visual aid. The teacher can easily provide expansion of utterances (as outlined in Snow, 1983) if the experience story is done as a group project. The child's particular skills must guide the choice of approach as well, however. Popp (1978), in an article about reading materials and the high-risk

child, suggests that the system of instruction should capitalize on student strengths. The child with strong visual skills might do well with a bottom-up approach. Ability to memorize sight words might be the one strength (and first success) that a child has.

Montessori's method, developed and implemented years ago in the Children's Houses of Italy, might offer an integrated approach that would work well with the language impaired child. Montessori encouraged applied experience and natural discovery. She stressed sensory learning and believed that "touching the letters and looking at them at the same time, fixe[d] the image more quickly through the cooperation of the senses" (Montessori, 1974, p. 266). The teacher's responsibility was to observe the child and to adjust the environment to maximize the child's potential learning.

Given the severity and complexity of a language disability, it is probably wise for the teacher to follow an eclectic approach. A child with multiple problems may benefit from a variety of strategies. As long as the teacher consistently supports the learning process and stays alert to successes and failures, the language impaired child will benefit.

Conclusions

There is little consensus to date amongst professionals regarding optimal intervention strategies for those youngsters having difficulty in absorbing language from the oral environment (Stark, 1984). This investigation, however, suggests that reading instruction, guided by a knowledgeable and sensitive teacher, may well be one means of complementing and facilitating oral language learning for the language impaired child. Primary reading instruction may afford the language impaired child an opportunity for broadening and deepening

knowledge of vocabulary and syntax. The static, simple nature of the written word, coupled with its potential for visual and kinesthetic input, may afford the language impaired child the opportunity to focus on the critical elements of language to be learned. The need for empirical research in this area is great. If professionals are to meet the special needs of language impaired children, the complex relationship between reading and oral language must be explored in depth and understood more fully.

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***"Thanks to the person who taught me to read,
I lived wherever I wanted
and I was whoever I wanted to be.
I learned a new way of being happy."***

*from an address by Janet Emig, outgoing president
of the National Council of Teachers of English*



READING: THE CONFERENCES

Jeanne M. Jacobson

Understanding our world through literature

"Soaring to new heights"

National Middle School Association, October 1989

"We didn't create the problems children in our society are experiencing, but we have to work with them when the children come to us." Ruth Cline, faculty member at the University of Colorado and president-elect of the National Council of Teachers of English, addressed an audience of fellow educators at the annual NMSA conference in Toronto, Canada, on the theme of using literature to help students cope with important issues in their lives. "Literature gives us an avenue. We must be aware of the literature, and aware of ways to use it to enter into dialogue with our students."

Diversity in family patterns is a fact of life within our society, and schools can show awareness and understanding of this diversity without emphasizing value judgements. Stereotypical views of families with a single child and families with many children, for example, encourage antagonistic views about which pattern is "better." Research, Cline noted, shows similarities across family patterns, as well as advantages of both family structures. Life with siblings, and life as an only child, are the themes of many books written for children in the intermediate and middle school grades.

Group reading and discussion of novels about a variety of family patterns, including families under severe stress, can foster family cohesiveness. Cline urged teachers to be aware of the riches and the difficulties to be found in the diversity which exists within actual family systems, and the resources available to teachers and students through the fictionalized accounts of family life found in current literature.

"Family cohesiveness," she said, "can be fostered by talking about families in school. By asking students questions which encourage them to relate their own ideas and feelings to those of characters in fiction we encourage thoughtful reading, and enable students to discuss issues of strong personal concern without impinging on their privacy."

She applauded current trends in the study of literature, pointing out the importance of engaging students as thoughtful readers, rather than as analysts, of text. "Some former methods of teaching literature," she asserted, "treated students as if they were preparing, not to develop as readers, but to become literary critics."

"I would like to see you reading to your students, reading with your students, using whole class and small group and dyadic discussions, conversing and writing together," Cline concluded. "Communication is the key."

A four-page annotated bibliography, "Fiction about families with only children/families with siblings" was distributed to participants. Dr. Cline has agreed to send copies to Reading Horizons readers on request. Send 50¢ for copying costs and a SASE to: Dr. Ruth Cline, University of Colorado CB 249, School of Education, Boulder, CO 80309.



Celebrating Diversity
National Council of Teachers of English,
November 1989

"African-Americans in children's books: Images and ideals, past and present" was the theme of a panel at NCTE's annual conference in Baltimore. Violet J. Harris, of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, spoke about her research into books and periodicals for black children which were published between 1865 and 1940. Although these books are virtually unknown today, they were influential among black readers over a period of many years. Analysis of these readers has contemporary importance, Harris noted, because the issues the texts raised are pertinent to current discussions and policy decisions about literacy and the type of content of material used in literacy instruction.

One catalyst for the production of these texts — which include a basal series for black children, a black ABC, and a children's magazine published for more than twenty years — was "the need of individuals to express creative impulses and the need for a forum from which to share that creativity." Another impetus was the desire to combat tales presenting negative images of black children which became part of mainstream American culture.

"One cannot discuss books [such as Little Black Sambo] as aberrations," said Harris. "They were typical and remain in circulation. Many passed from one generation to the next in families as enjoyable literature. Further, one cannot dismiss these books as atypical and innocent, because they are instruments of power. They represent the power of one group to control and shape the images of another group."

In one of the basal readers she prepared, the black educator Emma Akin wrote a children's story which conveys vividly the tragedy of books which demean members of one group of people and mislead members of other groups. In her story, Betty, the major character, falls asleep while reading *Little Black Sambo*. In her dream, Sambo escapes from the story crying.

"Clown! Clown!" shouted Sambo. "I know I look like a clown. But this is not a play. They are sending me on a long journey. I shall meet many boys and girls. They will think I am really like this all the time. They will look at me and laugh at me day after day after day. They will draw pictures of me in these clothes. They will talk about the funny black boy in the bright clothes. Think of meeting boys and girls who might become friends if they could see me as I really am. Alas! They will think that I am just a funny clown."

The comprehension question Mrs. Akin suggested for the readers of her story was "Why does Betty dream of Sambo?" Present day readers and educators have another question: To what extent has our vision of the world been narrowed because we have been unaware of writings by people whose experiences differ from our own, but whose talents, emotions and opinions could have informed and enriched our lives?

"Most of these books," Harris explained, "were used by relatively small numbers of children and were not commercial successes. Yet they were a success in one way: they represent what Susan Cox labels a 'storied tradition of resistance.'" The books for young black readers "were not merely propaganda or didactic lessons, nor were they linguistically contrived texts. They were skillfully written materials which developed literacy, language and ideals. They would challenge today's students."



REVIEWS

Professional Materials

Children's Literature in the Elementary Classroom. Peter Langford. 1989. Technomic Publishing Company, 851 New Holland Avenue, Box 3535, Lancaster, PA 17604. ISBN 0-87762-604-9. Hardcover. 171 pp. US\$ \$29.00

Reviewed by J.H. Kaufman

How do children come to build meaning, to understand and make sense of their/our world? What is the nature of the young child's cognitive development, what patterns are revealed, what perplexities? What is the relation between thought and practical activity in children's learning? How might the insights generated through such explorations guide the practices, projects and musings of the elementary school culture? In reading Peter Langford's *Children's Thinking and Learning in the Elementary Classroom*, these questions percolated and emerged to highlight both the glimmerings and the shadows inherent in Langford's text.

Langford's thesis, synthesized in the first chapter, stems largely from his concern over the dominance Piagetian theory has had in shaping educational practice. Drawing primarily on the works of Bruner, Gagné, and Ausubel, Langford critiques both Piaget's delineation of children's stages of cognitive development, and his emphasis on practical activity and discovery as the appropriate manner through which children should be engaged in learning. Langford regards Piaget's descriptions of children's thinking as valuable, but argues that Piaget underestimates the abilities of children at each stage.

In addition, he calls for a greater focus on the role of the teacher in facilitating children's learning. His analysis here may, at best, provide an introduction to the theoretical debate shaping our understanding of how children learn; however, his analysis is narrowed by its failure adequately to address the relation between children's thought and language.

In the remaining chapters, Langford considers the implications of this critique for the teaching of reading, writing, art, science, and mathematics in the elementary school. Here again, Langford seems to have provided an overview rather than a substantive analysis of each area. His analysis turns on the understanding of expressive versus logical hierarchies. In the former, he includes reading, writing, and art and he suggests the need to build up "that level of skills which has been left weakest by previous learning" (p. 14). In the latter, he includes science and mathematics and suggests the need for teachers to develop first simpler and more basic concepts and later to use these concepts to build higher-order conceptualizations (p. 16).

In his chapter on reading, primarily centered on Goodman's psycholinguistic model, the categorization of reading as an expression hierarchy leads him to conclude that because children entering school are weakest in graphophonic skills, most emphasis in initial reading should be placed on this element (p. 29). This statement seems to disregard the current understanding of the transactional nature of reading, as well as the importance of oral language and background knowledge in beginning reading. In his chapter on writing, Langford provides an analysis of Graves' process approach to writing. He argues that Graves' approach is "excessively learner-centered" and places too much emphasis on "incidental learning." Additionally, he

finds Graves limits the purposes of writing in the classroom by his emphasis on individual story-writing and personal-interest based products of a separated writing class; here Langford seems not to recognize the interactive and dialogic nature of Graves' approach.

Langford's analysis and implications for teaching in the chapters on art, science and mathematics are more explicitly connected with the particulars and limitations of Piagetian theory. His chapter on art is perhaps the strongest. Here, Langford gets beyond specific educational theory to provide an insightful synopsis of the historical and cultural influences on art instruction. It is in the context of this chapter that the author most successfully helps the reader focus on the notion that Piaget's work, and his focus on the child, is a counterbalancing force in education's historically adult-centering. Piaget gave children a presence and with this presence, dignity. It is for this reason that we are indebted to Piaget.

Books for Children

Where Is the Bear at School? Written by Bonnie Larkin Nims; illustrated by Madelaine Gill. 1989. Albert Whitman & Co., 5747 West Howard Street, Niles, IL 60648. ISBN 0-8075-8935-7. Hardcover. 19 pp. US\$ \$10.95.

Reviewed by Cindy Overly

Author Bonnie Larkin Nims invites young readers to help answer the question, *Where is the bear at school?* Nims' story, along with Madelaine Gill's illustrations, depicts a busy pre-school attended by boys and girls of many races, a child who uses a wheelchair, and a bear who hides in the midst of a variety of delightful school activities. Very young children

will enjoy the challenge of finding the hiding bear. Older children can participate even more by anticipating and repeating the predictable passage which asks, "where is the bear?"

The language and pictures so vividly re-create the pleasure and excitement found in a happy pre-school that when the story is over, readers will want to hear it again.

Computer Software

Story Tailor. 1989. Humanities Software, PO Box 950, 408 Columbia, Suite #209, Hood River, OR 97031.

Reviewed by Camela Vossen

Designed to teach basic reading and writing skills, Story Tailor is a series of poems, plays, and stories that can be personalized in numerous ways. A class list, as well as reading groups of up to 40 first names including gender (so that appropriate pronouns are also incorporated in the readings) can be entered. For further customization, the name of the teacher, school, town, state, a local park, and a street can be included. Once the class list has been created, the names will automatically be inserted to the selected story.

The program also has word processing capabilities so the students can rewrite the text. Additionally, frames can be inserted throughout the story, providing blank spaces for student drawings. The stories can be printed out for rereading and illustrating. Story Tailor consists of a driver program for the personalization of the texts and Story Tailor Library disks which each contain between five to twelve stories. Currently, 18 different disks are available. Ranging from kindergarten through sixth grade, 13 of them focus on the K through three

grade levels. The company plans to develop content disks in the science and history areas. The stories included on the demonstration diskette were fun to read and easy to revise. The software would be further enhanced if it included graphic images for context clues and audio capabilities.

Although the company provides a toll-free customer support line and the two representatives I talked with were friendly and helpful, it was disconcerting to be informed that some of the library disks listed in the company's catalog are not currently available. Most are scheduled for release later this year. On the positive side, the company welcomes suggestions and comments from teachers for implementation in future program upgrades.

The driver program is \$60.00 for an individual copy, a backup copy, and the teacher's manual. A full use license for \$199.00 allows unlimited copies within one school site and can be installed on the following networks: AppleShare, Corvus, Digidisk, LAN-TECH, and Velan. The library disks are \$75.00 each. The complete Story Tailor collection, the driver program and the 18 library disks, is \$1,339.50. Upgrades are provided free of charge. There is also a 45 day risk-free evaluation period on any of the company's programs. The Story Tailor program requires an Apple II computer with 128K RAM, one disk drive, and a monitor. The MS-DOS version is scheduled to be released later this year.

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