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ERIC/RCS Report: Retrieving Information From ERIC

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CLEARING HOUSE ON COMMUNICATION SKILLS

The Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) is a national information system currently consisting of sixteen clearinghouses under the sponsorship of the National Institute of Education (NIE). Each clearinghouse is responsible for obtaining the educational literature within its area for evaluation, indexing, and abstracting into the ERIC data bank, and also for providing information analysis materials and various user services based on the information contained in ERIC. Transcripts of speeches, topical papers, program descriptions, inservice and preservice workshop materials, curriculum guides, research reports, conference proceedings, and educational journal articles are among the documents indexed in the ERIC system. As one of the sixteen clearinghouses, the Clearinghouse on Reading and Communication Skills (ERIC/RCS) is responsible for resources, information, and materials in reading as well as in the other communication skill areas— English, jounalism, speech, and the theater. The data collected in reading by ERIC/RCS are available in at least 600 ERIC microfiche collections for use by reading coordinators, reading consultants, teachers who stress content reading, and other educators.

In order to use the ERIC system to best advantage, each individual needs a working concept of how to retrieve information. It does not take the skills of a librarian to acquire valuable information from the ERIC system, although a brief explanation from a librarian may be in order for a beginner. The effective user of ERIC will need to be familiar with the tools of the ERIC system, including the *Thesaurus of ERIC Descriptors, Resources in Education,* and *Current Index to Journals in Education.* The following descriptions and definitions of ERIC tools and terms should help the beginning user of the system to find needed information. A hypothetical case study, which follows the definitions, provides an illustration of how to use ERIC.

TOOLS OF THE ERIC SYSTEM

The *Thesaurus of ERIC Descriptors,* the key to the entire system, is continuously updated to maintain accuracy and serves as the source of all subject terms (descriptors) used for indexing and for retrieval of documents and journal articles in the ERIC collection (see Figure 1). Each item entered in the ERIC system is assigned several descriptors selected from the *Thesaurus* that reflect the essential subject matter contained in the document. Descriptors marked by an asterisk (*) indicate the major con-

Figure 1.   Extract from *Thesaurus of ERIC Descriptors*

Used For	*Reading Instruction*
Narrower Term(s)	UF Teaching Reading
Broader Term(s)	NT Language Experience Approach
Related Term(s)	BT Language Instruction
	RT Adult Reading programs

Braille
Content Reading
Directed Reading Activity
Early Reading
Experience Charts
Individualized Reading
Initial Teaching Alphabet
Kinesthetic Methods
Large Type Materials
Miscue Analysis
Oral Reading
Phonics
Readability
Reading
Reading Games
Sight Method
Silent Reading
Structural Analysis
Talking Books

Content Reading
BT   Reading
RT   Interpretive Reading
Reading Comprehension
Reading Instruction

USING THE ERIC SYSTEM

The ERIC Clearinghouse on Reading and Communication Skills is sponsored by the National Council of Teachers of English in cooperation with the National Institute of Education, U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare. ERIC's objective is to keep educators informed about current developments in education. Information collected by the ERIC Clearinghouse on Reading and Communication Skills and the other ERIC clearinghouses can be ordered from the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS), P.O. Box 190, Arlington, Virginia 22210. For complete ordering information consult the monthly issues of *Resources in Education* (RIE) or contact the ERIC Clearinghouse on Reading and Communication Skills, 1111 Kenyon Road, Urbana, Illinois 61801. Documents with ED numbers are indexed in *Resources in Education*. Those with EJ numbers are indexed in *Current Index to Journals in Education* (CIJE). And those with CS numbers are recently acquired materials; ED or EJ numbers will soon be assigned.

cepts of the document, while the unmarked descriptors denote concepts of only minor emphasis in the document. In cases where no descriptor term adequately describes some important feature of a document, an *identifier* term may be assigned in addition to the descriptors. Any word, name, or phrase may be an identifier, thus any concept not covered by a descriptor may be indexed through an identifier.

Abstracts of documents are printed with appropriate descriptors in *Resources in Education* (RIE), which is published monthly by NIE through the Government Printing Office. Monthly volumes and yearly compilations of RIE are available in many college and university libraries as well as in some special libraries. About 1,000 documents from the sixteen ERIC Clearinghouses are indexed and summarized in each monthly volume. Each volume contains the main entries and subject, author, and institution indexes.

The subject index is arranged alphabetically by descriptors. Documents which have been assigned a particular term as a major descriptor – and there can be up to five – are listed in the subject index under that term (see Figures 2 and 3). Thus, the title of a document which has been assigned five major descriptors will be listed in five places in the subject index. In addition to the title, a six-digit ED (for ERIC Document) accession number is listed. While documents indexed in RIE are available at microfiche collections in various libraries, most can be purchased on microfiche (MF) or in a hard copy (HC) from the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS), P.O. Box 190, Arlington, Virginia 22210.

Articles from nearly 700 educational journals are indexed in the same manner in another ERIC publication, *Current Index to Journals In Education* (CIJE), (see Figure 4). These articles are assigned a six-digit EJ (for Educational Journal) accession number and are annotated in most cases. Semiannual and annual compilations of CIJE are available. There is no need to refer to the monthly issues of CIJE to read the annotations – each cumulative volume also contains a Main Entry section. Each entry lists the complete title, the author, the source (journal title, volume number, date, and page numbers, assigned descriptor terms, and particularly in cases where the content is not clear from the title, a brief annotation. Copies of journal articles indexed in CIJE are not available from ERIC. They must be obtained from a library collection or from the publisher.

A hypothetical case study on content reading which incorporates the previously introduced tools, terms, and diagrams in a search of the ERIC system follows.

SEARCHING ERIC: A CASE STUDY

Bob Jones recently became the reading coordinator at the high school where he had been teaching for several years. During his tenure as a language arts instructor, he learned that one of the biggest problems students face is comprehending what they read. As a reading coordinator he feels that more materials are needed on how to improve reading skills in the content areas. Jones knows of the ERIC system and decides to spend

Figure 2.   Subject Index from RIE

Descriptor Term ____ ———— *Content Reading*
Subject Heading   Aiding Secondary Subject Teachers in
                               Guiding Reading Growth.
Document Titles   ED 092 887
                               A Classroom Reading Program.
                                                       ED 089 198
                               The College Commitments to Attainable
                               National   Goals — Learning   Support
                               Services for Open Admissions Students.
                                                       ED 085 664
                               The Contribution of Reading Instruction
                               to Success in the Content Areas in the
                               Secondary Schools.
                                                       ED 083 546
                               The Development of Learning Modules
                               for the Training of Content Teachers in
                               Reading: A Focus on Process.
                                                       ED 085 667
                               Differentiating Instruction to Improve
                               Comprehension in Middle School Content
                               Areas.
                                                       ED 092 882
                               The Effects of Different Content Area
                               Materials upon the Comprehension of
                               Eighth-Grade Students.
                                                       ED 085 670
                               Every Teacher a Teacher of Read-
                               ing — For Only a Week.
                                                       ED 080 971
                               Improving Reading in Every Class: A
                               Sourcebook for Teachers.
                                                       ED 089 235//
                               An In-Service Program Designed to
                               Improve the Teaching of Reading Study
                               Skills.
                                                       ED 080 962//
                               Preparation   of   Reading   Content
                               Specialists for the Junior High School;
                               Teaching Reading in the Content Areas at
                               the Junior High School Level: Strategies
                               for Meeting a Wide Range of Individual
                               Differences in Reading Achievement.
                               Final Report.
                                                       ED 088 003
                               Reading in the Content Fields; An
                               Annotated Bibliography.

Figure 3.   Main Entry from RIE

ED Number ——————————— ED 092 887   CS 001 151

Author ——————————————— *Courtney, Leonard*

Title ———————————————— **Aiding Secondary Subject Teachers in Guiding Reading Growth.**

Date ——————————————— Pub Date Sep 73

Availability and Price

Note — 19p.; Paper presented at the International Reading Association Far-West Rocky Mountain Regional Conference (Victoria, B.C., September 1973)

Descriptor Terms

EDRS Price MF-$0.75 HC-$1.50 Plus Postage.

Abstract

Descriptors — *Content Reading, Critical Reading, Reading, *Reading Development, Reading Improvement, *Reading Instruction, Reading Programs, *Reading Skills, Secondary Grades, *Teaching Techniques

Described in this paper is a technique for reading instruction at the secondary level which emphasizes paragraph-passage examination and is intended to fit into any content teacher's daily work. The technique described provides occasion to establish purpose in reading-study assignments, utilize experience and previous background to develop meaning, introduce new vocabulary, determine word meaning from context, intensify levels of comprehension from literal to evaluative, examine semantic and literary nuances, and study paragraph structure and internal paragraph relationships. Three different kinds of passages, chosen principally for their illustrative value rather than for any direct practical transfer to a particular classroom, are presented. Passage one briefly describes New York City; suggestions for teacher use include discussing general background relative to the passage, use of questioning to facilitate understanding, and identifying the main idea. Passage two is a social studies passage and is presented to demonstrate multiple word skills and demonstrate a shift from literal to critical reading. The third passage presented is the opening lines from "Dandelion Wine" and is intended to serve as an example of introducing a story and as an exercise in entry to imaginative language. (WR)

Figure 4.   Main Entry from CIJE

EJ Number —————————— EJ 103 969   CS 701 344

Sources for Teaching Reading in the

Article Title —————— **Content Areas.** Sanacore, Joseph,
and Author   *Reading Improvement,* v11 n1, pp 54-57,
                            Spr 74

Journal, Volume ————— *Reading Instruction, *Content Reading,
                            *Educational Resources, *Instructional
Descriptors ———   Materials, Secondary Education,
                            Bibliographies, English, Social Studies,
Annotations ————   Sciences, Mathematics
                            Fifty-four sources are listed for the
                            teaching of reading in the content areas of
                            social studies, English, science, and
                            mathematics. (RB)
                            EJ 105 640   CS 701 443
                            Shock Treatment Inservice Program
                            Adds New Life to Reading. Osborn,
                            Bess, **Journal of Reading,** v18, n2,
                            pp 122-26, Nov 74.
                            *Inservice Teacher Education, *Content
                            Reading, *Reading Instruction, *Reading
                            Skills, *Program Descriptions, Secondary
                            Education
                            Describes a teacher inservice program
                            designed to help secondary teachers
                            improve reading skills in the content
                            areas. (RB)

some time investigating it with the hope of uncovering some information
that will help teachers in the content areas.

Jones's first step is to phrase, as narrowly and accurately as possible, the
question he seeks to answer: "What materials are available that content
reading teachers can use to improve the reading skills of high school
students?" The key concepts to be used in locating descriptors should be
evident if the question is precise enough.

The next step is for Jones to determine the descriptors he will use to
conduct his search. He goes through the *Thesaurus of ERIC Descriptors*,
looking first under the term "Reading." He finds a list of terms under
"Reading" which are categorized according to the notations NT, BT, and
RT, indicating that those terms are narrower than (NT), broader than
(BT), or related to (RT) the term "Reading." Each of the terms listed under
these abbreviations is a descriptor, with the exception of those listed under
UF (Used For), a notation which leads the searcher to other terms. This
cross-listing of descriptors enables a searcher to identify other descriptors
that might be useful.

In this case, Jones picks "Reading Instruction," "Reading Comprehension," and "Content Reading." He also adds the leveling term "Secondary Education," which is the appropriate grade level for materials as expressed in his question. By searching through the subject index of RIE, Jones should find a number of documents which might be relevant. The ED numbers of these documents should be recorded under column headings with the appropriate descriptors:

Reading Instruction	Reading Comprehension	Content Reading	Secondary Education

Since there is an abundance of information in RIE on content reading, the above descriptors should enable Jones to retrieve the most relevant and useful materials.

The document resume provided as a sample in Figure 3 reflects Jones's selection of descriptors for retrieving information from RIE. From the title of the document listed in the subject index, Jones determined that he was interested in reading the abstract of ED 092 887. By reading this abstract and others which interest him, he can decide which ERIC documents he wants to read in their entirety. Jones can read those documents available on microfiche on the microfiche reader in his library. If he wishes, he can order either microfiche or paper copy reproductions using ordering instructions available in each issue of RIE. By reading the abstracts of documents *not* available on microfiche, Jones can determine if he would like to purchase copies of these documents, too. If so, he can order them from the publisher by using the ordering information that accompanies each abstract.

Jones can also obtain a list of references from educational journals relevant to the search topic by using the same descriptors in searching the *Current Index to Journals in Education* (CIJE) as were used in searching RIE. CIJE entries include brief annotations whenever an article's title is not indicative of its content. However, in order to read the entire article, Jones must either obtain it from the library or order it from the publisher. Since the contents of journals are copyrighted, copies of articles are not available through the ERIC system.

By now, Jones has obtained a significant body of information on the subject he is investigating. He may continue the search or decide that what he has found is sufficient.

SEARCH SUMMARY
1. State your question as accurately and precisely as possible.
2. Consult the ERIC *Thesaurus* for descriptors related to your question.
3. Look under the selected descriptors in the subject index of *Resources in Education*.
4. List those documents that are related to your question, noting those that occur under two or more descriptors (these will probably be related most directly to your question).

5. Read the abstract of each document to determine its significance to your question. (Entire documents may be read on microfiche or ordered from EDRS.)

6. Using the same descriptor terms, consult the subject index of CIJE. (Relevant journal articles may be read at the library.)

OTHER RESOURCES

Low cost computer searches of the ERIC system are available throughout the country from both public and private search services, and Jones could have used one of these services had he so desired. For availability of these computer search facilities, contact your local or state board of education, a nearby college or university library, or a school of education.

Another source of information is the ERIC Clearinghouses, each concerned with information analysis in a specialized field of educational interest. The staff of ERIC/RCS, for example, produces short, current bibliographies on selected topics and articles for a number of professional journals in the communication skills field. The Clearinghouse also commissions information analysis monographs analyzing and reflecting the current state of knowledge in specific areas. Other Clearinghouse publications include longer bibliographies and annotated topical indexes.

If you are near one of the Reading Resource Centers (RRC) — mini-clearinghouses affiliated with ERIC/RCS located at 56 teacher-training colleges and universities — check their facilities for information on topics of interest to the reading profession. The staff of each RRC in operation is able to answer your questions regarding the use of the ERIC system.

If you are still unsure of how the ERIC system works and how it can help you, ask the librarian at the ERIC collection for assistance, or write to ERIC/RCS at NCTE, 1111 Kenyon Road, Urbana, Illinois 61801.