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TEN-SECOND REVIEWS

Betty L. Hagberg

"Learning to read is one of the most complex tasks that a human being accomplishes in his lifetime. The amazing thing is not that a few people fail, but that so many succeed."

—G. Robert Carlsen

Ahern, Patricia Russell, "Tuned in to Parents, Reading Hits the German Airwaves," *The Reading Teacher*, (April, 1974), 27:676-679.

Julie Chan is living with her husband who is stationed with the U.S. Army in Nürnberg, Germany. Julie noted a need for channeling reading information to parents. She believes that "people would do better if they knew better." On this belief was built the entire program she initiated. Her plan was to air a year-long series of ten-minute broadcasts entitled "Getting Your Child Off to a Good Start in Reading" over the American Forces Radio Network. The broadcasts became so popular that the program is developing and expanding the series to its television network. Eventually the program will reach 300,000 military personnel in Germany, Belgium, and Holland. The weekly shows discuss parental concerns in four broad areas: 1) the pre-school years; 2) the child and beginning reading; 3) the child who can read but won't; 4) the child with reading problems. The article describes the format of these innovative programs in detail.

Ammon, Richard, "Reading Aloud: For What Purpose?" *The Reading Teacher*, (January, 1974), 27:342-346.

The author presents an overview of the current arguments favoring oral reading. They are: 1) to evaluate children's progress, 2) to practice reading, 3) to entertain or inform others, 4) all of the above. Each of these arguments is reviewed in depth and some pertinent questions raised as to their validity for teachers of reading in 1974. You be the judge!

Alexander, J. Estill, and Ronald Claude Filler, "Group Cohesiveness and Reading Instruction," *The Reading Teacher*, (February, 1974), 27:446-450.

Grouping in elementary classrooms is a common practice.

These authors suggest, however, that serious consideration be given grouping, particularly ability grouping. This particular form may be open to question psychologically, since this grouping plan often leads to low cohesiveness (and possibly lower achievement) in middle and low groups. The authors state that there is a need for more research to verify these findings. The article goes on to list several implications for teachers drawn from this social philosophy.

Bateman, Barbara D., "Educational Implications for Minimal Brain Dysfunction," *The Reading Teacher*, (April, 1974), 27:662-668.

The author brings together much research and opinion dealing with minimal brain dysfunction (MBD) and its relationship to educational practices. There is much disagreement at present as to just how much effect a diagnosis of MBD has on a child's ability to learn. How these children learn and the best educational procedures used to teach these children are problems which require much more research before they can be answered intelligently.

Baxter, Katherine B., "Combating the Influence of Black Stereotypes in Children's Books," *The Reading Teacher*, (March, 1974), 27:540-544.

This article reiterates again the absolute necessity for critical evaluation of children's books, especially where Black stereotyping is concerned. It is very discomfoting to recognize bias in books, but it is even more unnerving to realize that there is a real tendency for whites to read such books without that recognition. She challenges us to THINK about what we read. Also included in the article were some questions which outline standards for adequate book evaluation and a bibliography of books dealing with the subject of evaluating children's books in terms of stereotyping.

Bernstein, Joanne, "The Changing Roles of Females in Books for Young Children," *The Reading Teacher*, (March, 1974), 27:545-549.

This article points out the meager number of children's books with a female protagonist. Bernstein states that books about boys outnumber books about girls by at least six to one.

She then goes on to name and quickly analyze twenty-two books which she considers to be well done and worthy of special mention in this area of females in books. She finishes by challenging publishers to take note of the article and then to do something about the lack.

Church, Marilyn, "Does Visual Perceptual Training Help Beginning Readers?" *The Reading Teacher*, (January, 1974), 27:361-364.

The purpose of the reported study is to answer these questions: 1) Can visual perceptual ability be improved by the use of workbooks designed especially for the purpose? 2) Can visual perceptual ability be improved by the use of informal gamelike materials designed especially for that purpose? 3) Which of the two kinds of perceptual training best prepares children to score well on the subtests of the Metropolitan Reading Test as well as the total score? 4) Which kind of visual performance training contributes more to reading performance at first grade level? Findings suggest that a formal program of training in visual perception was not superior to a well planned informal program either in producing better results on a visual perception measure or on a reading achievement test. The author suggests that since the results of the study show the measurable differences between groups to be very small, other aspects of both methods should be considered.

Ekwall, Eldon E., "Should Repetitions be Counted as Errors?" *The Reading Teacher*, (January, 1974), 27:365-367.

There is considerable disagreement as to whether repetitions should be counted as errors when administering an informal reading inventory. Since there is almost universal agreement on the criteria for determining the independent level, the instructional level, and the frustration level of a student's reading ability, we must also agree on what to count as errors if we are to agree on the level placement of students who make numerous repetitions when reading. Through the use of a polygraph, the author measured the physiological frustration reading level of students while they read informal reading inventory passages. The author suggests that all repetitions be counted as errors when administering an informal reading inventory. If not, a teacher is likely to place a child at a reading level which is too difficult for him.

Gibbons, Robert D., "Beware the Home Eye Test for Preschoolers," *The Reading Teacher*, (March, 1971), 27:566-571.

In this article, Dr. Gibbons states the need for adequate near vision, distance vision, binocular coordination, and field of vision for any child. If a student has inadequacies in one or more of these four areas, mastery of reading skills may be difficult. He then warns against the use of the Home Eye Test for Preschoolers, and the use of the Snellen chart alone for indicating visual problems in school children. According to him, 60-70% of the children requiring professional visual care would be overlooked if these two tests were the only criteria used to determine visual adequacy.

Virginia Boyce, in an article of response to Dr. Gibbons, points out that he misinterpreted the intended use of these tests. She states that "The Test" is a screening device and in its preface clearly states that it should in no way replace a complete eye examination for every child entering school. She claims that the major purpose of "The Test" is to alert parents and the public to the importance of early detection and treatment of vision problems.

Groff, Patrick, "The Topsy Turvy World of Sight Words," *The Reading Teacher*, (March, 1974), 27:572-577.

The author presents several pieces of research which dispute many of the well known and often assumed truths about teaching sight words. Among his arguments are the claims that children discriminate parts of words from the time they begin to read and that the shape of a word is the least-used cue to its recognition by beginning readers. He calls for reform in the kind of information given reading teachers about sight words and concludes that more research is needed about the ways in which young children develop their powers of word identification.

Hammill, Donald, and Goodman, Libby, and Wiederholt, J. Lee, "Visual Motor Processes: Can We 'Train' Them?" *The Reading Teacher*, (February, 1974), 27:469-476.

These authors question the great emphasis placed on visual-motor training in our schools today. They wonder if the alloca-

tion of time, the expenditure of funds, and the efforts of teachers and children have been worthwhile. After carefully reviewing the Frostig-Horne program and the Kephart-Getman techniques, they report the findings of their own studies in this area of visual-motor training. They conclude that the value of perceptual training, especially those programs often used in schools, has not been clearly established. Their studies substantiate their conclusions.

Hillerich, Robert L., "Word Lists—Getting It All Together," *The Reading Teacher*, (January, 1974), 27:353-359.

This article compares and analyzes fourteen vocabulary studies for the following purposes: 1) to explore patterns of variation among word lists and 2) to present an updated basic vocabulary that minimizes the bias of individual counts. Findings substantiate the author's earlier hypothesis that variation in word counts is more related to the original source of the words than it is to the date the study was done. Also, in an effort to avoid the bias of limiting a basic word list to a particular source, the writer compiled and developed a composite list. This list is based on the 500 most frequently used words from five different counts. Sources for the count include the old and new, juvenile and adult writing, juvenile and adult printed material. The author feels that since reading and writing are related and mutually reinforcing a single composite list is preferable to separate lists for present and future, reading and writing, and library and textbook reading because such an approach leads to "hopeless fragmentation."

Hood, Joyce, "Why We Burned Our Basic Vocabulary Cards," *The Reading Teacher*, (March, 1974), 27:579-582.

Ms. Hood reports that she really did burn her supply of basic sight words. She contends that: 1) words should always be taught in context, 2) phrase cards are more effective than word cards, 3) the child must practice these words in a story. Several teaching tips are given in the article and she stresses keeping any kind of reading skill drill in its place—three to five minutes a day. Often good reading exercises go bad when we forget that these are only means to an end and not the end themselves.

Jones, Margaret B., and Edna C. Pikulski, "Cloze for the Classroom," *Journal of Reading*, International Reading Association, Newark, (March, 1974), 26:432-438.

Teachers need a quick, efficient, yet reasonably accurate means for determining appropriate pupil placement in reading materials. Some validity for informal reading inventories is often assumed since they are constructed from classroom materials and administered using techniques similar to those used in teaching situations. Because cloze can be developed in comparable materials and also be administered in a teaching situation, high correlations would appear likely, which suggests that the cloze procedure would also be a valid testing device. The cloze test can approximate reading inventory levels on an informal reading inventory 70-80% of the time. Since it takes only a short time to administer, the authors recommend its use to the classroom teacher.

Karlson, Bjorn, and Blocker, Margaret, "Black Children and Consonant Blends," *The Reading Teacher*, (February, 1974), 27:462-463.

Karlson and Blocker's study shows that Black children generally do have problems pronouncing final consonant blends. This generalization, however, does not extend itself to include problems in discriminating final consonant blends auditorally. Black children do perceive them and they can differentiate between words that they may pronounce the same. The authors cite the following example: "Although they might pronounce 'belt' as 'bell' when they read it or listen to it pronounced, they know that the word is 'bêlt' and they know what it means."

Livingston, Myra C., "Children's Literature—in Chaos, a Creative Weapon," *The Reading Teacher*, (March, 1974), 27:534-539.

Today, as the market is being flooded with children's books, Myra Livingston makes a plea to all adults to "keep in touch with chaos." She challenges us to rely on ourselves and our judgment, not entirely on a book reviewer's comment about a certain book. She emphasizes teaching "real literature," not watered down books, for in so doing, we cheat the child.

Know books, know your children, so that you may guide them to the right books at precisely the right moment!

Maloney, John D., "Developing Independent Learners In the Community College," *Journal of Reading*, International Reading Association, Newark, (March, 1974), 17:457-461.

At Ohlone College, California, a comprehensive program has been designed to help all students in college become independent learners. Eight individualized skill building courses with 61 video tapes were developed. Each course carries one unit of credit in English. The final major component of this comprehensive program for developing independent learners consists of a sixty-page Tutor's Handbook developed for use by subject area tutors who tutor fellow students on campus. Instructors make use of this convenient source of information available to them by discussing the reading center's services with students. The reading instructor is often invited into classes of other instructors to describe the reading services available on their campus. The goal is to develop independent and responsible learners.

Mazurkiewicz, Albert J., *Reading: An Introduction* (film), Jab Press, Inc., P.O. Box 213, Fair Lawn, New Jersey 07410.

This film is for use in the elementary school. It focuses attention on four basic approaches to the teaching of reading. The film takes the audience into live classrooms to view children learning to read using the basal, phonics, reformed orthography, and linguistic approaches.

Messer, Wallace, "Flexible Staffing—Another Path to Individualized Reading Instruction," *The Reading Teacher*, (February, 1974), 27:454-457.

The author feels that too few opportunities exist for teachers to share their knowledge and experiences with their colleagues and to learn from one another. He suggests three practical staffing arrangements which would invite more individualized instruction, thus giving children more personalized attention.

Palardy, J. Michael, "For Johnny's Reading Sake," *Early Reading Experiences For Young Children*, (Heath Lowry and Jerry King, editors), M.S.S. Information Corporation, New York, 1974, pp. 38-42.

Both the literature and the classroom teacher support the contention that boys very often do less well in beginning reading than girls. The authors indicate that there are three different explanations given for boys' failure to achieve as well as girls. First, it is indicated that boys mature physically and mentally at a slower rate than girls. Second, content of basal readers is less appealing to boys. Third, teachers in early grades are usually women and are said to conflict more with the personality traits of boys. Without denying these explanations there seems to be another possibility according to the author. He suggests that some boys are less successful than girls in beginning reading because their teachers expect them to be less successful. Polardy discusses this hypothesis and the sequential stages involved in this rationale. He indicates briefly some of the tasks that lie ahead to obtain data to answer the question about boys' success in beginning reading.

Pendrak, Michael, "Performance Contracting and the Secondary Reading Lab," *Journal of Reading*, International Reading Association. Newark, (March, 1974), 17:453-456.

Every student entering Morris Knolls High School, Denville, New Jersey is given the California Junior High Reading Test in their eighth grade year. Selected students come to the reading lab from their English class once a week. Since reading escapes grading, performance contracting in the reading lab provides the motivational reward. Students are given folders for their individual assignments and progress charts. The reading instructor keeps a duplicate folder to record diagnosis and remediation. Contracting is used to give the student a program which recognizes and emphasizes individual needs. It also offers the student a tangible plan as he chooses the amount of work in proportion to the grade he hopes to achieve in his English class.

Pikulski, John J., "Assessment of Pre-Reading Skills: A Review of Frequently Employed Measures," *Reading World* (formerly known

as *The Journal of the Reading Specialist*), The College Reading Association, York, Pennsylvania, (March, 1974), 13:171-197.

In the survey the author discusses recent investigations of several instruments that have received particular attention in evaluating the pre-first grade child. In the investigations of several leading intelligence tests, the Bender Gestalt Test, The Development Test of Visual Perception, and the Illinois Test of Psycholinguistic Abilities attention is given primarily to the question: "What and how is the child ready to learn?" According to this article, the instruments surveyed do appear to have merit in understanding the prerequisites for reading.

Roser, Nancy L., "Electric Company Critique: Can Great be Good Enough?" *The Reading Teacher*, (April, 1974), 27:680-684.

Since children in fifty countries of the world tune in Electric Company, this author feels that the time has come for a serious evaluation of how this television phenomenon affects children's reading and attitudes toward reading. She feels that the program has done an excellent job in motivating children to decode words and that this is precisely its stated purpose. Ms. Roser questions, however, whether more emphasis shouldn't be placed on comprehension and on appreciation for reading as a part of the total communication process.

Rosner, Jerome, "Auditory Analysis Training with Pre-readers," *The Reading Teacher*, (January, 1974), 27:379-383.

Based on the premise that there is a close relationship between children's primary grade reading achievement and their auditory perceptual skills, the author goes on to report his study in this area. Rosner's study supports the argument that it is possible to teach auditory analysis skills well in advance of reading instruction, thereby dealing effectively with one aptitude that is closely related to reading achievement.

Rude, Robert T., "Readiness Tests: Implications For Early Childhood Education," *Early Reading Experiences For Young Children*, (Heath Lowry and Jerry King, editors), M.S.S. Information Corporation, New York, 1974, pp. 38-42.

This paper investigates the specific content and format of

five major reading readiness batteries: the Metropolitan Readiness Tests; Murphy-Durrell Reading Readiness Analysis; Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test-Readiness Skills; and the Harrison-Stroud Reading Readiness Profiles. Reading readiness test authors disagree as to what constitutes reading readiness skills. Another implication to teachers of beginning readers is that teachers must realize that readiness tests measure a limited number of readiness skills. For instance, attention span and experiential background are not measured in the five tests examined. Still another implication is that there is almost no evidence that the increased teaching of these skills will ensure success in learning to read. An important point teachers must not overlook is that test authors usually report their readiness tests to be predictive, not diagnostic in nature.

Sack, Allan, "Notetaking As An Extension of Comprehension," *Reading World*, The College Reading Association, York, Pennsylvania, (May, 1974), 13:281-306.

The author introduces and explains in some detail the Sack-Yourman method of note-taking. In this plan the skill of note-taking is introduced and explained by leading the student through practice sessions with guided activities. Textbooks and taped lectures are used. Application to students' own texts and lectures is the end result of the Sack-Yourman Notetaking Method.

Santeusano, Richard P., "Do College Reading Programs Serve Their Purpose?" *Reading World*, The College Reading Association, York, Pennsylvania, (May, 1974), 13:258-271.

College reading-study skills (CRSS) programs have become widespread since Abell at Wellesley College in 1894 first attempted to help college students read more effectively. According to the author's summary of various research reports the participation in a CRSS program does not result in students attaining a higher GPA. He indicates that it is probable that CRSS programs would be more effective if instructors provided different teaching methods for different students. Santeusano points out the need for ATI (aptitude-treatment-interactions) research in reading. CRSS programs would then develop alternative instructional programs so that optimal educational

payoff would be obtained as students were assigned to different alternative programs.

Savage, John F., "How to Teach Reading?" *Early Reading Experiences For Young Children*, (Heath Lowry and Jerry D. King, editors), M.S.S. Information Corporation, New York, 1974, pp. 158-169.

Today's teacher has much to choose from in deciding how to teach reading. Which shall we choose? The author summarizes seven approaches: the basal reader, individualized reading, the language experience approach, the linguistic method, i/t/a, programmed reading, and words in color. Always comes the crucial question, which one is best? Fame and wealth await the person who proves he has the best way to teach reading. The author suggests while we await the answer that we are still faced with doing our best with the best we have. There is merit in each of the approaches he describes. In conclusion he states that the teacher's enthusiasm and commitment to an approach is most often the major factor in determining its success.

Sawyer, Diane J., "The Diagnostic Mystique—A Point of View," *The Reading Teacher*, (March, 1974), 27:555-561.

The "diagnostic mystique" referred to in the title of this article is explained by the author as being the belief that a skill oriented assessment of a child's reading behavior by a reading expert is the last word in diagnostic workups. If we can zero in on a child's skill deficiencies, a child will progress. Sawyer suggests that this too simple attitude must be altered and replaced because a disabled reader is a problem solver, an individual who interacts with his environment. He is not simply a child who is deficient in some particular reading skill. She presents a strong case for reviewing our present diagnostic techniques and suggests that perhaps our future efforts should focus on learning more about the learner and learning styles.

Spiegel, Dixie Lee, "Holistic Approach to Diagnosis and Remediation," *The Reading Teacher*, (January, 1974), 27:370-374.

The theory that reading is a holistic process (an entity in itself and not just the sum of various decoding and comprehen-

sion skills) is one that is rapidly gaining acceptance, according to the author. This view of reading as a process of deriving meaning has important implications for diagnosis and remediation techniques. She states these implications clearly and understandably. The author warns against entirely ignoring decoding in favor of comprehension. She suggests a healthy balance between the two approaches.