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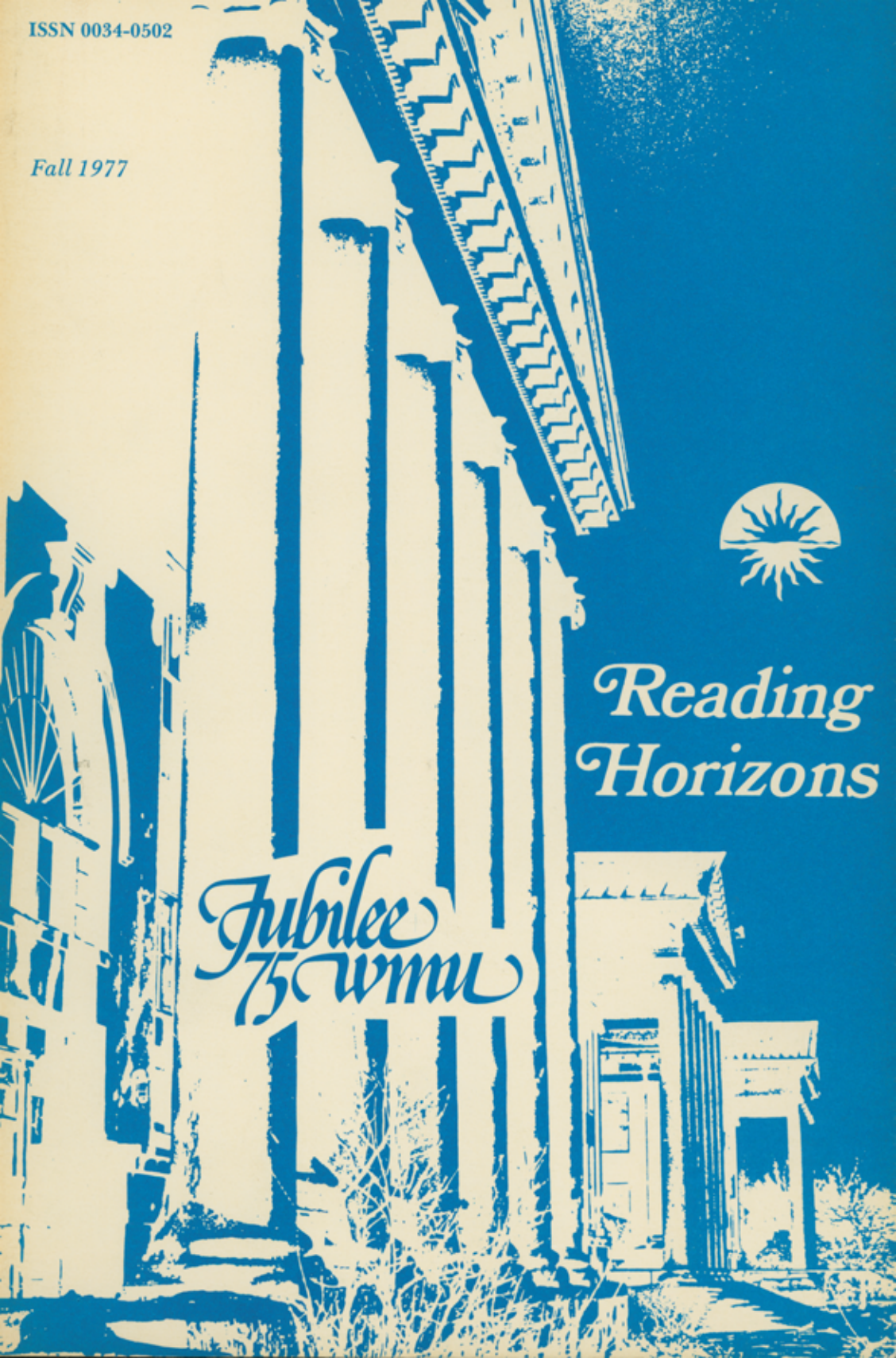
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Reading Horizons

*Jubilee
75 WmU*



Reading

HORIZONS

Volume 18

Number 1

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READING HORIZONS has been published quarterly since 1960 by the Reading Center and Clinic of Western Michigan University and the Homer L. J. Carter Reading Council, Michigan's oldest established IRA council. As a journal devoted to reading at all levels of educational endeavor, HORIZONS provides teachers, educators, and other interested professionals with the ideas, movements, and important changes in the ever increasing horizons of reading.



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DIAMOND JUBILEE—WMU

No one could be happier than we are at being able to share the occasion of the Diamond Jubilee with Western Michigan University. While *READING HORIZONS* is only seventeen years old, its beginnings are to be found in the 1930's, when Western was a State College of Education. Homer L. J. Carter, who established the first learning clinic in this part of the country, believed in sharing with others what can be learned about students and academic difficulties. Thus, with the assistance and efforts of Dr. Dorothy J. McGinnis as the other member of the team, Carter and McGinnis became leading innovators in the field of reading and learning. They represented Western Michigan at conferences and conventions all over the nation. Their research findings are still being quoted and cited in textbooks in many colleges of education. Their contribution to the reputation of WMU cannot be overstated.

Sharing ideas was their special enthusiasm in education, and the team of Carter and McGinnis started *READING HORIZONS* for that purpose in 1960. For the first ten years, it was a local organ of the IRA chapter of the Kalamazoo area. As it grew in stature, this quarterly journal attracted contributions and reader attention in other states. Today, subscribers in all 50 states and many foreign countries are sharing research findings and ideas for the teaching-of-reading. This issue, the Jubilee issue — Volume 18, Number 1 — is an example of the best that has been written by the best that we can find on this subject of teaching reading. Classroom practitioners say they often use the journal as a “textbook” because it contains valuable information in every issue.

We are proud to say that *READING HORIZONS* contains the feature writing of Donald C. Cushenbery, Regents Professor at the University of Nebraska, Omaha, at the secondary level of teaching reading. Other contributors in this issue include such well-known experts as Brother Leonard Courtney, Minnesota, Patrick Groff, San Diego State, and other leaders from reading clinics and research centers in several parts of the nation. We are proud to have them in our quarterly, and proud to let them know that Western Michigan University is in the business of sharing ideas through education and through *READING HORIZONS*.

Kenneth VanderMeulen
Editor

HOMER L.J. CARTER READING COUNCIL

1977-78 PROGRAM

DR. JOHN PESCOSOLIDO

Learning Modalities: Problem or Solution?

Saturday, October 8

9:30 a.m. Breakfast

Holiday Inn West

Bring a classroom teacher.

Regional Conference

featuring

DR. ROGER FARR

Reading Education: Now for the Good News

Thursday, November 17

4:45 p.m. Coffee and registration

5:15 p.m. Small group presentations

6:30 p.m. Dinner and speaker

Portage North Junior High

KIDS' STUFF

Demonstrations with Children

Thursday, February 16

7:30 p.m.

Comstock Northeast Middle School

READING UPDATE

Panel Discussion on Local Innovative Programs

Thursday, April 20

7:30 p.m.

Gull Lake High School

* * * *

OTHER IMPORTANT PROGRAMS

Great Lakes Regional Conference

Reading: The Hub of Learning

September 29-October 1, 1977

Indianapolis, Indiana

MRA Conference

Reading: An Instructional Priority

April 2-4, 1978

Grand Rapids, Michigan

International Reading Conference

May 1-5, 1978

Houston, Texas

READING PROBLEMS— PREVENTION RATHER THAN CURE

George Canney

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION, UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS, URBANA, ILLINOIS

Obituary notice: Jones, Johnny

Johnny Jones failed to learn to read while a student in one of our local elementary schools. He suffered from a lingering illness apparently caused by a premature introduction of beginning reading, followed by an overdose of dull and, at times, inappropriate instruction, culminating in loss of interest and motivation to read. No special services are planned to mark his passing, nor is it expected that the public will have an opportunity to notice Johnny in the future. He is survived by his disappointed family and friends who stated: "We always thought that Johnny had the potential to do better in school."

As the title suggests, there is concern among many of us that children can experience serious difficulty in learning to read. We expect to see some evidence of confusion and incomplete skill development as our pupils are learning to read. The quandry we face, however, is that some of these children do not grow beyond these stages—they continue to be confused, to not work up to their full potential. Often we have been unable to identify these children from the others in order to provide special instruction early enough to avoid compounding the learning problems that soon arise. In many schools, by the time the parents and teacher realize that the child is having serious difficulty learning to read, often the child has decided that he is stupid—or that school is "dumb"—and we face behavior and motivation problems which compound enormously the task of remediation.

Notice the terms we commonly use to describe corrective reading procedures: symptom; disability; treatment; cure; prescriptive teaching. Such terms, and the title of this article as well, suggest that often we view the instruction of children in much the same way as the doctor views the care of his patients. We would see ourselves as the physician and our pupils as the patients—to be treated with knowledge and concern so that they can live healthy, happy lives.

Ideally, we would like to avoid having the child experience frustration and failure so early in his school career, and so the title of this article "Reading Problems—Prevention Rather Than Cure"—seems reasonable. Yet, it is not. In fact, I believe that this approach to teaching children to read creates more problems than it cures!

A brief examination of a medical setting may help to explain why this is so. In the doctor-patient relationship it is the doctor's task to heal the

patient when he is sick, and to keep him healthy if possible. To do so, the doctor may prescribe a special diet, supplemental aids like vitamins, or a special program of exercise when the patient shows signs of overweight or physical weakness. If the doctor is puzzled by the symptoms he sees, he can call for an examination of the patient by specialists who may use elaborate equipment and techniques to determine the cause of the problem. Since, at times, the symptoms may suggest several possible causes, the doctors may prescribe first one, then a second, then a third type of medication in the belief that one of them will cure the patient and will also suggest post hoc what the problem really was.

In this setting the patient is expected to trust in the doctor's skill and to accept rather unquestioningly his advice and treatment. The patient role is essentially a passive one.

Often our approach to teaching children to read is like the physician's approach to treating sick patients. We presume responsibility for determining the best preparations of basic reading skills for our pupils. We determine the content of the reading program, the rate (dosage) in which it is administered, and the form in which our pupils receive it: direct instruction, workbooks, supplemental activities, tests. We are continually on the watch for signs of weakness or failure in our pupils; when we see evidence that a child is not operating up to his potential (something *we* decide) we diagnose the child's "problem" and prescribe some remedial treatment.

Like the doctor, we expect that each child will listen to our directives and do the work assigned—trusting that we know what's best for his intellectual development (as the doctor does the patient's health). The child who does not accept this type of pupil role—who resists our efforts to prescribe his program—is considered difficult to teach and a problem in our classroom. Despite such problems, we have persisted in our belief that if the method(s) we employ to teach reading are taught thoroughly, systematically, and with determination, most of our children will learn how to read. For the few who resist our efforts, or who have too many problems beyond our influence, failure is an unhappy but not unexpected outcome.

However, there are three fundamental weaknesses inherent in this medical model applied to teaching reading. First, we expect children to find reading difficult. Consequently, there is a tendency in our approaches to teaching reading to look for areas of weakness—of failure—and to overlook areas of strength and achievement. Over time some of our pupils, especially those experiencing difficulty, may infer that little that they do is "right" and, in fact, that they are not even progressing despite the efforts they have made to learn.

Robbed of confidence in their own ability to achieve, many pupils become uninterested, unresponsive, and passive members of our classroom. While many of these pupils may eventually learn the basic decoding skills, they find little enjoyment in reading and little desire to read beyond our directives. So, we've achieved our goal of teaching most of our children to decode—but at what cost!

Second, a medical approach to diagnostic teaching of reading is almost completely one-sided. It is the pupil (patient) who is diagnosed to discover his “problem” — never the teacher (physician). The results of most diagnoses of reading performance involve pupil adaptation to the adopted program — not vice versa. Yet, both Bond and Tinker (1973) and Robert Wilson (1975) state in their texts on corrective and remedial reading procedures that the major reason for reading failure is poor and inappropriate instruction — not pupil inability to learn to read.

Unless our diagnoses are two-sided — to examine our own effectiveness as teachers and the quality of our program, as well as how our pupils are progressing — we may not learn enough to promote acceptable pupil growth in reading.

The third major flaw in using the medical model concerns the teacher-pupil relationship. A good patient accepts completely his treatment as prescribed and avoids self-treatment; a good learner, however, must actively participate in his own education since desire, interest and attention are prerequisites to learning. If we don't seek to involve our pupils in planning at least part of their daily work, and permit them to make choices among a limited range of possible activities, then we can expect our pupils to show little enthusiasm or responsibility (independence) for what they must learn. Without enthusiasm, or at least interest, learning is minimized and often what is learned is not generalized beyond the teacher-school setting. In a sense, we've administered the proper medications, but lost the patient.

Consequently, I'd like to suggest an alternate model which presents a more positive and productive way to view reading instruction. Instead of viewing our reading instruction as an effort to PREVENT FAILURE, why not look upon teaching as BUILDING PROFICIENCY? To do so, let us first agree that children, like each one of us, much prefer to do those activities which they feel they do well, and to avoid doing those things in which they have little confidence.

If we view the child who enters school as an eager, curious individual (who may or may not be ready to sit still, attend carefully, and persist at school tasks) one whom we can direct, not prescribe, into interesting learning situations that they are ready for, then we have rejected our medical model from the start. In this second model the child is recognized as the *learner* (the client), the person responsible for trying to understand, to attend, to think, in order to learn. It is also assumed that he has the *potential* to succeed. The teacher acts as a *consultant*, an adviser, a motivator, and an expeditor attempting to guide the learning process. In order to be effective in this role, the teacher assumes that grade levels are only guides to plotting individual progress, not goals that every child can, or should be expected to reach or to be held back for.

This is not a “love'm and they'll learn” model of instruction. Teachers are still responsible for instructing children and must require a reasonable level of student productivity. However, unlike the medical model of teaching reading, this model acknowledges the fact that learning occurs

within the child and cannot be compelled if the child is passive or uninterested. Since reading, by definition, requires that the child think in order to derive maximum value from the teacher's instruction, it is not reasonable to presume that increased dosages of instruction (like medicines) can ever compensate for the child's inattentiveness or lack of interest.

As the teacher emphasizes what the child can do well, and uses these signs of achievement to signal the introduction of new instruction, the child will recognize that he has succeeded and can continue to do so. The child learns to interact positively and confidently with the teacher to learn new skills and gain more knowledge about the world and his own ability to perform independently. The purposes for the teacher's instruction and the pupil's need to attend and participate become progressively more certain in the child's eyes even as the desire to continue to read grows—because reading is viewed both as important and as enjoyable.

With this orientation, the following approaches to reading ought then to make sense.

From kindergarten, the child should be continually exposed to books through interest centers, story tapes, being read to by the teacher, older students, and their parents, and through brief instruction on the various parts of a book, how books are created, and, as interest develops, how the print represents what we say.

Regardless of the approach you adhere to—be it whole word, phonics (single letter or family), language experience, etc.—your room would include slides, pictures and objects of interest from the community along with the printed words—as labels—which represent those concrete experiences. Most children will absorb, almost unconsciously, a basic sight vocabulary simply by having their attention drawn repeatedly to the words and phrases that represent real events. And as you begin to teach the skills necessary to read fluently and critically, your efforts to help the children understand *WHY* they are doing the various exercises and *HOW* these exercises will give them access to books will be critical to the success of your program.

Instead of surgically dissecting the reading program into tiny, molecular skills to be taught in a rigid sequence for every child, you would struggle to present the particular skills in a coherent fashion related to the act of reading books. In other words, even though you have studied carefully the various skills involved in reading print fluently, you would recognize that it is not so important that the children isolate the skills as it is for them to integrate those skills effectively into their own reading strategies. For we do know this about proficient readers—they seem to integrate, almost unconsciously, the various skills we teach into an effective method of reading while the poor readers seem to learn the skills separately, yet do not integrate them into an effective strategy for processing print.

From first grade, acknowledging the range of reading skills, children should be allowed to read anything they wish during Sustained Silent Reading (SSR). *Everyone*, especially the teacher and possibly the school principal, reads—or looks at pictures—for an appropriate length of time

(two or three times per week) with no obligation to report on what was read in order to stress the importance of reading for enjoyment.

Limit the volume of worksheet exercises and provide more free reading time. When sheets are provided, they should offer some choice and allow the pupil to *practice* skills rather than to always be *tested* on his knowledge of skills.

That is,

- 1) The items should have more than two possible choices so that an inappropriate answer does not, by default, identify the correct choice.
- 2) The students should be free to check their answers—perhaps with the “student checker” of the week—and then, having discovered which items were correctly answered, figure out the answers to those that were wrong.
- 3) The student should have some *choice* of which sheets (on the same skill) he will do, or which eight out of ten items on a page he will do—to develop student responsibility for the work he does.
- 4) There should be a place on most sheets for the student to write his own explanation or examples to show that he understands—i.e., not just recognition, but production ability should be exercised.

Encourage your children to write daily, and to share their writings with others, perhaps by putting them in books to be incorporated into the class library.

Reading corners—attractive, secluded, cozy—would be an essential addition to every classroom. The books would rotate frequently, perhaps with the aid of the public library. In addition to free time, every child would go to the reading corner on a regular basis just to read and look at pictures as part of his reading assignment.

Know your pupils individually—keep interest inventory (cards) on each student (perhaps through interviews) and periodically provide reading materials on that topic as “surprise gifts.”

Utilize a method of plotting progress in skills so that you can effectively plan your practice exercises to fit the special needs of each child by building upon strengths, or weaknesses.

You can do this by

- 1) Using an IRI 2-3 times a year.
- 2) Do oral reading for diagnosis within your reading groups once or twice weekly.
- 3) Use multiple response devices to get high density feedback during skills lessons. (See Gambrell, L. and Wilson, R. *Focusing on the Strengths of Children*, 1972).

Keep fresh yourself.

Attend conferences - ask for professional leave.

Subscribe to journals and other professional magazines, and *read* yourself.

Meet regularly with other teachers and specialists in the district to share ideas (a district newsletter serves this function well).

—Relax (easy to say, hard to do)—individual student progress, *not* meeting grade-related deadlines, is what is important.

Therefore, as one who facilitates the learning of *clients* let's form our program to fit the needs, interests, and talents of our children, *not* force the children to fit the program.

To teach a child to mechanically process print, while destroying his desire to read, serves no purpose. Worse, it may prevent him from discovering the joy of reading later on when the need to read is felt.

I believe that a more realistic and service-oriented view of the teacher-pupil relationship will help us to achieve our elusive long-range goal—to develop readers who *want* to read.

Then, instead of writing the obituary notices for such a significant proportion of our children, the following statement can be written instead:

NEWS DEBUT

Mr. and Mrs. William Franklin, proud parents of Willie Franklin, age 13, are pleased to announce their son's graduation with honors from the local elementary school. Willie has successfully learned to read critically in the content fields as well as narrative materials. In a recent interview Willie stated that learning in school was not too hard and sometimes was fun. He said that his teachers really tried to help him stay interested in things and even let him read what he wanted to read—sometimes.

Willie plans to continue reading books because, said Willie, "Reading books helps you to know more about people and things and because reading books is fun." His parents asked that a special note of praise be given to the elementary school staff who worked so conscientiously to discover their son's interests and to help their son prepare for the future.

Hopefully, at this point you will concur that the title of this article "Reading Problems - Prevention Rather Than Cure" should be changed to read: "Reading - Service Rather Than Surgery." In a similar vein perhaps you will consider a slight alteration in your own job description—from one who *assigns* to one who *assists*.

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- Bond, Guy & Tinker, Miles. *Reading difficulties: their diagnosis and correction*. 3rd ed. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1973.
- Gambrell, Linda & Wilson, Robert. *Focusing on the strengths of children*. Belmont: Fearon Press, 1972.
- Wilson, Robert. *Diagnostic and remedial reading for classroom and clinic*. Columbus: Charles E. Merrill, 1972.

THE CRUCIAL TRANSITION YEARS

Brother Leonard Courtney

ST. MARY'S COLLEGE, WINONA, MINNESOTA

Three important years sculpted from a child's formal schooling, islanded as a period of guided passage from childhood to youth. Such is an ideal framework, unfortunately inconsistent with the actuality of the junior high years. Nonetheless, anyone who has worked closely with children of this age (11-14) or grades (7-9) acknowledge an array of differences—physical, psychological and emotional—which mandates a setting uniquely sympathetic to the pupils' needs. If for no other reason, junior high exists for the exceptional reading opportunity it provides: for intensification and diversification of skills, some ease and stability in dealing with varying content structures, and enrichment of personal reading.

In practice, junior high school is less than ideal. It was conceived prior to the insights of adolescent psychology solely as an administrative convenience to handle large numbers of children. Labeled by one expert as "America's greatest educational blunder,"³ it still seeks clear definition and direction. The "in-betweeness" of the junior high is attested by the very label "junior," by the ease with which either the lower or upper grade may be shifted physically at the dictates of space, by the curious amalgam of high school content and elementary school skills. (It is these arguments which support the move toward the "middle school.") The literature of the junior high focuses heavily on the mechanics of physical accommodation, only recently on the need for the personal guidance and academic exploration which the age level requires. Even our own reading literature attends conveniently to components, organization, extension of skills while ignoring the nature and reading climate of early adolescence. It is hardly fair to make this generalization absolute. Many junior high systems have beautifully integrated the years to adapt to their students. The core curriculum itself was designed specifically for the junior high. Too commonly, however, the junior high has not adjusted to its responsibility or realized its opportunity. Some of the problems possibly result from the tendency to view the pupils as a group rather than recognizing the subtle differentiations within the age levels.

THE EARLY ADOLESCENT

Elementary and senior high school pupils are less volatile temperamentally, change and growth being less dramatic. The elementary child's progress is relatively smooth. School is usually a happy experience. Learning is fundamental, mastery and independence to be achieved later. Even though puberty may begin at age eleven, the sixth grader is usually seen as a child. At the other extreme—always realizing the exception—the senior high student is consciously preparing for exit, either to vocation or

high education. Such predictability is not characteristic of the early adolescent years, those of junior high age.

The early adolescent is varied in disposition and ability, experiencing rapid physical and psychological changes, searching for identity, life goals, new relationships, greater independence, yet needing emotional support and clearly defined limits to behavior. Twelve's have boundless enthusiasm, seek peer association and approval, are delightfully open in and out of the classroom; they have longer attention spans and can do more independent work. They are less ego-centered and are interested in other's feelings, attitudes and beliefs. Thirteen is a year of complex transitions in body, mind, and personality. Moodiness and worry are common; the child is prone to be reflective, has a fondness for discussion periods and may be generally satisfied with school. While wishing to be treated as an adult, he will be resentful of adult restrictions, and school often appears as an endless tedious process. At age fourteen, the adolescent abounds in vigorous, robust expression. He is more able to do logical thinking and seriously considers his vocational plans. He is really more adapted to the departmentalized, demanding structure of the secondary school, his own disposition tending toward his older peers. Now such generalizations, although basically sound, hardly speak to the actual situation of the teacher contending daily with adolescents whose unruliness centers more on self than on the academic subjects of the curriculum. Nor do they say much about reading and the adolescent.

OBJECTIVES OF JUNIOR HIGH READING

Accepting the existing structure of the junior high school, however faulty, where does reading fit within its curriculum? Probably these years will be the last gasp of formalized reading instruction for the pupil. For reading does remain an accepted and workable feature of the junior high curriculum. As we are aware, senior high provides little formal instruction, reading being the task of the special teacher and more increasingly a recognized responsibility of the content teacher. The ultimate objective of junior high reading must be to assure security and comfort to the adolescent in the academic tasks ahead. Three vehicular objectives underpin this.

1. *Reinforcement of the "common" skills.* In the elementary years the child has been introduced to most of the entrance skills—word recognition, vocabulary development techniques, comprehension from identifying main ideas to minimal critical response. The time required to initiate skills rarely permits their sufficient exercise. Formal reading in grades 7 through 9 must provide opportunity for extension of these skills into new areas. Comprehension skills must be tested beyond main idea, the pupil challenged to evaluate, apply and think in new dimensions. Vocabulary tasks too must be expanded into ready use of context clues, study of roots and affixes, and broadened through purposeful search for and recording of new words and meanings. Simultaneously, the student must learn to cope rapidly with larger bodies of reading material, surveying printed materials, skimming and scanning, deliberately adjusting his rate to purpose and difficulty.

2. *Diversification of reading attack.* Junior high departmentalization permits shared reading responsibility with the content teacher. Throughout the elementary years, most reading tasks deal with narrative or carefully edited exposed materials, the former more abundant than the latter. The child develops meager facility in adjusting to the varied structural patterns of specialized materials. Yet expository material will comprise 75 percent of his reading fare in subsequent years. Moreover, the organizational patterns of the subject matters differ. It requires little argument to accept that mathematics has a vocabulary and conceptual structure distinct from social studies, as science has from language arts, as social studies and language arts have from each other. Access to these patterns and independence in their use may be achieved only with guided reading from the subject-matter specialist. There is evidence that little automatic transfer in reading methodology occurs from one subject to another; consequently the student needs to be introduced to and exercised in the separate demands of each subject matter. Further, it is to be expected that the study and reference skills will likewise be intensified and expanded within each classroom.

3. *Enrichment of personal reading.* Personal pleasurable reading peaks in early adolescence. In fact, the highest and lowest points of personal reading are the extremes of the junior high years: highest at grade seven and lowest in grade nine. How many ninth-grade teachers bewail that their pupils can read but won't! This desertion is probably a phenomenon of age; the excitement of self, friends and life's variety supersede the satisfaction of solitary reading. Nor is there a simple formula for sustaining the earlier interest of the child in private reading. Some children have acquired the habit and preserve it without inhibiting the social opportunities of growth. Others just quit — permanently. Many lapse to be reinspired at a later day. This latter group comprises the junior high population most amenable to the subtle persistent provision of time for leisurely reading. Of course, we are unable to know which pupil falls into which category so all must be allowed the opportunity. We know the catalog of strategies here: classroom libraries, an abundance of attractive books, sustained silent reading, frequent unevaluated book talks by teacher or pupils. Another possibility exists, which will be examined later, although it may be viewed as an administrative horror.

I have no intention of elaborating on the sub-skills, the alternatives, and the instructional modes of these simple guidelines. This task has already been done. The Proceedings of past IRA conferences abound in detailed explication of every facet of junior high reading. These volumes may be unknown to many or seem as historical artifacts to others. It is unfortunate that these messages go unheeded, confirming the frequently voiced contention that we tend to repeat ourselves. But the specific development you may need is available. For example, the 1964 Proceedings alone contains no less than forty papers concerned with junior high school reading.¹ It would be tedious and futile to review the specifics of these presentations which constitute a veritable catalog of junior high reading issues and tactics, each subject often echoed in more than one of the articles.

OTHER READING ISSUES

There are however several other pertinent matters which deserve consideration here. Where, you may ask, does the special reading teacher fit in? After all, such personnel are more common at the junior high than at the senior high level. Such a specialist, I trust, would perform many of the tasks normally associated with the position: work with remedial groups, consult with content teachers, offer model directed reading lessons in the classroom, and provide the time and atmosphere for extending reading to its ultimate developmental stage. Beyond that, however, the reading teacher ought to be an enrichment person, opening new doors for the young reader, making reading an exciting leisure opportunity. If so, then she must be permitted time to gain familiarity with the reading habits and interests of the young, to read their books and design stratagems for wedding book and child. (The reading class or hour ought to be the unique moment of the school day when students may explore printed matter at any level, under any guise, at any pace.) This familiarity is normally expected of content teachers or librarians but, would you agree, other matters always intervene, the content or syllabus or other obligations of job or subject matter. Really it does sound like an extravagance, an academic luxury. But substantiation for the suggestion rests with experience. We speak of the right book for the right child at the right moment. Few teachers or librarians have leisure to explore adolescent literature. Yet how else does one avoid the possibility of violating a child's sensibilities as could happen by presenting a book about a happy father-son camping trip to a child from a broken home? Too we have numerous apathetic junior high students, fully capable and equally turned off, who might conceivably be rescued by the kind of blameless leisure such a program embodies. Yes, it is idealistic and impractical, but it is practices such as these which partially account for the remarkable success of many individual reading programs that have flourished over recent years.

There is special concern with ninth graders in the junior high. Without older peer exemplification in the school and with their sights already leveled on the grown-up aspects of senior high, their growing indifference to reading, either as pleasure or task, poses a baffling problem. Here is the classic reluctant reader! These adolescents must become the transition focus. No level of the school system demands greater emphasis on reading in its every display than this, the final year of junior high. The student who leaves junior high with uncorrected reading problems stands a good chance of becoming a school dropout.² The student who can but won't read stands an equally good chance of becoming a lifetime dropout. If I were to select a single school year for intensive teacher in-service, it would be for the ninth-grade junior high teachers. More than anyone in the system they need to be knowledgeably convinced of the skills described above, of the practical approaches which will integrate reading into their curriculum, alert and sympathetic to every sign of student ennui toward reading. It is in ninth grade that I would insist on a specific free-reading component. Either we "catch" the student at this moment or risk increasing disenchantment in the

years ahead. And the same formula would apply to any terminal transition year, whether eight or nine.

Remedial reading at the junior high level is yet another issue. During this current year I have conducted a course in secondary remedial reading. Our pupil-subjects were all grade eight or nine students at a neighboring school, residential in large part, somewhat "urban" by American standards. This experience has led me to doubt whether "remedial" is the appropriate term for the junior high non-reader. We screened our subjects carefully, testing them and seeking advisement from teachers and counsellors. Our intent was traditional: a group of children of average intelligence two years retarded in reading. It was a profitable endeavor for everyone. Pupil gains were, as to be expected, somewhat mixed: sensational gains, disappointing stasis. In process we had a 90 percent pupil-attendance record on a voluntary Saturday morning basis. But it became evident that many of our pupils were not really remedial cases. Some were simply developmental; most were typical reluctant readers. Unquestionably we made a difference in the academic and reading lives of these sixteen children although much of our "magic" was simply a sustained "hawthorne effect." When before in their lives had these youngsters had total attention for seventy-five minutes a week from an intelligent sympathetic adult, especially a teacher? The pupils the majority of whom were the trouble-makers of the school responded famously, perhaps only because the tutors were concerned and responsive to their needs.

THE SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENT

Which perhaps emphasizes the major point of this essay, best illustrated by quoting a study made some years ago by William Paulo.⁴ He selected ten poor and ten good seventh and eighth grade readers, all in the 90-100 intelligence range. After studying their home and school backgrounds, he found that all shared common physical and environmental circumstances except that the poor readers had had a succession of reading failures from their first grade on with attendant academic consequences. He then asked the subjects to react to a set of self-constructed neutral pictures involving school and reading situations. As might be expected, the good readers demonstrated positive or optimistic views whereas the poor readers without exception expressed negative attitudes toward school and reading. Paulo concluded that: (1) the failure pattern unique to the disabled reader group had been a long-term one, originating for each at the first-grade level; (2) this pattern of failure had a markedly negative effect upon the attitudes of the disabled readers toward school and reading; and (3) by junior high school age, the disabled reader's negative attitude toward reading was firmly fixed as an integral part of his total personality.

I can only echo Paulo's recommendation that the junior high school particularly must make provision for fostering positive healthy attitudes toward reading. If such a spirit prevails throughout a faculty, supported by a vigorous effort to make reading a dynamic part of the curriculum, then

perhaps the junior high may become a suitable transition stage in guiding early adolescents toward the increased responsibilities of continuing academic life.

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INCREASING COMMUNICATION BETWEEN ADMINISTRATORS AND READING PERSONNEL

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What do administrators believe are the strong and weak points in their district's reading program? How do they evaluate the performance and capabilities of reading personnel? Do principals at the elementary and secondary levels differ in their expectations of the reading program?

These questions were raised recently in a survey of elementary and secondary administrators in New York State in the hope that this information would assist in developing needed training programs for administrators and teachers.

With tight budgets and reduced staffs putting additional pressures on administrators, reading personnel must assume a role of providing information to administrators about reading components, new materials, new techniques and needed programatic changes. Although administrators would like to function as the initiators and coordinators of curriculum change, in reality many are forced to operate chiefly as business managers and community relations specialists. Reading personnel might enhance both their own positions and the reading program, if they would serve as a primary source of information for their administrators.

This survey was completed to outline the needs, concerns and perceptions of administrators with regard to the reading program. Interviews were conducted in ten districts selected to sample districts of various sizes, locations and economic conditions.

Table 1 depicts how the administrators at the elementary and secondary level respond to seven questions about reading in their respective districts.

<i>Reading Program</i>	Percent of Administrators Responding		<i>High School</i>		<i>Elementary</i>	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Is the present program adequate?	14	86	57	43		
Is a written description of program available?	57	43	71	29		
Is the program reviewed regularly?	29	71	86	14		
Is there a procedure for reviewing new information?	57	43	57	43		
Is the program learner centered?	29	71	57	43		

Is there a regular staff development program?	14	86	57	43
Is there a need for comprehensive planning?	100	0	100	0

Both groups of administrators agreed that a need existed for comprehensive planning but they differed on what such planning should generate. Those at the elementary level wanted various program components coordinated into one program. At the secondary level, they preferred that the continuity of the reading program from elementary to secondary should be delineated and emphasized. The majority of administrators acknowledged that some written statement of the goals, methods and skills of the reading program existed and that provisions were not made for a regular, coordinated staff development program. Both groups were equally divided on whether the district had a policy for disseminating new reading information. Those who answered yes to this question said it was the responsibility of the reading coordinator.

The data indicated that the two groups differed substantially on four responses: the adequacy of the program; the existence of a regular review of the program; the presence of a learner centered approach; and a systematic program for staff development. In some instances, administrators from the same district responded differently to questions about district policies which indicates that certain district policies are not clearly defined.

Three topics were discussed during the interview which focused on the strengths and weaknesses of reading teachers and classroom teachers as perceived by principals in the areas of classroom techniques, personal characteristics and peer group relations (Figure 1). Generally, elementary principals tended to question the adequacy of pre-service training; first, to teach basic skills; second, to provide extended practice teaching experience; and third, to encourage individualization of the instructional programs. On the other hand, secondary administrators expressed their feelings of inadequacy when asked to evaluate reading programs but did recognize the need for more creative approaches to comprehension instruction. They also questioned the value of reading class separated from content instruction.

In their evaluations, secondary principals stressed the motivational, creative aspects of the reading teachers' job when working with either students or content area teachers. The elementary administrators tended to emphasize a knowledge about the total language process as one positive teacher quality and identified the inability to both diagnose and prescribe instruction as areas in need of improvement. Both groups of administrators recognized that reading specialists were hampered by a lack of time and authority when called upon to serve as a resource person or to implement staff training programs.

The results of this survey indicated that in-service workshops should focus on the separate needs of administrators and teachers at the secondary and elementary levels. It also provides a listing of administrator's needs for additional information.

The topics most frequently identified by secondary administrators as major concerns or needs are:

- nature of the reading process,
- methods and materials for content area reading;
- comprehension instruction;
- use of reading specialists as resource people; and
- motivating change with content teachers.

On the other hand, elementary personnel listed different concerns and interests such as:

- designing staff training sessions for diagnosing, prescribing and comprehension instruction
- evaluating material and programs
- effective methods of using staff for in-service.

Finally, reading specialists might write a proposal to generate a regular program review and a comprehensive reading plan. Both areas were identified by administrators as needed. As reading teachers assume a more active role in planning district goals and policies, effective reading programs should continue their development even in this age of restricted educational spending.

Figure 1

*Administrators' Perceptions of Reading Personnel
Secondary Principals*

<i>Strengths</i>	<i>Weaknesses</i>
1. Classroom techniques	
-- ability to locate appropriate material	-- difficulty teaching basic decoding skills
ability to motivate students personally	inability to creatively design programs
2. Personal characteristics	
-- willing to devote time and effort to assignments	-- lack of self-discipline for records and planning
-- anxious to continue professional improvement	-- lack of imagination
3. Peer group relations	
recognized as having necessary training	-- lack of authority to act as resource
-- willing to share materials and ideas	-- lack of confidence in working with peers

Elementary Principals

1. Classroom techniques
 - basic knowledge of reading process
 - instructional skills
 - knowledge of materials
 - lack of expertise to prescribe remediation
 - lack of achievement when working on comprehension
 - lack of skills in diagnosing
2. Personal characteristics
 - ability to achieve in small groups
 - demonstration of interest and motivation for work
 - tries to accomplish too much
 - lack of positive personality and “housekeeping” skills
3. Peer group relations
 - ability to motivate staff development
 - willingness to share material and methods
 - lack of time to work with staff
 - lack of service to offer staff

TEACHING LANGUAGE CLUES TO READING COMPREHENSION

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Reading Comprehension is an illusive entity. It is difficult to define, measure and teach. Researchers attempting to construct a theoretical model of the comprehension process for empirical examination are often confronted with a maze of confusing studies. The untangled maze is perhaps more discouraging. Confusion generally gives way to contradiction. Measurement problems are also prevalent in the area of comprehension. Naturally, any quality which is difficult to isolate and describe is equally difficult to measure. Finally, teachers must face the ominous responsibility of helping students obtain a quality which is vaguely defined and measured. It is the most difficult of these dilemmas with which this discussion deals; *teaching* students to gain meaning from the printed page.

The teacher of reading often becomes a teacher of decoding skills. The notions of phonics, structural analysis and dictionary skills are more precise and comfortable than the notion of teaching students to "think." A consonant blend or a compound word has a greater reality than does inferential or critical thinking. It would seem that it is far easier to teach something that can be underlined, printed, cutout of a magazine, or put on a cassette, than something which is more abstract. In short, word recognition has been treated as a more tangible commodity than comprehension. It is more readily definable, measurable and teachable. However, comprehension is far closer to the ultimate goal of mature reading than is single word decoding.

The primary purpose of this article is to propose a different teaching viewpoint on comprehension, one which removes some of the abstraction. The final product is a teaching sequence for comprehension skills that is parallel in form to the teaching sequences commonly used for word recognition.

What is Comprehension?

If teachers are to aid students in acquiring a set of behaviors or thought processes, it is helpful to be able to identify, isolate, and define the desired process and product. Teachers developing strategies for teaching comprehension may turn to the "experts" for definitional advice. They may also find little tangible help.

Comprehension is sometimes defined from a teaching point of view as a hierarchy or taxonomy of skills (Spache, 1961; Cleland, 1965; Barrett, 1968). Unfortunately, while a taxonomy appears to add authenticity to a teaching scheme the authenticity may be more implied than real. In other words one author may identify and sequence five comprehension skills while

another may identify and sequence five hundred. These appear to be different ways to slice the same ill-defined pie.

Another way the teacher may try to add reality to the definitional problem in teaching comprehension is by examining background research. Factory analytic techniques have been a common methodology for examining comprehension. (Davis, 1968; Homes and Singer, 1966; Vernon, 1962; Spearri, 1972.) These studies, when collectively examined, tend to support a three-factor definition of reading comprehension previously cited by Spache (1962). The three basic factors include:

1. Word Meanings
2. Idea Relationships
3. Reasoning

Unfortunately this approach does not establish what mental skills are to be taught to improve comprehension.

No definition of comprehension is an absolute. Teachers will not find an answer that is global as well as explicit. Knowledgeable and informed teachers must turn within for answers rather than searching for absolutes. The definition of comprehension must be one that the individual teacher believes in and can teach from with confidence. In short, a teacher who has taught about comprehension and arrived at a working conceptualization, will be more effective with his or her students than will the teacher who blindly accepts a sequence prepared by an "expert" without fully understanding the conceptualization.

How is Comprehension Presently Taught?

In examining the ways that comprehension is taught the teacher need not be exceptionally observant to note that one approach prevails. That is, teaching comprehension through the use of questioning techniques. Further, these questions which are generated often require only literal recall and recognition ability (Guszek, 1967). Questioning as a method of teaching is a very workable technique for some children in some situations, but it is heavily dependent on one major premise: the desired information must reside within the learner. The question may serve to help the learner organize or reorganize his or her thought processes, that (s)he must "contain" the desired response. In effect the questioning technique is often used to teach the learner what (s)he already knows. However, what happens when the learner does *not* contain the information? What happens when the skillfully designed inferential question falls flat because the learner has not made the inference?

At this point teachers of comprehension must have a working conceptualization of the comprehension process they are trying to teach, and this process must have some concrete reality directly observable for both the teacher and the student. It is felt that this reality is present in the form of language clues in the reading material that is to be comprehended. The teaching of comprehension *can* focus on the development of a reader who is searching for meaning, armed with a specific set of strategies. The use of

these strategies can be triggered by the occurrence of certain observable language clues.

At this point an example may serve to clarify the focus of the presentation. Read the following story:

Jimmy ran home from school as fast as he could go. Today was the day of the big baseball game between the B Street Bombers and the Park Hill Nine. He raced into the house and grabbed his baseball glove. As he started to run out the door his mother caught him and said, "If you do your home-work, then you can play baseball." Jimmy knew he didn't have time to do his home-work and get to the game on time.

Later in the afternoon as Jimmy hit his second homerun he wondered what would happen when he returned home.

Inferential comprehension may be dealt with superficially in this story through asking the question, "Did Jimmy take out the garbage?" This alone may be enough to "teach" many children about inference. However, another approach, one dealing with thought processes and language clues, may be more appropriate.

Many basic inferences are made using a structure known as an If . . . , then . . . clause. Children may first be introduced to the logical sequence of simple if . . . , then . . . implication. Then they can be made aware of the key words (If . . . , then . . .). Armed with this strategy the child could read the passage looking for the language clue to trigger his thinking process.

The Teacher's Thought Process In Developing a Strategy

For the purpose of conceptualization, comprehension will be defined here as four levels of thinking: literal, inferential, critical, and creative. There are no more absolutes in this definition than were cited in the previous definitional approaches, but the teacher must begin somewhere. *Literal* comprehension entails reading to recognize or recall information which is explicitly stated. *Inferential* comprehension entails taking literal level understandings and combining them to make interpretations beyond what is explicitly stated. *Critical* comprehension entails the combination of literal and inferential thinking to make more subjective judgments. *Creative* comprehension entails using thinking at all three previous levels to evoke emotional or affective responses.

This four-level breakdown is utilized to provide a common basis for conceptualization. If this format presents difficulty, view the breakdown as fluid and add or subtract levels as needed. The important requirement in teaching comprehension is that the teacher conceptualizes the process in comfortable and understandable manner.

Given the four levels of comprehension a framework needs to be established for the searching out of language clues. A simple analogy may help to clarify this need. If children are searching for San Diego on a map,

they might use a world map, a United States map, a California map, or a southern California map. The best strategy might be to use the southern California map first, and after locating San Diego to use increasingly larger maps to gain relative perspective. In the same way children searching for a specific language clue might begin their search with single words and then expand to sentences, paragraphs, stories, and finally, synthesize their thoughts through multiple stories.

For example, large meaning changes can emanate from single words. Consider three sentences:

President Carter confronted the group.
 President Carter confronted the throng.
 President Carter confronted the mob.

Three single words, group-throng-mob, seriously change the meaning of the sentence.

Meaning can also be gained from sentences. The if . . . , then . . . , example previously cited demonstrates inferential thinking within a sentence. These same concepts can also be extended beyond words and sentences to paragraphs and story passages.

The multiple story level is often neglected in the teaching of comprehension. In asking children to comprehend, teachers are often asking them to analyze or break down thoughts. It should not be forgotten that children need to be taught to see relationships across different stories and they need to be given a logical strategy for comparison and contrast synthesis.

The two variables presented, levels of comprehension and length of passages at which comprehension may operate, can be organized to form a matrix.

Figure One: A conceptualization of comprehension

	levels of thinking			
	1. literal	2. inferential	3. critical	4. creative
<i>length of passage</i>	1.1	2.1	3.1	4.1
word	1.2	2.2	3.2	4.2
Sentence	1.3	2.3	3.3	4.3
paragraph or story	1.4	2.4	3.4	4.4
multiple story				

In examining this matrix it should be noted that sixteen cells have been constructed. Four different levels of comprehension are represented and each of these levels divided by the length of passage which is used as the framework to organize the search for language clues. There is nothing absolute about this conceptualization, but it does have utility for the teacher.

What are the Language Clues?

It is impossible for any one person to fully establish all the clues that relate to any given cell in the matrix. The insightful teacher will constantly be adding strategies and clues to the framework. The following brief examination of specific language clues will be undertaken mindful of three factors:

1. The matrix is a skeleton outline to structure teacher thinking. The insightful teacher must add workable ideas at the applied level.
2. Most clues can be traced back to the single word or sentence level. Organization of these specific clues is what takes place at longer passage levels.
3. Inferential comprehension builds from literal, critical from literal and inferential, etc., in a hierarchical fashion.

For these reasons the discussion of specific language clues will center on four cells: literal comprehension of single words (1.1) sentences (1.2) inferential comprehension of single words (2.1) and sentences (2.2).

1.1 Literal comprehension of single words. Single words are the most obvious and apparent components of a written message. The reader should learn that certain thought processes are keyed with individual words. After the concepts have been presented at a concrete level the reader should be apprised of the key or clue words that indicate the process. For example, recognition and recall of a time sequence is an area that receives considerable attention under the area of literal comprehension. After readers have been assessed as needing development in this area, they begin to work on a concrete activity such as sequencing picture frames from a comic strip which have been cut apart. This is typically done to establish a concrete or low abstraction level understanding of time relationships.

Another concrete level activity to develop temporal ordering is enacting a story with figures on a story board or with puppets and then re-enacting the story. The creative teacher can find numerous ways to develop thought processes at the concrete level. As the child's ability to "think about" temporal order is developed the teacher should begin introducing the words that are the language clues to sequencing. In this instance the key words might be *before*, *during*, and *after* if the objective was of a low difficulty; or the key words might be *subsequently* and *retrospectively* at a higher difficulty level. Either way, the teaching strategy is to prepare the reader with some concrete clues for the search for meaning.

A brief example of two more types of single words that are clues to literal comprehension are appositives and pronoun referents. Words that are used in conjunction with appositive structures may help the student in recalling significant details. Appositives are an easily recognizable clue to single word meanings and usually appear with identifying punctuation, e.g., John, my brother, . . .

Sequence words, pronoun referents, and appositives are three examples of language clues to single word comprehension at the literal level of thinking. They relate directly to the skills of recognizing and recalling sequence and recognizing significant details.

1.2 Literal comprehension of sentences. Within the framework of the sentence most of the grammatical restrictions of the English language operate. In sentence length passages children can bring to bear their oral language knowledge on the comprehension task. The most obvious language clues to literal comprehension here are word order and punctuation. For example, consider the following three sentences:

Tony played first base!

Tony played first base.

Tony played first base?

The simple punctuation differences change the entire literal topic or main idea of these sentences.

Additionally, the relationship between literal comprehension of significant details and main ideas may often be uncovered in subordinate clauses. Consider the following sentences:

While the refinery exploded, the freighters waited
at the dock.

While the freighters waited at the dock, the refinery exploded.

The shift in word order from main to subordinate clause indicates a similar shift of the pieces of information from main ideas to significant details. Children need to be familiarized with subordinate conjunctions as language clues to this process. Teaching children to carefully dig through sentences for important punctuation and word order language clues can help them to develop strategies for recalling the main idea or recalling significant details.

2.1 Inferential comprehension of words. Inferential thinking is a series of thought processes or operations. These processes are cued by certain specific words. Some of the thought processes of inference involve classification. Piaget (1957) has described some of the logical strategies involved as negation, conjunction and disjunction. Negation is signaled by clue words such as *not*, *nor*, and *neither*; conjunction by *and*, *also*, and *both*; and disjunction by *or*, *either*, and *not both*. Consider the following sentence:

and

Jim or Bill pulled the bank robbery.

not

Obviously precise use of the clue words is all important in gaining the meaning of this passage. These basic operations are the core of inferential understanding. They relate directly to using class inclusive and exclusive inference. Children need to be made aware of the precise meanings of these words, and they need to search them out in their reading.

Another example of single word clues to inferential thinking is the *if . . . , then . . .* structure. This example has been previously cited, but also needs consideration here as it expands well into the sentence length passage. The words *if* and *then* are the clues to trigger the thought process of implication but they gain full meaning in complete sentence expansion.

2.2 Inferential comprehension of sentences. Determining fact from fiction is a comprehension skill that is often considered under the heading of inference. Once again there are certain clues in the written message that can help children to trigger their inferential thinking. One common clue is that fantasy, legend, fairy tales, etc. often include many context violations between the subject nouns and main verbs. Consider these sentences:

The wolf said "I'll huff and I'll puff . . ." (wolf/said)

The dish ran away with the spoon (dish/ran)

. . . along came a spider and sat down beside

her and said . . . (spider/said)

Stuart Little drove his car onto . . . (mouse/drove)

Each sentence is from a fictional piece. The subject of the sentence is doing something that in reality can not be done by the subject. Children need to be made aware of the restrictions between nouns and verbs and to look for violations of these restrictions as concrete clues that a story is fictionalized.

Other examples of logical relationships such as class inclusion and exclusion are often clued at the sequence level. Materials such as attribute blocks, people pieces, and color cubes published by Webster Divisions of

McGraw Hill are excellent concrete teaching materials for developing inferential thinking.

Implementing the Concepts Presented as a Teaching Style

To this point the discussion has been centered on the teacher's conceptualization of comprehension process, and on identifying some potential language clues. It is now necessary to set up an actual sequence of teaching that can be implemented. This sequence is designed to point up relationships in the teaching of word recognition skills to the teaching of thought processes or comprehension.

1. *Introduce the Concept or Thought Process at a Concrete Level.* The initial consonant *b* may be taught as sound at the beginning of words like those that can be shown in pictures, (ball, baby) or those that can be cut out of a mail-order catalogue (bicycle, baseball), or things that can be brought from home (banana, bow). Likewise, many comprehension processes can be demonstrated at concrete level. Attribute games and problems are one form of materials that science and math teachers often use to develop thinking skills. These materials are readily adaptable to any content area. The important point is to remember to help the child learn to think not merely to answer questions.

2. *Introduce the Language Clues that are Signals for the Thought Process the Student is Trying to Develop.* If children were being taught to syllabicate between identical consonants appearing side by side in a word, they would undoubtedly be presented with a number of words conforming to the generalization before they were asked to be able to select words to which the generalization applied. In the same way, children learning to differentiate appropriate and inappropriate if . . . , then . . . implications need to be made fully aware that they are reading to find a sentence in which the *if* and *then* both appear. These are their language clues to trigger the process they have been developing in step one.

3. *Provide Practice with the Process in Limited Context.* If the child had been introduced to the hard sound of *c*, it would be wise to provide reading selections including words such as *cake*, *cap*, *candle*, *cone* and *cup*. The wise teacher would not follow the lesson with a selection including the words *city*, *center*, *cell*, and *ceiling*. Therefore, after introducing if . . . , then . . . implication at the concrete level and carefully introducing the clue words, the teacher should find or write short selections which conform directly to the generalizations. After the child has had practice in using the cues, slight irregularities may be introduced such as a sentence with a stated *if* and an understood *then*.

4. *Provide Extended Practice with the Process in Context Where The Cues Are Not Present.* If the student has been taught to use context and the regular "ed" past tense marker as a word recognition aid it is hoped that some of this learning will transfer to decoding of irregular verbs which do not use the "ed" marker (eg. ran). Likewise once a comprehension process has been learned at the concrete level and the reader has ample practice in triggering the process through appearance of the language clues, it is hoped

that the thought processes will continue to function in the absence of the literal level clues.

Summary

A conceptual framework of reading comprehension including two variables, level of comprehension and length of passage has been presented. Four of the sixteen cells formed in this framework have been briefly explored to determine examples of specific language clues. Such traditional comprehension skills as finding the main idea, recalling significant details, detecting fact from fiction, drawing inferences, and recalling sequence of events have been fit into this framework. Further, some specific language clues have been cited as signals to each one of these thought processes. Finally, a four-step teaching sequence was introduced. The steps were:

1. Introduce the thought process at a concrete level.
2. Introduce the language clues that are signals of the process.
3. Provide practice in limited context.
4. Provide extended practice in a context where the cues are not present.

It has not been the contention that this article is a complete methodology for teaching reading comprehension. It is hoped that the information presented will provide a conceptualization and a few sample strategies to which the innovative teacher can move from the questioning technique toward teaching children to think.

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UNDERSTANDING THE HYPOTHESIS, IT'S THE TEACHER THAT MAKES THE DIFFERENCE

PART I

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Research Establishing the Pervasiveness of the Teacher Variable

Any explication of the essential components of an effective reading program will likely include a discussion of the teacher's role. Research findings have made it abundantly clear that the single most important element of an effective reading program is the regular classroom teacher. Many other factors are important, of course, but these research findings suggest pupil success or failure is most directly related to the "teacher variable" in the teaching of reading.

One of the best known research efforts related to the teaching of reading is the Cooperative Research Program in First Grade Reading Instruction, reported in detail in the *Reading Research Quarterly* (Bond and Dykstra, 1967). This research program involved twenty-seven individual studies carried on in various parts of the United States. The studies attempted to discover if there was an approach to initial reading instruction that would produce superior reading and spelling achievement at the end of grade one. Various instructional approaches, including the linguistic, basal, language experience, and i.t.a., were evaluated in terms of standardized measures of reading achievement.

Though Dykstra (1971) reported that there were problems in making sure that each approach was used in a pure form, the study's findings and conclusions were significant. In the first place the study pointed out that children seem to learn to read by a variety of materials and methods. The authors stated "... no one approach is so distinctively better in all situations and respects than the others that it should be considered the one best method and the one to be used exclusively" (Bond and Dykstra, 1967). The message was clear: Improved reading achievement is not a function solely of approach or method. The authors continue:

Future research might well center on teaching and learning situation characteristics The tremendous range among classrooms within any method points out the importance of elements in the learning situation over and above the methods employed. *To improve reading instruction, it is necessary to train better teachers of reading rather than to expect a panacea in the form of materials.* (p. 11)

Similar statements have been made by others. Ramsey (1962), in an evaluation of three groupings procedures for teaching reading, concluded, "The thing that the study probably illustrates most clearly is that the in-

fluence of the teacher is greater than that of a particular method, a certain variety of materials, or a specific plan of organization. *Given a good teacher, other factors in teaching reading tend to pale to insignificance.*"

Harris and Morrison (1969) reiterated this conclusion. These authors reported a three-year study of two approaches to teaching reading, basal readers vs. language experience. They found, as did Bond and Dykstra, that differences in mean reading scores *within* each method were much larger than differences between methods and approaches:

The results of the study have indicated that the teacher is far more important than the method. Clearly procedures such as smaller classes and provision of auxiliary personnel may continue to give disappointing results if teaching skills are not improved. It is recommended, therefore, that in-service workshops and expert consultive help be provided for all teachers and especially for those with minimal experience. (p. 339)

These studies have helped to establish the importance of the teacher variable in the teaching of reading. They have, in fact, stimulated much subsequent research as the sections entitled, "Teacher Preparation and Practice" in the Annual Summaries of Investigations Relating to Reading (Weintraub, *et al.*, 1973-74, 1974-75, 1975-76) attest. The teacher variable has been studied from a number of perspectives and always in the hope of finding and identifying the one variable which makes, or seems to make, the qualitative difference. Some examples of the dimensions of this variable most recently studied include the following: training (Roeder, Beal and Eller, 1973; Ahern and White, 1974; Garry, 1974), beliefs (Mayes, 1974), felt needs (Rutherford and Weaver, 1974; Yarrington and Kotler, 1973), problems encountered in teaching reading (Litchman, 1973), as well as information processing differences among teachers (Long and Henderson, 1974).

In spite of the fact that the reading profession has been fairly certain about the importance of the teacher variable and its relationship to pupil achievement in reading for roughly the past decade—its importance was suspected long before that—very little insight has been gained into the variable. After reviewing the research on the teacher variable, it is certainly possible to agree with Jackson (1966) who wrote:

. . . Almost all the noble crusades that have set out in search of the best teacher and the best method . . . have returned empty-handed. The few discoveries to date . . . are pitifully small in proportion to their cost in time and energy. For example, the few drops of knowledge that can be squeezed out of a half-century of research on the personality characteristics of good teachers are so low in intellectual food value that it is almost embarrassing to discuss them . . . (p. 9).

Part of the reason for this disappointment may be that the teacher variable, although well established as being important, has seldom been studied directly. In fact, if the research which establishes the importance of the teacher variable is closely examined (Bond and Dykstra, 1967; Ramsey, 1962; Harris and Morrison, 1969), one finds that none of these researchers were actually studying the teacher variable directly. Their identification of the variable apparently rests largely on their inability to find significance among and between the variables they were actually studying.

Recently Singer (1974) has suggested, from his analysis of low-achieving and high-achieving schools, that we modify the hypothesis that it's the teacher who makes the difference. "The more adequate hypothesis," he states, "is that to the degree that the faculty, including the principal, is trained, committed to, and implements any valid system of reading instruction now available, will there be a cumulative and significant difference in reading achievement." Although Singer doesn't title his hypothesis, I interpret him as recommending that *internal program thrust and consistency* be studied.

Another suggestion for modifying the hypothesis has been made by Harste and Burke (1976). We propose that the key component of the teacher variable is the teacher's *theoretical orientation*. We operationally define this component as a particular knowledge and belief system about reading which strongly influences critical decision-making related to both the teaching and learning of reading. Our findings suggest that both teachers *and* learners hold particular and identifiable theoretical orientations about reading which in turn significantly effect expectancies, goals, behavior, and outcomes at all levels.

Although Singer (1974) does not propose that theoretical orientation is the key dimension of internal program thrust and consistency which he recommends be studied, our findings suggest that such an exploration would be fruitful. In fact, if a school system had adopted a particular instructional program, had made sure it was being implemented appropriately, and had chosen criterion measures in accordance with the thrust of the program, we would argue that the variable of theoretical orientation was the key component of this thrust. An explication of the notion of theoretical orientation as well as examples drawn from four years of field observation follows.

A New Hypothesis for Reading Teacher Research: Both the Teaching and Learning of Reading are Theoretically Based

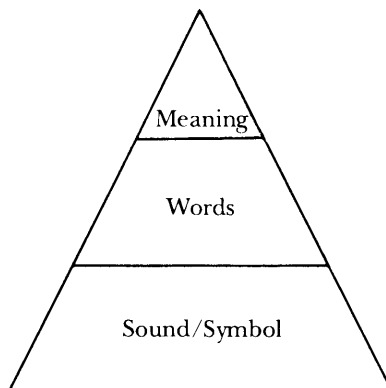
Because of our involvement in the teaching and supervision of college students within reading practicum experiences, we have constant entry to a number of public school classrooms. One exciting dimension of this experience is the exploration of the teacher's role in assisting children with their acquisition of reading competency. What has become both readily apparent and surprisingly persistent concerning the relationship between reading instruction and the reading process is that: (1) despite atheoretical statements, teachers are theoretical in their instructional approach to reading, and (2) despite lack of knowledge about reading theory, per se, students are theoretical in the way in which they approach learning to read.

Theoretical Views of Reading

Before defining by example what is meant by theoretical orientation as observable in student and teacher behavior, a verbal definition of the concept seems in order. Put simply, a theory is a system of assumptions through which experiences are organized and acted upon. In terms of cognitive psychology (see Anderson, *et. al.*, 1976), a theoretical orientation is best thought of as a cognitive structure or generalized schemata which governs behavior. Operationally then, a theoretical orientation is a particular knowledge and belief system held toward reading. In practice, this knowledge and belief system operates to establish expectancies and strongly influences a whole host of decisions made by teachers and pupils relative to reading. It is possible to cite a number of theoretical views of the reading process. Singer and Ruddell, in their volume *Theoretical Models and Processes of Reading* (1976), present some nine or more such models of the process – an effort which in no way exhausts the field. Current views of reading can be organized into three relatively distinct clusters and perceived as falling along a continuum. Their placement on the continuum is determined by what components of the reading process each cluster is willing to exclude from instructional settings.

One identifiable cluster can be labeled a sound/symbol or decoding orientation. In this instance reading is perceived as an offshoot of oral language, the chief accomplishment of which is dependent upon developing and manipulating the relationships between the sounds of speech and their graphic symbols. While people who hold this view of reading don't argue against the existence of syntax and meaning as components of language, they do not see them as primary factors in the acquisition of the process. Language is perceived as a pyramid, the base of which is sound/symbol relationships, the capstone of which is meaning. Figure 1 illustrates this model.

FIGURE 1: Decoding Model of Reading.



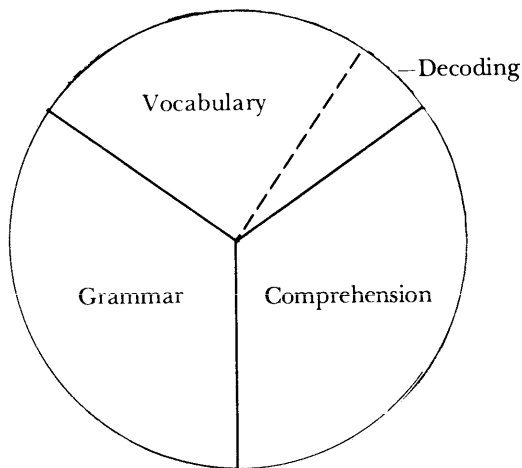
McCracken and Walcutt in the Teachers' Edition of *Basic Reading* (Lippincott, 1963), exemplify this orientation:

"Do you purpose to define reading as mere word-calling without regard for meaning?"

"Yes we do. Reading is, first of all, and essentially, the mechanical skill of decoding, of turning the printed symbols into the sounds which are language."

A second cluster which views reading as one of four language arts—listening, speaking, reading and writing—can be labeled a skills orientation. The four language arts are seen as being composed of (and thus learned as) a collection of discrete skills which share "common abilities." Figure 2 illustrates this model.

FIGURE 2: Skills Model of Reading.



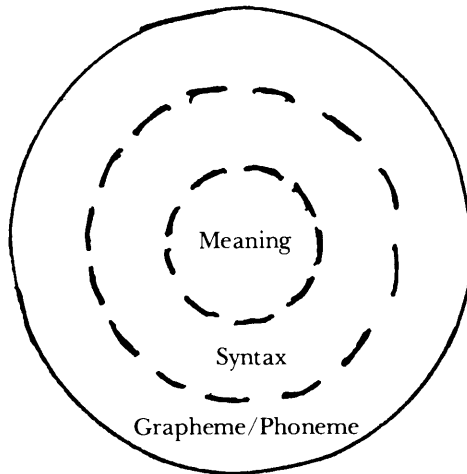
Because language is perceived as a pie from which individual "skill slices" can be extracted for instruction, it becomes a relevant task to develop skill hierarchies. Text book authors who operate out of this model usually provide instruction in all three component areas for each lesson. Because persons holding this model believe the distinctive feature or key to reading success is the word, new vocabulary items are typically introduced prior to reading. Following silent and oral reading a series of comprehension questions are given. Workbook activities complete the model by providing skill practice on usage. Robinson, Monroe, and Artley in the *New Basic Readers* (Scott Foresman, 1962), best illustrate this model and conclude in

the *Teachers' Edition* that one makes sense out of reading by stringing words together. The quote which follows captures this orientation's emphasis on words as well as the notion that reading is a sequential skill mastery process.

"Initially a child must learn to identify printed individual words and relate them to a meaningful context. This is best done by a) rapidly developing a basic sight vocabulary and b) teaching word recognition skills."

A third theoretical orientation, which we term whole language or language based, views reading as one of four ways in which the abstract concept of language is realized. This orientation assumes not only that the systems of language are shared, but that they are interdependent and interactive aspects of a process. Figure 3 illustrates that under this model language is conceived of as a sphere. This sphere is composed of a meaning core enwrapped in a syntactic structure and sheathed with a phoneme/grapheme system. When aspects of language are focused upon for instructional purposes, the sphere is penetrated and all three systems are extracted simultaneously. In this view, reading, whether or not for instructional purposes, is always focused upon comprehending. Text book authors who compose materials from

FIGURE 3: Language Based Model of Reading.



this perspective often do so building from the oral language base of the reader. Under this view speaking differs from reading only by the addition of the grapheme component in the outer ring of the model. Given this perspective, it follows that reading educators ought to build upon the strong

language systems which the child already has mastered when teaching reading. Scott Foresman Reading systems (Aaron, *et. al.*, 1971), the Sounds of Language Program (Martin and Brogan, 1972), and the core of the LEIR Program (Van Allen, 1974) exemplify this approach. Kenneth Goodman, one of the authors of the Scott Foresman Reading Systems program clearly exemplifies this model when he says:

“Reading is the active process of reconstructing meaning from language represented by graphic symbols (letters), just as listening is the active process of reconstructing meaning from the sound symbols (phonemes) or oral language.” (Smith, Goodman, and Meredith, 1976)

With these examples in mind, it might be well to restate the findings of our field observations; namely, that we found *both teachers and students* to have theoretical orientations to reading (theoretical orientations, we might add parenthetically, as distinctive and different from one another as those described above).

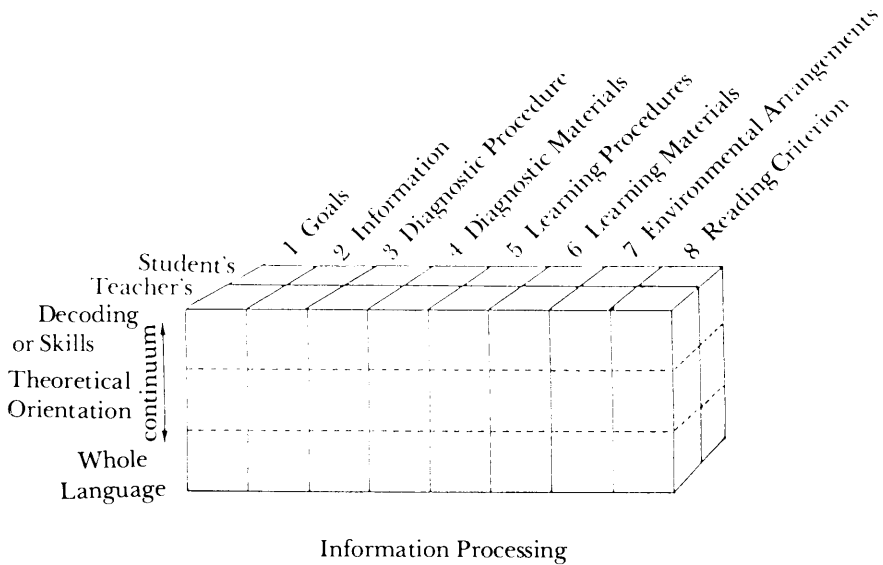
Research Paradigm

The research paradigm used to explore the hypothesis that both the teaching and learning of reading is theoretically based is presented in Figure 4. This paradigm suggests that a study of the decisions made by both teachers and pupils relative to what goals they select, what information or data they use to make decisions as to what progress they (students) or their students (teachers) are making in reading, and the like, are key to the identification of theoretical orientation. It should be noted that this paradigm includes not only a teacher dimension, but also a student dimension. While this is admittedly a new dimension in teacher education research, our inquiry suggests student performance is often key to understanding teacher performance. Put simply, student reading performance, at least in part, mirrors instruction. Put another way, our research suggests a student's predisposition to apply one theoretical model over another is strongly influenced by the instructional environment. Major environmental influences seem to be the classroom teacher's theoretical orientation or model of reading and the text author's theoretical orientation or model of reading. This phenomenon is particularly observable among less proficient readers who appear more dependent upon the model which is available for the development of reading strategies.

Examples of Theoretical Instruction

That the teaching of reading is theoretical in practice is something we learned early in our long series of classroom visits. In one of the first of such visits, for example, the authors watched a first grade teacher teach a reading lesson. After she had completed the lesson, we asked the teacher if she would mind if we would bring our undergraduate reading methods class into her room to see her teach an actual reading lesson, as she personified

FIGURE 4: Research Paradigm.



1. Goals Selected and Weighing of Goals
2. Information Selected for Diagnosis and the Weighing of such Information
3. Diagnostic Procedures To Be Used
4. Diagnostic Materials To Be Used
5. Learning Procedures To Be Used
6. Learning Materials To Be Used
7. Environmental Arrangements To Be Used
8. Reading Criterion To Be Used

the whole-language approach to reading in her teaching. The teacher's response was classic, "This program personifies nothing. I simply teach reading." Despite her disclaimer, what actually transpired in the classroom was clearly whole-language in nature. The teacher had a cucumber in a jar and had obviously had it for several weeks. The cucumber, at the time of this observation, was black with mold. The students were asked to observe the cucumber and to note changes which had taken place from the week prior. As the children offered descriptive statements, the teacher wrote these on the blackboard. In the process of doing this, one student remarked that they could have combined two of the sentences. The teacher immediately picked up on this idea by suggesting that the children think of various ways they could express their ideas about the molding cucumber in the classroom. While the teacher suggested her reading program "per-

sonifies nothing," an analysis of this instructional sequence suggests the operationalization of a whole-language approach to instruction.

Even more obvious were teachers holding a decoding view of reading. They, too, of course, maintained they were "pushing" no reading theory; yet, they repeatedly stressed that the child sound out the word. One teacher, we remember so vividly, was almost a perfect type-class of the theoretical position. Throughout the lesson she had children decode words. Never once during our observations in her classroom did we see her explore with the children the meaning of what they were reading. The story served solely as a vehicle for teaching phonic skills. She, like the theoretical model upon which she was operating, assumed that if the word was decoded, meaning was implicit. Return visits to her classroom found her conducting similar lessons.

Watching teachers work with individual children in reading adds further credence to the theoretical nature of instruction. Interestingly, teacher response repertoires to children who encounter an unfamiliar word in print is especially illuminating of their theoretical orientation. We found few teachers who had expanded repertoires. Most tended toward having a single high priority response pattern. Teachers who represented a decoding theory responded consistently with, "Sound it out," or "What other word do you know that begins with that letter?" Teachers holding a whole-language orientation to reading unknowingly, if their denials mean anything, had a favored response repertoire. The verbal ones prompted, "What do you think that word might be from the rest of the sentence?" The nonverbal ones often offered no help, thereby gaining information as to what strategies the child had for unlocking unfamiliar words encountered in print. Both types of teachers said in post-interviews that they followed this procedure so that children would learn to think about what they were reading to figure out unfamiliar words. Their reasons clearly reflect a theoretical orientation.

Interestingly, as we have mentioned before, teachers had extremely limited response repertoires. We can recall from neither our memories nor our notes a teacher who used all of the responses discussed in this section. The typical pattern was to offer prompts exemplifying a single theoretical orientation.

Not all teacher's responses to pupils were so obvious, however. One teacher, for example, simply and immediately gave the pupil the word if she ever hesitated in oral reading. She was, to an observer, encouraging the pupil to rely on her for cues to unlocking unfamiliar words in print. Because we found her behavior atypical, we purposely observed her classroom on several occasions. She remained consistent. Whenever a child came to an unfamiliar word, she would simply give the word. Because she felt it so important that the child comprehend the material being read, she elected not to interfere in the communicative process of reading, but rather to strengthen it. While this teacher maintained she was atheoretical, her verbal explanation and teacher behavior suggest she was acting out of a consistent theoretical framework.

To further explore the hypothesis that the teaching of reading is theoretically based, we often have extensive interviews with teachers after we observe them teaching. One of our favorite questions is, “Who is the best reader in this class?” This question usually elicited some name, to which we ask, “What does he/she do that makes you think he/she is such a good reader?” Again the responses that this question solicits strongly suggests a theoretical orientation.

“He uses phonics and can really sound out some difficult words.”

“She understands everything she reads.”

“He really tries to sound out words!”

Because teachers are often uneasy about this line of questioning and some, in fact, probably wisely, asked, “What do you mean by best?” we have been forced to develop a better procedure for eliciting their responses. We do this by asking teachers to rank order from best to worst the readers in their class. We then give those pupils listed as the best reader and the worst reader a Reading Miscue Inventory (Goodman and Burke, 1970). Later in interview with the teachers we play the tapes of these children reading and ask the teacher, after she listens to the tape, to tell us why the pupil was ranked as he was. This procedure, although developed quite recently, permits the teacher to be more explicit in her definition. With her explicitness comes even clearer indications of theoretical orientation, as the following reading miscue worksheet and teacher interview transcript indicate.

Student Worksheet (Tape transcript of oral reading)

C & Clavier & Turntell
THE CLEVER TURTLE

- 101 One day a man left his village to tend to
102 his field of corn. But he found only an
103 open place where young corn had stood
104 straight and tall.
105 The man looked down at the poor broken
106 stalks and saw a large turtle dozing in
107 the sun. He picked up the turtle and
108 carried him back to the village.

key -- omissions - circled

substitutions - written above word

s - sounds like

RM - repeated miscue

Interview Transcript

Interviewer (I): What would you say about that tape? Does it reflect how this student normally reads?

Teacher (T): Yes. That's a good tape. That's how Jimmy reads. That's really a hard piece, though.

I: Well, we chose the piece so that there would be things the child didn't know. Why did you pick Jimmy as the best reader?

T: Well, because he really sounds out the words well. You can tell that he is using what we've talked about. He really tries to get the word. And he usually does.

Oftentimes we have opportunities to discuss with the teacher things that have transpired while we are observing formal lessons in the classroom. When looking over student papers, one of our favorite questions is, "What do you suppose that means?" pointing to an incorrect response which the pupil had made on a worksheet. How teachers process information, as well as what information is selected for processing, is clearly another measure of theoretical orientation. Similarly, questions such as "Why did you select those materials?" and "Why did you use that approach?" are more often than not good stimuli for responses indicating theoretical orientation.

Probably the most personally surprising result of our observations is the consistency which we see in terms of theoretical orientation across behavior. Theoretical orientation seems consistent through goal, diagnostic materials, and reading criteria selection. We have found no examples of eclectic behavior (that is, teachers teaching from one theoretical position on one visit and from another on another visit), and this in spite of the fact that several of the teachers reportedly "did a little of everything every day."

End of Part I—(Part Two will appear in Winter '78 issue.)

PROFILE ANALYSIS OF DIAGNOSTIC READING TESTS: IS IT WARRANTED?

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Through the use of various screening instruments and achievement measures, a number of children are identified as possible reading disability cases. Once identified, these children are subjected to further testing usually with a reading diagnostic test which attempts to identify specific strengths and weaknesses in performance. Discussions with school psychologists, educational diagnosticians, and teachers of children with reading disabilities suggest that much credence is still placed on profile analysis of diagnostic reading test data as suggested by their authors (Durrell, 1957; Karlsen, Madden, and Gardner, 1966) among others. Reviews by Wechsler (1974), Sattler (1974) and Hirshoren and Kavale (1977), in the area of intelligence testing, provide appropriate cautions regarding the practice of profile analysis. Since it is not unusual to find remedial programs developed at least in part on these profiles, it might be profitable to examine why profile analysis adds spurious specificity and misarticulated authority to quasi diagnostic statements.

Using the *Stanford Diagnostic Reading Test* (SDRT) Level II, form W as an example,¹ the pitfalls of profile analysis can be examined. When dealing with any measurement instrument, an important consideration is its stability and consistency which is expressed by the reliability coefficient. While the reliabilities of individual subtests in the SDRT are acceptable (r 's range from .72 to .96), it is apparent that some subtests are less stable than others in measuring whatever the subtests do in fact measure. Reliability as an index of reproduce-ability is an important consideration in interpreting scores earned on separate subtests since the lower the reliability of a particular subtest, the less confidence there is that an accurate assessment of true ability has been achieved.

While the reliability coefficient expresses stability in a relative sense, a more useful statistic is the standard error of measurement (SEM) which expresses test reliability in an absolute sense, that is, with score units. The reliability coefficient and standard deviation provide an estimate of the standard error of measurement ($SEm = SD \sqrt{1-r}$) (Doppelt, 1956). This statistic indicates how much an individual's score would be expected to vary upon repeated examination with the same test.

¹ The SDRT is used only as a representative example of a type of test format and we do not mean to single it out for specific criticism.

Specifically, the standard error of measurement indicates the band of error surrounding a test score. It is used to define limits around an obtained score within which there is reasonable assurance that an individual's true score exists. At grade 5, the standard errors of measurement for the SDRT subtests range from 1.4 to 4.6 (p. 29). The reasonable limits around an obtained score can be determined by the level of confidence desired. If the usual .05 significance level is used, the 95% confidence interval can be calculated by multiplying the standard error of measurement of each subtest by 1.96 (± 1.96 SEM) (Hays, 1973). The resulting values indicate a 95 percent confidence that the individual's true score is not more than ± 1.96 SEM away from the obtained score. For example, in defining the 95% confidence interval at grade 5 for the SDRT, variations in subtest scores range from 6 to 18 raw score points around the obtained scores depending upon the particular subtest. On the SDRT, raw scores are converted to stanines on which the profiles are based. Figure 1 presents a hypothetical protocol in which the 95% confidence limits are portrayed for raw scores converted to stanines. (See figure one.)

The band portrayed in Figure 1 represents the fact that a score will be in this range 95% of the time. The most striking feature is the possible variation in scores for individual subtests. If stanines 4, 5, and 6 are considered average, it can be observed that the variations can range from average to superior (stanine 9), from average to below average (stanine 2 and 3), or average to poor (stanine 1). Thus, there is considerable variation in the amount by which a single obtained score may differ from the hypothetical true score due to errors of measurement. This would suggest that the interpretation of performance on a particular subtest is not warranted because of the considerable variation possible. Figure 2 represents the profile from the obtained raw scores converted into stanine equivalents. (See figure two.)

The resulting profile is then analyzed in an attempt to assess those specific reading skills which can be considered strong, adequate, or in need of remedial instruction. This approach, although attractive on the surface, may lead to the development of programs which actually work against the child's real needs. The reason is found in the magnitude of error present on subtest scores which allow for any number of theoretically possible profiles based upon the same hypothetical obtained scores (presented in Figure 2) and also within the 95% confidence interval. Figures 3 and 4 present other theoretically possible profiles based upon that same data. The result is a dilemma for the reading teacher: What is the true picture of the child's abilities? What remedial program will be most effective for this child? (See figures 3 and 4.)

The purported purposes of profile analysis are the identification of relatively strong and weak areas of functioning but an examination of Figures 2, 3, and 4 suggest that this goal is difficult to achieve because of lack of stability in individual subtests. The results are three different profiles which can be interpreted quite differently even though the total raw scores remain the same. While total performance is less resistant to variation because of high overall reliability, the larger error inherent in

FIGURE 2
PROFILE BASED UPON
RAW SCORES CONVERTED TO STANINES

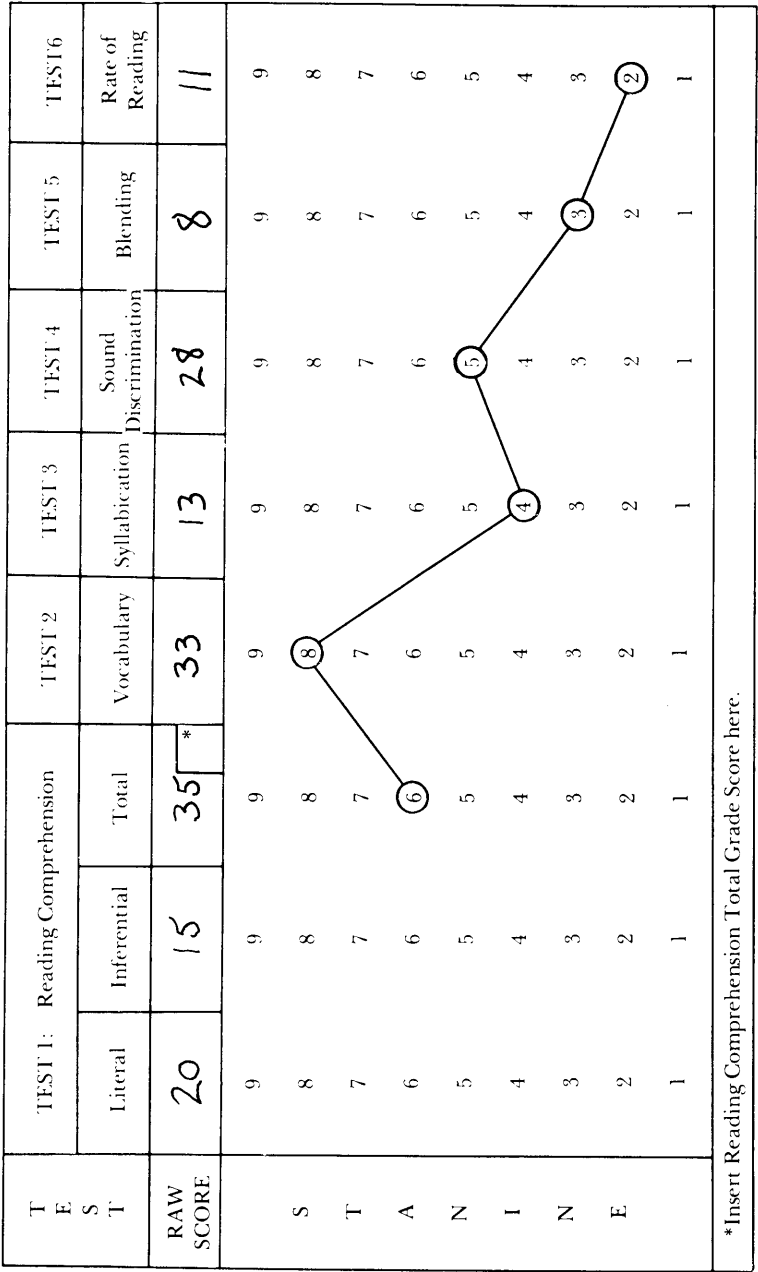
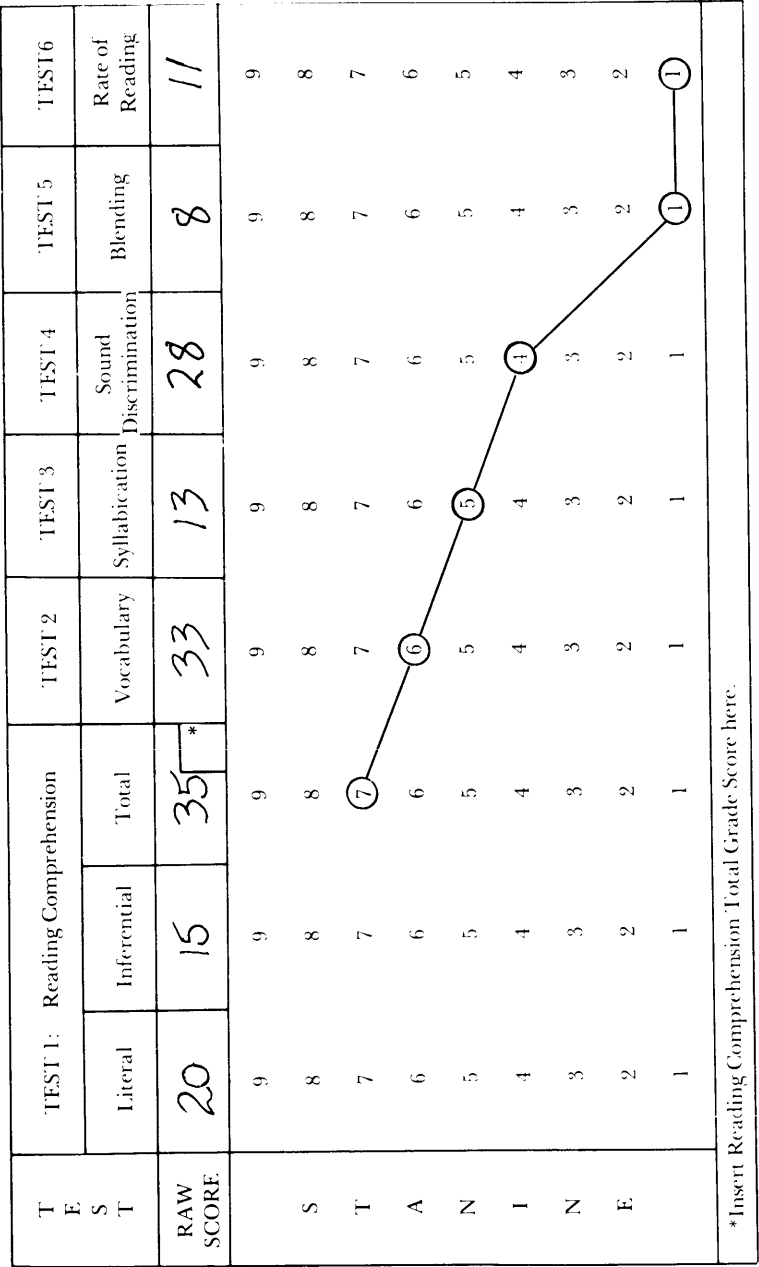


FIGURE 3
VARIATION I



individual subtests should preclude the use of profile analysis for the development of remedial programs.

Goodman (1968) and Smith (1971), in discussions of the reading process, emphasize that reading should be viewed as a global entity rather than a series of independent and uniquely defined skills. They further suggest that definitions of reading should avoid singling out any ability as crucial or overwhelmingly important. Thus, while profile analysis appears a logical and rational basis for educational planning, the fact that individual subtests representing single abilities are the foundation suggests caution in interpretation. Rather than being viewed as singular analyzable entities, the results of diagnostic tests should be interpreted in a holistic manner since subtests are only a means of assessing discrete abilities and do not highlight the complex interrelationships of those abilities to the total process.

The difficulties inherent in such tests as the SDRT, Durrell Analysis of Reading Difficulty (Durrell, 1957), or the Diagnostic Reading Scale (Spache, 1963) would suggest that they are best utilized in comparing a child's performance with a norm group. This use of diagnostic reading tests needs to be verified by the use of specific skill measures (Carver, 1972). The results may otherwise lead to the development of highly questionable remedial programs.

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THE COMPONENTS OF A COMPETENCY BASED ELEMENTARY READING PROGRAM

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Two fourth grade teachers were overheard having the following conversation:

Teacher A: "I'm confused about the concept of a competency based reading program."

Teacher B: "So am I. I don't know what I'm being asked to do. And, what is a module?"

Teacher A: "I don't know what a module is. We really need some help!"

Such conversations are typical among teachers who are trying to develop competency based elementary reading programs. As an aid to such teachers, this article will provide simple explanations that describe the components of this type of teaching strategy.

* * * * *

The concept of competency based elementary reading instruction

In a competency based reading program, the instructional emphasis is on each student's successful attainment and completion of the specific learning objectives provided. As such, the length of time required for each individual student to complete the objectives may be different. For example, it might take Ronny two weeks to master a set of objectives which took Tina only two days to master.

The elements of a learning module

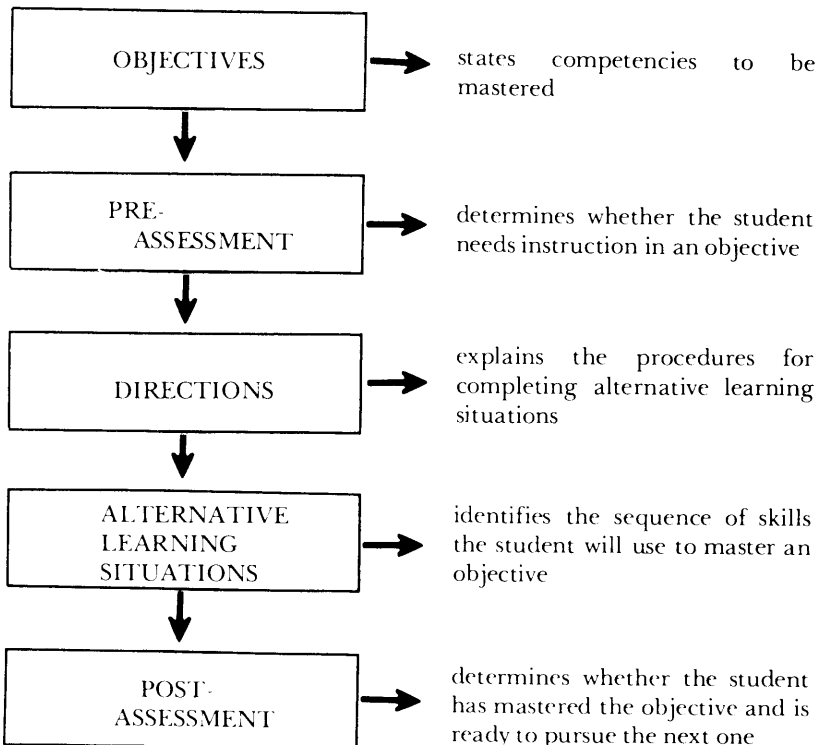
A learning module is a teacher-directed learning plan that incorporates student-directed alternative learning situations (Cooper and Weber, 1973). A module usually contains the following elements: (1) performance objectives; (2) an assessment to be administered before instruction begins (pre-assessment); (3) written and oral directions for completing each alternative learning situation; (4) a list of alternative learning situations; and (5) an assessment to be administered after instruction has been completed (post-assessment). The following definitions explain these components in more detail:

1. *Performance Objectives.* This component states each competency to be mastered.
2. *Pre-assessment.* This component determines whether the student can successfully meet each objective before receiving instruction. Theoretically, if the student can pass the pre-assessment with a competency level of 90% , he has mastered the competency and is ready for the next objective.

3. *Oral and written directions for the module.* This component indicates in descriptive terminology specifically how the alternative learning situations are to be completed by the students. These directions might include such components as when to use paper and pencil, what page to use in the module or in a workbook on a given date of the month, which audio tape to use on a given date, which filmstrip to use on a given date, and what type of grouping situation to expect.
4. *Alternative learning situations.* This component identifies the sequence of skills the student will use to successfully complete the performance objective if he has not passed the pre-assessment. Alternative learning situations should be designed to utilize a personally suitable learning mode (visual, auditory, or tactile-kinesthetic) so that each student can identify his own most appropriate option for mastering each objective.
5. *Post-assessment.* This component indicates whether the student has successfully met the objective. When he has met the objective, he is ready to pursue the next one, but the student not successfully meeting the objective must have additional instruction. The post-assessment may be identical or similar to the pre-assessment.

The following diagram outlines the five components in modular development:

The Components of Modular Development



Now let's consider what happens during each of the five components of modular development.

Title of Module: *Auditory Discrimination of Beginning Consonant Sounds*

Name of Student: _____

Date: _____

1. Performance objective: Given a stimulus word beginning with *n* or *d*, the student will pair the two words beginning with the same letter sound. (The teacher selects her method of instructional delivery. The performance objective may be read by the students, may be explained by the teacher, or may be delivered by an instructional substitute, such as a tape recorder or a paraprofessional.)

2. Pre-assessment: Using the set of six words in the following list, say to the student, "You should listen carefully to each set of three words that I pronounce." (Teacher or instructional substitute should pronounce each set of words.) "Which one sounds like _____ at the beginning?" (Teacher or instructional substitute should pronounce the stimulus word.)

NOTE: The criterion for objective mastery should be a competency level of 90% (less than 90% should require the student to complete the module).

pay	rain	nail	Which one sounds like nap at the beginning?
evening	did	corn	Which one sounds like down at the beginning?
nest	map	pot	Which one sounds like nap at the beginning?
send	door	high	Which one sounds like down at the beginning?
spray	work	north	Which one sounds like nap at the beginning?
dance	fly	July	Which one sounds like down at the beginning?

3. *Directions*: The purpose of this task is to teach the learner to auditorily discriminate the *n* and *d* sounds from among at least two other beginning consonant sounds. The teacher must direct the student's attention by stating what is to be learned and by stressing the beginning

sounds in each set of words. The teacher should also explain the procedures for completing the *Alternative Learning Situations*.

4. *Alternative Learning Situations*: The teacher should provide the student with a learning technique for auditorily discriminating the differences among beginning consonant sounds.

Once the skill has been taught effectively, the teacher should provide the student with two or more alternative learning situations. Two examples of alternative learning situations could be to:

1. Provide the student with an auditory listing of these words— full, family, February, five, hole, follow— and ask the student to name the word that has a different sound at the beginning.
2. Provide a word for the student, and ask the student to provide a different word that has the same initial consonant sound.

5. *Post-assessment*: Procedure for administration and criterion for objective mastery are the same as for the pre-assessment.

NOTE: Objective mastery of less than 90% should require the student to be re-cycled through the module and should require the student to receive additional skill practice.

new	pour	stop	Which one sounds like never at the beginning?
dip	bathtub	teddy bear	Which one sounds like dig at the beginning?
park	net	hockey	Which one sounds like never at the beginning?
dirt	beach	answer	Which one sounds like dig at the beginning?
needle	market	laugh	Which one sounds like never at the beginning?
golf	question	broom	Which one sounds like dig at the beginning?

You should think of this format as an example for the teacher to use in constructing competency-based reading modular systems for students.

The role of the classroom teacher in a competency based reading program

The teacher should serve as a resource person by being involved on a daily basis both with program development and with individual children, groups of children, and the whole class. The involvement of the teacher with program development includes establishing objectives, and developing assessments and alternative learning situations.

The level of student performance in competency based elementary reading program

The classroom teacher should identify a level of performance for the pre-assessment and post assessment. Usually a teacher identifies 95% or better as a proficiency level; 85% or less as an incomplete or re-cycle level. Actually these performance levels should be identified by the classroom teacher, because she knows the individual abilities of her students.

The level of performance should become an important component of the teacher's record-keeping file. The teacher should use an evaluation checklist that contains the following information: (1) the pre-assessment and post-assessment performance on each objective for each student; (2) the knowledge skills completed for each objective; (3) the instructional materials utilized by each student for each objective; (4) the descriptive data needed such as the independent, instructional, and frustration reading grade levels' and (5) the skills mastered in reading instructional areas and other related language arts areas.

* * * * *

Do you remember the conversation at the beginning of this article that summarized the emotions of two fourth grade teachers who are beginning to teach in a competency based elementary reading program? If these two teachers utilize the description of the components of a competency based elementary reading program, their initial developmental strategies will be more effective. These components do work when developing a competency based elementary reading program—try these components soon in your school's reading program.

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A TEST OF THE UTILITY OF HIGH FREQUENCY WORDS

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How much utility there is for reading instruction in the lists of the most frequently used words (MFUW) has been a topic of great interest for several reading experts. For example, Dechant (1970, p. 248) notes that the 150 MFUW (in this case those of the basal readers from several different series) are "especially useful in group activities such as experience charts, word games and word drills." Durkin (1970, p. 118) also believes that these MFUW are "highly serviceable" for basal reader stories. So much so, she says (1970, p. 424), that one good way to diagnose children's speed-of-reading habits is to have them read Dolch's (1951) list of the MFUW. (Durkin appears to contradict herself on this matter, however, when she [1972, p. 249] insists on another occasion that "the easiest words to learn often are the least useful.") Heilman (1967, p. 189) agrees with the position that the MFUW are highly important when he comments that "a child who has trouble with many of these [the 100 MFUW] will find reading a frustrating task."

Reading experts have even discussed the stage in beginning reading at which the MFUW should be taught. Here they do not all agree, however. For example, Durkin (1972, p. 250) argues that beginning readers should first "Concentrate on words that are of special interest" to such children. Then, at some unnamed point later in time the teacher is advised "to start introducing [high frequency] words which might not be very appealing but which are, in fact, basically important." Jones (1971, p. 62) disagrees strongly about this. To her, "the learner will gain nothing by passing them [the MFUW] by for temporary learning." Thus, the child "might just as well learn them once and for all," Jones asserts. According to Veatch (1966, p. 218), however, all lists of the MFUW are beside the point. She maintains that "no words lists are needed from any other source" than the child's spoken language.

Shortcomings of the MFUW

Other experts in reading instruction are also not convinced that the materials for basal reading instruction should depend heavily on lists of the MFUW. For one thing, Smith (1971, pp. 8-9) points out that such high frequency words are not on all occasions equally recognizable. He reminds us that "one might think that for any given reader, a particular word would be just as easy or difficult to read in whatever circumstances it occurred. . . . But this is not the case; ease in identifying a word depends very much on the words around it and on our prior knowledge." Beyond this, Stauffer (1970,

p. 5) protests that a dependence on high frequency words, especially in basal readers, has resulted in a “vocabulary poverty” of such a nature that it “puts school children at a serious disadvantage.” Walcutt, et al. (1974, p. 7) agree. They observe that the writers of ordinary basal readers, influenced by the notion of the importance of high frequency words, require the child at the end of the third grade to learn to read only 1345 words. This, they claim, is far too few. A child at this level in school is “capable of reading in a vocabulary of 15,000 words, or more,” they avow.

Other Praise of the MFUW

It is obvious there is strong support for, and vigorous negative criticism against the idea that the MFUW have great utility for reading instruction. None voice the affirmative of this contention more resolutely than does Hillerich (1976, p. 59). He judges that the MFUW are the “context to use in unlocking strange words.” To this effect he offers his belief that if children can read the first ten of the MFUW they “can read a fourth of all words in any English book.” To Hillerich, “this is a tremendous return for a very few words. On the other hand, once one gets beyond the first hundred most frequently used words, there is a point of rapidly diminishing returns” from those gained from the first 100 MFUW. The MFUW are even related to reading disabilities, in Hillerich’s view. He notes that he has observed that “one of the most common symptoms with older disabled readers” is their inability to read the MFUW.

The Present Study

One way to determine the extent of the “returns” from the MFUW to the reader that Hillerich refers to is to examine basal reader passages at different grade levels to see how, in fact, the inclusion of successive segments of 100 MFUW (Carroll, Davies and Richman, 1971) affects their readability. For this purpose I selected passages of about 100 words in length that occurred at the halfway point in basal readers written for pupils in grades one through six (Fay, et al., 1972).

First, for each of these six passages the words that were not on a list of the first 100 MFUW (Carroll, Davies and Richman, 1971) were deleted. *Second*, the words appearing in these passages that were on a list of the second 100 MFUW were then reinserted in the passages. *Third*, this was then done for the third 100 MFUW.

Read the following passages by first eliminating the words in italics and in quotes (“ ”). The words remaining are those from the first 100 MFUW used in the given passage. This exemplifies how much of the intended meaning of the passage is carried exclusively by the first 100 MFUW. Then read the words in italics in the passages. These are the ones from the second 100 MFUW that were used in the passages. This shows how much of the meaning of the passage in question is carried by the second 100 MFUW. Finally, read the words in quotes. These are the ones from the third 100 MFUW. Here one can note the amount that the third 100 MFUW contribute to the meaningfulness of each passage. (Each of the following

passages were originally written as several paragraphs. For the sake of simplicity in display they are presented here each as a single paragraph.)

Grade 1, Level 6 passage (Fay, et al., 1972, pp. 85-86):

___ said. There, there, said ___. *Don't* be ___. You can *come back next* ___. ___ can I? ___ said. ___ "boy"! I can *get here* as "soon" as "school" is out. Then I can make a ___ more than ___! ___ "didn't" ___. She "knew" she would have a ___ of ___ on her *next* ___ at ___. Now she ___ to *get home* and *tell* ___ and ___ all about her ___. ___ in the little ___ and *looked* out. She was ___ that she was *going home* in ___ little ___.

Grade 2, Level 7 passage (pp. 125-126):

He ___ than "ever." He was not very ___, but he "knew" he could not ___. If he ___, the ___ would ___ him up. ___ he ___ on and one. He was ___. He was ___. His "feet" ___. But there was the ___ him, and he had to "keep" on ___. "Soon" the ___ *came* to his *old* ___. He ___ *right* up to the ___. The ___ "heard" the ___ and ___ out. He *saw* his ___, and he *saw* the ___. The ___ the ___ to the ___ and ___ very ___.

Grade 3, Level 9 passage (p. 153):

But one "night" after they made ___, ___ said, *Well*, we *don't* have "far" to *go* now. By ___ "night" we *should* be at ___. Two ___ there, and ___ be ___ to *get* ___ and "food." ___ "better" "let" the ___ and ___ for *a few* "days," *too*. ___ be a ___ "across" the ___. As "soon" as the ___, they ___ the ___ to the ___. When they ___ out, ___ said, ___, it ___ be *too* ___ now that ___ the ___. At ___ now we ___ have to ___ about ___.

Grade 4, Level 11 passage (p. 211):

There was now no ___ in my ___ that ___ was ___ — in its most ___ and ___. In the ___ I had ___. Now, ___ about, I was ___ to find him ___ in ___. At this ___ a *large* ___ of ___ from the ___, ___ "across" the ___, and ___ down the ___, ___ and ___ *off* a ___. The ___ that ___ a ___ from the ___. There I ___, or ___ his "feet," for they were the only *part* of him ___.

Grade 5, Level 2 passage (p. 226):

On a ___ the ___ of ___ could see the ___ *along* the ___. And the ___ on the ___ could see ___, the ___ on ___, and ___, at its "side" and a little ___, ___, where the ___ was ___. The *men* were ___ the ___ which ___ the ___. I ___ *go*! I ___ *go*! ___, and he ___ his ___ in the ___. He ___ that ___, his "father," *might* ___ about him. But he "knew" that would not be.

Grade 6, Level 13 passage (p. 225):

An ____ of "school" ____ to the ____: ____ *Mr.* ____! *I don't* see what ____ it is to this little ____ that he has *such* a "high" ____, ____ a ____ from ____, ____ A ____ "year" *old* "boy" ____: *I think*, in ____, I am "sure" that you can ____ "keep" your ____, *Mr.* ____ He ____ do one ____ of ____, and ____ would be ____ to see their first ____ "since" ____, ____ "boy" was ____ he had the ____: *I think* ____ of the ____ you *should* ____ him *back* to ____.

It is apparent from the appearance of the six basal reader passages presented here that the 100 MFUW their authors used in them contribute little to their overall meaningfulness. Thus, Hillerich's observation that more of the first 100 MFUW will appear in such passages than will those of the second or third 100 MFUW seems true – but beside the point, in terms of "returns" in comprehension for the reader. That is, while in certain instances an addition of the second and/or third 100 MFUW in these passages does provide for the meaning of a given sentence, the addition of these two segments of the MFUW does little to improve the readability of any of these passages as a whole.

In the light of this, it seems reasonable to question the appropriateness of the praise given by some as to the utility of the MFUW as aids to reading comprehension. For example, if the 300 MFUW contribute such a small part of the meaning a reader can gain from passages from graded basal readers, as is demonstrated here, should much valuable reading instruction time be spent on word games and drill with them? Then, with the limitations of the MFUW shown here in mind, surely it would be improper to measure a child's speed-of-reading ability by having him read the MFUW in isolation. Above all, the belief that the difficulty some children have in learning to read with comprehension can be attributed to their not being able to read the MFUW also becomes suspect. To the contrary of Jones' notion, that to be successful the beginning reader must first learn to recognize the first few hundred MFUW, one can suggest that other words besides these are the more important for the child to learn to recognize.

It appears, therefore, that these other words should take precedence over the MFUW as to which are taught in the early sequences of the reading program. In short, the present analysis of the six graded reading passages described here raises serious doubt that the large amounts of instructional time some teachers give to the 300 MFUW will result in the goal these teachers strive for – children well armed to read with comprehension. Conversely, one could say that instead of concentrating so much on the MFUW it may be better for the teacher to use the available instructional time to draw children's attention to the words in the basal reader that are at least beyond the 300 MFUW. The present study reinforces the generally known fact that it is these words, rather than the MFUW, which carry the bulk of the meaning found in such stories.

If this shift in instructional emphasis is to succeed, however, it is critical to suggest that two important teaching positions must prevail. One, the

teacher needs to develop good phonics skills in young pupils so that they are readily prepared to use letters as cues to the recognition of frequently appearing yet unknown words. One should stress that the use of phonics skills for this purpose will be done only when a pupil feels the need to recognize the MFUW.

This leads us to the second prerequisite needed here. The psycholinguistic approach to reading, as it has come to be called, should be adopted. Simply put, this means that the teacher should be concerned, above all, that pupils read sentences and passages to gain meanings the authors of such material intended, rather than to recognize the MFUW in oral reading activities. This approach assumes that to gain comprehension in reading pupils must depend on words beyond the 300 MFUW, at the very least. So, when teachers spend time directing pupils' attention to such words, rather than to the MFUW, they are conforming to a basic principle of this psycholinguistic method of teaching.

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THE NATURE AND ROLE OF HIGH SCHOOL READING AND LANGUAGE COMPETENCY TESTS IN TODAY'S SOCIETY

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During the past several years a sizable segment of the general public has expressed varying degrees of dissatisfaction with the overall academic skills demonstrated by graduates of public and private high schools. According to some reports, scores on national achievement tests relating to reading achievement have been decreasing in many areas of the United States and various colleges and universities such as Stanford have found it necessary to implement massive remedial programs for freshman students in the basic skills areas. Several recent newspaper accounts reveal that the results obtained from different public surveys indicate that a significant percentage of the adult population of the United States suffers from problems related to such everyday tasks as reading a recipe, completing a Social Security application, and passing a written driver's test. It is not difficult to understand the results from a recent Gallup Poll of Public Attitudes Toward The Public Schools which indicated that 65 percent of the general United States populace believes that all high school students should be required to successfully complete a standard national achievement test before a diploma is awarded.

Due to the recent curriculum developments at the university level relating to competency based instruction, legislators have either introduced or passed laws in twenty-nine states¹ requiring high school students to demonstrate a minimum competency in basic skills before they can be allowed to graduate. According to one journal² the high school equivalency G.E.D. test developed in California and adopted for national use in the United States may have fueled the trend.

The implications of such legislation are far-reaching and present a number of immediate decisions which will need to be made by secondary teachers and administrators. A recent publication³ of the National Council of Teachers of English suggests that these problems include:

1. the possibility that scores on competency tests will determine promotion or non-promotion and thus will lead to a return to grade-repeating, a practice which disappeared from American schools after research pointed to its ill-effects on students and on schools;
2. the possibility that there will emerge diplomas of different "classes" dependent on the student's scores on a test, with attendant danger of social stigmatism;

3. the possibility that statements of competence will lead to a circumscribing of the curriculum to a point where it will be merely preparing students for the test rather than educating them broadly;
4. the possibility that statements of competence will lead to didactic teaching as a shortcut to improving student performance, when research has indicated that such teaching is not as beneficial as more varied approaches to teaching;
5. the possibility that educational resources will be concentrated upon those students who have trouble attaining the minimal level of competence, and will be diverted from the gifted and the broad range of students who can attain the minimal level fairly easily but need to go beyond it;
6. the possibility that educators and the public will be satisfied with bringing students to a minimal level of competency rather than to a level of mastery that is appropriate to their age, their view of themselves, and their aspirations;
7. the possibility that statements of competence and measures of competency will make schools less responsive to the cultural and linguistic diversity of this country.

In order to focus on some of the major issues surrounding the concept of competency testing of basic skills, the following topics are discussed in this article: a description of the reading problem; the present status of competency tests in reading and language; each teacher's role and responsibilities; and the significance of competency tests in shaping curriculum and instructional patterns of the future. A summary is furnished at the close of the discussion.

A DESCRIPTION OF THE READING PROBLEM

Most educators, including several reading authorities, admit that far too many young people possess inadequate skill levels in such basic reading areas as word analysis, comprehension, and study skills. There are several apparent reasons for this condition: too much television viewing; lack of proper home environment; inadequate funding for elementary and secondary reading programs; and compulsory school attendance laws.

Thompson ⁴ believes the real root of the problem may lie in the home environment since a positive feeling toward intellectual and academic excellence can only be created and encouraged in a child within the walls of his own home and by his parents. He makes the observation that it is time that we stopped blaming the schools and that unless children start discovering the excitement of intellectual achievement in the home the schools can never be anything but an expensive baby sitting facility.

Some educators, such as Alf Nelson ⁵ of Pennsylvania, believe that the major causes of reading problems are the unwillingness of most school boards to provide reasonable class size for elementary classroom teachers; inadequate space for remedial teachers; and ignorance of what kinds of reading programs are needed at the secondary level. For whatever the

reasons, a “back to basics” movement has been promoted by the media and various conservative parent groups. Inferences have been made of the complete shock which has come over university instructors who demand minimum reading and writing competencies.⁶

The reading skill problems of most high school graduates appear to center around the word analysis and comprehension skill areas. Intensive teaching, particularly in phonic principles and interpretive comprehension, needs to be promoted. Professional texts such as those by Miller⁷ and Cushenbery⁸ may be useful to teachers who desire specific teaching helps.

THE PRESENT STATUS OF COMPETENCY TESTS IN READING AND LANGUAGE

Competency tests which are being administered in various locations vary considerably as to nature and kind. For example, Alaska is developing evaluative devices which correlate with state educational objectives. The State Board of Education of Arizona requires each school district to certify that all graduates can demonstrate basic reading, writing, and computing skills at the ninth grade level. The Los Angeles Unified School District requires all graduating seniors to pass the *Senior High Assessment of Reading Proficiency* test.

The Westside School District of Omaha has developed competency tests in reading, oral communication, writing, and four other areas. High school students start taking the examinations at the ninth grade level to discover those who need remedial help for aiding them to pass the tests with achievement at or above the ninth grade level before they graduate. According to Assistant Principal James Findley, 1 to 3 percent may miss graduation because of the tests. Westside High School graduating seniors of 1977 have completed three years of the minimum competency testing program.¹⁰

The West Milford Township High School of Newfoundland, New Jersey, employs the use of the *California Achievement Test* with minimum competency expected at the eighth grade level for all graduating seniors. According to school officials, the probability that West Milford students will graduate with the ability to read, compute, and understand the scientific approach has been enhanced.

There appears to be much controversy among some educators and public authorities regarding the kinds of skills needed and the level of achievement which should be expected. Typical of one such opinion is that offered by Monk¹²:

Defining basic education is impossible. What one individual needs and/or is able to accomplish is unique unto him.

Nothing could be further from the truth than the statement “Every child can achieve a minimum level of competence in the basic subjects.” Think about it. What are the basic subjects? Ask 10 educators, you’ll get 100 different answers.

The specific survival skills are well known. Right? Wrong! We can't even define survival, much less what we need to survive.

Gilman¹³ suggests that when a minimum competency testing program is introduced, an accompanying program of remedial study is essential for all persons who have not passed the test. A clinical approach to remedial education which involves a diagnostic interpretation of the specific areas of a student's difficulty is absolutely vital in order to help students. Inservice training of secondary teachers must and should take place. While a number of states such as California, Arizona, and Wisconsin require high school teachers to complete reading courses, most states still do not require course credit in reading methodology for high school teachers. Competency levels of students will improve when all instructors have reading training. *Each* teacher, regardless of grade or subject taught, must be a *reading* teacher. Reading instruction cannot and must not stop at grade six. All instructors must assume responsibility for teaching vocabulary, comprehension, and study skills each and every school day. If they don't know how, they should be instructed through the use of *effective* inservice which is conducted by trained, experienced reading specialists.

EACH TEACHER'S ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITIES

If we accept the thesis that each teacher must assume both diagnostic and intervention roles in the process of an adolescent's competency training, two basic principles related to these functions must be clearly understood by each instructor. In the diagnosis realm, the teacher *must have a clear understanding of the student's present level of reading and language development*. For example, if a given textbook is known to be of tenth grade level difficulty, then each student who has general reading competence at that level should make no more than five errors when reading sample 100 word passages from that book. At least 75 percent comprehension of the material when reading silently should be demonstrated. Any student who cannot perform at these critical levels should be given remedial instruction involving the use of materials which are commensurate with his or her present reading level. Intensive, individualized reading lessons should be provided for those who are severely retarded in reading skill development.

A second basic principle of diagnosis involves *the careful study of all test data available regarding a given student*. Do scores from recent standardized tests relate favorably to information derived from informal classroom procedures such as oral reading and teacher-made comprehension checks? After information has been studied carefully from both informal and standardized instruments, each instructor should use these data as the foundation for the daily teaching of vocabulary, word analysis, comprehension, and study skills. At the beginning of each class period those words and phrases which are likely to cause difficulty for many students should be presented to the class. All words should be presented in context

with the proper pronunciation and meaning(s) carefully explained. Phonic and structural analysis techniques should be used to help with the pronunciation process.

Since comprehension consists of such aspects as reading for details, understanding main ideas, and selecting propaganda techniques, all oral and written questions supplied by the instructor should be varied to suit both student and teacher purposes. (Far too many teachers are guilty of perceiving the comprehension process as a sole task for reading and remembering details.) Proper techniques of outlining and summarizing should be explained both to individual students and total classes.

Reading growth can be assessed in each class by the use of such standardized secondary reading tests as the *Nelson-Denny*, *California Achievement Test*, and the *Diagnostic Reading Test* (Survey Section). The two reading methods mentioned in the references section contain detailed procedures of an informal nature which may be used for assessing current reading and language competency in the basic skill areas.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF COMPETENCY TESTS IN SHAPING CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTIONAL PATTERNS OF THE FUTURE

The use of competency tests will cause high school curricula and teaching practices to change in a major sense. Teacher accountability will be directly related to how well students perform on the tests and significant failure rate will cause a segment of the general public to blame teachers. This prospect does not set well with many educators. For instance, Henry Acland ¹⁴ says:

My prediction is that teachers will respond to proficiency tests for high school graduation by teaching a dreary list of skills in areas such as form-filling, letter-writing, and marketing. For students these will appear as another senseless school ritual. Teachers will tend to find it demeaning and within four years will use their bargaining power to eliminate it.

The results of the competency tests should help teachers and administrators to pinpoint those areas of the curriculum which need strengthening. If, for example, many students have difficulty reading and completing job application forms, all teachers (especially English teachers) need to place greater stress on this area. (A recent survey of leading literacy authorities indicated that ability to accomplish everyday reading skills constituted the best measure of reading competency.¹⁵)

Educators need to be cautioned not to make the minimum competency requirements the new maximum standard. That is, in order to avoid wholesale failure, levels of proficiency will be so low that they will be worthless.¹⁶ Certainly each student should be challenged to achieve at his or her maximum level of learning.

Every teacher must have a complete knowledge of the competencies required of each student. School reading specialists should serve as resource personnel to all instructors. Each teacher should understand his or her role for helping adolescents become competent in all areas, especially reading and language.

During the testing process of any large school population, the data bank will no doubt suggest that as many as 10 percent of the learners of a given school have serious reading and language difficulties. The average teacher, regardless of ability, is not in a position because of time and class load to give intensive remedial instruction. Those students who are in this category must be scheduled into special reading and/or language courses which are designed to render individualized instruction. These classes should be taught and directed by trained reading teachers who have vast knowledge of diagnostic and remedial techniques. Such courses should be modeled after principles such as those outlined by Bond and Tinker.¹⁷ The combined program of classroom reading instruction and specialized teaching should result in a higher level of competence for all students.

SUMMARY

The administration and successful completion of competency tests by all high school students tend to be a firm trend in the United States. Though there appears to be much debate about the nature and level of competency desired, much agreement does rest on the thesis that schools and teachers can do a better job in preparing young people for everyday literacy requirements. *Every* teacher in *every* school must assume the role of a skills teacher using the diagnostic and remedial principles explained in this article. Our nation's children will be the better for it.

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¹¹Cannava, Ernest J. and Koy, William F., "New Jersey School Requires Competency Test for Graduation," *N.A.S.S.P. Bulletin*, Vol. 60, No. 398 (March 1976) pp. 119-121.

¹²Monk, James A., "But What Is Minimum Competence," *Instructor*, Vol. 86, No. 5 (January 1977) p. 28.

¹³Gilman, David Alan, "Minimum Competency Testing: An Insurance Policy for Survival Skills," *N.A.S.S.P. Bulletin*, Vol. 61, No. 407 (March 1977) p. 83.

¹⁴Acland, Henry, "If Reading Scores are Irrelevant, Do We Have Anything Better?" *Educational Technology*, Vol. 16, No. 7 (July 1976) p. 29.

¹⁵Finch, F. L. "Is Coping With the Real World The Criterion Test of Reading Ability?" *Address*, International Reading Association, May 2, 1977, Miami Beach, Florida, p. 6.

¹⁶"Some Apprehensions About Minimum Competency," Washington, D.C.: Council for Basic Education, May, 1977.

¹⁷Bond, Guy L. and Tinker, Miles. *Reading Difficulties: Their Diagnosis and Correction*. New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1973.

WE SUGGEST

Eleanor Buelke

Rogers, Carl R.

Carl Rogers on Personal Power

New York: Delacorte Press, 1977. Pp. xiii + 299.

The thesis of this new volume by one of our country's foremost psychotherapists is a challenge to the usually accepted concepts upon which American society is based. Theoretically, in a democracy, government and societal institutions exist by virtue of power shared and strength manifested by the majority of the people. Constitutional safeguards and popular enfranchisement notwithstanding, in America today power *shared* is infinitesimal in comparison to power *over* and strength *to control* exercised by the private sector. Two recent Senate reports state that decision-making by agencies which regulate much of American life is influenced primarily by private interests with formidable financial assets to represent their views to the public. Alone, with limited resources, the consumer is virtually powerless to execute political force for effective growth and change in his life. Here, in this book, Carl Rogers suggests that what is needed, even possible, is a humanistic network of persons cutting across all party lines for "empowering persons in their own places to live more effectively, in their personal lives and in the realm of 'politics' . . ." and to provide a vehicle for those "who want to attend simultaneously to their own personal growth and to their concern for humanistic social change."

Traditionally, persons in so-called helping professions have attempted to help others by assisting in solving problems. In his person-centered approach, Rogers has a genuinely different goal. His aim is to assist individuals to grow so that they can cope with their present and future problems in a more integrated fashion. Further, he suggests that the word "politics," as currently utilized, has acquired new meanings. It definitely relates to power and control; maneuvers, strategies, and tactics; the locus of decision-making power: all the means by which persons desire and attempt to obtain, share, or surrender power and control. The whole world and meaning of politics has to do with what happens in relationships between persons, or groups, or persons and groups as they engage in processes of power-taking, power-relinquishing, power-sharing.

If one agrees with this author that the individual possesses "within himself vast resources for self-understanding and for altering self-concept, attitudes, and self-directed behavior," the revolutionary nature of such forces is apparent. Within a safe, facilitative psychological climate, these resources may be tapped, freeing individuals or groups of persons for normal growth, health, and adjustment. Rogers maintains that this can happen not only in individuals, or small social groups, but within com-

munities, racial groups, and even international groups representing great diversity of nationality, race, and culture when *persons* are discovered, attended to, and accepted. He cites examples of self-empowered relationships functioning positively on every level, from the intimacies of marriage to the intricacies of international mediation.

Central in the book, both in a figurative and a literal sense, is a detailed description of a person-centered workshop, planned and implemented by this author. The politics of this situation in which many individuals, possessing the richness of diversity of any large group, learned to live together is summarized as an ecologically related process:

Here every individual leads; no one leads. The locus of choice resides in each person, and intuitively the community choice becomes a consensus taking each of these individual choices into account. Power and leadership and control flow easily from one person to another as the differing needs arise.

When groups turn always and only to authority, or a leader, for answers to their questions, or direction for their lives, they will be restricted in learning and growth by the limits of the leader. In whatever group they are, people need to be facilitators of learning for themselves and for each other. Rogers believes that once individuals exercise this kind of responsible freedom for learning, it becomes an *irreversible* force in their lives. It cannot be eliminated or extinguished. The exhilaration and excitement of striving for it will last a lifetime.

Beyond even this, Carl Rogers believes *there is evidence* that the person-centered approach can make significant changes in the way people perceive the possible. At the close of his book, he condenses some cherished views of the national culture, contrasting these elements with evidence which contradicts them. Some of these might be directly applicable to education. However, for many teachers and educators, the implications of trusting that the actualizing tendency in the student/learner is basic to motivation for learning present grave risk-taking. Such a belief leads to a trend away from control by external forces toward self-regulation by learners. It means that young persons cannot be caused directly to develop in one way or another, but that if optimum conditions for permitting survival and growth are provided, growth will come from within. Instead of contributing to repression of speech in the classroom, it means attending to children's language as authentic expressions of thoughts and feelings of their inner selves. It means replacing much of teacher/leader *presentation* of materials and procedures for learning with *observation* of students' needs and modes of learning. It leads to a "continual educational process of testing hypotheses in thought and action, discarding some, but following others. It recognizes that there is no such thing as static truth, only a series of changing approximations to the truth." It precludes teaching any curriculum exactly the same way twice. All this takes concentrated, consistent effort on the part of teachers, but makes for easier, more deeply

involved learning by students. More than this, perhaps most perplexing and precarious of all, it means for leaders to put themselves in order and in harmony with life, being willing to offer what they have experienced and felt, as well as to share an appropriate part of their own passion for the incredible gift of being alive.

PROFESSIONAL CONCERNS

R. Baird Shuman

EDITOR

Evelyn Hill

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Professional Concerns is a regular column devoted to the interchange of ideas among those interested in reading instruction. Send your comments and contributions to the editor. If you have questions about reading that you wish to have answered, the editor will find respondents to answer them. Address correspondence to R. Baird Shuman, Department of English, 100 English Building, University of Illinois, Urbana, Illinois 61801.

The success of elementary school reading programs has normally been directly proportionate to the extent to which elementary school principals have involved themselves with such programs. Elementary school principals, even those who are not reading specialists in any sense of the word, can make or break the reading programs in their schools.

In the article which follows, Evelyn Hill, principal of Gertrude Ealy Elementary School in the West Bloomfield School District of Birmingham, Michigan, suggests specific ways in which the elementary school administrator can promote the reading program within his/her school. Ms. Hill provides sensible suggestions which any elementary school administrator should find rather easy and practical to apply.

THE ELEMENTARY PRINCIPAL AND THE READING PROGRAM

The foundation upon which any reading program flourishes or dwindles away is the philosophy of the school. This can and should be a collective statement arrived at by the staff and the building principal.

Reading is the core of much learning that goes on in an elementary school. The building principal must be involved in all aspects of this vital program. The media center, Bucket Brigade program, classroom teaching and reading habits of the children should be of concern. Standardized test scores, end-of-book tests, creative writing, reports are other facets which should supply the administrator with information about the total reading program.

The elementary school principal must encourage reading instruction at all levels. It is imperative that he/she be aware of new techniques,

materials, and research, while being equally aware of what is being done in his/her school in reading.

The administrator is responsible for arranging opportunities for staff to become aware of new materials and techniques. This can be done by planning extended staff meetings focusing on this concern, taking the teacher's class so that he/she can visit other classes or meet with the reading consultant, encourage teachers to attend workshops, seminars, etc., by providing funding within the budget for such expenses. If the staff includes a reading consultant, this person can be a helpful assistant in keeping the reading program moving. The principal must communicate with the reading consultant constantly in order to be aware of test scores, progress being made by students, groupings and changes being made within the groupings. Visits to classes on a scheduled basis also is an aid to the administrator. The teacher and the principal working together can enrich the program and can investigate materials which might be of use to students and teachers.

Because reading is the foundation of the educational program in elementary schools, it is important to teach children how to read different kinds of materials. It is important not only that reading instruction be emphasized but that reading in other areas be taught as well. The reading of mathematics, science, and social studies should also be taught. Looking to the future, it is incumbent upon educators to teach children that reading is an acceptable leisure time activity. It is something which one can do alone and requires only a book or magazine for equipment. The number of good trade books published each year affords ample resources to implement this.

Implementing any new programs must begin with the kindergarten. Knowledge of child growth and development is primary. It is important that children have developed gross motor, fine motor and other perceptual skills before they are expected to perform reading readiness tasks. Teacher made or commercial programs may be employed to teach thinking skills. These include picture cards, story completion exercises, listening skill lessons and body awareness. It appears in many cases that an inordinate amount of emphasis is being placed on reading skills alone in the kindergarten and primary grades, excluding thinking skills which are a higher level of learning. Attribute games, conceptualizing and problem solving are all means of getting students to expand their thinking skills.

Curriculum in the area of reading needs to be developed as a cooperative effort between the administrator and staff. This can be achieved only if lines of communication are open and time is available. The assistance of the reading consultant is a great help. This person can suggest materials, preview texts and provide an opportunity to pilot some reading approaches. As more is learned about cognitive style, it behooves educators to investigate the many ways in which people learn. Success is the key to effective learning, and unless the most appropriate vehicle for each child can be found, learning diminishes.

The philosophy of a school can make a great difference in the attitude

of the staff and students toward reading. If there is a media center which serves as the hub of the school, it can provide a broad spectrum of activities for the students. Within the framework of the media center, listening centers, interest centers, featured books areas, book report displays, and student displays (diaramas, reports, etc.) all pique the interest of the boys and girls. This area provides a place where children may come to do many different kinds of things. There are rocking chairs and pillows for leisure reading, tables and chairs for research; tape recorders and headsets for skill building, filmstrip previewers and tapes for story listening, many many books, realia, and a TV. All of these items meet different needs of children during the course of their education. The building principal must be aware of the use of such materials, suggest new ideas and procedures, and listen to the person in charge of the media center to be sure it is being used to the optimum.

Visiting classrooms assists the principal in his/her efforts to be cognizant of the progress of students and methods and materials being used. Another way is to substitute in a classroom and actually work with the students. On a less formal basis, just chatting with the boys and girls about what they are reading—what they like to read—and how much time they spend reading, provides insight into habits that they are forming.

Providing a time during each day when *everyone* in the building is reading for 20 or 30 minutes emphasizes the importance reading can assume in everyone's life. Although such activity is not formal instruction, reading is a skill and to become more proficient in it requires practice. Arranging opportunities for such things to happen is the responsibility of the building administrator.

It behooves the building principal to read widely about new ventures, to ask questions, to be creative and above all to be supportive of staff who wish to explore new trails.

QUICK REVIEWS

By Carter Reading Council

Ball, Samuel, and Gerry Ann Bogatz, "A Summary of the Major Findings from 'Reading with Television: An Evaluation of the Electric Company'," *The Michigan Reading Journal*, (Spring 1977) 11:50-59.

Major findings by the Educational Testing Service indicate that viewing classes (1971-2, Youngstown, Ohio, and Fresno, California) made significantly greater gains than non-viewing classes in the reading skills which the program was designed to teach.

Bergman, Jerry R., "A New Tool Designed to Develop Positive Attitudes Toward Reading," *Reading Improvement*, (Summer 1977) 14:70-73.

Research shows that a negative attitude is largely to blame for the number of cases of reading difficulties, which in turn leads to non-reading. In this presentation, the author makes a case for helping students learn what is involved in writing, which leads to an improved attitude toward the printed materials all around.

Bradley, John M., and Wilbur S. Ames, "Readability Parameters of Basal Readers," *Journal of Reading Behavior*, (Summer 1977) 9:175-183.

After careful research, using the Edward Fry scale, examining a few different sets of basal readers, the authors conclude that -- a) many more than three sample passages are required to adequately estimate readability variation of a basal reader, and b) the variation of difficulty within a single story could run as high as six grades. The reasonable recommendation is made that publishers include information on readability range in the books they sell.

Braun, Carl, "Pygmalion in the Reading Circle," *Academic Therapy*, (Spring 1977) 12:445-454.

The author asks readers to consider a number of factors which may be involved in the theory that teachers' prior knowledge or expectations of students play a definite role in determining student performance.

(Editors) "Who Is the Child You Teach? -- A Profile of the American Child Today," *Instructor*, (September 1977) LXXXVII:51-68.

The American family is changing. There are fewer children per

family and more working mothers. One in six children is now living with a single parent. The health of American children hasn't changed, despite increased availability of health care services and government involvement. The physical fitness of youth has not improved significantly during the last ten years. Students are smoking at a younger age and the potential for alcoholism has increased. Nine-year-olds are reading and writing better than a year ago, while \$4 billion is being spent on toys. Today's child identifies with television heroes and heroines, to help them feel good about themselves. "Yet they are not fooled; they can differentiate the real from the make-believe both in their heroes and in themselves."

Gentile, Lance M., and Merna M. McMillan, "Why Won't Teenagers Read?" *Journal of Reading*, (May 1977) 20:649-655.

This article suggests ten factors that contribute to secondary students' lack of interest in reading and provides a number of practical instructional procedures to stimulate their desire to read. The authors maintain that students need reading experiences that fully engage their emotions as well as their intellects.

Hertz, Sharon M., Barbara K. Gold, Lenore J. Kaufman, and Meralée G. Wallach, "College Credit for Reading Courses?—Yes!" *Journal of Reading*, (May 1977) 20:688-692.

Strong arguments are presented for granting credit for remedial reading courses for community college students.

Hubert, Karen M., "Escape Into Writing—Ready-to-Use Adventure Story Idea Cards," *Learning*, (August/September 1977) 6:104-114.

Because the experience and skills involved relate so closely to reading, this article and the idea cards have value for the reading as well as the writing teachers. The whole purpose is to involve the student in the printed or the written word, and Hubert's have the potential to bring every student to his toes.

Kasdon, Lawrence M., "One Man's Opinion: What Is Fernald's Method?" *Reading World*, (May 1977) 16:326-328.

Because so many reading specialists tend to think of tracing words when they hear the name of Fernald, Kasdon explains the philosophy of using any means by which the child can learn to read. He shows the place for tracing as being a part of the means for building a word bank.

Lesiak, Judi, "There is a Need for Word Attack Generalizations," *Reading Improvement*, (Summer 1977) 14:100-103.

Extremists at both ends of this teaching-of-reading issue would do well to read this carefully researched paper on the phonic generalizations which fit the majority of the cases. The students, says the author, must have some ways to aid them in new word attack.

Mavrogenes, Nancy A., Carol K. Winkley, Earl Hanson, and Richard T. Vacca, "Concise Guide to Standardized Secondary and College Reading Tests," *Classroom Strategies for Secondary Teachers*, edited by W. John Harker, 1977, International Reading Association, pps. 8-18.

In four categories: Survey, Analytical, Diagnostic, and Special, the authors have listed and described almost sixty tests. Included with each is information about scope and level of test, date of publication and revisions, duration of test, and a brief resume of evaluation. Unless one owns a Buros, this is the best in the current decade.

Morrison, Coleman, and Mary C. Austin, *The Torch Lighters Revisited*, International Reading Association, 800 Barksdale Road, Newark, Delaware, 1977, 94 pps.

As a follow-up study of a landmark survey in 1961 on the preparation of teachers of reading, this work shows both great progress and some disappointing facts. Sixteen years have passed, and we still have not figured out how to help secondary subject matter teachers to include reading skills as they teach! This study gives credit to teacher training institutions for developing reading courses in the curricular offerings, but shows they are weak in selection (or screening). All told, the scores run predominantly positive with a few dismaying exceptions. (Why are we failing to educate administrators in the importance of teaching reading at *all* levels?)

Olshavsky, Jill Edwards, "Reading as Problem Solving: An Investigation of Strategies," *Reading Research Quarterly*, (1976-77) 12:654-674.

The purpose of this study was to identify the types of strategies readers employ to comprehend an author's message. Three factors of strategy usage were examined: interest, reader proficiency, and writing style. The findings include:

1. The results confirm the hypothesis that readers with high interest apply strategies more frequently than readers with low interest.

2. The results failed to support the hypothesis that good readers use strategies more frequently.

3. The hypothesis that readers will use more strategies with abstract style materials was supported by the results.

It was concluded that further research was needed to develop a theory of reading as problem solving and for teaching strategies.

Reichurdt, Konrad W., "Playing Dead or Running Away—Defense Reactions During Reading," *Journal of Reading*, (May 1977) 20:706-711.

This is an interesting article in which the author hypothesizes that in specific individuals an innate tendency toward hypo- or hypertensive levels of arousal wakefulness and specific bodily defense patterns are further developed under positive and negative reinforcing situations such as those found in the classroom. Individuals who enter formal learning situations with some tendency toward under- or over-arousal are further pushed in that direction by having the nondefensive aspect of their internal behavior stamped out through failure in classroom activities. The author says that these findings point to a need for remedial programs which normalize physiological responses *prior* to the normal cognitive procedures found in most special education classes.

(Staff) "News from the Professional Studies and Standards Committee: Department of Education Definition of Reading," *The Michigan Reading Journal*, (Spring 1977) 11:35-36.

The Michigan Department of Education and the Michigan Reading Association have jointly developed a definition for reading. The definition is based on the assumption that the "... final outcome of reading instruction is comprehension." It currently needs a sentence or two about the *affective* area of reading (reading for enjoyment). Since the definition will have an impact on everyone who teaches reading in the State of Michigan, it is an article that deserves your attention.

Vance, Hubert Booney, "Informal Assessment Techniques With LD Children," *Academic Therapy*, (Spring 1977) 12:291-303.

Since there are all degrees and kinds of learning disabilities, teachers should be able to recognize and measure the less severe disabilities by informal means. The position of the author is that diagnostic procedures are not effective unless they lead to the implementation of a practical program for each student. The author goes further, giving explanations and examples, to encourage teachers to make their own informal texts that will identify learning problems.

NEW MATERIALS

Sandra Ahern

READING CONSULTANT, COMSTOCK, MICHIGAN

You're Somebody Special on a Horse by Fern G. Brown and illustrated by Frank Murphy. Published by Albert Whitman Company, 560 W. Lake Street, Chicago, Illinois, 60606, 1977, 128 pps., Grades 4-8 and Remedial.

This is more than a horse story and whether you are a horse lover or not, there is a very special appeal for all young readers.

Marni loved horses! But her parents thought she was spending too much time with her horse and not enough time on her schoolwork. They felt she should give up her horse unless her studies improved.

In the middle of her dilemma, Marni becomes involved in a new program designed to teach handicapped children how to ride horses. Through sharing her love for horses with these children, Marni learns many new joys and values.

Witching Time an Anthology by Lee Bennett Hopkins and illustrated by Vera Rosenberry. Published by Albert Whitman and Company, 1977, 128 pps., Grades 3-6 and Ages 8-11.

Mr. Hopkins has put together another delightful anthology of ghost stories and poems. And as before, witches and other friendly spirits are sparkling with humor and mischief, shivery, but not sinister.

The stories vary in length; some are easier reading and others provide reading of a higher level. Although some of the tales might not be bedtime stories, many are perfect for reading aloud.

Story-tellers include Rowena Bennett, Aileen Fisher, Gunhild Paehr, and Lee Wyndham.

My Mom Hates Me in January by Judy Delton and illustrated by John Faulkner. Published by Albert Whitman and Company, 1977, 32 pps., Grades 1-3 and Ages 6-8.

This little picture/story book points out that parents are not perfect and have a right to feel anger and depression and impatience like anyone else. These feelings seem to come to play in the month of January as little Lee Henry finds out. During the month, Lee is sure his mother hates him for he can not seem to do anything right in his mother's eyes.

Then he realizes that perhaps it is not him, but the winter blues

that are making his mother so cranky. This is an exaggerated observation for a small boy to make, but the book may help other children realize that even parents have moods. And these moods do not last forever.

Lentil Soup written and illustrated by Joe Lasker. Published by Albert Whitman and Company, 1977, 32 pps., Grades K-3 and Ages 5-8.

A beautifully illustrated full-color picture book which depicts situations and settings between a farming couple in America in the early 1800's.

The book presents the use of cardinal and ordinary numbers from 1 through 7 and the names of days of the week as part of the story.

Reading for Concepts, second edition, by William Liddle. Published by Webster Division, McGraw-Hill Book Company, New York, 1977.

Reading for Concepts is a nonconsumable reading program of a series of softbound books designed to develop and strengthen a multitude of reading skills. The authors have developed a three-way attack on reading deficiencies: (1) by presenting selections with catchy titles, with relevant up-to-date information, and with detailed illustrations that will be a motivating force; (2) by teaching basic reading-comprehension skills in "a repeating pattern of no-fail exercises" which make the main idea, details, inferences, context clues, and vocabulary within the grasp of the slow reader; (3) by giving short selections with a controlled reading level and making it possible to place a student at a comfortable, workable level.

The reading selections are put on a two-page lesson. Part of each lesson is a set of follow-up questions with each question designed to test certain reading skills. Each testing page faces the related reading selection. The question types are repeated throughout the levels of the series. The tests teach increasingly difficult skills as the students progress through the levels.

The Spache readability formula was used to analyze the word difficulty in Books A-D. The Dale-Chall readability formula and the Dale list of 3,000 familiar words were used for Books E-H. The average readability levels for the series range from Book A-Low second grade to Book H-Low sixth grade. The vocabulary is held below the level indicated and each text has a page-by-page list of special words which may cause the reader difficulty at the level of the text.

The Guide for Teachers has a wealth of information as to what each level contains and the skills taught in each book, reports of test findings, aims and purposes, and basic teaching methods for the program. It also has an informal inventory for pupil placement in

the readings. In the back of the Guide can be found the Combined Answer Key for the program.

Although the series is designed for pupils who need to catch up (average and below average groups), there is much flexibility in the program and it could be used with many elementary and secondary groups.

Reading for Concepts would be a valuable tool for the classroom teacher looking for new material to help children in a specific and concrete way in overcoming mistakes and developing basic study/reading skills which are so essential for success.

The Whole Kids Catalog created by Peter Cardozo and designed by Ted Menten. Published by Bantam Books, Inc., 666 Fifth Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10019, 1975, 218 pps.

This is a wonderful source book that will enable the child or adult to learn to make or build hundreds of exciting things. Instructions are given on how to make just about anything from a tree house to creating sandcastles . . . and you are learning through fun experiences.

The book can also be called an activity book because it is full of things one can actually do or make, like making a robot out of spools or turning an egg carton into a silly sea serpent.

It is also a guide book to free samples, posters, pictures, books, recipes, coins, and many other items you can write away for.