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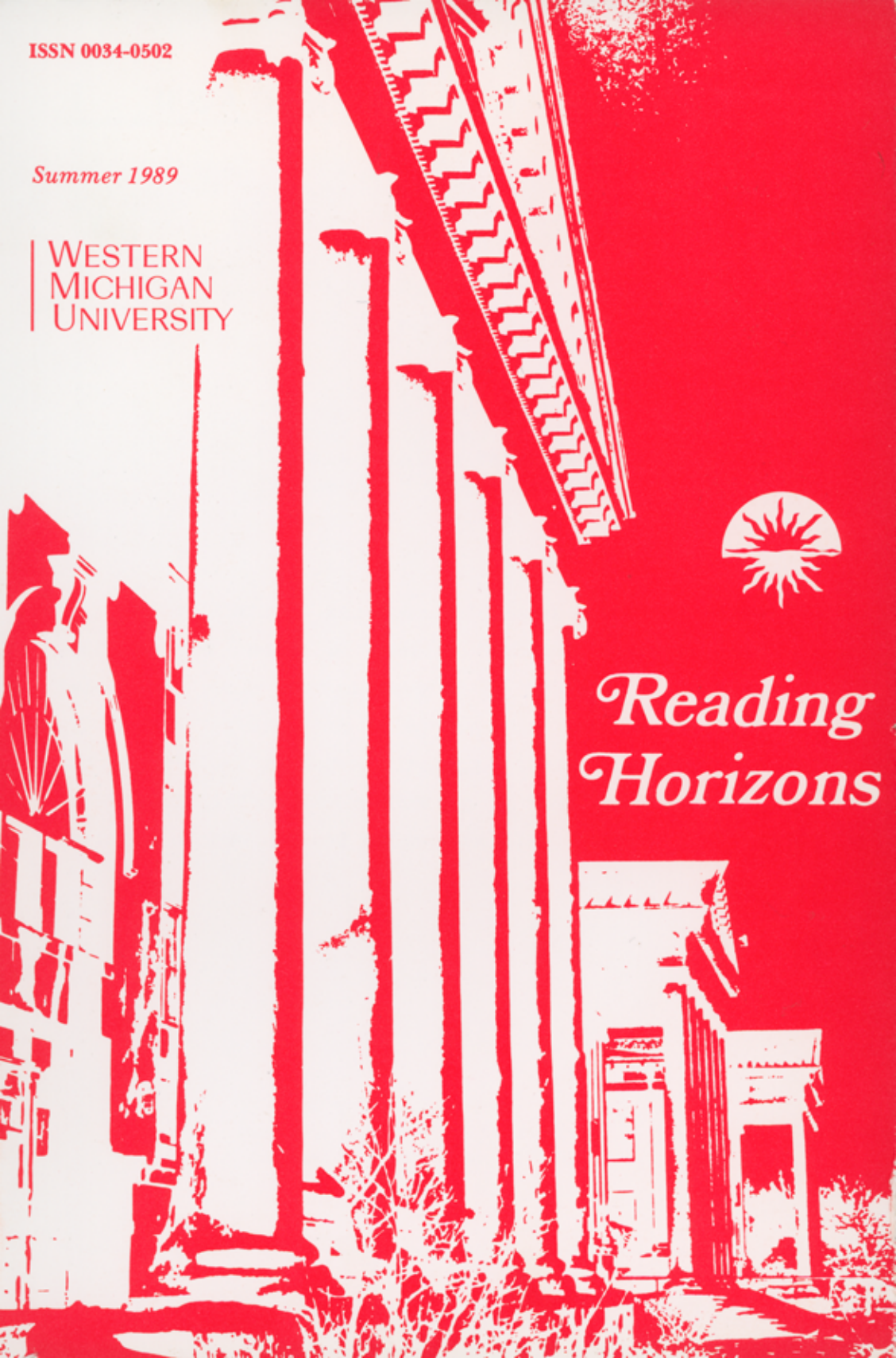
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# *Reading Horizons*





# READING HORIZONS

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Editor - Ken VanderMeulen  
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Kalamazoo, Michigan 49008

READING HORIZONS has been published quarterly since 1960, on the campus of Western Michigan University in Kalamazoo. As a journal devoted to teaching reading at all levels, it seeks to bring together through articles and reports of research findings, those concerned and interested professionals working in the ever widening horizons of reading and related skills.

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## MAKING STORY TIME A LITERACY EVENT FOR THE YOUNG CHILD

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A literacy event is "any action or sequence, involving one or more persons in which the production and/or comprehension of print plays a role" (Anderson, Teale & Estrada, 1980). Story reading by a parent or teacher is perhaps the single most effective literacy event in a young child's experience with written language. Increasingly, reports suggest children's development of skills associated with ease of reading acquisition are enhanced with regular readings of storybooks both prior to and concomitant with formal instruction.

Oral language competence is an early developing reading related skill. Children who exhibit proficiency with complex grammatical forms tend to find the process of learning to read easier than those children who are less competent (Hiebert, 1980; Share, Jorm, MacClean, Mathews, & Waterman, 1983). Facility with grammatical structures is enhanced with regular story reading at the preschool level (Durkin, 1978; McCormick, 1983).

Development of early reading knowledge; ability to differentiate between the front and back of a book, awareness of the direction in which print is to be read, understanding that print provides salient information is associated with regular story reading at the preschool level (Durkin, 1974-75, Teale, 1978). Likewise, motivation to deal with the process of learning to read is fostered in children who are read to consistently at home (Freeman & Wasserman, 1987).

Children beginning the formal process of reading acquisition also benefit from consistent story reading.



Comprehension skills and decoding ability of low socio-economic first-grade children read to daily for six months were superior to the control group (Feitelson, Kita, & Goldstein, 1986).

Reading stories also benefits those whose experience deviates from "normal". Hearing impaired children performed at or above grade level in reading instruction after participating in a prereading program with a significant story-reading component (Lieding & Gammel, 1982).

Interest has recently focused on aspects of the story reading act as investigators report "being read to in itself does not necessarily enhance literacy" (Morrow, 1988, p. 91). Quality of instruction, quality of time and quality of books are significant factors in ensuring story reading is a true literacy event.

### Quality Instruction

The primary purpose of story reading is pleasure. However, a number of instructional approaches may be adopted to both enhance enjoyment of stories and awareness of literacy.

**Interactive Discussion** occurs when questions and comments are initiated by both the children and the reader (Cochran-Smith, 1984). Initial evidence suggests the quantity and the nature of questions and comments by all participants, dictate how effective a story reading is in promoting readiness for formal instruction.

After observing parents with preschool children, Flood (1977) reported the number of questions asked by both the reader and the child was one of the best predictors of success on reading readiness scores. He suggests interactive questioning occur before, during and after the reading with much positive reinforcement of children's responses.

While not directed at the classroom story time situation, Flood's (1977) report and recommendations have relevance for it. His suggestions support such time honored practices as initial discussion of title, author, and a guess at the story line. Also implicated as appropriate instructional activity is the practice of having children predict events at regular intervals. Finally,

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discussion in which an emotional reaction to the story is required is also a justifiable story reading activity.

Children less experienced with the story reading process may require assistance in dealing with interactive discussion. When uncertainty is displayed the teacher can both ask and answer such a question. Such a practice is often referred to as "scaffolding" (Ninio & Bruner, 1978) and the intent is to provide the student with a model for future behavior. Over time the extent of teacher participation should be dropped in favor of more extensive contributions on the part of the children (Combs, 1987).

**Shared Reading** is an instructional activity that can be conducted with a whole class or a small group. Children not yet able to read formally are encouraged to join in or read in place of the teacher whenever possible (Holdaway, 1982). Predictable books, those with a recurring phrase or sentence are the most appropriate for this activity. Outsize texts with enlarged print are sometimes used to ensure all children can see the text and pictures.

Practices associated with an interactive reading of a story book are equally appropriate in the shared reading context. Like a "simple story reading", the initial reading of a new story is conducted in one sitting. Unlike a simple story reading the children are encouraged to join it and "read" where possible. This expectation is conveyed easily by stopping and waiting for the children to take up the refrain--" . . . and that was the end of that." While this occurs the teacher can sweep her hand under the text to identify the printed form of the spoken words.

The book is reread only if both teacher and children are eager to return to it. Subsequent readings can be handled in a variety of ways. Children may listen to a taped version of the story and "read along" endeavoring to match the words they see with the words they hear. The teacher and children may read in unison from individual copies. If appropriate, the children's attention may be drawn to book or print conventions or to word and letter details.

**Repeated Readings:**

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Recently, support has also been offered for multiple readings of the same story. Repeated readings have been found to encourage increasing amounts of discussion with each reiteration (Martinez, 1983; Yaden, 1988). Growth of interest in a different aspect of the story; characters, plot and vocabulary, is evident with each reading (Martinez & Roser, 1985). This implies insight into one component of the story frees the child to explore and process another in greater depth. Thus, children should listen to the same story as often as interest dictates.

Morrow (1988) reports a differential effect of repeated readings on low and high ability children. More questions and comments were made by low ability children than by higher ability children across subsequent reading of the same books. Such a finding suggests less academically able children would benefit from hearing stories read repeatedly.

**Children as Story Tellers:** Having the child become the storyteller is a teaching strategy directed at making storytime an intensely personal experience for the student. This can be done in a number of ways once children have gained a little competence with the reading process. Anecdotal reports suggest interest in reading and books is stimulated through such approaches, thus enhancing the value of story time as a literacy event.

A student storytelling session may be established as part of classroom routine. Capetty (1986) describes one successful attempt to incorporate students as readers into the class program. Groups were formed and one child designated a reader, the other children listeners for that week. A prepared portion of the story was read by the reader to each of the groups in the room. Capetty reports interest in personal reading is heightened as children both become aware of books enjoyed by their peers and wish to know the end of the story.

Children can be encouraged to tell, orally, their own stories in a class or group context. A singularly important benefit that accrues from this practice is the development of a sense of story; awareness of story elements such as the beginning, time and location, characters, sequence of events and endings (Hough, Nurss & Wood, 1987). Awareness of story structure is significant

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as it helps the child know what to expect in a story (Sadow, 1982; Whaley, 1981a) and plays a role in children's interpretation and construction of stories (Golden 1984).

Stories related orally by students may ultimately be copied down by the teacher, illustrated by the author and made available for class members to read. Such activity, of course, provides young children opportunity to develop the essential understanding that oral and written language are corresponding codes.

A related instructional activity is oral retelling of stories that have been read aloud (Golden, 1984; Morrow, 1985a). Young children may require assistance with the structural elements of a tale; the setting, locations, etc. throughout the process. This can be offered in the form of prompts; "Who was the story about? When did the story happen? Where did the story happen? What was the problem (main character) had to face? What did s/he do about it?" Consistent instruction with story retelling has positive effects for literacy acquisition. It has been found to improve the sense of a story (Morrow 1986), comprehension (Brown, 1975; Gambrell, Pfeiffer, & Wilson, 1985) and complexity of oral language used (Morrow, 1985a).

Theater: Reader's theater in which we encourage children to develop a play from a story is recommended as an activity for creating interest in reading (Cox, 1988; Stoodt, 1988). Gray's (1987) report suggests that dramatics increase comprehension.

Adapting a story for a radio play is an enjoyable and novel experience for most children. Stories may be rewritten as an alternative to reading of stories at story time. In presenting a radio play, readers are stationed behind a screen serving as "radio station". To add realism the performers are encouraged to introduce the performance and broadcast the station call letters. Children must read their parts loudly and clearly so that all members of the audience can hear.

No accounts could be located in the literature about the efficacy of this procedure. The author's experience with the practice, however, has been positive. Since the

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participants perform in relative anonymity they often feel secure enough to read confidently and with expression. Furthermore, the audience enjoys guessing who is taking the various parts of the characters.

#### Quality Time

The amount of time spent engaged in story reading is felt to be a significant factor in fostering literacy acquisition. Shanahan & Hogan (1983) report the most significant factor in predicting children's achievement on a test of print awareness is the minutes per week spent in book reading. Equally important, though, is the quality of time spent engaged in story reading and related activity. Essentially, this refers to allowing children opportunity to reflect upon stories and the reading process.

Prerequisite to reflection is familiarity with the story (Miles, 1985; Minns, 1988). After a number of readings and full discussion of a given book, the teacher may ask or encourage a response to it. One approach is to have the children try to relate the stories to their own situation. "What was the story trying to say? Have the things that happened in the story ever happened to you?" Miles (1985) characterizes such activity as "making meaning with a story" (p. 343). The intent is to have children make sense of a book on a deep and personal level by relating experiences described in literature to their own lives. Teale (1981) states that these events provide a "range of reinforcements and extensions which build a child's typification of literacy" (p. 907).

Opportunity to individually read a book quietly or to share a story with friends can also be quality time. Children with some reading competence can use designated "sustained silent reading" periods, now fully described in the literature (e.g., Kaisen, 1987).

However, children who cannot read in the traditional sense also need a personal reflective reading time built into the daily schedule. Reports (Holdaway, 1979; Minns, 1988) suggest opportunity to reread familiar books provides children with a chance to "rehearse" the reading process. Formal structures of written language are tried out and corrected as stories are re-enacted. Additionally,

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reading like behaviors are adopted as children begin to fully understand book handling conventions.

### Quality Books

Anecdotal accounts (e.g., Huffman, 1981) and research reports (Chandler & Baghban, 1986) suggest stories with repetitive rhythmic and cumulative refrains are suitable for introducing children to the literary experience. Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day, (Viorst, 1975) and The Hungry Giant (Cowley & Melser, 1980) are examples of stories employing this convention. Repeated phrases or sentences such as " 'I'll hit you with my bommy-knocker' said the giant" begin to be anticipated and identified in print by the young reader after several hearings. This experience gives the child a sense of his/her potential ability to deal with the reading acquisition process.

While colorful or imaginative graphics enhance the appeal of a book, the language employed is the significant component of quality literature. It must be forceful enough to evoke images in the mind of the listener (Martin, 1978). A simple test of appeal of the language of a book is a story reading since children will rarely attend to a poorly written tale (Cullinan, 1987).

Quality books for the young reader also incorporate an easily identifiable plot and sequence of events that build suspense. Such stories provide children opportunity to develop the sense of story necessary for comprehension (Stein, 1979).

### Conclusions

Consistent story readings provide young children with opportunity to construct concepts and understandings about reading that will facilitate the acquisition process. Reports suggest some instructional practices, such as careful questioning and rereadings of the tale optimize these learning opportunities. Also significant in developing awareness of the literacy process is individual time for reflection upon the books read. Such personal reading time permits the young child

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opportunity to practice reading-like behaviors that encourage understanding of written language structures and book handling conventions. Finally, quality books, books with natural sentence, a plausible plot and appealing graphics are essential to hold the interest of young learners.

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## READING ATTITUDES OF PRE-SERVICE EDUCATION MAJORS

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Studies of teachers' reading habits and attitudes over the past fifteen years suggest that teachers generally do not highly value reading (Mangieri & Corboy, 1981; Mour, 1977; Mueller, 1973). If we cautiously generalize from these studies, it can be said that a number of practicing teachers are no avid readers, although a few studies have found that many teachers do enjoy reading for work and leisure (Searles, 1985). An implicit goal of reading instruction is to develop readers who enjoy reading and will read throughout their lives (Alexander, 1983). Children learn a great deal by imitating the behavior of models. So, it is important that teachers model good reading behaviors and positive attitudes about reading (Briggs, 1987; Gray & Troy, 1986).

One way of ensuring that the next generation of teachers embrace reading is to help them develop positive attitudes toward reading. Attitudes guide behavior and can have a large impact on individuals' reading activities. A few studies have reported success at enhancing the reading attitudes of preservice teachers via activities in reading methods courses (Brittain, 1981). Dillingofski and Dulin (1980) simply had their students (48 undergraduate teaching majors) discuss the books they read during the semester. These students increased the number of books which they read and there was some improvement in reading attitude as well.

The purpose of the current study was to assess the reading attitudes of undergraduates in training. We

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wondered if there were any relationship between such students' reading attitudes and the number of reading methods and other reading- and language-related courses they had taken.

### Subjects

Forty-seven students enrolled in educational psychology courses at a major midwestern university completed a 40-item reading attitude survey. Eleven percent (11%) of these students had taken six or more courses in reading methods or the psychology of reading and language, language arts, or communication studies; 21% of the students had taken more than 4 but less than 6 courses, 49% had taken 1-3 such courses, and 19% had taken no language-related courses.

There were 7 freshmen, 19 sophomores, 14 juniors, 6 seniors, and 1 graduate student in the sample. The mean age was 21.06 years. There were 42 females and 5 males.

### Instrument

Students completed the 40-item Adult Survey of Reading Attitudes (Smith, 1988). Students responded to statements concerned with their feelings about reading and their reading behaviors along a 5-point scale (5="strongly agree" to 1="strongly disagree"). The survey assesses dimensions of reading such as enjoyment, social reinforcement for reading, and reading difficulty. A typical item reads "Reading is one of my favorite activities." A high score (about 150 and above) indicates a positive attitude toward reading, while 100 or below shows a negative attitude. Students provided demographic data (age, sex, GPA, year in school, courses taken) on the cover sheet of the ASRA.

### Results

The results showed that the mean score for the ASRA equalled 140.55, reflecting a moderately positive attitude toward reading among this sample of students. This outcome is similar to earlier administrations of the ASRA with comparable groups of university students (Smith 1988). There was no relationship between attitude and the number of reading- and language-related courses taken ( $r = .00$ ). There was, however, a significant correlation between reading attitude and students' self-rating

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of their reading ability ( $r = .54$ ,  $p = .001$ ), and between attitude and overall GPA ( $r = .33$ ,  $p < .05$ ).

A t-test revealed no differences on reading attitude between those students who had taken 6 or more reading- and language-related courses and those who had not taken any such courses ( $t = -0.48$ ,  $p > .05$ ).

### Discussion

This study revealed that there is no relationship between undergraduates' attitudes toward reading and the number of reading- and language-related courses taken. Obviously, other factors work to influence students' attitudes toward reading (e.g., attitude development in elementary and high school, influence of role models). It is not surprising to find that for those students who believed themselves to be good readers, attitude toward reading was positive. The majority of the students believed themselves to be good readers.

It should be remembered that no information was collected concerning the content and activities of the reading methods, language arts and communication courses taken by the students. Thus, we do not assert that students' reading attitudes were affected (positively or negatively) simply by having taken such courses. It is unlikely that the content of several of these courses dealt with the affective dimensions of reading. Further, it is quite probable that students who already have positive attitudes toward reading are likely to enroll in these courses. More carefully controlled studies, such as Brittain's (1981) are needed to determine the impact that instruction has on promoting positive reading attitudes.

Despite our failure to find an attitude-training relationship, this descriptive study demonstrates that typical undergraduate pre-service teachers possess only moderately positive attitudes about reading. Will these individuals come to view reading in a more positive light once they become practicing teachers? Perhaps by making professional reading materials more accessible (i.e., the content having a practical orientation) to teachers, and by promoting the benefits of reading for professional development as well as for leisure, we can

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ensure that young children are exposed to teachers who are positive reading models.

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## LANGUAGE AND LITERACY: MEDIATING READING PROBLEMS IN A COMMUNICATIVE CONTEXT

JIM WADDELL

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A week after school had begun in the fall, the big door opened from the outside of the first grade portable classroom. Trevor, a new student, was met with the busy hum of children's voices. Scanning the classroom, Trevor could notice two children reading to each other in what appeared to be a space rocket. Another child was writing in a book in front of two gerbil cages. Three children were sitting at the writing table. One was drawing. The other two were making books. No one seemed to notice the visitor until finally a child reading on the couch, looked up from behind her colorful book and announced, "Mrs. W., someone's here!"

The purpose of this paper is to describe how Trevor, a student who failed first grade because he didn't attain minimal reading skills according to school standards, learned to read during his second year in first grade. We believe that this description of Trevor's program will contribute to the understanding of how oral and written language impact on literacy attainment. We describe (a) Trevor's school history and problems that were noted in his folder prior to his second year in first grade, and (b) Trevor's success in learning to read and write in a program that encouraged his use of language and comprehension strategies. Samples of his writing illustrate how Trevor's increased participation

in the writing process enhanced his ability to build connections between meaning and print.

### **Trevor's School History**

A study of Trevor's school records revealed information about Trevor's previous two years in school. In kindergarten Trevor had attained 100% mastery of the skills delineated within a Basic Skills program developed for his school district. His scores on the Stanford Achievement Test, administered during his last month of kindergarten, were stanine 4 in reading and stanine 3 in listening. The apparent success of his first year of instruction, however, was not a predictor of his first grade performance. By the end of first grade, Trevor had a stanine of 1 in reading on Stanford Achievement and he did not achieve mastery of 60% of the school's predetermined "minimum basic skills". The list of skills on which Trevor did not meet school criteria for successful mastery included word recognition skills (e.g., consonant blends and digraphs, word endings), study aids, word meaning skills (e.g., synonyms), comprehension skills (e.g., details, sequence), and literary plot. The last report card that Trevor received in first grade revealed an F in reading, an F in spelling, and a D in language.

Trevor's previous year of instruction was described as a skills-based program. Reading groups were assigned to basal reader stories and at least an hour a day was spent in drill work on basic skills using workbooks, skilpaks, and ditto sheets. Students worked independently at their desks during skill practice and had little opportunity for group projects or interaction. Skill mastery was assessed by criterion-referenced tests and recorded on student checklists.

### **A Dilemma For Reading Educators**

Determining how to teach the student who exhibits problems in learning to read has been one of the most controversial issues confronting educators. A wide variety of interpretations exist about the cause of reading problems, and each of these engendered different instructional solutions. For example, those who believe that reading is a skills-based process (e.g., Block & Burns, 1977; Bloom, 1976) suggest that students exper-

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ience difficulty when they have not mastered a set of predetermined skills. To be successful in such a program, the beginning reader is taught skills that are arranged hierarchically and each must be mastered before a new level of skills is introduced.

Rather than assuming that reading failure is caused by student deficiencies, it may be useful to determine whether the student can adjust existing knowledge and language structures to meet the demands of the instructional program or classroom environment (e.g., Y. Goodman 1985). Some educators (Atwell, 1982; Goodman, 1986; Graves, 1983; Hansen, 1987; Murray, 1984) advocate instruction in which children are encouraged to rely on their language experiences to predict meaning as they learn to read by reading and to write by writing. Further --these educators (e.g. Altwerger, Edelsky & Flores, 1987; Goodman, 1986) describe early and continued writing as a way to enhance students' ability to become skilled language users and to encourage reading for self-monitoring so that written compositions make sense. In such a program, students learn about word recognition, vocabulary meanings, syntax, and grammar conventions directly as they compose, edit, and revise (e.g., Edelsky, 1986; Harste, Woodward, & Burke, 1984).

Rather than teaching to weaknesses by targeting specific reading skills to be taught, these authors suggest that students can learn literacy skills holistically through the writing process. When students are provided time to write and allowed to maintain control over their writings, they begin to hypothesize about rules that govern print. Students are encouraged to take risks and self-select topics and structure for their writing. As they use and misuse the skills they select, students learn when rules work and when they are not appropriate.

### **Participation and Collaboration Guide Trevor's Learning**

On his first day of school, Trevor was introduced to his reading-writing curriculum within a classroom that had an abundance of oral language, reading and writing activities. Children's literature, poetry, students' writing, and written notes from the teacher were displayed throughout the room. The students and teacher

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were involved in activities such as reading aloud to share stories, writing information in personal journals, and constructing and illustrating books for stories they wrote.

Two and a half hours each day were devoted to the language arts activities. This time was filled with reading, writing, and social learning. Students chose books they wanted to read from a large collection of classroom books, including books the children had made. If a child had trouble with a word in print, s/he learned a variety of strategies (e.g., think of the theme, look at the pictures) which included asking a friend.

Students wrote from the first day of school about topics of their own choice. They selected their ideas from the books the teacher read in class, events that happened at home or at school, and ideas from other children. Scribble writings were accepted and invented spellings were encouraged. Meaningful writing was the goal, so students were always asked to read or talk about what they had written. Large group conferences allowed the student authors to share their writings with the entire class and to invite comments and questions about the meaning and form of the writings.

#### **From the Hardware Store and Computers to Mailboxes and the Dog Downstairs--Writing for Different Reasons**

Students in this classroom wrote for multiple reasons and about many topics. A predictable time was provided every day when the children planned and initiated their writing. This writing time began with the students and Mrs. W. writing for an uninterrupted five minute period. Then individual conferences with the teacher and peer conferences among the children occurred simultaneously. Writing projects were continued throughout the morning. Classroom news, personal narratives, journal entries, poems and prose were among the daily genre. Trevor had his reasons for wanting to write.

##### **1-To Convey Personal Experiences and Feelings**

From the first day of school, Trevor wrote about his personal experiences and feelings in his new journal. Trevor's first entry was:

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"I h a a F a e f o"

(I had a physical.)

Mrs. W.'s written response was:

"When you had the physical, did you get a shot?"

She read her message as she pointed to the words. Trevor started to answer verbally but his teacher asked him to write his answer. Trevor smiled and wrote:

"Y e s a e D h e t."

(Yes and it didn't hurt.)

Again his teacher wrote and read her response as Trevor focused on the print:

"I'm glad it didn't hurt. I don't like shots."

Trevor often wrote about his joy with school.

"ILveyoutesro.Iamhype toBeAt Shool."

(I love you teacher. I am happy to be at school.)

Trevor also wrote about classroom events. For example in late September, a group of firefighters made a presentation to Trevor's class. They brought the fire engine for the children to see. As the class was about to view the fire engine, the firefighters had to respond to an emergency call. When the firefighters returned, they explained that a man had jumped off a building. They said that the man was taken to a hospital by ambulance.

When the children returned to the classroom, Mrs. W. suggested that the students could write about this event and/or write a thank-you letter to the firefighters for their visit. Trevor chose to write to the firefighters but instead of writing a thank-you letter, he had a specific question to ask.

"the Mamis going to the /Rhe Man jompoff

WDSro

the belding.

I-hap-you-git-was-oN-Tim

Sin Yes ro No

frm Trevor

(The man is going to the hardware store. The man jumped off the building. I hope you got there on time. Sign yes or no. from Trevor)

Mrs. W. asked Trevor where he got the idea to write hardware store that way. He responded, "Cause that's the

way it looks on the sign." Trevor often talked about where he got his ideas. He seemed to notice environmental print and to use this knowledge in his writings.

As can be seen by the above examples, Trevor's writing about personal feelings and experiences commonly shared with his classmates provided an opportunity for him to translate true experiences to print.

### **To Seek Permission**

Numerous events encouraged this aspect of writing. For example, when the classroom computer arrived in October, Trevor wrote:

"C a N I P a w e F P O U"  
(Can I play with the computer)

One day Trevor forgot his permission slip for a field trip to the school's farm. Written permission from a parent was required for this excursion. Later in the day, he handed Mrs. W. the following note written in his own manuscript writing.

"Trevor have my pamesh to go to the fam."

(Trevor has my permission to go to the farm.)

He had quickly learned that he had the ability to translate his request to printed messages and that they were functional and evoked responses.

### **To Respond to Literature**

Trevor responded to literature in many of his writings. One early experience occurred when Trevor became captivated by the book T-Shirts by Estelle Corney (1985). The first verse in the book reads:

I've got a t-shirt,  
A big orange t-shirt,  
And on my orange t-shirt  
There's a great, big,  
ME!

The next week Mrs. W. read Blue Jeans (Cummings & Sykes, 1985), patterned after T-Shirts and written by two teachers in the school district. The children loved it and could read the verses chorally. Only a few days later, Trevor began to work on "Mailbox". His verse read:

I've got a mailbox,	My neighbors have a mailbox,
A big orange mailbox,	A big, purple mailbox,
And on my orange mailbox,	And on my purpose mailbox,
There's a code called 247	There's a code called 242.

This was only the beginning of this verse for Trevor. He wrote eleven verses using this rhythmic pattern before the end of the year.

### **To Revise and Publish**

At the beginning of the year, Mrs. W. introduced her students to

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the concept of publishing. She explained that the students could choose to have one of their writings published each week. These compositions could be published either singularly or in books that contained several writings. Mrs.W. shared published works that she had collected from previous students to illustrate that the published product was hard-bound, typed on the classroom computer by both the teacher and students and illustrated by the student authors.

As early as November, Trevor began to use the editing checklist independently. For example, he decided that his writing about Chad, his best friend, was important and should be published.

"Imis Chad and heis mi bstfrnd and we  
alwys patoger whin we go otsidfor the xtr paprd."

He used the editing checklist to correct the mechanics of his writing. He deleted the "and's" to create three sentences. Each began with a capital and ended with a period. After he made these changes he asked his teacher for a publishing conference so that his finished product could be published. At the conference, she asked him to encircle two words that may be misspelled. He encircled pa and prd. She helped him find these words on classroom signs before he rewrote the words with correct spellings. She then directed him to another question on the editing checklist—spacing between words. Together, they marked his page at the end of each word to signal a need for a space. When typed, his published writing was:

I miss Chad. He is my best friend.

We always play together when we go  
outside for the extra play period.

Publishing the children's writings into a book or newspaper gave the children a reason to write, revise, and edit. In an interview with his classroom teacher, he answered her question about how he felt about his work, saying, "I'm a good author and a good boy. We are learning to write and I'm learning to read."

### **Indicators of Progress**

By the end of the year Trevor had written 209 pieces. He had published 25 stories and 6 books (that contained several compositions) and co-authored 20 newsletters. Trevor's results on the Stanford Test at the end of the year yielded a stanine 6 in total reading. Analyses of his reading miscues (Goodman, Watson & Burke, 1987) on a full-length story revealed that 90% of his miscues were judged to not change the meaning of the story. Although Trevor had only mastered 40% of skills taught and tested in reading at the end of his first year in first grade, he had mastered all skills listed on the school's checklist by

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the end of his second year in grade one. Trevor learned these skills even though they were not taught directly within an isolated format or with the help of worksheets or workbooks. Instead, skills were taught within the context of Trevor's reading and writing activities. Likewise, these skills were determined as mastered when Trevor actually used them consistently (at least three times) in samples of his writing.

### Summary and Conclusion

This story about Trevor is important, it shows how a language-rich program that deviated from traditional skills-based lessons impacted on a student who was viewed as reading disabled. While this case study does not settle any debates, we can conclude that Trevor experienced early and sustained success in reading and writing in this language and meaning centered program.

Trevor learned to read and write within an environment that is similar to a home in which children learn oral language. In these surroundings ideas are presented in meaningful contexts, and students are encouraged to decide what they will learn and use according to interest and function. Peer and teacher audiences provide a reason for making sense of language experiences and social interactions occur naturally and purposefully. Central to the success of this program, in addition to stressing language and meaning, is the generative nature of students' learning. These students become active participants in literacy acquisition by choosing topics for their writing, producing written work for multiple purposes, and reading to revise and make sense of their writing.

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## CLASSROOM ORAL READING AND ITS NEEDS FOR RESTRAINTS

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Few deny the beneficial effects of prose or poetry read aloud by a fluent and expressive reader; imparting reassurance, delivering entertainment, dispensing information or explanation, arousing curiosity, diffusing inspiration (Trelease, 1982). Apart from these advantages as we shall see, oral reading has the capability to engender literacy among individuals, more particularly our schoolchildren (Hoffman, 1982).

First, when oral reading is provided regularly, either on a one-to-one basis or before a group of boys and girls, with consistently high standards for reader performance and listener participation, the activity subtly but effectively works to promote language and reading competence. Then, too, reading-skills needs are assessable, at least in part, when oral reading is put to some diagnostic use. Nonetheless, as concerns these educational benefits, one question is bound to arise: Are there operational restraints in using oral reading in the classroom? Let us examine this query, first within the context of correspondences between oral and written language, then within the perimeters of existent models of oral reading and the roles those models play in meeting student needs.

### Prosody and Fluency: Essentials of Oral Discourse

To communicate written matter viva voce, a reader must faithfully convey its prosodic features (juncture, pitch, and stress) and adhere to its fluency demands (word-recognition accuracy and rate of reading). Though a strong link exists between spoken and written language,

the tie-in is far from perfect (Spache and Spache, 1986; Witte, 1980). Junctures or pauses in speech constitute a case in point. Many of these are represented in written discourse by commas, periods, and the like; others have no such proxies. Consider, by way of example, the elusive pause which identifies the boundary between subject and predicate in spoken utterances. Recognition of this unmarked juncture is absolutely essential if textual materials are to be read with proper expression.

While pauses in oral language signal a division of words into meaningful groups, it is pitch, the rise and fall of voice, that furnishes a cue to the meaning assigned each group. In written language, however, the only available markers of pitch are punctuation marks. Think about the question mark and the rising tone it prompts, as when asking, "What's for supper?" In contrast is the falling intonation pattern, induced by the period, in the statement, "We're having hotdogs and sauerkraut." From these illustrations, it is clear that graphemic cues alter the contour of intonation.

Stress is still another aspect of articulated expression. This prosodic feature not only identifies pronunciation emphases within words, but it accords prominence to certain words within our oral discourse. Because of these roles, stress is rightly considered a major indicator of meaning in speech. Nonetheless, when it comes to written words, there is a change in scenario. Though readers of text require a good working knowledge of accentuation principles, their only cues to word emphasis are capital letters or boldface type, italics or underlining, quotation marks or exclamation point. An amplification of this point is found in the simple sentence, "His failure surprised everyone." Here, the underlined "his" testifies to a deliberate stress. On the other hand, what might happen to intended meaning should the sentence have no marker for emphasis, and the stress shifted arbitrarily to "failure" or another word?

Obviously, a reader cannot rely on prosodic cues alone, but must employ semantic, syntactic, and other constructs of language, as well, if script is to be read with meaning and expression (Ross, 1986). If for no other reason than the recurrent incompleteness of our

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prosodic analogues, silent reading must precede all instructional uses of oral reading. Employment of this restraint justifiably affords the reader and opportunity ". . . to supply those portions of the signals which are not in the graphic representations themselves" (Fries, 1963, p. 130). But, there is more to oral reading than a skilled use of prosody. There is also fluency.

According to Schreiber (1980, p. 177), fluent reading ability is ". . . that level of reading competence at which nontechnical textual materials can be effortlessly, smoothly, and automatically understood." While most clinical and empirical data point to a decidedly strong relationship between fluency and general reading ability (Allington, 1983), the views articulated about fluency are typically couched in terms of its decoding and comprehension requirements (Aulls, 1982; Buehner, 1983). These views, in turn, are reflected in the popular contention that reading fluency is best served when children use materials and techniques geared to an assuagement of difficulties in word attack or comprehension. Those subscribing to this line of reasoning are numerous, yet there are others in education who insist that fluent reading ability is achievable by a much less pedantic means. Teachers of the latter persuasion are convinced that the halting, expressionless word-by-word reading of poor readers--lamentably punctuated by hesitations, repetitions, and other signs of difficulty--is correctable by a modus operandi quite different from the usual approach: competent modeling of oral reading and, when possible, concomitant silent reading and group discussion. It is this same premise that now directs our attention to the various paradigms of oral reading in the classrooms.

#### The Teacher-to-Pupil Model

In this country, children require models of English which mirror the language expected of them in their speaking, writing, and reading in school and later, in their functioning as responsible adults. As a pedagogical position, this is particularly apropos where language minority students are involved (Hough, Nurss, and Enright, 1986).

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Although the role of the teacher, as language exemplar, has been voiced time and again, perchance no more convincing statement exists than that of the Commission on the English Curriculum, still valid despite the passing of near thirty-five years and its use of pronoun forms denoting feminine gender only:

"Throughout all of the school day, the boys and girls have one paramount example in speech--the teacher. In everything she says to them--and she must say many things--her voice, her pronunciation, her articulation, her inflections, her simple and clear ways of expressing her ideas influence the members of her class more strongly than she realizes"(NCTE, 1954, p. 128).

If it is also true that today's educator is oftentimes a surrogate for other adult models, then there should be little basis for disagreement with the conclusion that quite a few youngsters in school ". . . speak the language primarily as they have heard it spoken" (Trelease, 1982, p. 11) by their teacher. But of what real consequence is this deduction, within the context of oral reading to inform or serve some other instructional goal? It is precisely through the day-to-day modeling of a skillful teacher that students garner explicit and implicit information about acceptable language which, in turn, they utilize for their own communication needs. Indeed, as a conduit for language instruction, oral reading serves the teacher well (Butler, 1980; Heilman, Blair & Rupley, 1986; McCormick, 1977).

On each day of school, opportunities abound for children to hear their teacher read. There are bulletins about upcoming events, decisions, and expectations; letters which send a "thank-you" message or other communique; printed directions for tests and exercises; and reference works which unveil a mosaic of facts and concepts, to mention but a few. Still, it is probably in the sharing of poems and stories that most teachers project their best models of language to students. Whether the selection is Rose Fyleman's "Mice," a few pages from Katherine Paterson's Bridge to Terabithia, or the lines of another literary favorite, youngsters learn immeasurably about the reality and potential of language--provided their teacher makes the necessary preparations to assure fluency and correct expression

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in the oral reading.

To do a competent job of reading aloud, the teacher must first silently peruse the materials s/he wishes to use. Oral rehearsals may be necessary in some cases but, for most, prereading is the only major need (Burns, Roe, and Ross, 1988). Nevertheless, this facet of preparation is absolutely essential if an educator is to be apprised of the fluency and prosodic requirements of text read aloud. To the teacher, prior silent reading becomes the sine qua non for effecting a smooth, articulate rendition of script--and conveying a pattern of language which reflects the standards expected in the speech, reading, and writing of youth.

### The Pupil-to-Pupil Model

Through their use of stories, poems, and plays--to mention but a few literary genre--students, too, become paragons of oral expression (Groff, 1985). And, just like their counterpart, the teacher, youngsters who read orally (1) must know all words at sight, (2) must have mastered the prosodic elements necessary for accurate interpretations, (3) must comprehend the intended meaning of selections, and (4) must speak clearly and forcefully enough to be heard by others. Apart from a perennial need for listening amenities, the foregoing criteria are indispensable to the success of an oral presentation. Without rereading, and rehearsal by some, young oral readers incur needless errors that bring humiliation and possible ridicule from peers --not to mention the likelihood of a strong dislike for reading itself. Should the above standards not be attainable by children (barring limitations imposed by learning disabilities), the materials to be read are probably too difficult or, perhaps, certain programmatic requirements stand in need of adjustment. On the other hand, if the performance criteria are achievable, but for one or more reasons have not been met, oral reading should be postponed until such time that success can be assured. Realizing at this juncture that the above-mentioned restraints address both the group's need of a model for emulation and the students' need for self-esteem, let us proceed with the pupil-to-pupil model and its versatile role in oral reading.

Serving as a comprehension check for teacher and

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students alike, questioning is a common sequel to a variety of assignments involving silent reading. And, because this questioning requires the giving of answers, oral reading emerges as a viable alternative to the pencil-and-paper type of response. Though many queries in the classroom are geared to factual recall, the teacher is duty bound to ask and encourage questions involving higher planes of thought, particularly at the critical and creative levels. Therefore, while some of the questions to elicit oral reading may begin with who, when, where, why, or how, there is also a need for requests to begin with compare, show, contrast, what clues, and the like. Phrases and sentences--even whole paragraphs--may be read aloud by children to supply factual data, or to support the reasons behind their conclusions and opinions (Alexander, 1988: Johns, 1982). An interesting spin-off of questioning, by the way, is the written report of upper-primary and intermediate youngsters. Frequently read aloud to inform or persuade classmates, these reports usually stem from issues and problems under consideration by a group, or in connection with some special assignment from the teacher.

It is clear that pupil-to-pupil oral reading, at times, may be induced by inquiries or requests. On other occasions, however, it is wholly unsolicited. An example of the latter might be the child who mentions having learned "something big" about dinosaurs, and asks permission to read a line or two to others in the class. Imagine the group's wonderment as the following is shared (Lopshire, 1980, p. 32): "Brachiosaurus was probably the heaviest dinosaur that ever lived. People think it weighed more than seventeen elephants. Luckily for us, the last one died over a hundren million years ago!" In this case the children were fortunate to have one in the midst who was anxious to share information with them. Yet, for many girls and boys, there is a strong desire to share something else--not a snippet, but a choice poem or story. Entertainment becomes their objective, as in an oral reading of "Jane Grows a Carrot" (Schwartz, 1982, pp. 40-43):

Jane and Sam were walking home from school. 'I have a secret to tell you,' said Jane. 'I won't tell any-

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body.' said Sam. 'There is a carrot in my ear,' said Jane. 'It has been growing there all week.' 'That is very strange,' said Sam. 'How did that happen?' 'I don't know,' said Jane. 'I planted radishes.'

There are other equally delightful moments when school children demonstrate their grasp of language. One such occasion resides in play or script reading, which ranges from the simple and unpretentious performance--as in Readers Theatre (Groff, 1978)--to the more polished production, with its concerns for setting, action, and character development (Manna, 1984). Whatever the mode, opportunities are legion to learn about language, whether from the perspective of oral reader or that of attentive listener. Besides, the narration and dialogue of fairy tales, legends, fables, and stories take on new meaning and impressiveness when read aloud by capable readers, especially by those in the primary and intermediate grades.

The students' underlying language competence influences their reading behavior in choral reading, as well (Pennock, 1984). Nonetheless, in utilization of the pupil-to-pupil model, the two literary vehicles--script reading and choral reading--have their distinctions. Whereas the oral reading of plays or scripts revolves about single individuals, each striving to interpret a number of story lines, the lifeblood of charal reading is contained in verse and rhythmic prose that is interpreted by an entire group, by subordinate groups in turn, or by single students whose lines interchange with those read by groups. When skillfully orchestrated, using refrain, antiphonal, combined voices, line-a-child or line-a-group arrangements, choric reading becomes a totally entertaining instructional tool. As such, it affords a likely option to dramalogue, for modeling the elements of language that educators seek to develop in the speech, reading, and writing of their pupils.

Without doubt, use of the pupil-to-pupil model fosters the acquisition of any number of linguistic understandings, even when the entertainment motive for oral reading shifts to another stimulus, the building of self-esteem. It should come as little surprise that, of pedagogues who sanction this motive for oral reading

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by students, the most vociferous are probably the kindergarten and first-grade teachers. The preponderance of oral reading in early grades, they point out, is but a sensible adaptation to the dominant oral language pattern of youngsters just starting school. "Oral reading thus makes for a natural learning environment for the beginning stages of reading instruction" (Groff, 1985, p. 202). Nevertheless, pupil self-esteem is at the core of teacher efforts--and rightfully so. Once five- and six-year-olds have learned to read with ease and expression, it is natural for them to want--indeed, seek--repeated opportunities to validate their newly acquired ability (Burns, Roe, and Ross, 1988; Taylor and Connor, 1982). After all, the achievement is long awaited by some, and prized as the capstone of schooling by many.

As reading, per se, becomes less novel as a personal goal in school, one notices a corresponding decrease in need for learners to verify its attainment. This phenomenon is a common manifestation as children progress into upper primary and intermediate grades. As a rule, however, their earlier desire "to prove" ability in reading is replaced by an equally strong desire "to advertise" proficiency. Teachers capitalize on this ego-centric motive for oral reading, and why should they not? Those wanting to read aloud--more often than not, the better readers in a group--profit from the activity in at least three ways: enhancement of self-concept, practice in using word-recognition skills, reinforcement of syntactic, prosodic, and semantic understandings of language. Less capable youngsters, on the other hand, are provided peer models with whom they can identify.

If, and when, the oral reading is from a common textbook, listeners assimilate both visual and nonvisual features of written language, provided they follow the script being read and participate in learning experiences that complement the reading. Granted, the acquisition of fluency and prosody may progress at snail's pace for some. However, the teacher must remain patient and resolute in his/her attempts to engage more and more children as archetypes, if for no other reason than to elevate their self-concept as readers (Quandt and Selznick, 1984). Pupil-to-pupil oral reading, then,

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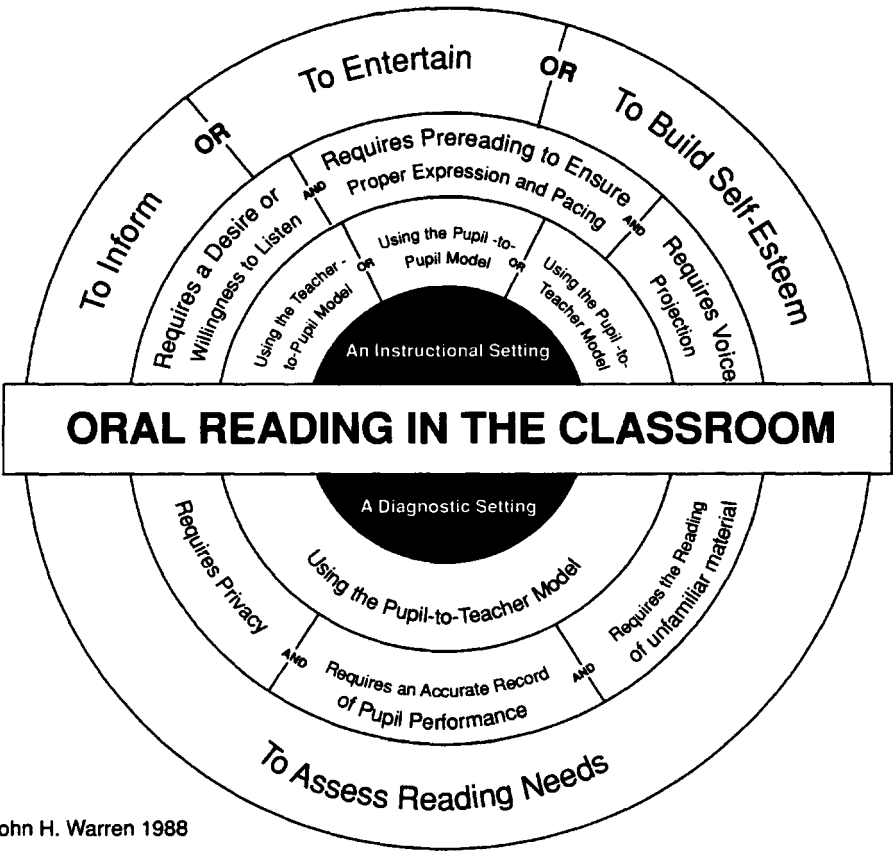
is perceived and handled as an activity that is within the grasp of most boys and girls. One child, for example, might model a textbook reference that confirms an opinion about a character or happening; another, a sentence containing a newly discovered figure of speech or a paragraph holding some special appeal. The possibilities are practically endless. The only distinction in actual performances, once the youngsters model, is in the quantitative, not qualitative, aspect of their modeling.

### The Pupil-to-Teacher Model

In the classroom where children's words are accepted as contributions having worth, students seize upon opportunities to read a good joke, a short news article, a vignette to their teacher. In doing so, they betray their desire to entertain, inform, show mastery of reading--or succeed at some combination of the three. Whatever the motive, pupil-to-teacher oral reader serves the student well. Yet, it is within the sphere of assessment that this model exhibits its greatest utility for the teacher.

Since "oral reading provides a window to students' reading behaviors" (McCormick, 1987, p. 124). its assessment will reveal, more often than not, the typical reading habits, miscues, and comprehension difficulties of schoolchildren (Briggs, 1978). There are provisos to this approach, however, and one of these demands the oral reading of only unfamiliar material. Without this restraint, the teacher gains little, if any, information about the techniques her/his students first apply in recognizing words. Moreover, since the proverbial "window" attests to reading behavior that is either efficient or faulty, the teacher must attempt to diagnose girls and boys in a private manner, on a one-to-one basis, to minimize attention to any chagrin that may result from a poor or awkward performance. Then, too, the need for accountability--and limitations of short-term memory--constrain the teacher to make accurate and complete records of children's reading, for use in analyzing difficulties and determining the procedures best suited to overcome patterns of error (Ekwall & Shanker, 1985).

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An acceptance of Groff's generalization that ". . . poor oral readers are poor silent readers, while good oral readers are good silent readers: (1985, p. 201) could lead to the deductions that (1) oral reading miscues usually transfer to silent reading, (2) oral reading comprehension tends to approximate the understanding that results from text read silently, and (3) errors in silent reading typically decrease as oral reading improves. The inverse relationship of the latter conclusion, one must agree, lends further support to this writer's original and persistent line of argument: when offered regularly, with high standards for reader performance and audience participation, oral reading effectively works to promote language and reading competence.

### In Brief

To inform, to entertain, to build self-esteem, to assess reading needs--each is a rational basis for oral reading. Actualization of each goal, however, is contingent upon a number of restraints. By adhering to these conditions, a classroom community may come to realize the multiple benefits of oral reading, as a tool of instruction and as an instrument of appraisal.

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# THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY AS LANGUAGE REFLECTION

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## Introduction

There has been much attention given recently to the idea of metacognition (Brown, 1980) and metalinguistic awareness or metalanguage (Yaden & Templeton, 1986). Reflecting on the thinking process and communication are critical elements in understanding language processes.

Reflective thinking has also been addressed (Dewey, 1933). Wedman and Martin (1986) advocate the use of reflective journal writing to give preservice teachers the opportunity to reflect upon observations and theoretical constructs in terms of meaningful practice. The type of writing which ". . . allows for the possibility of thinking about the relationship between self and institution, theory and practice, and daily routines and teaching effectiveness. In short, the process of writing serves as the technology for developing reflectivity" (Wedman & Martin, 1986, p. 69).

Often, preservice teachers need to be reminded of the many influences on children's language. By reflecting on their own past language experiences, perhaps prospective teachers can better examine the important elements for language development.

As an assignment for my undergraduate education students, they wrote a modified autobiography about the literacy experiences which may have affected their language development. Students were familiar with the theories of language acquisition and the factors influencing language. I wanted students to have the opportunity to reflect upon these factors in their own lives, to

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get them to think reflectively on their past experiences and how they affect language. The following excerpts from their papers serve as examples of the influences these students believed to be important in their own lives:

"As a toddler I was constantly after my mom's numerous magazines that she faithfully subscribed to . . . I'm not quite sure if I loved tearing and chewing on the pages, but this was definitely a first 'taste' of the written language."

"All I needed was a box of colored chalk, a stack of papers, and imaginary pupils, and I could play for hours. Pretending to be a teacher expanded my written and spoken language. Writing on the chalkboard and using old elementary texts augmented my writing abilities by introducing me to school words. I also pretended that I was speaking to a classroom of students, so I used my oral language to present the lessons."

"Grandpa told the best stories. They were usually set down in 'Deep Dark Holler.' He called them 'bear tales.' Sometimes he would start the stories, 'Once upon a time when I was a little girl---' and for a long time I believed Grandpa had been a little girl when he was my age!"

Surely early experiences with print are an important factor in language development. Children need to see print and hear it read to them to grow linguistically.

The impact that "playing school" and storytelling have on language development and practice are very real. Imaginative and interactional language uses (Halliday, 1975) expand language experiences.

### Upper Elementary Experiences

Self-confidence is an important factor as children gain independence and deal more with peer pressure. Some students noted embarrassing experiences:

". . . the teacher asked for a volunteer to copy a story down to be run off for the class. I volunteered and Miss ----- said, '...we all know you can't write well!' I was so crushed and to this day I still remember that moment vividly."

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Certainly good literature is a critical element of language development. How students choose to respond to literature is an individual matter.

"One book that got me into trouble was Harriet the Spy. I am talking about my parents sitting down with me telling me how I could not go around spying on people because it was an invasion on one's privacy!"

Many students noted the positive effects of having an upper elementary teacher who read to them and sparked their interest in good literature.

Slang words are a natural social factor of a dynamic communication system. Many students noted their experience with slang as they used language to interact with their peers.

"I went through the 'Duh' stage in sixth grade and also the 'If you love it why don't you marry it?' stage. 'Doy' was another . . . We thought we were so great, but I bet we drove everyone crazy."

Slang words are evidence that language changes just as society and people change. Slang is an example of language interaction between friends and peers in informal situations.

#### Junior High--The Awkward Stage

Junior High may be a turning point of sorts for students as they learn to get along with new friends and begin to question things they don't understand.

"As a result of consolidation . . . I had to ride a but ten miles every day. . . so I learned some interesting things . . . how to write backwards on a window so people can read it from the outside."

"I read a lot of Harlequin romances and science fiction books in junior high. I was a very inquisitive person. I carried around a small notebook of questions that I wanted to know the answers to."

Studying a foreign language can also be an aid to understanding the English language. By learning a different language, some students gained a new appreciation for their native language:

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"To acquire another language, I used my knowledge of English to help me. How complicated! I had never sat down and thought about how difficult and extremely complex English really is. Learning German both expanded my knowledge and vocabulary and brought some interesting yet startling observations of the English language to my mind."

Being exposed to various regional dialects adds to language awareness. Words and expressions vary from region to region and are evidence of geographical language differences.

". . . in Massachusetts, I went into an ice cream store and ordered, and the clerk asked me if I would like 'Jimmies' on my ice cream. I was at a total loss as to what 'Jimmies' were. I turned to my friend who tried to help me by using a term from Rhode Island. 'You know, ants,' he said, 'I don't want ants on my ice cream!' The clerk showed me what she meant--chocolate sprinkles."

Marriage might also have an impact on the social nature of language. Language is used in a casual setting with a familiar person.

"I'm fascinated by the vast knowledge of words my husband has. He's taught me much of the slang from the streets that I was totally unaware of, as well as different aspects of cars, motorcycles, well-drilling, mail production, and the Viet Nam War."

How a teacher shares himself/herself is also representative of language. A teacher who is willing to share him or herself and take risks is apt to reap the benefits of a classroom of comfortable interaction. One high school teacher who was working on recertification wrote this about her own classroom: "I like to create a friendly atmosphere in the class. I think that in order to do that you have to take the risk of talking about yourself a little bit for students to get to know you. Chances are they will open up and talk about themselves also."

Many students summarized their life experiences in this way: "I feel lucky to have had so many experiences

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with different people and different places. These experiences have definitely enhanced my language development . . . which I realize now, is indeed dynamic and continuous. I now see the powerful influence each of my own teachers had on me."

### Conclusions

The factors influencing language development are varied and yet consistent. As students reflected upon their own unique experiences, they were reminded of the critical factors surrounding language development and use. As prospective teachers, they thought reflectively about language as a function and byproduct of the social nature of school and beyond. Further, they began to think about how they might incorporate positive language elements into their own classrooms, by reading aloud to students, providing creative drama opportunities, discussing language change and diversity (sland and dialects), enhancing self-esteem, and taking risks as teachers by talking more about themselves to set a comfortable classroom tone. Writing about these experiences and future plans helped the students to develop their own abilities to be reflective and to think critically about language development factors within a meaningful context.

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## PROVIDING FOR CAPABLE READERS: BEYOND THE BASAL MANUAL

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### Introduction

For many years, reading methods textbooks have suggested the use of flexible grouping to meet the needs of students' abilities and interests in reading (Smith, 1963; Spache and Spache, 1977; Durkin, 1983). However, the authors' observations of intern and experienced teachers indicate that such practices are not often utilized. Within grouping patterns observed, special allowances were often made to meet the needs of students who read below grade level but rarely for capable students who read above grade level.

If classroom teachers do not use the suggestions of the reading methods textbooks from their college instruction, then one might ask how teachers make instructional decisions about reading, especially those decisions affecting capable readers. According to the results of a survey conducted by Barton and Wilder (1964), teachers responded that they depended on the basal reading manual to guide their instructional practices. In a more recent survey, Shannon (1987) found that little change had been made since the sixties. Teachers assume that basal manuals are founded on current research; therefore, they do not feel the need to stay abreast of what research suggests about reading instruction. Teachers continue to see the basal manual as the only source of direction for teaching reading.

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This study was an attempt to better understand teacher practices for placement in basal reading series, particularly placement of capable readers. The following questions were addressed:

1. On what do teachers base their placement decisions?
2. What do teachers believe will happen to the skill development of capable students who skip basal reading levels?
3. In actual practice would a teacher allow a capable reader to skip levels in a basal reading series?

### Method

A survey was developed and piloted by the authors, then mailed to a sample of elementary teachers. Respondents were asked to describe placement practices they used and the reasons underlying such decisions. Then, as a means of comparison, several descriptions of children achieving at various reading levels were presented. The respondents were asked to make a placement decision and include the factors underlying each decision.

The survey was sent to 324 entry year teachers and their supervising teachers on file with Oklahoma State University. The 112 (35%) respondents comprised the sample for this study. Experience for the supervising teachers ranged from 3 to 45 years (Table 1). The respondents represented urban, suburban, and rural communities. Twenty-five teachers were randomly selected to participate in a follow-up telephone interview in which their beliefs about placement and basal reader hierarchies would be further explored.

The survey instrument included questions dealing with number of reading groups and their levels, influences on the placement of students for reading, the effect of placement on skill development, and beliefs about the placement of students either above or below grade level. Demographic information was also requested, as well as the teacher's educational background and years of experience.

### Results

When questioned about the number and levels of reading groups in their classrooms, 73% of the respon-

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Table 1--Respondents' Years of Experience

Years Exper.	No. of Tchrs.	Years Exper.	No. Tchrs
1	13	15	5
2	16	16	4
3	7	17	1
4	3	18	3
5	3	19	4
6	5	20	3
7	5	22	2
8	2	24	1
9	4	25	1
10	6	26	3
11	2	27	1
12	4	28	1
13	4	45	1
14	7		

dents indicated that they had three or more reading groups. Forty-two percent had at least one reading group above grade placement.

The teachers were asked to rank 10 possible influences on reading placement (informal assessment, school board policy, school principal, other teachers, personal beliefs, basal placement materials, basal manual, achievement tests, reading specialist, and other). Of these ten, teachers reported being most influenced by informal assessment (40%) (Figure 1). The next highest rating was basal placement materials. These were followed by achievement test scores, reading specialist recommendations, and other teachers. Only five percent of the respondents indicated that their personal beliefs about reading instruction influenced their decisions about placement.

Figure 1. Influences on Placement Decisions

Q: What influences your decisions about placement of students in a basal series? Please rank order your choices with 1 having the most influence. (informal assessment, school board policy, principal, other teachers, personal beliefs about reading, basal placement materials, recommendations of the basal manual, achievement test scores, recommendations of reading specialists, other).

Figure 1. Influences on Placement Decisions

40%	informal assessment
13%	basal placement materials
9%	achievement test scores
9%	reading specialist
6%	other teachers
5%	personal beliefs

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### Capable Readers

Teachers were questioned about what they believed would happen to the skill development of a capable reader who skipped levels in the basal reader (Fig. 2). Seventy-one percent of the respondents believed that capable readers would miss skills which would make it difficult to progress, and two percent felt that capable readers could not progress because of the missed skills.

Figure 2. Effect on Skill Development of Skipping Basal Reading Levels.

Q: What do you believe would happen to the skill development of a capable reader who skipped one or more levels within a basal reading system?

71%	would miss essential skills but would be able to compensate
19%	would miss skills which would make it difficult to progress
8%	would not miss any skills
2%	could not progress because of missed skills

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The teachers were asked to respond to the following scenario: "At the highest grade level you teach, Student A scored 1½ years above grade level on a standardized achievement test at the end of last year and completed all books in the basal series for that level. Where in the basal series would you place this child?"

Approximately 50% of the teachers said they would

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place the student in grade level material but would move him through at a faster pace. One-third of the respondents stated that they would move the student to a higher level basal in the same series. Twenty-three percent of the teachers suggested the use of supplementary materials with the capable student.

Teachers were asked to explain on what information they had based their decisions in the previous scenario. One-third of the respondents did not give reasons for making their decisions. Twenty percent stated they would give the student an informal assessment rather than accept the score of the achievement test. Eighteen percent said that placement would be contingent upon completion of previous basal reading materials, and sixteen percent of the teachers would base their decisions on professional judgment and personal beliefs.

In the telephone interviews teachers were asked to discuss the skill hierarchy in the basal reading series that they were using and placement of students above grade level. Of the 23 teachers we were able to contact, 26% stated that they had not noticed a specific skill hierarchy in their basal reader. Basals cited were Open Court, Houghton Mifflin, Economy, Macmillan, Scott Foresman, and Ginn. The remaining 74% stated that there was a specific skill hierarchy in their basal reader. Of the 17 teachers who noticed a specific skill hierarchy, only five could expand on what that hierarchy was. The remaining 12, although aware that there was a specific scope and sequence, were unable to state what that scope and sequence was. The same basal reading series were cited as having specific skill hierarchies as were cited for not having specific skill hierarchies.

When asked under what circumstances they would place a student above grade level in the basal reading series, two specifically said that they would not place a student above grade level. Eleven respondents would place a student above grade level only if it were determined the student had mastered all of the skills in the grade reader. The remaining teachers said they would advance a student if he were gifted, or if he tested above grade level.

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### Discussion

This study was designed to determine teachers' beliefs about the placement of capable readers for reading instruction and their actual placement practices. The questions were structured in such a way that inconsistencies between beliefs and practices became evident. The respondents stated that allowing capable readers to skip levels of the basal reader would result in the reader missing essential skills. However, when questions about their placement practices, 42% stated that they had some students in their classrooms placed above grade level.

When the teachers were asked what influenced their placement decisions, 40% stated that they primarily used informal assessment, but when asked where they based their placement decision for the student in the scenario, only 20% indicated that they would administer some type of informal assessment. Whereas only 5% initially stated that their personal beliefs influenced their placement practices, 16% indicated that in a given situation their placement decision was determined by personal belief and judgment.

The participants in the telephone interviews were generally consistent with their mailed survey responses. However, 26% were not consistent when questioned about where they would place capable students.

### Implications

This study indicated that there are basic inconsistencies between teachers' stated beliefs about capable readers and stated placement practices. These inconsistencies appear to be partly the result of the fear of skipping essential skills as outlined in the basals.

Unfortunately, this study cannot state with certainty how teachers react to capable readers within their own classrooms. A follow-up of classroom observations should be conducted to determine what these teachers do in actual practice. Only then could a definitive estimation of how often teachers act in accordance with their state beliefs be made.

Classroom teachers must become knowledgeable deci-

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sion-makers. In light of recent research (Russell, 1986; Combs, Siera & Douglas, 1987) which question the validity of skill hierarchies, teachers must study and evaluate the scope and sequence in their adopted basal reading series. In addition, the use of the basal as the only source of instruction needs to be questioned, and a more eclectic approach to reading instruction needs to be adopted.

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## "SPONGE" UP THAT TIME FOR READING

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As anyone who has ever worked with children during an organized activity knows, trouble frequently arises when we try to move from one activity to another (transitions) or when the youngsters have periods of time with nothing to do. Student teachers, beginning teachers, and less organized teachers have always found these two times to be very frustrating until they learn to manage them successfully. Supervisors are often asked for help with these tasks.

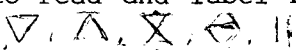
In recent years, we have documented that discipline problems rise and learning decreases when students do not have something meaningful to do. Time that is engaged and productive, on the other hand, is usually called time on task (Brookover, Beamer, Efthim, Hathaway, Lezotte, Miller, Passalacqua, and Tornatzky, 1982). Sparks and Sparks (1983) have used the term "sponges" to mean those short activities that can keep the child meaningfully involved while a transition takes place or the rest of the group is ready to move on or the bell rings for recess. Kounin (cited in Brookover) has described the teacher's ability to make transitions smooth and continuous as a major distinguishing characteristic between good and poor managers, and Robinson and Good (1987) have reiterated that teachers who are successful managers plan before school starts how they will handle these "unplanned for" minutes.

For the reading teacher, these unoccupied times often arise several times a day during reading groups when a few children read much faster or slower than the others. If the lapse is only a couple of minutes, no major time off task may ensue, but anything longer usually suggests the need for sponges suited to the time



and space and arrangement of reading groups. The following list has been compiled as ways to absorb those extra few minutes within reading groups or when the students are tired (just before lunch or school ends, for example) or during transitions such as waiting to change classes, reassembling the class at bathroom breaks, or standing in the hall for school pictures. The latter, of course, are often beyond the control of the classroom teacher. The list is roughly organized so that the majority of activities listed as #1-35 could be done during reading group and would be quieter and more individual. The latter fifteen (#36-50) could be more easily used with small or whole groups and during waiting or tired time, but they are still related to reading tasks. In some cases, the ideas fit both categories and could be modified easily for either one.

1. Book basket--have a basket of books on the reading table on Monday; keep them for the week at the reading table for free reading; could be done by students on alternating schedule
  2. Clipped magazine articles, or whole magazines (used as above)
  3. Poems (laminated) for pleasure reading (used as above)
  4. Picture vocabulary flash cards for practice drill by individuals (commercial or teacher--made)
  5. Vocabulary words (in context) to practice quietly (perhaps with rhymes or phonetic respellings)
  6. Character, setting, and/or plot descriptions from trade books written cards; have child(ren) read to identify and earn points for contest-type activities (again, students could sometimes write)
  7. Crossword puzzles using vocabulary words studied or taken from newspapers and magazines
  8. Laminated old weekly readers for pleasure reading
  9. Newspaper articles (clipped weekly) for practice reading (a homework assignment might be for one group to clip for another)
  10. Analogy cards with answers on back (taken from old worksheets or idea books)
  11. Riddles on cards--clip from books and use about 5 per card
  12. Laminated pictures to study and be able to describe orally to improve visual imagery
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13. Decks of phonic element picture cards to sort (self-checking by colored symbols on back)
  14. Ziplock bags of pictures or paper bags of objects to classify
  15. Words on Wall - practice rereading words that have been alphabetized on wall (Cunningham, Moore, Cunningham, Moore, 1983)
  16. Main idea paragraphs to read and label by the topic sentence diagrams of  where the horizontal line represents the topic sentence
  17. Joke books to be read and practiced for telling a favorite one to the group
  18. Maps with questions (self-checking)
  19. Advertisements to sort by propaganda techniques (self-checking) or to find the cheapest car, ham, movie, admissions, etc.
  20. Book part cards that contain short questions that require the use of the index, table of contents, glossary, etc., on a sheet or card with self-checking questions
  21. Pictures to color and write captions for (accept invented spellings)
  22. Magic slates, laminated cards, chalk slates or coffee lids to practice making letters (cursive or manuscript)
  23. Headlines or titles to match to stories on puzzle pieces (title story - = match)
  24. Tactile flash cards to practice (words written in yarm, sand, glitter, glue, etc.)
  25. Laminated cards with a stimulus word(s) for writing homonyms, synonyms, antonyms, etc.
  26. Scrambled vocabulary words to unscramble
  27. Word Finds that are laminated and clipped from old worksheets, puzzle books, etc. Hooked on Reading (Lewis, 1986) is an excellent source for puzzles about award winning books.)
  28. Tablets for writing the best part of story, worst, most exciting or confusing, etc. (These could be made by stapling leftover worksheets together and using the backs of the pages.)
  29. Tablets to draw the best parts of a story
  30. Sample laminated test pages (old basals, unadopted samples, outdated standardized tests (if not restricted) for practice
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31. Dictionary or glossary sheets laminated with questions (most unusual word, hardest to spell, one that means . . ., phonetic respelling, etc.)
  32. Following directions - sheets to do
  33. Laminated feature matrices or skeletal semantic maps (Heimlich & Pitterman, 1986) for students to complete
  34. Clay or play dough in plastic sandwich baggies to make a model of something from a story
  35. Cards with book reviews written by classmates or from magazines for student to review
  36. Cards of biographical sketches of authors for student to read to others for guessing
  37. Oral book reviews by classmates
  38. "I'm thinking of" games where students give clues for vocabulary recently studied, stories read, character descriptions, etc., and others guess
  39. Play "Authors Alphabet" where each youngster names an author whose last name begins with A, B, C, etc. until he misses. "Book Parade" can be played the same way but with book titles
  40. "Who Done It?" descriptions where an individual or group describes a scene from pleasure books or previously read basal stories and asks for the character involved
  41. Charades of favorite books, stories, or poems
  42. Student-made tapes of short selections (to reinforce oral reading skills) from books such as Where the Sidewalk Ends (Silverstein, 1974)
  43. "Wheel of Fortune" cards about book titles; each card gives more clues and students try to guess with the fewest number to earn homework passes, free time, etc.
  44. Ziplock bags of finger paint for the students to practice writing troublesome letters or spelling demons or sight words
  45. A "Go Fishing" game with sight words written on fish; each fish has a paper slip attached and is fished out by a magnet connected to a dowel pole with a string; could be stored in a plastic shopping bag for easy access and transport
  46. List-Group-Label activities for upcoming content study where pupils brainstorm words related to a topic, group them logically and give the group a label (Taba, 1967)
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47. Laminated copies of the Mini-Page from the Newspaper in Education program for free reading; might be linked to content area reading
48. Mind Bender puzzles (Since these can be quite tedious problems to solve, simple ones would need to be chosen as sponges)
49. Post-reading semantic maps about recently completed basal stories, pleasure books, or content selections that might be recorded and continued over several days; students brainstorm words about a topic and categorize
50. Finger puppets made by keeping several "fingers" from old gloves handy; students can then draw characters on slips of paper and paper clip to fingers for simple, quick puppets from a just-completed story or pleasure book and use them for retellings

These sponge activities are certainly only a sampling of what might be done. Some will be more appropriate for certain ages and grades, but hopefully, they can stimulate ideas of others that might be useful in specific situations. The possibilities are really limited only by imagination!

Indeed, sponges can make the difference between classes where students are actively engaged in learning when they should be and when time on task is maximized. Such management means greater learning for the youngsters and fewer discipline problems for the teacher. Transition becomes a positive time, learning increases, misbehavior decreases, and students and teachers are happier and more motivated. Such a combination is certainly our objective when we are working with children and allows us to use every "drop" of time available for reading.

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## BLENDING WHOLE LANGUAGE AND BASAL READER INSTRUCTION

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In recent years there has been a movement in reading education away from basal readers as the primary tool for teaching beginning literacy skills. Whole language approaches; those which attempt to integrate reading, writing, listening, and speaking activities using the child's own language and various forms of children's literature, have seen a resurgence both in educational research and classroom practice. However, some educators feel that the enthusiasm for holistic methods may have already peaked and the movement could fade away as it has several times before in educational history. Reasons for the decline may be that many school administrators and teachers feel strongly about keeping basal readers in their classrooms, and feel they lack the kind of training necessary for venturing into the world of holistic teaching.

There seems to be little doubt regarding the viability of whole language programs in the elementary classroom, but the question remains, "how do we get teachers to begin integrating holistic methods in their classrooms?" A possible solution to the dilemma facing both administrators and teachers is an "integrated approach."

Integrated approaches to reading instruction combine aspects of whole language and direct instruction methods to introduce children to literacy in the classroom. In essence, these approaches are based on the assumption

that emerging literacy can be nurtured initially in a holistic and natural manner (see Gunderson & Shapiro, 1988) as a prelude to the introduction to commercial reading materials. It is further assumed that the basal reader may be used in innovative ways (Burns and others, 1988; Cooter and Reutzel, 1987; Reutzel, 1986) to promote a variety of literacy experiences. While the notion of integrated approaches has been discussed for many years, there has been little research that observes and documents their existence in classrooms.

The Chetopa, Kansas, program described in this article successfully integrates many holistic and direct instruction ideas presented in bits and pieces for the past few years in various professional journals. We will discuss our observations in these classrooms, both the relative benefits and concerns associated with programs of this kind.

Chetopa is a rural school district in Southeastern Kansas. Data will reflect the development of literacy skills for first grade students in Chetopa over the first three years of implementation. Many of the materials and unit plans were developed in the first two years, as the teachers moved away from the basal reader as the exclusive reading program.

The keystone of this program is immersing children in print. From the first day of school, students find themselves actively involved with motivational creative writing activities, reading quality predictable children's literature, listening to exciting stories, learning to read and write new words from their natural experiences, and learning or reviewing alphabet letters and their sounds. These activities and many more are woven together during the first 26 days of school by focusing on a daily letter theme.

The stage is set for ensuring success with basal and other commercially published materials. Each day as they enter the room, they find themselves immersed in a whole-day theme related to a single letter of the alphabet. Whole group instruction and small heterogeneous groups are used during the entire first grade. Letters of the alphabet are seen as the catalyst for a variety of beginning literacy experiences. For example,

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on "J" day instruction begins with a class introduction to the letter theme by viewing a collage made up of pictures representing words beginning with "J". The discussion is followed by the teacher's reading a predictable book which used the word "jump" as the key word for "J".

### Figure 1 J Book

(Adapted from Sounds of Language, by Bill Martin, Jr.)

Jump a rope.	Jump like a frog.
Jump in a puddle.	Jump for the basketball.
Jump over a rock.	Jump for the baseball.
Jump on a trampoline.	Jump for ice cream
Jump on a bed? Oh, no!	Jump like a spider.
Jump like a kangaroo.	Jump for joy!

These teacher-developed predictable books are then reread with the class. Multiple copies of the books are available for children to take home to be shared with family members. Each book is constructed in the shape of a familiar object related to the letter sound. The letter-theme books are written in easy-to-predict patterns--expanding sentences, rhyming lines, or adaptations of familiar songs. Although most of the books used in the program were either original or adapted from existing trade books, a list of predictable books can be found in many publishers' brochures.

Following the predictable book experiences, the students engage in a variety of writing activities. These include structured language experience stories pertaining to the letter theme, handwriting practice with the "J" letter in upper and lower case forms, and creative writing experiences, like writing a "story" about how to make a peanut butter and jelly sandwich. Vocabulary words found in the basal preprimers which begin with the daily letter are introduced in context and written on index cards, which are added to each child's word bank and reviewed daily in class and at home with family members.

The teachers find that first graders gain a great

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deal through the writing component. Because invented spellings are encouraged, children quickly learn about beginning, medial, and final sounds in words. Thus, phonic knowledge begins naturally and intuitively.

Throughout the remainder of the day students meet a variety of literacy events consistent with the daily letter-theme. These include sustained silent reading periods with books having to do with the theme, listening center activities, art projects, cooking experiences and computer assisted instruction.

This basic format continues until all letters have been highlighted. At the end of the first six weeks, each child has read 26 books, learned the words included in the first three preprimers, acquired basic handwriting skills including the formation of all letters (upper and lower case), developed a basic understanding of beginning, medial, and ending sounds in words, mastered most basic concepts about print, and something about authoring.

One of the strengths of this integrated program is its blending of student-driven and teacher-directed experiences. Throughout the day students are allowed to make choices about books they will read, stories they can write about, and topics they can discuss and investigate. Likewise, teachers are provided time for leading the class to discover crucial concepts, vocabulary, and literacy skills for success in texts and trade books.

### Bringing in the Basal

At the conclusion of the 26 letter-theme days and for the remainder of the school year, the basal is integrated into the program. Basal stories are viewed as only one literacy experience within a larger theme of study. For instance, if a basal preprimer is written around a circus motif; then writing experiences, supplemental materials (audio/visual aids, etc.), bulletin boards, computer assisted instruction packages, are pulled together in a thematic unit about circuses. Thus, the basal preprimer is secondary and serves only as a thematic departure point for a variety of other literacy experiences. Once the pupils are placed into the basal materials they move through the preprimers rapidly. By the end of the first semester the first graders are

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usually one full book ahead of traditional basal-only classes. More important, they have acquired zeal and enthusiasm for reading and authoring. One teacher remarked "These children believe they can read anything!"

In essence, the Chetopa teachers use the basal reader as one small piece of an otherwise holistic literacy program. For example, the teachers used what amounted to the Reconciled Reading Lesson (Reutzel, 1985) when presenting basal stories. When queried, the teachers indicated they had not hear of this procedure, but used the pattern only because it made sense and students responded to the basal stories more favorably. Similarly, the teachers felt free to eliminate stories in the basal when they seemed to mundane and unappealing. The success of the Chetopa program seems to validate the notion that when teachers are free to select their own programs and materials, student performance levels increase dramatically (Veatch and Cooter, 1986).

Table 1  
Chetopa First Graders' Average Percentile Rank

<u>Yr</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>Listening</u>	<u>Word Analysis</u>	<u>Vocabulary</u>	<u>Reading</u>
'83*	25	28	60	51	49
'84	25	52	51	51	59
'85	26	82	73	77	79
'86	31	n/a	77	65	73

\* Before integrated program was initiated

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### Learning Outcomes

A careful review of student performance in these first grade classrooms from 1983 to 1986 was conducted. This allowed examination of achievement levels prior to the beginning of the integrated program through full implementation. The information provides a quantitative look at the strength of the integrated approach as compared to a typical basal program. Table 1 gives average percentile for all first graders, using the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills (1986). While the figures represent impressive and significant gains with the integrated approach, many qualitative aspects of experimental pro-

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grams often escape the statistical component of a study, and the Chetopa program is no exception. Major benefits of the integrated approach are:

#### --Teaching Versatility

There are at least two groups of teachers who benefit from the integrated approach; those who are "basal bound" and fearful of leaping into a holistic approach all at once, and those who understand holistic teaching methods but feel pressured by their school district to use basal readers as part of their program. For the "basal bound" group, an integrated approach allows one to develop literacy events which enhance what is already being done and gradually move on to more holistic experiences. Eventually the basal moves out of center stage and becomes only one part of an exciting new learning mosaic. Teachers who are more holistically inclined and are feeling pressured to use the adopted basal program will find the integrated approach to be a welcome ally. Simply "plug in" the basal stories to the existing program where they make sense, or use the basal themes to organize literacy events already planned.

#### --Naturalistic Skill Development

While some may feel that teaching skills is antithetical to whole language, others disagree (Gunderson & Shapiro, 1988). As we mentioned, many literacy skills are taught in an incidental fashion in the Chetopa program. Much of the credit seems to rest with the merging of writing with reading experiences from the first day of school. Random inspection of student work gives ample evidence of the rapid growth occurring through the writing component. This becomes a natural desire to express oneself in print and to read the thoughts of others, leading to natural acquisition of basic concepts about print necessary for success in commercially prepared and published materials.

#### --Parent Involvement

The Chetopa teachers initiate parent involvement prior to the beginning of school and continue to nurture this participation throughout the year. Parents understand that they are a critical factor in their child's educational success and respond accordingly. During the

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first 26 days parents commit to listening to their child read student copies of the letter-theme books each night, regularly reviewing word bank words with their child, reading aloud, and providing writing materials. Parents of first graders generally welcome such an opportunity.

#### --Student interest

Children involved with Chetopa's integrated program are "turned-on" learners. They are interested, excited and fearless authors and readers. In parent-teacher conferences the word used most by parents to describe their child's reaction to the program was "enthusiastic."

As someone has said "Every silver lining has its cloud" and this approach does suggest a few concerns.

#### --Time commitment

Most of the materials used in the Chetopa program are teacher-made. Thus, a substantial amount of time is required to make such items as the predictable books, bulletin boards, listening and writing centers, not to mention research time to locate theme-appropriate trade books for classroom use. For teachers with large room budgets, predictable books, big books and basal text extenders (trade books) may be purchased from some of the educational publishers, but for most teachers developing a solid integrated program like that in Chetopa will mean a two or three year process, if unsupported by the school district.

#### --Risk taking

Some teachers tend to get into "comfort zones" in their classrooms. What has worked reasonably well in the past tends to become a permanent fixture in a curriculum. Certainly basal readers have worked reasonably well in the past (or perhaps students have learned in spite of them). At any rate, those who feel comfortable using the basal are now presented with a viable option in the integrated approach. The key factor is the teacher and the question--can s/he muster sufficient courage to try?

More research is needed to determine whether the Chetopa integrated program can be replicated elsewhere with the same degree of effectiveness. Some whole language purists may feel this type of program is contrary

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to holistic and naturalistic modes of teaching. However, this may be a needed bridge for many basal bound teachers helping them establish more enriched classroom environments.

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## EFFECTS OF SUSTAINED SILENT READING ON ATTITUDES TOWARD READING

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Sustained silent reading (SSR) is a practice involving readers in the process of reading over a designated time period. The basic assumption, in a pedagogical sense, is that practice in reading contributes to reading achievement. Durkin (1983) suggested that the focus of any reading program should be the development of competence in independent silent reading. In the same light, Gambrell (1978) proposed that "commonsense notions about the reading process tell us that independent reading skills are enhanced through daily practice in silent reading. . ." (p. 328). On the other hand, little empirical research appears to have been undertaken to determine effects of sustained silent reading on either achievement or attitudes toward reading. However, some important studies have now been made. Some of the most relevant will be reviewed below.

### SSR and Reading Achievement

A notable study by Nagy, Herman, and Anderson (1985) examined the effects of free reading on vocabulary gains among average and above average eighth graders. The subjects read either an expository or narrative passage followed by evaluation on several measures of vocabulary. Findings prompted the researchers to state "incidental learning from context accounts for a substantial portion of the vocabulary growth that occurs during the school years" (p. 233). While not measuring vocabulary gains of

subjects involved in a sustained reading program, Nagy, Herman, and Anderson demonstrated that gains in vocabulary occur through "natural reading" (p. 233). A further conclusion follows: since sustained silent reading involves substantial amounts of natural reading it is probable that this practice fosters vocabulary growth.

Pfau (1966) determined that a supplementary program among elementary grade students involving recreational reading had significantly positive effects on 1) interest in reading, 2) sight vocabulary, and 3) written language. Pfau's subjects were first and second graders who spent approximately 40 minutes a day involved in the reading program. Pfau's experimental groups did not engage in just an SSR program but were also involved in planned activities revolving around the materials read.

Evidence from both research and "commonsense" (Gambrell, 1978) suggest that SSR has a positive effect on reading achievement. More studies in this area are needed, however, if the case for SSR as a stimulus to reading achievement is to be permanently and firmly established.

#### Focus of this Study

The major purpose of this study concerns, not the effects of SSR on reading achievement per se, but the related area of attitudes toward reading. The following assumptions are accepted: 1) SSR encourages reading achievement and 2) more positive attitudes toward reading result in more reading. Therefore, if it can be demonstrated that SSR fosters more positive attitudes toward reading, subjects engaged in SSR are likely to read more extensively. Thus, benefits are twofold: subjects would increase in reading competence while doing SSR and also increase reading enjoyment. To examine effects of SSR on attitudes toward reading, the following directional questions were asked:

1. Does participation in an SSR program lead to more favorable attitudes toward reading?
  2. Do male and female students differ in the attitudes toward reading?
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SSR and Attitudes Toward Reading

Minton (1980) implemented an extensive SSR program to examine the effects of SSR on ninth grade students. Overall analysis of the program let Minton to conclude that the program "flopped" (p. 500). Nevertheless, her careful evaluation of the program provides valuable information concerning implementing SSR programs. Minton concluded that inadequate planning and logistic problems contributed substantially to dissatisfaction among students and faculty. Minton maintained her confidence in the value of SSR but within the realm of careful preparation and monitoring to avoid pitfalls accompanying the general assumption that "everyone can and should read at the same time." (p. 502)

Like Minton, Herbert (1987) examined attitudes toward SSR among junior high school students. Herbert reported that analysis of over 600 anonymously reported responses demonstrated that students generally had negative attitudes toward SSR. Further, this researcher reported that students who indicated that they liked to read and also thought of themselves as good readers reported that they did not like the SSR program. Findings were not dramatically weighted in negative directions concerning the SSR program; nevertheless, demonstrated a substantial level of dissatisfaction with the program. More light is shed on these findings through descriptive information reported on the same study reported earlier (Herbert, undated). The researcher reported that approximately half of the subjects said that they did not actually participate in SSR during the allotted time period but did other things including "visiting with friends" (p. 11). This observation suggests a lack of structure and sense of purpose on the part of at least some of the teachers and administrators ultimately responsible for the implementation and maintenance of the program. Given the nature of adolescents, it is hard to believe that most of them would choose to voluntarily read in a social environment when other options are open. Further, those who chose to read might have found themselves in a distracting environment and consequently, developed negative attitudes about this particular SSR program. Although data and observa-

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tions reported by Herbert indicate that cautions in implementing an SSR program are necessary, negative attitudes toward SSR might stem, in large measure, from flaws in conducting the program.

Also, at junior high school level, Cline and Kretke (1980) reported on an extensive study involving above average students in a three year SSR program. The researchers found no differences in reading achievement scores between SSR and control groups, but significant differences in the direction of the SSR groups relative to development of positive attitudes toward reading. Cline and Kretke suggested that the study should be replicated with average and below average readers. Despite having worked with students in the well above average range, the researchers concluded that their findings demonstrated "tangible evidence to support the provision of reading practice time for students on a continuing basis." (p. 506)

Pfau (1966) found, as noted earlier, that interest in reading as measured on a reading interest inventory was significantly superior for elementary students in a recreational reading program. In addition, he found that the recreational reading groups made more voluntary trips to the school library than their counterparts in the control groups. While not directly measuring attitudes toward reading, the findings by Pfau suggest that the recreational program encouraged positive attitudes toward reading among the students.

Goostree (1981) determined that students classified as gifted generally have more positive attitudes toward reading than their fellow students. Of the gifted students evaluated relative to reading attitudes, Goostree determined females showed more positive attitudes than males.

Parker and Paradis (1986) found no attitude change in students in grades 1-3, but found an increase in positive attitudes in grade five. However, the researchers reported no change in attitudes between five and six. The authors reported that the increase in positive attitudes demonstrated in grade five and maintained through grade six tended to result from "nonclassroom reading" (p. 315) rather than as a result of changes in

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classroom practices. Parker and Paradis also reported that girls at every grade level demonstrated more positive attitudes toward reading than boys in all grades but sixth where the mean attitude scale score was nearly identical for males and females. The greatest sex differences favoring females were noted in grades two, four, and five, the latter two grades being of special interest to this study.

### Subjects

The subjects were all from one school located in a lower middle class section of a mid-sized city in south-east United States. There were 19 subjects in the experimental group, seven fourth graders and twelve fifth graders. The fourth and fifth graders were housed in the same classroom in a split four/five combination made necessary to balance class size in the school. The fourth graders were considered strong readers, capable of receiving reading instruction with the fifth graders. The 21 subjects in the control group were fifth graders.

The socioeconomic status and racial composition of both groups was similar. There were four black students in the experimental group and six in the control group. Eleven students qualified for the free lunch program while ten in the control group qualified.

Test data, however, revealed that the groups were not equal in achievement level. The experimental group scored substantially higher on the Stanford Achievement Test (1982) administered immediately after the sustained silent reading program. The Total Reading score for the experimental group was grade equivalent 8.3 as opposed to 6.7 for the control group. This difference made statistical comparison of the groups impossible because subjects were not identified and only group data were analyzed. This mode was chosen to assure students they could respond freely on the attitude survey without without identity. Given the nature of the groups, the researchers felt that the subjects would be more candid and honest if they did not have to identify themselves.

### Instrument

The Rhody Secondary Reading Attitude Assessment (Tullock-Rhody & Alexander, 1980) was used to measure

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attitudes toward reading at the outset and end of the experiment. Although designed for secondary, the instrument appeared suitable for fifth graders as well. The items on this measure are read aloud and students can follow along if they experience difficulty reading any items. The Leikert style format also seemed easy for the subjects in this study to understand. There are 25 items on the scale with a maximum positive attitude toward reading score of five on any one item, totalling 125 representing the most positive attitude possible. Tullock-Rhody and Alexander reported an  $r$  of .84 based on the test-retest procedure for establishing reliability. They reported validity data determined from responses of teachers yielding a  $t$  of 4.16 ( $P$  .001).

### Procedures

The second author provided reading instruction for both the experimental and control groups. The only substantial difference in instruction occurred when the experimental group engaged in the 15 min. sustained silent reading program. The control group, however, had approximately 20 min. more instructional time in the regular reading program. Both groups were using the same basal reading series and were proceeding at approximately the same pace.

The attitude scale was administered at the outset of the experiment. Each day thereafter for six weeks the experimental group engaged in the 15 min. SSR program. The teacher created a pleasant, quiet, and orderly atmosphere during the SSR time. In keeping with established practices, the teacher also read during the SSR period. At the end of the six week period the attitude scale was readministered to both the experimental and control groups.

### Findings

The experimental group demonstrated an overall drop of nearly two points on the attitude scale. A look at sex differences, however, indicates that this loss is attributable to the substantially lower post experimental scores demonstrated by the boys, who dropped from 79.85 at the outset of the study to 72.57 at the close of the experiment. The experimental girls gained

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slightly. There were no substantial differences in any of the control group pre and post attitude scores. Summary data are presented in Table 1.

Table 1  
Pre and Post Scores by Group  
Mean Attitude Scale

Group	N	Pre	Post	Diff
Total Experimental	19	92.46	90.68	-1.78
Total Control	20	88.09	87.52	- .57
Boys Experimental	7	79.85	72.57	-7.28
Boys Control	11	86.18	84.83	-1.35
Girls Experimental	12	99.8	101.25	1.45
Girls Control	9	90.44	91.00	.56

Noteworthy in pre and post data is the pronounced difference in attitude scale scores among boys and girls. The boys combined, experimental and control (N=18), produced a mean attitude scale score of 83.72 at the outset of the study while for girls the corresponding mean (N=21) was 95.77. At the close of the study, six weeks later, the mean attitude scale score for boys was 80.31 and 96.86 for girls. Note Table 2.

Table 2  
Differences in Pre and Post Attitude Scale Score by Sex

Group	N	Pre	(SD)	Post	(SD)	Diff
Boys	18	83.72	(17.77)	80.31	(18.35)	-3.41
Girls	21	95.77	(14.88)	96.86	(15.68)	1.09

The mean pre and post attitude scale scores for boys were inordinately lowered by scores of one individual in the experimental group who demonstrated a highly negative attitude toward reading. His pre score was 41 while his post score was 37. Observation of

overt behavior of one boy suggests that the lowest score on both pre and post measures came from the same individual. Application of the outlier principle for removing the scores of this individual raises the mean of the experimental boys from 79.85 to 86.3 at the outset of the study. The post scale scores are 72.57 with the lowest score remaining and 78.5 with the lowest score removed.

The instrument itself, the Rhody Secondary Reading Attitude Assessment (Tullock-Rhody and Alexander, 1980) proved to be stable measure. Application of Cronbach's Coefficient Alpha at the outset of the study yielded a reliability coefficient of .90 while the corresponding coefficient at the conclusion of the study was .92.

### Discussion

Regardless of the disposition of the lowest scores, there is ample evidence indicating that boys in this study have substantially poor attitudes toward reading than girls. Further, application of the SSR program appeared to have no positive effects relative to either boys or girls. This finding seems consistent with findings of Minton (1980) and Herbert (1987) who reported that SSR apparently did not result in more positive attitudes toward reading. On the other hand results herein contradict findings, circumstantial differences notwithstanding, of Cline and Ketke (1980) and Pfau (1966) who reported attitude changes favoring reading following SSR programs.

The most remarkable data concern differences in attitudes of boys and girls. These findings complement those of Goostree (1981) who determined that gifted girls have more positive attitudes toward reading than gifted boys.

Observations peculiar to this study suggest that the one extremely negative male measurably affected attitudes toward reading of the remaining boys in the experimental group. On the other hand, the control group males, without the influence of an exceptionally negative member, also scored considerably lower than their female counterparts. This finding is consistent with data reported by Parker and Paradis (1986) who

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found substantial differences in grades four and five in attitudes toward reading favoring girls. Parker and Paradis reported that attitude differences among grade six boys and girls were almost non-existent. However, in the Parker and Paradis study, the same subjects were not examined as they progressed from grade to grade. It is not plausible that the boys and girls in the present study would undergo natural changes in attitudes toward reading simply by moving to sixth grade.

Preston (1962) in his classic study comparing American and German readers attributed achievement differences favoring American girls over American boys to cultural variables. Since sex differences in achievement appeared to be reversed among German schoolchildren, Preston suggested that cultural and environmental factors rather than biological principles account for sex differences. Preston proposed that German boys learn to read efficiently and successfully primarily because reading is a "normal activity of the male" (p. 353) in that country. The opposite appears true for American males according to Preston (1979) who reported on research suggesting the American boys perceived of reading as a feminine activity and, thus, not a normal male's activity. Preston (1979) demonstrated his point by returning to Germany to examine the effects of male and female teachers on reading achievement of boys and girls. He determined that having male teachers did not help German boys learn to read any better than having female teachers.

Recommendations suggest that studies be undertaken to determine if, in fact, reading can become a more normal activity for the American male child. Further, longitudinal studies need to be undertaken to determine variation in attitudes toward reading among individual children as they progress through the grades. The Parker and Paradis (1986) study provides a good framework for developing such longitudinal studies.

The question of whether SSR enhances attitudes toward reading remains essentially unanswered. Nevertheless, the quest to find ways and means to encourage what we call natural reading must continue. Determining attitudes of very young children toward reading and

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building on factors contributing to positive attitudes should prove helpful. For example, Durkin (1966) found the most important factors in learning reading early were having parents who read to them and reading themselves in the presence of their children.

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Phelps, Stephen, State College, NY	2	101
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