

3-1990

## In the Classroom: Strategies for Poor Readers (Mar. '90)

Michael P. French

*Lourdes University, mfrench@lourdes.edu*

Kathy Everts Danielson

*University of Nebraska at Omaha, kdanielson@unomaha.edu*

Maureen Conn

*Morris Hill Elementary School, Junction City, KS*

Willa Gale

*Chisholm Trail Elementary School, Wichita, KS*

Charlene Lueck

*Franklin Elementary School, Junction City, KS*

*See next page for additional authors*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.unomaha.edu/tedfacpub>

 Part of the [Curriculum and Instruction Commons](#), [Elementary Education and Teaching Commons](#), and the [Junior High, Intermediate, Middle School Education and Teaching Commons](#)

### Recommended Citation

French, Michael P.; Danielson, Kathy Everts; Conn, Maureen; Gale, Willa; Lueck, Charlene; and Manley, Mona, "In the Classroom: Strategies for Poor Readers (Mar. '90)" (1990). *Teacher Education Faculty Publications*. 10.  
<https://digitalcommons.unomaha.edu/tedfacpub/10>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Department of Teacher Education at DigitalCommons@UNO. It has been accepted for inclusion in Teacher Education Faculty Publications by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@UNO. For more information, please contact [unodigitalcommons@unomaha.edu](mailto:unodigitalcommons@unomaha.edu).



---

**Authors**

Michael P. French, Kathy Everts Danielson, Maureen Conn, Willa Gale, Charlene Lueck, and Mona Manley

# IN THE CLASSROOM

## Strategies for poor readers

Michael P. French, Bowling Green State University

Kathy Everts Danielson, University of Nebraska at Omaha

Maureen Conn, Morris Hill Elementary School, Junction City, KS

Willa Gale, Chisholm Trail Elementary School, Wichita, KS

Charlene Lueck, Franklin Elementary School, Junction City, KS

Mona Manley, Washington Elementary School, Junction City, KS

All readers need successful learning experiences. Recent research suggests that poor readers benefit from using the same whole language reading and writing strategies as more successful readers. In her introduction to the April 1988 themed issue of *The Reading Teacher* on what works with poor readers, Irene West Gaskins stated:

The research I was doing supported the current view that reading is a process in which an active and strategic reader gains meaning through an interaction between background knowledge and information in a text. Since I have adopted this definition, the way I teach has changed and students in the classrooms in which I teach seem to be benefitting—especially the hard-to-teach students.

I no longer believe that I am successful as a teacher when most of my students are learning. Unless I have reached the hard-to-teach, I may not have taught at all. The challenge is for classroom teachers to accept responsibility for providing successful learning experiences for *all* children in their classrooms, including the poor readers (p. 749).

The following teaching ideas could be adapted to readers at various grade levels and abilities in the effort to provide successful experiences for *all* readers.

To read more about working with poor readers:

Ciani, A.J. (Ed.). (1981). *Motivating reluctant readers*. Newark, DE: International Reading Association.

Gaskins, I.W. (Ed.). (1988). Teaching poor readers: What works [special issue]. *The Reading Teacher*, 41 (8).

Gentile, L.M., & McMillan, M.M. (1987). *Stress and reading difficulties: Research, assessment, intervention*. Newark, DE: International Reading Association.

Quandt, I., & Selznick, R. (1984). *Self-concept and reading* (2nd ed.). Newark, DE: International Reading Association.

Sawyer, D.J. (Ed.). (1980). *Disabled readers: Insight, assessment, instruction*. Newark, DE: International Reading Association.

### Middle school remedial readers serve as cross-grade tutors

Susan Coleman

For the past 3 years, a successful component of my middle school Chapter 1 reading program has been a cross-grade tutoring exchange. My middle

school students are reading and writing tutors for kindergarten and second-grade students.

We make two visits each month to the elementary classrooms, spending 1 hour with the five kindergarten classes and 1 hour with the four second-grade classes. Four or five middle school students visit each classroom. The older students plan 15-minute teaching activities and rotate among the classrooms. They spend a week planning their activities, which must be related to the current unit of study in each class and must include a reading and writing activity.

As reading and writing tutors, the middle schoolers have the following responsibilities:

- read aloud;
- transcribe language experience stories;
- help the younger students through the writing process so they may publish their works;
- share their own writings;
- teach poetry patterns;
- reinforce letter decoding and sight word instruction; and
- teach information related to the current unit of study.

Some of the student-made teaching activities used so far have included: word puzzles, board games designed to reinforce vocabulary, card games



*Tutors teach information related to the current unit of study.* Photo by Robert Finken

for letter recognition and sight words, various arts and crafts, puppet shows, models and dioramas, dramatics, and various holiday activities (e.g., letters to Santa, valentine exchange).

This tutoring program has had many positive effects on my Chapter 1 students. The middle schoolers have gained greater self-confidence which has led to better performance in their content classes. Because of the research involved in planning their teaching activities, my students have improved their library skills. Positive attitudes have been fostered toward reading and writing as the students realized their own skills have improved. They have developed leadership skills by directing their groups, and they now appreciate some of the frustrations teachers experience when lessons do not go well or when students are not attentive.

This tutoring program has resulted in bonds among the elementary students, the middle school tutors, and the teachers involved. We all look forward to the monthly meetings. The younger students are finding positive role models in the older students, and their reading and writing skills are enhanced by the positive attitudes that are fostered.

*Coleman is a reading and language arts teacher at Goodrich Junior High School in Lincoln, Nebraska.*

## Using wordless picture books with disabled readers

Honré Frank Gitelman

For the past few years in my Chapter 1 program, I have used wordless picture books to complement the basal readers used in first-grade classrooms. Wordless picture books contain familiar experiences to which students can respond. The pictures prompt students to speak, read, and write because the pictures stimulate the students to tell the stories in their own words.

Procedures for using wordless picture books with groups of children are straightforward and may span a series of lessons such as the five presented here. To begin, select a book which has an inviting title and an appealing cover. For example, students enjoy Tommie dePaola's *Pancakes for Breakfast* because it is humorous, imaginatively illustrated, and full of surprises. If wordless books are not available, mask the text in an appropriate picture book by placing strips of paper over the text. Encourage students to predict the story as they read the pictures. Allow ample time to discuss the pictures before turning each page. Together, discuss puzzling concepts, match up pictures of characters with their names in the story, and continually help students predict future events based on facts they have learned in the story.

Following the initial discussion of the story, the students are ready to generate a written text. After the story title has been printed on paper, ask the students to print their names beside it. This act is meaningful to them because they see themselves as authors.

Starting with the first page, ask each student in turn to dictate a sentence for each picture while the teacher serves as the scribe. When a sentence sounds confusing, encourage the group to clarify it, so that it will be understandable to everyone. Finish writing the text in this manner.

Begin session two by orally reviewing the story. The teacher turns the pages as the story is retold. Next, each student receives a copy of the story. While one student reads a sentence aloud, the others follow along silently.

The teacher supplies forgotten words quickly in order to maintain an even pace. Students reread their story several times in order to develop oral reading fluency and to become totally familiar with the story.

Start session three by asking the students to retell the story while looking through the book together to make sure the important details have been stated. Next, the students reread their story as they did in session two. During this session, the students also demonstrate their understanding of the text by accurately and quickly underlining one word in each sentence selected by the teacher.

In the fourth session, each student selects a favorite sentence from the story. Then the student copies it on the lower part of a sheet of paper, signs his or her name, and draws a picture to illustrate it in the remaining space. When the work is completed, the students read the sentences and discuss their pictures.

In session five, have the children record their stories on a cassette recorder. When the recording is completed, schedule a suitable time for the students to discuss their work with their classmates. They will read their story aloud and play the recording which then becomes a part of the classroom library. In addition, place their pictures on a bulletin board for visitors to see.

Wordless picture books prepare students for a solid foundation in reading because they stimulate oral communication and foster literacy.

*Gitelman teaches Chapter 1 reading at Bethesda Elementary School in Durham, North Carolina.*

## Fold-a-books

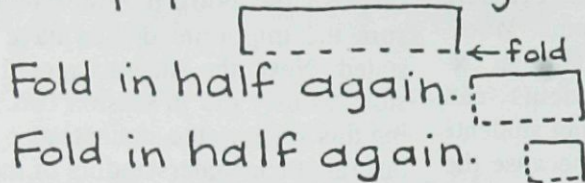
Gerry Bohning  
Lynn Cuccia

Do you have a sheet of paper handy? Any size will do. Now, get ready to introduce your elementary students to the fun of making and writing fold-a-books. Fold-a-books are simple ori-

## Fold-a-Book

Use any size paper. Large sheets of newsprint work well

1. Fold paper in half lengthwise.



Fold in half again.

Fold in half again.

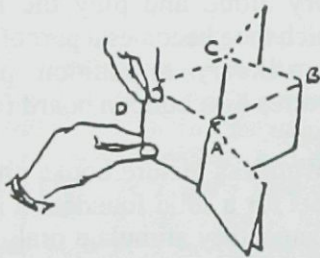
2. Open to step 1 lengthwise fold. Cut narrow strip A to C on fold of two middle sections.



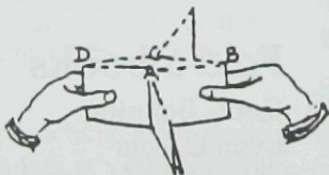
3. Open the slit.



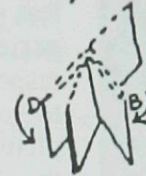
4. Refold side D with pinches to make a fold. Crease the outside.



5. Pull points D and B out while pushing A and C to the middle to make a plus sign.



6. Bring points D and B toward you.



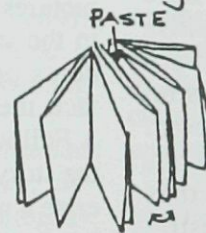
7. Bring remaining page toward you to make a book.



8. Crease the book edge.



9. To make a book with more pages, paste two books together.



*Acknowledgment:* This sharing of fold-a-books is a way of thanking the many teachers who have used them to help children enjoy reading and writing. We do not know the original origami reference; the folding format has been, and continues to be, passed on from teacher to teacher.

gami books that require no glue, tape, stitching, fasteners, or staples. They offer children a four-leaf book format that they can prepare at a moment's notice.

**BENEFITS**

Children react with enthusiasm and pleasure to authoring their own books. Fold-a-books offer the excitement of book production through a simple format. Since children are not required to produce lengthy stories with fold-a-books, they get an immediate sense of satisfaction from writing.

Fold-a-books can be used to foster independent writing and are suitable for very capable writers as well as those who have only minimal writing skills. Authoring a fold-a-book of word opposites may be as personally satisfying to one child as writing a novel may be to another.

**DIRECTIONS**

Four-page fold-a-books require a sheet of paper of any size; large newspaper is suitable for primary-grade children and notebook paper for older students. The accompanying diagram offers step-by-step directions for making blank fold-a-books. Children can fold several books and have them available for writing activities. The front cover should be saved for the book's title and the child's name. Also, it is important that children have opportunities to share their fold-a-books with classmates, friends, and family members.

Fold-a-books are ideal for use with most every subject and all elementary grade levels.

**PRIMARY-LEVEL USES**

*A B C books.* Objects beginning with a particular letter can be illustrated and organized as a book, or sev-

eral books can be pasted together so there is a page for each letter of the alphabet.

*Categories.* Concepts can be reinforced by drawing pictures and writing labels for categories such as community helpers, toys, colors, or shapes.

*Storywriting.* Language experience stories can be authored, illustrated, and shared with others. Students can write on special themes such as safety, the circus, grooming, and care of pets.

*Scrapbooks.* Pictures cut from magazines can be used to make counting books, consonant or vowel books, or books about holidays.

*Picture dictionaries.* New words, words for a content area, or words a child wishes to learn can be alphabetized, illustrated, and used in sentences.

*My family and friends.* Family members and good friends can each have a page with an accompanying portrait.

*Recipes.* Directions for preparing favorite foods can be a personal or a class project.

*Opposites.* A word and illustration can appear on one page with an opposite word written and pictured on the facing page (e.g., *sunny* and *cloudy*).

*Rhyme books.* Sets of words that rhyme can be listed, and rhyming sentences can be included.

**INTERMEDIATE-LEVEL USES**

*Vocabulary.* New words, definitions, and sentences can be entered. These words might include glossary

words, technical words, compound words, contractions, words with suffixes and prefixes, and idioms.

*Biographies.* Students can write about the life of an inventor, explorer, or other leader allocating separate pages for certain years.

*Poetry.* Poetry books bring special joy to their authors.

*Science.* Descriptions of simple machines, seasons, food groups, and observation field notes are good topics.

*Social studies.* Information about a state (flower, bird, tree, map, capital, motto), research summaries, and travel notes make exciting fold-a-books.

*Journey sequences.* Happenings on a journey can be illustrated; these might include actual historical journeys (Columbus, the Pilgrims, the Oregon Trail pioneers) or fictional journeys from favorite stories.

*Diaries and journals.* Entries can be made daily or weekly.

*Stories.* Stories can be written and read to younger children.

*Tongue twisters, nonsense rhymes, riddles.* Word play offers a good time when the fold-a-books are exchanged with friends.

*Book reports.* Favorite stories can be summarized as lures to encourage classmates to read a variety of books.

*Bohning teaches education courses at Barry University in Miami, Florida, and Cuccia is an elementary education major at the same university.*

In the Classroom is a peer reviewed column that publishes practical ideas for classroom use within the field of literacy education. Submit manuscripts to **In the Classroom, The Reading Teacher, School of Education, Purdue University, West Lafayette, IN 47907, USA.** Send a self-addressed, stamped envelope to this same address to receive a brochure describing manuscript preparation and submission procedures.

Copyright of Reading Teacher is the property of International Reading Association. The copyright in an individual article may be maintained by the author in certain cases. Content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.