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A SURVEY OF ORAL COMMUNICATION INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES  
IN THE ELEMENTARY PUBLIC SCHOOLS OF MICHIGAN

by

James N. Walker

A Dissertation  
Submitted to the  
Faculty of The Graduate College  
in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the  
Degree of Doctor of Education  
Department of Educational Leadership

Western Michigan University  
Kalamazoo, Michigan  
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A SURVEY OF ORAL COMMUNICATION INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES  
IN THE ELEMENTARY PUBLIC SCHOOLS OF MICHIGAN

James N. Walker, Ed.D.

Western Michigan University, 1988

Instruction in oral communication is critical to education. Oral communication skills are needed in the development of skills in written language, math, problem solving, and reading. Oral communication skills are important in achieving academic, vocational, and personal success. On November 1, 1978, speech education was recognized as a basic skill by United States law.

The purpose of this study was to determine the oral communication instructional practices in Michigan public elementary schools grades K-5. Eight research questions were identified:

1. Is instruction provided?
2. What is the "basis" for instruction?
3. What materials are used?
4. What is the method of delivery?
5. What is the frequency of instruction?
6. How is student achievement evaluated or graded?
7. Do teachers believe instruction should be provided?
8. What is the relative importance teachers assign to instruction?

One hundred ninety-eight teachers were selected for this study. The major findings of the study are as follows:

1. Most teachers provide planned instruction (73%).
2. There is no formal basis for instruction (73%).
3. Material usage varied; self-developed material was most often noted (28%).
4. Instruction is integrated throughout other areas of instruction (96%).
5. Planned instruction is provided almost daily or daily (65%).
6. Few teachers write separate marks or grades on report cards (30%). Grading is determined via observation or knowledge of the student (85%).
7. Teachers believe oral communication should be taught in school (97%).
8. Teachers believe oral communication is as important as other instruction.
9. Teachers lacked conviction and or familiarity with oral communication instruction.

Three recommendations were made in the study. School districts should: (1) adopt or develop formal oral communication curriculum, (2) provide inservice for teachers on oral communication instruction, and (3) provide formal recognition of oral communication skills.

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## DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my wife, Bonnie, my daughters, Jill and Kathleen, and my parents, John and Elizabeth. Their enduring support has inspired me to reach for goals I never thought possible.

James N. Walker

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James N. Walker

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Early in the 20th century, speech education emphasized a classical educational model of instruction which was aimed to "prepare the leaders of the culture, explainers of causality, and possessors of power" (Buys et al., cited in Schmidt, 1982, p. 2). This classical education model was disrupted by four cultural changes which altered speech education emphasis: (1) Charles Darwin's theory of evolution, (2) Sigmund Freud's attention to the nature and function of the human emotional neurological-somatic system, (3) Albert Einstein's concept of relativity, and (4) economic changes which altered man's contact with man (Buys et al., cited in Schmidt, 1982, p. 2).

Oral language is now thought to be inseparable from the study of the human situation; it is almost always produced by human beings for human purposes to share human meanings. Oral language is about people. Oral communication is a way of looking at, thinking about, and talking about the world around us. Throughout recorded history, people have recognized the importance of speech (Willbrand & Riecke, 1933).

Speech is infinitely relevant for people of all ages

(Ritter, 1975). Adults require oral and communication skills in social and career contexts to function effectively in society (Endicott, 1978). A person's oral expressive abilities are closely related to an individual's personality and self-concept (Ritter, 1975; Rubin, 1980). Oral communication instruction is critical to education (Allen, Brown, & Yatvin, 1984; Lieb-Brilhart, 1979).

On November 1, 1978, speech communication became a basic skill by law. Title II (Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, amended 1978) was amended in the new Title II, Section 201, to read as follows:

The purpose of this part is -- (1) to assist Federal, State, and local educational agencies to coordinate the utilization of all available resources for elementary and secondary education to improve instruction so that all children are able to master the basic skills of reading, mathematics, and effective communication, both written and oral; (2) to encourage states to develop comprehensive and systematic plans for improving achievements in the basic skills; (3) to provide financial agencies for the development of programs in basic skills. (ESEA of 1965, amended 1978).

In Section 205, the Act states that instruction must be provided in the four basic skills and that preservice and inservice training must be provided school personnel to improve their ability to teach basic skills. By including speaking and listening as basic skills, this legislative mandate placed new demands on our schools to identify the manner in which they will satisfy this requirement.

What then are schools doing to implement instruction in oral communication? Modaff and Hopper (1984) report:

According to the Speech Communication Association Task Force on Assessment and Testing, as of July 15, 1981, nineteen states "have no curriculum or assessment programs in speaking and/or listening and have no plans of implementing any such program." Fourteen additional states report an intention of developing either curriculums or assessment programs "but have not yet done so." Thus, 33 of our 50 states, despite strong encouragement of federal mandate, do not yet teach speaking and/or listening skills as part of their statewide curriculum. (p. 37)

Speaking and listening skills are part of this country's basic school instruction supported by professionals in the field of language, national task forces on education, and legislative mandates; yet, implementation of oral communication instruction would appear at a standstill. In the classroom, textbooks are one of the most influential materials that are used for instruction on a nationwide basis; yet, publishers admit that the printed page poses limitations in teaching speech and listening skills (Brown, 1967). At the elementary school level, speaking and listening skills are either fortuitous or contingent upon the teacher's training and interest or targeted for students with communication disorders in the context of special education (Lieb-Brilhart, 1979). The study of oral communication instruction has also been neglected.

Research in oral communication is fragmented and without focus (Cooper & Powell, 1981). In an exhaustive

study of research from 1974 to 1982 on communication and instruction Staton-Spicer & Wulff (1984) concluded that both communication education and instructional communication is a topic which periodic assessment of research has not been forthcoming. Even with limited research in oral communication instruction, there is little debate how oral communication skills should be instructed.

Experts believe oral communication instruction should focus on a holistic approach (Allen & Kellner, 1983; Burns & Browman, 1979; Crocker, 1979; Ediger, 1980; Lieb-Brilhart, 1979; Moffet & Wagner, 1976; Monda, 1983; Rubin & Kantor, 1983; Wood, 1983). Oral communication instruction must be provided through practice, not through learning sentence structure in isolation. Oral communication instruction should be integrated across the other areas of curriculum and should be taught directly with instruction in reading and writing (Lieb-Brilhart, 1980).

Implementation ideology for classroom practices in instruction should parallel five assumptions: (1) Communication educators are primarily interested in the pragmatics of communication; (2) communication competency is not tied to competency in a particular form of language; (3) the communication behavior of children can be modified; (4) as communication educators, we should be



child centered in our educational prescription; and, (5) communication instruction should emphasize the interactive nature of communication (Gruenberg & Boileau, 1978). Ideology preceeds implementation strategy.

Teachers should link performance of language to a social context and focus oral communication instruction on the following features: (a) building a repertoire of experiences; (b) selecting strategies; (c) implementing strategies; and, (d) evaluating performance. Communication competence in the speaker listener exchange can then be analyzed by four principles which form the basics for oral communication instruction: (1) sensitivity; (2) flexibility; (3) performance; and, (4) feedback (Rubin & Kantor, 1983). When teachers understand the assumptions, features, and principles of communication education, they can directly understand the nature of communication competence and gain the total scope of speech acts.

Communication competence is not situationally bound but extends to all situations in which a person interacts (Gruenberg & Boileau, 1978). Oral communication instruction should emphasize a functional approach to oral communication (Wood, 1980). Oral communication instruction must be directed and competency based (Connolly & Bruner, 1974). Teacher instruction is the key element in developing communication competence in children. Competency based speech instruction should be developed

by (a) identification of individual needs, and (b) determining students abilities and immediate environmental requirements; needs dictate focus (Schmidt, 1982).

Educators know that oral communication skills should be taught in our schools. Experts know "what" to teach in oral communication instruction and "how" to teach oral communication skills. What remains is implementing what most people in our culture know needs to be done.

### Definitions

Oral communication in this study will be defined as follows: (definition used by the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association and Speech Communication Association, Willbrand & Riecke, 1983)

Oral communication: the process of interacting through heard and spoken messages in a variety of situations. Effective oral communication is a learned behavior, involving the following processes:

1. Speaking in a variety of educational and social situations: speaking involves, but is not limited to, arranging and producing messages through the use of voice, articulation, vocabulary, syntax and nonverbal cues (e.g., gesture, facial expression, vocal cues) appropriate to the speaker and listener.

2. Listening in a variety of educational and social situations: Listening involves, but is not limited to hearing, perceiving, discriminating, interpreting, synthesizing, organizing and remembering information from verbal and nonverbal messages. (p. 11)

Oral communication instruction is defined as teacher directed instruction toward the completion of either individual or group documented goals or objectives in

oral communication. Goals and objectives are written in measurable terms by the school, teacher, curriculum or textbook publisher; students are evaluated on either goal or objective attainment with some type of measurable criteria.

### Purpose

The purpose of this study is to determine the oral communication instructional practices in Michigan public elementary schools grades K-5.

### Research Questions

1. Is oral communication instruction being provided children in Michigan public elementary schools?
2. What is the "basis" for oral communication instruction in Michigan public elementary schools?
3. What materials are used to support oral communication instruction in Michigan public elementary schools?
4. What is the method of delivery for oral communication instruction in Michigan public elementary schools?
5. What is the frequency of delivery of oral communication instruction in Michigan public elementary schools?
6. How is student achievement of oral communication skills evaluated or graded in Michigan public elementary schools?

7. Do teachers believe oral communication instruction should be provided students in Michigan public elementary schools?

8. What is the relative importance teachers assign to oral communication instruction compared to other subject areas in Michigan public elementary schools?

#### Importance of Study

By identifying the oral communication teaching practices throughout the state of Michigan, a comparison can be made in oral communication as to the current teaching practices versus legislative mandate. If oral communication teaching practices match or exceed legislative mandates, oral communication inservice and emphasis can be directed toward improving current instruction. Alteration in the cognitive scheme of instruction may not be necessary. If, however, oral communication teaching practices do not meet legislative requirements, impetus for instructional change will need to develop from a different course of action. Oral communication instruction may require an adaptation to current curriculum design. This alteration in curriculum structure may require that teachers come to view academics from a different perspective. Curriculum change will only come about through a radical shift in ideology. Inservice training and professional consultation become critical

components for change if teachers are to view oral communication instruction as one of the "four basics."

Figure 1 depicts oral communication instruction as one of the four basics. Change in teaching practices may be implemented to better balance the underlying curriculum. Figure 2 depicts oral communication instruction as the "weak spoke" of basic school instruction. Change in curriculum teaching practices will require a modification of curricular design.

By surveying what teachers believe to be a balanced curricular design, educators can better understand what is currently taking place in our schools. Oral communication instruction is a federally mandated component of public school instruction; if teachers believe in this mandate, it should follow that oral communication instruction is being practiced in our schools.

#### Assumptions

A survey of oral communication instructional practices is limiting in that the survey alone will not benefit instruction to students. The intent of the survey is to provide information to Michigan educators as to the "what is" not the what "should be" or "how we should" develop better instruction and environments for learning.

The study is indicative of oral communication instructional practices in Michigan public schools but is

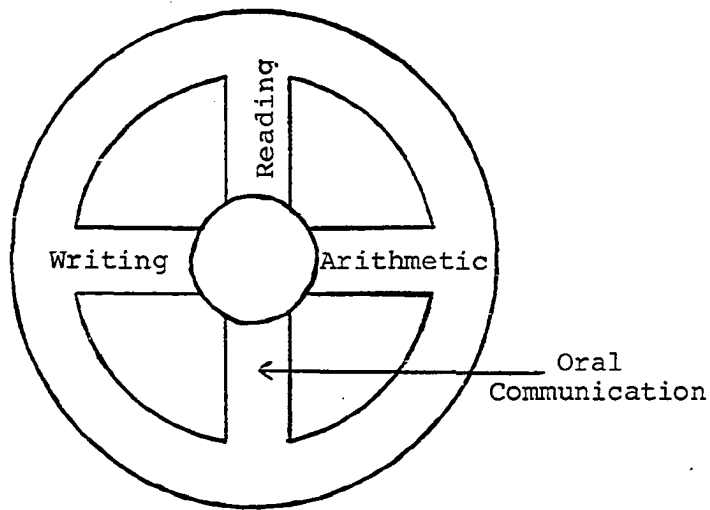


Figure 1. Balanced cognitive curriculum.

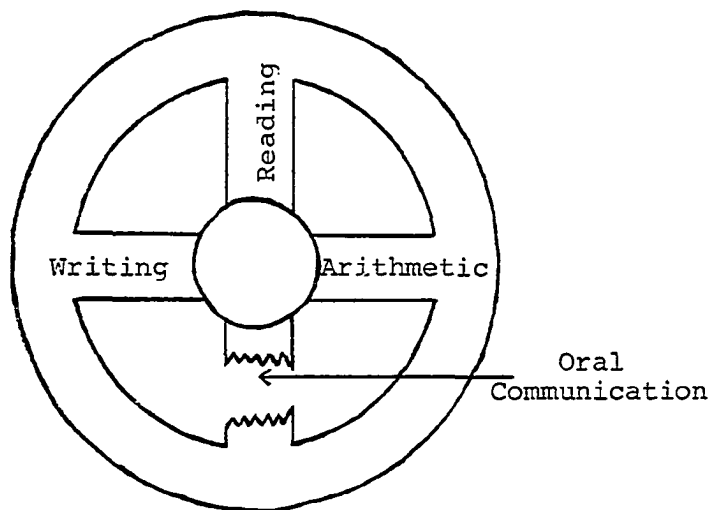


Figure 2. Unbalanced Cognitive Curriculum.

limiting in that it cannot identify the best program or programs in oral communication instruction throughout the

State. The sample of schools, buildings, and teachers is random and is indicative of our public school instruction, but in no way should this study be interpreted to single out any one or group of school districts, buildings, or teachers.

Curriculum per se may not be obvious. Because schools specifically identify curriculum, evaluation of such can in no way assure that because curriculum is identified, it is being carried out to the benefit of students; non-documented curriculum may be excellent. Instructional excellence may be fostered by an excellent teacher providing little direction or be a nightmare induced by a teacher with excellent instructional documentation.

Since only Michigan elementary grades K-5 are included in the sample, some school districts may not be fairly represented. Some districts may not emphasize instructional documentation until intermediate and secondary grades while other districts may emphasize elementary curriculum documentation only. Surveying only a sample of teachers per grade or grades per building may skew the sample survey. Teacher belief and practice may be individual teacher orientation and not be representative of a grade level or school practice.

At best, a survey of oral communication instructional practices in Michigan will provide educators with

the opportunity to look and begin thinking of what is needed in our schools to improve student instruction. The survey information is a starting point; a point of departure to begin looking at what and how educators provide oral communication instruction in Michigan public schools. Only by understanding what teachers do with instruction can educators begin determining what it is teachers should be doing.

#### Overview

An introduction to the study, definitions of substantive terms, and specific information regarding purpose, research questions, importance and assumptions are included in this chapter. A review of literature guiding this research is presented in Chapter II. In Chapter III, the design of the study and research procedures are described. The findings of the study are presented in Chapter IV. The study concludes with Chapter V where the findings are discussed and implications documented for future research.



## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

#### Introduction

The purpose of this study is to describe the relationship between what experts believe to be essential characteristics of oral communication instruction and what Michigan public elementary schools are providing students in oral communication instruction. Four major topics included in the review of literature are: (1) the historical basis for oral communication instruction, (2) the importance of teaching oral communication skills, (3) state of the art research and teaching practices in oral communication instruction, and (4) instructional practices recommended by experts to teach oral communication skills.

#### Historical Basis for Oral Communication Instruction

Philosophers believed speech to be nothing more than performance and stylized sounds and movements without sense, substance, or ethical constraints. Scholars looked to great literature; everyday communication of the populace was looked upon as beneath the scholars' attention. Oral communication was thought to develop on its

own. As children learned to speak, it was assumed that the child's language skills would develop on their own and flourish. This idea was reinforced by speech teachers interested in elecutiary speech (Willbrand & Riecke, 1983).

Early in the 20th century, speech education emphasized a classical educational model of instruction which was aimed to "prepare the leaders of the culture, explainers of causality, and possessors of power" (Buys et al., cited in Schmidt, 1982, p. 2). Speech education was viewed as a linear activity concerned with the source of the message and its content (Schmidt, 1982).

Four cultural changes altered speech education emphasis (Buys et al., cited in Schmidt, 1982, p. 2).

1. Charles Darwin's theory of evolution described mankind's survival as being dependent upon his intellect and ability to communicate. Man was an evolving creature who lived in a world of evolving structures and changing functions. Man looked to the behavior that gave him a chance for survival.

2. Sigmund Freud turned man's attention inward to the nature and functioning of the human emotional-neurological-somatic system. Healthy organisms were dependent upon human personality and the functions of intra-personal and interpersonal communication.

3. Albert Einstein introduced the concept of rela-

tivity. Certainty of truths were no longer certain. Truths became probabilities.

4. Economic changes altered man's contact with man. Our society transformed from a predominantly blue collar to a white collar society. Man is more frequently in contact with man rather than things.

#### Importance of Oral Communication Skills

Children develop linguistic competence on their own. By the time a child enters public school, he or she knows virtually all the grammatical resources of his or her language (Rubin & Kantor, 1983). Children know about the structure of their language; more importantly, they know how to use communication codes in real situations. Unfortunately, as children mature, oral expression encompasses more than the family unit.

Oral language is inseparable from the study of the human situation; it is almost always produced by human beings for human purposes to share human meanings. Language situations are any events wherein language is used to share meaning; it is a joke, an advertisement, an argument, newscast, scientific report, or a story (Postman & Weingartner, 1969).

Oral language is about people. People acquire their identity through response to communication, reflect their identity through communication, and use communication as

the method by which they attain human goals (Phillips et al., cited in Schmidt, 1982, p. 5). Oral communication serves a variety of purposes with most communication being concerned with eliciting responses and establishing and maintaining relationships (Crocker, 1979). Oral communication is a way of looking at, thinking about, and talking about the world around us (Schmidt, 1982).

Throughout recorded history, people have recognized the importance of speech (Willbrand & Riecke, 1983). People are at a disadvantage if they cannot make their needs and wants known. Many misunderstandings occur between and among individuals, groups, and nations for lack of effective means of communication. Positive human relations require that people express themselves orally (Ediger, 1980).

Adults require oral and communication skills in social and career contexts to function effectively in society (Endicott, 1978). Oral communication was noted as one of the top three skills cited as important for success by managers in business, engineering, and the arts (Endicott, 1978). The findings of several studies support the fact that communication skills are among the most valued in business and industry (McBath & Burhans, 1975). People with good oral skills should achieve at a higher level in obtaining and maintaining a desirable job (Ediger, 1980). Skilled communicators have a high degree

of success over long periods of time over a wide variety of situations eliciting desired responses and maintaining desired relationships (Crocker, 1979).

Speech is infinitely relevant for people of all ages (Ritter, 1975). Speech affects everyday life through family, classmates, and friends. Communication skills are necessary in business, government, and a variety of service oriented careers. Development of good oral communication skills prepares young and old for future needs and careers.

A person's oral expression abilities are closely related to an individual's personality and self concept (Ritter, 1975; Rubin, 1980). Oral communication skills are important in achieving academic, vocational, and personal success (Lieb-Brilhart, 1979). Speaking and listening skills play a vital role in the development of written language skills, mathematical skills, problem solving, and personal development skills (Lieb-Brilhart, 1979; Rubin, 1980; Rubin & Kantor, 1983; Willbrand & Riecke, 1983). Oral communication instruction is critical in the teaching of reading (Ediger, 1980; Lieb-Brilhart, 1980; Loban, 1978). Humans spend almost 75% of their time sending or receiving messages (Nichols & Steven, 1957). Speech communication serves as a medium for the transmission of ideas, expression of emotions, and creation of enjoyment (Ritter, 1975). Speech is an

uniquely active process; it is multi-sensory, it links individuals to their environment, and it guides behavior (Modaff & Hopper, 1984). Speech develops higher conceptualization and it promotes literacy (Modaff & Hopper, 1984). Oral communication instruction is critical to education (Allen, Brown, & Yatvin, 1984; Lieb-Brilhart, 1979).

On November 1, 1978, speech education became a basic skill by law. Title II (Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, amended 1978) was amended in the new Title II, Section 201. By including speaking and listening as basic skills, this legislation mandate placed new demands on our schools to identify the manner in which they satisfy this requirement (Allen & Kellner, 1983).

#### State of the Art Research and Teaching Practices in Oral Communication Instruction

Research in oral communication is fragmented and without focus (Cooper & Powell, 1981). Researchers have dedicated their efforts and study to the components of communication rather than communication itself (Willbrand & Riecke, 1983). Only in the area concerning anxiety associated with communication has the most systematic attention been received (Galvin & Cooper, 1981). Communication education is an area of study people write about but do not do research in (Galvin & Cooper, 1981).

In an exhaustive study of research from 1974 to 1982 on communication and instruction Staton-Spicer & Wulff (1984) concluded that both communication education and instructional communication is a topic which periodic assessment of research has not been forthcoming. In concluding their study, they stated that instead of systematic research programs, isolated one shot studies were the norm which were unlikely to contribute to an integrated understanding of the teaching-learning process or the process of teaching speech communication. Communication research's lack of cohesiveness and discipline distinction was most visible when looking to other curriculum basics: reading, writing, and arithmetic.

The textbook is one of the most influential materials that is used in a classroom on a nationwide basis (Brown, 1967). By examining 54 language arts textbooks for grades 3-6 to determine textbook content criteria and the amount and specific nature of speech and listening content, Brown determined that the authors and publishers believed that language skills (a) are primarily used for communication, for social competency, and for thinking; (b) are best taught by focusing on specific areas; (c) should be developed in social situations; and (d) should be taught emphasizing oral language first. Textbooks give more space to six other language arts areas over speech activities. In conclusion, Brown determined the

following speech activity emphasis in rank order: (1) giving talks, conversation, discussion, dramatization, storytelling, social amenities, articulation, enunciation, pronunciation, and telephoning; (2) in listening content, teaching listening. Creativity, spontaneity and bodily actions in speech were neglected; skill development in voice usage was limited by the printed page and oral teaching devices. Publishers admit that the printed page poses limitation in teaching speech and listening (Brown, 1967).

Textbooks in 1980 do not show an increase in the attention given to speech communication instructional needs of students (Jandt, 1980). In describing our country's language arts curriculum, William Possien (1965) stated that there is a wide discrepancy between recommended philosophy and procedures for language instruction and actual practices in the classroom. Possien (1969) stated:

Our programs would appear to be based on two assumptions: first, that written communication is more important than and precedes oral communication, and, second, that people learn to speak by writing. (pp. 9-16)

Speaking and listening skills are part of this country's basic school curriculum supported by professionals in the field of language, national task forces on education, and legislative mandates; yet, implementation of oral communication instruction would appear to be at a



standstill. As of July 15, 1981, nineteen states "had no curriculum or assessment programs in speaking and or listening and have no plans of implementing any such program" (Backlund et al., cited in Modaff & Hopper, 1982, p. 37). Fourteen additional states report an intention of developing either curriculums or assessment programs "but have not yet done so" (Backlund et al., cited in Modaff & Hopper, 1982, p. 37). Thus, 33 of our 50 states, despite strong encouragement of federal mandate, did not yet teach speaking and or listening skills as part of their statewide curriculum (Modaff & Hopper, 1984).

At the elementary school level, speaking and listening skill instruction is either fortuitous, contingent upon the teacher's training and interest, or targeted for students with communication disorders in the context of special education (Lieb-Brilhart, 1979). Speech is rarely taught in the elementary school; little formal training in speech communication is provided children after the age of six (Lieb-Brilhart, 1979; Modaff & Hopper, 1984; Van Allen, 1976). "We have become a nation of receivers, not senders" (Boyer, 1978).

#### Recommended Instructional Practices in Teaching Oral Communication Skills

##### Background

Since 1978, oral communication and listening skills

instruction have been advocated by people in business, education, the professions, and the home (Boileau, 1984). At the 1984 International Listening Association Summer Conference, Boileau (1984) outlined national attention to communication and listening skills citing the following nationally recognized documents: (a) A Nation At Risk, The National Commission on Excellence in Education; (b) Academic Preparation for College, The College Board; (c) The Gordon Cawelti Model for High School General Education, Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development; (d) Action for Excellence, Task Force on Education for Economic Growth; (e) High School: Report on Secondary Education in America, by Ernest L. Boyer, Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching; and, (f) The Paideia Proposal, Mortimer Adler for the Paideia Group. Educators have been called upon to redefine literacy by acknowledging the communication revolution of print, radio, and television and to redefine the basics to help students become more sophisticated senders of messages (Boyer, 1978). There is little, if any, debate against the notion that it is the school's function and teacher's responsibility to help students develop their utmost potential in developing communication skills (Crocker, 1979).

#### "How" Oral Communication Skills Should Be Taught

Oral communication instruction should focus on a

holistic approach (Allen & Kellner, 1983; Burns & Browman, 1979; Crocker, 1979; Ediger, 1980; Lieb-Brilhart, 1979; Moffett & Wagner, 1976; Monda, 1983; Rubin & Kantor, 1983; Wood, 1983). Further, oral communication instruction should be integrated with other areas of instruction and should be directly integrated with instruction in reading and writing (Lieb-Brilhart, 1980). Students need the opportunity to express themselves through a variety of experiences (Rubin & Kantor, 1983). An integrated language arts curriculum encourages a better language arts balance, promotes development of a sense of audience, provides rich, varied language experiences, encourages experimental learnings, expands concept of communication potentialities, and focuses attention on communication as a process (Allen & Kellner, 1983).

Oral communication instruction must be provided through practice, not through learning sentence structures in isolation. Teachers should use a language experience approach to the teaching of reading and speaking (Ediger, 1980; Rubin & Kantor, 1983). Use of puppets, dramatization, conversation, interviews, introductions, oral reports, oral reading, and giving and following directions are advocated by Ediger. Language arts skills are so strongly interrelated that no single skill can be taught in isolation; speaking, listening, reading, and writing are so interwoven that the strands of lan-

guage are almost indistinguishable (Tiedt & Tiedt, 1978).

The continuum shown in Figure 1 illustrates three examples of integrating oral communication instruction in the classroom.

Language arts as a means, a tool across the discipline	Language arts as communicative forms, as a means unto themselves	Language arts as a separate discipline
<hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Life experience</li> <li>-Language arts unlocks all learning</li> <li>-Communication goals</li> <li>-Communicative growth</li> </ul>	<hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Interrelated language arts</li> <li>-Unifying principles:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>meaning</li> <li>audience</li> <li>context</li> <li>content and form</li> </ul> </li> <li>-Communicative goals</li> <li>-Communicative growth</li> <li>-Communicative growth</li> </ul>	<hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Separate time slots</li> <li>-Elements studies for their own sake</li> <li>-Lack of communicative purpose</li> </ul>

Figure 3. Integration Continuum

Source: Putting Humpty Dumpty Together Again: Integrating the Language Arts. The Talking and Writing Series K-12: Successful Classroom Practices by R. R. Allen & R. W. Kellner, 1983, p. 3. Department of Education, Basic Skills Improvement Program, Washington, DC: Dingle Associates, Inc.

The traditional approach to teaching oral communication skills is represented by the extreme right hand side of the continuum while the opposite end represents the belief that language serves as a tool for learning and a way of thinking about the concepts inherent within all

subjects. Teachers fearing the global approach (left side) will be more comfortable taking a moderate approach to the teaching of language arts (as represented by the midpoint of the continuum) (Allen & Kellner, 1983). This approach uses all of language blending reading, writing, speaking, and listening into a model which reinforces the different content areas. Using this model, teachers are not concerned with blocks of time but with student communication needs and interests along with unifying principals in all communication situations: purpose, audience, context, the marriages of context and form, and those skills necessary to transmit the message which is vital to the sender and receiver.

To state that oral communication instruction be taught holistically and integrated across the language arts curriculum does not imply that teachers should not teach the principles of effective communication directly; they should! Elementary schools must teach oral communication processes directly and specifically, just as we teach reading, mathematics, and science (Lieb-Brilhart, 1980). Oral communication instruction should be integrated across the other areas of curriculum and should be directly integrated with instruction in reading and writing (Lieb-Brilhart, 1980).

"What" Oral Communication Skills Should Be Taught

There appears to be little debate among experts as to the basis for good oral communication instruction. Following are assumptions, features, principals, guidelines, components, and competencies which most literature in oral communication instruction supports as being good oral communication instructional practice.

Communication competence which results in an implementation ideology for classroom practices has been provided by the National Project on Speech Communication Competencies (Gruenberg & Boileau, 1978). In this publication, the following assumptions were made: (a) Communication educators are primarily interested in the pragmatics of communication; (b) communication competency is not tied to competency in a particular form of language; (c) the communication behavior of children can be modified; (d) as communication educators, we should be child-centered in our educational prescriptions; and, (e) communication instruction should emphasize the interactive nature of communication.

From these, four basic features are recommended that link performance of language to a social context. They include: (1) Building a repertoire of experiences; (2) selecting strategies; (3) implementing strategies; and, (4) evaluating performance. These features assist the

teacher in focusing on a plan of instruction which takes on a complete and directive posture (Gruenberg & Boileau, 1978).

Communication competence in the speaker listener exchange can be analyzed by four principles: (1) sensitivity; (2) flexibility; (3) performance; and, (4) feedback (Rubin & Kantor, 1983). These competencies, which follow, form the basics for oral communication instruction.

1. Sensitivity refers to one's ability to be sensitive to the communication situation. The speaker must be sensitive to whether the listener perceives the speaker as being an equal or subordinate and what demands the setting makes on the particular form of address. There are generally six aspects of communicative context requiring situationally appropriate expression:

a. Medium of communication, in this case, oral communication, is accompanied by gestures, facial expression, touch, spatial orientation, voice tone, volume, and speaker dress which all impact communication.

b. Audience: The speaker must consider the age, status, and degree of familiarity of his audience. He or she must take into account the listener's social perspective and may have to understand something of the listener's background.

c. Function: The speaker must understand his or

her purpose be it entertainment, persuasion, describing, narrating, or explaining. Communication function is one of the most recognized and popular components of communication which was developed from work by Gordon Wells (1973). Barbara Wood (1983) lists five functions: (1) expressing feelings; (2) controlling others; (3) imagining; (4) describing; and, (5) social rituals. These functions are recognized, explained, and expounded upon by others (Allen & Brown, 1976; Allen & Kellner, 1983; Gruenberg & Boileau, 1978; Leib-Brilhart, 1979; Wells, 1973; Halliday, 1973; Willbrand & Riecke, 1983).

d. Setting refers to the environment in which a speaker addresses his/her audience. This will differ as well as physical settings. People relate to other people depending upon whether they sit next to, across from, or behind a desk.

e. Topic refers to communication style. Sports conversation where teams "slaughter" and "pulverize" each other differs from styles one uses to discuss current events or that one uses in formal situations.

f. Discourse process refers to the way in which a conversation is initiated, flows, and is developed. An example of this process may be the manner in which a speaker develops settings for stories and jokes or the manner people make a request of a listener after various and often appropriate dialogue (Hi, how are you; how is



the family; say, are you heading toward town? I need a lift).

2. Flexibility refers to a speaker's ability to adapt various speaking styles as situations arise. Good speakers are assertive, humorous, and can gain the attention of their listeners all at one time when the need exists.

3. Performance refers to the mechanics of communication: using the right word, pronouncing words intelligently, projecting appropriate volume, and adjusting the flow of speech. Good speaking performance requires practice.

4. Feedback refers to the speaker's ability to "read" his audience. When the listener's attention wanders, the speaker must be able to interpret audience feedback to adjust or fine tune his behavior. Speaker listener exchange can be short lived if the speaker cannot evaluate audience response.

When teachers understand the assumptions, features, and principles (functions) of communication education, they can directly understand the nature of communication competence and gain the total scope of speech acts. Teachers can construct appropriate learning experiences and provide realistic communication situations. Communication competence is not situationally bound but extends to all situations in which a person interacts; be it with

peers, parents, school personnel, or at work (Gruenberg & Boileau, 1978).

Oral communication instruction should emphasize a functional approach to oral communication. Four guidelines set the proper perspective for oral communication instruction (Wood, 1980).

1. Communication in everyday situations involves a very fluid flow of ideas and feelings.

2. Most communication situations include multiple functions at any one time.

3. Oral communication is more than just speech.

4. A dominant mode of learning in all basic skill areas is the oral mode.

Oral communication instruction must be directed and competency based. Four statements on communication competence includes the following components (Connolly & Bruner, 1974):

1. Communication competence must include an adequate repertoire of skills in any area.

2. Communication competence includes selection criteria so children can select from among strategies in their repertoire.

3. Communication competence requires that children be given choices to select and practice verbal and non-verbal strategies appropriate to particular situations.

4. Communication competence requires that children

use solid evaluation procedures in assessing the appropriateness and effectiveness of communication.

Criteria for the selection of oral communication competencies include the following criteria used by the 1977 Speech Communication Task Force charged with recommending minimal speaking and listening competencies needed by adults (Lowe, 1980):

1. Skills must be functional, i.e., capable of application for occupational, citizenship, and personal maintenance purposes.

2. Skills must be educational, i.e., capable of development by instruction.

3. Skills must be general, i.e., needed by all.

Teacher instruction is the key element in developing communication competence in children. A task force of the Speech Communication Association and American Theatre Association have identified five roles teachers play which relate to communication behavior (Lieb-Brilhart, 1979). These roles are followed by eight goals the task force believes teachers should achieve for themselves and their students. Teachers are:

1. A model of behavior.
2. A facilitator of learning.
3. A resource person.
4. A participant in the profession.
5. A change agent.

and should achieve:

1. Effective communication in a variety of contexts.

2. Aesthetic valuing and sensitive responses to artistic experience.

3. Accurate prediction of the consequence of communication decisions and behavior.

4. Management of essential factors in communication situations such as selection, development, and presentation of ideas, strategies, and media to influence human behavior.

5. Message evaluations on the basis of functional, ethical, and aesthetic considerations.

6. Development of a personal communication style which can be appropriately adapted to a variety of communication concerns.

7. Participation in a democratic society (including freedom of artistic expression) through the development of specific skills and attitudes which promote free inquiry, critical listening, receptiveness toward divergent viewpoints, and willingness to support (functionally or artistically) unpopular ideas.

8. Facilitation of intercultural communication through increased sensitivity to similarities and differences among groups, through appropriate applications of the principles and processes of interpersonal communication.

tion, and through aesthetic values. Similar goals in oral communication which students should develop in school prior to graduation are expressed by others (Basset, 1978; Green & Petty, 1975; Ritter, 1975).

Students should be capable of performing an array of interactive communication behavior as well as be capable of understanding the complexities of verbal and non-verbal communication (Lieb-Brilhart, 1979). Competency based speech communication instruction should be developed by (a) identification of individual needs, and (b) determining students abilities and immediate environmental requirements; needs dictate focus (Schmidt, 1982).

### Summary

Oral communication is the very core of human experience.

In the beginning was and is the spoken word. At the beginning of language communities, at the beginning of linguistic competence, at the beginning of the child's development is the speaking skill (Modaff & Hopper, 1984).

Educators know that oral communication skills should be taught in our schools. Experts know "what" to teach in oral communication instruction and "how" to teach oral communication skills. What remains is implementing what most people in our culture know needs to be done.

## CHAPTER III

### DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

#### Introduction

The purpose of this study is to determine the status of oral communication instructional practices in Michigan public elementary school grades K-5. In this chapter, the design of the study and research procedure are described. The chapter is divided into six sections: Subjects, Sampling Plan, Design and Instrumentation, Data Gathering Procedures, Data Analysis Procedures, and Chapter Summary.

#### Research Questions

Eight research questions were developed. They are:

1. Is oral communication instruction being provided children in Michigan public elementary schools?
2. What is the "basis" for oral communication instruction in Michigan public elementary schools?
3. What materials are used to support oral communication instruction in Michigan public elementary schools?
4. What is the method of delivery for oral communication instruction in Michigan public elementary schools?
5. What is the frequency of delivery of oral commu-

nication instruction in Michigan public elementary schools?

6. How is student achievement of oral communication skills evaluated or graded in Michigan public elementary schools?

7. Do teachers believe oral communication instruction should be provided students in Michigan public elementary schools?

8. What is the relative importance teachers assign to oral communication instruction compared to other subject areas in Michigan public elementary schools?

#### Population and Subjects

The focus of this study is the determination of the status quo of oral communication instructional practices of Michigan public school teachers grades K-5. All of the public school districts in Michigan were included in the population of this study. School districts and buildings within districts were randomly selected to participate in the study. Teachers in grades K-5 were selected by their respective building administrators to complete the survey on oral communication instructional practices within their classroom.

#### Sampling Plan

A list of all Michigan school districts in order of

student membership K-12 for the 1986-87 school year was secured from the Michigan Department of Education. Thirty-five of the 565 school districts were randomly selected for the study from a table of random numbers. Two school districts were eliminated from the sample because of their limited enrollment (less than 30 students in the entire district). Thus, thirty-three of the 565 school districts in Michigan were selected for the study.

From a State Department listing of all Michigan elementary school buildings per district, thirty-three buildings (or group of buildings) were randomly selected via a table of numbers to represent the respective school district selected in the study. Where only one elementary building was noted per district, that building was selected to participate in the study. When "one" building per district did not include a K-5 elementary enrollment, a different building representing a K-5 continuum was randomly selected. When districts did not have a K-5 continuum in any one building, a second building encompassing the K-5 continuum was randomly selected. Where more than one building was not available to complete the continuum, the single building housing the remaining K-5 grades was selected.

The specific teachers selected to complete the survey were selected by the building administrator from



teachers working in their respective school (building(s)). Only general education classroom teachers were included within the population. Special education teachers, remedial reading teachers, specialty teachers (physical education, music, art, etc.) were not included within the population of classroom teachers. One teacher from each level (K-5) was selected to participate in the study who the principal believed best typified the curriculum practices of that grade.

In summary, the sample procedure follows:

1. All Michigan public school districts were listed by a 1986-87 membership MDE Report.
2. Thirty-three school districts were randomly selected to participate in the study.
3. Thirty buildings or group of buildings were randomly selected to participate in the study.
4. Teachers per grade level per building were identified by building principal to participate in the study.
5. Thirty-three school districts, one teacher each from grades K-5 or 198 teachers were surveyed.

### Design and Instrumentation

#### Development

A survey form developed specifically for this study was used to collect data. The survey form and instructions for its use are contained in Appendix A and B. The

survey included an introductory letter and directions to aid in the return of the survey.

### Validation of the Survey Instrument

The survey was reviewed by a panel of experts to determine whether the instrument appeared to measure what it claimed to measure.

The experts were identified in the following manner:

1. C. Danford Austin, the Director of Teacher Preparation and Certification Services was contacted at the Michigan Department of Education to identify professional educators whom he believed to be knowledgeable in oral communication curriculum and instruction.

2. Four individuals, Dr. Elaine Weber, Reading Specialist, MDE; Dr. Anne Hansen, Director of School Program Services, MDE; Ms. Judy Hood, Language Arts Specialist, MDE; and Dr. Cassandra Book, Assistant Dean, School of Education, MSU were contacted and asked to identify professionals (themselves included), who they believed to be experts in oral communication curriculum and instructional practices. The four were asked to rank the professionals they selected from most to least knowledgeable.

3. Of the 15 experts identified, 5 were selected.

Selection was based upon:

1. Identifying those persons whose names were most

frequently noted by the group of four,

2. Identifying those individuals whose names were most frequently noted in the bibliography, and

3. Identifying those individuals who were willing to validate the survey instrument in a timely manner.

Thus, Ms. Judy Hood, Language Arts Specialist, Michigan Department of Education; Dr. Cassandra Book, Associate Dean, School of Education, Michigan State University; Dr. Steven Rhodes, Department of Communications, Western Michigan University; Dr. Ron R. Allen, Department of Communication, University of Wisconsin, Madison; and, Dr. Don M. Boileau, Chairperson, Communication Department, George Mason University, Fairfax, VA were included as experts to validate the oral communication instructional practices survey. The letter sent to the experts requesting their critique of the survey instrument is included in Appendix C.

#### Reliability of the Survey Instrument

To determine the reliability of the survey instrument and individual items within the survey, a test retest procedure was implemented. Twenty-four teachers from the Bay City Public Schools were identified, then asked by the administration to complete the survey twice, the second survey being sent ten weeks after the initial mailing. Four teachers from each grade K-5 were

selected. The initial survey introductory letter, survey instrument, and follow-up survey letter are included in Appendix D and E, respectively.

Twenty of the 24 teachers identified to complete the initial survey returned the survey. Of the 20 teachers completing the initial survey, 13 returned the follow-up survey.

Each individual question on the initial survey was compared to individual question responses on the follow-up survey. The findings are summarized in Table 1. The initial test retest comparisons of individual survey items looked to be predominantly unreliable. Either the survey items (or questions) were written in such a way as to confuse the respondents or respondents lacked conviction in selecting responses among those offered.

From a review of the 13 sets of surveys, it seems most probable that respondents lacked conviction in selecting specific items among those offered. When respondents had to respond to few choices on individual questions, their incidence of selecting the same response ten weeks later increased. As respondents had the opportunity to make multiple response selections, the response rates being the same as their initial response decreased.

Lack of reliability in teacher test retest comparison may have been the result of contamination. Teachers were initially surveyed on an instructional area which

Table 1

Test Retest Comparison of Teacher Response  
to Oral Communication Survey

Survey Item	Number of Responses Available per Item	Item Answered Same	Item Answered Different
1	1	13	0
2	1	13	0
3	6+	8	5
4	2	9	4
5	2	10	3
6	3	6	7
7	7+	6	7
8	7+	5	8
9	6+	6	7
10	6	6	7
11	5	6	7
12	2	9	4
13	4	9	4
14	2	13	0
15	5	7	6
16	5	4	9
17	16	6	7
18	infinite	3	10
19	4	8	3

receives little exposure. Oral communication instruction is an area which receives little individualized attention. Following the initial "exposure" to oral communication instruction via the first survey, teachers may have begun thinking about, researching, and formalizing opinions as to oral communication inclusion into their instructional curriculum.

The lack of reliability in the survey test retest comparison may also have been the result of teacher apprehension or teacher unfamiliarity with oral communication instruction. Teacher response to oral communication instructional practices is likely to change as teachers are asked to identify or think about oral communication instruction inclusion within their curriculum offerings.

#### Data Gathering Procedures

Six survey forms, one each for grades K-5, were mailed to the 33 districts selected for the study. The surveys were addressed to the building administrators in the school districts where the K-5 teachers were employed. The building administrators were contacted via telephone prior to the survey mailing to insure approval and prior notification of the research purpose and intent. A copy of the letter sent to building administrators is included in Appendix F.

The administrators were asked to select one teacher in each grade level K-5 who they believed operated a classroom which best typified curriculum practices at that grade level. Teachers were asked via the administrator and survey letter to complete the survey and return it to their building administrator within approximately one week. Within two weeks, the building administrators were requested to return the six surveys in the self-addressed, stamped envelope. All building administrators were contacted via telephone the second week to request that they secure all surveys completed by teachers and return them by their approximate due date.

The analysis of data was made on responses received no later than one week after the due date. In reporting the data, the response rate was calculated to permit appropriate interpretation of the findings.

#### Data Analysis Procedures

Each research question was analyzed individually and in relation to the survey questions. Data was interpreted via explanation, tables, or charts for each research question.

The questionnaire respondent information included:

1. Years of teaching experience
2. Grade level employed to teach
3. Training or college course work teacher had in

oral communication instruction.

Data regarding instructional practices in oral communication included (1) its inclusion within the curriculum, (2) the method of its inclusion, (3) the basis for its content, (4) the instructional material used for its delivery, (5) the methods of instruction, (6) the time devoted to its instruction, and (7) the basis for evaluating student achievement in oral communication. An analysis was computed on whether teachers believed their students needed to improve their oral communication skills and if so, how instruction could be provided. Further analysis was computed to determine teacher response to oral communications inclusion within their curriculum when compared to the other subject areas (arithmetic, reading, writing, and spelling).

#### Summary

An overview of methodology was included in this chapter. The subjects, sampling plan, design and instrumentation, data gathering procedures, and data analysis were outlined. The findings of the study are reported in Chapter IV. Chapter V concludes the study where findings are discussed and implication made for future research.



## CHAPTER IV

### FINDINGS

#### Introduction

The purpose of this study was to describe the relationship between what experts believe to be essential characteristics of oral communication instruction and what Michigan public elementary schools are providing students in oral communication instruction. Eight research questions were developed. They are:

1. Is oral communication instruction being provided children in Michigan public elementary schools?
2. What is the "basis" for oral communication instruction in Michigan public elementary schools?
3. What materials are used to support oral communication instruction in Michigan public elementary schools?
4. What is the method of delivery for oral communication instruction in Michigan public elementary schools?
5. What is the frequency of delivery of oral communication instruction in Michigan public elementary schools?
6. How is student achievement of oral communication skills evaluated or graded in Michigan public elementary schools?

7. Do teachers believe oral communication instruction should be provided students in Michigan public elementary schools?

8. What is the relative importance teachers assign to oral communication instruction compared to other subject areas in Michigan public elementary schools?

A review of literature relating to the research question was conducted. The review included four major topics: (1) the historical basis for oral communication instruction, (2) the importance of teaching oral communication skills, (3) state of the art research and teaching practices in oral communication instruction, and (4) instructional practices recommended by experts to teach oral communication skills. A nineteen question survey questionnaire encompassing the eight research questions was developed to gather data from the districts selected in the random sample.

The data analysis of the findings are contained in this chapter. The findings of research based on the eight research questions are presented. Findings are calculated to tenths of whole percentages or where appropriate, whole percentages.

#### Review of Design and Methodology

Thirty-three randomly selected school districts of the 565 public school districts in Michigan listed in a

1986-87 Michigan Department of Education membership report were selected for the study. From the 33 districts selected, 33 school buildings or groups of buildings housing K-5 grades were randomly selected to represent the respective district selected in the study. Six surveys, one each for teachers in grades K-5, were sent to the building administrators of each site (or sites) of buildings housing students in grades K-5. Administrators selected six teachers, one each in grades K-5, they believed best typified curriculum practices in that grade level. In all, 198 or 33 surveys per grade were distributed.

Administrators were asked to return the surveys in the self-addressed envelopes prior to October 16, 1987. Thirty-two of the 33 school districts returned the surveys. One hundred eighty-three of the 198 possible surveys were returned. The response rate was 92%. Data analysis was computed on responses received no later than November 6, 1987.

#### Respondent Background

The first 3 of the 19 question survey asked respondents (1) to identify their years of teaching experience, (2) to indicate the grade level of their teaching assignment, and (3) to indicate formal training in college course work they have had in teaching oral communication

skills to children. A summary of their responses are noted in Tables 2, 3, and 4.

Years of teaching experience varied from 0 years of experience (first year teachers) to 32 years of teacher experience. The mean of teacher experience was 16.2 years with the mode and mean being 16 years. The frequency of teacher responses per grade, grade levels K-5, ranged from 29 to 31 respondents. Three responses could not be determined and thus were labeled "missing." Forty-two percent of the teacher respondents had no college course work in speech, speech communication, or in teaching communication skills to children beyond a language arts introductory methods course. Forty percent of the respondents indicated that they had minimally taken at least an undergraduate course beyond the language arts introductory course in speech or communication arts. Thus, 82% of the teachers surveyed had little formal training in speech or communication arts.

#### Research Questions

Eight research questions were developed for this study to determine the oral communication instructional practices in Michigan public elementary schools grades K-5. They are:

1. Is oral communication instruction being provided children in Michigan public elementary schools?

Table 2  
Years of Teaching Experience

Years	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
0	1	.5	.5
1	3	1.6	2.1
2	1	.5	2.6
3	4	2.2	4.8
4	4	2.2	7.0
5	1	.5	7.5
7	4	2.2	9.7
8	2	1.1	10.8
9	6	3.3	14.1
10	11	6.0	20.1
11	4	2.2	22.3
12	11	6.0	28.3
13	6	3.3	31.6
14	12	6.6	38.2
15	11	6.0	44.2
16	14	7.7	51.9
17	12	6.6	58.6
18	11	6.0	64.5
19	8	4.4	68.9
20	14	7.7	76.6
21	10	5.5	82.1
22	5	2.7	84.8
23	4	2.2	87.0
24	4	2.2	89.2
25	3	1.6	90.8
26	1	.5	91.3
27	4	2.2	93.5
28	4	2.2	95.7
29	4	2.2	97.9
30	2	1.1	99.0
31	1	.5	99.5
32	1	.5	100.0
Totals	183	100.0	100.0
Mean 16.2 years	Mode 16 years	Medium 16 years	

Table 3  
Grade Level Surveyed

Grade	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
K	29	16	16
1	29	16	32
2	30	16	48
3	31	17	65
4	31	17	82
5	30	16	98
Missing	3	2	100
Totals	183	100	100

Table 4  
Training or Course Work in Oral Communication

Item	K	1	2	3	4	5	Totals	Percent
A	12	14	11	15	10	11	73	42
B	8	13	14	8	13	14	70	40
C	1			1		1	3	2
D	2			3			5	3
E			2	1	3	1	7	4
B & E	4			3	3	1	11	6
B & D	1					1	2	1
B & C		1	1				2	1
B & E		1					1	1
Totals							174	100
F (Other)	1	1	2	2	2	1	9	

2. What is the "basis" for oral communication instruction in Michigan public elementary schools?

3. What materials are used to support oral communication instruction in Michigan public elementary schools?

4. What is the method of delivery for oral communication instruction in Michigan public elementary schools?

5. What is the frequency of delivery of oral communication instruction in Michigan public elementary schools?

6. How is student achievement of oral communication skills evaluated or graded in Michigan public elementary schools?

7. Do teachers believe oral communication instruction should be provided students in Michigan public elementary schools?

8. What is the relative importance teachers assign to oral communication instruction compared to other subject areas in Michigan public elementary schools?

The findings of the analysis for the questions are reported in this section.

#### Question 1

"Is oral communication instruction being provided children in Michigan public elementary schools?" Survey questions 4, 5, and 6 were designed to answer this question. The findings are summarized in Tables 5, 6, and 7.



Table 5  
Teachers Providing Planned Instruction in  
Oral Communication

Planned	Frequency	Percent
T	133	73
F	48	26
Missing	2	1
Totals	183	100

Table 6  
Teachers Providing Planned Instruction Integrated  
Throughout Other Areas of Instruction

Integrated	Frequency	Percent
T	128	96
F	2	2
Missing	3	2
Totals	133	100

Table 7

Source Teachers use When Providing Planned  
Oral Communication Instruction

Source	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
District approved guide- lines with materials	19	14	14
Vague guidelines with limited materials	31	23	37
No approved guides, methods, materials	75	56	93
Missing	8	6	99
Totals	133	99	99

Seventy-three percent of the teachers responded that they provided planned instruction in oral communication instruction when given my definition of oral communication instruction:

Oral communication instruction is teacher directed instruction toward the completion of either individual or group documented goals or objectives in oral communication. Goals and objectives are written in measurable terms by the school, teacher, curriculum or textbook publisher; students are evaluated on either goal or objective attainment with some type of measurable criteria.

Of the 73% of teachers providing planned instruction in oral communication instruction, 96% of the respondents indicated that they provide planned instruction "integrated" throughout other areas of instruction

(arithmetic, writing, spelling, science, social studies, music, art, play activities, etc.). Most teachers providing planned instruction (56%) indicated they did not have or use district approved methods or materials for oral communication instruction. Respondents indicated they infused instruction by coaching pupils whenever they demonstrate lack of skills or inappropriate communication patterns. Twenty-three percent of the teachers providing planned instruction indicated they use vague guidelines with some preselected materials at times set aside for oral communication instruction. Thus, 79% of the teachers that provide planned instruction in oral communication use no guidelines or vague guidelines for oral communication instruction. Only 14% of the respondents who provide planned oral communication instruction use district approved guides with preselected materials and methods at time set aside on a regular basis for oral communication instruction.

### Question 2

"What is the "basis" for oral communication instruction in Michigan public elementary schools?" Question seven of the survey instrument addressed this research question. The findings are summarized in Table 8.

Of the Michigan public elementary school teachers who provide planned instruction in oral communication

Table 8  
Guide Teachers Use When Providing Planned  
Oral Communication Instruction

Guide	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
A. District Developed Curriculum	6	5	5
B. Commercially Developed Curriculum	1	1	6
C. District Outline	11	8	14
D. Commercial Outline	6	5	19
E. Self Developed Outline	23	17	36
F. No Formal Guide	74	56	92
G. A & C	2	2	94
H. A - D	1	1	95
I. B & F	1	1	96
J. A & E	1	1	97
Missing	7	5	102
Totals	133	102	102

only 19% are using a district or commercially developed curriculum outline. Most teachers are using no formal guide for oral communication instruction (56%), or use an outline of oral communication skills or competencies they developed on their own (17%). These two methods combined totaled 73% of the responses indicating that there is little formal basis for oral communication instruction.

### Question 3

"What materials are used to support oral communication instruction in Michigan public elementary schools?"

Question eight of the survey instrument addressed this research question. The findings are summarized in Table 9.

The materials Michigan public elementary school teachers use when providing planned instruction in oral communication instruction vary. Thirty of the 133 teachers providing planned oral communication instruction responded that they did not use any structured materials. This response accounts for about 23% of the responding teachers. Fifty-three teachers indicated that they use self-developed material or handouts which accounts for about 40% of the teachers. Thirty-six teachers or 27% of the teachers providing planned instruction indicated they use textbooks for oral communication instruction. The remaining teachers use workbooks, commercially prepared material, or oral or visual tapes, filmstrips, etc., or materials not noted on the questionnaire.

Percentage of response of material used by teachers providing planned instruction in oral communication instruction is difficult to determine as many teachers responded to more than one item (even when asked to select only one). One hundred thirty-three teachers noted 186 responses.

Table 9  
Material Teachers Use When Providing Planned  
Oral Communication Instruction

Materials	Frequency	Percent of Responses	Cumulative Percent of Responses	Percent of Teachers
A. Textbooks	36	19	19	27
B. Workbooks	17	9	28	13
C. Commercially Prepared	17	9	37	13
D. Oral or Visual Tapes, Filmstrips, etc.	16	9	46	12
E. Self Developed	53	28	74	40
F. No Structured Materials Not Used	30	16	90	23
G. Other	17	9	99	13
Totals	186	99	99	

Note: Response rates are distorted as many teachers responded to more than one item (133 teachers indicated 186 responses)

#### Question 4

"What is the method of delivery for oral communication instruction in Michigan public elementary schools?" Question nine of the survey instrument addressed this research question. The findings are summarized in Table 10.

The most often noted method Michigan public elementary school teachers use when providing planned instruction in oral communication instruction was drill and practice-recitation (speeches, reading out loud, individual or group reports, experiences, etc.) (65% of the teachers). Creative dramatic role playing-plays was noted by 27% of the teachers, demonstration 23% of the teachers, while 14% of the teachers indicated that no specific method was used for teaching oral communication skills. Lecture was the least noted by teachers (4%). Percentage of response is distorted as 133 respondents noted 187 responses even though the question asked the respondent to check the "one" item which best described their teaching situation.

#### Question 5

"What is the frequency of delivery of oral communication instruction in Michigan public elementary schools?" Question ten and eleven of the survey instrument addressed this research question. The findings are

Table 10  
Material Teachers Use When Providing Planned  
Oral Communication Instruction

Materials	Frequency	Percent of Responses	Cumulative Percent of Responses	Percent of Teachers
A. Demonstration	31	17	17	23
B. Role Playing - Plays	36	19	36	27
C. Drill and Practice	86	46	82	65
D. Lecture	5	3	85	4
E. No Specific Method Used	19	10	95	14
F. Other	10	5	100	8
Totals	187	100	100	

Note: Response rates are distorted as many teachers responded to more than one item (133 teachers indicated 187 responses)



summarized in Tables 11 and 12.

The most noted time frequency Michigan public elementary school teachers provide in planned oral communication instruction was almost every day (47%), followed by once a week (20%), and every day (18%). Less than 12% of the teachers provided planned instruction in oral communication once each month or less.

Daily percentages Michigan public school teachers provided in planned instruction varied considerably. More than 20% of their daily instruction to oral communication was indicated by 32% of the teachers while 25% of the teachers indicated they provide 0-5% oral communication instruction per day. Percentage of daily instruction in oral communication varied appreciably between much time (more than 20%) and little daily time (5% or less).

#### Question 6

"How is student achievement of oral communication skills evaluated or graded in Michigan public elementary schools?" Questions twelve and thirteen of the survey instrument address this research question. The findings are summarized in Tables 13, 14, 15, 16, and 17.

Michigan public elementary school teachers do not typically grade their students on report cards in oral communication. Approximately 69% of the teachers

Table 11  
Frequency of Direct Instruction Teachers Provide  
In Planned Oral Communication Instruction

Frequency of Instruction	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
A. Once During the Year	1	1	1
B. Once Each Semester	3	2	3
C. One Each Month/Marking Period	10	8	11
D. Once Each Week	27	20	31
E. Almost Every Day	63	47	78
F. Every Day	24	18	96
G. Missing	5	4	100
Totals	133	100	100

Table 12  
Daily Percentage of Oral Communication Instruction  
Provided Students by Teachers Providing Planned  
Instruction Through Other Areas of Instruction

Percent of Daily Instruction	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
A. 0 - 5%	35	25	25
B. 6 - 10%	24	18	43
C. 11 - 15%	17	13	56
D. 16 - 20%	12	9	65
E. More than 20%	42	32	97
F. Missing	3	2	99
Totals	133	99	99

Table 13  
Report Cards Indicating Pupil Performance  
in Oral Communication

Grade Performance on Report Cards	Frequency	Percent
Yes	55	30
No	127	69
Missing	1	1
Totals	183	100

Table 14  
Report Cards Indicating Pupil Performance in Oral  
Communication of Teachers Providing Planned  
Oral Communication Instruction

Grade Performance on Report Cards	Frequency	Percent
Yes	46	35
No	86	65
Missing	1	1
Totals	133	101

Table 15  
Grade Level Frequency of Report Cards Indicating  
Pupil Performance in Oral Communication

Grade Level	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
K	21	35	35
1	15	25	60
2	10	17	77
3	8	13	90
4	3	5	95
5	3	5	100
Totals	60	100	100

Note: Frequencies do not exactly parallel those in Table 13 as 5 of the 60 respondents indicated that although they do not specifically grade oral communication skills, their report cards do allow for oral communication grades or comments.

Table 16  
Grading Methods Teachers Use to Evaluate  
Oral Communication Skills

Method	Frequency	Percent
A. District tests, quizzes, etc.	3	2
B. Commercial tests, quizzes, etc.	4	3
C. Textbook or workbook tests, etc.	15	11
D. Observation and knowledge	120	85
Totals	142	101
No Response	41	22

**Table 17**  
**Grading Methods Teachers Use to Evaluate Oral Communication Skills Who**  
**Use Report Cards Indicating Pupil Performance in Oral Communication**

Method	Frequency	Percent
A. District tests, quizzes, etc.	3	5
B. Commercial tests, quizzes, etc.	1	2
C. Textbook or workbook tests, etc.	1	2
D. Observation and knowledge	49	89
Missing	1	2
<b>Totals</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>100</b>

surveyed indicated they did not write grades on report cards while 30% indicated that they did.

Thirty-five percent of the teachers who indicated they provided planned oral communication instruction indicated they did grade students in oral communication on report cards while 65% of the teachers did not grade students on report cards. For those teachers that do not provide planned oral communication instruction only 8 or 20% indicated they graded students in oral communication.

Of the teachers that indicated that their report cards allow for oral communication grades or comments, most grading would appear to take place in kindergarten or the first grade (60%). Only 17% of the second grade teachers, 13% of the third grade teachers, and 10% of the fourth and fifth grade teachers indicated that their report cards allowed for grades or comments in oral communication.

Grades or comments on report cards for oral communication skills were mostly general. Typical oral communication report card statements included approximation of one of the following:

- Student expressed ideas orally
- Speaks in sentences and is understood
- Communicates ideas effectively
- Speaks correctly
- Speaks in complete sentences, states full name,



address, telephone number

- Participates in class discussion
- Listens carefully. Follows oral directions.

Two teachers indicated that their report cards were more discriminating in evaluating oral communication skills. Their report cards noted the following:

- Speaking ... Speaks clearly and can be understood; expresses ideas well; shares experiences; dictates a story with a beginning and end. Listening...Listens to others; enjoys listening to stories, poems, and films; hears rhyming words; distinguishes between beginning consonant sounds.

- Enjoys and volunteers to speak. Shares ideas and helps evaluate results. Can tell and retell dramatization.

Student grades in oral communication are primarily determined through observation and knowledge of individual student skills in and out of class. With or without report card grading, 85% of the teachers responding to this survey item indicated the observation and knowledge method of grading. Of the teachers that provide grades on report cards in oral communication, 89% of the teachers base oral communication grades on observation and knowledge of individual student skills in and out of class.

Question 7

"Do teachers believe oral communication instruction should be provided students in Michigan public elementary schools?" Questions 14, 15, and 16 of the survey instrument addressed this research question. The findings are summarized in Tables 18, 19, 20, 21, and 22.

Most teachers believe that oral communication skills should be taught in our schools (97%). Teachers believe that student performance in oral communication skill needs improvement; very much 17%; much 33%, and some 40%. Only 7% of the teachers believe little or no student improvement was needed in oral communication. This belief is consistent for all teachers whether they provide planned instruction in oral communication or not.

Teachers identified that the best method of accomplishing improved student performance in oral communication is through help in integrating oral communication instruction into what they are presently teaching (70%). This method is supported regardless of how teachers perceive the need for student improvement in developing oral communication skills.

Question 8

"What is the relative importance teachers assign to oral communication instruction compared to other subject areas in Michigan public elementary schools?" Survey

Table 18

Teacher Opinion That Oral Communication  
Skills Should be Taught in Schools

Value	Frequency	Percent
Yes	177	97
No	1	1
Missing	5	3
Totals	183	101

Table 19

Teacher Perception of Student Need for  
Oral Communication Improvement

Value	Frequency	Percent
A. Very Much	32	17
B. Much	61	33
C. Some	74	40
D. Little	11	6
E. None at all	1	1
Missing	4	2
Totals	183	99

Table 20

Teacher Perception of Student Need for Oral Communication  
Improvement of Teachers Providing Planned  
Oral Communication Instruction

Value	Frequency	Percent of Response
A. Very Much	24	18
B. Much	44	33
C. Some	56	42
D. Little	9	7
E. None at all	0	0
Totals	133	100

Table 21

Teacher Belief as to how Improvement in  
Oral Communication Performance Can  
Best be Accomplished

Method	Frequency	Percent of Response
A. District Curriculum Guides	6	3
B. More or Better Materials	14	8
C. Improved Instructional Methods	11	6
D. More or Designated Time	24	13
E. Help with integrating instruction with current instruction	128	70
Totals	183	100

Table 22

Teacher Response When Comparing Perceived Teacher Need & Teacher  
Belief as to how Instruction in Oral Communication  
Performance can Best be Accomplished

Performance Need				
Method	Very Much Frequency	Some Little None Frequency	Totals	Combined Percent
A. District Curriculum Guides	5	1	6	3
B. More or Better Materials	8	6	14	8
C. Improved Instructional Methods	5	6	11	6
D. More or Designated Time	13	11	24	13
E. Help with integrating instruction with current instruction	60	63	123	67
Missing			5	3
Totals	91	87	183	100

questions 17, 18, and 19 addressed this research question. The findings are summarized in Tables 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, and 28.

Michigan public elementary school teachers perceive reading instruction as the most important area of instruction among arithmetic, oral communication, reading and writing-spelling. Arithmetic ranks second followed by writing-spelling and oral communication. This ranking is consistent with how much time teachers believe should be devoted to teaching the four basic instructional areas.

When teachers were asked to respond to the areas of instruction (arithmetic, reading, writing-spelling) that could be reduced to allow for oral communication instruction, writing-spelling was most often noted by teachers 23%, followed by reading 15%, and arithmetic 8%. Most teachers believed that no time should be taken from arithmetic, reading or writing-spelling instruction (60%) for oral communication instruction.

### Summary

Most Michigan public elementary school teachers provide planned instruction in oral communication. They integrate oral communication instruction throughout other areas of their instruction and use district approved guides, preselected methods or materials, self-developed

Table 23

Rank Order in Importance Teacher Perceived Arithmetic, Oral Communication, Reading and Writing

Subject Area	Rank						Rank Percent					
	1	2	3	4	Missing	Totals	1	2	3	4	Missing	Totals
Arithmetic	6	87	50	34	6	183	3	48	27	19	3	100
Oral Communication	28	36	50	62	7	183	15	20	27	34	4	100
Reading	149	26	1	1	6	183	81	14	1	1	3	100
Writing	2	32	72	70	7	183	1	17	39	38	4	99
Totals	185	181	173	167			100	99	94	92		

Note: Rankings varied; some teachers indicated the same rank when they believed subjects to be of equal importance

Table 24

Percent Allocation of Time Teachers Believed Should be  
Devoted to Arithmetic Assuming Four Instructional  
Areas (Arithmetic, Oral Communication, Reading  
and Writing) Equals 100% of Time Allotted

Value	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
0	6	3	3
5	1	1	4
10	7	4	8
13	1	1	9
15	7	4	13
20	41	22	35
23	1	1	36
24	1	1	37
25	57	31	68
26	1	1	69
30	46	25	94
33	1	1	95
35	8	4	99
40	2	1	100
50	2	1	101
70	1	1	102
Totals	183	102	102



Table 25

Percent Allocation of Time Teachers Believed Should be  
Devoted to Oral Communication Assuming Four  
Instructional Areas (Arithmetic, Oral Communication,  
Reading and Writing) Equals 100% of Time Allotted

Value	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
0	13	7	7
5	11	6	13
10	44	24	37
12	1	1	38
13	1	1	39
15	20	11	50
16	1	1	51
20	44	24	75
24	1	1	76
25	28	15	91
27	1	1	92
30	13	7	99
35	1	1	100
40	3	2	102
60	1	1	103
Totals	183	103	103

Table 26

Percent Allocation of Time Teachers Believed Should be  
Devoted to Reading Assuming Four Instructional Areas  
(Arithmetic, Oral Communication, Reading and  
Writing) Equals 100% of Time Allotted

Value	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
0	6	3	3
10	1	1	4
15	1	1	5
16	1	1	6
20	2	1	7
24	1	1	8
25	23	13	21
27	1	1	22
30	45	25	47
33	1	1	48
35	25	14	62
40	42	23	85
45	5	3	88
50	25	14	102
60	3	2	104
85	1	1	105
Totals	183	105	105

Table 27

Percent Allocation of Time Teachers Believed Should be  
Devoted to Writing-Spelling Assuming Four  
Instructional Areas (Arithmetic, Oral Communication,  
Reading and Writing) Equals 100% of Time Allotted

Value	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
0	6	3	3
5	2	1	4
10	18	10	14
12	1	1	15
13	2	1	16
15	27	15	31
16	1	1	32
20	45	25	57
22	1	1	58
23	1	1	59
25	46	25	84
30	27	15	99
33	1	1	100
35	4	2	102
40	1	1	103
Totals	183	103	103

Table 28

Teacher Perception of Where Time Could be Decreased to  
Allow for Oral Communication Instruction

Instruction Area	Frequency	Percent of Response	Percent of Teachers
A. Arithmetic	14	7	8
B. Reading	27	14	15
C. Writing-Spelling	42	22	23
D. No time should be taken from the 3 above	110	57	60
Totals	193	100	

outlines of oral communication skills or competencies they have developed on their own, or use no formal guide for oral communication instruction.

Most Michigan public elementary school teachers use a variety of materials for oral communication instruction. Teachers develop their own materials, use textbooks or simply do not use any instructional material.

The most noted method of instruction used by Michigan public elementary school teachers is drill and practice method followed by creative dramatic role playing. Most teachers provide oral communication almost every day or daily. The amount of time spent daily on oral communication instruction varies anywhere from 0-5% of the day to over 20% of daily instructional time.

Michigan public elementary school teachers do not often grade students on report cards in oral communication. When and if they were to grade oral communication skills, teachers base their grades on observation and knowledge of individual student skills in and out of school.

Almost all Michigan public elementary school teachers believe that oral communication skills should be taught in our schools. Teachers believe that most students need some improvement in oral communication skills and many students require much and very much improvement.

Michigan public elementary school teachers believe the best means of teaching oral communication skills to children is through an integrated approach. Michigan teachers rank the importance of oral communication instruction on about par with writing-spelling. Reading instruction is perceived as the most important area of instruction followed by arithmetic instruction.

Michigan public elementary school teachers do not want to take time from arithmetic, reading or writing-spelling instruction to provide oral communication instruction. Oral communication instruction is perceived as being an important area of instruction, it should be integrated throughout the other areas of instruction, yet should not take time away from arithmetic, reading, or writing-spelling instruction.

The study concludes with Chapter V. Chapter V contains a summary of the study, conclusions, recommendations, and suggestions for further research.

## CHAPTER V

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this study was to describe the relationship between what experts believe to be essential characteristics of oral communication instruction and what Michigan public elementary schools are providing students in oral communication instruction. Eight research questions were developed. They are:

1. Is oral communication instruction being provided children in Michigan public elementary schools?
2. What is the "basis" for oral communication instruction in Michigan public elementary schools?
3. What materials are used to support oral communication instruction in Michigan public elementary schools?
4. What is the method of delivery for oral communication instruction in Michigan public elementary schools?
5. What is the frequency of delivery of oral communication instruction in Michigan public elementary schools?
6. How is student achievement of oral communication skills evaluated or graded in Michigan public elementary schools?
7. Do teachers believe oral communication instruc-

tion should be provided students in Michigan public elementary schools?

8. What is the relative importance teachers assign to oral communication instruction compared to other subject areas in Michigan public elementary schools?

### Major Findings

#### Findings From the Review of Literature

The review of literature outlined four major topics including: (1) the historical basis for oral communication instruction, (2) the importance of teaching oral communication skills, (3) the state of the art research and teaching practices in oral communication instruction, and (4) instructional practices recommended by experts to teach oral communication skills. From the literature review, eight research questions were developed to compare what experts believed to be essential characteristics of oral communication instruction and what Michigan public elementary schools are providing students in oral communication instruction. Following is a summary of the literature review as outlined by the eight research questions.

#### Question 1

"Is oral communication instruction being provided children in Michigan public elementary schools?" The



literature on oral communication instruction supports the belief that oral communication instruction is not being provided elementary school children. Speaking and listening skill instruction are either fortuitous, contingent upon the teachers training or interest, or targeted for students with communication disorders in the context of special education (Lieb-Brilhart, 1979). Speech is rarely taught in the elementary school (Lieb-Brilhart, 1979; Modaff & Hopper, 1984; Van Allen, 1976).

#### Question 2

"What is the basis for oral communication instruction in the Michigan public elementary schools?" The literature on oral communication instruction supports the belief that there is little basis for oral communication instruction in our elementary schools. Few states teach speaking or listening skills as part of their statewide curriculum (Modaff & Hopper, 1984). Speaking and listening skill instruction are fortuitous or contingent upon the teachers training and interest (Lieb-Brilhart, 1979). As of July 15, 1981, nineteen states had no curriculum or assessment programs in speaking and or listening and have no plans of implementing any such program (Modaff & Hopper, 1984).

Questions 3 & 4

"What materials are used to support oral communication instruction in Michigan public elementary schools?" "What is the method of delivery of oral communication instruction in Michigan public elementary schools?" The literature on oral communication instruction supports the belief that oral communication instruction is not being provided and that there is no basis for its instruction; material usage and method of delivery for oral communication instruction would likely not be considered by teachers.

If, however, teachers do provide oral communication instruction, textbooks should not be emphasized as they pose limitations in the teaching of speech and listening (Brown, 1967). Oral communication instruction must be provided through practice, using a language experience approach (Ediger, 1980; Rubin & Kantor, 1983). Puppets, dramatization, conversation, interviews, introductions, oral reports, oral reading, giving and following directions are advocated in the teaching of speaking and listening (Ediger, 1980). Oral communication instruction should focus on a holistic approach with oral communication instruction being integrated with other areas of instruction (Allen & Kellner, 1983; Burns & Browman, 1979; Crocker, 1979; Ediger, 1980; Lieb-Brilhart, 1979;

Moffett & Wagner, 1976; Monda, 1983; Rubin & Kantor, 1983; Wood, 1983).

#### Question 5

"What is the frequency of delivery of oral communication instruction in Michigan public elementary schools?" The literature on oral communication instruction supports the belief that oral communication instruction is not being provided and that there is no basis for its instruction.

If, however, teachers do provide oral communication instruction, it should be provided daily. Oral communication instruction should be approached holistically and integrated with other areas of instruction, specifically with instruction in reading and writing (Lieb-Brilhart, 1980).

#### Question 6

"How is student achievement of oral communication skills evaluated or graded in Michigan public elementary schools?" The literature on oral communication instruction supports the belief that since oral communication instruction is not being provided and since there is little basis for its instruction it follows that it is not graded or evaluated. Grading per se of oral communication is not an issue found in the literature.

The literature emphasized communication competency. Grading or evaluation was used in this research as a measure of instruction. If oral communication instruction was being provided elementary pupils, it follows that it would be graded or evaluated in a manner similar to the grading or evaluation of the other "basic" areas of instruction.

#### Question 7

"Do teachers believe oral communication instruction should be provided students in Michigan public elementary schools?" The literature on oral communication instruction does not specifically address teacher belief regarding oral communication instruction. The literature supports a global belief that oral communication instruction should be provided. Since 1978, oral communication and listening skills instruction have been advocated by people in business, education, the professions, and the home (Boileau, 1984).

#### Question 8

"What is the relative importance teachers assign to oral communication instruction compared to other subject areas in Michigan public elementary schools?" The literature on oral communication instruction does not specifically address teacher belief regarding the relative

importance teachers assign to oral communication instruction. Like research question seven, literature supports global belief in oral communication instruction. This research question taxed respondents to place a value on oral communication when comparing it to the other areas of basic instruction. The literature supports the belief that oral communication instruction is critical in the teaching of reading (Ediger, 1980; Lieb-Brilhart, 1980; Loban, 1978) and in the development of written language skills, mathematical skills, problem solving, and personal development skills (Lieb-Brilhart, 1979; Rubin, 1980; Rubin & Kantor, 1983; Willbrand & Riecke, 1983).

#### Findings of the Study

Thirty-three Michigan public school districts were randomly selected to participate in the study of oral communication instructional practices in grades K-5. The school districts were selected from a Michigan Department of Education K-12 student membership report. Thirty-three elementary school buildings (or groups of buildings) were randomly selected to participate in the study. Building administrators were sent six survey questionnaires and asked that they have the teachers they believed best typified the individual grade levels to complete a survey (one teacher per grade).

The nineteen question survey instrument included

questions on teacher background information (years of teacher experience, grade level teaching assignment, and training in teaching oral communication) and questions relating to the eight research questions.

The questionnaire was mailed in October 1987 to the 33 districts and buildings selected for the study. The selected districts were asked to return the questionnaire within ten days. Follow-up telephone calls were made to non-respondents requesting they complete and return the survey. Thirty-two of the 33 school districts returned the surveys. One hundred eighty-three of a possible 198 individual surveys were returned.

Following is a summary of the survey results as outlined by the eight research questions. Teacher information is included for clarity in understanding the background of the teachers surveyed.

#### Respondent Background

Years of teaching experience varied from 0 years of experience (first year teachers) to 32 years of teaching experience. The mean of teacher experience was 16.2 years with the mode and mean being 16 years. The frequency of teacher response per grade level K-5, ranged from 27 to 31 respondents. Eighty-two percent of the teachers surveyed had little formal training in speech or communication arts.

Question 1

"Is oral communication instruction being provided children in Michigan public elementary schools?" Seventy-three percent of the surveyed teachers responded that they provide planned instruction in oral communication instruction.

Question 2

"What is the basis for oral communication instruction in the Michigan public elementary schools?" Of the 73% of teachers surveyed who indicated they provide planned oral communication instruction, 56% of those teachers indicated that they did not use any formal guide for oral communication instruction. Seventeen percent of the teachers providing planned oral communication instruction use an outline of oral communication skills they developed on their own. Overall, there does not appear to be any formal basis for oral communication instruction.

Questions 3 & 4

"What materials are used to support oral communication instruction in the Michigan public elementary schools?" What is the method of delivery of oral communication instruction in Michigan public elementary schools?" Teachers use a variety of materials to teach

oral communication skills to children. No single item or items were predominantly noted by teachers. Of the teachers providing planned oral communication instruction, drill and practice (speeches, reading out loud, individual or group reports, experiences, etc.) was the most noted method of instruction (65% of teachers responded to this method). Teachers providing planned oral communication instruction overwhelmingly noted that they integrated oral communication instruction throughout other areas of instruction (96%).

#### Question 5

"What is the frequency of delivery of oral communication instruction in Michigan public elementary schools?" Of the teachers providing planned oral communication instruction, 65% of the teachers indicated they provided oral communication instruction almost everyday (47%) or every day (18%). Daily percentages of oral communication instruction varied considerably from 0 - 5% of instructional time to over 20% of daily instruction time.

#### Question 6

"How is achievement of oral communication skills evaluated or graded in Michigan public elementary schools?" Most teachers (69%) do not write oral communi-



cation grades on report cards. Of those teachers evaluating oral communication skills of students (for whatever reason), 85% of the respondents noted that they evaluated oral communication skills via observation and knowledge of individual student skills in and out of class. This method of evaluation was also supported by teachers providing planned instruction (89%).

#### Question 7

"Do teachers believe oral communication instruction should be provided students in Michigan public elementary schools?" Most teachers (97%) believe oral communication skills should be taught in our schools. Ninety percent of the respondents noted that student performance needed some (40%), much (33%), or very much (17%) improvement.

#### Question 8

"What is the relative importance teachers assign to oral communication instruction compared to other subject areas in Michigan public elementary schools?" Most teachers believe oral communication instruction to be as important as writing and spelling instruction. The time teachers are willing to devote to oral communication instruction is consistent with its ranked importance. Reading, followed by arithmetic instruction were the areas of instruction believed to be most important.

Teachers are not willing to take time from reading, arithmetic, or writing and spelling instruction for oral communication instruction.

### Conclusions

Teacher response to the Survey On Oral Communication Instructional Practices in Michigan may not be representative of what teachers actually do with regard to oral communication instruction or be representative of what teachers believe to be the best oral communication instructional practices. The test of the "Survey's" reliability characteristics indicates that many teachers refine or change their thinking about oral communication instruction. It seems most probable that teachers lacked conviction or familiarity with oral communication instructional practice.

Lack of reliability in teacher test retest response must be considered when analyzing the conclusions of this study. The conclusions stated in this section are indicative of "initial teacher response" to the Survey On Oral Communication Instructional Practices in Michigan.

Most teachers believe they provide planned instruction in oral communication. This finding is inconsistent with what experts believe to be occurring in the classroom. Teachers do not use a formal guide as a basis for oral communication, but may use a guide they develop on

their own. This practice is consistent with what the experts believe is occurring. Because teacher instruction in oral communication does not have a basis or guide from which its content can be evaluated, it is difficult to determine what exactly teachers do when they state they provide oral communication instruction. Whether teachers are truly providing "planned" oral communication instruction is an area of research which needs study.

Teachers use a variety of materials to teach oral communication skills and believe oral communication instruction is best integrated throughout other areas of instruction. These practices are consistent with what experts believe to be the best methods of oral communication instruction.

Most teachers are providing oral communication instruction "almost" daily or daily in varying amounts of time during the school day (0 - 5%) to over 20% of their school day. This practice is supported by experts as oral communication instruction is viewed as an integral part of all instruction.

Few teachers grade students in oral communication skills development, yet when teachers evaluate oral communication skills, they rely on their observation and knowledge of students in and out of the classroom. This method of evaluation of oral communication skills is not consistent with what experts imply to be the best prac-

tice. Experts look to the evaluation process as being much more defined and tangible. Experts look to oral communication competencies which can be evaluated via some measurable criteria.

Teachers and experts do agree on the need for oral communication instruction. Teachers believe students need to improve their oral communication skills and view oral communication instruction as equal in importance as writing and spelling instruction. Experts perceive oral communication as the key to all instruction. When comparing teacher and expert belief in the area of oral communication instruction, both groups support oral communication instruction; differences occur only in the matter of degree.

Teachers do not want to take time from their other areas of basic instruction (arithmetic, reading, writing-spelling) to teach oral communication. Teachers believe student performance in oral communication could best be accomplished by offering them ways to integrate oral communication instruction into what they are presently teaching. Teachers and experts are consistent in their belief that oral communication instruction is best provided as it is integrated throughout a students curriculum.

Teachers appear to know the importance of oral communication skill development. They know it should be

taught in school, and they know their students require oral communication instruction. What teachers do not know is what and how to teach oral communication to their students within the confines of the school day.

#### Recommendations

School districts should make every effort to ensure that oral communication instruction is an integral part of their elementary school curriculum. Minimally, school districts should:

1. Adopt or develop oral communication curriculum which includes an assessment instrument, group and individual goals, implementation methods, and evaluative measures for oral communication competencies.
2. Inservice all teachers on the importance of and teaching of oral communication skills.
3. Develop a means to formalize the evaluation and documentation of individual and group oral communication skills (individual student reports, report card documentation, etc.)

This research study was designed to determine what Michigan public elementary school teachers were providing students in oral communication instruction. Exemplary programs were not identified nor was it possible to determine which school districts or grades provided the best examples of oral communication instruction.

Schools need to identify themselves, their school buildings, and classrooms where exemplary oral communication instruction is being integrated throughout other areas of instruction. We need to identify these exemplary programs so that they can be models for developing new programs. Schools that offer exemplary programs need to identify themselves so that other districts can look and fashion their programs after programs that work.

#### Suggestions for Further Research

This study was limited in that it only offered an overview of what exists in Michigan public elementary schools in oral communication instruction. This study was a starting point, whereby research could begin to look at what is needed to develop sound oral communication instructional programs in our elementary schools.

Research is desperately needed to identify specific oral communication instructional practices which are currently operating in schools. School districts and teachers need to know how and what to do to incorporate oral communication instruction into their classrooms. Only when teachers know how and what to do with oral communication instruction can they begin to incorporate it into their teaching.

## APPENDICES

Appendix A  
Questionnaire



Survey On Oral Communication Instructional  
Practices in Michigan

Directions:

Please read, then complete the following survey in a manner which best describes your classroom program.

Definitions:

1. Oral communication is the process of interacting through heard and spoken messages in a variety of situations. Effective oral communication is a learned behavior, involving the following processes:
  - A. Speaking in a variety of educational and social situations: speaking involves, but is not limited to, arranging and producing messages through the use of voice, articulation, vocabulary, syntax and non-verbal cues (e.g. gesture, facial expression, vocal cues) appropriate to the speaker and listener.
  - B. Listening in a variety of educational and social situations: listening involves, but is not limited to, hearing, perceiving, discriminating, interpreting, synthesizing, organizing, and remembering information from verbal and non-verbal messages.
2. Oral communication instruction is teacher directed instruction toward the completion of either individual or group documented goals or objectives in oral communication. Goals and objectives are written in measurable terms by the school, teacher, curriculum or textbook publisher; students are evaluated on either goal or objective attainment with some type of measurable criteria.

Survey on Oral Communication Instructional  
Practices in Michigan

Part I

Please complete the following:

1. I have \_\_\_\_\_ years of professional teaching experience as of July 1, 1987. (List as a whole number for years completed).
2. My grade level teaching assignment is \_\_\_\_\_. (If you teach more than one grade level, indicate the grade level of "primary" assignment).
3. Please indicate any formal training or college course work you have had in teaching oral communication skills to children. (Check only those that apply).

\_\_\_\_\_ a. I have had no college course work in speech, speech communication, or in teaching communication skills to children beyond a language arts introductory methods course.

\_\_\_\_\_ b. I have had undergraduate course work beyond the language arts introductory methods course in speech or communication arts.

\_\_\_\_\_ c. I have a "minor" in speech or communication arts.

\_\_\_\_\_ d. I have a "major" in speech or communication arts.

\_\_\_\_\_ e. I have had graduate course work in speech or communication arts.

\_\_\_\_\_ f. Other, explain:

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## Part II

4. Within my teaching assignment, I provide planned instruction in oral communication (See definition 2, page 1)

☐ a. True  
☐ b. False

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**If you answered "b. False" to question #4 skip items #5 - #11 and continue with item #12.**

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5. I provide planned oral communication instruction to students integrated throughout other areas of instruction (arithmetic, reading, writing, spelling, science, social studies, music, art, play activities, etc.

☐ a. True  
☐ b. False

6. From the descriptions below, check the ONE DESCRIPTION which best describes your current oral communication instructional practice.

☐ a. I use district approved guides with pre-selected materials and methods at time set aside on a regular basis for oral communication instruction.

☐ b. I use vague guidelines, with some pre-selected materials and methods at time occasionally set aside for oral communication instruction.

☐ c. While I do not have or use district approved guides, pre-selected methods, or materials, I infuse oral communication instruction by coaching pupils whenever they demonstrate lack of skills or inappropriate communication patterns.

7. In my teaching assignment, the basic guide for instruction in oral communication is: (Check the ONE which best describes your situation).

\_\_\_ a. I use a district developed curriculum as a basis for oral communication instruction.

\_\_\_ b. I use a commercially developed curriculum as a basis for oral communication instruction. (This may include the Speech Communication Association Outline of Oral Communication Competencies or Michigan's Assessment on Objectives in Oral Communication).

Please indicate name: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_ c. I use a district developed outline of oral communication skills or competencies such as may appear on individual student report cards.

\_\_\_ d. I use a commercially developed outline of oral communication skills or competencies such as may appear on individual student report cards.

\_\_\_ e. I use a curriculum and/or outline of oral communication skills or competencies I developed on my own.

\_\_\_ f. I do not have (use) a formal guide for oral communication instruction.

\_\_\_ g. Other (Please describe briefly).

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

8. In my teaching assignment, the structured material used for oral communication instruction is: (Check the ONE which best describes your situation).

- ☐ a. Textbooks
- ☐ b. Workbooks
- ☐ c. Commercially prepared handouts
- ☐ d. Oral or visual tapes, films, etc.
- ☐ e. Self developed materials or handouts
- ☐ f. I do not use any structured materials
- ☐ g. Other (Please describe briefly)

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9. In my teaching assignment, the primary method of teaching oral communication skills is: (Check the ONE which best describes your situation).

- ☐ a. Demonstration - modeling (ex: articulation, or pronunciation exercises)
- ☐ b. Creative dramatic role playing - plays
- ☐ c. Drill and practice - recitation (speeches, reading out loud, individual or group reports, experiences, etc.)
- ☐ d. Lecture
- ☐ e. I do not use a specific method for teaching oral communication skills
- ☐ f. Other (Please describe briefly)

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10. I provide direct oral communication instruction to students at a designated time scheduled for instruction: (Check the ONE which best describes your situation).

☐ a. Once during the year  
☐ b. One each semester  
☐ c. Once each month or card marking period  
☐ d. Once each week  
☐ e. Almost every day  
☐ f. Every day

11. On a "typical" or average day, what percent of your total instruction is directed to oral communication instruction? (Check the ONE which best describes your situation).

☐ a. 0 - 5%  
☐ b. 6 - 10%  
☐ c. 11 - 15%  
☐ d. 16 - 20%  
☐ e. More than 20%

12. Does the report card at your grade level have a separate place to grade pupil performance in oral communication?

☐ a. Yes. If yes, how is it noted. Explain:

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☐ b. No

13. I base pupil grades in oral communication on:  
(Check the ONE which best describes your situation).
- ☐ a. District developed tests, quizzes, or check sheets which parallel our district developed curriculum, outline, or report card.
  - ☐ b. Commercially developed standardized tests, quizzes, or check sheets which parallel our commercially developed curriculum, outline, or report card.
  - ☐ c. Textbook or workbook tests, quizzes, or check sheets.
  - ☐ d. Observation and knowledge of individual student skills in and out of class.
14. Do you believe that oral communication skills should be taught students in our schools?
- ☐ a. Yes
  - ☐ b. No
15. To what degree does the performance of your students in oral communication skill need or require improvement (Check only ONE).
- ☐ a. Very much
  - ☐ b. Much
  - ☐ c. Some
  - ☐ d. Little
  - ☐ e. None at all
16. Significant improvement of student performance in oral communication can best be accomplished by which of the following: (Check only ONE).
- ☐ a. District wide adopted curriculum guides or outlines
  - ☐ b. More or better materials provided by the district
  - ☐ c. Improved instructional methods
  - ☐ d. More or designated time devoted to oral communication instruction
  - ☐ e. Help with ways to integrate oral communication instruction into what I am presently teaching

17. Rank order the following subject areas by first placing a "1" next to the area of instruction you believe to be the most important. Next, place a "4" next to the area of instruction you believe to be the least important. Next, place a "2" next to the area of instruction you believe to be the second most important. Finally, place a "3" next to the area of instruction you believe to be the second least important.

\_\_\_\_ a. Arithmetic  
\_\_\_\_ b. Oral Communication  
\_\_\_\_ c. Reading  
\_\_\_\_ d. Writing - Spelling

18. Of the time devoted to direct instruction, assign percentage allocation of time you believe should be provided the following basic areas of instruction: (The total MUST equal 100%).

\_\_\_\_ a. Arithmetic  
\_\_\_\_ b. Oral Communication  
\_\_\_\_ c. Reading  
\_\_\_\_ d. Writing - Spelling

100% TOTAL

19. Assuming you presently teach three "basic" areas of instruction (arithmetic, reading, writing-spelling), check the area(s) of instruction where time should be decreased to allow for oral communication instruction:

\_\_\_\_ a. Arithmetic  
\_\_\_\_ b. Reading  
\_\_\_\_ c. Writing - Spelling  
\_\_\_\_ d. No time should be taken from the three basic areas of instruction indicated above.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR HELP IN COMPLETING THIS SURVEY. PLEASE SEAL AND RETURN THIS SURVEY TO ME IN THE ATTACHED ENVELOPE.



Appendix B  
Questionnaire Instructions  
Survey Letter to Elementary Classroom Teachers

October 1987

Dear Elementary Classroom Teacher:

The attached survey instrument concerned with oral communication teaching practices in Michigan is part of a statewide study being carried out in cooperation with the Michigan State Department of Education, Western Michigan University, and Tuscola Intermediate School District. This study involves the determination of the status of oral communication teaching practices in our state. The results of this study will help provide direction for further research in oral communication instruction.

I am particularly desirous of obtaining your response because as a classroom teacher, you directly impact the skill development of our young people. The enclosed instrument has been field tested with a sampling of Michigan public elementary school teachers and has been reviewed and validated by experts in the field of oral communication. Revisions have been made in order to make it possible to obtain the necessary data while requiring a minimum amount of your time.

I have enclosed a small "token" incentive for you to complete this survey demonstrating my appreciation and thanks for your insight into public school curriculum practices. Have a coffee, a coke, or other refreshment on me to make this task more palatable to you. The time necessary to complete this survey should not exceed 10 minutes. Your options are:

1. To accept my offer of appreciation and to trash the survey,
2. To accept my offer of appreciation and to return the survey,
3. To return my offer of appreciation and to trash the survey, or
4. To return my offer of appreciation and to return the survey.

I would like you to select option "2".

Classroom Teachers  
October 1987  
Page 2

I would be most appreciative if you complete the survey prior to October 16, 1987, and return it to your building principal in the enclosed envelope. Your principal will forward the information to me. Other phases of this research cannot be carried out until I complete an analysis of your data. I welcome any comments that you may have concerning any aspect of oral communication instruction not addressed in the survey instrument. Your responses will be held in the strictest confidence.

I will be pleased to send you a summary of the survey results if you so desire. Thank you for your time, professionalism, and cooperation.

Sincerely,

James N. Walker  
Tuscola Intermediate School District  
1385 Cleaver Road  
Caro, MI 48723

JNW:fam

## Appendix C

### Sample Letter Regarding Validity of Questionnaire

July 14, 1987

Name  
Department  
University  
City

Dear

Thank you for offering to review, critique, and offer suggestions to my survey instrument on oral communication instructional practices in Michigan. I have made every effort to focus my instrument toward obtaining the data I require with minimal verbage and excess need of survey response. Dr. Douglas MacPherson, Research and Evaluation Department, Bay City Public Schools, Bay City, Michigan, has graciously provided his assistance in helping me work toward this goal. This project is being offered as the research component of my Doctorate of Education Degree under the auspices of Western Michigan University, Department of Educational Leadership, Dr. Edgar Kelley, Chairperson.

I have enclosed with my instrument a brief outline of my research to help clarify questions you may have regarding the purpose and scope of my project. I have also included a copy of my bibliography (in draft form) for your review and critique.

Please review the information I have provided and include any comments you may have on any or all of it. Your input is critically needed and will be documented and used to validate my survey instrument. With your permission, I will include your name and title in the appendices of my dissertation as being one of five experts selected to validate my survey on oral communication instructional practices in Michigan public schools.

I would be most appreciative if you would complete and return your review and critique of my survey instrument in the enclosed envelope by July 31, 1987, so that I can make any necessary revisions and begin gathering survey information in September, 1987. Please feel free to

contact me at work or home regarding any questions you have on the information I am providing you. I sincerely appreciate your willingness to assist me in this project and I appreciate your expertise in helping me make this research truly meaningful and a contribution to the field of communication arts.

I will gladly provide you with any information you require to make your role easier. Upon the completion of my survey, I will be pleased to send you a summary of the survey results, if you desire. Thank you again for your help and insights.

Sincerely,

James N. Walker  
1734 Cedar Knoll  
Caro, MI 48723  
517/673-3202

Office:  
Tuscola Intermediate School District  
1385 Cleaver Road  
Caro, MI 48723  
517/673-2144

JNN:fam

Appendix D  
Initial Reliability Survey Letter

September 1987

Dear Elementary Classroom Teacher:

The attached pilot survey instrument concerned with oral communication teaching practices in Michigan is part of a statewide study being carried out in cooperation with the Michigan State Department of Education, Western Michigan University, Tuscola Intermediate School District, and Bay City Public Schools. This study involves the determination of the status of oral communication teaching practices in our state. The results of this study will help provide direction for further research in oral communication instruction.

I am particularly desirous of obtaining your response because as a classroom teacher, you directly impact the skill development of our young people. The enclosed instrument has been reviewed and validated by experts in the field of oral communication. Revisions have been made in order to make it possible to obtain the necessary data while requiring a minimum amount of your time.

I have enclosed a small "token" incentive for you to complete this survey demonstrating my appreciation and thanks for your insight into public school curriculum practices. Have a coffee, a coke, or other refreshment on me to make this task more palatable to you. The time necessary to complete this survey should not exceed 10 minutes. Your options are:

1. To accept my offer of appreciation and to trash the survey,
2. To accept my offer of appreciation and to return the survey,
3. To return my offer of appreciation and to trash the survey, or
4. To return my offer of appreciation and to return the survey.

I would like you to select option "2".



Classroom Teachers  
September 1987  
Page 2

I would be most appreciative if you complete the survey prior to October 16, 1987, and return it to me in the enclosed envelope. Other phases of this research cannot be carried out until I complete an analysis of your data. I welcome any comments that you may have concerning any aspect of oral communication instruction not addressed in the survey instrument. Your responses will be held in the strictest confidence.

I will be pleased to send you a summary of the survey results if you so desire. Thank you for your time, professionalism, and cooperation.

Sincerely,

James N. Walker  
Tuscola Intermediate School District  
1385 Cleaver Road  
Caro, MI 48723

JNW:fam

Appendix E  
Follow-up Reliability Survey Letter

December 11, 1987

Dear Elementary Classroom Teacher:

**THANK YOU** for returning the pilot survey instrument concerning oral communication teaching practices in Michigan public elementary schools. You were one of twenty respondents from the Bay City Public Schools who completed the questionnaire. The information you provided was critical to the project; your efforts were truly appreciated.

In order for me to complete this project, I need to enlist your help one more time. Attached to this letter is a copy of the oral communication questionnaire which I request that you complete again and return to me no later than December 18, 1987, in the enclosed envelope. Please accept my small offer of thanks demonstrating my appreciation for help in making this research project a success.

Everyone with whom I have come into contact at the Bay City Public Schools has been incredibly supportive and helpful in this project. A special thanks goes out to Bay City Schools elementary classroom teachers, Mr. Ron Stachowiak, Dr. Douglas MacPherson and Mrs. Faye Major. I am very impressed with the Bay City Schools and the professionalism displayed by Bay City faculty and support staff.

Sincerely,

James N. Walker  
c/o Tuscola Intermediate  
1385 Cleaver Road  
Caro, MI 48703

P.S.

Upon completion of this research, I will gladly forward any information you may request. Simply document your request on the survey or write me c/o Tuscola Intermediate School District.

Appendix F  
Sample Letter to Principal

October 1987

Dear \_\_\_\_\_ :

Enclosed are the individual teacher surveys concerning oral communication teaching practices in Michigan I discussed with you via telephone in September. This research is part of a statewide study being carried out in cooperation with the Michigan State Department of Education, Western Michigan University, Tuscola Intermediate School District, and the Bay City Public Schools.

Your tasks, which are the most critical to the research, are (1) to distribute "one" survey per grade level in your building (K-5) to the teachers you believe whose classroom best "typifies" that particular grade level in curriculum practices, and (2) to collect the surveys and return them to me in the enclosed envelope by October 23, 1987. Other phases of the research cannot be carried out until I complete an analysis of your school district's data.

I have enclosed a small "token" incentive for your teachers to complete this survey demonstrating my appreciation and thanks for their insight into public school curriculum practices. I offer the same incentive to you in appreciation of your critical role in this project.

I welcome any comments that you may have concerning any aspect of oral communication instruction addressed or not addressed in the survey instrument. Your responses will be held in the strictest confidence. I will also be pleased to send you a summary of the survey results if you so desire.

Thank you for your assistance in making this project a success. I look forward to analyzing the data submitted by your school district. For your review, I have attached a copy of the teacher survey introduction letter and survey itself. Again, thank you!

Sincerely,

James N. Walker  
Tuscola Intermediate School District  
1385 Cleaver Road  
Caro, MI 48723

JNW:fam

Enclosures

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