A Physical Education Teacher Looks at Reading

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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.
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<tr>
<th>Title and Author</th>
<th>Level</th>
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<tr>
<td>Baseball Pals (Christopher)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Little</td>
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<td>A baseball story stressing team cooperation (fiction)</td>
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<td>Baseball for Young Champions (Antonacci and Barr)</td>
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<td>How to play baseball and the history of the game.</td>
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<td>Basketball for Young Champions (Antonacci and Barr)</td>
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<td>How to play basketball and the history of the game.</td>
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<td>Jimmy's Own Basketball (Renick)</td>
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<td>Pete's Home Run (Renick)</td>
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<td>Terry and Bunky Play Hockey (Fishel and Hay)</td>
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<td>Story of playing hockey (fiction)</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Big Book of Real Boats and Ships (Zaffo)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Grosset, Dunlap</td>
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<tr>
<td>Story of boats and ships from sailing dinghies to ocean liners</td>
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<td>Tourney Team (Frick)</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td>Buzzy Plays Midget League Football (Jackson)</td>
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<td>A football story (fiction)</td>
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<tr>
<td>First Book of Baseball (Brewster)</td>
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<tr>
<td>A handbook of baseball</td>
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<tr>
<td>Giant in The Midget League (Jackson)</td>
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<td>A baseball story (fiction)</td>
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<td>How to Play Baseball (Bonner)</td>
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<tr>
<td>A guide for children who want to learn to play baseball</td>
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<td>Little Leaguer's First Uniform (Jackson)</td>
<td>4</td>
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<td>A baseball story (fiction)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Monkey Shines: A Baseball Story (Miers)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>World Publishing Company</td>
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Plug-Horse Derby (Brock)  
A story of a plow horse that has been entered in the State Fair (fiction)

Spice’s Football (Jackson)  
A football story (fiction)

The Blood Bay Colt (Farley)  
A story of harness racing (fiction)

The Dooley’s Play Ball (Renick)  
A baseball story (fiction)

The First Book of Fishing (Schneider)  
All about learning to fish

The Heart for Baseball (Renick)  
A baseball story (fiction)

The Shining Shooter (Renick)  
The story of a boy’s love for marbles (fiction)

Tommy Carries the Ball (Renick)  
A football story (fiction)

Boxing for Boys (Silks)  
Helps for the beginner on techniques, equipment, and practices

Crack of the Bat (Fenner)  
Ten baseball stories, both fact and fiction

First Boat: How to Pick It and Use It for Fun Afloat (Colby)  
Instructions for the beginner in the handling of all types of boats

First Rifle (Colby)  
Instructions for the beginner in the handling and care of a rifle for fun and safety

Games (Bancroft)  
A guide to play activities, games and sports of all kinds

Hillbilly Pitcher (Jackson)  
A baseball story (fiction)

King of the Wind (Henry)  
A story of horse racing (fiction)

Learning to Sail (Calahan)  
Practical instruction in the art of sailing small boats
Let's Go Camping (Zarchy)
A guide to camping and outdoor living
Sink the Basket (Knapp)
Story about girls basketball (fiction)
Skating for Beginners (Scott and Kirley)
By means of photographs and diagrams, the authors show the basic principles of ice skating and figure skating
Sports and Games (Keith)
Historical accounts of the origin of certain games
Swimming (Renick)
A swimming story (fiction)
The First Book of Basketball (Schiffer)
This book covers all major aspects of the game of basketball. A good glossary of basketball terms
The First Book of Football (Schiffer)
This book covers all major aspects of the game of football
The First Book of Rhythms (Hughes)
An introduction to children of the rhythms around them
The Kid Comes Back (Tunis)
A baseball story (fiction)
The Kid from Tompkinsville (Tunis)
A baseball story (fiction)
World Series (Tunis)
A baseball story (fiction)
Batter Up (Scholz)
A baseball story (fiction)
Better Baseball for Boys (Cooke)
Rules and skills in playing baseball
Boxing (Haislet)
A guide to the sport of boxing
Buddy and the Old Pro (Tunis)
Story of a baseball team (fiction)
Clean Up Hitter (Friendlick)
A baseball story (fiction)
Deep Down Under (Floeherty)
All phases of diving, deep-sea and shallow-water
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<th>Title</th>
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<tr>
<td>End Zone (Scholz)</td>
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<td>A college football story (fiction)</td>
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<td>Fighting Quarterback (Bishop)</td>
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<td>A story of high school football (fiction)</td>
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<td>Freshman Forward (Jackson)</td>
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<td>A basketball story (fiction)</td>
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<td>Full Count (Archibald)</td>
<td>6 Macrae Smith</td>
<td>1956</td>
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<td>A baseball story of a young pitcher (fiction)</td>
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<td>Joe DiMaggio: The Yankee Clipper (Schoor)</td>
<td>6 Messner</td>
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<td>Biography of this baseball star</td>
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<td>Kid Brother (Keating)</td>
<td>6 Westminster</td>
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<td>A basketball and baseball story (fiction)</td>
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<td>Lou Gehrig, A Quiet Hero (Graham)</td>
<td>6 Putnam</td>
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<td>A biography of the baseball star</td>
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<td>Lucky Shoes (Millholland)</td>
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<td>Mister Shortstop (Decker)</td>
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<td>Patch (Frick)</td>
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<td>A high school track team story (fiction)</td>
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<td>Skating Shoes (Streatfield)</td>
<td>6 Random House</td>
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<td>The story of a boy and his work to become a champion skater (fiction)</td>
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<td>Skiing for Beginners (Brown)</td>
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<td>A guide for learning how to ski</td>
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<td>Sparkplug of the Hornets (Meader)</td>
<td>6 Harcourt</td>
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<td>A basketball story (fiction)</td>
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<td>Sport for the Fun of It (Tunis)</td>
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<td>A handbook of information on twenty sports</td>
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<td>The Big Loop (Bishop)</td>
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<td>Story of a great bicycle racer (fiction)</td>
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<td>The Boy's Complete Book of Fresh and Salt Water Fishing (James and Rodman)</td>
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<td>The Pee Wee Reese Story (Schoor)</td>
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<td>A biography of a baseball star</td>
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<td>The Sal Maglie Story (Shapiro)</td>
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<td>Biography of this baseball star</td>
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</tbody>
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Trouble on the Run
   Story of high school track (fiction) 6 Westminster 1956

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

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4. Eakin, Mary K., Good Books for Children, The University of
5. Eaton, Anne Thaxter, Treasure for the Taking, The Viking Press,
   New York, 1957.
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Mr. Richard Grushon earned his bachelor's degree in physical education and his master's degree in school administration and guidance at Miami University, Oxford, Ohio. He served as administrative assistant to the principal of McGuffey School, Oxford, Ohio, before joining the Kalamazoo Public Schools in 1957. Since then, he has taught physical education and also in the elementary classroom.