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We Suggest

Eleanor Buelke

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WE SUGGEST

Eleanor Buelke

Veatch, Jeannette

Reading In The Elementary School

New York: The Ronald Press Company, 1966. Pp. ix-535.

Under the aegis of teachers and writers such as the author of this book, opportunities for improvement of reading instruction are being made ever more available to classroom instructors. *Reading In The Elementary School* proposes, describes, and details piquant patterns for teaching children to read which differ greatly from prevalent practices. In Jeannette Veatch's own words, "Herein is presented a way of teaching reading that has certain major characteristics that set it off from current practices." Other books about reading have also contained bold, imaginative approaches to teaching in this field. Few have been based upon such a sound, research-oriented philosophy.

While recent research, experimentation, and thinking concerning operative forces which shape intelligence, behavioral integration, problem solving skills, and creativity have altered previously conceived views and beliefs about the nature of man, relatively little of this new knowledge has been translated into methodology and adapted for use in elementary school classrooms. It has been suggested by some psychologists that:

. . . behavior may be regarded as being determined to varying degrees by two different sets of factors: external in one instance and internal in the other.¹

Severe external constraints operate to restrict the number and breadth of behavioral determiners, thus limiting the individual in his potential variability of behavior.² Good education is not merely a frayed rope of incidence, loosely knotted with haphazard hope and happenstance. Rather, it is a cognate concatenation welded together by careful study and formation of generic understandings and relationships. In the reading program proposed by Veatch, she recognizes the need for

1. Ludwig Immergluck, "Determinism-Freedom In Contemporary Psychology: An Ancient Problem Revisited," *American Psychologist*, 19 (April, 1964), 278.

2. *Op. cit.*, p. 278.

constant awareness of complex events and factors affecting human growth and learning.

Examination of research about intellectual development in children highlights the following:

. . . at each stage of development the child has a characteristic way of viewing the world and explaining it to himself. The task of teaching a subject to a child at any particular age is one of representing the structure of that subject in terms of the child's way of viewing things. The task can be thought of as one of translation.³

In this book Veatch suggests that intellectual development inherent in the task of learning to read occurs most efficiently during human interaction, between child and teacher, and among children involved in purposeful, group activities. She makes the basic assumptions that reading instruction depends centrally upon a variety of materials with literary merit; that it calls for the use of children's own speech, in various ways, at all levels; that it employs the incentive factor of pupil-selected material; and that it reaches a peak, or climax, in the individual pupil-teacher conference on a one-to-one basis. In discussion of these assumptions, the author is cognizant of the limitations and possibilities of the many external and internal factors which can be just the rich resources the knowledgeable, creative teacher needs, seeks, and uses to encourage and to accomplish learning.

For the elementary teacher who has questioned the value of homogeneous grouping practices, strictly controlled vocabularies, over-emphasis upon extrinsic rewards for learning, artificial motivational techniques and devices, and evaluation solely by teachers, much of real practical worth is included in this volume. Guidelines for grouping indicate reasons, as well as methods, for classroom practice. Ways and means of developing vocabularies, with no ceiling except the child's own language experiences, are illustrated. Open-ended, problem-centered, creative reading lessons and activities which promote independent learning for its own sake are presented and explained. Evaluative processes which help a child to look at himself, and where he stands in relation to expected learnings, are developed and explored.

For all teachers who, as members of their profession, are in quest of humanness, beauty, and knowledge, the major premises of this book offer much of a thought-provoking nature. Teaching is a human act, so methodology that puts children and their adult teachers together as human beings will help them to grow and to strengthen each other.

3. Jerome S. Bruner, *The Process of Education*, p. 33. New York: Random House, Inc., 1960.

Beauty is a major force for good in the world, so ways in which the most beautiful of books can find their way into classrooms will promote the effectiveness of this force. Knowledge is crucial in our world, to be seized and loved for itself and for what it can do for the one who possesses it, so the presentation of the proper means toward its acquisition must be limited only by time, space, and brains. "There are no limits to being human, to loving beauty, to cherishing knowledge."