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ABSTRACT

"A Newspaper in My Classroom" project was conducted by a Grade 5 teacher with her class for four months. During the project, the newspaper supplemented the regular textbooks for language arts. Exposure to the project did not result in perceptible differences in performance on a semantic differential containing seven concepts or on the Gates-MacGinitie Reading Tests, when compared with a control group. However, the results of a newspaper survey given before and after the project and the teacher's comments indicate that the project had desirable effects on the students.  
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RESEARCH REPORT

Evaluation of "A Newspaper in My Classroom"  
Project at Secord School. 1972

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August, 1972  
Marilyn J. Reid  
Research Report 72-22

Department of Planning and Evaluation  
Board of School Trustees  
1595 West 10th Avenue  
Vancouver 9, B. C.

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AN EVALUATION OF "A NEWSPAPER IN MY CLASSROOM" PROJECT  
AT LAURA SECORD ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, 1972

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AN EVALUATION OF "A NEWSPAPER IN MY CLASSROOM" PROJECT

AT LAURA SECORD ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, 1972

ABSTRACT

At Laura Secord Elementary School, there was "A Newspaper in My Classroom" project conducted by a Grade 5 teacher with her class for four months, from February to June, 1972. During the period of the project, the newspaper supplemented the regular textbooks for language arts.

Results of a newspaper survey given "pre and post" indicated that by the end of the project:

- more students reported having a daily newspaper in their homes;
- the typical student spent more time each day reading a newspaper;
- several sections of the newspaper were still read by only a few students;
- there was an increase in the students' ability to understand newspapers, and
- more students were convinced of the necessity of freedom of the press in a democracy.

There were no significant differences between the experimental class and a control group on changes in attitude towards seven selected concepts on a semantic differential over a three-month period.

No statistically significant differences were found between the experimental and control groups on difference scores between pre- and post-testing on the Gates-MacGinitie Reading Tests.

The project teacher thought that her students:

- gained in knowledge and communication arts;
- became more critical and careful readers;
- showed improvements in vocabulary; and
- generally did work of a high standard.

She noted that the material used was more real than that in textbooks, more relevant to the students, and that it was fun for the students to read a newspaper. Factors outside the project tended to interfere with its success, from the teacher's point of view.

To conclude, exposure to "A Newspaper in My Classroom" project by one class of Grade 5 students has not resulted in perceptible differences in performance in those facets measured in comparison with a control group. However, the results of a newspaper survey and the teacher's comments indicate that the project has had desirable effects on the students.

## INTRODUCTION

Over the last fifteen years, there has been a growing interest in Canada and the United States in the use of newspapers in classrooms to supplement textbooks.

Newspapers are "up-to-date" and contain news of current happenings while textbooks often are several years old. Many students find that reading a newspaper is more interesting than reading a textbook. Newspapers contain information pertinent to all subjects taught in school.

The volume of knowledge to be assimilated grows steadily. As a result, individuals must learn to read selectively. Newspapers condense this information. Many adults read little other than their daily newspapers. Therefore, it is important that students learn how to read, interpret, and use the information to be found in their daily newspapers.

At Laura Secord Elementary School, there was "A Newspaper in My Classroom" project conducted by a Grade 5 teacher with her class for four months, from February to June, 1972.

## OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the project were:

- To develop language arts skills, particularly analytical skills in reading, i.e., reading for meaning.
- To lead students to have a better understanding of a newspaper as a communication medium.
- To encourage students to read critically and selectively.
- To improve oral expression.
- To increase participation in class.
- To improve students' ability to express themselves in writing.
- To improve vocabulary.

## DESCRIPTION

During the period of the project, the newspaper supplemented the regular textbooks for language arts. The use of the newspaper in language arts periods varied from one-third to all of the time during the course of the program.

"The Vancouver Sun" supplied forty copies of this newspaper each Wednesday during the project.

The Canadian Daily Newspaper Publishers Association (CDNPA) was the source of a kit<sup>1</sup> which the teacher used in conducting the program.

At the beginning of the project, the newspaper was used primarily as a tool to learn about the newspaper itself. This included: who reads what sections, why there are different sections, newspaper vocabulary, how a story is set out, the 5 W's (who, what, when, where, and why), the pyramid style of writing, advertising - commercial and want ads.

This soon led to other activities: writing stories, ads, etc.; word activities; vocabulary enrichment; following a theme (i.e., collecting items on a subject over a period of time); cartooning; reporting on school events; watching "ships in port"; doing comparative shopping; debating on issues (such as rapid transit); picking a famous person and looking for news items about him over a period of time; criticizing an article or feature; interviewing people and writing this up as a report; writing a letter to the editor; and making graphs of spending, watching a stock rise and fall.

"The Vancouver Province" was also used sometimes to facilitate discussion of certain issues or sections of the paper. Students brought to class copies of a local newspaper - the "Highland Echo", Chinese and Italian newspapers, a high school paper, and historical artifacts (old newspapers).

"The Vancouver Sun" provided weekly an allotment of filmstrips and quizzes with teachers' guides known as "See and Think". This was geared mainly to current events but also contained a few undated feature sets, e.g., The Trash Explosion, and How to Read the Newspaper Intelligently. When the class had a fair knowledge of the newspaper, "See and Think" was used regularly.

#### EVALUATION

This evaluation of "A Newspaper in My Classroom" at Second School consists of five parts, one of which, the 1971 Student Census Project, was a follow-up on students who had previously taken part in such a program.

Students in the current study completed a questionnaire on newspapers, a semantic differential, and the Gates-MacGinitie Reading Tests at the beginning and at the end of the project.

The semantic differential and the Gates-MacGinitie Reading Tests were also completed by the pupils in another Grade 5 class at Second School selected to serve as a control group.

In addition, an assessment of the project by its teacher is presented.

1 Daily Newspapers in Education, Canadian Daily Newspaper Publishers Association, Information Services, 250 Bloor Street East, Suite 206, Toronto 285. Ontario. In Vancouver - Pacific Press. Promotion

I - NEWSPAPER QUESTIONNAIRE

A newspaper questionnaire designed by the project teacher was administered to the thirty students of the experimental class at the beginning and again at the end of the project.

A comparison of the pre- and post-test responses revealed the following information. (Appendix "A" contains a detailed listing of the results.)

While most students on both administrations of the questionnaire claimed that their homes regularly had daily newspapers, more students said this on the post-test than on the pre-test.

A slight increase was noted in the amount of time spent each day by the students reading newspapers. At the end of the project, a typical student was spending about fifteen minutes a day reading a newspaper.

There was consistency between the pre- and post-test responses concerning the parts of the paper read most often by the students - these sections have been ranked below.

<u>Section of Newspaper</u>	<u>Ranks</u>	
	<u>Pre-test</u>	<u>Post-test</u>
Sports	1	2
Comics	2	1
Weather news	3	3
Headlines	4	4
Advice columns	5	5
Political cartoons	*	6
News - local	*	7

Responses for other parts of the newspaper were too few to permit the awarding of ranks to those sections.

Prior to the project, nearly a third of the respondents said that they had had school studies on how to use the newspaper.

Generally, students reported that they found newspapers easier to understand after the newspaper project than they had before it. All but two students said that newspapers were "usually understood" or "easily understood".

The number of students who read the advertising in newspapers rose minimally from the pre- to post-testing. Almost two-thirds of the students reported reading the advertising "sometimes".

The students had little idea of the cost of advertising. On both administrations of the questionnaire, more than half of the students estimated the cost of a full-page advertisement as being less than one dollar.

\* Responses were too few to justify ranking



Four students on each administration of the questionnaire admitted having written a letter to a newspaper at some time.

At both the beginning and the end of the project, the newspaper considered to be the favourite of most of the students was "The Vancouver Sun".

By the end of the project, more students were convinced of the necessity of freedom of the press in a democracy.

In summary, by the end of the project:

- more students reported having a daily newspaper in their homes;
- the typical student spent more time each day reading a newspaper;
- several sections of the newspaper were still read by only a few students;
- there was an increase in the students' ability to understand newspapers; and
- more students were convinced of the necessity of freedom of the press in a democracy.

A semantic difference test was administered to measure changes in attitude towards seven concepts.

A seven-concept verbal instrument was administered to the experimental group in June of 1972. The concepts were "textbooks," "advertising," "magazines," "television," "newspapers," and "radio". A copy of the instrument is in Appendix "B".

Differences were calculated for each group on all concepts using "t" tests to determine if there were significant changes in the changes of the two groups shown in Table I.

TABLE I: A COMPARISON OF THE EXPERIMENTAL GROUP WITH A CONTROL GROUP ON SEVEN CONCEPTS IN MARCH AND JUNE.

	Experimental Group Mean Difference (N=29)
Textbooks	- 0.86
Books Other Than Textbooks	- 1.55
Advertising	6.52
Magazines	- 0.48
Television	3.97
Newspapers	0.00
Radio	- 0.31

\* n.s.d. - no significant difference

There were no significant differences in attitude towards seven selected concepts nor was there any consistent pattern.

Possibly, the three-month period was too short to detectable changes to take place with the instrument by some of the students.

DIFFERENTIAL

an instrument designed to measure concepts.

the semantic differential was administered to control group students in March and again in June. The concepts tested were: "textbooks," "books other than textbooks," "magazines," "television," "newspapers," and "radio." For all concepts can be found in

the differences between the pre- and post-test scores. The difference scores were compared by a t-test to determine statistically significant differences. The results of these comparisons are

"NEWSPAPER IN MY CLASSROOM" PROJECT  
COMPARISON OF DIFFERENCE SCORES OBTAINED  
ON THE SEMANTIC DIFFERENTIAL, ADMINISTERED

Control Group Mean Difference (N=25)	"t" Statistic	
0.28	0.46	n.s.d.*
- 0.60	0.31	n.s.d.*
1.96	1.05	n.s.d.*
2.00	0.82	n.s.d.*
- 1.00	1.30	n.s.d.*
4.56	1.29	n.s.d.*
1.04	0.38	n.s.d.*

ence  
 differences between the groups on changes in concepts over a period of three months; and to the changes that did occur.

ERIC  
 Full Text Provided by ERIC  
 The time between testings was too short for the apparent misunderstanding of the

### III - GATES-MacGINITIE READING TESTS

All Grade 5 students in Vancouver public schools wrote the Gates-MacGinitie Reading Tests, Survey D, Form 1M, in November, 1971. The results of this served as a pre-test for the experimental and control groups in this study. The Gates-MacGinitie Reading Tests, Survey D, Form 2M, were administered to these two groups of students as a post-test in June, 1972.

Mean standard scores were calculated for each group on both administrations of the tests. The mean standard scores were translated to percentiles and grade equivalents using the publisher's norms. Differences were calculated between standard scores obtained on the pre- and post-tests by each group. Comparisons were made between the difference scores of the experimental and control groups to determine by "t" tests if there were significant differences between them. These results are all shown in Table II.

No statistically significant differences were found between the groups in gains on any of the subtests or total score of the Gates-MacGinitie Reading Tests. However, only on the Comprehension subtest and total score were the gains made by the experimental group greater than those of the control group.

Over the course of the school year, students in both classes made gains in all three areas assessed - Speed and Accuracy, Vocabulary, and Comprehension. At the time of the post-testing in June, 1972, both classes were performing in these three areas at levels higher than their actual grade placement of 5.9.

From these results, it would appear that the achievement gains in reading during the 1971-72 school year, of those students who were in the "A Newspaper in My Classroom" project and of those in a control group were similar and reasonable.

TABLE II: MEAN RATINGS OF EXPERIMENTAL AND CONTROL STUDENTS AND A COMPARISON OF THEIR DIFFERENCE SCORES ON THE GATES-MACGINNITIE READING TESTS ADMINISTERED IN NOVEMBER, 1971, AND JUNE, 1972.

	Speed and Accuracy (Correct)	Vocabulary	Comprehension	Total (Mean Raw Scores Only)
<b>Experimental Class</b>	(N=29)	(N=29)	(N=28)	(N=28)
Pre-Test	52.1	51.4	48.6	74.4
1. Standard Score	58	56	44	
2. Percentile	5.5	5.3	4.8	
3. Grade Equivalent				
<b>Experimental Class</b>	(N=29)	(N=29)	(N=28)	(N=28)
Post-Test	54.8	51.1	50.9	87.0
1. Standard Score	69	54	53	
2. Percentile	7.4	6.0	6.0	
3. Grade Equivalent				
<b>Control Class</b>	(N=28)	(N=28)	(N=28)	(N=28)
Pre-Test	49.3	51.9	50.6	75.9
1. Standard Score	47	57	52	
2. Percentile	4.8	5.4	5.2	
3. Grade Equivalent				
<b>Control Class</b>	(N=28)	(N=28)	(N=28)	(N=28)
Post-Test	54.0	52.8	51.5	88.4
1. Standard Score	66	61	56	
2. Percentile	7.1	6.3	6.1	
3. Grade Equivalent				
<b>Difference Between the Means of the Difference Scores</b>	2.0	1.2	1.4	0.1
	1.11	0.79	1.23	0.03
	n.s.d.*	n.s.d.*	n.s.d.*	n.s.d.*

\* n.s.d. = no significant difference

#### IV - ASSESSMENT OF THE PROGRAM BY ITS TEACHER

The teacher who conducted the "A Newspaper in My Classroom" project at Second School offered the following comments as her evaluation of the program.

1. Pupil achievement - "I felt that the children gained in knowledge and in communication arts. They have become more critical and careful readers. There was increased awareness of vocabulary with improvements for most students. (Quality of work (on projects, etc.) were generally high."
2. Teacher's functions - "There were no changes in class control or in the role of the teacher. Teacher time in class was not affected since this program served as the framework for the core program. Planning and marking time were relatively the same as usual."
3. Materials - "The materials used (sets of newspapers) were ordered too frequently. Only one set of newspapers per week was required for the first six to eight weeks; ten to fifteen sets per week would have been sufficient for the rest of the time. The 'See and Think' program was very good - however, it was not always easy to get our portion from the high school.\*"
4. Program's major strengths - "The material used is more real and relevant to the student. New papers each week mean that the 'text-book' doesn't become stale. It's fun to read a newspaper. (For me, it's a multi-subject textbook.)"
5. Program's major weaknesses - "I would like to have felt better organized and less buffeted by conflicting programs and school happenings - we had several timetable upheavals, field trips, etc. Perhaps the program should have been accepted by the rest of the team (the other Grade 5 teachers) - a better use of material would have resulted. I would have liked to structure my program - break it into smaller, more manageable sections. Several things that I had planned to do (and have done in the past) were not done, i.e., trips to Vancouver Technical School's graphics shop, and to a local (community) newspaper. I chose not to continue with the program when the student teacher came, and this was a mistake."

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\* There were three levels of "See and Think" filmstrips - senior high, junior high, and elementary - all of which were sent to the local high school from which the elementary filmstrip was to be forwarded to Second School.

## V - STUDENT CENSUS PROJECT 1971

At the time of the official Canadian Census in June, 1971, a Student Census Project was also conducted. Vancouver schools were included in a representative sample of Canadian schools.

In May, 1972, statistics from the Student Census became available, which enabled a comparison of students in individual schools with all students:

- under the jurisdiction of their school board,
- within their province, and
- in Canada.

Data received concerning students in "Grade 6 or below" at Secord School provided some information pertinent to this evaluation.

Some of the Grade 6 students at Secord School would have been in the "A Newspaper in My Classroom" project one year prior to taking part in the Student Census Project. The Census information could be considered to be a partial follow-up on students who had taken part in the project previously. There is no way of separating the data of those Grade 6 students at Secord School who were in the project from those who weren't.

Pertinent data from the Census are shown in Table III.

From these data it can be seen that fewer than one-half of the Secord students spoke English as their first language. English was the first language spoken by more than 70% of the students in the other groups. Perhaps this situation influenced other responses by the Secord students.

The majority of the Secord students said that they spent twenty or more hours a week watching television - 20% more Secord students said this than any of the other groups.

However, a larger percentage of Secord students read five or more books per month than did students in the other groups.

A smaller percentage of Secord students than students in the other groups responded to all but three categories regarding the sections of the newspaper that they read. Secord students responded similarly to the other groups on the "Comics" and "Sports" sections which were the parts of the newspaper most often read. Secord students made a remarkably lower response to "World News" and "Local News". More Secord students responded to "Other" than did the students in the other groups.

TABLE III: A COMPARISON OF STUDENTS FROM SECORD SCHOOL IN "GRADE 6 OR BELOW" WITH OTHER GROUPS OF STUDENTS ON CERTAIN DATA FROM THE 1971 STUDENT CENSUS PROJECT.

Category	Secord School %	Vancouver School District %	Province of B.C. %	Canada %
1. First language spoken was English	45.54	71.50	82.55	74.20
2. Hours per week spent watching television				
0- 4 hours	.00	6.95	7.81	6.22
5- 9 hours	7.92	14.32	15.68	13.65
10-14 hours	11.88	19.27	21.01	19.34
15-19 hours	15.84	18.20	17.82	18.14
20+ hours	59.41	36.76	33.18	38.36
3. Number of books read per month by each student				
None	12.87	10.25	8.91	9.50
1-2	23.76	28.79	31.95	30.03
3-4	20.79	24.63	25.56	26.73
5-6	14.85	12.87	12.45	13.14
7 or more	22.77	18.48	16.48	16.04
4. Sections of newspaper read by students				
None	.00	4.10	3.47	4.99
Comic	75.25	75.93	76.52	72.15
Editorial	.99	3.91	3.92	5.47
Financial	.99	3.13	3.10	2.73
Local news	21.78	29.35	30.58	30.26
Sports	45.54	45.73	43.56	44.93
Women's	5.94	7.29	7.06	11.61
World news	12.87	32.62	32.12	29.27
Other	14.85	11.57	13.86	12.40

### SUMMARY

In North America over the last fifteen years, there has been a growing interest in the use of newspapers to supplement textbooks.

At Laura Secord Elementary School, there was "A Newspaper in My Classroom" project conducted by a Grade 5 teacher with her class for four months, from February to June, 1972. During the period of the project, the newspaper supplemented the regular textbooks for language arts. The use of the newspaper in language arts periods varied from one-third to all of the time during the course of the program.

Part of the evaluation of this alternate school program involved comparison of the project group (experimental) with a control group. For this, a similar Grade 5 class at Secord School was selected.

A newspaper questionnaire was administered to the thirty students of the experimental class at the beginning and at the end of the project. A comparison of the results showed that by the end of the project: more students reported having a daily newspaper in their homes; the typical student spent more time each day reading a newspaper; several sections of the newspaper were still read by only a few students; there was an increase in students' ability to understand newspapers; and, more students were convinced of the necessity of freedom of the press in a democracy.

A semantic differential was administered to the experimental and control groups in March and again in June, 1972, to measure changes in attitude towards seven selected concepts. The concepts included were: "textbooks," "books other than textbooks," "advertising," "magazines," "television," "newspapers," and "radio". There were no significant differences between the groups in their changes in attitude towards these concepts over the three-month period.

The students in both groups wrote the Gates-MacGinitie Reading Tests in November, 1971 (Form D1M) and in June, 1972 (Form D2M). No statistically significant differences were found between the groups on any of the subtests. Both groups of students made gains in all three areas assessed - Speed and Accuracy, Vocabulary, and Comprehension - and, in June, were performing at levels higher than their grade placement of 5.9 (publisher's norms).

The project teacher thought that her students - gained in knowledge and communication arts, became more critical and careful readers, showed improvements in vocabulary, and generally did work of a high standard. She noted that the material used was more real than that in textbooks, more relevant to the students, and that it was fun for the students to read a newspaper. Factors outside the project tended to interfere with its success, from the teacher's point of view.

The Student Census, conducted in the spring of 1971, provided information on Secord students in "Grade 6 or below", some of whom would have been in the "A Newspaper in My Classroom" project one year earlier. Thus, it could be considered to be a partial follow-up of students previously in this project. In comparison with all students in "Grade 6 or below" - from

Vancouver, from B.C., and from Canada, Secord students fared in pertinent respects as follows: fewer Secord students spoke English as their first language; more Secord students watched television twenty or more hours a week; a larger percentage of Secord students read five or more books per month; and a smaller percentage of Secord students responded to all but three categories regarding the sections of the newspaper that they read (they were similar on "Comics" and "Sports", and higher on "Other").

To conclude, exposure to "A Newspaper in My Classroom" project by one class of Grade 5 students has not resulted in perceptible differences in performance in those facets measured in comparison with a control group. However, the results of a newspaper survey and the teacher's comments indicate that the project has had desirable effects on the students.

APPENDIX "A" - RESULTS OF NEWSPAPER QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Do you regularly have a daily newspaper in your home?

	<u>Pre-test</u>	<u>Post-test</u>
Yes	19	25
No	11	4
No response		1

2. How much time do you spend each day reading a newspaper?

	<u>Pre-test</u>	<u>Post-test</u>
Less than 5 minutes	5	2
5 to 15 minutes	16	13
15 to 30 minutes	5	8
Over 30 minutes	4	7

3. Which parts of the paper do you most often read? (Number in order of interest. Do not mark those you never read.)

	<u>Pre-test</u>	<u>Post-test</u>
Sports	1	2
Editorials	*	*
Comics	2	1
Headlines	4	4
News - local	*	7
News - national	*	*
News - international	*	*
Financial pages	*	*
Political cartoons	*	6
Advice columns	5	5
Weather news	3	3
Women's news	*	*

4. Have you ever had any school studies on how to use the newspaper?

	<u>Pre-test</u>	<u>Post-test</u>
Yes	9	30
No	21	0

5. In YOUR opinion, newspapers are:

	<u>Pre-test</u>	<u>Post-test</u>
Too hard to understand	6	2
Usually understood	15	16
Easily understood	9	12

---

\* Response too minimal to permit awarding rank.

6. How often do you read the advertising?

	<u>Pre-test</u>	<u>Post-test</u>
Never	4	2
Sometimes	17	19
Usually	9	9

7. How much do you think a full-page ad costs for one day?

	<u>Pre-test</u>	<u>Post-test</u>
Less than \$1.00	18	18
More than \$1.00	9	10
No usable response	3	2

8. Have you ever written a letter to a newspaper?

	<u>Pre-test</u>	<u>Post-test</u>
Yes	4	4
No	26	26

9. What is your favourite newspaper?

The pre- and post-test results were the same.

First choice (by wide margin) - The Vancouver Sun  
 Second choice - The Vancouver Province

10. How necessary do you think freedom of the press is in a democracy?

	<u>Pre-test</u>	<u>Post-test</u>
Very necessary	7	15
Quite necessary	10	12
Not necessary	13	3

APPENDIX "B" - DIRECTIONS AND FORM USED FOR EACH OF  
SEVEN CONCEPTS ON THE SEMANTIC DIFFERENTIAL

The Semantic Differential is a technique designed to measure your attitudes toward the following seven topics: Textbooks, Books other than Textbooks, Advertising, Magazines, Television, Newspapers, and Radio.

You are requested to make an "X" mark where you believe the topic belongs between each pair of opposing adjectives. It is essential that ONE "X" mark be indicated between EVERY pair of adjectives, even though you may be uncertain where it belongs.

sick	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	healthy
pleasing	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	displeasing
interesting	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	boring
ugly	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	beautiful
happy	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	sad
good	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	bad
hazy	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	clear
meaningful	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	meaningless
relaxed	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	tense
likeable	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	dislikeable