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Furthermore, in playing with other children Jimmy was given ample opportunity to examine his own inadequate feelings and actions without fear of being punished. He was encouraged to respect the rights of others through examples of fair play and good sportsmanship.

In the final analysis, teachers need to be aware of the conditions which make non-readers out of some children. Whether it be a child whose mental development functions at a sub-normal level or one who is extremely advanced in intellect, it is the teacher's responsibility to take into account these differences and provide a reading program which will enhance learning at all levels. This is a worthy objective to which dedicated teachers can make a substantial contribution.

## **Instructional Problems in Reading as Viewed By the Teacher and By Her Administrators**

**Research Committee**

**Western Michigan University Chapter  
International Reading Association  
Kalamazoo, Michigan**

### **Introduction**

Nine years ago a group of interested students of reading formed the Western Michigan University Chapter of the International Reading Association. Their purposes then, as now, were to encourage the study of reading problems at all educational levels, to stimulate and promote research in developmental, corrective and remedial reading, to study the various factors that influence progress in reading, to assist in the development of more adequate teacher-training programs, to disseminate knowledge helpful in the solution of problems related to reading, and to sponsor conferences and meetings planned to implement the purposes of the association. The group, which has

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The Research Committee is composed of the following members of the Chapter: Dorothy J. McGinnis, chairman, Fran Baden, Homer L. J. Carter, Lillian Mulvaney, Ruth Penty, Alice Perejda, and Helen Wise.

grown larger and more effective with each passing year, has completed its first cooperative study. The purpose of this paper is two-fold: to report findings resulting from the study and to stimulate other chapters to sponsor investigations in the field of reading.

### **Problem**

This study was undertaken to investigate problems associated with the teaching of reading as expressed both by elementary teachers and school administrators who are working together in the same school systems. Furthermore, it was the aim of this study to determine the kinds of in-service assistance provided in the various schools which were represented. In this report an attempt has been made to describe the procedure used to secure the opinions of teachers and administrators, to summarize resulting data, and to set forth inferences concerning problems and practices associated with the teaching of reading in the elementary grades of both a metropolitan and county school system in the state of Michigan.

### **Procedure**

In order to investigate problems associated with the teaching of reading, members of the Western Michigan University Chapter prepared two inventories, one for classroom teachers and one for school administrators. Both inventories asked the respondents to list problems encountered in the teaching of reading and to record the kinds of in-service training programs provided by their schools. The investigators realized that inventories which required participants to state responses in their own words would make tabulation of data difficult but felt that this method would increase validity of responses. In addition, information was obtained regarding the background, experience, and training of the 549 elementary teachers and 54 school administrators to whom the inventories were administered. Responses to each question were then classified according to content, and a general tabulation was prepared. After these data had been treated statistically and studied by the different members making up the research team, inferences based upon them were set forth.

### **Information Concerning Participants**

The 54 school administrators participating in this study received their academic preparation at ten different colleges and universities. 3.7 per cent had not met the requirements for any degree. Thirteen

per cent had a bachelor's degree, 79.6 per cent a master's degree, and 3.7 per cent had earned the doctorate. Approximately 60 per cent of the administrators had earned a degree between 1950 and 1959. Some, however, completed the requirements for their last degree as early as 1925. The average year in which the last degree was earned was found to be 1948. 64.8 per cent of the 54 school administrators indicated that as undergraduates they had prepared for elementary teaching whereas 31.5 per cent said their training was in the secondary field and 3.7 per cent reported that their undergraduate preparation was not in the area of education. The school administrators reported an average of thirteen years of teaching experience in the elementary grades with some having as many as thirty-nine years of experience and some with no experience. The number of years spent in administration ranged from one to thirty-nine with the average being nine years. 83.3 per cent reported that their responsibilities included planned classroom observation, and 75.9 per cent stated that their duties included planned supervision. The average number of classroom teachers supervised by administrators was 22 although the number ranged from five to 375. Approximately 65 per cent supervised less than 20 teachers.

549 elementary teachers participated in this study. They received their academic preparation in 56 different colleges and universities. 6.4 per cent had not met the requirements for a degree, 66.5 per cent had a bachelor's degree and 22.2 per cent held a master's degree. 4.9 per cent failed to indicate their degree status. The average year in which the last degree was earned was 1949 and the earliest was 1910. 61 per cent of the participants have met the requirements for a permanent teaching certificate, and 32.4 per cent hold some form of provisional certificate. 6.6 per cent failed to indicate the type of teaching qualifications they had met. The average number of years taught by the teachers in the elementary grades was thirteen although the number of years ranged from one to forty-four. Nearly half the teachers had taught less than ten years. Approximately 57 per cent of the elementary teachers participating in this study have had some experience teaching at the secondary level. The range is from one year to twenty-four with three years being the average. 9.6 per cent of the teachers participating in this study are teaching in the kindergarten. 51.6 per cent in grades 1, 2 and 3, and 38.8 per cent in the upper elementary grades.

**Table 1**  
**Problems Related to the Teaching of Reading**

PROBLEMS	Administrators	Teachers
Teacher Preparation and		
Adequacy in Reading Instruction	42.3	1.7*
Teacher Turnover	1.0	
Providing for Individual Differences (through grouping and provisions for children with reading problems and the gifted)	18.5	12.0
Time (lack of supervisory and teaching time)	13.4	11.1
Materials (inadequate workbooks, readers, teacher's guidebooks, library facilities, and audio- visual materials)	9.3	14.4
Class Size	4.2	1.3
Parental Attitudes	2.1	2.9
Commonly Accepted Philosophy of Education	2.0	
Development of Basic Skills		36.7*
Reading Readiness (primarily initial stages of reading instruction)		1.4
Causal Factors		10.5*
Identification and		
Evaluation of Reading Needs	1.0	.6
Record Keeping		.3
Attendance and Mobility of Students	1.0	.6
No Reading Problems Indicated	5.2	6.5
Total	100.0	100.0

\* The differences in per cents are significant at the one per cent level.

**Table 2**  
**In-Service Training Programs**

PROGRAMS	Administrators	Teachers
Extension Courses	1.6	1.0
Professional Library Facilities and Instructional Materials	17.4	4.9*

Administrators' Letters and Service Bulletins	.8	
Research Projects	1.6	2.4
Faculty Meetings	22.8	15.4
Special Meetings and Institutes	10.2	16.4
Conferences with Reading Consultants	11.7	12.6
Reading Clinics and Demonstrations	19.0	5.5*
Reading Committees and Workshops (building, system and county)	7.9	14.2
No In-Service Program or No Mention of One	7.0	27.6*
Total	100.0	100.0

\* The differences in per cents are significant at the one per cent level.

**Summary of Data**

A study of Table 1 sets forth some interesting facts which should be brought to the attention of the reader. This table shows the different problems mentioned by administrators and teachers and the frequencies of these responses in terms of per cents. For example, one of the most significant facts is classified under teacher preparation and adequacy in reading instruction, for here 42 per cent of the responses of administrators suggested that this problem was directly related to the teaching of reading while less than two per cent of the responses of the teachers regarded teacher preparation and adequacy of instruction as a significant problem. On the other hand, approximately 37 per cent of the responses of teachers indicated that the major problem related to the teaching of reading was that of the development of basic reading skills. Some of the more common skills, listed in the order of their frequency, were phonetic analysis, adequate comprehension, and vocabulary development. A great range of basic skills is indicated by the fact that 21 skills were listed by the teachers participating in the study. It is apparent that none of the administrators listed the development of basic skills as one of the major problems related to the teaching of reading. Data in this table show that the teachers were aware of causal factors affecting reading performance and that no administrator regarded these as major problems. Those causal factors frequently mentioned can be classified as being of a physical, mental, and emotional nature.

Approximately 19 per cent of the responses of administrators and 12 per cent of the responses of teachers dealt with the problem of

caring for individual differences. In going back to the original sources for more detailed information on this subject, it becomes apparent that both administrators and teachers were aware of the wide range of abilities and interests in the classroom. More of the responses of administrators than of the teachers, however, dealt with procedures for grouping children in order to care for individual differences. In the interpretation of these data the differences between the responses of the administrators and the responses of the teacher were not statistically significant.

Thirteen per cent of the responses of administrators and eleven per cent of the responses of the teachers indicated that lack of time is a problem in the classroom. Nine per cent of the responses of administrators and 14 per cent of the responses of teachers mentioned materials as a problem. An analysis of the original data reveals that administrators and teachers are concerned with inadequate library and audio-visual materials and that in addition teachers are disturbed by a lack of materials of interest to children, inadequate readers, workbooks and teachers' guidebooks. It should again be observed that the responses of administrators and teachers show no statistically significant difference. Such factors as reading readiness, class size, parental attitudes, attendance, identification of reading needs, means of keeping records, and a commonly accepted philosophy of education are not disturbing to any significant degree.

The reader's attention should next be directed to Table 2 which shows the differences in the opinions of administrators and teachers regarding in-service training programs. The 54 school administrators participating in this study listed a total of 127 in-service programs in reading made available in their school systems. These 127 instructional activities were classified into ten areas. A study of Table 2 shows the per cent of responses for each classification. The in-service training programs mentioned by administrators are listed in the order of their frequency:

- (1) Faculty meetings
- (2) Reading clinics and demonstrations
- (3) Professional library facilities and instructional materials
- (4) Conferences with reading consultants
- (5) Special meetings and institutes
- (6) Reading committees and workshops
- (7) No in-service program or no mention of one

- (8.5) Research projects
- (8.5) Extension courses
- (10) Administrator's letters and service bulletins

The 793 in-service programs in reading recorded by the 594 teachers cooperating in this investigation were classified into nine areas. The in-service training programs mentioned by teachers are listed in the order of their frequency of response.

- (1) No in-service program or no mention of one
- (2) Special meetings and institutes
- (3) Faculty meetings
- (4) Reading committees and workshops
- (5) Conferences with reading consultants
- (6) Reading clinics and demonstrations
- (7) Professional library facilities and instructional materials
- (8) Research projects
- (9) Extension courses

Apparently none of the teachers considered the administrator's letters and service bulletins to be a part of in-service training in reading. There are three classifications which show a difference between the responses of administrators and teachers which is significant at the one per cent level. These areas are (1) professional library facilities and instructional materials, (2) reading clinics and demonstrations, and (3) no in-service program or no mention of one.

### **Inferences**

1. Both administrators and teachers are concerned with adequacy of instruction. Administrators and teachers, however, perceive this problem from different points of view. Administrators appear to relate the problem to inadequate teacher preparation and ineffective instructional practices. Teachers, on the other hand, relate the problem to children and to the development of basic reading skills.

2. Although 21 skills were mentioned by teachers, their major concern with phonics may indicate that teachers have need to be informed of more functional methods of teaching phonics for use with those students who learn best through auditory methods. The frequent mention of phonics may also indicate that teachers are increasingly aware of public pressures and are confused with the place of phonics in the total reading program.

3. In view of the fact that 10.5 per cent of the teachers' re-

sponses voiced concern with causal factors, it may be inferred that many of them relate their instructional problems to some factors which are beyond their ability to control. This may suggest that teachers and administrators should consider causal factors primarily in terms of prevention of reading difficulties and that their major efforts should be directed to the successful operation of a thorough-going developmental program in reading. In turn, it seems to suggest that teachers should better qualify themselves to teach those aspects of a remedial reading program which can be handled within a class organization if their situation demands this type of teaching. Some authorities in the field may suggest the need for psychological assistance in the diagnosis and treatment of children's problems.

4. It can be inferred that the thoughtful observer of facts presented in Table 1 will wonder why both administrators and teachers have been so little concerned with teacher turnover, parental attitudes, a commonly accepted philosophy of education, record keeping, attendance, and, perhaps most important of all, the identification and evaluation of reading needs.

5. Means of providing for individual differences is the second most frequently listed problem of administrators and the third most frequently stated problem by teachers. Consequently, it may be inferred that teachers and administrators recognize this as an area in which they need assistance, and it may suggest the necessity for scientific experimentation regarding the various methods of dealing with individual differences.

6. A lack of time is the third most frequently mentioned problem by administrators and fourth as listed by teachers. In view of these findings, it may be inferred that pressures exist which detract from efficient and effective reading instruction. Pressures may stem from an overcrowded curriculum, lack of time for planning and preparation, or from ineffective use of time available. The whole problem of time pressures should receive careful consideration by all concerned.

7. It is obvious that very few teachers and no administrators gave consideration to reading readiness as a problem related to the teaching of reading. This may indicate that mental, emotional, and social readiness for reading at all grade levels might well receive emphasis in both pre-service and in-service training of teachers.

8. It is evident that many of the in-service programs made avail-

able by administrators are not recognized by teachers as contributing to their training in the teaching of reading. These data may suggest that attempts should be made to have teachers become more aware of the basic purposes underlying these programs. In accomplishing this objective, it may be advisable for administrators to consider the judgment of their teachers in the planning and evaluation of in-service programs.

9. It may be possible that the in-service training programs listed by teachers and administrators are those which are best remembered because they are most effective. If this inference is true, one may ask why 27.6 per cent of the responses of teachers indicated no in-service program or at least no mention of one.

10. The classroom teacher apparently evaluates highly those in-service programs which bring her into direct contact with others through faculty meetings, special meetings and institutes, and conferences with reading consultants. This may explain why more teachers did not mention clinics, demonstrations, and library facilities as in-service functions in which participation through teacher discussion is not common.

11. Only 4.9 per cent of the responses of teachers listed professional library facilities and instructional materials as in-service training. 9.3 per cent of the administrators and 14.4 per cent of the teachers' responses mentioned materials as a problem related to the teaching of reading. Therefore, is it not reasonable to assume that there is a need for more professional and elementary libraries which are easily accessible to administrators, teachers, and children?

12. Research projects as a means of in-service training received next to least frequent mention in this study on the part of both administrators and teachers. This fact points to the possible need for the carrying on of more experimentation and research with methods designed to improve the teaching of reading. This would provide experience in testing the value of research methods as a medium of in-service training in this area.

13. College teachers of education and administrators in the public schools can profit from a consideration of the facts brought out in this study. This is true because individuals expressing the points of view set forth in this report would be given consideration in education classes and in conferences with school administrators.