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# A PHYSICAL EDUCATION TEACHER LOOKS AT READING

*Richard Grushon*

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When the hallway door to my gymnasium opened, I looked up from my work to see one of the sixth grade boys walking across the gymnasium floor to my desk.

“I wanted to return this book on tumbling that you loaned me last week.”

From under his arm, Keith took a green-covered book and handed it to me. As I opened the book, I asked him if he had liked it and understood what the book said.

“Gee, I sure did like it,” was the quick reply, “and there were a few words that I didn’t know but my dad helped me with them.”

“Say, do you think that now I could borrow that other book that you’ve got on tumbling?” Our eyes turned to a row of books that lined my desk and suddenly Keith raised his hand and pointed, “There—that one with a blue cover. It’s the one on Advanced Tumbling.”

I pulled the book from its place and looked through it.

“Yes, I think you could understand this book alright, but you be sure to ask about words that you don’t understand.”

“Thanks. I sure will and I’ll take good care of it and bring it back as soon as I’m finished with it.”

This conversation was with a boy who was working at grade level in all of his school subjects except reading. Yet, suddenly he had gone out of his way to obtain books to read—something he had never done before. The reason for this is not hard to understand for Keith was an outstanding performer in his physical education classes and especially in the area of tumbling and gymnastics. In fact, he had made the school’s tumbling team for three years in a row. Now Keith had found reading material that was of great interest to him and he was at last reading for enjoyment, profit, and the enrichment of his personal and social life.

We know that children bring to school a great variety of attitudes

and interests—some being favorable to learning to read, others unfavorable. Pupils from some homes are eager to learn to read while those from other homes have no apparent incentive for learning. The schools must take these children just as they come, helping some of them to *maintain* the favorable attitudes and interests which they already possess and at the same time helping others to *develop* the favorable attitudes and interest which they lack.

→ Interest breeds motivation, the will to do something, including drive needed for learning. This is true in learning to read. The interested child becomes the well-motivated child, the good or interested reader. Thus, the reading program should be integrated with the child's everyday activities and problems so that he will find it meaningful and purposeful. It should be built around his own centers of interest so that he will be motivated to learn to read, to read for different purposes, to select suitable materials, and to apply the benefits of reading in everyday living.

#### **Factors Which Influence Reading Interest and Taste**

It is well known that some interests vary greatly from child to child of the same age and sex. For the most part, the patterns of child development determine the interests of children at different age levels, but there are other factors which influence their individual choices of reading material. How much and the type of reading that is done by the members of a child's family will help to develop his preference and, even more, to determine how well he will like to read. For example, if there is little reading done in the home and if comments of dislike or indifference are made toward reading, a child would be very likely to assume this unfavorable attitude toward reading. Of course, favorable attitudes toward reading at home can help the child to develop a positive attitude toward reading.

→ Another important factor in determining a child's preference in reading would be the accessibility or availability of books. A home or classroom which can offer a variety of reading materials can give a child an opportunity to sample and to build up preferences that are best suited to him personally. Consequently, it is important for the school to provide adequate time and materials for free reading. If the school itself does not provide a library, it may be necessary to make trips to the public library where a variety of rich offerings in various interest areas can be found by the children.

The type of school curriculum may also be a factor in determining what children will select and enjoy in their reading. Interesting units of work in social studies or science may call for outside reading that would prove interesting to children, thus stimulating them to look for more books of the same sort. The same would be true in the special areas of art, music, and physical education as in the case of Keith. Therefore, it is essential for the special teacher to be alert to detect special interests and to work with the classroom teacher to capitalize on them.

The teacher, more than any other factor, will influence the attitude of the children toward reading! The teacher who has the ability to read stories aloud with real enthusiasm should have little difficulty in stimulating interest in reading. The teacher can also stimulate interest by utilizing methods that the children understand and approve. It is important to encourage the children to react naturally to reading by using a variety of activities and not by talking of vague, noble ideals or assuming the role of their conscience which may tend to annoy or disgust the children. Children are concerned about the approval of their peers. Consequently, children's interests and tastes in reading are strongly influenced by the recommendation of their classmates, and here the teacher's guidance is of marked importance since it will be the teacher's influence that will guide and develop class attitude and selection of reading material.

#### **How Can the Teacher Determine a Child's Interest?**

Now, having an idea as to the factors that operate in determining a child's interest in reading, the next step for the teacher is a need to study each child to find what interests are being established. This can be accomplished in four ways:

*First*, everyday observation. This is a simple and effective way to find out what a child's interests are. By watching his daily activities in school and out, and observing the child when he is free to express himself in talk, play, or drawing, one can make note of areas where the child excels.

*Second*, questionnaires. These usually consist of checklists of play and other forms of leisure activities as well as different kinds of work.

*Third*, interviews. It is important to make the child feel at ease during the interview so he will talk freely about his activities; his

likes and dislikes; his fears and worries. Although an interview may be time-consuming, so much information is usually gained that it is very valuable.

*Fourth, hobby clubs.* The teacher can schedule a period in which each pupil has an opportunity to discuss the things he likes to do best in his leisure time. Then the teacher can suggest some special reading which will strengthen the child's interest in his hobby.

The development of interest in reading should not be limited to motivating the child to do large amounts of reading. The teacher must also be concerned with helping children to broaden their interests. A boy who is interested primarily in airplanes may do much reading but confine his reading to stories and articles in this area. The problem in this case is to channel his interest into other fields, so he will want to read about many things besides airplanes and rockets. The teacher must guide this child in such a way that he comes to realize that other materials can also be interesting. Perhaps the most effective incentives for broadening interests come from the enthusiasm of the teacher and pupils for stories and books not dealing with what one thought was his only interest. The alert teacher will sense the method to emphasize with a particular pupil.

The writer would like to reiterate that how much a child will read of his own accord depends upon his interests. These induce him to respond eagerly to certain areas of his own environment. Nothing is more important in teaching reading than maintaining strong motivation. There is ample proof from the classroom and the clinic to show that children make greater progress in their reading when they are able to read things that are highly interesting to them. Consequently, as a teacher especially interested in physical education, the writer has compiled a bibliography which may be used to find books which will help boys and girls develop or continue an interest in this area. The books making up this guide are listed according to the approximate grade level at which they have been written. The title, author, publisher and a short description of each book have been provided.

<i>Title and Author</i>	<i>Approximate</i>		<i>Date</i>
	<i>Level</i>	<i>Publisher</i>	
Baseball Pals (Christopher) A baseball story stressing team cooperation (fiction)	3	Little	1956
Baseball for Young Champions (Antonacci and Barr) How to play baseball and the history of the game.	3	McGraw-Hill	1956
Basketball for Young Champions (Antonacci and Barr) How to play basketball and the history of the game.	3	McGraw-Hill	1958
Jimmy's Own Basketball (Renick) A basketball story (fiction)	3	Scribner	1952
Pete's Home Run (Renick) A baseball story (fiction)	3	Scribner	1952
Terry and Bunky Play Hockey (Fishel and Hay) Story of playing hockey (fiction)	3	Putnam	1948
The Big Book of Real Boats and Ships (Zaffo) Story of boats and ships from sailing dinghies to ocean liners	3	Grosset Dunlap	1951
Tourney Team (Frick) A basketball story (fiction)	3	Harcourt	1954
Buzzy Plays Midget League Football (Jackson) A football story (fiction)	4	Follett	1956
First Book of Baseball (Brewster) A handbook of baseball	4	Watts	1950
Giant in The Midget League (Jackson) A baseball story (fiction)	4	Crowell	1953
How to Play Baseball (Bonner) A guide for children who want to learn to play baseball	4	Knopf	1955
Little Leaguer's First Uniform (Jackson) A baseball story (fiction)	4	Crowell	1952
Monkey Shines: A Baseball Story (Miers) Story of a Little League Team (fiction)	4	World Publishing Company	1952

Plug-Horse Derby (Brock)	4	Knopf	1955
A story of a plow horse that has been entered in the State Fair (fiction)			
Spice's Football (Jackson)	4	Crowell	1955
A football story (fiction)			
The Blood Bay Colt (Farley)	4	Random House	1950
A story of harness racing (fiction)			
The Dooley's Play Ball (Renick)	4	Scribner	1951
A baseball story (fiction)			
The First Book of Fishing (Schneider)	4	Watts	1952
All about learning to fish			
The Heart for Baseball (Renick)	4	Scribner	1953
A baseball story (fiction)			
The Shining Shooter (Renick)	4	Scribner	1951
The story of a boy's love for marbles (fiction)			
Tommy Carries the Ball (Renick)	4	Scribner	1940
A football story (fiction)			
Boxing for Boys (Silks)	5	Knopf	1953
Helps for the beginner on techniques, equipment, and practices			
Crack of the Bat (Fenner)	5	Knopf	1960
Ten baseball stories, both fact and fiction			
First Boat: How to Pick It and Use It for Fun Afloat (Colby)	5	Coward-McCann	1956
Instructions for the beginner in the handling of all types of boats			
First Rifle (Colby)	5	Coward-McCann	1955
Instructions for the beginner in the handling and care of a rifle for fun and safety			
Games (Bancroft)	5	Macmillan	1937
A guide to play activities, games and sports of all kinds			
Hillbilly Pitcher (Jackson)	5	McGraw Hill	1956
A baseball story (fiction)			
King of the Wind (Henry)	5	Rand-McNally	1948
A story of horse racing (fiction)			
Learning to Sail (Calahan)	5	Macmillan	1947
Practical instruction in the art of sailing small boats			

Let's Go Camping (Zarchy)	5	Knopf	1959
A guide to camping and outdoor living			
Sink the Basket (Knapp)	5	Crowell	1956
Story about girls basketball (fiction)			
Skating for Beginners (Scott and Kirley)	5	Knopf	1953
By means of photographs and diagrams, the authors show the basic principles of ice skating and figure skating			
Sports and Games (Keith)	5	Crowell	1953
Historical accounts of the origin of certain games			
Swimming (Renick)	5	Scribner	1947
A swimming story (fiction)			
The First Book of Basketball (Schiffer)	5	Watts, Inc.	1959
This book covers all major aspects of the game of basketball. A good glossary of basketball terms			
The First Book of Football (Schiffer)	5	Watts, Inc.	1958
This book covers all major aspects of the game of football			
The First Book of Rhythms (Hughes)	5	Watts, Inc.	1954
An introduction to children of the rhythms around them			
The Kid Comes Back (Tunis)	5	Morrow	1946
A baseball story (fiction)			
The Kid from Tompkinsville (Tunis)	5	Harcourt	1940
A baseball story (fiction)			
World Series (Tunis)	5	Harcourt	1941
A baseball story (fiction)			
Batter Up (Scholz)	6	Morrow	1946
A baseball story (fiction)			
Better Baseball for Boys (Cooke)	6	Dodd,	1959
Rules and skills in playing baseball			
Boxing (Haislet)	6	Barnes	1940
A guide to the sport of boxing			
Buddy and the Old Pro (Tunis)	6	Morrow	1955
Story of a baseball team (fiction)			
Clean Up Hitter (Friendlick)	6	Westminster	1956
A baseball story (fiction)			
Deep Down Under (Floherly)	6	Lippincott	1953
All phases of diving, deep-sea and shallow-water			

End Zone (Scholz) A college football story (fiction)	6	Morrow	1954
Fighting Quarterback (Bishop) A story of high school football (fiction)	6	Steck	1954
Freshman Forward (Jackson) A basketball story (fiction)	6	McGraw- Hill	1959
Full Count (Archibald) A baseball story of a young pitcher (fiction)	6	Macrae Smith	1956
Joe DiMaggio: The Yankee Clipper (Schoor) Biography of this baseball star	6	Messner	1956
Kid Brother (Keating) A basketball and baseball story (fiction)	6	Westminster Press	1956
Lou Gehrig, A Quiet Hero (Graham) A biography of the baseball star	6	Putnam	1942
Lucky Shoes (Millholland) A football story (fiction)	6	Doubleday	1956
Mister Shortstop (Decker) A baseball story (fiction)	6	Morrow	1954
Patch (Frick) A high school track team story (fiction)	6	Harcourt	1957
Skating Shoes (Streatfield) The story of a boy and his work to become a champion skater (fiction)	6	Random House	1951
Skiing for Beginners (Brown) A guide for learning how to ski	6	Scribner	1951
Sparkplug of the Hornets (Meader) A basketball story (fiction)	6	Harcourt	1953
Sport for the Fun of It (Tunis) A handbook of information on twenty sports	6	Barnes	1950
The Big Loop (Bishop) Story of a great bicycle racer (fiction)	6	Viking	1955
The Boy's Complete Book of Fresh and Salt Water Fishing (James and Rodman) A book on fishing	6	Little	1959
The Pee Wee Reese Story (Schoor) A biography of a baseball star	6	Messner	1956
The Sal Maglie Story (Shapiro) Biography of this baseball star	6	Messner	1957

Trouble on the Run Story of high school track (fiction)	6	Westminster Press	1956
Where Speed Is King (Hyde and Edwin) Various interests involving speed: air-planes, bicycles, boating, horses, sport cars, track, swimming, and water skiing	6	McGraw-Hill	1955
All Conference Tackle (Jackson) A football story (fiction)	7	Crowell	1947
Baseball Rookies Who Made Good (Bonner) Stories of forty baseball stars	7	Knopf	1954
Better Badminton (Jackson and Swan) A guide and history to the sport of badminton	7	Barnes	1939
Champion of the Court (Verral) A basketball story (fiction)	7	Crowell	1954
Go, Team, Go (Tunis) A basketball story (fiction)	7	Morrow	1954
Hard to Tackle (Douglas) A high school football story (fiction)	7	Crowell	1956
Hero at Halfback (Bishop) A football story (fiction)	7	Steck	1953
Highpockets (Tunis) A baseball story (fiction)	7	Morrow	1948
Hit and Run (Decker) A baseball story (fiction)	7	Morrow	1949
Hot Rod (Felsen) Car Racing (fiction)	7	Dutton	1950
Mountain Tamer (Stapp) The story of a mountain-climber (fiction)	7	Morrow	1948
Rose Bowl All-American (Jackson) A football story (fiction)	7	Crowell	1949
Skate With Me (Scott) Ice skating as a participant and as an observer	7	Doubleday	1957
Sport and Racing Cars (Yates and Brock) Automobile racing of every kind	7	Harper	1954
The Boy's Book of Rifles (Chapel) The history, analysis, care, and use of rifles	7	Coward-McCann	1948
The Tall One (Olson) A basketball story (fiction)	7	Dodd	1956

Wings on My Feet (Henie) True Experiences of Sonja Henie	7	Prentice	1940
Action at Third (Emery) A baseball story (fiction)	8	Macrae Smith	1957
A Fighting Chance (Scholz) A story of college football (fiction)	8	Morrow	1956
Angel on Skis (Cavanna) The story of a fourteen year old girl who loves the sport of skiing (fiction)	8	Morrow	1957
A Treasure Chest of Sport Stories (Herzeberg) A collection of sport stories	8	Messner	1951
Escape on Skis (Stapp) The story of boys on a ski trip (fiction)	8	Morrow	1949
Fast Man on a Pivot (Decker) A baseball story (fiction)	8	Morrow	1951
Rookie Coach (Fulton) A high school coach of football, base- ball, and basketball (fiction)	8	Doubleday	1955
Speed Six (Carter) Racing story of modern styles of cars (fiction)	8	Harper	1956
The Indianapolis 500 (Yates) Information about winning and losing drivers	8	Harper	1956

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