

child repeated what *he* heard without meaning.

This difficulty frequently occurs when the children get away from first-hand experiences and the teacher does not connect the new ideas with the experiences which the children have had. Enough importance is not attached to the mental pictures which the child is receiving through the words he learns.

The more meaningful the experiences are to the children, the better the growth in every way. A program of meaningful experiences in the school will help the children get a wealth of correct concepts, a broad spoken vocabulary, more accurate enunciation and pronunciation, more ability to think, and a desire to read. In such a program the teacher is developing the individual as a useful person in society and in so doing is developing those abilities which produce both the *desire* and the *ability* to read. If reading from books is considered a meaningful activity only after the child has reached sufficient maturity, it can be a natural activity. The school can, therefore, remove the strain and waste of energy on the part of children and teachers in connection with learning to read. Ruth Streitz⁸ says that "if the organism is not 'ready' we need devices, some machinery, or some mechanical way of stimulating the organism to respond. So, teachers have had a fairy sitting upon every word in order to aid the child in maturing instead of having actual experiences that need no such dressing up."

This paper has considered *reading* as a stage of child development at which children cannot arrive according to a pre-arranged schedule. Through wide experiences they grow and acquire abilities which make reading not only possible and profitable, but a pleasant activity. The children *can* and *will* use reading in purposeful living if they are so taught that they accumulate a wealth of accurate concepts and habits of

speech which will give meaning to printed language.

Such physical factors as general health, vision, and hearing greatly influence readiness for reading, but that subject is too large to include in this discussion.

MARIE E. ALEXANDER

WHEN AND HOW TO BEGIN READING

ALTHOUGH a great deal has been written on the subject of beginning reading, first-grade teachers are still confronted with the question of what to do with six-year-olds who come into the first grade in September, many of whom are not yet mature enough to start a formal reading program. In this article three phases of the problem will be briefly discussed: (a) how to know when a child is ready to read, (b) what to do with the child who is *not* ready to read, and (c) how to begin with the child who *is* ready to read.

No longer do first-grade teachers assume that a child's chronological age of six years is the criterion for determining his readiness for beginning reading. Nor do they lay special emphasis on the child's mental ability as the chief determining factor. The whole child is studied; his mental, physical, and emotional make-up are considered in deciding whether or not he is mature enough to profit by definite reading activities. By means of intelligence tests, physical examinations, reading readiness tests, and close observation, teachers determine the child's readiness for reading. Some of the factors considered are as follows:

1. A chronological and mental age of approximately 6½ years.
2. Good physical health, including normal speech, vision, and hearing.
3. Emotional adjustment to school and the ability to work satisfactorily with others.
4. Good English habits, including the

⁸*Ibid.*, p. 195.

ability to speak distinctly, to enunciate words clearly, and to speak in simple sentences.

5. The ability to remember a sequence of events, and to repeat and carry out simple directions accurately.
6. A rich background of experiences and a large speaking vocabulary.
7. The ability to plan carefully, to solve problems which arise, and to concentrate on a job until it is finished.
8. The ability to distinguish differences and similarities in form.
9. A keen interest in books and a desire to read.

After careful examination and observation of the children who enter the first grade in September, some children will be found to be immature and inexperienced and not yet ready to start reading. For such children a program including worthwhile experiences in literature, art, music, and science should be planned. There are many activities which will help to build up the right attitudes, help to enlarge the child's background of experiences, and aid the child in making the needed adjustments socially and emotionally. Some suggestions are as follows:

1. Through such activities as trips, discussions, and the reading and telling of stories, a background of information and a large speaking vocabulary can be built up. By observation, experimentation, and questioning, new ideas can be grasped and concepts enriched. Any community offers many opportunities for both first hand and vicarious experiences.
2. By discussing new books, by reading stories and poems, and by showing what fun it is to find out what books "say," a desire to read can be stimulated. Reading the content under pictures in answer to children's questions will help to stimulate an interest in books. Children can be trained in the use of books; as, how to handle

them and how to turn their pages. With books attractively displayed, the reading corner can become one of the favorite spots in the classroom. Bringing books from home to share with the other children is a worth-while activity. There might even be a shelf in the book case labeled "Books from Home."

3. Through such activities as dramatization, the use of picture books that tell a continuous story, picture shows (which the children can make), and the retelling of stories, the ability to keep in mind a sequence of events can be improved. A little can be done to increase the memory span through such activities as carrying messages and following directions which are clearly and simply given.
4. By participating in discussions, dictating stories, and reading pictures and picture books, the child can improve his language facilities. He can be aided in learning to speak clearly in simple sentences, pronouncing and enunciating his words distinctly. The constant use of good English on the part of the teacher is very important.
5. The power of visual discrimination can be developed by matching pictures, matching duplicate labels and name cards, using puzzles, and picking out like and unlike pictures. The child can be helped to see differences and likenesses in forms, a very important item in learning to read.
6. By listening to initial consonants, by hearing words clearly pronounced, and by having attention called to the fact that some of the words sound alike, auditory discrimination can gradually be developed. Reading nonsense rhymes is valuable both in affording fun for the child and in giving him an opportunity to hear words that sound alike. Watching the teacher's lip movements when sounding

words will help to train the child in auditory discrimination.

7. By explaining the left to right movement in reading and by letting the child see that principle constantly in use, the correct eye movement of left to right can be learned by the child.
8. Through planning and carrying out group and individual activities the child can learn to do problematic thinking and to concentrate on a job until it is finished. The type of activities usually carried out in work periods will help to meet this need of the child.

Although some first grade children may need a readiness period of weeks or even months (including activities similar to the ones mentioned above), other children show by their good physical and emotional health, their broad background of experiences, and their ability to speak fluently, that they are ready to learn to read soon after they enter the first grade. For such children the development of ideas through rich experiences is continued, and the development of a meaningful vocabulary to express their ideas is continued. For those children, however, there is also the beginning of the development of the ability to recognize the symbols which are used to express their ideas in reading.

The child's first reading material comes from experience stories which are dictated by the child and recorded by the teacher. The stories may be printed on tagboard or unprinted newspaper and put together to form the child's first reading book. These stories may be typed (on a typewriter equipped with primer-type) or hectographed so that each child can have a book of his own. Children also delight in making their own individual picture-story books, drawing pictures and dictating stories which are printed or typed by the teacher. From these early stories the child begins to learn correct reading habits, he builds up the right

attitude toward reading, he learns how stories are really made, he develops some sentence sense, and he begins to recognize a few words.

Interesting bits of news, stories about pictures, announcements of plans for the day and trips to be taken might be posted on the bulletin boards. Action games, matching games, puzzles, and other games which can be made by the teacher are fun for the child. Labels should be used when needed, and name cards should be available for identifying lockers and filling out charts. Reading recipes from the blackboard when engaging in a cooking experience, as making apple sauce, candy, or cookies, is a very worth-while activity. Recording interesting news which the children relate and putting the news together to form a newspaper makes excellent reading material. The news can be printed on unprinted newspaper and pasted on large sheets of brown wrapping paper. The teacher might also type or hectograph the news so that each child could have a copy of the newspaper.

One experience which should be frequently encouraged is reading pictures in books. The child may be given an opportunity to make up his own story about the pictures in a new book. After several children have read the pictures to the class, the children have much fun in hearing the teacher read the story just as it is written in the book. Children also enjoy reading the pictures in familiar books which they have memorized by hearing the teacher read the story over and over in response to the frequent cry, "Read it again."

After many reading experiences similar to the above, numerous attractive pre-primers are available for use. At first the child may need to be helped a great deal, assisted in anticipating the story, and often merely told what the story says. He needs to be kept going at the rate that will challenge him but not so fast that he will become discouraged. From the beginning the child

should be led to understand that reading is thought-getting and that for him reading is a pleasurable and useful experience. If he is hampered by the inability to recognize words, however, he may become discouraged and he will not be able to continue to read for thought. By frequently seeing words in meaningful situations he will gradually build up a reading vocabulary. He will soon need some help, however, in figuring out new words for himself. Picture clues, context clues, and word configuration will assist him in becoming more independent in recognizing new words. Eventually each child should develop independent methods of attacking new words.

In this article no attempt will be made to discuss further the problems involved in beginning reading. The splendid manuals which accompany some of the new readers will be helpful to the first-grade teacher who is looking for assistance in teaching reading. There are also numerous books and articles on reading, many of them offering excellent ideas for the first-grade teacher. Many attractive children's books, too, have been placed on the market during the past few years, thus making it easy for the first grade teacher to find suitable material for children at any stage in reading. The important thing for the teacher to do is first to study the child, and after determining his readiness for reading, to help him grow naturally and gradually, eventually becoming an independent reader with a keen interest in reading and a great love for books. After all, that is the goal teachers are striving to reach in reading, regardless of the methods they use in attaining that goal.

MARY EVELYN WATKINS

A well-known analyst of retail sales points out that women spend 85 cents of every dollar. Such a wife is a jewel. So many spend \$1.37.—*Detroit News*.

THE GROWTH OF AN ACTIVITY

PEG PRICE tapped the toe of her black patent leather pump nervously, as she regarded the minute hand of her watch. That ever-increasing fear so dampened her spirits and upset her mind that it was impossible for her to rehearse the speech so carefully prepared.

What was there to be afraid of, anyway? Wasn't she amply prepared? Wouldn't her experience of student teaching in the 4B grade at Main Street School be of some value in this interview? Hadn't her supervisor helped her to develop a philosophy of education which was almost fool-proof.

Without warning, Peg's train of thought was interrupted by the appearance of a sinister looking figure, all bushy eyebrows and bay-window. "He couldn't be, please don't let him be the superintendent," breathed Peggy to herself.

There was a rushing of air as he passed her and banged through the door, marked "Private—Superintendent McGill."

As she waited, there came a determination to show this man how his views on education were a bit antiquated. "How is it possible for anyone living in a changing civilization to keep the same point of view?" thought Peg. "Progressive education has so much to offer. The experience of reading the book *Hitty, Her First Hundred Years*, and the numerous activities which grew out of it, down at the Main Street School, would certainly provide an excellent example of what progressive education and creativity can do toward the development of the whole child."

Five minutes of tense waiting, and then the chilly voice of the secretary broke the strained silence. "You are Miss Price?" she queried.

"Yes, I am," replied Peg weakly.

"You may come in," suggested Miss Snead, the secretary.