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The Secondary Reading Problem

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THE SECONDARY READING PROBLEM

Most educators are well aware of the reading problems existing in our secondary schools. The topic has been discussed and written about *ad infinitum*. School personnel have listened to the public's complaints that too many high school graduates are unemployable because they lack the necessary reading skills. They have heard the grumblings of teachers who find it difficult to teach effectively in the content areas because of the wide range of reading abilities existing in their classrooms. They have observed the discouragement of teachers who are tormented by discipline problems created by some of the frustrated non readers in the school. In desperation, superintendents, principals, and teachers have gone to the colleges of education and have asserted that the secondary teachers they turn out are ill prepared to deal with reading problems. Administrators and teachers have searched and are searching for an answer to the question, "What can we do to help our students develop needed reading skills?"

Secondary schools have taken a positive step toward answering this question by recognizing that a reading problem exists. But awareness of the problem is not enough. There must be a commitment on the part of all secondary school personnel to improve the reading skills of students and there must be a plan of action which is philosophically sound, practical, and realistic.

This editorial is a plea to all administrators associated with secondary schools. Publicly commit yourselves and your teachers to the task of improving the reading abilities of the students entrusted to your care. Employ only secondary teachers who have completed at least one course in the teaching of reading. Conduct well-planned, continuous, year-to-year, inservice programs in the teaching of reading for all teachers. Provide reading consultants to work directly with content area teachers in their classrooms. Attack vigorously the problem of the severely disabled secondary reader by providing reading specialists to serve as tutors to small groups of disabled readers.

There is, of course, the possibility that these suggestions represent an oversimplified solution to a very complex problem. But inaction will not accomplish anything. One has to begin some place, some time, doesn't one?

Dorothy J. McGinnis
Editor

