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# MRA and MDE Work Toward Comprehensive Planning for Reading Improvement

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During the summer of 1976, the Michigan Reading Association embarked upon an ambitious plan of action aimed at improving reading achievement throughout the State of Michigan. Significant stride toward that improvement has been made in the few months that have followed.

The action strategy began when Michigan Reading Association members — Mr. Jim Alexander, Mr. Clarence Brock, and Dr. Gerry Duffy, met with Dr. John Porter, State Superintendent of Public Instruction, to present MRA's model for improving reading coordination throughout the State of Michigan. The MRA model included, (1) goals of reading; (2) definition of reading; (3) responsibilities for reading including the Michigan Department of Education and local school agencies; (4) performance objectives; and (5) evaluation. In addition to presenting the model, the MRA group requested that the Department of Education identify a staff person to work on a full-time basis to assist in implementing the model.

Subsequent to MRA's initial presentation, Dr. Porter designated me, a Consultant with the Michigan Right to Read Program, to act as Reading Planning Specialist to coordinate various activities necessary to implement the plan of action.

Eventually, as an outgrowth of MRA's model, the plan was dubbed "Comprehensive Reading Design".

Steps of action included in the "Comprehensive Reading Design" were designated as follows: (1) establishment of a Michigan Department of Education Task Force; (2) establishment of a Michigan Reading Association Referent Group; (3) analysis of the various reading programs within the Department of Education; (4) development of a position statement on reading; and (5) development of an in-service model in reading.

## **Establishment of the Michigan Department of Education Reading Task Force**

The Michigan Department of Education Reading Task Force was organized in

late August, 1976. The Task Force consists of the Communication Skills coordinator and service area directors including Compensatory Education, Vocational Education, Adult and Continuing Education, Special Education, and General Education. The Task Force is chaired by Dr. Philip Kearney, Associate Superintendent of Elementary and Secondary Education.

Purposes of the Task Force are as follows: (1) to provide data on existing reading programs within the Department; (2) to reach a consensus on a position statement in reading; (3) to ascertain methods and resources for establishing in-service models; and (4) to formulate goals and objectives for coordination of the various reading programs within the Department of Education.

## **Establishment of a Michigan Reading Association Referent Group**

The Professional Standards and Studies Committee, chaired by Mr. James Alexander, Director of Instruction in the Oscoda Public Schools, was designated by the Michigan Reading Association Board of Directors to assist in the development of the "Comprehensive Reading Design".

The committee has been meeting with me on a bi-monthly basis to cooperatively develop the different activities needed to complete the design.

Mr. Alexander and the committee members including Clarice Stafford, Lois Bader, Bill Eckstrom, Gene Packwood, Gerald Duffy, Betty Childs, Clarence Brock, and Susan Stuber should be commended on the time and effort given towards the development of this design.

## **Analysis of Reading Programs**

At this time, a document of the various federal and state reading programs has been compiled. The compilation is divided into three sections; the first section deals with federal programs that are administered through the Department of Education; the second deals with programs that are state supported; and the third section is a summary/diagram of all programs

which have been identified as major reading programs within the Department of Education.

School administrators and the State Department of Education will find this document helpful in determining; (1) overall goals and objectives of the program; (2) the applicable funding for each program; (3) basic standards of eligibility examples of a program in operation; and (4) evaluation procedures of the program. This document is expected to be ready for distribution by July, 1977.

#### **Position Statement on Reading**

The reading position on reading is under final development. This position will present: (1) a departmental definition of reading; (2) a list of assumptions about reading; and (3) a list of implications of the definition for both the Michigan Department of Education and local education agencies.

Presently, the Department's definition and assumptions about reading have been endorsed by the Michigan Department of Education Reading Task Force and the Michigan Reading Association Board of Directors. When the position statement is completed, the Michigan Department of Education and the Michigan Reading Association will cooperatively publish the document. The position statement will appear in the Fall MRA JOURNAL.

#### **In-Service Model In Reading**

An in-service model for elementary teachers is under development. The model is called TRIM — Teachers of Reading In-service Model. The model is intended to be adaptable in a variety of learning environments.

The model will include: (1) a list of 40 or 50 teacher competencies in the area of reading instruction; (2) a teacher assessment technique that determines teacher needs in terms of the listed competencies; (3) a description of activities appropriate for the acquisition of the competencies; (4) a description of activities appropriate to the use of the competencies in the classroom; (5) reading evaluation techniques; and (6) descriptions of available resources.

The model is being designed both for teachers of reading and for content area teachers who need to upgrade their skills in teaching reading through social studies, science, mathematics, etc.

As you can see with the help of members of Michigan Reading Association, a great deal of progress has been made since August, 1976, in developing a "Comprehensive Reading Design" which, no doubt, will have a significant affect upon the achievement of reading for students throughout the State of Michigan.

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