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# educational considerations

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**Viewpoint**

# Helping the reading professional

Reading instruction has always been one of the primary goals of American education. Current trends such as "back to basics" and minimal competency testing have re-affirmed this emphasis. The teaching of reading is a growing, expanding, evolving field. Recently, there has been a strong surge of interest in teaching reading to secondary school and college students as well as adults. This endeavor requires different materials, techniques, skills and resources. Another area of expansion has been that of multi-disciplinary development as fields not related to reading instruction such as counseling, linguistics, language development and dialect are being utilized by reading specialists in an effort to apply relevant research to the improvement of reading instruction.

Other topics continuing to receive much attention from reading professionals deal with the affective domain, children's attitudes toward books and the ever-popular issue of critical reading. The field of reading instruction continues to be a challenge to professionals in the field. Such a challenge can be met by keeping up with current developments in reading instruction, new insights into established methods, materials, and techniques. It is the intent of this issue to assist the reading professional in meeting the challenge of today by offering the information provided herein by authors from around the country.

**Catherine Anne Phillips**  
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**Students have the right to be the focal point as reading programs are planned, organized and evaluated.**

# Student rights and the reading program

by Lyndon W. Searfoss

As curriculum specialists formulate reading programs for students in elementary and secondary schools they generally try to incorporate student needs as the central core around which programs are organized. Some kind of formal or informal assessment or surveying of student needs is often done. This data is then analyzed and used to plan reading programs. As curriculum specialists consider student **needs** they are also considering student **rights** which are inexorably, yet often unknowingly, tied to student needs. A **need** is defined as a condition in which something is found to be required or wanted, i.e. there is a lack of something necessary or desirable. A **right** is defined as something which may be claimed on just, moral, legal or customary grounds, i.e. there is an established claim to something.

The obvious difference in meaning between the terms **need** and **right** comes into clearer focus when curriculum specialists begin to discuss them in relation to educational planning. A **need** is discovered for students through assessment or surveying by others, usually those charged with planning educational programs. Needs are often portrayed as mysteriously hidden until discovered for the students by others. This type of thinking has led us to ignore a pre-existing condition to needs assessment: the inherent, granted rights that students have which do not require discovering or assessing. Rights exist whether we choose to consider them or not.

The whole issue of student rights and the reading program aroused the author's interest during the summer of 1978 when he taught a graduate seminar at Kansas State University on organizing reading programs. As the class discussed the bases upon which good reading programs are developed, a publication of the International Reading Association devoted to reading and the law triggered much debate over the issue of student rights (see **References**).

Criteria for developing programs were collected from

local, state, federal, and professional reading organizations. Nothing could be found which stated clearly and succinctly what rights students have as reading programs are planned for them. After much discussion, reading, and searching the class devised the following list of student rights.

**1. Students have the right to a comprehensive reading program which has been professionally planned and organized.**

This right mandates that any reading program within a school be planned school-wide, not piecemeal. If a district reading program is being developed, then it must be planned with all grade levels incorporated, kindergarten through grade twelve. Elementary, junior and senior high programs must exist as an integrated, coordinated program with each component existing as part of the whole.

**2. Students have the right to be taught by personnel trained in reading education.**

Colleges and universities need to carefully examine requirements for admission to teacher preparation programs and courses required to meet basic certification in reading education. Some suggested changes in current teacher preparation practices are:

- admission based on personal interviews as well as test scores.
- admission would be probationary until completion of an intensive observation/internship program under tutorial supervision in public schools by college or university and school personnel.
- establishment of specific criteria to identify applicants who do and do not appear suited for a career in teaching during the observation/internship program.
- counseling and career guidance would accompany the observation/internship program.
- students would be moved from probationary to regular admission status upon completion of the observation/internship program.

The observation/internship program would aid students in selecting which type of teaching career might be the most rewarding. It could also function to prevent certification requirements and tenure laws as our only quality control on teachers.

**3. Students have the right to an environment for learning to read which meets their physical, emotional, and intellectual needs by providing:**

- a) Acceptance
- b) Development of positive self-concept
- c) Success

Although this right sounds a bit trite, an examination of reading programs often reveals that mechanistic approaches and systems have become increasingly popular, with the role of the teacher reduced to that of a manager of classroom instruction. The teacher must view reading as a dynamic communication process and children as users or consumers of that process as a tool to manipulate their world. Such a view necessitates a classroom reading environment where more than learning to read is being stressed. It requires an environment where the teacher understands as much as possible (given the current state of the art) that reading is not a science but a tool and children are learners, eager to use that tool.



**4. Students have the right to participate as actively as they can in the planning, organization, and evaluation of their reading program.**

Curriculum builders and reading specialists who plan programs for students must begin to plan programs with students. A reading program developed during the summer by a faculty committee or during the school year by a consultant ignores the right students have to participate in the development of reading programs designed for them.

**5. Students have the right to a reading program which views reading as a:**

- a) Functional, social survival tool
- b) Communication tool for gathering information
- c) Recreational activity

Such a definition of reading lifts reading from a skills mastery process to its proper role as an active, dynamic communication tool. Teacher preparation programs which include courses and experiences in basic principles of language, cognition, psycholinguistics and sociolinguistics will provide preservice teachers with the knowledge necessary to teach reading as a communication tool. Most of our current teacher preparation programs fall short in these areas.

**6. Students have the right to knowledge of their reading ability, including strengths and weaknesses in reading skills and strategies.**

This right is one of the most violated of all the rights students possess. We simply do not make our students aware of why we are doing to them what we are doing to them in the name of learning to read. Lesson plans developed by the teacher, with information available only to the teacher and gleaned from testing and observation may be completely meaningless to students. If students knew their strengths and weaknesses, then perhaps they could be involved in setting goals and objectives with the teacher and thus see the purpose for reading instruction, a basic prerequisite to effective learning.

**7. Students have the right to know their responsibilities in meeting the goals of their reading program.**

Involvement in the planning, organization and evaluation of the reading program as mentioned earlier also requires students sharing in the responsibilities for its success. Rights assume responsibility. Students have the right to know what they must do, day-by-day, in order to learn to read. If students are active participants in the reading program, getting them to assume their responsibilities for its success would be more easily accomplished.

**8. Students have the right to appropriate diagnosis, both immediate and long term, of their reading strengths and weaknesses using reliable and valid instruments.**

The reading program should provide valid and reliable, formal and informal assessment instruments to measure student progress in reading. Teachers with a solid foundation in testing and measurement will use these instruments as guides and not eternal truth. Without this foundation teachers can become slaves to test manuals, written by the publishers and authors who wish to sell their product. The buyer beware . . . seems to be the message. So buyers (teachers) must be trained and prepared to protect the consumer (students).

**9. Students have the right for assistance from other specialists when it becomes apparent their reading problems may be caused, in part, by factors other than educational.**

Referral mechanisms through which students can receive help from psychologists, speech therapists, social workers, and counselors should be part of every reading program. It is often the special reading teacher who first detects the need for assistance from other professionals.

**10. Students have the right to sensitive and flexible placement in appropriate short term or longer term remedial programs when necessary.**

Corrective and remedial instruction should be a part of every comprehensive reading program. This compensatory component, however, must be coordinated with classroom instruction and not viewed as a replacement for regular classroom instruction. The tendency for classroom and compensatory instruction to become separate and uncoordinated can be avoided if compensatory instruction is carefully monitored to be certain it is supportive of the core reading program of the classroom.

### Summary

Reading programs should be designed to provide a broad range of learning experiences that are motivating, relevant, enjoyable, student-centered, and which consider student rights. Students have the right to be the focal point as reading programs are planned, organized and evaluated. This and other student rights are not granted, but are rights to which students are entitled. We, as educators, must become both legally and morally more sensitive to the rights of our students.

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The author expresses his gratitude to the members of a class in organizing reading programs taught at Kansas State University during the summer of 1978. They were a remarkable group of sensitive and competent teachers whose concern for quality education helped bring this paper from a vague class discussion to its present form: Shari Heerman, Shirley Hopkins, Jim Karasiewicz, Dottie Noyce, Dan Plummer, Elizabeth Potlock, Jean Radtke, Ardelia Schmidt and Mary Shoop.



**It is apparent that the long-standing use of certain phonic rules should be abandoned**

## Phonics: a time for re-evaluation

by Randall J. Ryder

From the mid-1800s to the present, American educators have debated the merits of phonics instruction. According to Nila Banton Smith (1965) the controversy over phonics instruction began in the 1850s with the publication of the *Bumstead Readers*, which emphasized the whole word approach. While several publishers switched to the whole word approach at about that time, the majority of reading materials continued to employ the phonics method. Consequently most teachers continued to use the phonics approach.

From 1890-1920, elaborate phonics systems emphasized the sounds of isolated letters and clusters. Following this period silent reading for the sake of gaining meaning was considered more important than the decoding of words and consequently phonics instruction was largely dropped from 1920-1935.

Then, from 1935-1955 phonics was reimplemented into the curriculum. However, seldom in the course of American reading instruction has the debate reached the epidemic proportions that followed the publication in 1955 of Rudolph Flesch's *Why Johnny Can't Read*. In his book, Flesch challenged any attempt to teach reading by a sight method, advocating instead that the phonics approach was the only method to use in beginning reading instruction. Flesch's conclusions were based on rather loose interpretations of existing research and a good deal of subjective judgment which was more rhetorical than analytical in nature. At the same time, it should be noted that the conclusions of an extensive investigation designed to critically review existing research comparing different approaches to beginning reading instruction by Chall (1967) and the results of experimental studies by Bond and Dykstra (1967) provide support for phonics instruction up to the end of third grade.

More recently, the conclusions of Chall and of Bond and Dykstra have been questioned (c.f., Lohnes and Gray, 1972) and Smith (1971) and Goodman (1968) have gone so far as to argue for the unimportance of phonics skills. However, at the present time there is relatively little debate about whether or not phonics should be taught. As Venezky (1972) and Samuels (1974) have noted that since almost all contemporary reading systems make use of phonics instruction, the present day concerns over phonics are aimed not at its use, but rather at its scope, sequence, and emphasis within the reading curriculum.

Is such a pervasive acceptance of phonics justified, or are we, as Smith (1971) has noted, operating under the pretense of false gods? Certainly if one accepts the notion that writing is a form of speech and that the translation of written language requires the reader to acknowledge the letter-to-sound regularities of English, then it is apparent that the acquisition of these letter-sound correspondences is a necessary stage in the process of learning to read.

The purpose of this paper is to review the usefulness of commonly taught phonic "rules" and to examine studies which have attempted to ascertain the regularity of English orthography by examining letter-sound correspondences occurring in large corpuses of words and students internalization of these correspondences.

The teaching of letter-sound correspondences has proceeded on the assumption that certain rather general rules accurately and consistently describe the pronunciation of fairly large numbers of English words. Those generalizations thought to be useful have changed little over the years. An examination of the *Beacon Phonics Chart* (1924), for example, displays generalizations almost identical to those appearing in today's basal reading series. Several studies have examined these long accepted generalizations in an attempt to identify those which may be most useful for children to learn.

In one of the earliest of these investigations Clymer (1963) assessed the usefulness of letter-sound generalizations directly taught or exemplified in several basal reading series. Forty-five generalizations were tested against a composite list of words consisting of those introduced in the basal series and words appearing in Gates (1935) elementary grade word list. A percentage reflecting the rule's utility was computed by dividing the number of words which were pronounced according to the generalization by the number of words to which the generalization could be applied. Of the 45 generalizations examined, only 18 were found to have a utility of at least 75 percent. Clymer concluded that many commonly taught generalizations are of limited value and argued that attention to exceptions should be noted when generalizations are taught. The results of Clymer's study spurred a rash of inquiries into the utility of letter-sound rules. Bailey (1963) for example, investigated the usefulness of the 45 generalizations identified by Clymer on words appearing in the first through sixth grade materials of eight basal series. Of these 45 generalizations selected for study only six were found to be simple to understand, apply to a large number of words, and to have few exceptions. Similar types of studies examined the utility of letter-sound generalizations when applied to word frequency counts (Fry, 1964; Burmeister, 1972; Emans, 1967) or attempted to modify these generalizations to increase their utility (Emans, 1967; Burmeister, 1968). Generally, it is apparent from the results of



these studies that letter-sound generalizations gain utility as they become increasingly narrow, that is, as they are modified to reflect specific letter-sound correspondences. It can be seen, for example, that by replacing the general phonic rule that "when two vowels are side by side, the long sound of the first one is heard and the second is usually silent" with specific letter-sound correspondences (ai /e/, oa /o/, io /u/) the rule's utility is increased. While the use of letter-sound generalizations would appear to be of questionable value in light of the results of the heretofore mentioned studies, more detailed descriptions of the relationship between letters and sounds suggest a far greater regularity of English orthography than has previously been accepted.

Two studies stand out as the most extensive and detailed investigations of letter-sound correspondence to date. As part of a series of investigations supporting the development of a phonic based reading program, Cronnell (1971) described correspondences found to be useful with the vocabulary of children in kindergarten through third grade. A word corpus consisting of all one and two syllable words appearing contained in the Rinsland (1945) list were selected then analyzed by computer to tally the phonemes represented by (1) single letters, (2) consonants and vowel digraphs, (3) strings of letters which commonly function together as units (ck, tch), and consonant geminate clusters (ff, gg). The actual pronunciation of words to which each of the correspondences applied was then compared to the pronunciation predicted by the correspondence. Criteria which served to determine the usefulness of a correspondence were that (1) each correspondence had to have a minimum of ten exemplars in the corpus, and (2) each correspondence could have no more than a specified maximum number of exceptions in the corpus. A total of 168 correspondences met the established criteria. Of these 75 described the pronunciation of vowels, 33 described the pronunciation of vowel digraphs and 60 described the pronunciation of consonants and consonant clusters. In what is considered to be the most extensive study of the occurrence of letter-sound correspondences to date, Venezky (1970) described consonant and vowel correspondences found to occur regularly in a large corpus of words. Correspondences were obtained using a computer program (see Venezky, 1962) that derived and tabulated correspondences appearing in the 20,000 most frequent English words. Information from this printout was used to examine spelling-to-sound patterns and morphemic elements which contribute to the regularity of English orthography. Of the 138 correspondences specified, 19 described the pronunciation of vowels, 51 described the pronunciation of vowel clusters, and 68 correspondences described the pronunciation of consonants and consonant clusters. As a result of this lengthy investigation, Venezky suggested that spelling-to-sound correspondences be classified into the following three categories:

1. **Invariant-predictable** (b → /b/, z → /z/)
2. **Variant-unpredictable** → (ea → /i/, /e/, or /a/)
3. **Variant-predictable** (c → /s/ before e, i, y; otherwise c → /k/)

Several studies have attempted to examine the degree to which students have internalized letters and letter clusters of these three categories. In the earliest of these investigations, Calfee, Venezky and Chapman (1969) investigated the internalization of variant-predictable,

variant-unpredictable correspondences. Results showed that among variant predictable vowels the percentage of correct responses were significantly higher at each grade level from third grade through high school. Correlations between subjects correct pronunciations of these items and reading achievement were significant in the third and sixth grade but those in later grades were not. Analysis of variant-unpredictable vowel patterns compared subjects' responses to the frequency of pronunciation obtained from a count of the most frequent pronunciation of that letter or cluster in a large corpus of words (type count) to the frequency of pronunciations of that letter or cluster in highly frequent words (token count). Results suggested that students were more likely to respond with pronunciations which more closely matched the principal pronunciation of a type than token count. For example, the principal pronunciation for ai in a type count was /e/ with a frequency of 86 percent. The principal pronunciation of ai in a token count was /e/ with 38 percent frequency. In a similar study, Johnson (1970) found that elementary students are more likely to pronounce words according to the principal pronunciations indicated by type than those indicated by token counts. Furthermore, Johnson noted that subjects were much more consistent in their preference for highly frequent principal pronunciations such as ay → /e/, than for infrequent principal pronunciations such as ie /i/.

In the most recent investigation of students' internalization of letter-sound correspondences, Ryder (1978) examined secondary students' internalization of variant-unpredictable, variant-predictable and invariant-predictable letters and clusters. The findings of this study indicated that secondary students increasingly internalize letter-sound correspondences as they progress through school, and that among variant-predictable, variant-unpredictable and invariant-predictable patterns, certain correspondence types are consistently more fully internalized than others suggesting a definite sequence in the order and extent of letter-sound correspondence internalization. Among variant-predictable patterns, for example, consonants were more fully internalized than consonant clusters and vowels. Furthermore the rank-order of these correspondence patterns remained the same for each grade while the extent to which these patterns were internalized increased at each successively higher grade. And, by the eleventh grade there is no significant difference between good and poor readers' internalization of most correspondences.

Inherent in a review of studies which have examined the usefulness of phonic rules, the occurrence of letter-sound correspondences in English, and investigations of students' internalization of various letter-sound correspondences are several educational implications, and a re-occurring observation. First, the re-occurring observation is that the long accepted phonic rules which purport to accurately and consistently predict sounds of letters and clusters are useful only when they are modified to reflect specific letter-sound correspondences. It can be noted, for example, that of the 12 phonic rules dealing with vowels and consonants which Clymer (1963) reported as being useful, seven were stated in terms of specific letter-sound correspondences rather than phonic rules. While it is apparent that phonic rules are of little use in allowing the student to create a phonemic representation of graphemes, it is also apparent that students are not aware of the rules themselves.



Studies of elementary students' ability to vocalize rules which account for the pronunciation of specified letters or clusters (c.f. Towner, 1972; Hilsop and King, 1973) for example, have found that neither good nor poor readers make use of phonic rules, rather they report that in decoding unfamiliar words they compare the unknown words to known words containing the same grapheme. These findings as well as those of Calfee, Venezky, Chapman (1969), Johnson (1970), Johnson and Venezky (1975) and Ryder (1978) strongly suggest students at younger ages acquire knowledge of orthographic structures which are seldom taught, and students continue to acquire knowledge of letter-sound correspondences long after phonic instruction.

While the results of these studies are correlational in nature, and little evidence is available to suggest what effects direct instruction of letter-sound correspondences would have on students' reading ability, several educational implications are suggested. First, it is apparent that the long-standing use of certain phonic rules should be abandoned. Given our knowledge of the utility of these rules, and students' inability to recall the rules when applying them to unfamiliar words there is seemingly little justification for their continued use. Secondly, it is apparent that English orthography displays a much greater degree of predictable letter-sound patterning than was previously assumed. Consequently, phonics programs should be restructured to reflect the utility of these correspondences. Specifically, it would seem that correspondences which are invariant-predictable or variant-predictable should be taught directly. And those which are variant-unpredictable should not be taught directly, but rather exemplified in words which have a similar pronunciation of a given letter and cluster. Finally, it is apparent that students of various reading abilities become increasingly proficient in their internalization of correspondences at successively higher grades, suggesting that phonics instruction for older aged secondary students may be totally inappropriate.

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**The field of counseling psychology can provide assistance in searching for a way to develop students' reading/thinking strategies.**

# Using counseling techniques as classroom questioning strategies

by Donna Robbins

Traditional questioning techniques employed by classroom teachers seldom enhance our understanding of and ability to develop the reading/thinking strategies of our students. The most sophisticated taxonomies have done little to discourage our asking questions that elicit literal level thinking. Questions such as: "What color was Arnold's hat?" or "Who was the main character?" cannot possibly provide insight into students' thinking and reading. Instead, they tend to mask the very information needed to assist our students' comprehension of written material.

In searching for more appropriate or, at least additional, means of developing students' reading/thinking strategies, the field of counseling psychology can provide assistance. At a conference at Harvard University in 1952, Carl Rogers gave a presentation entitled "Classroom Approaches to Influencing Human Behavior." Rogers spoke for only a few moments, simply presenting a number of very personal thoughts concerning his own experiences as a teacher and a learner. The result was incendiary: some teachers in the group expressing outrage, and others voicing a sense of relief. Perhaps it was not so much the content of Rogers' presentation that gave rise to such turmoil, but rather that he had dared to give voice to those subconscious fears experienced by most teachers at some point in their careers. Rogers told the group that, in his experience, teaching probably did not result in learning. Instead, that learning occurs as a process of self-discovery by the learner.

Anyone who can accept this notion is immediately faced with the problem of just how to manage the classroom so as to provide maximum opportunities for such self-discovery. Toward this end, the counseling technique of "reflective listening" may be of enormous value to the classroom teacher. It should be mentioned that reflective listening is not suggested as a replacement for traditional questioning. As long as our education system demands the ability to respond to traditional questions, it seems essential that appropriate training occur. Instead, reflective listening may be added to the questioning repertoire of teachers without conflicting with the traditional methods.

Reflective listening was developed by Rogers as a therapeutic model. However, Rogers' notion of therapy was "... a relationship in which at least one of the parties has the intent of promoting the growth, development, maturity, improved functioning, improved coping in life of the other." (Rogers, 1961). The similarity between Rogers' goals of therapy and the goals of education are not merely coincidental; Rogers believed that therapy takes place constantly in the classroom (1957).

Whether reflection is used in therapy or in the classroom, the basic purposes and techniques are similar. It is assumed that learning occurs as an individual interprets and integrates life experiences. The individual may be assisted in this effort by a helping person (teacher or therapist) but ultimately, it is the individual and not the helper who is responsible for the learning. It is the extent to which the teacher or therapist can facilitate this learning process that growth can occur. In a sense, reflection is the mirror by which an individual is made aware of his/her processes.

In a classroom it is possible to allow students to observe not only their own processes, but the processes of others as well; to become aware of self-defeating processes and develop more self-satisfying ones. In this case, the teacher's role as a helping person—one who holds the mirror—is most important. What follows is an example of reflective listening as it might occur in a counseling session with a student. It is significant to note the efficiency with which the student is able to identify his major source of discomfort.

H = helping person

S = student

H: I'd like to hear why you have come to talk with me.

S: I'm not sure really. I just feel very mixed up these days.

H: You're feeling a lot of confusion.

S: Yes, I feel like I don't know what I really want out of school anymore. My ideas keep changing.

H: You think that what you once wanted is not what you now want.

S: Yes, last year all I cared about was being on the football team. That was my whole life. Now, I don't know if it's enough for me any more.

In each case, the helping person did not question, but instead, reflected the thoughts and feelings of the student. Now consider a second means of responding to the same client.

H: I'd like to hear why you have come to talk with me.

S: I'm not sure really. I just feel very mixed up these days.

H: What are you confused about?

S: I don't know exactly. One day I like school and the next day I hate it.



- H: When you hate it, what things do you hate?  
 S: Oh everything! The homework, the practice for the team. Stuff like that.  
 H: Have you considered eliminating those things that you dislike?

It becomes apparent that, in the second dialogue, the student is not being given the opportunity to become aware of his needs. Instead, he is being diverted by the well-intended but not very helpful questions. Carrying the above examples into the classroom, it is possible that our well-intended questions are diverting our students from making the highly personal interpretations and connections between their reading and their lives. Again, as teachers, we may hold the mirror and help them to see their needs and processes, but we cannot interpret their experiences for them.

The following teacher statements are consistent with principles of reflective listening and, therefore, suggested as alternatives to traditional questioning techniques in the classroom.

#### Teacher statements

- Structure Setting (STR):** A statement (given prior to reading) designed to: a) direct students' reading/thinking and b) initiate discussion.  
 -Read to find out how you might use this machine in your daily life.
- Reflection (REF):** A statement designed to: a) check teacher's understanding of students' statements and/or b) provide students with opportunities to evaluate their own reading/thinking.  
 -Are you saying that . . .  
 -You seem to feel that . . .  
 -It sounds like you agree with John . . .  
 -I wonder why you are saying . . .
- Acknowledge (ACK):** A statement of acceptance designed simply to recognize the students' contribution.  
 -okay  
 -I see  
 This response is appropriate when reflection appears unnecessary.
- Focus Change (FC):** This response, while not normally a part of reflective listening, is necessary for classroom use. Often, the teacher is cast as the "right answer machine" when, in fact, the students should be responsible for their own learning. Changing the focus involves encouraging additional participation by directing the discussion away from the teacher and back on to the students.
- Other (O):** A response not otherwise categorized. A response which, while appropriate for other types

of questioning techniques, are inconsistent and therefore, inappropriate for reflective listening.

The following is an example of reflective listening used in the classroom. The teacher's statements have been coded and illustrate all types of responses mentioned—previously.

T = teacher

S = students

Read the story and decide whether you think Cara acted wisely in leaving her home and starting a new career. (STR)

After Reading-

T: Well, what do you think—did she do the right thing? (STR)

S<sub>1</sub>: I think she did the right thing.

T: Why do you think she did the right thing? (O)

S<sub>1</sub>: Because it worked out for the best.

S<sub>2</sub>: I disagree, I think she hurt a lot of people. She hurt everyone in her life.

S<sub>1</sub>: Well, she probably would have hurt more people if she had stayed.

S<sub>3</sub>: Why?

S<sub>1</sub>: Well, when you yourself hurt, you make others around you hurt also.

T: Are you saying that Cara would have made others miserable just because she was unhappy? (REF)

S<sub>2</sub>: No—not purposely anyway, but her unhappiness would have affected those around her.

T: Oh, I see. (ACK)

S<sub>3</sub>: I agree that if she stayed, she would have been terrible to live with. But she should have thought of that when she married. (to teacher) Don't you agree?

T: Well how do the rest of you feel? (FC)

Fluency in using reflective listening is not automatic. A teacher who has been involved in traditional questioning strategies must practice reflection in order that it be used effectively. Toward this end, it is suggested that the teacher tape record class sessions in which reflective listening is being used. Later, the teacher's statements may be coded in order to evaluate the appropriateness of the responses. As the teacher gains experience and becomes more comfortable and skillful with the technique, it is expected that the number of responses coded "O" (other) will decrease.

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**What is it children should be able to do with language?**

# Developing children's language through content area activities

by Sarah Hudelson

In recent years, the term language development has been used in a variety of ways. One way to conceive of language development is in terms of the ways in which people use language, the functions that language serves humans. What does an adult language user do with language, and, therefore, what is it that children should be able to do with language? This question will be approached from the points of view of three people. Some of their ideas will be summarized and suggestions will be offered about ways classroom activities in content areas provide children opportunities to use language in specific kinds of ways.

M.A.K. Halliday delineates several ways in which language functions for people (1973). One function is the instrumental one. Language is used to ask for something. A second function Halliday defines is a regulatory function. It is a do as I tell you function. A third function that Halliday deals with is the social or interactional function. People use language to maintain their contacts with other people. Halliday also mentions the personal function of language. The focus is here I am and I am distinct from anyone else in the world. Sometimes this expression of self is most concerned with clarifying oneself to oneself. The personal function, then, emphasizes communication with oneself as well as with others.

Halliday also defines a heuristic function. People use language to ask questions, to explore and to question the environment. A sixth function is an imaginative or let's pretend function. Humans think about and imagine worlds other than the one they are in. The last function considered by Halliday is the representational function, using language to let other people know what you know. Language is used to inform other people about who we are and what we think. Halliday sees people as utilizing language in these basic ways.

A second author who considers language aims is James Kinneavy (1971), who defined four basic functions or aims of language. First, people use language in a referential way, which is similar to Halliday's idea of using

language to represent something. Language is used to give and to receive information. Language may be used to narrate events, to share ideas, to talk about activities and so on. Second, Kinneavy offers the persuasive aim. Kinneavy suggests that people use language not only to express their opinions but also to coerce others to certain actions or to certain opinions. The third aim that Kinneavy considers is that of self expression. People use language in self reflection, which involves thinking to oneself, talking to oneself, working through one's self, thoughts and values. These reflections may be shared or may be kept private. The fourth aim that Kinneavy offers is the literary aim. His focus is on the creative aspect of language and the enjoyment of language for its own sake. This may involve, for example, viewing a sunset and expressing joy in it in a literary, composed way. One may use poetry, story form, songs, limericks and so on. Oral as well as written language may be literary in form.

In a volume that emphasizes realistic language use in classroom settings, Britton (1970) suggests that language users take both participant and spectator roles as they use language. As participants, language users are concerned with the clarity with which they send a message to other people. The participant role involves more of the representational, heuristic and interactional functions and the referential and persuasive aims. The focus is clarity of communication. How am I communicating to you? Do you know what my opinions are? Have I given you enough information? The participant uses language to ask questions, to inform and to regulate others' behaviors and thoughts. Conversely in the spectator role the user turns inward. Language is used to examine feelings, ideas, values, joys and pleasures. Language expresses the self first in a way that is pleasurable to the individual and then in ways that may be shared with other people. This stepping back and working things out seems to fit more into the ideas of seeing language use as encompassing the self-expressive, imaginative and literary aims.

Halliday and Kinneavy, then, propose that people use language in various ways. Britton separates these purposes into particular roles that a person assumes in various contexts. These ideas may be combined to describe what people do with language, whether in oral or written form.

The first function is the **informational** function. People use language to ask questions, to find out information. Often this occurs (as Halliday's interactional function points) in social situations.

The second major function may be called a **persuasive** function (a combination of regulatory, instrumental, personal and representational aims of language). The focus is the expression of opinions in attempts to get others to express their ideas, to reach consensus, to formulate a plan of action and so on.

The third major function of language is that of **personal expression**, stepping back from situations and thinking them through (or talking or writing them through). Talking to oneself is a perfect example of the personal expression function of language. Language is used to express ourselves, both to ourselves and to others. In sharing opinions, values and emotions, we move from a strictly information giving function into a function of personal expression.

The final function language serves is that of **literary-creative** function. People use language in a composing fashion, to create or to recreate something that has had



meaning for them. The literary function involves observing and then organizing a composition of some sort. To play with language, to consider special effects that one may create with language, to take one's ideas and to recreate them with a specific audience in mind, all are involved in the literary-creative function of language.

Adults certainly use language in these ways. For example, when the President speaks to the nation, he uses language in informative and persuasive ways. He asks questions, he provides information, he tries to persuade people to adopt his point of view. He shares personal values. And images such as "Ask not what your country can do for you, but what you can do for your country" are typical of literary language. Effective adult language users use language in a variety of ways. It is appropriate, then, for teachers to consider ways in which they may facilitate opportunities for children to practice these uses of language. This means organizing classrooms so that the activities in which children participate provide them opportunities to use language for different reasons. This may be done through content areas. Many activities suggested in the teachers' guides of existing content area materials, would, if used, provide these opportunities. Let's consider a few examples, pulled from commercial texts currently in use in public school.

Science lessons may provide language experiences. Consider a primary science unit on seed germination. In small groups, children decide on several places to plant seeds. The children share what they know about good conditions for seed growth (using language in an informative way). The groups then resolve where they will plant the seeds (informing and persuading). Group hypotheses about germination results may be recorded (informing), as well as oral and written records kept of how well seeds germinate under certain conditions (informing). As they compare results to determine which conditions were most favorable for germination and growth, children use language in informing and persuading ways. (Note that often it is difficult, even impossible, to arbitrarily separate one function from another.) To extend language use to the literary and self-expressive functions, the teacher may share the book *The Carrot Seed* (Krauss, 1945). This might lead to a discussion of how individual children would feel if they were the little boy in the story (self-expression), or to the creation of stories (literary). Children might imagine themselves as seeds and describe, orally or in writing, how they would feel as they broke ground, what the sun would be like, etc. (self-expressive and literary).

Intermediate math/science material on measurement also provides languaging opportunities. To arrive at the need for standard measurement, small groups of children receive pencils or slips of paper lengths. Each child is measured using the particular unit, and then the groups compare their measurements (informing). They begin to see that, without a standard unit, they can't compare their measurements. They may then respond to the question of the need for standard measurements (informing and persuading). A discussion of the merits of metric versus non-metric measurement might be organized. Pupils try to convince their peers that one system should be adopted by everyone (informing and persuading). To extend this theme into the literary-expressive aims, play the song "Inch Worm, Inch Worm." Share Leo Lionni's book *Inch by Inch* (1960). Having heard the song and/or read the book, have pupils imagine themselves as the tiny crea-

tures. How would they view the world? (self-expressive-literary)

Consider some fourth grade social studies material. The chapter concentrates on markets, buyers, sellers and the chain of production-consumption. To illustrate the interdependence of producers and consumers, each pupil receives a three by five card on which a particular role has been written. The pupils share their roles and organize themselves into pairs or groups by matching themselves with others whose roles connect to theirs. There may be several "correct" combinations. Groups may organize and role play situations involving production, selling and consumer demand (informing/persuading/literizing). To focus on demand and supply, groups may invent new products and construct their own advertising slogans and commercials (persuasive and literary functions).

An art activity involving creating secondary colors from primary colors may also include the use of language in several ways. Pupils begin by hypothesizing about what colors will be created by combining the basic ones. As the new colors are created, pupils record what actually happened (informing). Then the children may use the colors in an art project, choosing the colors they want to use and sharing with others in an informal way what their favorites are and why (self-expression). The teacher might then use an idea from Kenneth Koch's *Wishes, Lies and Dreams* (1970) and have students create poems from the lines Red is . . . . ., Yellow is . . . . ., Green is . . . . . and so on (literizing).

These are a few examples of ways in which language development may be facilitated through content area activities. In all of them, the focus is on process (the languaging) not product. The objective is doing the activity, not coming up with the right answer. All involve children in activities. Children do and talk and talk and do. They are active participants in a process, not passive receptacles for a variety of facts. The situations are contextual. The teacher is the facilitator for children's efforts, not the Big T, the possessor of an unending stream of knowledge.

Recently a colleague shared a comment from one of his children's teachers. The teacher said that schools were spending so much time teaching the basics of reading and math that there was no time for the fun things like science, social studies and art. I would respond that these fun areas are not frills but are basic. Through them we may facilitate our children becoming effective users of language. And I know of nothing more basic than that.

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## The reading specialist is the appropriate person for administering and interpreting cloze tests and results

# Some suggestions for the teacher's use of cloze

by Kathryn A. Treadway

and

Charles E. Heerman

The cloze procedure is a widely-known instrument developed by Wilson Taylor (1953). It has been subsequently touted as a teaching and a testing procedure which can contribute to a child's learning to read; it does not, however, seem to be widely used in the classroom. (Beil, 1977; Russell, 1978). Because of this reluctance we hope to describe some of the major difficulties in using the cloze which we have located in the literature and in our own research. We think some useful suggestions for educating teachers and reading specialists in the appropriate uses of cloze will result from analyzing these problems.

### Using the Cloze:

Typically, the procedure used for constructing a cloze exercise includes deleting every *n*th word from a passage and substituting lines of the same length for every word deleted. The teacher then instructs the student to read the passage silently and supply the missing words. When this task has been completed, the teacher scores for percent of exact responses by the student. From these scores the teacher can evaluate the students and the passages as follows:

1. The student read the particular passage at one of three levels. (i.e., 60 percent correct identifies an independent reading of the passage, 40-60 percent correct identifies an instructional reading of the passage, and less than 40 percent identifies a frustration level reading of the passage.)

2. Having administered several passages to students, a series of passages can be placed in an order of increasing difficulty. (i.e., higher mean scores for a passage indicate an easier passage while lower mean scores indicate a passage which is more difficult to read.)

Though cloze evaluations are easy to learn and quickly rendered, they are limited to evaluating a student's reading ability; they do not provide interpretations which can help improve that ability. At times the evaluations can even mislead. In terms of teaching, cloze can be too cumbersome to use with large groups of students.

We found these observations to be true in the case of a group of middle-grade teachers who had been making extensive use of cloze exercises in working with their below-average readers on an individual basis. At the end of a 14-week period the 11 teachers were asked to provide feedback on the use of the cloze as an instructional device. The teachers reported that the students consistently scored at the instructional level in the cloze passages even though they were reading below the grade level mean. Further, the teachers were reluctant to instruct all students with the cloze. They suggested that instead, the cloze should be used with only a few children. Also, they suggested that lexical cloze would have facilitated more specific learning than the generalized context requirements of the any-word cloze. A follow-up was done with better readers. The teachers reported that this group found the cloze to be challenging and that it seemed to sharpen their critical reading skills. At the same time the teachers noted that interest in the cloze waned and they, therefore, merged it with other activities. In essence, teaching with the cloze became a task unto itself and was not directed to the specific needs of the children.

To be sure, recipes for constructing and using different cloze procedures for teaching abound (Blachowicz, 1968; Gove, 1975; Heerman, 1977; Lopardo, 1975; Rankin, 1977; and Schneyer, 1965) and many are very specific, however, Jongsma's (1971) skepticism of the cloze as an effective teaching device remains with us. In short, the uses of the cloze seem insufficiently refined and understood.

### Clarification of cloze uses:

In order to clarify the usefulness of cloze it is important that its various uses which have been developed so far be explained. Rankin (1977) outlines cloze sequencing strategies by which a teacher can proceed from the very simple to the very complex in planning, constructing and using cloze exercises. Rankin's sequencing strategies represent a significant contribution; however, it should be noted that he includes what are commonly called, "context", exercises, under the rubric of cloze. Such indiscriminate uses of the term "cloze" have likely contributed to its being misunderstood by the classroom teacher.

Other aspects of cloze use which should be clarified are as follows:

1. Cloze is a procedure which can be used for ascertaining the difficulty level of various materials.
2. Cloze is a procedure for matching student reading level to material difficulty.



3. Cloze can be used to test student comprehension of a passage. In this instance, it represents a substitute for teacher questions.
4. Cloze can be used, along with other instruments, for reading diagnosis.
5. Cloze is a recommended teaching device, whose efficacy has not been clearly demonstrated.

Regarding these uses, it needs to be further understood that cloze, in itself, is not a total strategy for teaching or testing reading. It should be studiously integrated with other tools.

Aulls (1978) has made a contribution toward this integration. He identifies a specific disability, a good decoder (3.0-5.5), who is weak in comprehension. He then maps out a detailed, long-range strategy for instructing this type of reader which includes the following components:

1. Self-selected, independent reading.
2. Fluency training.
3. Imagery training.
4. Cloze training.

Cloze training represents only one part of the total strategy and has been assigned a definite place in the strategy. Secondly, the type of reader has been identified quite specifically.

In summary, one should be aware of the specific uses of the cloze and the specific needs of the children. The teacher must be very clear about why he/she is using the cloze, and what he/she will accomplish by using it. Finally, he/she must be able to integrate and sequence the cloze into a total instructional strategy.

#### Differing cloze criteria and scoring systems:

Another confounding aspect of the cloze is differing cloze criteria and scoring systems. Heerman and Treadway (1978) discovered much disparity in the literature among the different criteria for establishing frustration, instructional, and independent reading levels. Beyond differing criteria for establishing reading performance levels, variations in scoring which allow further analysis of cloze responses have been suggested (Heerman, 1977; Heerman and Treadway, 1978). Included within the scoring variations are systems for identifying the students' abilities in using semantics and syntax. In brief, it would seem that the classroom teacher would have to develop a keenly-honed, diagnostic mind-set, particularly in dealing with differing criteria and scoring systems, and relating these to the different uses of the cloze.

#### Suggestions:

The foregoing suggests that cloze is indeed a complex procedure. At the same time, classroom teachers seem to think of it as a simple but inconclusive procedure. It is small wonder that teachers who attempt the cloze procedure with their students find that it can be a frustrating and consequently short-lived experience.

Because of this complexity we suggest the following: 1) It should not be assumed that the regular classroom teacher can use the cloze for specific purposes beyond the two mentioned earlier. 2) The reading specialist, having a more in-depth knowledge of the reading process, and perhaps a more diagnostic approach to teaching reading, is the appropriate person for administering and interpreting cloze tests and results. These abilities should enable the specialist to provide instructional strategies to the classroom teacher. 3) Reading specialists should be trained to emphasize cloze as a substantiating diagnostic test and to convert the interpretation of the cloze results into meaningful classroom teaching strategies. 4) In-service programs which include the cloze should communicate the necessity of integrating this technique into a well-developed reading program. The procedure should not be proclaimed as a cure-all, nor as a separate task to be mastered by all learners.

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**When you schedule uninterrupted reading time for students, be sure the teacher also reads.**

# Effecting the affect in the reading curriculum

by Yvonne Steinruck

and

Kaye Anderson

One of the major goals of the elementary school curriculum is to provide children with the tools needed to read, for reading is basic for optimum participation in our society. In order to achieve this goal, the reading program should not only help children learn the word recognition and comprehension skills needed to be an independent reader, but should also develop positive attitudes towards reading and life-long reading habits. The balance and interplay between the areas of skill instruction and the affective dimensions of reading characterize a reading program more than any other feature. An overemphasis on one area would limit the potential of a student to acquire the skills needed for reading or handicap him/her from full use and satisfaction from reading in life.

With the current back-to-the-basics and competency testing movements, there is a grave danger that the major emphasis of many reading programs will be to focus instruction primarily on the mechanical skills to the near exclusion of important aspects in the affective dimension. While skills are needed for reading and are certainly significant, skill instruction should never be an end in itself. As Strickler and Eller stated, "What have they gained if children leave school knowing how to read, but don't know why to read, what to read, when to read—or worse—don't care to read at all?"<sup>1</sup>

Regardless of any movement, no matter how strong it is, reading instruction cannot be directed only to the teaching of reading skills. The reading program must concern itself with fostering positive attitudes toward reading, for the attitudes an individual has toward reading significantly influence the reading habits which are developed and carried through life.

The following are suggestions for the teacher who wishes to build student interest in reading.

1. Get to know every child in the class. Determine the interests of each child and be sure to provide reading

materials as well as sources to materials<sup>2</sup> which are in consonance with those interests. Encourage students to pursue the interests they have and develop new interests.

2. Provide a variety and wealth of reading materials, such as newspapers, magazines and current literature as well as the all-time favorites. If the school does not have a library which has reading materials which will interest your students, borrow them from the local library.
3. Familiarize yourself with the wide variety of children's literature and annotated bibliographies<sup>3</sup> currently on the market. Use children's literature to supplement other subject areas, such as math, science or social studies.
4. Provide time for Uninterrupted Sustained Silent Reading (USSR). Children need time to read for themselves in an environment devoid of distractions. During this scheduled period, it is important that the teacher also reads. USSR will not work well if the teacher is grading papers while the children are reading. Besides, it is important for the teacher to model good reading habits.
5. Provide time for purposeful oral reading. Encourage children to select a short story, passage or poem which they really enjoy and practice it thoroughly for effective oral presentation to the class.
6. Provide time for sharing books read. Nobody can "sell" another child on reading a book better than the child who has just read and enjoyed that book. During such sharing periods, the teacher should also give "book talks" to the students. This will expose them to unfamiliar books and will also let the children know that you really enjoy reading yourself.
7. Read to children regularly. Schedule a time each day when children are read to. Children should be exposed to the multitude of creative ways language is used in poetry, narrative and occasionally expository writings.
8. Teach skills only when they are needed. Assemble a group of students who lack a particular skill and instruct them in the application of that skill. Allow the rest of the class to do something else more worthwhile and relevant (like read books). Disassemble the group when the purpose for its creation is accomplished.
9. Engage children in experiences which build and expand their experiential and language backgrounds. Hands-on science lessons and field trips are excellent. For each such experience, provide opportunities for the children to discuss the activity and to use the vocabulary associated with that experience.
10. Don't immediately correct children if they make miscues when they read aloud. Allow children the opportunity to self-correct. Because language is redundant and much information is carried in the context, children can often determine the appropriate pronunciation of a word themselves if given the opportunity.
11. Discourage children from immediately correcting each other when miscues are made during oral reading. Allowing children to jump in and yell out the correct word does not help the youngster who is doing the reading. It only enhances the ego of the



child doing the correcting, and this is usually done at the expense of the child who needs support, not degradation. When children each prepare self-selected material to read orally and present their selection in a true audience situation, this unhealthy practice is further eliminated.

12. Teach children to be flexible in using strategies to unlock unknown words. Teaching children to rely primarily on phonics as a tool to unlock unknown words will hinder a child. They need to learn to use grammatical patterns (syntactic cues) as well as the meaning of the passage (semantic cues) to be versatile in word recognition.
13. Build positive school-home relationships. Send notes home to parents stating the accomplishments the child is making in reading. Such a procedure can greatly improve children's self concepts as well as develop positive attitudes of the parents toward the school.
14. Allow children to select their own reading materials. Children informally learn that reading is enjoyable and can enrich their lives when they choose books on topics interesting and relevant to them.
15. Create an environment in which children are willing to take the risk of being wrong. Risk-taking is essential for learning.

The teacher is the most important ingredient of a good reading program. It is the teacher who makes most, if not all of the instructional decisions, and creates the climate that pervades in the class. The teacher has major responsibility for developing in children the skills of reading as well as positive attitudes towards reading.

In order to determine whether you are providing a balanced reading program which emphasizes the affective domain as well as the skills necessary for reading, record your answers to the following questions. Then compute your score according to the guidelines following the questions.

- |     |    |  |
|-----|----|--|
| Yes | No | 1. Do you know the interest areas of each child in your classroom?   |
| Yes | No | 2. Do you regularly read children's books so that you are familiar with books currently on the market?                       |
| Yes | No | 3. Do you have a minimum of three books per child in the classroom library which are diversified in interests and levels?    |
| Yes | No | 4. Do you change the books in the classroom library on a regular basis?  |
| Yes | No | 5. Do you regularly schedule time for Uninterrupted Sustained Silent Reading?  |
| Yes | No | 6. Do you read with the children during the sustained silent reading period?   |
| Yes | No | 7. Do you regularly schedule a time for children to read orally something they prepared and practiced for oral presentation? |
| Yes | No | 8. Do you regularly schedule time for sharing books read?  |
| Yes | No | 9. Do you read to children both prose and poetry?  |
| Yes | No | 10. Do you teach reading skills based on student need rather than convenience?   |

- |     |    |   |
|-----|----|---|
| Yes | No | 11. Do you engage children in experiences which build and expand the experiential and language backgrounds of children?   |
| Yes | No | 12. Do you refrain from immediately correcting your students when the miscue?   |
| Yes | No | 13. Do you discourage children from jumping in and calling out the word when a child is having difficulty with that word? |
| Yes | No | 14. Do you encourage children to write and make books for the classroom library?  |
| Yes | No | 15. Do you teach children to be flexible when using strategies to unlock unknown words?                                   |
| Yes | No | 16. Do you regularly communicate positive information to parents when their child is making good progress in reading?     |
| Yes | No | 17. Is your classroom environment such that children are willing to take the risks needed for learning?                   |

Directions for Scoring: For each Yes response give yourself one (1) point. Find your total score on the following chart to see how well your reading program is providing experiences which build positive attitudes towards reading.

Score	Interpretation
0-4	Program should be rebuilt.
5-8	Program needs major overhaul.
9-11	Program needs tune-up.
12-14	Program needs minor adjustment.
15-17	Program is in good condition.

The questions posed are not offered on mandates which must be met. Changes do not occur readily when they are mandated by another. Rather, changes are made most easily as the result of honest self-evaluation. The questions are offered as food-for-thought and as stimulus for action for those classroom teachers who want to evaluate the affective dimensions of their reading program.

#### Footnotes

1. Darryl Strickler and William Eller, "Reading: Attitudes and Interests," in **Reading: Foundations and Instructional Strategies**, eds. Pose Lamb and Richard Arnold (Belmont, California: Wadsworth, 1976), p. 449.
  2. Peter Cardozo and Ted Menten, **Whole Kids Catalog** (Des Plaines, Illinois: Bantam, 1975).
  3. Patricia Cianciolo, ed., **Adventuring with Books** (Urbana, Illinois: National Council of Teachers of English, 1977).
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## Why can't students read critically?

# Independence in critical reading: An instructional strategy

by John E. Readence

and

R. Scott Baldwin

A question which typically mystifies classroom teachers is why students, even after thorough instruction in critical reading, are unable to read critically. This question becomes even more mystifying because, as a rule, students are capable of critical thinking as witnessed by their interactions with their peers on topics of common interest. Perhaps the answer behind this may be how we currently approach the field of critical reading instruction.

Traditionally, instruction in critical reading has emphasized the importance of experiential background and adequate concept development in forming a base for critical thinking during reading. Equally prominent has been the emphasis on direct teaching/training of various types of information deemed essential for successful critical reading.

One heavily emphasized method is training in the recognition of propaganda techniques which can distort critical evaluation (Karlín, 1977). Along similar lines, students are taught to sense writing which is designed to persuade the reader to a particular point of view (Robinson, 1978). Students are also frequently instructed to distinguish fact from opinion or fantasy and are encouraged to suspend judgments until an author's intent is clearly understood (Robinson, 1978; Spache and Spache, 1977). Another technique for teaching critical reading involves the recognition of signal words which provide clues to the probable validity of written statements (Aulls, 1978).

As can be surmised from these brief descriptions, most of these techniques for teaching critical reading take place isolated from routine reading activities. For instance, students may be formally introduced to propaganda techniques, e.g., glittering generalities, testimonials or the band wagon approach through the use of

overt, literal level contexts. Students may then be asked to identify these forms of propaganda in prose selections of various lengths.

The problem with exercises of this type is the underlying assumption that critical thinking skills which students learn to employ during directed reading activities will transfer automatically to other reading situations, e.g., reading regular class assignments in textbooks or reading for personal reasons. Rarely, it seems, do children experience the use of covert contexts used by authors in print to disguise their intended meaning and "sway" the reader. It is one thing to expect students to recognize propaganda when the teacher has made that a specific goal for a limited number of prose selections. It may be quite another thing to expect students to sense propaganda when they are sitting at home reading a magazine or when they are reading an assigned chapter from a social studies text.

The current status of critical reading instruction appears to respond to the question, what does one do to teach students how to read critically? An equally salient, but less frequently asked question is, what does one do to create in students an attitude which allows them to read critically on a regular basis?

Recent research (Baldwin and Readence, 1978) suggests that even intelligent adults who are quite "capable" of critical thinking frequently fail to "employ" their talents for critical thinking when they are confronted with written materials which appear authoritative to them. If asked whether or not they believe everything they read, few adults or older children will answer in the affirmative; the "power of print" is far more subtle than that and operates below the reader's threshold of conscious awareness. Right justified margins, tidy print, perfect spelling and perfect grammar make a page of print "appear" flawless. In addition, the teacher's authority, the prestige of the textbook and a grading system which is most responsive to the assimilation of raw content may cause students at all educational levels to memorize facts and search out main ideas without questioning the author's intent or the validity of what is being said.

The present authors are convinced that teachers need to assist students in becoming independent critical readers under all conditions. The teacher's primary goal in teaching critical reading should be to instill students with an intelligent attitude toward print, an attitude which will allow them to exercise their talents for critical thinking even in the face of teacher authority, textbook prestige and the commanding appearance of published materials.

Teachers can accomplish this task by using an instructional strategy which demonstrates to students how to evaluate and make decisions concerning the validity and importance of statements in daily reading assignments. However, prerequisite to any instructional strategy teachers might employ, is the creation of the proper instructional atmosphere for that to be undertaken. Teachers must communicate to students that they have the "right to be wrong" and the "right to be actively involved" in their reading. Once students realize that it is permissible to take risks as they interact with print or with the teacher, that they have a freedom to respond in the classroom without fear of reprisal, or any form of negative reinforcement, by the teacher, and that it is permitted to disagree with an author or with the teacher, the necessary climate has been established to begin instruction in critical reading.



Some variation of the following four-step strategy is recommended. Materials to be used for instruction could include many content area textbooks, e.g, English, social studies or something as simple as the daily newspaper.

1. **Self-monitoring questions.** Teach students that they should constantly monitor their own reading behavior by asking themselves certain questions pertinent to the reading task asked of them. Such questions would include: a) Do I understand what I am to do in reading this material? b) Is there anything I must do before I begin to read this material? c) What do I already know that will help me in reading this material?
2. **Evaluation and critique.** Ask students to ascertain the author's point of view and opinions and have them record what they think are the important ideas contained in the reading material. At this point it should be communicated to students that they are not supposed to second-guess the teacher; rather, they are to evaluate the author's ideas in juxtaposition to their own ideas and beliefs. The important thing is to stress that students should react to what the author has to say.
3. **Summarize.** When the previous step has been completed, the teacher should summarize in writing the student responses. It is recommended that the chalkboard or a transparency be used so students may view the composite as the final step of the strategy is undertaken.
4. **Comparison and discussion.** Teachers should now compare their evaluation/responses of the material with that of the students. Teachers should justify their positions and richly reinforce all legitimate criticisms made by students. Teachers should be

careful to praise the process rather than the product of critical reading. Merely rewarding those student perceptions which agree with their own viewpoint is a self-defeating exercise. Central to the successful implementation of this strategy is for students to witness that their perceptions and criticisms have merit even if they may contradict teachers' beliefs.

Techniques which tell students how to read critically should be combined with techniques which let them know that critical reading is not an ephemeral classroom task. Rather, students will understand that they should be constantly monitoring their reading. If this can be accomplished, students at all educational levels will stand a better chance of becoming something more than passive recipients of written language.

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## Should a reading course be required for secondary teacher certification?

# Secondary school teachers' attitudes toward a reading course requirement for certification

by J. Harvey Littrell

Do secondary school teachers and administrators believe that knowledge about the teaching of reading is important enough that a course in reading should be required for secondary teachers?

The answers to these two questions provide important information for decision-making. There are state committees presently in the process of making decisions about certification requirements in reading for secondary teachers. Nineteen certifying bodies have faced this question and have decided that either some or all secondary teachers should have experiences in reading. This means that at least 31 others are either facing the issue or will be in the future. Teacher education college faculties are making decisions about their responsibilities in preparing secondary teachers in reading. Teacher Associations must make decisions about their position on the issue.

To help educators with their decision-making a study was conducted in Kansas to determine the attitudes of secondary school personnel toward courses in teaching reading and toward certification requirements in reading. The subjects were 232 teachers and administrators employed in 17 Kansas secondary schools. To obtain subjects the investigator secured permission to attend and collect data at six in-service education meetings held at various locations in the state.

The subjects taught or worked in ten teaching areas. About three-eighths of these participants were in their first five years of teaching. Only 37 percent of the participants had received credit in a course in teaching reading, and of these, about one-half were Language Arts teachers.

About one-third of the subjects were in Language Arts (English, speech, foreign language, library). Since some states have singled out Language Arts teachers from teachers in other areas in their decision-making about certification requirements, the information obtained in this study has been reported separately for teachers in Language Arts and those in other areas.

For the purpose of assessing the subjects' attitudes toward the value of a reading course for teachers, they were asked, "Do you believe that secondary school teachers would benefit from having a course designed to teach them how to help secondary school students with reading?" The responses to this question are given in Table 1.

Table 1.

Subjects reactions to the question, "Do you believe that secondary school teachers would benefit from having a course designed to teach them how to help secondary school students with reading?"

Reaction	Lang. Arts		Other Areas		Total	
		%		%		%
No	1	1%	9	6%	10	4%
Yes, if prior to teaching experience	24	34%	50	31%	74	32%
Yes, if after teaching experience	27	39%	79	49%	106	46%
Yes, under conditions listed	18	26%	22	14%	40	17%
No response	0	0%	2	1%	2	1%

Of the 232 subjects, 220, or 94 percent, believed a course in reading would be beneficial. Two participants did not reply. The response of 10 subjects, or 4 percent, was that the course would not be of benefit. The 40 respondents who answered, "Yes, under certain conditions," listed 45 conditions. Their responses can be summarized as follows: 16 participants said the course would be of value **both** before and after teaching experience; 11 replied the course would be of value if it pertained to the subjects the teacher taught; 13 thought the course would be of value **either** before or after teaching experience. There were 5 miscellaneous answers which did not pertain to the question. Participants from both Language Arts and Other Areas were highly favorable toward courses in teaching reading.

The subjects apparently believed a course in teaching reading would be beneficial to them. Did they believe such a course should be required for certification? To obtain an answer to this question, the participants were asked to react to a series of statements. Statements 1 and 2 were concerned with a requirement to be met during teacher **pre-service** education. These statements were:



Statement 1: "Students preparing to teach in the secondary school should have a required course in reading during their undergraduate pre-service experiences."

Statement 2: (Presented to those who disagreed or were undecided about Statement 1.) "Students preparing to teach certain subjects (e.g. English, Industrial Arts, etc.) should be required to take a course in reading during their undergraduate pre-service experience."

The reactions of the subject to Statement 1 are given in Table 2.

**Table 2.**

Reactions of the 232 subjects to Statement 1.

Reaction	Lang. Arts subjects	%	Other Area subject	%	Total	%
Agree	56	80%	95	59%	151	65%
Undecided	10	14%	41	25%	51	22%
Disagree	4	6%	26	16%	30	13%

Sixty-five percent of the 232 subjects would require a reading course of all students preparing to teach in the secondary schools. The 81 participants who either were undecided or disagreed with Statement 1 were asked to respond to Statement 2. Their responses are shown in Table 3.

**Table 3.**

Reactions to Statement 2 of the 81 subjects who were "Undecided" or "Disagreed" to Statement 1.

Reaction	Lang. Arts subjects	%*	Other Areas subjects	%**	Total	% of 232 Subjects
Agree	8	11%	35	22%	43	19%
Undecided	4	6%	20	12%	24	10%
Disagree	2	3%	11	7%	13	6%
No reply	0	0%	1	1%	1	0%

\*Percent of the 70 Language Arts subjects

\*\*Percent of the 162 Other Area subjects

In addition to the 65 percent who would require reading in the pre-service education of teachers, an additional 19 percent would require reading of those preparing to teach certain subjects. Twenty-four percent were undecided about such a requirement. Only 6 percent believed there should be no reading requirement in the pre-service preparation.

The 43 subjects who agreed that a course should be required of those preparing to teach certain subject areas were asked to list the areas. Their list included all of the major teaching areas. However, Language Arts and Social Studies were named the most frequently.

The participants from Language Arts were somewhat more favorable to certification requirements for those preparing to teach than were the subjects from the Other Areas. The percent of acceptance for these two groups were 91 and 81, respectively.

The subjects in the study were all in-service teachers or administrators. Eighty-four percent of these in-service people believed that some or all pre-service teachers should have a course in reading prior to certification. To determine their attitudes toward a certification requirement for in-service teachers, the subjects were asked to react to the following statements:

Statement 3: "All teachers employed in a secondary school should be required to have a course in teaching reading."

Statement 4: (Presented to those who disagreed or were undecided about Statement 3) "Teachers of certain subjects should be required to take a course in teaching reading."

The reactions of the participants to Statement 3 are given in Table 4.

**Table 4.**

Reactions of 232 subjects to Statement 3.

Reaction	Lang. Arts subjects	%	Other Areas subjects	%	Total	%
Agree	49	70%	67	41%	116	50%
Undecided	7	10%	48	30%	56	24%
Disagree	12	17%	42	26%	54	23%
No reply	2	3%	4	6%	6	3%

One-half of the 232 subjects in the study agreed that a course in teaching reading should be required of all teachers in the secondary school. The 110 who were undecided or who disagreed with Statement 3 were asked to respond to Statement 4. Their reactions are given in Table 5.

**Table 5.**

Reactions to Statement 4 of the 110 subjects who were "Undecided" or "Disagreed" with Statement 3.

Reaction	Lang. Arts subjects	%*	Other Areas subjects	%**	Total	% of 232 subjects
Agree	14	20%	37	23%	51	22%
Undecided	3	4%	35	22%	38	16%
Disagree	4	6%	16	10%	20	9%
No reply	0	0%	1	1%	1	0%

\*Percent of the 70 Language Arts subjects

\*\*Percent of the 162 Other Area subjects

In addition to the 50 percent of the subjects who would require a course in the teaching of reading of all in-service teachers, another 22 percent would require a



course in reading for teachers of certain subjects. Sixteen percent of the subjects were undecided whether or not they would make such a requirement. Only 9 percent believed there should not be a requirement.

The 51 participants who agreed with Statement 4 were asked to list the subject areas. Every curriculum area was listed by one or more participants. English and Social Studies were named most frequently.

Ninety percent of the Language Arts participants agreed that all or some teachers should be required to have a course in reading for certification. Subjects in the Other Areas were 64 percent in agreement with such a requirement.

### Summary

A survey of 232 Kansas secondary teachers and administrators was made to determine their attitudes toward courses designed to help them teach the reading skills needed by pupils in their classes. A predominate question to be answered was whether or not such a reading course should be required for certification. Ninety-four percent of the participants in the study believed a course in the

teaching of reading would be beneficial for teachers. The requirement of such a course for certification for all students preparing to be teachers was agreed to by 65 percent of the participants. An additional 19 percent would require a course in teaching reading of those preparing to teach certain subjects, particularly English and Social Studies. Fifty percent of the participants would require a course in teaching reading of all teachers employed in the secondary schools. An additional 22 percent would have this requirement only for those teaching certain subjects. English and Social Studies were named most frequently. A larger percent of the participants in Language Arts than of participants from the Other Areas were in agreement with such certification requirements as previously stated.

Teacher Certification Boards, college faculties planning curricula and teacher associations should be aware of the attitudes of secondary teachers toward courses preparing them to teach the reading skills needed by their pupils. Before making decisions it would be advisable for these groups to either replicate the study reported in this paper or develop other research techniques to determine the attitudes of the secondary teachers in their geographical areas, colleges or associations.

## Right to read

Right to Read. A phrase that has been bandied about so much that many of us use it without thinking. Two points need to be remembered and implemented if we are to be at all successful with our work: (a) the project is to wipe out illiteracy, the inability to read and write. What we know about teaching those kids in academic trouble suggests that we'll do a better job if we combine our teaching of the two areas. They reinforce each other, which really speaks to the need to use integrated activities in more of our teaching. (b) While we're working with the kids who cannot read well, let's realize that these kids have, as Dr. Sheldon Schmidt of the University of North Dakota has noted, "... a right to learn even if they cannot read." If we can free them by providing this other right, we'll provide them with a higher self regard and increased energy and enthusiasm for other things good and wonderful—such as the 2 R's we're responsible for . . . .

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This article describes some of the problems of criterion-referenced tests

# Criterion-referenced reading test: Stop, look and listen

by Leo M. Schell

Ten years ago hardly any educators knew what a criterion-referenced test (CRT) was; today there are dozens of commercial ones and hundreds of teacher-made ones. But the problem is that there has been little discussion within the reading community of the pros and cons of these tests. Indeed, James Popham of UCLA, one of the original and most ardent proponents of criterion-referenced tests, has become so disenchanted with the quality of some of the tests he so strongly favors that he recently lamented that some of these tests "are less fit for schools than they are for paper shredders." (6)

Educators should not be cynics, skeptics nor "againers" of something new. But they should be knowledgeable, evaluative, cautious and professional. They need to avoid the poorest of these tests and exercise great caution in constructing their own. Thus, this article describes some of the common problems of many CRTs and suggests some guidelines by which they may be appraised.

## CRTs—Part of a System

CRTs are intended to be an integral part of an instructional system. Given as pretests, they indicate which students need which skills. Given as post-tests, they indicate who learned how much of what was taught and indirectly prescribe future instruction. In fact, some CRTs are integral parts of instructional systems that provide materials and recommendations for such instruction.

This system seems based on four fundamental assumptions:

1. Reading can be divided into small, discrete entities.
2. These entities can be written as objectives.
3. These objectives can be measured via specially constructed test items.
4. Standards for mastery can be set.

These assumptions are extraordinarily important because they depart to some degree from common instructional and testing beliefs of the past—and even many current ones. For one thing, they define to a great degree what this thing called reading is and how its achievement and growth should be measured. One problem is that not everybody can agree with one or more of these assumptions. Psycholinguists such as Kenneth Goodman (3) or Frank Smith (6) might easily reject the first assumption. Educators who agree with the psycholinguistic point of view would have a difficult time accepting the first premise upon which CRTs are based.

Some measurement specialists (as will be explained later) may disagree substantially with the fourth assumption, arguing that the problems of setting standards is so complex, so fraught with unresolved problems, that the assumption is actually dangerous and that tests based on that assumption should be labeled "Potentially hazardous." Therefore, these assumptions need to be examined carefully by educators and not taken lightly.

## Validity

Whether CRTs measure what they say they measure should not be a problem since there is supposed to be a close correspondence between test items and corresponding objectives. This is called content validity which is judgmental and logical. A person should be able to inspect an objective and its corresponding test item(s) and decide with a reasonable degree of confidence whether the item generally measures its objective.

However, the objectives for numerous CRTs are unavailable. Not only does this violate one of the assumptions on which CRTs are based but it makes it difficult if not impossible to determine the validity of the test, to know how well a test item measures its objective. Without objectives, few of us are capable of determining a test's validity, and, therefore, we remain ignorant. Ignorance may be blissful but it's also unprofessional and potentially dangerous since we will or will not assign instruction to children on the basis of test results. Invalid tests give potentially invalid test results which in turn may lead to either unneeded instruction—or even lack of needed instruction. Validity is not irrelevant.

McClung (4) points out that CRTs should have **instructional validity**, a variation of curricular validity. He argues that there must be some way of knowing whether or not the stated objectives were actually taught in the classroom. He states that instructional validity should be a central concern to educators because if test items are not representative of the instruction then test results—and subsequent use of them—will be inappropriate. Instructional validity could be particularly troublesome with CRTs that are independent of the instructional program, e.g., a commercial CRT from one publisher used with a basal reader program from another publisher. In such cases, the test could easily measure something that wasn't taught or not measure something important that was. Thus a rigorous comparison of the test, curriculum and instruction is crucial.

Another aspect of validity is that some tests include mislabeled items. One subtest of critical reading requires that statements be numbered as to their order of occurrence. To this author's knowledge, sequence of events is not mentioned by any reading authority as a skill in critical reading. Can we assume that a child doing well on this test is really a good critical reader? Another example



of questionable validity is found on a widely used phonics subtest which claims to measure sound-letter associations. The audio tape says both the stimulus word, e.g., **put**, and several response words, e.g., **pet, gate, pony**. The examinee is to choose which of these response words ends with the same sound and letter as the stimulus word. But since the stimulus word is shown **in print**, it seems as if this test merely measures the ability to match final letters rather than the ability to associate a sound with its corresponding letter. What does a child really know who does well on this test? And can we validly assume that children doing poorly on it need sound-letter instruction?

Another example of questionable validity is found in one CRT from one of education's largest publishers which claims to measure over 15 separate comprehension skills, e.g., Equivalent Sentences, Main Idea: Unstated, Author's Purpose, etc. For over 35 years we've known that current testing procedures are inadequate to validly divide comprehension into more than 2-3 categories. Drahozal and Hanna (1) report on the latest such failure. Are all these subtests really measuring what their title says they are? If they are, they are valid and we can have some degree of confidence in them. But if not, they are invalid to some unknown degree and our confidence in them is diminished to the same degree. We are not interested in validity merely for its own sake; we are interested in it because the test results direct our subsequent instruction, they determine who will receive further teaching and who won't. This requires valid, not questionable, information.

Another aspect of validity is how an objective is measured. One test measures the characteristics of a given literary form by having the examinee write **myth, legend, fairy tale, or tall tale** by a definition such as "This type of story takes place in a 'never-never land' and often features fairies." Another test measures the same general objective by asking the test taker to read a passage typical of a kind of literature and asks the examinee to select which of four genres it is probably from. Are both items equally valid to appraise the same objective? They claim to be. I doubt it.

Numerous other examples could also be cited of tests and test items whose validity should be questioned or challenged. Educators should select only those tests whose items best mirror the objective being measured; they should be skeptical of any which are questionable.

### Reliability

Conventional procedures for determining reliability are not appropriate for nor applicable to mastery CRTs. These procedures require variability in scores, a range of scores so it can be seen whether the low scores are consistently low and the high scores consistently high. But most CRTs are deliberately constructed to produce low variability because typically 80 percent or more of the examinees are expected to answer nearly all the items correctly. But even though traditional reliability assessment methods are inappropriate for indicating the reliability of most CRTs, we do know some general things about what makes a test reliable.

One is test length or the number of items measuring an objective. The longer a test or the more items that

measure an objective, the more reliable the test tends to be. Yet many commercially published CRTs that I examined used only two items to measure an objective and several used only one. In multiple-choice tests where guessing is possible, so few items as this may not unequivocally indicate whether or not an examinee possesses the stated competence. Popham (5) states that it is "technically impossible to get a decent fix on an examinee's status with respect to a particular skill by using only a handful of items." Furthermore, he warns that in situations where the stakes are high "such as when a student's graduation from high school hinges on mastering the skills represented by a test, then attempting to squeeze by with a paucity of items is both professionally and ethically irresponsible."

Related to the number of items is the matter of guessing. Some tests use only three responses, which gives a 33 1/3 percent chance of getting the answer correct by guessing. And several I examined provide only two responses, thereby giving the examinee a 50 percent chance of guessing the right answer. Did the student **know** an answer or did he/she **guess** it? This is what reliability data helps us determine. In the absence of such numerical information, educators wishing to select the best CRT need to determine how many items measure each objective and what the examinees' chances of guessing the right answer are.

### Cut-Off Scores

Cut-off scores are probably the single most perplexing, troublesome and unresolved aspect of CRTs. A fundamental concept of CRTs is that a standard is set and if the examinee meets or exceeds it, then we can assume he/she probably needs no more instruction at this time in that skill. How standards are set is therefore of unparalleled importance.

The interested educator searches test manuals in vain for an answer, for a rationale for the standards. Was it a consensus of experts or the arbitrary judgment of one person? How does anyone **know** that correctly answering 70 percent of the items on a test indicates proficiency, competency or mastery? Glass (2) has written compellingly and movingly on this topic. He concludes, "I have examined a half dozen classes of methods for establishing mastery levels, standards or cut-off scores; each has proved to yield arbitrary and potentially dangerous results."

This is an enormously complicated topic but one of extraordinary cruciality. If the cut-off score is too easy, students will be passed who would merit from further instruction; yet if the standard is too difficult, students who shouldn't be will be given unnecessary instruction. Educators should be wary of tests that provide no information on how standards were set and which imply "Trust me." Popham (5) says that one characteristic of a well-constructed CRT is "the availability of normative data that will permit educators to answer more sensibly the question: 'How good is good enough?'" Currently, hardly any commercial CRTs provide such data and obviously it is not available for the superabundance of teacher-constructed ones that fill reading "methods" textbooks and others for which advertisements flood our daily mail.



### **Conclusion**

This article in no way is an attempt to halt the current move toward using more and more criterion-referenced tests in reading instruction. Properly constructed CRTs can definitely help teachers improve both their teaching and children's learning. But we should be aware that merely because a measuring device is labeled "criterion-referenced" does not make it an adequate or worthwhile test. Consumer advocates have recently begun to demand that canned foods plainly state in writing what the contents inside the can are so that potential buyers will have more to rely on than the enticing photo on the can's label. Educators wanting the best for their students would be well advised to look for and demand precisely the same thing from tests labeled "criterion-referenced."

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**Teachers need to reflect on whether they are exposing children to the best of recent literature**

# What Kansas teachers read aloud to elementary classes

by Mary McDonnell Harris

Reading aloud to children has a demonstrable effect on their reading comprehension, vocabulary, reading interests and language development.<sup>1</sup> Experts recommend it to teachers at all elementary levels.<sup>2</sup>

This study was undertaken to determine 1) the extent to which Kansas elementary teachers read aloud to their classes, 2) factors they consider in selecting books to read aloud and 3) the books read to children during the 1976-77 school year. From examination of titles actually read, the influence of book awards, the entertainment media and publication date were assessed.

A questionnaire was sent in May, 1977, to 418 Kansas teachers. Equal numbers of teachers were selected at random from each grade level, K-6. Of the questionnaires administered, 330 (80.1 percent) were analyzed.<sup>3</sup>

## Extent of Reading Aloud

Of the teachers examined, 98 percent read aloud to their classes. They indicated a variety of reasons for doing so. Fostering good listening habits was the reason most frequently selected, followed by desire to introduce children to literature.

Teachers who read to their classes were asked to indicate the frequency with which they selected types of

literature. Fiction was most frequently read aloud. At all grade levels, a majority of teachers read fiction aloud several times a week. Most primary and fourth grade teachers read it daily. At the kindergarten and first grade levels, fiction is often in the picture book format. Primary teachers reported that they read tales and short stories as often as several times a week, but such literature is rarely read by intermediate teachers. Primary teachers were more likely than intermediate to read poetry aloud. Even so, a majority of primary teachers read poetry only several times a month. While nonfiction was read aloud by primary teachers several times a month, practices in reading nonfiction varied among intermediate teachers. Most read it less than once a month, but a sizable minority read it as often as several times a week.

Teachers were asked to list titles of books they had read aloud during the 1976-77 school year and to estimate the number of books they had read but were unable to name. A steady decrease in the number of books named and in the number of estimated unnamed books was observed from level to level. Table I lists the mean numbers of named and estimated books read by teachers at each grade level along with their sum (mean total books) and the number of questionnaire responses on which that mean is based.

**Table I**

Mean Numbers of Books Read Aloud Reported  
by Grade Levels

Grade	Mean books named	Mean books estimated	Mean total books	Teachers reporting
K	17.9	120.6	138.5	45
1	11.0	82.6	82.6	46
2	12.1	21.9	34.0	42
3	9.2	8.7	17.8	47
4	8.2	1.1	9.3	55
5	6.2	2.1	8.6	44
6	4.6	0.2	4.8	51

## Factors in Book Selection

A variety of factors influence the books selected to read aloud by Kansas elementary teachers. Enjoyment by previous classes, topics being studied by the class, and student recommendations were the most frequently mentioned. The influence of the William Allen White Award is strong at the intermediate levels. Seasonal books and books that meet developmental needs of children are often selected by primary teachers. The influence of children's literature courses on teacher selection undergoes a steady decrease with grade level, with fewer than half of the teachers above first grade selecting it as an influence on their choice of books. Neither the Kansas State Reading Circle nor reviews in professional journals appears to have much influence on book selections of teachers. At all levels, however, recommendations of the school librarian influence enough teachers that these resources may have an indirect effect on selections.



**Table II**  
**Books Most Frequently Read Aloud by Teachers by Levels**

	Frequency
<b>Kindergarten</b>	
The Gingerbread Boy, several versions	9
The Cat in the Hat, Dr. Seuss, Beginner, 1957.	7
Curious George, H.A. Rey, Houghton Mifflin, 1941.	7
C The Snowy Day, Ezra Jack Keats, Viking, 1962.	7
The Three Little Pigs, William Pene DuBois, Viking, 1962.	7
The Three Bears, Margaret Hillert, Follett, 1963.	7
C Where the Wild Things Are, Maurice Sendak, Harper Row, 1963	7
The Three Billy Goats Gruff, Susan Blair, Holt, 1963.	6
Blueberries for Sal, Robert McCloskey, Viking, 1948.	5
Green Eggs and Ham, Dr. Seuss, Beginner, 1960.	5
Little Hatchy Hen, Flora James, Harcourt, 1969.	5
The Little Engine that Could, Watty Piper, Platt and Monk, 1930.	5
Millions of Cats, Wanda Gag, Coward, 1928.	5
Too Many Mittens, Florence Slobodkin, Vanguard, 1958.	5
Wobble the Witch Cat, Mary Calhoun, Morrow, 1958.	5
<b>First Grade</b>	
The Cat in the Hat, Dr. Seuss, Beginner, 1957.	6
C Make Way for Ducklings, Robert McCloskey, Viking, 1941.	6
Winnie the Pooh, A.A. Milne, Dutton, 1926.	6
Charlotte's Web, E.B. White, Harper Row, 1952.	5
C Cinderella, Charles Perrault, Harper Row, 1955.	5
Little House on the Prairie, Laura Ingalls Wilder, Harper Row, 1953.	5
Are You My Mother?, P.D. Eastman, Beginner, 1960.	4
Bambi, Felix Salten, Grosset and Dunlap, 1969.	4
Curious George, H.A. Rey, Houghton Mifflin, 1941.	4
Georgie and the Magician, Robert Bright, Doubleday, 1966.	4
Harry, the Dirty Dog, Gene Zion, Harper Row, 1956.	4
Nobody Listens to Andrew, Elizabeth Gullfoile, Follett, 1957.	4
Robert the Rose Horse, Joan Heilbronner, Beginner, 1962.	4
<b>Second Grade</b>	
Charlotte's Web, E.B. White, Harper Row, 1952.	19
Little House on the Prairie, Laura Ingalls Wilder, Harper Row, 1953.	12
Little House in the Big Woods, Laura Ingalls Wilder, Harper Row, 1953.	10
W The Mouse and the Motorcycle, Beverly Cleary, Morrow, 1965.	8
By the Shores of Silver Lake, Laura Ingalls Wilder, Harper Row, 1953.	4
The Boxcar Children, Gertrude Chandler Warner, Scott Foresman, 1950.	4
Curious George, H.A. Rey, Houghton Mifflin, 1941.	4
Did You Carry the Flag Today, Charley?, Rebecca Caudill, Holt, 1971.	4
Farmer Boy, Laura Ingalls Wilder, Harper Row, 1953.	4
On the Banks of Plum Creek, Laura Ingalls Wilder, Harper Row, 1953.	4
Ribsy, Beverly Cleary, Morrow, 1964.	4
<b>Third Grade</b>	
Charlotte's Web, E.B. White, Harper Row, 1952.	11
Little House on the Prairie, Laura Ingalls Wilder, Harper Row, 1953.	11
Ribsy, Beverly Cleary, Morrow, 1964.	6
The Boxcar Children, Gertrude Chandler Warner, Scott Foresman, 1950.	5
Charlie and the Chocolate Factory, Ronald Dahl, Knopf, 1964.	5
Farmer Boy, Laura Ingalls Wilder, Harper Row, 1953.	5
Henry Huggins, Beverly Cleary, Morrow, 1950.	5
Little House in the Big Woods, Laura Ingalls Wilder, Harper Row, 1953.	5
On the Banks of Plum Creek, Laura Ingalls Wilder, Harper Row, 1953.	5
Pippi Longstocking, Astrid Lindgren, Viking, 1950.	5
Ramona the Brave, Beverly Cleary, Morrow, 1975.	5
W Socks, Beverly Cleary, Morrow, 1973.	5



(Table II cont.)

Fourth Grade		
*	Harry Cat's Pet Puppy, George Selden, Farrar, 1974.	10
	Charlotte's Web, E.B. White, Harper Row, 1952.	8
	The Ghost on Saturday Night, Albert Sidney Fleishman, Atlantic-Little, 1974.	8
*	Maybe, A Mole, Julia Cunningham, Pantheon, 1974.	8
*	Toad for Tuesday, Russell E. Erickson, Lothrop, 1974.	8
C	Where the Wild Things Are, Maurice Sendak, Harper Row, 1963.	8
W	Henry Reed's Babysitting Service, Keith Robertson, Viking, 1966.	7
*	After the Goat Man, Betsy Byars, Avon, 1975.	6
	Tales of a Fourth-Grade Nothing, Judy Blume, Dutton, 1972.	5
	Taste of Blackberries, Doris Buchanan Smith, Crowell, 1973.	5
*	Why Don't You Get a Horse, Sam Adams, Jean Fritz, Coward, 1974.	5
Fifth Grade		
*	Devil's Storybook, Natalie Babbitt, Farrar, 1974.	6
	Taste of Blackberries, Doris Buchanan Smith, Crowell, 1973.	5
NW	Mrs. Frisby and the Rats of Nihm, Robert C. O'Brien, Atheneum, 1971.	5
	Little House on the Prairie, Laura Ingalls Wilder, Harper Row, 1953.	5
*	Toad for Tuesday, Russell E. Erickson, Lothrop, 1974.	4
*	Ghost on Saturday Night, Albert Sidney Fleishman, Atlantic-Little, 1974.	3
*	After the Goat Man, Betsy Byars, Avon, 1974.	3
	Charlie and the Chocolate Factory, Ronald Dahl, Knopf, 1964.	3
	Charlotte's Web, E.B. White, Harper Row, 1952.	3
*	Harry Cat's Pet Puppy, George Selden, Farrar, 1974.	3
	Indian Captive: The Story of Mary Jamison, Lois Lenski, Lippincott, 1941.	3
W	The Mouse and the Motorcycle, Beverly Cleary, Morrow, 1965.	3
	My Side of the Mountain, Jean George, Dutton, 1975.	3
W	Old Yeller, Fred Gipson, Harper Row, 1964.	3
	Philip Hall Likes Me, I Reckon Maybe, Bette Greene, Dial, 1974.	3
	Runaway Ralph, Beverly Cleary, Morrow, 1970.	3
N	Slave Dancer, Paula Fox, Bradbury, 1973.	3
N	A Wrinkle in Time, Madeleine L'Engle, Farrar, 1963.	3
Sixth Grade		
*	Ghost on Saturday Night, Albert Sidney Fleishman, Atlantic-Little, 1974.	4
*	A Toad for Tuesday, Russell E. Erickson, Lothrop, 1974.	4
	Adventures of Tom Sawyer, Mark Twain, Collins, 1946.	3
*	Devil's Storybook, Natalie Babbitt, Farrar, 1974.	3
	How to Eat Fried Worms, Thomas Rockwell, Watts, 1973.	3
NW	Island of the Blue Dolphins, Scott O'Dell, Houghton Mifflin, 1961.	3
N	Johnny Tremain, Esther Forbes, Houghton Mifflin, 1944.	3
	Johnny and the Monarch, Margaret Friskey, Children's, 1946.	3
*	Where the Sidewalk Ends, Shel Silverstein, Harper Row, 1974.	3
*	Why Don't You Get a Horse, Sam Adams, Jean Fritz, Coward, 1974.	3

C = Caldecott Medal

N = Newbery Medal

W = William Allen White Award

\* = William Allen White nominee, 1976-77

### Books Read Aloud in 1976-77

The elementary teachers reported 1514 titles of books they had read aloud in their entirety to classes during the 1976-77 academic year. Of these books, 1051 (69 percent) were selected for reading aloud by only one teacher. Only 128 of the books (8 percent) were read aloud by more than five teachers. The most popular book was **Charlotte's Web**, read aloud by 46 of the teachers in the survey. Teachers of first, second, third, fourth and fifth graders read **Charlotte's Web** although a majority of them were

second grade teachers. Thirty-seven teachers at all levels except kindergarten read the second most frequent title, **Little House on the Prairie**. The third title, **Little House in the Big Woods**, was read by 22 teachers. It was followed in popularity by three of the 1976-77 William Allen White nominees (**A Toad for Tuesday**, **Harry Cat's Pet Puppy**, and **The Ghost on Saturday Night**), a William Allen White book (**The Mouse and the Motorcycle**), and **Curious George**.

Table II presents the ten books most frequently read aloud by teachers at each grade level. Actual numbers of books listed per grade vary because of many ties.



### Characteristics of Books Read Aloud

The influence of the William Allen White Award on the list presented in Table II is striking. Seven of the 22 1976-77 nominated titles appear there. Comparison of numbers of teachers who read aloud nominees with the books' rankings by Kansas children who voted to determine the 1977 William Allen White Book, indicates a definite relationship, but not a one-to-one correspondence, between teachers' and children's selections.

Ten winners of the William Allen White Award appear on Table II. Of the 24 books so honored since 1963, 18 were read aloud by at least one teacher in the sample. The 1970 winner, *The Mouse and the Motorcycle*, was most popular, heard by 18 classes. Ninety-eight classes (not necessarily different classes) heard William Allen White Books during the 1976-77 school year.

The reading of Newbery Medal Books is less frequent, but Caldecott Books are often selected. The most frequently read Newbery books were *Island of the Blue Dolphins* and *Mrs. Frisby and the Rats of Nihm*, both William Allen White winners, also. Twenty-three of the 54 Newbery books announced since 1922 were read aloud to 70 classes. *Make Way for Ducklings*, *Where the Wild Things Are*, and *The Snowy Day* were the most frequently read Caldecott winners. Twenty-three of the 30 books chosen to receive the Caldecott Medal were read aloud to 113 classes.

The influence of the media on books selected, especially on books selected by primary teachers, seems quite strong. Books from Table II to which children had media exposure in 1976-77 include *Little House on the Prairie*, *Charlotte's Web*, *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, *The Cat in the Hat*, and *Winnie the Pooh*. Books from this group were read to 123 classes.

In evaluating the recency of books selected for reading aloud, all titles published since 1970 were considered recent. Numbers of recent books were compared to numbers of books published before 1960. Of the titles appearing on Table II, 21 were published after 1970, and 30 were published before 1960. Thus, older books seem to be more likely to have gained the "classic" status to be frequently selected by teachers. Of the books from Table II read aloud by intermediate teachers, 18 were recent, and seven were older. Primary teachers, by contrast, read 23 older books and only three recent ones.

Examination of the publication dates of approximately 1300 of the 1514 titles reported revealed that more were recent than older. In fact, about 40 percent of the books read aloud were recent. Thus, it would seem that although the William Allen White award is the most persistent influence toward currency in book selection, individual teachers were finding other recent selections for reading aloud.

### Recommendations and Conclusions

Most Kansas teachers act on their knowledge of language skill development by reading aloud to their classes several times a week, but daily reading aloud is ad-

vocated by most authorities in reading. Some teachers should consider becoming more intentional about making daily time for reading good books to children. Others might find ways to involve parents, high school and college aides, and adopted grandparents in reading to youngsters.

Books selected for reading aloud by Kansas teachers are usually prose fiction. Because poetry is brief, intense, readily available and intended for reading aloud, children's experiences with literature would be enriched if more teachers were intentional about reading it to them. Although not all nonfiction is suitable for reading aloud, children need to be introduced to it on at least a weekly basis. Teachers might consider reading portions of non-fiction books to illustrate their uses to children.

The entertainment media have a strong influence on primary teachers' selections. Discussion of the influence of media on the literature program might help teachers to make wise decisions about appropriate levels for reading featured books. Teachers and librarians might work together to identify literature for study in conjunction with media offerings.

Enjoyment by previous classes, topics being studied by the class and student recommendations are strong influences on Kansas teachers' book selections. These factors tend to encourage the reading of familiar books. Teachers report that recent reviews of children's books have little or no influence on their selections. While the reading of children's classics is certainly important, teachers need to reflect on whether they are exposing children, also, to the best of recent literature.

The institution of an award similar to the William Allen White Award for the primary grades might stimulate exposure to the best of the many recent publications for younger children. In the meantime, teachers may become familiar with the review media available in their school libraries. The K-NEA Reading Circle, *The Hornbook Magazine*, and *Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books* are especially helpful in choosing current read-aloud selections that will appeal to the teacher as well as to the children.

### Footnotes

1. Sandra McCormick, "Should You Read Aloud To Your Children?" *Language Arts*, February, 1977, p. 139.

2. Charlotte S. Huck, *Children's Literature in the Elementary School* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1976), p. 712.

3. 80.9 percent of the questionnaires mailed were returned. Those returned but not analyzed were completed by teachers who taught above the sixth grade level or were incomplete.



**Children model the illiteracy of "the American way."**

# Do it with books: The why and how of reading

by Jim Duggins

and

Tom Finn

## Whereas:

Most adults do not read  
Parents and teachers seldom read to children  
Many classrooms contain no real books  
Reading clinics use books as only supplements to more important work  
Reading lessons rely on workbooks and ditto sheets  
Tutoring is fragmented word drills and "meaning" in isolated paragraphs  
Libraries are seldom included in reading programs.

## Therefore:

We should not be startled to learn that children read poorly or not at all. They simply imitate the model set by the school and the nation. Their illiteracy is merely "the American way."

If lifelong, voluntary, independent reading is the true

goal of reading instruction, the classroom must demonstrate positive aspects of literacy. Reading programs must **show** rather than **tell** the power of reading to the young who ask "why read?" Not until students have experienced the joy of reading can they be taught how. Media fads come and go, but there has been no substitute for the pleasure and the power of books.

In this golden age of literature for children and young adults, books indeed are mirror to the soul. Because they treat, more realistically than ever before, the difficulties contemporary young people face, they entice lifelong reading as an avenue to problem solution. Children who are led to see books as a way to make sense of their lives become reading adults. Because their authors vary in style and content, their prose and poetry becomes the staff from which reading instruction should be based. Surely, the **how** of reading is better founded upon materials that also demonstrate the **why**.

We have chosen here to present the integration of the why and how of reading instruction as a reading ladder of books for young people. With these books, kindergarten through twelfth grade, based upon a contemporary theme, objectives for reading instruction can be reached.

Using multiple titles of trade books often causes the teacher problems in focusing the class in small group or overall, general class activities. For that reason, we have chosen books with a theme to demonstrate how a variety of titles may be used and at the same time class cohesion may be maintained. The theme is broad and may best be stated as viewing and understanding older persons.

In today's complex and fragmented world, understanding aging and the aging process is a psychological survival skill. As we use books concerned with aging, the intent is to span the spectrum of what aging means to our students. The outlook of a 5-year-old sibling toward his 12-year-old brother is in many ways as psychologically important to him as are his relationships with his 50-year-old grand parent; therefore, age differences apparently great and small will be our concern.

Why age and aging? Simply because we all are a part of the process, and, perhaps, because we live in a youth-oriented society, it is an underlying social theme which is rarely discussed among young people and often kept in the closet by those over 30. Some of the books suggested have as their main theme relationships with people of different ages; others only tangentially touch upon this topic; however, a teacher can utilize this major or minor theme to engage students in pre-reading, reading, writing and discussion activities. Remember, as you read this, you are getting **older!**

Our book choices here are not intended to be exhaustive but simply to demonstrate how this single theme might be developed in K-12. Dozens of other titles could be added easily to the various grade levels represented.

Of course, the reading-language arts teacher is concerned about skills. We do not choose to ignore this need. Our contention, however, is that skills programs can be developed only about materials of the "real world." Further we suggest that those real materials teach reading more effectively than the canned pap found in many classrooms. A major difference in this approach is that the teacher chooses skills from the content and style of the books rather than superimposing alleged skills upon whatever materials are at hand. In other words skills emerge from the literature rather than being forced to fit.



## Viewing and Understanding Older People

Primary. Pre-reading.

Reading Skills: Sight Words. (Child's Name, Mother, Father)

Book: **Are You My Grandmother?** Libbie and David Hilberman.  
Palo Alto, Calif.: Kinfolk, 1976.

Activities:

1. Read the book with the child.
2. Paste pictures in the book.
3. Print in names.
4. On large, lined paper, child practices printing his/her name and other sight words.

Primary. First/Second Grade.

Reading Skill: Recognizing past tense verbs.

Book: **My Grandson Lew.** Charlotte Zolotow and William Pene du Bois.  
New York: Harper and Row, 1974.

Activities:

1. Read the book with the children.
2. Using the verbs presented in the book, analyze the present tense verbs they know, printing them on the board or in class dictionary.
3. In small groups, children read the story aloud.
4. Children identify the past tense verbs of the story.
5. Children may write a story of something that happened yesterday.

Alternative Book: **Nana Upstairs and Nana Downstairs.**  
Tonie De Paola.  
New York: Puffin Books, 1978.

Alternative Objectives for these books:

- Use of apostrophe.
- Concept words, up, down, below, over, etc.

Primary Through Third

Reading Objective: Understanding Comparison and Contrast

Book: **Kevin's Grandma.** Barbara Williams and Kay Choroa.  
New York: E.P. Dutton, 1978.

Activities:

1. Be certain that children understand family relationships. Discuss families and grandparents with them. Ask them to tell of their own parents and grandparents. Some children may share pictures of their grandparents.
2. Read the story with them asking them to point out contrasts. Develop with them, too, the contrast of humor and credibility.
3. In small groups children may read the story again, color or paint the scenes described, and write their own stories of a day with grandma.

Alternative Reading Objectives:

- Understanding the Absurd.
- Remembering Details.

Alternate Book: **William's Doll.** Charlotte Zolotow and William Pene du Bois.  
New York: Harper and Row, 1972.

Intermediate 4-5-6

Reading Objective: Understanding Characterization

Book: **The House Without A Christmas Tree**

Activities:

1. Discuss family relationships with the class. How would it be to live without a father? A mother? What special relationships do we have with grandparents? What relationship do our parents have with our grandparents? How does it feel to be different? Do we feel badly when other children have things we do not? Do we resent being told "no" without a reason?
2. Introduce the book **The House Without A Christmas Tree** about a family who is different because they never have a Christmas Tree. As a part of the book talk, read passages that describe the main characters: Adelaide who hates to be called "Addie," pages 13-14; Grandma, pages 10-12, pages 64-65; and Dad, pages 31-32, pages 34-35.
3. Individuals from the class will want to read the story and report back. You may want to read the story, one chapter each day, in the two weeks before Christmas.
4. Students will be able to discuss the characters as they are developed. In particular, ask them to predict the probable attitudes of Adelaide, Grandma and Dad toward the various events of the story.
5. They may write short themes about who is kindest, who is most understanding, who is "right" in each segment of the controversy.

Alternate reading objectives for this book:

- Understanding Cause & Effect.
- Vocabulary Through Context.

Seventh Through Twelfth Grades

Reading Objective: Recalling Sequence and Details

\*\*Book: **The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman.** Gaines, Ernest J., Bantam Books, New York, 1971.

1. If the book is to be made available to all students, begin a general discussion of the oldest person students know. Do students know anyone who remembers World War II, World War I, or the Spanish American War? It would be helpful to place a time-line on the chalkboard. Using the group's knowledge of American history, place on the time-line important events as far back as they can recall; the teacher may add and explain other events. After the time-line has been developed, ask students to copy it and place on their time-lines when their ancestors arrived in America.

A general discussion, using the time-line, should follow, and the class should share the details of each others' geneology in America. After this discussion, the teacher may place on the chalkboard time-line the name "Tacey" near the year 1864 and on the year 1962 the name "Miss Jane Pittman." The students are now told that the novel they are about to read is about a woman who lived from the 1860's to the 1960's, and that they will keep their own time-lines of Miss Jane as they progress through the novel. They are to place on their individual time-lines what



they consider to be the most significant occurrences in Miss Jane's life.

2. The introduction is read aloud, and the teacher may wish to point out that the author is using a literary technique in writing a novel which appears to be an actual oral history. (You may wish to discuss this after the novel has been completed.) Questions on why the history teacher wants to interview Miss Jane should be asked, and what does he mean when he says Miss Jane is not in the history books? Ask students if their parents or grandparents are in the history books? Who gets in history books and why?

3. Students should read the book at their own pace and add to their individual time-lines of Miss Jane's life as they read. The teacher may wish to interrupt the reading at key chapters and discuss a particular section of the novel and/or read aloud sections to students or have students read specific selections. There are numerous passages rich in language, such as the naming scene on pages 17-19.

4. Upon completion of the novel, there are a multitude of discussion topics; however, to investigate the theme of age and aging, attention should be given to the question of how Miss Jane changed from the opening chapters of the novel to its conclusion. The students' individual time-lines should help in developing this discussion. Students may be placed in small groups to begin this dialogue and return to the larger group with their groups' generalizations.

5. Other activities: Ask students to interview or tape-record an older relative or community member or perhaps do an oral history project of their school or particular aspects of their community. Have students write "autobiographies" of other students or of someone they know.

Other Objectives:

Understanding dialect.

Understanding point of view.

#### Seventh Through Twelfth Grades

Reading Objective: Predicting Outcome

\*\*Book: **Let A River Be**. Cummings, Betty Sue, Atheneum, New York, 1978.

1. Show the dust jacket to student(s) and elicit responses to what clues the title provides about the possible content of the novel. Why is "Be" underlined? What visual clues does the dust jacket offer regarding the novel's topic?

2. Read the first paragraph of Chapter 1, pages 3-8 aloud (The student(s) or teacher may wish to do the

reading). Question student(s) on what they think of Ella Richards from the initial description. What would it be like to be a 76-year old arthritic woman? Why might she call the River hers? What mental pictures do they have at this point of Ella? What are her major concerns in life?

3. During the oral reading of Chapter 1, interject questions which will aid the student(s) to predict what may happen in the following pages. Page 1: How does Ella feel about the River? Why is she concerned about the River? How do people feel about Ella? What is her financial condition? What might the "Swamp Beast" be? Who is Doc, and how does Ella feel about him? What generalizations can be made about Ella after completing Chapter 1, and what is her lifestyle and outlook on life? Ask the student(s) to list specific things they know about Ella from reading Chapter 1.

4. Chapter 2 further develops the reader's understanding of Ella and introduces another major character, Reetard. Questions dealing with Ella's treatment and final acceptance of Reetard based upon what the reader has learned about her should enable the student(s) to gain an understanding of how the author has established Ella's characteristics.

5. Ella calls the River "Old Woman," and, by questions, the reader should be made aware of the parallel in the life of the River and Ella's life. What does the reader think will become of the River, and what will become of Ella and Reetard? There are numerous points in the novel when student(s) can be asked to predict what might happen to these three main characters and, when appropriate, the teacher may elicit oral or written predictions. Upon concluding the novel, the student(s) predictions can be compared with the actual outcome of the story.

6. Culminating activities: Write a physical description of Ella or Reetard. Draw a portrait of Ella or Reetard or of the pelicans from a particular chapter of the book: e.g., Reetard in Chapter 1 when Ella first encounters him; Ella in Chapter 45 at Reetard's funeral; Reetard's sculpture of the pelican; etc. Write about the course Ella's life may take after the book ends. Discuss people student(s) know who are like Ella.

Other Objectives:

Characterization.

Vocabulary Development (Especially regarding river ecology)

\*Student interest often overcomes reading levels. High interest—about 5th grade reading level.

\*\*Some words and scenes possible objectionable to parents or school. Read before use.



**Standard English teaching should begin as early as possible.**

# Acceptance, awareness, approach: Three key issues to standard dialect teaching

by **Alsylvia Smith**

During the past decade much attention has been devoted to the educational problems of speakers of non-standard English. Although many ethnic groups fall into this category the primary focus has been on Black children, especially those from low socioeconomic backgrounds. There seems to be a general consensus among linguists, most sociolinguists and a few educators, that the difficulties involved in teaching these children to read, write and speak standard English arise because they are linguistically different. In spite of the proliferation of literature on the subject and the numerous recommendations made by researchers and educators, the problem remains unresolved.

Prior to the development and successful implementation of an effective program for teaching the linguistically different child, three major factors, acceptance, awareness and approach, must be carefully considered.

## **Acceptance**

The child and his dialect must be accepted by the teacher. Neither must be looked upon as being inferior. The child is not "subhuman" and his language is not sub-standard. Rejection of one's language is rejection of the person, his culture, his family and his life style. As Philip Dale points out "Black English as an autonomous dialect

has been delayed by strongly negative attitudes toward it and its speakers."<sup>1</sup> It is my contention that this negative connotation of nonstandard English has been one of the predominant barriers to providing effective education for children who speak nonstandard dialects. Donoghue asserts that "the attitude of the teacher is crucial."<sup>2</sup> Before linguistically different children can be successfully taught to read and write standard English, the fact that they are "different" and not deficient" must be realized and accepted.

Philip Dale describes dialects as variations in language and Black English as a specific dialect of English.<sup>3</sup> Researchers such as, DeStefano, Fasold, Wolfram, Labov, Baratz and Shuy agree that everyone speaks a dialect. "Dialect differences are often interpreted as indicators of real or imagined differences in education, religion, morality, social class, race attitudes and other aspects of life."<sup>4</sup> The manner in which the non-standard English speaking child is perceived depends entirely upon the theory, if any, accepted by the teacher. Negative attitudes rarely, if ever, produce positive results. This is especially true in the educational arena.

## **Awareness**

According to Labov, "American education has always been concerned with nonstandard English but primarily in a negative way. It has been the object to be overcome rather than something to be studied and understood in its own right."<sup>5</sup> Because nonstandard English has been viewed in a negative manner by components of American education many educators are totally unfamiliar with its structure as a language. Once nonstandard English has been accepted as a language in its own right that is "different" and not "deficient" one is more readily able to become aware of the structural differences which exists between standard and nonstandard English. An awareness of these differences can eliminate many of the problems involved in teaching standard English to speakers of nonstandard English. Baratz states that "a structural knowledge of nonstandard vernacular and the way it can interfere with learning to speak and read standard English are indispensable to teach ghetto Negro children."

Researchers are divided into two groups: those who support the "deficit" theory and those who support the "difference" theory. These two groups, according to Baratz, have operated quite independently for several years—psycholinguists continuing to describe deficiencies while sociolinguists continued detailing differences. "Recently however with the advent of interdisciplinary programs, each group has developed an increased awareness of the other's position." I see this type of awareness as a major step in the right direction. In addition, however it is imperative that educators, researchers and the like, become more aware of and sincerely interested in the structural make-up of the language spoken by the linguistically different child.

## **Approach**

Since theories are often the foundation for methodology (approach), educators must formulate accurate theories based on empirical and unbiased research. Although there are varying viewpoints involved in providing adequate educational facilities for speakers of nonstandard English most educators agree that it should be taught. Baratz, Donoghue, Labov, Shuy, Spolsky,



Destefano and others feel that standard English should be taught as early as possible. Kenneth Johnson favors teaching standard English as a separate subject rather than incorporating it within the language arts curriculum. The most popular approach recommended by Donoghue, Baratz, Boyd, Shuy, and others is that of teaching Standard English by way of the nonstandard dialect.

Baratz proposes that speakers of nonstandard English be taught standard English as a quasi-foreign language. This approach involves the use of both standard English and nonstandard English. This bidialectal approach begins reading instruction in the student's own dialect with standard English being introduced gradually. The other language skills: listening, speaking and writing are developed by way of the student's dialect.

Of the numerous programs proposed by educators and researchers, I am inclined to support a quasi-foreign language approach to teaching standard English. As a foreign language teacher I realize the effectiveness of logical development of the four basic skills (listening, speaking, reading, writing) when teaching students a language that is different from their own. Whether standard English is taught as a separate subject or incorporated within the language arts curriculum is not as crucial as when it is taught and the approach used.

I strongly recommend that standard English teaching begin as early as possible and that all materials used, including pattern drills, etc., be in standard English. When using quasi-foreign language techniques the oral language is stressed before the written language. The language (nonstandard English) spoken by the student is accepted as being different from the one to be learned

(standard English). The teacher must be aware of the structural differences in the languages involved.

Although this method adequately deals with the issues of acceptance and awareness finding a viable method for teaching standard English to nonstandard speakers of English is indeed a difficult task. However, acceptance, awareness and approach are three key issues to which future language programs must address themselves if each child is to be educated to his fullest potential.

#### Footnotes

1. Philip Dale, **Language Development: Structure and Function** (Illinois: The Dryden Press Inc., 1972), p. 238.
2. Mildred Donoghue, **The Child and the English Language Arts** (Iowa: Wm. C. Brown Company Publishers, 1975), p. 45.
3. William Labov, **The Study of Nonstandard English** (Illinois: National Council of Teachers of English, 1969), p. 1.
4. Joan C. Baratz, "Teaching Reading In An Urban Negro School System," in F. Williams, ed., **Language and Poverty Perspectives on a Theme** (Chicago: Markham Publishing Company, 1970), p. 17.
5. Joan C. Baratz, "Educational Considerations for Teaching Standard English to Negro Children, in B. Spolsky, ed., **The Language Education of Minority Children** (Massachusetts: Newbury House Publishers, Inc., 1972), p. 140.



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