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## We Suggest

Eleanor Buelke

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# WE SUGGEST

*Eleanor Buelke*

Stauffer, Russell G.

*Directing Reading Maturity As A Cognitive Process*

New York: Harper & Row, Publishers

1969, Pp. xiv + 498.

In a recent issue of the *Saturday Review* the editor makes a plea for people today to understand the fearsome, suicidal shadows they have projected into their own futures. To implement such understanding he proposes a foundation for creation of "ideas to which people can respond in making their world congenial for human life. True, they will have only words at their disposal. If they are the right words, they will be enough."<sup>1</sup>

This process, finding and using the right words, through realistic, imaginative, and personalized thinking, to solve a human problem, appears closely akin to the reading process as described and envisioned by the author of *Directing Reading Maturity As A Cognitive Process*. This book has been written for use as a text for graduate students. Its overall concern is to acquaint these students with a philosophy of reading instruction, particularly as it relates to intellectual growth and cognitive development in children and young people. With primary emphasis on process and theory, the well-organized contents proceed from foundations of reading instruction, through sections on group and individualized instruction, beginning reading instruction, the language-experience approach, and teaching of developmental skills, to conclude with attention to the larger developmental phases of reading instruction.

Throughout the clear, detailed description of activities, penetrating all pertinent procedures for skill development, the major premise of the writer is readily discernible. "Reading is a mental process, as is concept development." Children must "be required to do their own learning. Teachers must present children with reading situations in which the children experiment by trying out ideas to see what happens, by manipulating things and ideas by posing questions and seeking answers, by reconciling what they find at one time with what they find at another, and by comparing their findings with each other." In this fashion they "can acquire the rationality and objectivity which only a multiperspective view can offer."

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1. Norman Cousins, "Proposal to a Foundation," *Saturday Review*, (April 26, 1969), 26.

Adequate, appropriate, explanatory evidence and documentation support the author's theory and rationale for this way of directing reading maturity. Of particular interest and value are his summary and interpretations of Piaget's research and theories as they relate to educational practice. Dr. Stauffer's personal, practical proximity to classroom practices in actual instruction of young children lends credence to his suggestions for curriculum planning.

With its underlying emphasis and pervading attention to promotion of learning as cognition, this text warrants examination and study by students, not only in reading instruction, but in all teaching areas. Again, and again, the reader's attention is directed to the consideration of reading in all areas of concern as an active mental process, leading to critical and creative performance. The author's critical concern for "the right words" and avoidance of token deference to certain publicized, but not proven, procedures, or dehumanizing patterns of influence, are among the primary strengths of the book. Somewhat unique to a functional college text, and thoroughly enjoyable, is the rhetorical style in which much of it is written.

Students taught as suggested here might be ready to respond to creative ideas for the world's future. A principal outcome might well be competency in reading "the right words," and using them, too, to "pin down problems," to "identify promising solutions," and to make "the creative choice" for better lives, and a better world.