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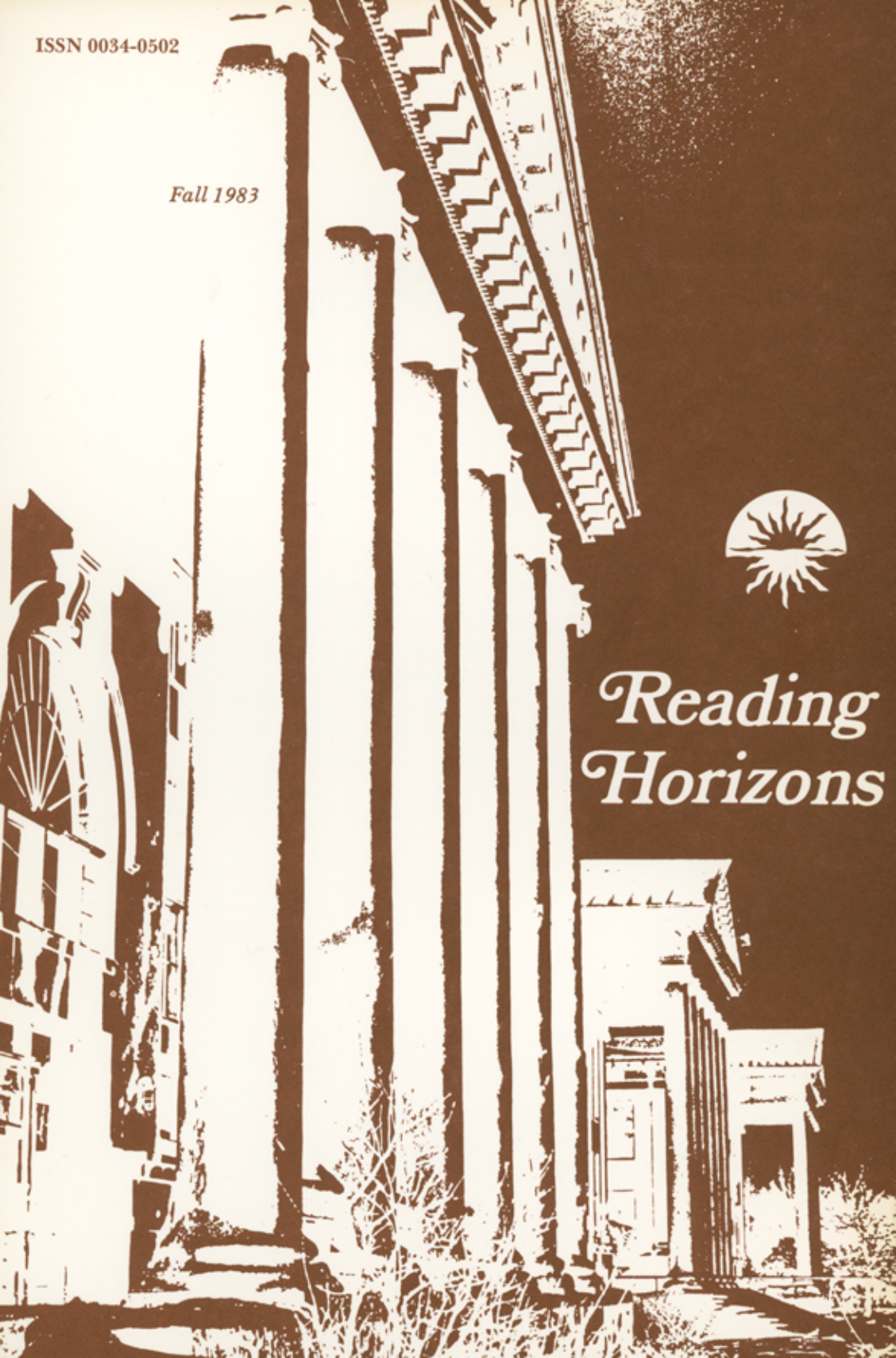


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READING HORIZONS has been published quarterly since 1960, on the campus of Western Michigan University, in Kalamazoo. As a journal devoted to the teaching of reading at all levels, it provides all interested professionals with the ideas, reports, and important developments that constitute the ever widening horizons of reading.

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READING ALOUD TO PRESCHOOLERS AGE 3-6: A REVIEW OF THE RESEARCH

Sandra McCormick
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QUESTION: What is the best thing parents, preschool teachers, and kindergarten teachers can do to influence a child's readiness for reading?

ANSWER: Read aloud to the child!

Although some teachers and parents do read to their children on a regular basis, unfortunately, others do so only as occasional activity. When a preschool teacher ends up with a few extra minutes in the school day, she may pull a book from the shelves and read it to the children. Or, a parent may take time to read to his child, if the child brings the book and prompts, pesters, and cajoles to hear the book read.

Research has shown us that reading to preschool children should be more than an occasional activity, however, and has given specific reasons why. Reading books to children can positively affect their language development, interest in books, academic readiness, success in learning to read, specific reading interests, and social attitudes and values.

Reading aloud is a simple activity to carry out and one that is not very time-consuming. Why, then, isn't it done more consistently by all parents and teachers? Parents do show evidence of interest in preparing their young children for school; for example, many purchase the workbooks found in grocery stores and drugstores that purport to contain reading readiness activities. Preschool and kindergarten teachers include other activities as part of their regularly planned programs because they believe these will enhance children's readiness for reading; for example, phonics exercises.

One reason for failing to read to preschool children, or to do so often, may be lack of knowledge about the value of this activity. In the February, 1977 issue of Language Arts, an article was published which reviewed research on the effects of reading aloud to school-age children (McCormick, 1977). The purpose of the present article is to supplement that review by presenting research related to the preschooler.

Table 1 presents this research. The table allows educators to review in summarized form important data which shows the positive relationship of reading aloud to other educational variables. It is hoped that making these research results readily available will result in increased practices of regular reading aloud to

young children. References following the table allow the interested reader to locate the original research reports to obtain additional information about each study.

Table 1
Effects of Reading Aloud to Preschool Children

A. Variable investigated: EFFECTS ON LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT

Researcher: Burroughs Date: 1970 Age of Subjects: 3

Question: How will reading aloud affect language development of children from low socio-economic status homes?

Procedure: Read to children daily for 3 months

Findings: Scored significantly higher than control group on a) receptive vocabulary; b) expressive vocabulary; c) length of sentences used; & d) Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test (1965).

Researcher: Chomsky Date: 1972 Age of Subjects: Prereaders

Question: What is the relationship of children's linguistic development to the amount and complexity of material they hear read?

Procedure: Examined variables to determine which showed a positive relationship to linguistic state of development.

Findings: Prereaders in highest stages of linguistic development: a) had more books read aloud to them each week; b) heard books at higher syntactic complexity levels; c) were read to by more people.

B. Variable investigated: EFFECTS ON INTEREST IN BOOKS

Researchers: Haskett & Lenfesty Date: 1974
Age of subjects: Preschool

Question: How can the activity of looking at books be increased as a free time choice in an open classroom preschool?

Procedure: a) teacher had books in classroom; b) teacher brought in new books; c) teacher read aloud from classroom books.

Findings: a) mere presence of books resulted in low frequency of looking at books as activity choice; b) introduction of new books resulted in some increase; c) reading aloud of books by adults produced larger and more stable increases of the desired behavior.

C. Variable investigated: EFFECTS ON ACADEMIC READINESS

Researcher: Hoskins Date: 1976 Age of subjects: Preschool & kindergarten

Question: What are the effects of parents reading to children prior to kindergarten entrance on their academic readiness (general mathematics, knowledge of letters and sounds, aural comprehension)?

Procedure: Read aloud three months prior to kindergarten for at least sixty minutes per week.

Findings: Scored significantly higher than control group on tests of academic readiness.

Researcher: Ferguson Date: 1979 Age of subjects: Kindergarten

Question: What are the effects of listening to stories read on kindergarten children whose reading readiness scores were low?

Procedure: a) Group 1 - heard stories read daily; b) Group 2 - time divided between hearing stories and other activities; c) Group 3 - regular kindergarten program.

Findings: Group 1 made significantly great gains in reading readiness scores than Groups 2 and 3.

Researcher: Henry Date: 1974 Age of subjects: Kindergarten

Question: Will boys who are read to by fathers score higher on reading readiness measures than those read to by mothers or those not read to at all?

Procedure: Groups 1 and 2 read aloud to on regular basis (Gr. 1 by fathers, Gr. 2 by mothers) for 6 months prior to 1st Grade. Group 3 did not hear stories read.

Findings: Boys read to by fathers scored better on one measure but not on others.

D. Variable investigated: EFFECTS ON LEARNING TO READ

Researcher: Durkin Date: 1966 Age of Subjects: Preschool

Question: What are the characteristics of children who read before entering school?

Procedure: Examined Variable to determine which showed a positive relationship to early reading.

Findings: In every case children who read early were read to by their parents or by older brothers or sisters.

Researcher: Harty Date: 1975 Age of Subjects: Kindergarten

Question: What are the differences in characteristics of kindergarten entrants who can read and those who cannot?

Procedure: Compared the two groups on 21 variables.

Findings: Frequency of parents reading to children was one of eight variables which showed differences in favor of the readers.

Researcher: Durkin Date: 1974-75 Age of Subjects: 4

Question: What is the effectiveness of a specific program for teaching preschool children to read?

Procedure: Program included: a) development of a sight vocabulary; b) letter and numeral naming; c) reading aloud to the children.

Findings: Reading achievement scores in grades 1 and 2 significantly exceeded those of control group. However, the gains over the control group were not maintained in grades 3 and 4.

E. Variable investigated: EFFECTS ON SPECIFIC READING INTERESTS

Researchers: Mason & Blanton Date: 1971 Age of Subjects: 3, 4, 5

Question: What is appropriate story content for beginning reading instruction?

Procedure: Stories were read aloud to preschool children to determine their reading interests and literature preferences.

Findings: After children learned to read, they were more eager to read books which had been read aloud to them, or books of the same type, than to read other books.

F. Variable investigated: EFFECTS ON SOCIAL ATTITUDES

Researchers: L. & G. Berg-Cross Date: 1978 Age of subjects: 4-6

Question: Will changes in social attitude of preschoolers occur as a result of hearing stories read which express values?

Procedure: Picture storybooks about sex roles, friendship, death, and risk taking merely read to children in experimental group (no follow-up discussion). Control

group read to, but not from stories which expressed the targeted values.

Findings: Little changes in attitudes of control group; experimental group's attitude changes were large and positive.

G. Variable investigated: PARENT EDUCATION

Researcher: Swift Date: 1970 Age of subjects: 3, 4, 5

Question: Can educationally limited mothers be taught how to read stories to their children?

Procedure: Several specific techniques used to teach mothers to read and discuss stories with their children.

Findings: Learned to read stories and discuss them with greater elaboration; became more atuned to respond to their children's questions; changed their perceptions about their roles in the education of their children.

A review of the research on reading aloud to preschool children can only lead to the conclusion that this activity should be a regular and planned one in every preschool and kindergarten classroom, and in every home where there are young children. Reading aloud to children provides assistance in realizing some of our most important educational objectives for preschool children.

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READINESS FOR READING COMPREHENSION

Dixie Lee Spiegel

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Over the last four years several students in my graduate courses in the teaching of reading have informally questioned kindergarten teachers about their reading readiness programs. The results have been remarkably consistent. Almost all of the kindergarten teachers surveyed did have some kind of readiness program. Generally they reported that these programs were designed to teach letter names, consonant sounds and fine motor skills. Occasionally listening skills, following directions, and interest in reading were mentioned. Only rarely, however, did kindergarten teachers report that building comprehension was part of their readiness program.

My reaction to the omission of comprehension training is reminiscent of the man in the steak sauce commercial: "After all, what is reading?" Reading is not knowing the names of the letters or huffing and puffing to sound out words or staying on the lines when you write. Reading is understanding what the author is trying to tell you. It is absorbing and reacting to the author's ideas. Identifying the words is only a means for getting to the ideas. When a program designed to enhance readiness for reading does not include a strong comprehension component, that program becomes at best a decoding or word identification readiness program. It is not a reading readiness program.

Fortunately, an effective comprehension component may be included in any kindergarten curriculum in a relatively simple manner. The series of lessons described below does not require expensive kits or a great deal of teacher preparation. What these lessons do require is teacher/child interaction, with careful attention given to how the child arrived at an answer, and for that reason these lessons work best with groups of six to ten children. The activities are built around the concept of parallel lessons (Cunningham, 1975) and are a non-threatening but very effective way of guiding children toward the comprehension aspects of reading. In Cunningham's model for parallel lessons, the processes of comprehension are taught at the listening level (which is easier than reading for most children) and then transferred to the reading task. At the listening level, the teacher reads the passage while modeling the thinking processes necessary for understanding while the children listen. At the reading level, the children are then encouraged to utilize these same thinking strategies while reading the materials themselves. Moore and Readence (1980) have extended Cunningham's suggestion for parallel

lessons to include pictures and oral reading as well as listening and silent reading. With each mode the teacher first models the processes, then helps the children recognize and later generate good responses.

For the purposes of a kindergarten program, only the picture-based and listening methods will be discussed here. The comprehension lessons which follow are designed both to enhance teachers' awareness of the processes that lead to comprehension and to provide a framework within which they may develop their own lessons for comprehension awareness.

Picture-based Lessons

Beginning with pictures, the teacher goes through three strategies designed to move the children gradually to independent application of the thinking processes required to interpret a picture. The teacher should focus only on one specific aspect of comprehension during each set of lessons, such as identifying the main idea or determining a sequence. The example I will use in the following descriptions is inferring the characters' feelings or personality traits.

The first strategy is teacher modeling. Holding up a picture, the teacher models for the children, for example, ways in which they can figure out how a particular character in the picture feels. This modeling should always include two components: 1) exploring why a right answer is right and a wrong answer is wrong, and, 2) showing the children that they always have two sources of information—what's on the page (whether it's a picture, or, later, words) and what's in their heads (i.e., what they already know about the world). By emphasizing how one can tell when an answer is reasonable and when it is not and what kinds of information are fair to use in making these decisions, the teacher is modeling the thinking processes necessary for arriving at answers reasonably. Too often comprehension instruction deals only with what the right answer is (Durkin, 1978-79), but doesn't show the children how to get the right answer. Actually, what the right answer is is not of primary importance in comprehension instruction. What is important is knowing the processes and strategies for figuring out the right answer when you are on your own. Furthermore, by pointing out to the children what it is that is right about a particular answer and contrasting that with what is wrong about another response, the teacher focuses the children's attention on the pertinent features of each answer. Without such a discussion, the children may decide that an entirely irrelevant feature is the important aspect.

Showing the children what kinds of information are fair to use is also crucial. Children need to understand from the beginning that the book doesn't always give the answer and that they are supposed to use what they know about the world when they listen or (later) read. Sometimes, of course, that means different children will arrive at different answers because of variation in their experiential backgrounds. Exploration of differing answers will help children understand that there will not always be just one right answer; indeed, sometimes several different answers

may be justifiable, as long as each can be supported by some kind of evidence.

In the sample modeling script below, these two emphases are coded as EX⁺ (exploring reasonable answers), EX⁻ (exploring wrong answers), TXT (using information from the text) and HD (using information from your head).

Teacher (holding up a picture of a children's birthday party and pointing to the "birthday child"):
I can tell how this boy feels right now. He feels happy and excited. How can I tell that? For one thing, I can just look at him (TXT). He is smiling and clapping his hands. When we're happy we smile (EX⁺, HD). Have you ever done that? When? (HD) I don't think I would say that this boy is being silly (EX⁻). If he were being silly, his mother would probably be looking annoyed or even angry (HD) and she's not doing that. (TXT) What does your mother do when you're being silly (HD)?

After the children have watched the teacher model thinking about two or three pictures, they will start to interrupt to share their own reasoning. Terrific. Now's the time to move quickly to the second strategy, recognition of a reasonable answer. In this step the teacher shows the children a new picture and asks: "Does this person feel angry, happy, or sick?" This is essentially a multiple-choice exercise in which the children have to do some of the work (i.e., recognize reasonable answer among several wrong answers) but not all of it. The most important part of the recognition step, however, is not recognizing a reasonable answer but understanding how one determines that it is reasonable. Therefore the teacher should always ask:

How do you know that's a good answer? What do you see that makes you think that's a good answer? (EX⁺, TXT)
Is that how you would feel? Why? (EX⁺, HD) What do you see that lets you know the person doesn't feel sick? (EX⁻, TXT) Why wouldn't you feel sick if this happened to you? (EX⁻, HD)

After the children have become adept at selecting a reasonable answer when given a choice and supporting their decision with confidence, the teacher should move to the third strategy—student generation of a reasonable answer. In this step, the children have to come up with an answer all by themselves; they have to produce it, not just recognize it. As with the first two strategies, the primary emphasis should be on process (how to get a reasonable answer), not product (what the right answer is). After asking, "How does this person feel?" the teacher should have the children tell why they decided on that answer and rejected other possibilities, following the questioning format described earlier.

The teacher will most likely spend several short (10–15 minutes) lessons just working with pictures in order to insure that the children really do understand the thinking processes involved. When they can deal with pictures with ease, it is time to move to a slightly more abstract level, listening.

Listening Lessons

At the listening level the teacher uses the same three strategies that were used with pictures: teacher modeling, student recognition of a reasonable answer, and student generation of a reasonable answer. Although the listening level is more abstract than the picture level, it has one very important advantage over pictures. It is more like reading than looking at a picture because information is not received all at once but is received by the listener over time. As with reading, a tentative conclusion reached early may need to be altered later as additional information is processed. At the listening level, therefore, the teacher should break the listening into segments and these breaks should come as new information becomes available. Somehow many children think that it is wrong to change your mind when reading. They need to learn from the very beginning that reading is a gathering and sifting through information, and as one gathers more information and gets more clues, an earlier, very reasonable hypothesis may need to be modified or even discarded entirely. At the listening level teachers can emphasize the hypothesis-testing nature of comprehension by pausing when new information becomes available and asking the children to re-evaluate their answers.

The teacher modeling step during a listening activity might follow a sequence something like this:

Teacher reads a paragraph or so) Hmm...
 I think Andy must be feeling sad. He has lost the money he was going to use to buy an ice cream cone (EX+, TXT). I'd certainly feel sad about that, especially if I didn't get to buy ice cream very often (EX+, HD). I sure wouldn't feel happy about it (EX-) because I like ice cream a lot (HD). How would you feel if you'd lost the money? Why? (Children give responses and justify them.) Let's read some more and find out if Andy really is feeling sad. (Teacher reads aloud and stops when additional information has been presented in the story about Andy's feelings.) I may have to change my mind now. At first I thought Andy was sad because he lost his money. But now it just said that when he got back home from the store he yelled at his sister and he kicked his bike (TXT). Now I think he's more mad than sad. I know when I'm feeling sad I just get quiet and want to be by myself (EX-, HD). That's certainly not how Andy acted (EX-, TXT)! But I still don't know why he's mad. Let's go on and see if there are any more clues about how he is feeling and why.

Note that whereas sad was a reasonable (EX+) answer early in the story, as more clues to Andy's feelings are given, mad becomes an example of a wrong answer (EX-). Teachers should carefully build into their listening lessons opportunities for themselves to make reasonable guesses that will later be proven wrong. In this way the children will feel more comfortable both about making guesses in the first place and intelligently changing their guesses as needed.

As at the picture level, during the listening lessons the teacher should move gradually from dependence on the teacher to student independence, from teacher modeling through recognition of reasonable answers to student generation of answers. If the teacher carefully follows the questioning strategies outlined here for picture-based and listening lessons, pre-readers should begin to develop many of the thinking processes that they will later need for successful reading comprehension. They will begin to understand how to figure out a right answer and how to combine what they already know with why they learn from the page. They will be ready for reading comprehension.

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READING INTERESTS OF GIFTED CHILDREN

Sue Hawkins

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In recent years there has been a renewed interest in programs for gifted children. School districts are developing a variety of administrative structures: special classes, pull-out programs, enrichment within the regular class, and acceleration (George, Cohn, and Stanley, Eds., 1979).

Programs for gifted have also varied in content and focus. Encouraging wide reading or developing higher order reading skills is often directly or indirectly involved in many programs.

Trezise (1977) writes that gifted children learn in ways that differ from the average in ability to conceptualize, abstract, organize, and in their ability to deal with complex associations. He states that reading programs need to meet these needs and not merely deal with what happens in books, but with the significance of these happenings.

Both Trezise (1977) and Switzer and Nourse (1979) stress the importance of wide reading for the gifted. Switzer and Nourse (1979) feel that finding material of interest to the child is crucial to an effective program. They suggest that teachers utilize interest surveys with gifted children so they may serve as better facilitators of reading.

Studies of reading interests of children report similar findings. Ashley (1970) surveyed the interests of Canadian children and found that mysteries, adventure, comics, ghost stories, and science fiction were high on the list. Non-fiction, encyclopedias, newspapers, and poetry were low interest areas. One study (McKay, 1971) included children with IQ's ranging from 69 to 147. Though adventure, animals, sports, and mysteries were high with all groups, the brighter students chose biographies, humor, and mysteries more than those students in the lower ranges. Barchas (1971) studied children from four ethnic groups. There were some interests that were specific to cultural groups but all shared general interests in mystery-adventure, animal stories, and humor.

If gifted children have learning styles that differ from the normal, are their reading interests also different? The purpose of this study was to assess the expressed reading interests of a group of gifted children and to determine if their reading interests differ from the interests of other children in their age group.

Table 1
Percent Preferred Type

	Totals			Grade 4			Grade 5			Grade 6		
	G	B	T	G	B	T	G	B	T	G	B	T
Fiction	88.5	85.1	87.0	83.3	71.4	78.9	100.0	88.2	93.3	80.0	100.0	84.6
Magazines	68.5	59.2	64.5	66.6	57.1	57.8	61.5	52.9	56.6	90.0	100.0	92.3
Comic Books	57.1	51.8	54.8	83.3	57.1	73.6	53.8	52.9	53.3	30.0	33.3	30.7
Non-Fiction	45.7	59.2	51.6	75.0	85.7	73.6	38.4	64.7	53.3	20.0	0.0	15.3
Newspaper	42.8	46.4	45.1	41.6	57.1	47.3	30.7	52.9	43.3	60.0	0.0	46.1
Novel	48.5	37.0	43.5	41.6	14.2	31.5	30.7	41.1	36.6	80.0	66.6	76.9
Short-story	71.4	40.7	41.9	25.0	42.8	31.5	46.1	47.0	46.6	60.0	0.0	46.1
Poetry	51.8	18.5	32.2	66.6	14.2	42.1	23.0	29.4	26.6	40.0	0.0	30.7
Reference	17.1	37.0	25.8	25.0	42.8	31.5	7.6	41.1	26.6	20.0	0.0	15.3

Table 2
Percent Preferred Content

	Totals			Grade 4			Grade 5			Grade 6		
	G	B	T	G	B	T	G	B	T	G	B	T
Mystery	82.8	74.0	79.0	91.6	85.7	89.4	84.6	76.4	80.0	70.0	33.3	61.5
Fantasy	82.8	70.3	77.4	100.0	85.7	94.7	76.9	64.7	70.0	70.0	66.6	69.2
Adventure	74.2	77.7	75.8	83.3	100.0	89.4	76.9	76.4	76.6	60.0	33.3	53.8
Humor	80.0	70.3	75.8	91.6	71.4	84.2	76.9	76.4	76.6	70.0	33.3	61.5
Science Fiction	45.7	81.4	61.2	66.6	100.0	78.9	38.4	82.3	63.3	30.0	33.3	30.7
Biography	62.8	37.0	51.6	66.6	42.8	52.6	84.6	41.1	60.0	40.0	0.0	30.7
Animal	65.7	29.6	50.0	83.3	42.8	68.4	61.5	23.5	40.0	50.0	33.3	46.1
Science	31.4	66.6	46.7	41.6	71.4	52.6	30.7	70.5	53.3	20.0	33.3	23.0
"How to do it"	37.1	51.8	43.5	66.6	57.1	63.1	15.3	58.8	40.0	30.0	0.0	23.0
Fairy Tales	57.1	22.2	41.9	75.0	14.2	52.6	69.2	23.5	43.3	20.0	33.3	23.0
History	22.8	48.1	33.8	25.0	14.2	21.0	23.0	64.7	46.6	20.0	33.3	23.0
Religious	25.7	29.6	27.4	25.0	14.2	21.0	30.7	41.1	36.6	20.0	0.0	15.3
Patriotism	20.0	37.0	27.4	25.0	14.2	21.0	30.7	52.9	43.3	0.0	0.0	0.0

PROCEDURE

Sixty-two students who were enrolled in the Saturday Morning Experience for gifted children, were the subjects of this study. The Saturday Morning Experience is an enrichment program for gifted students, sponsored by Trinity University. Criteria for selection in the Saturday Morning Experience include a measured I.Q. above 130 and recommendation by the students' school districts. The students were distributed as follows: grade 4, 12 boys and seven girls; grade 5, 17 boys and 13 girls; grade 6, 3 boys and 10 girls. This was the total group enrolled in the program at these grade levels. The numbers at the fourth and sixth grades are limited and may only suggest trends for these grade levels.

Subjects were given a paper and pencil inventory concerning their reading interests. The inventory listed types of literature and different content areas. Interests were indicated by placing check marks beside preferred types and content. There was space provided to indicate magazines and comic books that students read. Subjects were also asked to list books they had recently read.

RESULTS

Table 1 shows the type of literature preferred by the subjects in this study. Fiction is a favorite at all levels and with both sexes. Novels are selected by the 6th grade subjects more often than at the other levels. Preference for short stories increases with grade level while non-fiction decreases. Except at the 6th grade level, which includes only three males, boys select non-fiction more than girls do. Reference materials are not highly chosen, but males, again excepting grade 6, appear to read more reference material than females.

The subjects were also asked about their newspaper, magazine and comic book reading habits. As a group, about 45% said they read the newspaper. The comic section was most widely read. Twenty-one subjects reported that they read news stories and 17 read the sports section. Comic books were selected most frequently by the fourth-grade girls. Selection of comic books decreased with grade level. Magazine reading increased with grade level.

Table 2 shows the selections for content. There are some grade level differences and sex differences in choice of content. Adventure, mystery, humor, and fantasy are high on the list with a trend toward decreased interests as the grade level increases. Girls select biography, poetry, fairy tales, and animal stories with greater frequency than boys. Boys express more interest in science, science fiction, and "How to do it" books than girls. History, patriotism, and religious books were seldom selected by any of the subjects.

An open-ended question asked the subjects to list books they had recently read. Judy Blume books, Encyclopedia Brown books and others that seemed typical for the age group predominated. At the sixth grade level three people included The Amityville Horror and one girl The Silver Chalice. These people also included books that had less mature content.

DISCUSSION

The results of this study indicate that the reading interests of gifted intermediate grade students do not differ from children in general as reported by Pieronek (1980), Ashley (1970), McKay (1971), and Barchas (1971). Mystery, adventure, and fantasy seem predominant in all groups. The subjects in this study did report reading newspapers and magazines with greater frequency than the subjects in the above studies. It is not known how much time is spent in newspaper and magazine reading, however. For the children in this study, chronological age rather than intellectual ability appears to be important in determining reading interests.

If the subjects in this study are representative of other gifted children there are possible implications for teachers who work with gifted children. One would simply be to accept them at their age level and encourage them to read books aimed at that level. Another implication is that teachers need to determine the interests of their students and find literature of high quality in their interests. Accept Nancy Drew, but find other mysteries that don't follow a formula. A third course teachers could follow is to broaden children's interests. Encourage them to take risks with materials and content they have never tried before. Develop activities that will send them to reference materials and stimulate higher order thinking skills.

The children in this study were in enrichment programs at school as well as being in the Saturday Morning Experience. One would wonder if there had been an effort to broad their reading interests. Direct counseling by teachers about available reading materials may be required in order to challenge students' reading interests. Teachers will also need to read widely in order to be able to suggest materials to children.

The needs of gifted children in reading go beyond merely passing competency tests. Creative and challenging programs need to be designed that will meet their needs for growth both in and through reading.

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SSR—WHAT TO DO WHEN THE INTEREST IS GONE

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In the late 1960's and early 1970's, Sustained Silent Reading (SSR) was viewed as a sure-fire method of developing a student's ability to read silently without interruption for relatively long periods of time. According to Robert A. McCracken, the goal of sustained silent reading is achieved almost immediately if the practice becomes a complement and not a supplement to the teaching program (McCracken, 1971). This concept has been widely accepted. Throughout the 1970's until the present time, SSR has continued in schools and classrooms as an integral part of the total reading program. It has provided the practice or drill of silent reading.

Recently, teachers have expressed concern because, despite the adherence to the established rules of SSR, the interest in silent reading has begun to diminish after several months. Students who have developed a love for reading and have mastered the mechanical skills involved continue to have an appreciation for the knowledge and pleasure gained through reading. However, students who experience difficulty when reading or who are low achievers are the focal concern of teachers implementing SSR. These students have shorter attention spans and do not begin or attend to silent reading after a brief period of time. Additionally, students experience too many classroom disruptions when reading independently. They then cause disruptions which disturb the entire class. A disruptive situation may occur when SSR is initially conceived but, if the condition persists, the teacher must then decide what can be done to reestablish SSR.

Because students experiment with different behaviors, they need to be guided into situations where reading is respected, quiet is expected, and the students see each other and the teacher in a productive and enjoyable environment (Cline & Kretke, 1980). Teachers must realize that not all students have the desire to become proficient in reading. Some students, especially the low achievers, cannot work independently and require the structure of a teacher asking questions and guiding the silent reading.

What should a teacher do when students lose interest in SSR? The first step would be to discover why they lost interest. This sounds relatively simple but oftentimes the teacher may find the reasons to be multicausal. Consequently, many alternatives or options need to be considered.

The most logical decision for a deteriorating program is

the elimination of SSR. This is a drastic move since many students enjoy recreational reading because there are no mandatory reports or sharing of reading material. However, an option could be the suspension of SSR for a short while. By suspending the allotted silent reading period, the teacher is free to utilize time to engage in an alternative program. He or she may decide to use the time to read aloud to the students. By doing so, the teacher becomes a model of fluent oral reading. Also, students will grasp the concept of comprehending through oral reading as well as the awareness that reading is a form of communication similar to conversation. Subsequently, students frequently decide they want to read what the teacher has read aloud.

Time could be spent presenting a book review to the class. A synopsis plus personal reaction could be given by the teacher. Students who are avid readers could indicate, and then interpret and evaluate their choice of books to peers. The conclusion to the book or story should be omitted to enhance interest so students will be motivated to read to find the ending.

A third alternative could be grouping the students who conscientiously read during the specified time and enjoy SSR. This choice would be consistent with the current trend to meet the individual needs of students. Different levels of student ability and maturity must be considered as well as each student's right to determine whether he/she will read for pleasure during SSR. The teacher would need to explain to the group who chooses to read that it is necessary for her to work with the students who have lost interest in independent silent reading. Students implementing SSR would have no role model to emulate while reading silently but their reading habits should be established by this time so they would be able to read without the presence of a model. Another option might include a paraprofessional, volunteer, or teacher aide to guide SSR. The children are then away from the teacher with whom they frequently associate questioning, reporting and an evaluation or grade.

Alternative four would be the revitalization of SSR. At all times sustained silent reading should be promoted as a privilege. An advertising campaign in which the students would plan, develop and implement the strategies involved could be incorporated. Other classes could be invited to participate in making the advertising project a joint venture. Some suggested techniques would be designing and constructing bulletin boards to enhance the concept of SSR as well as dramatizing a book or books that are exceptionally appealing to students.

Community resources should be utilized. The local librarian could speak to the class concerning the variety and depth of materials within the city library. Students could plan a field trip to view the assets of the library and to select books for reading. Additionally, community leaders, such as the mayor, or business persons and other professionals, should be invited to demonstrate the vital role reading plays in their lives.

The classroom setting may be rearranged so a specific quiet area can be designated for reading. A unique setting which departs from the traditional classroom structure could be provided. Carpets

and cushions, a rocker for reading, or a reading niche could be included so SSR will be viewed as a positive complement to the reading period, not a negative supplement, such as reading silently after assignments are completed, or enforcing independent reading after the students have been disciplined.

The amount and type of reading material within the classroom should be expanded. Children's magazines, contemporary magazines, newspapers, informational booklets, and comic books in addition to paperback and hardback books could be included. Parents as well as students, and people within the community should be encouraged to donate books and magazines to the class or the school library. A rotation plan for providing a variety of books for the students may be arranged with the school and town librarians. A "swap shop" within the classroom or with another class could be conducted. Time must be provided for the used books to be scrutinized so students may make appropriate selections. An SSR "Salebration", a used book fair so students may choose from a variety of books, new and/or used, would add a dimension to SSR.

Strategies for enhancing and intensifying the material which had been read previously by students or teacher should be provided. Let the creativity of individual children be demonstrated through posters, mobiles, puppets, dramatizations, murals or the identity of a favorite storybook character.

Guidelines, not "rules" (the term "rules" has an unsavory connotation), to follow when SSR is resumed should be reestablished. The guidelines should be composed by the students who have more influence on their peers than does the teacher who is viewed as the authoritarian figure in the classroom. The guidelines should be printed on a large chart, clearly visible during SSR.

The teacher should not monitor students as they read. Although he or she can remain aware of the classroom situation during SSR, the teacher read without interruption, verbally and physically ignoring students unless it is necessary to prevent trouble.

Reading unshared is reading forgotten. Although reading is a highly personal process, there are times when students have the need to share what has been read. However, not all students will want to share what they have read. No mandatory sharing is required, and sharing should and must be spontaneous. Time, other than during SSR, should be allocated so students can share orally the reading that has appealed to them. Some students may opt to participate in group discussions, while others may wish to participate in sharing by means of writing, or through another method.

When examining the causes of SSR failure, all factors including the classroom teacher must be carefully analyzed. Perhaps the teacher needs to be re-inspired. Teachers must possess a commitment to the concept that practice and example, i.e., an exemplary role model, are necessary components of a successful reading program. The teacher's example and enthusiasm are powerful strategies for instruction. Students need a role model and, frequently, imitate the teacher. A teacher's behavior should demonstrate constantly the belief that reading is a highly valued activity.

As students experience success in reading, they will view SSR as an enjoyable learning situation. The more they read, the more interested and competent they will become and, subsequently, will derive more enjoyment from reading. To sustain this circuit of pleasure and competence in students, each teacher needs to exude enthusiasm for reading books and use every means possible to instill a love of reading in students. Kindergarten and first-grade teachers should be encouraged to initiate SSR in their classrooms. Teachers in other grades should continue to implement SSR throughout the grades so reading will become a healthy, satisfying, sustaining habit.

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A COMPARISON OF CHILDREN'S ABILITY TO DEFINE AND APPLY PHONICS TERMS

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Since the early 1900's, American educators have emphasized that letter sounds instead of letter names should be taught to beginning readers (Venezky, 1976). They have also stressed that blending of sounds should be done in order to minimize memory load. Consequently, the practice of emphasizing phonics application and de-emphasizing phonics terminology is, in theory, the basis for many present-day teaching strategies. However, a question arises when one considers the actual material being taught to children. Has the critical emphasis been on the knowledge of phonics usage rather than the memorization of terms?

Research by Tovey (1980), Downing (1970), and Reid (1966) provides the conclusion that children do not readily handle the abstract technical terms used by teachers in talking about written or spoken language. Although a child may possess the skills required to deal with the concept of the term, the child may have difficulty in the clarification of the term.

Many current reading series still emphasize the use of labels in learning practice. Beck (1979) has stated that no logical or empirical evidence can be found to link the knowledge of a label such as short or long vowel with learning the correct sound.

Therefore, the purposes of the present study are: 1) to investigate whether or not children can use phonics as a tool in reading without knowing abstract terms; 2) to compare high and low level readers on their abilities to define phonics terms; 3) to compare high and low level readers on their abilities to apply phonics terms; and 4) to determine the relationship between the determination and application of phonics terms.

METHOD

The subjects in the study were 40 fourth-grade students chosen from a population of 152 students attending an elementary school near a large metropolitan area in the Southeast. Twenty students were randomly selected from fourth graders scoring at or above fourth year, fifth month (4.5) on the 3rd grade California Achievement Test, Form C, Level 13, and were designated as high level readers. Twenty students were randomly selected from fourth graders scoring at or below third year, fifth month (3.5) on the same California Achievement Test and were designated as low level readers.

Two instruments developed by Tovey (1980) were used to obtain data from the subjects. The first instrument, the Phonics Definition Instrument, was used to determine whether the subjects could correctly define selected phonics terms. Each was asked if he or she had ever heard of a particular phonics term. For example, the child might have been asked, "Have you ever heard of a vowel?" If the response was affirmative, the child was asked the meaning of the term, "Tell me what a vowel is." The oral response provided by the students were coded by the researchers on a data sheet. A definition was considered acceptable if minimal understanding of the term was express and this understanding was coded with a plus. A possible score of 18 correct responses could be obtained on the instrument.

A second instrument used in the study was the Phonics Application Instrument. Three items which tested knowledge of vowels, short vowels, and inflectional endings were added to the Tovey Application test since the original test measured only 15 of the 18 terms that were to be defined by the subjects. During the administration of the second instrument, each subject read nonsense words and completed items concerning phonics skills. All instructions were read aloud to the subjects. Responses were recorded by the researcher.

The test administration for each subject took approximately 15 minutes. During that time the items on the Phonics Definition Instrument were defined and the Phonics Application Instrument was administered. A tape recording was made of every testing session. The tapes were used to insure scoring accuracy and establish interrater reliability.

STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

Analysis of the data was computed in four areas. First, differences between the mean scores of all subjects on the instrument measuring the ability to define phonics terms and the instrument measuring the ability to apply phonics terms were examined by a correlated t-test. Second, an independent t-test was used to examine the differences between high level and low level readers' scores on the instrument measuring the ability to define phonics terms. Third, the differences between high and low level readers' scores on the instrument measuring phonics application were examined by an independent t-test. Finally, the relationship between students' knowledge of phonics terms and their ability to apply phonics terms was examined by the Pearson product-moment correlation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Children in the present study applied more phonics terms than they defined. The t-test applied to the mean scores of all subjects on the Phonics Definition Instrument and the Phonics Application Instrument revealed a significant difference.

Table 1
Difference Between Means on the Phonics Definition
Instrument and Phonics Application Instrument

Variable	Range	Mean	SD	t
Definition instrument	2 - 14	8	2.8	*10.4
Application instrument	6 - 17	12.8	2.5	

df = 39; *p < .001

Table 2
Difference Between Means on the Phonics Definition
Instrument for High and Low Level Readers

Variable	Range	Mean	SD	t
High Level Readers	5 - 14	9.5	2.6	*3.63
Low Level Readers	2 - 11	6.6	2.2	

df = 38; *p < .001

Table 3
Difference Between Means on the Phonics Application
Instrument for High Level and Low Level Readers

Variable	Range	Mean	SD	t
High level readers	10 - 17	14	1.4	*3.17
Low level readers	6 - 16	11.7	2.8	

df = 38; *p < .01

By way of elaboration, a few examples of contrast and comparison might be appropriate. The term consonant digraph, for instance, was not successfully defined by any child, yet 39 of the 40 subjects successfully pronounced words containing consonant digraphs. Furthermore, the term consonant blend was correctly defined by only 13 students, yet was applied correctly by 39 students. These findings support the research of Tovey (1980), who found that children could use sound/symbol relationships even when they could not define the terms involved. Also, children were able to learn phonics relationships without first learning phonics terms.

An explanation for the results above may be attributed to the reading instruction given to the students in classroom lessons. Teachers are presented with terms that are never taught to the students. The students are expected to master phonics skills even though the terms have not been presented.

The greater success of high level readers in defining phonics terms may be directly related to the level of reading instruction. A statistically significant *t* value was found between the mean scores of high level and low level readers on the Phonics Definition Instrument. The high level readers used as students had been exposed to terms like possessive, prefix, and suffix in the fourth-grade reading instruction. The students in the low level reading group had not received similar instruction. Consequently, the terms were familiar only to the high level readers. For example, 15 students in the high level group successfully defined the terms prefix and suffix, while only four students from the low level group correctly defined prefix and only three students defined suffix.

It is interesting to note that when the number of acceptable definitions familiar to both groups is compared, the differences lessen and, in some cases, reverse. The terms short vowel and final e rule were successfully defined by the same number of students in each group. More low level readers than high level readers successfully defined the term vowel and the term short vowel.

The difference in mean scores of high and low level readers on the Phonics Application Instrument was statistically significant. An explanation for this significance can be found in the research by Allington, who found the successful readers spend up to 95% of their formal reading instruction time practicing activities involving silent reading comprehension, oral reading with fluency, and oral reading with accuracy and self-correction. In other words, when students are exposed to large amounts of reading material, the conversion of isolated phonics skills into near-automatic responses is possible. High level readers see and hear phonics skills used correctly during almost all of their reading instruction time.

Conversely, Allington continues, low level readers spend only 5% of their time in formal reading instruction performing silent and oral reading activities. Generally, low level readers are instructed in tasks and drills which stress word recognition, word analysis, and visual discrimination. Obviously, low level readers have very little exposure to actual reading. They are often unable to see words as whole units or how words appear in sentences. They also experience difficulty in making the transition from studying the phonics skills in isolated units to the successful application of the skills in actual reading.

The finding that high level readers are able to apply phonics terms more successfully than low level readers tempts one to conclude that a student's ability to apply phonics terms correctly causes the student to be a high level reader. Weaver and Skonkoff (1979) feel that this relationship could be caused by other factors.

High level reading and the ability to apply phonics skills may be the result of cognitive ability, combined with a home environment where the importance of reading and other language skills is emphasized. If this environmental factor is valid, high level readers have the additional advantage of stimulation which can strengthen their reading abilities both outside and inside the school.

The results of the study confirm the relationship of high knowledge of phonics terms to the ability of successfully applying phonics terms and vice versa. A correlation of .44 was obtained between scores of all subjects on the instruments measuring phonics term definitions and phonics application ($df = 38$; $p < .01$). The correlation between phonics term knowledge and phonics application supports the research of Weaver and Skonkoff (1979). Although the teaching of phonics terms does not necessarily cause children to become good readers, phonics terms are useful labels in children's reading instruction. Awareness of phonics terms facilitates communication between teacher and the students during reading instruction. Students who understand phonics terms are more likely to receive and understand instruction in the area of phonics application.

The findings in the present study are supported by Tovey's research (1980) which found that children could use sound/symbol relationships (commonly called phonics skills) even when they couldn't define the terms involved. Also, children were able to learn phonics relationships without first learning phonics terms.

Two limitations inherent in the study must be identified. They are: (1) The procedure for student selection was not as powerful as it might have been had other performance variables such as teacher rating and current reading level been used in conjunction with the California Achievement Test scores;

(2) The present study made use of two recently developed instruments lacking reliability and validity. However, reliability coefficients were established during the research and both instruments were judged to have more than adequate face validity for the terms included.

Limitations notwithstanding, the authors feel that when teaching reading to students, the critical emphasis needs to be on knowledge of phonics usage, instead of memorization of phonics terms. Phonics skills can be learned as isolated sub-skills, but must be immediately practiced in actual reading. Teachers can best assist in the development of successful readers by providing students with large amounts of interesting reading material and encouragement to read.

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A LOOK AT THE FUTURE: TEACHERS IN NON-TRADITIONAL ADULT READING PROGRAMS

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Currently, the job market for those equipped to teach reading and reading related skills to older adolescents and adults in non-school settings is clearly changing and possibly expanding while the demand for teachers to teach only in traditional school-based settings is declining.

In the past, colleges and universities have regularly offered preservice and in-service coursework in reading instructional techniques for elementary and secondary teachers as a part of their teacher education offerings. Advanced work frequently is offered for teachers who want to specialize in reading instruction, but such training is generally intended to turn out specialists to teach remedial reading and to organize and supervise reading programs in typical elementary or secondary schools. Those employed to teach in adult basic education projects, high school equivalency programs, commercial reading improvement enterprises, vocational schools, training academies for firemen and policemen, or university reading and study improvement centers are usually personnel trained in traditional school approaches to reading instruction. However, these same traditional school-oriented reading teachers are now being found in even more divergent roles in the rapidly growing areas of business and industrial training and development. In these positions, teachers are expected to extrapolate from their school-based training and work experience to the designing and offering of reading instruction in settings that may require services that are markedly different from those required in traditional school-based programs.

Basis for Concern

There are several reasons for the resurgence of interest in non-traditional adult reading programs that justify comparing and contrasting such programs to traditional reading programs. A major one is the search for "new markets" on the part of teacher educators faced with a lessened demand for teachers because of dropping school enrollments. Additionally, there exists a widespread perception on the part of employers that a sizable proportion of their personnel are deficient in reading and related communication skills. As a result it is becoming more widely accepted that corporations must provide training to improve these

skills. Further, these corporations must orient those responsible for disseminating necessary information within the corporation as to the best methods for transmitting continuously changing technical information to those needing it for their jobs. To put it another way, in business and industry there is a concern with training lower level technicians to receive and process essential information accurately, while at the same time there is a recognition that the higher level management and technical development personnel need assistance in the preparation and effective presentation of information to those technicians on line or in the field. We are talking about a very close comparison here to the schools, where pupils are being taught to read while teachers are being helped to prepare and/or select instructional materials appropriate for these pupils. The instructional technology useful to teachers and to reading specialists can, in this way, be applicable in non-traditional adult reading programs.

It is speculative to argue that print literacy is on the decline in this country, but there is some support for that belief. There is, at the very least, a strong possibility that increasing segments of the population are turning away from lengthy involvement with printed matter and are finding the television screen a more attractive source of information as well as entertainment. Trend data for the last fifteen to twenty years have been used to support the contention that print literacy as traditionally defined is on the decline. Even though intensive teaching in early grades is resulting in children picking up coding features of print language better than previously, competition with print by electronic media is at least one factor contributing to holding down population achievement averages. In a future society with increasingly complex technology, other avenues for information transmittal may need to be used to augment or replace printed material. To the extent that printed communication may be perceived as more useful than other emerging communication media, training programs beyond the schools will need to be directed at teaching reading and writing skills as these relate to performance on specific jobs.

Education Versus Training

What are the basic differences between reading instruction in schools and that in non-traditional programs? The first important difference tends to be in the time frame. Schools have the luxury of years to develop reading and related skills. In adult programs, the time frame typically tends to be weeks or months. Secondly, in schools the learning outcomes tend to be general or global, with specific competencies and isolated skills presented en route to those broad objectives. Educators in schools see motivating or "real life" learning activities as a means of imparting skills that can be applied later on in a variety of higher educational, occupational, or adult role settings. In contrast, instructors in non-school settings are teaching direct application of learnings to meet immediately recognized job or role requirements. The characteristics of a lengthy time frame and broad learning objectives apply to education. The character-

istics of short time duration and highly specific learning objectives apply to what is generally called "training" rather than education. Reading teachers often fail to differentiate "educational" objectives from "training" objectives. This is certainly understandable if we keep in mind the heavy emphasis on "remedial reading" points of view which so permeate all school reading instruction. Remedial reading tends to follow a "training" model, since it usually is offered in shorter time frames and is aimed at highly specific learning outcomes rather than broad, general objectives. In schools, training efforts are perceived as short term interventions intended to contribute to the eventual accomplishment of broader, long term educational goals. "Getting the pupil's reading achievement up to grade level" is an example of a short term objective. The good intention behind the objective is that once attained, the pursuit of education can continue, without a handicapping condition.

In non-school settings, the training efforts are directed to an immediate and usually readily apparent goal. A common example would be to read the installation and maintenance manuals related to a job. Even in high school equivalency programs, training usually focuses on being able to score above the cut-offs on specified tests to the point that passing the tests becomes the immediate and readily apparent goal. In training programs, once the criterion objective is met, the program is completed for the learner. Usually little or no thought is given to how one training segment is related to others.

This limited contrasting of education and training is meant to support the claim that reading educators might have more than they realize to contribute to the preparation of planners and instructors for non-traditional adult reading programs. Conversely, a closer analysis of training programs conducted outside of school might well have implications for improving the quality of instructional efforts within the schools.

School-based Reading Technology and Non-traditional Programs

An expanding research literature has appeared in the seventies relating to the teaching of reading comprehension. The focus on comprehension is partly due to the increasingly widespread acceptance of a psycholinguistic point of view which conveys the strong belief that effective comprehension of printed text is the obvious goal in reading and that an extreme concern with sub-skills in the past has been counterproductive. Common sense reinforced by years of field studies establishes that comprehension efficiency can be improved in specific fields, in specific tasks, or in specific roles, if reading instruction and practice are directed toward specific fields, specific tasks, or specific roles. If increased efficiency in reading science materials is wanted, directed practice in the reading of science materials is needed. If increased efficiency in reading newspapers is wanted, directed practice in the reading of newspapers is needed. If increased efficiency in reading recipes is wanted, directed practice in reading recipes is needed. The return obtainable on an investment in teaching time and energy is, apparently, directly related to

how narrowly we focus on the type of reading we want our students to do. Many educators have awakened to this realization as a consequence of their attempts to prepare pupils to pass state mandated minimum competency tests. Eighth graders reading at what might generally be considered a third grade level can be taught to pass eighth grade tests in specific content or skill areas much more effectively by teaching them to read content closely related to the test items rather than by attempting to teach them general reading skills as the means to cope with the tests. The competent reading teacher, while teaching the vocabulary and concepts relevant to the test, can also be incidentally improving word analysis skills and imparting comprehension strategies which are applicable more broadly than to the specific test content alone. Such competence on the part of a reading teacher requires much more of the teacher than a mechanistic dependence on commercially available materials or a slavish commitment to programmed phonics sequences.

In spite of a general acceptance of the principle that reading comprehension efficiency tends to be specific to the prior practice and experience of the learner, a major concern of the research on comprehension is to establish what generalizable strategies can be taught to pupils that are transferrable to a wide variety of reading types. The findings regarding generalizable strategies tend to indicate that these strategies are not ordinarily picked up inductively and transferred from one reading situation to another but must be modeled, practiced, and repeatedly demonstrated to be applicable in varied types of material. A commonly taught strategy of this type is SQ3R or a derivative. Related strategies would include using topic sentences in the search for main ideas, using outlining principles, specifying pronoun referents, systematically identifying and using parenthetical explanations, explicating semantic principles through semantic mapping, anticipating coming events and predicting outcomes, relating newly read-about events and experiences to older ones, and practicing paraphrasing, abstracting and summarizing. Practice in using text-provided cueing systems is also common, including the use of such things as tables of contents, topical subheadings, topical overviews, summaries, tables, and other illustrations.

The proficient reading teacher in a school setting doubtless has polished a number of technical competencies that are applicable to non-traditional adult reading settings. Skill at examining reading behavior and perceiving with strengths are operating and what weaknesses are evident comes out of continuous application of informal reading observation and recording techniques. A sense of what readers can handle without teacher direction or being able to assess how much preparatory help and the nature of preparation to insure efficient reading comes from experiences with reading observations and from insights gained through working with a wide variety of learners. A practical knowledge of the principles of estimating reading difficulty with implications for selecting materials, adapting available materials or writing suitable text material, and preparing instructional plans designed to achieve a high level of mastery is another set of technical competencies that the school reading teacher can bring to bear

in a non-traditional adult reading program. As indicated before, the ability to review and teach word analysis principles almost without learner awareness, while the principal focus is on obtaining the meaning from textual material, is another major competency that an experienced reading teacher can bring to bear in teaching older adolescents and adults in non-school settings.

In, indeed, the definition of literacy needs broadening and the vehicles of information transmitting are increasingly going beyond print materials, the reading teacher can play a large role in assisting in the preparation of instructional materials. At the very least, the experienced reading teacher ought to be able to assist in matching materials and the medium for presenting information to a given set of learners. Reading technology can help in determining whether certain information can be presented in printed text to a given audience and can aid in selecting the most efficient means for presenting that information in print. By the same token, reading technology will be called into play increasingly to help determine whether modes of presentation other than print are likely to be more appropriate for a target audience. These modes of presentation often tend to be more costly than print, but where learning efficiency is the salient criterion, it may be necessary to go to these other modes. In such an event, a competent reading teacher has the technical skill to render a judgment as to whether the print medium is appropriate or to sample the population reading skills as a basis for making such a determination.

Emerging Technology

Television over the last thirty years has been seen by some as a definite deterrent in the acquisition of high level print literacy on the part of the general population. The early promise was that television would broaden and deepen experiential and language background, build meaning vocabularies, and motivate widescale interest in books and printed matter. It is apparent that, for whatever reasons, it has not lived up to this promise. However, it might well be that the cathode ray tube (CRT) or television screen coupled with the microcomputer will trigger a return to a form of print literacy that is altogether different from what was commonly conceptualized in the past. Books may go out of vogue but print communication may survive as a consequence of its use on video screens. The probability is that the CRT coupled with the microcomputer will become not only an instrument of communication but will develop into an instructional device in language (reading and writing) that offers a flexibility and power unequalled by any instructional materials or programs ever before available.

We have yet to see reading instructional programs available on cost efficient microcomputers that compare with some of the multi-mode simulation programs available on main frame computers such as simulation trainers for airline pilots, for example. There is no reason to assume, however, that comparable programs in reading instruction will not be available by the end of the decade. Microcomputers utilizing disc collections and tied to cable tele-

vision networks can offer the advantages of main frame computer networks at far less cost and far greater access to users.

Hopefully, it will be reading teacher educators and reading teachers trained and experienced in school reading instructional programs who ultimately influence the development of (or develop themselves) the best of these computer-based materials. But, it is going to be those reading teacher educators and reading teachers who have had an awareness all along of what goes on outside traditional school-based reading instructional programs who play a significant part in these future developments.

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READING PROGRAM EVALUATION: A PLAN FOR EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION

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In recent years schools have increasingly been faced with the question of accountability. Parents, as well as the general public, are concerned about the quality of instruction which is currently being provided, often noting the decrease in standardized test scores nationally as a primary indicator of fundamental problems in education. Nowhere has this concern been more evident than in the area of reading instruction. Current reading practices and procedures are frequently cited as being ineffective and unworkable. The slogan "return to the basics" is a rallying cry heard throughout the land. In response to these criticisms, schools have found themselves being placed on the defensive with increased importance being given to various forms of curriculum evaluation.

These approaches to measuring the quality of a reading program have taken various formats. Typically they often include faculty questionnaires, limited classroom observations, and a review of student reading achievement scores on standardized tests. Frequently there is also the use of the results of a basic skills test as a determination of reading program quality. While each of these procedures has some degree of merit they often produce very superficial findings. Superficial in the sense that data obtained in this manner does not necessarily reflect the actual quality of the reading instruction taking place in each individual classroom. For this information to be obtained in a meaningful manner there must be active involvement of each staff member at each level. In essence what is being suggested here is for self-evaluation of the part of the teaching staff to be a major component of any reading program evaluation. We will outline a program for implementing this concept.

Program for Change

All too frequently a reading program evaluation is something which is mandated by the administration of a school. This is done in an atmosphere which leaves very little opportunity for individual teachers to actively participate in the process. It almost seems that the primary goal is to collect the most easily obtainable data in the fastest possible manner. What is being suggested here, as an alternate approach, is one that while it may take longer and does not rely as heavily on specific data collection, still gives a school a very accurate measure of their current efforts in reading instruction.

Establishing the Setting or Atmosphere for Change

Perhaps the single most important factor and also one of the most difficult to achieve is the establishment of an appropriate atmosphere in which a reading program evaluation can take place. This is a critically important step because if there is not the appropriate preparation done before the evaluation process begins much of what follows will often be less than effective. In helping to develop the best possible atmosphere for change, the following issues should probably be thoughtfully discussed by all those who are to participate.

1. Both the teachers and the administrators are in agreement as to the reasons for conducting an evaluation of the current reading program in a school.
2. The value of the individual classroom teacher should be recognized as being the most important aspect of any successful reading program.
3. For a reading evaluation to have any merit it must be primarily a self-evaluation by the teaching staff, both as individuals and as a group.
4. The faculty members must assume the responsibility for the openness and candor needed in the evaluation process.
5. On completion of the reading program evaluation each classroom teacher must be willing to honestly consider suggested changes (Robinson & Hulett, 1980, p. 2).

Once there is fundamental agreement as to the reasons and the purposes for the reading program evaluation, the actual process can begin.

Collection of Formal and Informal Information for Change

Traditionally, schools have tended to rely very heavily on the use of standardized reading test results as a single measure of their effectiveness in reading instruction. While these scores do indicate general trends, particularly in large groups of students, they often have limited value when used by an individual school or district for determining local changes to be made in a reading program. Instead, the use of a variety of self-evaluation techniques may give a much more accurate picture of what is actually taking place in the local school's reading efforts. Questionnaires such as in Appendices I & II have been developed to collect this type of information. Hopefully, if the appropriate atmosphere for change has been established the participating faculty will answer the questions with candor and openness.

Motivation for Change

Unfortunately, most of us who have participated in reading program evaluations in the past are well acquainted with what often happens at this point. Once the information, both formal and informal has been gathered, a report is written and then put aside rather than being used. Regardless of the amount of information gathered and reported in various ways, it will be ineffective

until teachers are motivated to consider these results in relation to what is currently taking place in their classrooms.

One of the most useful approaches for motivating teachers to change is simply to allow ample opportunity for interaction and discussion about the reading evaluation results. It is frequently the case that teachers become aware of common problems and concerns for the first time as a result of these discussions. Rather than feel alone, they now realize others may share the same worry. In addition, not only are problems discussed but often workable solutions are also created. The simple knowledge that they are not alone in having problems with reading instruction is often sufficient motivation for change.

These discussion periods between teachers are so vital a part of the evaluation process they need to be scheduled by the administration in much the same manner as teachers' meetings. The degree to which effective communication takes place during these periods will largely determine the success or eventual failure of the entire reading program evaluation. Appendix III is an example of a form which can be used during these discussion periods to indicate current as well as future changes.

Once an effective program for change in a reading curriculum is established, evaluation becomes a continuing process of self-examination and improvement, rather than a one time experience. Information on the current status of reading instruction can be obtained in an effective and realistic manner. It is often the result of a reading program evaluation of this type which shows clearly how well a school is actually doing in the development of children's reading. Rather than being a negative experience this approach to program evaluation is both an encouraging as well as a positive process for change.

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APPENDIX I

Current Reading Program Assessment
(Please answer on separate piece of paper)

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

1. How many years have you taught?
2. What grade levels or subject areas?
3. How many courses in the teaching of reading have you had?
4. If you remember the titles of these courses
or their content, please list.
5. How long have you taught in your present school?
6. How long have you taught at your present grade level?

Appendix I (continued)

READING PROGRAM INFORMATION

7. Briefly summarize your feelings about the current conditions of the reading program in your school system. Indicate strengths and weaknesses of these efforts.
8. Please define the word, "reading."
9. What do you feel is the primary cause of reading disability in children? Briefly explain your answer.
10. What do you feel is the single biggest problem you have in teaching children to read?

READING MATERIALS

11. What is the primary basal series used in your class? (list the company name)
12. What other basal materials are available for your use? (list the company names)
13. What other reading materials are available for your use?

_____ kits	_____ library books in
_____ Reading machines	classroom (how many?)
_____ other	_____ Newspapers
(specify _____)	
14. Do you feel you have adequate materials for the teaching of reading in your classroom?
15. If not, what additional materials would you like to have?

APPENDIX II

Teacher Self-Inventory of Classroom

Reading Practices

The following teacher inventory is intended to encourage you to think about your own classroom efforts in the area of reading instruction. While general in nature, each statement is designed to assist you in thinking about specific aspects of your own classroom reading program. As you consider each statement try to recall how you structure your teaching of reading to meet the stated goal or objective.

The ten statements which follow are frequently made about teacher practices in effective reading programs. Indicate by circling the appropriate number the extent to which your classroom reading program shows each characteristic or practice. If it is found almost always in your classroom, circle "1." If it is found most of the time, circle "2." If found sometimes, circle "3." If it is found very seldom or never, circle "4." If you are undecided, circle "5." If you think this characteristic or practice is not desirable, then circle "6." As a reminder, the rating scale is presented here

- | | |
|--------------------|-------------------|
| 1—almost always | 4—seldom or never |
| 2—most of the time | 5—undecided |
| 3—sometimes | 6—not desirable |

Appendix II (continued)

- I. The ultimate goal of my classroom reading program is to show each child the value of reading in their personal lives as both a source of information and as a valuable recreational pursuit. 1 2 3 4 5 6
- II. In all my reading activities I respect the self-image and individual worth of each child. 1 2 3 4 5 6
- III. I know the objectives and goals of the total reading program in my school and the role my efforts contribute to this effort. 1 2 3 4 5 6
- IV. My classroom reading program reflects an understanding of the fact that reading is closely related to the other language arts—writing, speaking, and listening. 1 2 3 4 5 6
- V. I am aware and respect the differences in each of my students, adjusting reading instruction to meet these individual needs. 1 2 3 4 5 6
- VI. The use of reading materials in my classroom reflects a thorough understanding on my part of their content and the place they have in a total reading program. 1 2 3 4 5 6
- VII. My reading instruction reflects a belief about the reading process as being a personal search for meaning rather than just the mastery of isolated skills. 1 2 3 4 5 6
- VIII. The child experiencing difficulty in learning to read is provided with the appropriate instruction whether it is in the classroom or with a special teacher. 1 2 3 4 5 6
- IX. I am enthusiastic about my reading instruction and am open to suggestions and new ideas related to the classroom activities. 1 2 3 4 5 6

APPENDIX III

Implications of the Reading Program Evaluation

Based on the review of the information collected about your school's total reading program and discussion with your fellow teachers concerning common problems, complete the following:

1. What are the major strengths and weaknesses identified through the evaluation process about the current reading program?

Appendix III (continued)

2. How do these conclusions relate to the efforts in your classroom reading instruction?
3. What implications or changes are you considering in your daily reading instruction based on the results of this evaluation? Specific areas which might be noted include:

	Does not need Changing	Needs to be Improved	Expected time needed for Change
Basal reading program	_____	_____	_____
Comprehension	_____	_____	_____
Content Area Reading	_____	_____	_____
Recreational Reading	_____	_____	_____
Study Skills	_____	_____	_____
Language arts (writing, speaking, listening)	_____	_____	_____
Individualized Instruction (gifted, average, and remedial readers)	_____	_____	_____
Classroom reading organization	_____	_____	_____
Reading evaluation (formal and informal)	_____	_____	_____
Other (specify)	_____	_____	_____

VOCABULARY SCAVENGER HUNTS: A SCHEME FOR SCHEMA DEVELOPMENT

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There are in education some accepted "truths" which are generally believed by teachers. There are also some "truths" based on research findings. Occasionally these two separate entities come together, and we have the rare occurrence of a truth generally believed by teachers and overwhelmingly supported by empirical research. One of these rare occurrences of truth accepted by both teachers and researchers is that what you know about something determines how much you will comprehend when reading about that topic. Teachers refer to this prior knowledge as "background experience." Researchers use the term "schema" and have demonstrated empirically the crucial role in reading comprehension which this prior knowledge plays.

Now, your background of experience or schema for a particular topic includes both general knowledge of that topic and specific word meanings. If you are about to read something about "Weather," for example, you reach into your mind and pull out your "folder of information" about weather. This folder contains general knowledge of the topic "Weather"—different weather is generally associated with different seasons; weather affects how people live; weather can be very destructive. Your mental weather folder also contains meanings for weather-related words such as celcius, temperature, farenheit, humidity. As you read about "Weather," you check to see what general information you already have stored in your mind and you add a thing or two. The stored word meanings allow you to comprehend what you are reading, and you may add a new word meaning or broaden a word meaning you already have.

Imagine now that you are faced with the task of reading and comprehending this passage:

The centroid solution involves placing the first reference axis through the centroid of the configuration of vectors; obtaining a table of residual correlations, which are subject to certain adjustments; placing the second factor through the centroid corresponding to the table of residual correlations; and continuing the process until the magnitude of the residuals can be considered inconsequential.

(Ferguson, 1971, p. 416)

Can you cover the passage and explain it in your own words? If not, why not? Did you go looking in your brain for your folder of information about centroids and find an empty folder? Perhaps you don't even have a folder of information started for this important topic. Could you start one based on this passage?

For years teachers have known that you had to build background of experience before reading if children were to be able to understand and store in memory the information read. Teachers have also known that the best way to build this background of experience was to provide real experiences. Thus, teachers have taken children on field trips to farms and factories and have helped children develop general information and specific word meanings as they had this direct experience with the topic under study. When visits outside the classroom were impossible, teachers have gathered people and objects and brought them into the classroom. For those topics where the children could not be taken to the real thing nor could the real thing be brought to them, teachers have relied on pictures—films, filmstrips, photographs and illustrations. Teachers have long intuited that this indirect visual experience was "the next best thing to being there."

There's only one difficulty that teachers express with providing objects and pictures of objects to help children develop general information and word meanings for a topic under study. This difficulty relates to the vast investment of time teachers must spend in rounding up these objects and pictures. Vocabulary scavenger hunts are ways of gathering objects and pictures related to a topic under study in which the students, NOT the teacher, do the hunting and gathering. The Reading Teacher (Vaughan, Crawley and Mountain, 1979) introduced vocabulary scavenger hunts as a multiple-modality approach to word study. The approach is even handier, however, as a scheme for schema development.

Imagine that you are about to begin a science unit on weather. You look through the text your children are going to read, preview films, filmstrips and other teaching aids, and make a list of the unfamiliar vocabulary you will teach as you increase their store of information on the topic of weather. Your list includes the words evaporation, condensation, cirrus clouds, stratus clouds, precipitation, temperature, humidity, barometer, thermometer, cyclone, tornado, hurricane, meteorologist, wind vane, rain gauge and a variety of other words.

Of these words, some can be represented by pictures and objects (direct experience). Other words such as evaporation, condensation, precipitation, temperature, and humidity cannot be represented directly or indirectly. Take all the words on your list which can be represented by pictures or objects cirrus clouds, cumulus clouds, stratus clouds, barometer, thermometer, cyclone, tornado, hurricane, meteorologist, wind vane, rain gauge and add to these some familiar, picturable words related to the topic of weather such as snow, ice, lightning, fog, rainbow until you have a list of 15-25 picturable words which relate to the topic of weather. You now have your list of things for which your students will scavenge!

Before you hand out the first set of words, be sure that your students understand what a scavenger hunt is. Some of them will already know, but for others your vocabulary scavenger hunt may be a "first."

One sixth grader, when asked about her previous scavenger hunt experience, told the class, "It was on a church picnic. The leader gave everybody the same list of things to find--acorns and leaves and stuff. I read my list, and I decided which things would be easy to find and which things would be hard to find. Then the leader divided us into teams. My team captain asked me which things I could find, and he put my name down for those things. The other people said what they could find, and away we went. My team brought in everything on the list, so we won the scavenger hunt." (Mountain and Vaughan, 1979)

When you divide your class into teams, you will want the groups to be heterogeneous. Ideally, each group should include at least one good reader to help the other students read unfamiliar words and one good leader to keep the group moving productively through discussion of the words and assignment of "who brings in what". With one good reader and one good leader, each group can comfortably absorb some students who will profit from peer help. Also, spreading around your strong students enables the groups to compete on an evenly matched basis, since no one team has all the top students.

Assign your students to teams of five or six, and provide each team with the list. Explain that in a week the teams are to bring in a picture and/or object representing as many of the items on the list as they can find. To the students' inevitable question, "How can I bring in a hurricane?" your response will be, "You can bring in a picture of a hurricane." Two points are given for each object and one point for each picture. Pictures can be illustrations, photographs, tracings, or drawings as long as they actually represent the word.

Allow the teams time to discuss what the different words mean and who might be able to find an object and/or picture representing each. Of course, if some of the words are truly unfamiliar to your students, a question such as "What's a rain gauge?" will arise. Depending on the maturity of your students and on whether this is their first or their tenth scavenger hunt, you may choose to respond by explaining what each word means or by saying, "I guess you will have to look it up somewhere. It's hard to find a picture or an object which represents something if you don't know what that something is." This response should send your teams to their dictionaries or other reference sources.

Allow the teams to meet several times during the week they are scavenging. They should check things off the list as pictures and objects are found. Do not, however, allow any pictures or objects to come to school before the appointed date. Teams should be cautioned to keep secret what they have found and where they found it. On the appointed day each team should assemble and show their pictures and objects. The teacher should total the points for each team (two per object, one per picture--only one picture or object per word per team). The team with the most points is the winner.

Now winners like to get a prize—and what better prize than being allowed to create the bulletin board. "What bulletin board?" you ask. Why, the weather bulletin board, of course. You certainly are not going to let all these pictures go to waste! The winning team should design the bulletin board so that each word is printed in large letters and the different pictures which represent it are displayed with the word. The artistic design of the bulletin board is simple since it is determined by categorizing the words—types of clouds, weather instruments, storms, etc. (Any word without a picture might be displayed by its lonely self—challenge to someone to find a picture).

"What about the objects?" you ask. Well, any objects which are valuable, dangerous, or alive, must, of course, be taken back home. But the rest can be displayed on the table you push underneath the bulletin board. Naturally, you will need in big bold letter someplace: Weather Bulletin Board Created by Winners of Weather Scavenger Hunt and the names of all the proud winners.

You are now ready to begin your unit on Weather. What's more important—your students are now ready. Having spent the last week or two collecting objects and pictures related to the topic of weather has increased their general knowledge of that topic. Perhaps they talked to the local meteorologist or watched the weather report or even read and intriguing section of the reference book from which they traced their picture of cirrus clouds.

You have increased their interest in the topic of weather. You also have this marvelous bulletin board with representations of the portion of your meaning vocabulary words which can be represented by objects and pictures. Some of your meaning vocabulary which could not be directly or indirectly represented can be easily understood with reference to the pictures and objects. Precipitation is a form of moisture such as rain or snow. Temperature is measured with thermometers.

Now that the children have enjoyed their first scavenger hunt and have begun their actual study of weather, what next? Well, perhaps you plan to study Mexico in social studies soon and your Mexico topic includes such words as pinata, pyramids, castanets, and tacos; or maybe you are developing a topical word-set on animals with one of your reading groups, and words such as polar bears, cobras, and gerbils are part of that topical word set. The children will certainly be ready for another scavenger hunt and, this time, having learned how to hunt for objects and pictures and how to find out what unfamiliar words mean and working to create the next bulletin board, they will be much more ready to get right to work on locating these representations.

It's easy to add variety to your vocabulary scavenger hunt by changing your methods of grouping your teams. Consider these possibilities:

1. Grouping by Initial of Last Name

The randomness of the alphabetical listing of students in your gradebook usually insures that your groups will be somewhat heterogeneous if you divide your class into three or four teams by the last initial (A—H, I—P, etc.).

2. Grouping by color of Clothing

A quick glance around the room will tell you whether you could get evenly matched teams by saying, "Everyone wearing blue jeans will be on Team 1. If you're wearing brown pants, you'll be on Team 2. Everyone else is Team 3."

3. Grouping by Month of Birthday

After the first couple of vocabulary scavenger hunts, you will want to develop new leaders. So you might take a chance on grouping all the people with January, February, and March birthdays together, even if that group doesn't contain one of your established leaders.

(Mountain and Vaughan)

To field-test vocabulary scavenger hunts as a scheme for schema development, nine teachers in a metropolitan school district volunteered to try the vocabulary scavenger hunt strategy, as described, with three third-grade classes, three fourth-grade classes, and three fifth-grade classes. Each teacher designed four or five word lists to correlate with material she was teaching in the content areas (e.g., nutrition, holidays, transportation, clothing, weather). The total number of words presented by each teacher during the ten weeks of the field test ranged from 77 to 84. The average was 80.

Each teacher designed a simple pretest/posttest instrument to ascertain her pupils' familiarity with the scavenger hunt words. The test offered a multiple choice selection of a category for each word, as follows:

- | | | | |
|------------|---------|----------|-----------|
| 1. turban | (a) hat | (b) coat | (c) shoes |
| 2. oxfords | (a) hat | (b) coat | (c) shoes |

.....

.....

- | | | | |
|-----------------|-----------------|--------------|------------------|
| 25. goblin | (a)Thanksgiving | (b)Halloween | (c) Columbus Day |
| 26. Santa Maria | (a)Thanksgiving | (b)Halloween | (c) Columbus Day |

The percentage gains in class means from pretest to posttest ranged from 19 to 33 percentage points. The average gain was 25 points.

These field-test numbers, however, tell only a small fraction of the vocabulary scavenger hunt story, according to the reports from the teachers. The vocabulary gains were desirable, of course, but they were only a minor part of the major benefits connected with the scavenger hunt approach. The teachers identified these three major benefits: (1) time was saved; (2) students were motivated; and (3) comprehension was enhanced. During the weeks of these field tests, the nine teachers invested no time at all in hunting for visual aids and realia. Their students were motivated to do the whole job for them—with enthusiasm. The students were also able to do a better job of comprehending their reading material, since the scavenger hunt experiences had put some content words into their mental file folders.

The teachers felt that the bulletin boards and display tables

were excellent instructional aids. Categorizing the words and pictures for display gave pupils an awareness of the structure of the topic. They were better able to write about the topic with the words in easy view. Starting with a "factstorming" list of words is a good procedure for incorporating schema theory into a writing approach to reading comprehension (Hennings, 1982).

The schema research (Guthrie, 1978) that supports vocabulary scavenger hunts points up a truth which teachers hold to be self-evident—that the more you know about a subject, the better you can comprehend what you read about that subject. Another self-evident (and research-evident) truth related to vocabulary scavenger hunts is that tactile and high visual-imagery experiences are beneficial to comprehension (Paivio, 1971; Bower, 1972; Wolpert, 1972), so the hands-on approach to gathering pictures and objects is educationally sound. In short, both theory and practice suggest that vocabulary scavenger hunts are an instructional strategy worth trying in your classroom.

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USING A THEMATIC PRE-ORGANIZER AND GUIDED INSTRUCTION AS AIDS TO CONCEPT LEARNING

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Researchers have investigated various instructional methods which are developed to foster reading comprehension and provide transfer of content learning. Two strategies designed to improve reading comprehension are pre-organizers and guided instruction. Prereading techniques develop concepts of the passage prior to reading and set a purpose for reading. Guided study activities elicit students' responses to a series of statements or questions which are presented prior to, during, and/or after reading. These strategies rely upon the learner's existing knowledge and readiness to cope with the conceptual level of the textual reading passage. This study investigated whether the use of a thematic pre-organizer with statements related to an implied thematic concept and guided instruction exercise on the same concept would lead to increased reading comprehension.

Background

Instructional strategies which relate the learner's existing knowledge to new information by establishing a cognitive mind set prior to a reading selection reflect Ausubel's (1959) developmental definition of the concept of readiness. Written overviews, outlines, and/or summaries comprise the prevalent introductory methods used in units and chapters of study within textbooks. Teacher imposed strategies designed to formulate conceptual awareness prior to reading include advance organizers (Ausubel, 1960, 1968), structured outlines (Glynn & DiVesta, 1977), and structured overviews (Barron, 1969; Earle, 1969; Earle & Barron, 1973).

The use of thematic statements prior to a textual reading have also been investigated. Studies by Adams (1977), Adams & Collins (1977), Bransford & Johnson (1972), Bransford & McCarrel (1974), and Dooling & Lachman (1971), indicate that the use of thematic titles increases comprehension of the presented graphic or verbal materials prior to reading or hearing the passage. These studies have demonstrated that when learners are given a purpose determined by the contextual situation or guided by their own intentions, that these learners tend to recall more information relating to the presented materials.

The purpose of a guided instruction exercise is to evoke

responses to statements or questions pertaining to a selected passage. Guides are used when the organization and conceptual framework of a reading needs to be clarified. Guided instruction exercises have varied in their formats (e.g., Cunningham & Shablak, 1975; Herber, 1978; Tutolo, 1977).

Previous studies have not investigated how guided instruction affects reading comprehension when the guide presents only the implied concept of the passage with written statements at the interpretive mode. Mixed findings in the effectiveness of pre-organizers and guided instruction activities to develop inferential comprehension coupled with the need to conduct more research within a classroom setting (Alvarez, 1981; Gagne' & White, 1978); Herber, 1979) established the basis for this study.

Purpose of Study

A major premise of this exploratory study was that the presentation of thematic concepts and critical attributes of those concepts prior to and during reading would increase reading comprehension. In this study, a thematic concept was defined as the main topic about which the textual passage is written. It is usually an implied concept or one that is stated but ill-defined. It was believed that the process of connecting the main theme of the textual passage with the reader's existing knowledge, experiential background, and specific reading abilities could be initiated through the use of a thematic pre-organizer intended to clarify or expand the primary concept in a textual passage, and reinforced through the use of a theme related guided instructional exercise. The thematic pre-organizer is like Ausubel's (1960, 1968) advance organizer in that it acts as an "anchoring" force for the learning passage by serving as a "bridge" between the learner's present knowledge and the knowledge to be gained from the passage. It differs from the advance organizer in that it is written on a level commensurate with the learner's comprehension and reading abilities.

The second instructional method investigated in this study was the use of guided instruction. The guided instruction exercise consisted of inferential statements which were to be read prior to the textual passage. These statements referred to the implied thematic concept in the selected textual passage.

Specifically, this study investigated the effects of guiding the learner through a textual passage by employing a thematic pre-organizer, guided instruction exercise or a combination of these two procedures. It was the intent of this study to determine whether any of the treatments had a differential effect on student responses when compared to a text reading treatment. These differences were measured by asking the subjects questions and determining whether their responses were literal (answering a question directly from the selected reading passage) or inferred (answering question by interpreting, generalizing, or drawing conclusions from the selected reading passage).

METHOD

Subjects and Sampling Procedures

The sample for this study consisted of 50 ninth grade subjects with average reading ability, who were attending either an urban or rural junior high school in northern West Virginia. All subjects whose scores were within the fourth, fifth, or sixth stanine on the Reading Comprehension subtest of the Comprehensive Tests of Basic Skills (CTBS), Form S, 1973, were selected for possible inclusion in the study. They were then stratified on the basis of stanine scores and were randomly assigned to five groups. Each group consisted of ten subjects. One group served as a prior knowledge quasi-control comparison group. Each subject in this group was individually interviewed using the same questions that were asked of the other subjects in this study to determine their prior knowledge with the designated implied concept (polarization of opinions). None of the subjects in this group showed prior knowledge with this concept. It was then determined that the remaining forty subjects would serve as the experimental groups (thematic pre-organizer plus guided instruction, thematic pre-organizer, guided instruction, and textual passage).

Examiners

All treatment sessions were conducted under the direction of examiners who were trained to follow a highly structured set of procedures for presenting treatment and conducting the post treatment interview. Each examiner became familiar with the materials and procedures that each treatment group received. Examiners were assigned to three different treatment groups in predetermined random order.

Materials

The instructional materials consisted of: (1) a textual passage; (2) a thematic pre-organizer; and (3) a guided instruction exercise. The textual passage consisted of a two page section of a chapter in the social studies textbook Rise of the American Nation, Heritage Edition: Vol. 1 (Todd & Curti, 1977, pp. 191-192). The title "The role of political parties in American government" preceded the selection. The textual passage contained highly detailed information concerning the designated concept, "polarization of opinions," and contained 632 words.

The thematic pre-organizer and the guided instruction exercise were prepared by the investigator. For this study, the preorganizer consisted by three written paragraphs which defined the implied concept of the passage and related this concept to the theme of the passage. It was developed to clarify or elaborate upon the primary concept in the textual passage.

The thematic pre-organizer was developed as follows: The first paragraph introduced the concept to be studied. For example, situations which described how opinions are formed (e.g., which subjects we like or dislike, who will win the football game) with examples of "polarized" opinions were presented. The second paragraph was designed to elaborate upon the thematic concept (polarization of opinions) and relate the concept to the theme of the

passage. For this experiment, the second paragraph explained that the formation of political parties in America after the American Revolution caused a polarization of opinions. The third paragraph presented a concise message of what was to be comprehended upon completion of the reading. It read as follows:

You will read statements about two Americans, Alexander Hamilton and Thomas Jefferson, and their views on forming political parties. As you read each person's opinions regarding political parties, try to pinpoint what you believe to be the most serious areas of polarization of opinions between Alexander Hamilton and Thomas Jefferson.

The guided instruction exercise contained statements designed to facilitate comprehension of the selected concept implied within the textual passage. Example statements included: (1) The overall membership, between the Federalist and Republican party, differed with regards to money and occupation, (2) Alexander Hamilton and Thomas Jefferson had a major polarization of opinion over the issue of federal versus state control of the government. Subjects were directed to indicate whether they agreed or disagreed with the statements.

Procedures

The four experimental groups received the same textual passage. In addition, each group was given a different combination of the same thematic pre-organizer and guided instruction exercise. Time was held constant across treatments and each subject was given an individual oral interview following the treatment. The textual passage group served as the comparison group.

Subjects in group one received treatment involving a thematic pre-organizer plus a guided instruction exercise that was used in conjunction with the textual passage. The examiner distributed the thematic pre-organizer and informed the subjects that they would be given four minutes to read and study the thematic pre-organizer. The examiner collected the thematic pre-organizer and distributed the textual passage and guided instruction exercise. The examiner asked the subjects to read the directions appearing on the guided instruction exercise silently, while s/he read them aloud. The subjects were directed to read the seven statements and then read the passage. After they read the passage, they were directed to read the statements again, and to place a check mark on the numbered line if they agreed, or to leave it blank if they disagreed with the statement. They were directed to give reasons to support their position, and to refer to the reading selection as often as they wished. The subjects were told that they had twenty minutes to read and study the textual passage and complete the guided instruction exercise. When the time had elapsed, the examiner collected the textual passage and the guided instruction exercise from each subject.

Subjects in group two were given the thematic pre-organizer and the textual passage only. The examiner informed the subjects that they would be given four minutes to read and study the thematic pre-organizer. The examiner collected the thematic pre-organizer

and distributed the textual passage. The subjects were instructed that they had twenty minutes to read and study the textual passage after which the examiner collected the textual passage from each subject.

Subjects in group three were given the guided instruction exercise that accompanied the textual passage. The examiner distributed the textual passage and the guided instruction exercise and followed the same procedure during this portion of the experiment as described in group one. The subjects in this group were given twenty-four minutes to read and study the textual passage and complete the guided instruction exercise before the examiner collected the textual passage and the guided instruction exercise from each subject.

Subjects in group four were given the textual passage only. This group served as the comparison for groups one, two, and three. The examiner distributed the textual passage to the subjects and informed them that they had twenty-four minutes to read and study the textual passage. When the time had elapsed, the examiner collected the textual passage from each subject.

Instrumentation

A rating scale was constructed by the investigator as a method to record and classify the number of literal and inferred responses of each subject during the interview portion of the experiment. Idea units were written and classified by the investigator as being either literal or inferred. These idea units corresponded to the information appearing in the textual reading passage and with the implied designated concept under study. These units were listed on the rating scale for the interviewer to record each subject's responses.

This instrument was evaluated for content validity by a panel of five judges who independently reviewed and verified the items appearing on the scale after reading and studying the textual passage under study.

Interview and Recording Procedures

All interview sessions were recorded on audiotape to allow for later analysis and classification by the examiner. This procedure also provided a means for the clarification of any uncertainties in rating unexpected responses.

At the beginning of each interview, an open ended question was presented by the examiner which reflected the thematic concept of the textual passage. The first question asked of the subject was: "Will you explain the idea of polarization of opinions?" After the responses were recorded, the subject was then asked the second question: "Will you explain how the political views of Alexander Hamilton and Thomas Jefferson were polarized?" Each unaided response was recorded on the rating scale. For example, if the subject mentioned that Thomas Jefferson disagreed with Alexander Hamilton's political beliefs or that Jefferson favored a weak federal government, then the examiner would check these two statements as being literal since that information appeared directly in the textual passage.

If this same subject inferred that Alexander Hamilton was an elitist and that a loose interpretation of the U.S. Constitution would benefit Hamilton's political beliefs, then the examiner would check these two statements as being inferred since that information was derived by implying a polarization of opinion between Thomas Jefferson and Alexander Hamilton. The literal and inferred responses for each subject were then analyzed and tallied. Upon completion of this task, each examiner's ratings were compared to establish the extent of inter-rater reliability. The resultant coefficient was $r = .93$.

RESULTS

Statistical Analysis

Separate one-way analyses of variance were used in determining the effect of the treatment variable upon the literal and inferred response mode of the second interview question. All null hypotheses associated with the research questions were tested at the .05 alpha level. The mean number of literal and inferred responses for each of the four experimental groups is presented in Table 1.

Table 1
MEAN NUMBER OF LITERAL AND
INFERRED RESPONSES ACROSS TREATMENTS

	Thematic Pre-Org. & Guided Instruc.	Thematic Pre-Org.	Guided Instruc.	Textual Passage
Literal	M = 1.60 SD = 1.83	M = 1.80 SD = 2.29	M = 1.10 SD = 1.66	M = 1.10 SD = 1.52
Inferred	M = 1.20 SD = 1.35	M = 0.60 SD = 0.69	M = 0.30 SD = 0.48	M = 0.20 SD = 0.63

One-way analyses of variance designed to measure the effect of treatments at the literal level of free response revealed no significant differences among the group means. Because of the exploratory nature of this study, it should be noted that the obtained F value of 1.77 approached significance.

A one-way analysis of variance revealed a significant treatment effect for responses at the inferential mode. The analysis of the mean number of unaided inferential correct responses across the four treatment groups resulted in an $F = 4.52$; $df = 4.45$; $p < .003$. A *post hoc* Duncan's test indicated that the group using the thematic pre-organizer plus guided instruction was significantly different from the group using guided instruction, and the textual passage group ($p < .05$).

DISCUSSION

This exploratory study investigated the hypothetical construct that the use of a thematic pre-organizer, used separately and

in conjunction with a guided instruction exercise, would aid comprehension of an implied concept of a textual passage. The differences revealed that these thematic treatments facilitated the number and level of subjects' literal and inferred responses.

A limitation of this study dealt with the duration and scope of the treatment procedures employed. The findings of this investigation should be limited to this instructional reading passage, the thematic pre-organizer and guided instruction developed by the investigator, and to the theme of "polarization of opinions." Even though the theme and the passage were randomly selected, the generalizability of the results should be limited to these particular materials. However, due to the limited number of subjects in each group, and the significant results obtained by the combined procedure of using a thematic pre-organizer and guided instruction these findings may become more generalizable through further studies.

The most important finding of this investigation was the significant difference obtained among the mean number of inferential correct responses across the four treatment groups. The results showed that the group using the thematic pre-organizer and guided instruction was significantly different from the group using guided instruction and the group using the textual passage. These results can be interpreted as signifying that the use of a thematic pre-organizer in conjunction with guided instruction facilitates comprehension of a given concept to a greater extent than using a guided instruction exercise with the textual passage or reading the textual passage alone. This finding also seems to suggest that the methodology of providing students with a textual reading without an introductory theme-related pre-organizer combined with guided instruction does not facilitate conceptual understanding as reflected by the increased number of inferential appropriate responses associated with this treatment. It was also noted that even though a title was included with the passage, it did not enhance comprehension of the comparison group. It may have been that the title was too global to be instructive.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study are consistent with the notion advanced by Ausubel (1960, 1968) that clarifying and providing the reader with prior structure on which to map incoming material leads to increased comprehension of a related reading. In this case, comprehension of the passage was dependent on a schema or thematic conceptual framework to make the referents of the passage clear.

This study also suggests that the extent to which a textual passage is comprehended is not exclusively dependent upon the reader or the text itself. Instead, the study suggests that certain aspects of reading comprehension may be positively influenced by such factors as the type of pre-organizer and guided instruction given prior to and/or along with a textual reading. This investigation gives supportive evidence to the contention that a thematic pre-organizer in conjunction with a guided instruction exercise simultaneously facilitates or alters the interaction between the

learner and the textual passage resulting in an inferential mode of response.

Because this study was exploratory in nature, further research is being conducted to substantiate the findings and conclusions of the current investigation.

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HELPING CHILDREN DEVELOP READING COMPETENCY FOR THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

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Helping children develop appropriate reading competency for the twenty-first century is one of our most important functions as teachers of reading. As we move to a more technical society, it is very important that we help each child improve his or her reading skills to the maximum level possible. There are three major aspects discussed in this article. First, some of the social conditions which necessitate improved reading programs is outlined. Second, the important skills which we should emphasize in an effective reading program. Third, some principles for building a meaningful philosophy about reading instruction are explained. At the end of the article some thoughts are expressed relative to the importance of building lifetime reading habits.

Importance of Reading as a Literacy Skill

Of all the literacy skills which we educators emphasize, that of reading, may be the most important. Certainly students will not be able to function in today's society until they are able to recognize words, comprehend words, react to the words, and then make a logical decision based on what they have read or learned. We have, currently, over thirty million functionally illiterate adults in this country! These individuals are over the age of eighteen and cannot demonstrate a minimum sixth-grade instructional level in reading skills. There are many significant reasons for this particular condition. Perhaps one of the reasons is the fact that students have not developed appropriate reading skills in going from one grade level to the next. We need to be very sure that children have developed appropriate reading skills before promoting them to the next grade. In far too many instances, an adequate record system has been neglected and teachers have not been able to continue a precise planned program of reading instruction.

There are many aspects of our society which would cause us to want to be better teachers of reading and promote reading as a literacy skill. For example, many students as low as the fifth grade are regularly using illegal drugs. In 1975, nearly six percent of the nation's high school seniors reported using marijuana daily, as compared with an estimated 10.7% in 1978, and an approximate 15% in 1981. Some estimates today indicate that as many as 15 to 20% of the young people of many junior and senior high schools are regularly using mind-altering drugs. In other cases, over half of the student population have experimented with the drugs.

Since the development of reading skills requires the close attention of the student, the negative effect of illegal drug use has considerable significance. Certainly another aspect of the situation with regard to the current social picture is the rapid rise in the number of one parent families. Estimates reported in the media indicate that 20% of all children live in one parent homes. In some schools, as many as one-half of the children come from one parent homes. The one parent may not have the time to give the appropriate attention to his/her children because of work schedules and other concerns, and thus the reading level of the child is likely to suffer significantly.

There is also an alarming increase in the incidence of child abuse. It is estimated that a child dies from reported child abuse every four hours in this country. Many children are the victims of psychological abuse and other kinds of problems which are in a troubled home. With at least ten million persons unemployed, there has been a negative effect on reading abilities of children because there may be constant turmoil, the emotional turmoil that accompanies the fight for economic and physical survival. The rise in child abuse has been directly correlated with unemployment in many instances.

In a recent speech to the annual meeting of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools, Dr. Ernest L. Boyer, former U. S. Commissioner of Education, painted some other grim pictures of social problems among today's young people. He said that 1) Forty percent of girls of 14 today will be pregnant at least once during the next five years;

2) One-third of America's teen-agers will have sexual intercourse by their fifteen birthday;

3) Forty-percent of high school students say they have had five or more drinks in succession during the past two weeks; and

4) Every hour, 57 teen-agers try to kill themselves.

These circumstances demand as never before that we develop effective reading programs for these and all young people.

Another aspect related to the development of reading literacy skill is that of the influence of television on a child's reading ability. Television viewing in the United States now averages about twenty-five hours per week for children six to eleven, and almost twenty-seven hours per week for those from two to five. Many reading specialists are greatly concerned about the amount of television viewing because they feel that television is replacing reading for young children. A few people promote the positive effects of the television and applaud it as an educational tool. We know, for example, that Sesame Street and Electric Company are two outstanding programs. Due to the advent of cable television in many areas, there is a great deal of concern about the unsupervised viewing of adult television programs by children. On level, it would appear that if television viewing is properly supervised, there can be advantages for reading. If not supervised, the effects may well be negative.

A fourth major aspect of teaching reading as a literacy skill

relates to the reading abilities of teachers themselves with respect to reading. In the April 8, 1981 issue of the Omaha World-Herald, Barbara Reynolds writes in a syndicated column that the reading and spelling abilities of teachers constitute nothing less than horror stories. One recent city to begin testing teachers is Baltimore. She says the school administrators of Baltimore decided they lacked the funds to prop up weak teachers. In Louisiana only 63% of the teachers passed appropriate spelling tests last year. The certification director for the state of Louisiana said some teachers are now moving out of the state to escape the testing laws. In Florida, the first state to require prospective teachers to take competency exams, about one out of four teachers failed the test last year. In Georgia, 20% of the 8,000 teachers failed a competency test which measured not only the basic skills but also professional knowledge. Georgia, like some other states gives prospective teachers three chances to pass the test and offers help with remedial courses in the community colleges.

In summary, we have a number of aspects of our present society which could make us think our whole environment precludes the building of reading as a literary skill. As reading educators, we need to realize that there are many things we can do to help our children prepare for the twenty-first century!

Important Reading Skills Which Students Should Develop

As we look at the manuals for the more common reading programs such as the basal reading program, and many of the more nationally known individualized reading programs, we generally see a large number of reading skills which are outlined for the students to develop. The teacher must decide which of the skills he or she will emphasize with the student. There are four major reading skill areas which should be emphasized: readiness skills, word analysis skills, vocabulary skills and comprehension skills.

Think of READINESS as being a lifetime proposition.

Reading readiness is not something which is just unique to primary children. To build specific readiness is a necessary item of any good lesson when one is dealing with older adults. We need to develop specific readiness for reading for almost anything. For example, we should not tell children to "read the story and then we'll discuss it." We need to give a little background for the study and help students set a purpose for reading. With primary children, the importance of auditory and visual discrimination, the ability to listen, and the ability to write simple sentences, should always be emphasized.

Of all of the factors relating to reading readiness, the two which probably are as important as any would be those of visual and auditory discrimination. Some reading authorities are of the opinion, for example, that a child should be able to name all of the letters of the alphabet, saying this is terribly important with regard to a child's readiness to read. Auditory discrimination may be the most important of these. All, of course, need to be evaluated rather carefully, and a child should not enter formal reading until he/she is ready.

The second major reading skill we need to emphasize
is the word analysis skill area.

The importance of phonics has been debated and discussed for decades and this topic has been a very emotional issue for many people. Some major critics of public schools feel, for example, that teachers have not emphasized phonics enough in their reading programs. We know, of course, that phonics is very important and that this particular tool will unlock at least 86 percent of the words in the English language. Along with phonics, we need to stress structural analysis, context clues, the use of the dictionary, and the development of an appropriate vocabulary of sight words. In any case, we need to remember that the ability to attack words and pronounce them is actually the heart of the reading act.

The third major reading skill—vocabulary

We have a number of different kinds of vocabularies which we should emphasize with students; the listening vocabulary, the speaking vocabulary, the reading vocabulary, and the writing vocabulary. The development of these vocabulary certainly is the function of every teacher. Words unique to a given subject area should be taught and emphasized; biology teachers should analyze such words as "photosynthesis" and "chlorophyll", mathematics teachers should acquaint students with "improper fractions" and "inverted triangle" in the many ways we can teach and reinforce vocabulary. As important as vocabulary growth is to effective reading, many teachers are leaving students to their own devices about gaining words through structural analysis.

A fourth major reading skill—comprehension

Reading authorities know that comprehension is the end product of reading and that a good teacher who understands the reading process will ask question on each of the four levels of comprehension. These aspects would be the literal, interpretive, critical and creative levels. Even at a very early age we need to ask questions which relate to each of these levels. In many cases, teachers seem to be concerned only with the literal and interpretive levels. The two higher levels are as important, if not moreso, to many students in their classes.

Developing a Philosophy of Reading Instruction

After having determined the reading skills that you would like for your students to develop, your next major question is that of how to construct a meaningful instructional program which will help your students to master the skills which you deem to be important. There are at least two steps to take—the first of which is a very effective program of diagnosis to determine which students have developed which reading skills.

Make a grid on which you list student names down the left side, the skills which are important are listed across the top. Various evaluative techniques will help you determine which students have developed these at 90% and which have not. Among the various technique you might use are observation, criterion reference tests, and reading achievement tests. Sometimes publishers of

basal readers will provide a unit test which is of great deal of importance to teachers. Through all of this, you will need to decide the critical level of competency which you will expect of each child.

The second step, a program of instruction to help students develop an appropriate level of reading proficiency, is more complex. Students are reading at different instructional levels, and have various preferred learning modalities. We should have a number of teaching techniques available for meeting the different needs and levels.

Currently, computer-assisted instruction is having a great impact on reading instruction for children. Programs such as the Apple, the TRS 80 and Plato have marvelous potentials for helping children develop various reading skills. These techniques have the capacity for diagnosis and remediation and can let the child go at his or her pace. The price may be coming down as this equipment becomes more plentiful. All teachers should take computer programming courses so they can construct their own programs which can meet the unique needs of their children. It seems essential that all teachers become computer literate.

A Lifetime Reading Competency for the Twenty-first Century

A most important affective concept needing promotion is simply that reading is a lifetime ability.

Of all the skills that we develop at school, reading has more promise for use throughout one's life. Those children who have had good teachers, who have been in good reading programs where teachers and parents have been excellent models for them, will quite likely develop healthy attitudes towards reading. The process should be promoted every day of every year. Older children, who have developed a dislike for reading because of bad experiences will be the losers as they grow older. Teachers must be role models and let children see them reading and enjoying books.

Despite the factors which seem to defeat our best efforts, we teachers can prepare children to read effectively in the next century. By accurate diagnosis, and through careful development, we can help pupils grow into a lifetime reading philosophy. Nancy Whitelaw of Buffalo, New York, says it best when she says that reading is enjoying, learning, feeling, becoming, sensing, laughing, crying, hating, deciding, loving, growing, sympathizing, listening. Reading is, most importantly, being, and becoming. That is the philosophy we must develop as we plan effective reading programs for our pupils who need to survive in the 21st century.

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A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF EDUCATORS' PERCEPTIONS AND USE OF MANDATED READING ASSESSMENTS

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With the increasing emphasis on minimum competency testing has come a corresponding increase in mandated, district-wide testing programs. Results of such testing are often highly publicized, though perhaps not always completely understood. Yet, even though mandated tests have become an integral part of schooling in many areas of this country, we know little about specific testing practices. Even less data are available regarding the attitudes, values and perceived impact of testing programs in reading from the standpoint of educators whom such tests affect most directly: teachers and principals. Our lack of knowledge in this important area has been previously noted by Singer, Ruddell, McNeil & Whittrock (1980) and Ruddell (1981). The need for such data, if school district personnel and test publishers are to make reasoned, cost effective decisions, is clear.

There is also a paucity of comparative data, both on national and international levels, regarding test use and impact. This study used an instrument developed by Ruddell & Kinzer (1981), which previously served as a tool to gather such data in California. The study reported here was made in Puerto Rico, a site chosen because Puerto Rico is a U. S. protectorate, yet has an independent educational system and is often considered a Latin American country. The results provide insights into testing practices and opinions in diverse regions, and allow a direct comparison to the results of Ruddell & Kinzer's (1982) research, as well as to findings reported by Kinzer & Ruddell (1981). The following research questions guided this study:

1. How do teachers' and principals' perceptions regarding tests and testing in reading compare across Puerto Rico and California?
2. How are tests used and perceived by teachers and principals in Puerto Rico?
3. What do teachers and principals feel are the major areas of impact of standardized testing programs, related to reading, in Puerto Rico?
4. How well do teachers and principals feel the goals of standardized testing programs, related to reading, are being met in Puerto Rico?

Table 1
Comparative and Descriptive Data
(Percent of Valid Responses)

	Puerto Rican Data		Ruddell & Kinzer Kinzer & Ruddell (Californian Data)	
	Princ. N=14	Teacher N=22	Princ. N=12	Teacher N=18
Test Utilization/Importance				
useful to very useful	92.80	83.85	86.67	76.47
important to very important	85.70	76.85	100.00	84.00
Test Administration (Per- ceived optimum number)				
once a year	64.30	32.25	73.33	50.00
twice a year	28.60	53.00	6.67	38.89
more than twice a year	7.10	14.55	6.67	0
never	0	0	13.33	11.11
Curriculum Factors				
test strongly related to curriculum	71.40	71.25	100.00	88.20
Impact of Testing (Per- ceived major impact)				
dist. curriculum planning	63.63	26.67	66.67	47.05
local school planning	80.00	72.22	80.00	47.05
planning inservice needs	37.50	42.85	21.42	23.52
planning class instruc.	50.00	53.33	14.28	41.17
budgetary planning	16.70	28.57	9.09	29.41
Goals of Testing (perceived as met mostly or completely)				
aid in program improvement	92.30	66.67	84.61	44.44
provide public w/ knowledge	46.16	36.84	46.67	31.58
evaluate spec. programs	84.61	65.00	26.67	27.78
budget allocation decisions	58.33	27.78	13.33	5.88
Test Preferences (major pre- ference for province/state- wide testing)				
standardized	53.84	29.30	78.57	64.70
criterion referenced	33.33	21.42	16.67	45.45
teacher-made	16.66	70.10	9.09	12.50
Test Preferences (major pre- ference for schoolwide test)				
standardized	25.00	7.14	60.00	17.64
criterion referenced	61.50	40.95	42.85	58.82
teacher-made	23.10	63.90	0	45.45
Test Preferences (major pre- ference for classroom tests)				
standardized	9.09	7.14	28.57	0
criterion referenced	63.63	39.30	53.84	47.05
teacher-made	41.66	66.70	23.07	62.50

Method

The Ruddell & Kinzer questionnaire was translated and slightly modified for the Spanish speaking population. Seventy-five 43-item questionnaires were sent to 25 Puerto Rican schools. In each school, principals as well as second and fifth grade teachers were asked to respond. The sample reflected a balance across rural and urban schools and school districts across the country. An initial and follow-up mailing yielded a 48% return, including 14 responses from principals, and 11 each from second and fifth grade teachers. In 11 instances, all three respondents within the school returned the questionnaire. In three cases, only the principal responded. The sample size and sampling procedure was chosen to reflect that used by the Ruddell & Kinzer and Kinzer & Ruddell studies.

Results and Discussion

Table 1 summarizes the results of the Puerto Rican data and provides a comparison with the Ruddell & Kinzer and Kinzer & Ruddell findings in California. As in the Californian studies, the Puerto Rican data are reported as percentages of valid responses, excluding missing data.

Attitudes and Perceptions

Respondents across both regions felt that standardized testing programs in reading are useful and important. Teachers and principals in California, however, were markedly less supportive of such tests being administered more than once a year. In the sample from California, 11.11% of the teachers and 13.33% of the principals felt that such tests should never be given. None of the Puerto Rican respondents felt similarly, with 14.55% of the teachers stating that standardized reading tests should be administered more than twice a year. Yet, more respondents in California felt that their testing program matched their reading curriculum than did their Puerto Rican counterparts.

When asked to rank the impact of their testing programs, respondents in both regions noted the greatest impact in local school curriculum planning. Puerto Rican teachers, however, ranked planning for class instruction as the next greatest area of impact, while the other respondents ranked district curriculum planning as second. The impact of standardized testing programs in reading on budgetary planning was ranked last overall.

Perceptions regarding how well goals of the respective district-wide testing programs were being met differed somewhat across Puerto Rico and California. With the exception of the goal "to provide the public with knowledge," which approximately equal numbers of respondents agreed was being mostly-to-completely met, more Puerto Rican than Californian respondents felt that their testing program goals were being met. In both regions studied, the greatest number of respondents felt that the goal "to aid in program improvement" was being met, while the goal "to aid in budget decisions" ranked last. Overall, more principals than teachers felt that the testing program goals were being fulfilled.

Test Preferences

Respondents were asked to rank standardized, criterion referenced and teacher-made tests in terms of preference for assessing student reading in province/state-wide, school-wide, or classroom situations. Results indicate that the Californian teachers and principals are more comfortable with standardized tests than are the Puerto Rican respondents. Although principals in both regions ranked standardized tests as their first choice for testing on a province/state-wide basis, 78.57% of Californian principals (and 64.70% of the teachers) noted this preference, as compared to only 53.84% and 12.50%, school-wide and classroom testing situations.

Puerto Rican teachers seem to place more faith in their own, teacher-made tests than in other types of measures, ranking teacher-made tests as their first choice across all three testing situations. Criterion referenced tests were the second choice of Puerto Rican teachers, for both school-wide and classroom assessment. Teachers in California agreed with the primary ranking of teacher-made tests for classroom testing, but preferred criterion reference tests for school-wide testing, and standardized tests for testing on a province/state-wide basis.

Conclusions

The results of this study point toward four general conclusions. These relate specifically to the research questions noted previously. First, tests are valued and extensively used by both principals and teachers in Puerto Rico. This is true even though over 60% of both teachers and principals noted that over 3 hours were required to prepare for test administration (e.g., group meetings to examine manuals, discuss procedure, etc.). This did not include actual administration time, which was time that would otherwise have been used for instructional purposes. Yet, even though a significant amount of instructional time is required to administer the standardized testing program, respondents felt that such testing was useful and important.

Secondly, province and district-wide reading assessments in Puerto Rico impact primarily on curriculum decisions, with the greatest impact at the local school level. This might well be the reason for the testing program being perceived as valuable and important, even given the amounts of time and energy required for its implementation. Assessment results also have a significant impact on curriculum planning at the classroom and district level, although to a somewhat lesser degree. The impact of district-wide reading/testing programs in Puerto Rico is least felt in the areas of inservice and budgetary planning.

Thirdly, Puerto Rican teachers and principals feel that five generally accepted goals of testing programs are being met. Though teachers felt less confident than principals that the goals of their district's testing program were being fulfilled, there was no general teacher dissatisfaction with the overall testing program in reading.

Finally, a comparison of the Puerto Rican data with similar studies in California reveals that the two groups are similar rather than dichotomous. Although specific, interesting differences exist, most notably in the areas of test preferences and amount of testing which is acceptable, general patterns are similar. Educators in both regions voice a clear concern that test should be performed for educationally sound purposes, and that reading tests should be consistent with the curriculum being taught.

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