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A FOOT IN THE DOOR: THE ANNOTATED CHECKLIST

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The role of the reading specialist has traditionally been perceived as broader in some scope than that of just a remedial teacher. Ideally, the reading specialist becomes a resource upon which all classroom teachers can rely. Some recent evidence (IRA, 1976) seems to support the assumption that this ideal is, at least to some degree, a reality at the elementary level.

Unfortunately, the reading specialist at the secondary level is often unable to function in this resource role. Although authorities in secondary reading generally advocate this resource role (Robinson, 1975; Karlin, 1972), the reading specialist in many secondary schools remains cloistered in a room, teaching small groups of children five or six periods a day.

This situation is particularly unfortunate in the middle school. The middle school student has particular developmental problems in addition to problems associated with the transition from elementary to secondary school (Fillmer, 1975). Undoubtedly these problems have an effect on reading achievement.

In addition, the middle school itself has a number of organizational problems. There is little agreement as to what kind of program the middle school should have. Should it be like the high school? Should it be like the elementary school? Should it be a combination of both? Should it be a distinct program of its own? Besides difference of opinion about a program, there is little agreement as to the grades that should be housed in a middle school. Some schools comprise grades 5 through 8; some grades 6 through 8; some grades 7 and 8; and some grades 7 through 9. Many of these schools, of course, are merely junior highs with changed names (Duffy, 1975).

Reading programs in middle schools also represent a broad spectrum of these organizational patterns and problems. For example, in some middle schools housing grades 5 through 8, one can find a traditional elementary basal program in the fifth and sixth grades and an absence of any formal reading instruction at the seventh and eighth grade levels. In other middle schools, children with reading problems are the only ones to receive reading instruction, and this is all handled by the reading specialist. These differing organizational problems even in the same school coupled with the developmental problems of adolescent youngsters combine to make the role of the middle school reading specialist a particularly difficult one.

Even if the middle school specialist is assigned a resource role, functioning in this manner is often difficult. Classroom teachers and content area teachers often feel threatened by any outside “expert” working in their classrooms. In some cases, involvement of the reading specialist can be facilitated if administrators schedule the reading specialist to work in various classrooms (Cassidy, 1973). More often than not, however, administrators are reluctant to utilize this kind of scheduling. Thus, it is left to the reading specialists to devise their own means of facilitating entry into the classroom.

Annotated Checklist

One way is to distribute an annotated checklist to all teachers describing services that the reading specialist can perform. Classroom teachers then check the services in which they are interested and return the form to the reading specialist. In addition to serving as an excellent entree into teachers’ classrooms, annotated checklists serve other purposes. Certainly, the checklist educates teachers about reading in a non-threatening way. Often, teachers are reluctant to ask questions about reading, fearful that they will sound uninformed or ignorant. Therefore, each item in the checklist is clearly explained in the annotated section of the checklist. Also, all the items in the checklist are practical in nature. Teachers can read the checklist and discover ways to utilize the wide variety of reading activities in their classrooms. Finally, activities on the checklist are designed to benefit all children, not just those students who usually receive extra help in reading.

Figure 1 is a copy of the checklist, and Figure 2 provides a list of references to aid the reading specialist in providing these services. Some of the items on the checklist and bibliography refer to specific tests, but these can easily be replaced with others appropriate for a given situation.

FIGURE 1 ANNOTATED CHECKLIST

Name _____

Room Number _____

Date _____

PLEASE CHECK THE AREA(S) WHERE YOU WOULD LIKE ASSISTANCE FROM THE READING SPECIALIST

___1. *Word Recognition Test*

a. Individual test. b. takes about 15-20 minutes to administer to each child. c. results will indicate *specific* skills that need to be taught (e.g., blends, short vowels, etc.).

___2. *Phonics Inventory*

a. Group or individual test. b. takes about 30 minutes to administer. c. results will give you an *in-depth* analysis of specific skills that need to be taught.

- 3. *Word Opposites Test*
 - a. Group test. b. takes about 20 minutes to administer. c. results will tell you where to begin instruction in a *general* way; measures comprehension; will tell you student's *instructional* level.
- 4. *Spelling Inventory*
 - a. Group test. b. takes about 20-30 minutes to administer. c. results will tell you each child's spelling instructional level.
- 5. *Cloze*
 - a. Group or individual test. b. takes about 30 minutes to administer. c. results will give you a reading level in a particular content area (e.g., social studies, science).
- 6. *Standardized Diagnostic Reading Test*
 - a. Group test. b. takes about two hours to administer; should be given in two days. c. results are diagnostic in these areas; auditory vocabulary, phonetic analysis and two levels of comprehension, literal and inferential.
- 7. *Mastery*
 - a. Group test. b. takes about 30 minutes to administer. c. results will tell you if student is ready for the next basal reader in a series.

CURRICULUM

- 1. *Newspaper*
 - a. Group lesson. b. local newspapers delivered to your classroom complete with stock lesson plans and activity cards. c. good for teaching science, social studies, etc. via newspaper. d. good for low students; lots of cutting and pasting activities.
- 2. *Materials*
 - a. High/Interest/Easy vocabulary materials. b. Phonics materials. c. Comprehension materials. d. Other.
- 3. *Directed Reading Thinking Activities (D.R.T.A.)*
 - a. Small group in classroom. b. purpose of D.R.T.A. is to provide motivation for critical thinking during reading.
- 4. *Enrichment Lessons*
 - a. Group lesson. b. games and activities designed to reinforce vocabulary, comprehension and word study.
- 5. *Recreational Reading*
 - a. Group lesson. b. Reading for enjoyment and entertainment. c. will help organize a program; show ways to evaluate and check progress.
- 6. *Survival Reading*
 - a. Group lesson. b. Reading beyond the classroom for "survival" purposes. c. teaches students how to read maps, menus, shop wisely, etc.

- 7. *T.V. Reading*
 a. Group lesson. b. practical ways to teach reading through television.

GENERAL

- 1. *Readability*
 a. Means of ascertaining the reading level of your content area materials.
- 2. *Skills Management System*
 a. Wisconsin, Fountain Valley, etc. b. skills taught in a systematic way. c. skills can be incorporated into any basal series.
- 3. *Other*
 Please list other ways the reading specialist can assist you.
 A.
 B.
 C.

FIGURE 2

SOME REFERENCES FOR THE ANNOTATED CHECKLIST

TESTING

1. *Word Recognition*
 Botel, Morton, *Botel Reading Inventory*. Word Recognition Test (Rev. Forms A & B) Chicago: Follett Publishing Company, 1970.
2. *Phonics Inventory*
 Miller, Wilma. *Reading Diagnosis Kit*. New York: Center for the Applied Research in Education, 1974.
3. *Word Opposites—Comprehension*
 A. Botel, Morton. *Botel Reading Inventory* Word Opposites Test (Rev. Forms A & B) Chicago: Follett Publishing Company, 1970.
4. *Spelling Inventory*
 Botel, Morton. *Revised Guide to the Botel Reading Inventory*. Chicago: Follett Publishing Co., 1970.
5. *Cloze*
 A. Bortnicks, Robert & Lopardo, Genevieve S. "An Instructional Application of the Cloze Procedure," *Classroom Strategies for Secondary Reading*, edited by W. John Harker, Newark: International Reading Association, 1977.
6. *Standardized Tests*
Stanford Diagnostic Test. Harcourt-Brace Jovanovich, Inc. Test Department, 757 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10017, 1976. Bjorn Karlsen, Richard Madden, Eric F. Gardner.
 Mavrogenes, Nancy A. Winkley, Carol K. Hanson, Earl, Vacca, Richard T. "Concise Guide to Standardized Secondary College Reading Tests" in *Classroom Strategies for Secondary Reading*. Edited by W. John Harker, IRA, 1977.

CURRICULUM

1. *Newspaper*
Chevney, Arnold B. *Teaching Reading Skills Through the Newspaper*. Newark, Delaware: IRA, 1971.
Wilson, Robert M. and Barnes, Marcia M. *Using Newspapers to Teach Reading Skills*, American Newspaper Publishers Association, P.O. Box 17407, Dulles International Airport, Washington, DC 20041, 1975.
2. *Materials* (High/Interest/Easy Vocabulary)
Spache, George D. *Good Reading for Poor Readers*. Champaign, IL: Garrard Publishing, 1974.
3. *Directed Reading Thinking Activity* (D.R.T.A.)
Stauffer, Russell G. *Directing the Reading—Thinking Process*. New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1964.
4. *Enrichment Lessons*
Forte, Imogene, Frank, Marjorie, Mackenzie. *Kids' Stuff, Reading and Language Experiences Intermediate-Jr. High*. Nashville, TN: Incentive Publications.
5. *Recreational Reading*
Alexander, J. Estil and Filler, Ronald C. *Attitudes and Reading*. Newark, DE: International Reading Association, 1976.
6. *Survival Reading*
Functional Reading: A Resource Guide for Teachers. Volumes 1 and 2, 1975-76. A Publication of the Division of Instruction, Maryland State Department of Education, P.O. Box 8717, Baltimore/Washington International Airport, Baltimore, MD 21240.
Cassidy, Jack. "Survival Reading" *Teacher*, September, 1977, pp. 62-64.
7. *T.V. Reading*
Becker, George J. *Television and the Classroom Reading Program*, I.R.A. Service Bulletin, 1973.

GENERAL

1. *Readability*
Fry, Edward. "Fry's Readability Graph: Clarification, Validity Extension to Level 17," *Journal of Reading*, December, 1977, pp. 242-252.
2. *Skills Management*
The Wisconsin Design for Reading Skill Development, Minneapolis, MN: Interpretive Scoring Systems, 1973.

In the schools in which this checklist has been used an individual conference is scheduled between the reading teacher and the classroom teacher after the checklist has been returned. The purpose of this conference is to answer questions and to arrange a time for the reading specialist to begin.

Results from using this checklist have been encouraging. Of the 50 checklists distributed to teachers in two middle schools, 35 were returned.

Most of the teachers requested assistance in testing and enrichment lessons. Many of these teachers had been unresponsive to previous overtures from the reading specialist. In addition, items on the checklist have served as a base for in-service sessions with classroom teachers.

The Beginning

Certainly, using the annotated checklist is only the first step in the reading specialist's road to functioning as a resource person. Careful follow-through work with all teachers returning the checklist is a definite necessity. However, the checklist does represent a beginning. Perhaps if effective follow-up work is initiated, the middle school reading specialist can become a meaningful component of the entire school's reading program.

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