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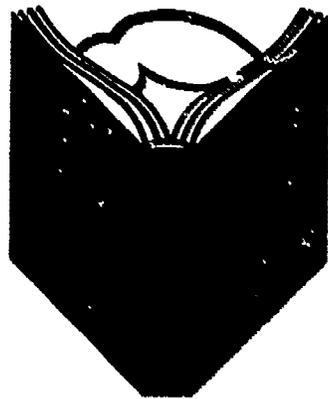
ABSTRACT

One of a series of special reports on current trends in school policies and programs, this publication is designed to provide school practitioners and others concerned with education with current information on problems which are the core of the constantly changing education scene. This special report focuses on reading programs throughout the country and contains samples of programs that are working. One chapter identifies and describes the elements most often found in effective programs. An in-depth look at the methodology debate on the best way to teach reading is provided. The problems of teacher training, the escalating use of volunteers in reading programs, the use and abuses of standardized tests, the dyslexic child, the public relations dimensions of a reading program, and numerous other aspects associated with reading instruction are also examined. (TO)

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# READING: ISSUES AND ACTIONS

CURRENT TRENDS  
in School Policies & Programs

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## Table of Contents



# READING: ISSUES AND ACTIONS

## **CURRENT TRENDS in School Policies & Programs**

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Overview .....	5
Chapter 1. The Federal Role: Rhetoric and Right To Read .....	8
Chapter 2. The Role of the States .....	14
Chapter 3. What's Happening in the Schools .....	21
Chapter 4. The Great Methodology Debate .....	32
Chapter 5. Building a Successful Reading Program .....	37
Chapter 6. The Use and Abuse of Tests .....	48
Chapter 7. The Great Void: Training for Teachers .....	53
Chapter 8. Volunteers and Reading Success .....	56
Chapter 9. Reading and Public Relations .....	61

# Acknowledgments

*Reading: Issues and Actions* is one of a series of special reports on current trends in school policies and programs. The purpose of the series is to provide school practitioners at all levels, and others concerned with education, with the most up-to-date information on problems which are at the core of today's constantly changing education scene.

*Reading: Issues and Actions* was written by Roger Dixon of Plainwell, Mich., with assistance from Ben Brodinsky of Old Saybrook, Conn., and Neild Oldham of New London, Conn. The report was edited by J. William Jones of Philadelphia, Pa. It was developed by the Education U.S.A. Special Reports staff: Roy K. Wilson, Editorial Director, and Cynthia C. Menand, Director of Editorial Services. Special research and production assistance was provided by Lyn Broad of Reston, Va.

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## Overview

In 1970, an *Education U.S.A.* Special Report on the reading crisis in the nation's schools observed:

The grim facts speak for themselves. Masses of American students are coming out of the public schools unable to function effectively because of reading deficiencies. And the federal government is using its national platform to spotlight the failure. As a result, the reading issue is currently the most publicized failure in education.

About the same time, the late U.S. Comr. of Education James E. Allen, trying to invoke a national crusade against illiteracy during the 1970s, proclaimed over and over again that there was no excuse for the scandalous record of reading failure in the nation's schools.

Since that time, lawmakers in Washington have been under considerable pressure from constituents back home to do something about "the national reading problem." They have considered everything from a mandated 40 minutes of daily reading instruction in every first- and second-grade classroom in the country to the creation of a national Reading Corps modeled after the Peace Corps.

Yet, critics of Congressional and Administration inaction on education in general and reading in particular are quick to remind the nation that little has been done to alleviate this crisis of monumental proportions.

Sen. Thomas Eagleton, D-Mo., charged in April 1973: "There are an estimated 3 million adults who are totally unable to read and write and another 20 million who read so poorly that they are classified as 'functional illiterates' . . . and 10 million children and teenagers in elementary and secondary schools throughout the country have severe reading deficiencies."

And said Sen. Edward Kennedy, D-Mass., also in 1973: "As a people, as a government and as a nation, we have failed to make the right to read a part of our heritage."

Backing them up are statistics such as those compiled by Louis Harris and Associates in 1970 for the now defunct National Reading Council to determine the "survival" literacy rate in the nation. Harris found: "A total of 4.3 million Americans fall into the 'Low Survival Threshold' group, 7.1 million into the 'Questionable Survival Threshold' group, and 18.5 million into the 'Marginal Survival Threshold' group."

Survival literacy was determined by the ability to fill out five simulated application forms for a social security number, a bank loan, public assistance, Medicaid and a driver's license. Those in the low survival threshold group got 20% or more of the form questions incorrect, while those in the marginal survival threshold got 10% or more incorrect.

In May 1974, the National Center for Health Statistics reported that from literacy tests administered to a selected sample of 6,768 youths from 1966 through 1970 it has been determined that about one million American youths ages 12 to 17 cannot read as well as the average fourth grader and can thus be called illiterate.

As one result of statistics such as these, students and parents and state governments across the nation have taken action where Congress has failed. In California, a student, using the name "Peter Doe" to protect his identity, is suing the San Francisco public schools and the state for \$1 million in damages because, he contends, he was graduated from high school with a fifth-grade reading ability.

Across the country, 28% of the parents interviewed in 1973 in the Fifth Annual Gallup Poll of Public Attitudes Toward Education said they believed a parent should be able to sue a school district "if a student of normal intelligence and without physical disabilities reaches the sixth grade without being able to read." Said Gallup: "If even 1 in 100 holds to this view, future trouble may be in store for the schools."

And it's not just the rank and file of parents across the land who are beginning to assume a more militant posture toward the teaching of reading in the schools. There is criticism from parents in high places, too. Said Sen. Peter Dominick, R-Colo., during a Senate subcommittee hearing in 1973: "I have a lot of trouble understanding why a teacher having a group of 5- and 6-year-olds is unable to teach them how to read. I have trouble with my own son. What is going on in the schools?"

## ENTER ACCOUNTABILITY

As this kind of criticism builds in the homes, in the halls of Congress and in state legislatures, a new word — foreboding to some, a panacea to others — appears with more and more regularity on the educational scene. It's "accountability," and it means that schools and school districts must improve the basic skill scores of their students or face a penalty, usually where it hurts the most — in the pocketbook.

According to Phyllis Hawthorne of the Cooperative Accountability Project (CAP), a federally funded, three-year project in state accountability, most states now have or are planning an assessment program. For example, CAP data indicates Minnesota, Pennsylvania, Michigan, Colorado, Florida, California, Connecticut, and Texas all have operating assessment programs, and Michigan, Florida, Maryland and Colorado have added the concept of legislated accountability.

The CAP report "Legislation By The States: Accountability and Assessment In Education" (April 1973), indicates that 39 of the 50 states already had assessment legislation on the books or were contemplating such during 1973. The implications of both assessment and accountability for local school districts are both numerous and debatable. However, one fact appears certain: the local board of education, administration and faculty are going to be held more responsible by their state education departments for producing reading progress in students.

Yet, is it really all that bad?

Are school reading programs being dragged kicking and screaming into the 20th century against the will of disinterested, unaccountable teachers and fat cat, unreachable administrators?

Are reading programs in the nation's schools really the total failure that so many proclaim them to be?

After an extensive, two-year search for the answer to this question, the editors of this *Education U.S.A.* Special Report find that the answer is an emphatic "no."

This conclusion is based in part on:

- Research for this report that shows there are hundreds, perhaps thousands, of exemplary reading programs in the schools across this nation. They are all producing positive results. Some, of course, are small, but some are dramatic. Most are somewhere in between. And many states are finally beginning to tackle the reading problem, too.
- 1970 census figures that reveal that illiteracy for all persons 14 years and older in the U.S. was cut in half during the 1960s, as 1.2 million individuals learned to read and write for the first time.
- The 1972 report of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) on reading by the Education Commission of the States (ECS) that failed to provide the negative conclusions that many expected. In fact, the results suggested strongly that the reading problem, although formidable, may not be as great as many persons had believed. According to J. Stanley Ahmann, National Assessment staff director for ECS, the results were a "pleasant surprise."

Ahmann said the test makers had expected most of the approximately 100,000 students tested (from ages 13 to 35) to be able to answer correctly some 50% of the test exercises. Yet, the final rate of success was about 70%.

While the NAEP report came under considerable fire from those who contended it understated the reading problem in the U.S. with too optimistic an interpretation of the results, the report did not proclaim the nation's reading problem was under control or that easy solutions were in sight. It said simply in its summary:

Though the study of reading and the reading process has yielded much valuable information in the last decade, there is still a great deal to be learned about how people read and how best to help children acquire reading skills.

And there was still another form of optimism uncovered in the research for this Special Report.

It came from educators responding from across the country to survey questionnaires. And it was not based on statistics or methodology or test results. It was based on a human, interpersonal feeling that reading involves not only numbers and methods, but human beings, too.

The questionnaires told *Education U.S.A.* that administrators and teachers are beginning to find that reading can be a fun thing for young people, a happy experience, a warm, rewarding part of their lives. They reported consistently about a "love for reading" and perhaps nothing signified this new awareness more than the report from Mesa, Ariz., that reading aides are not selected for their college degrees or previous teaching experience, but for the extent of their "human compassion" and the brightness of the "twinkle in their eyes."

Yet, the problem is still a monumental one. There is, unquestionably, still one very long way to go before the gains of individual schools and districts can be projected nationwide into a positive, prolonged upswing in the literacy level of the schoolchildren and adults of the United States.

But the signs appear unmistakable that at long last the accent is on reading respectability in the schools. And that's what this Special Report is all about.

The editors of *Education U.S.A.* have delved deeply into reading programs into almost every state in the country, and samples of those that appear to be working are presented in the pages that follow. They are presented from the national level, the state level and the local school level.

There is a special chapter that identifies and describes the elements found most prevalent as the nation's schools attempt to build effective reading programs. And there is an in-depth look at the great methodology debate on just which way is best to teach a child how to read.

The editors of *Education U.S.A.* also look into the problems of teacher training, the escalating use of volunteer in reading programs, the uses and abuses of standardized tests, the dyslexic child, the public relations dimensions of a reading program, and many other aspects associated with education's drive toward better reading instruction in the schools.

Obviously, there is no one, easy answer to the problem of teaching children to read. If there were, this Special Report would be unnecessary. Teachers, principals, parents, methodology, environment and the children themselves all play important roles in a successful reading program.

And just as obviously, there is no one faction to blame for the poor results of school reading programs through the 1960s. As John Ott'ra, former U.S. Comr. of Education, summed it up in December 1973:

"I do not intend to apportion blame for the existence of the reading problem. Regardless of who is at fault, the problem will not be solved by blaming someone. Our need is to define the problem and concentrate all our efforts on its solution."

This is exactly what this Special Report attempts to do.

## Chapter 1



# The Federal Role: Rhetoric and Right To Read

The date was Sept. 23, 1969, and former U.S. Comr. of Education James E. Allen set an historic goal for the U.S. Office of Education and the nation's schools: "We should immediately set for ourselves the goal of assuring that by the end of the 1970s the right to read shall be a reality for all — that no one shall be leaving our schools without the skill and the desire necessary to read to the full limits of his capability."

Allen, in a speech that day before the National Assn. of State Boards of Education, announced the beginning of a program that since has become one of the most highly publicized and under financed federal efforts in educational history: Right To Read.

Designed to make maximum use of all possible public and private resources, the Right To Read effort is aimed toward achieving highly ambitious goals: insuring that by 1980, 99% of all people under 16 years of age living in the United States and 90% of all those over 16 will possess and use literacy skills.

"We're really serious about this goal of ending illiteracy by the 1980s," says Right To Read Director Ruth Love Holloway, "It is a massive effort, not just here in Washington, D.C., but in every school district across the country."

"The enthusiasm coming out of the states is tremendous," she adds. "We're giving more than just dollars. We're giving leadership to show how things can be done effectively. Money alone doesn't do it. We're giving structure."

Yet, despite Holloway's optimistic outlook, others aren't so sure. Columnist James J. Kilpatrick says bluntly: "A glum impression cannot be dispelled that the program functions chiefly as a bonanza for bureaucrats, professional grantsmen, paper-shuffling pedagogs, the salesmen of educational gimmickery, and the devisers of tests testing other people's tests."

Simon Beagle, chairman of the American Federation of Teachers National Council for Effective

Schools, casting an incredulous eye at Right To Reads lofty goal of eliminating illiteracy by 1980, says tersely: "Who is kidding whom?" And Sen. Eagleton, looking at the Nixon Administration's promise of \$200 million in 1970 for Right To Read and the actual budget of \$8 million to \$12 million, calls the effort simply "a sham."

Yet, in the face of this criticism, Holloway is undaunted. She contends: "Sixty-two percent of our school-based demonstration programs made month-to-month progress in 1972-73, and the community-based programs are also progressing." Testing of 20,000 Right To Read children nationwide, she said, revealed an average gain of 1.1 years, compared with an average gain of 0.6 years in comparable children not involved in Right To Read.

Deputy Director Ed Cain echoes Holloway's comments, as he elaborates on Right To Read's efforts and goals, which he sees being achieved through correcting the educational system that produces nonreaders.

"We're not just interested in bringing kids up to grade level in reading," he says, explaining that this can be little more than a "self-defeating process", which doesn't change the educational system that created the problem in the first place.

"We want to make learning a constant factor," says Cain, who feels one of the ways to accomplish this goal is to change the present system by working with a total community concept, involving not only the states and local school districts, but all segments of society — public and private — in the process.

According to Holloway, the major question is: "Can Right To Read do the job with the resources it has available?" And the answer she quickly adds, is "Yes."

"In order to accomplish the Right To Read goal," she says, "the existing problem must be corrected and the schools must be changed so as to prevent massive difficulty," and teacher training

institutions must be influenced "to change their standards and their ways of training teachers in reading instruction."

She contends that people will make the difference since major emphasis is being placed on training existing school staff rather than adding large numbers of personnel. Staff development, which focuses on the needs of teachers, librarians, special aides, and parents, is a significant aspect of the Right To Read program.

The overall Right To Read effort is aimed at eventually achieving what USOE officials call the "multiplier effect," which it is hoped, will involve every school system and administrator in the nation. The program's aim is the development of a cadre of reading specialists at the state level to provide training and leadership for schools throughout their state until eventually every district in the nation is involved in the Right To Read effort.

Yet, such a goal is still light years away from reality. In a city like Philadelphia, for instance, only two schools out of 280 are involved specifically in the Right To Read program.

In its first three years, Right To Read has been a three-fold effort: funding school and community-based demonstration projects; fostering Right To Read staffs and programs in the state education agencies; and strengthening the reading component of other USOE programs.

Currently, there are 106 Right To Read projects in schools, K-12, and 74 community programs serving dropouts, the unemployed, mothers on welfare, prison inmates, etc. These demonstration projects are intended to test ways of upgrading reading instruction through staff development and use of new methods and materials. Technical assistance is provided by some 90 Right To Read consultants and the national staff. Instruments have been developed to assess reading needs and appraise progress. The Right To Read program also administers about 50 projects funded through the Emergency School Aid Act of 1972. More than 1,000 teachers have been trained under this authority. The goal of these projects, which involve almost 35,000 minority and other children in integrated schools, is to effect gains of 1 to 1.5 years in word recognition, vocabulary and other skills among 70% to 80% of the students.

The Right To Read program has been accepted by 31 state education agencies, and 20 governors have declared Right To Read a statewide school priority. These states have surveyed teacher training and pupil needs and prepared action plans

which include workshops for training local Right To Read leadership. The targets of these efforts are more than 1,200 districts enrolling more than 37 million students.

Within USOE, the Right To Read staff has tried to influence activities under ESEA, the Education of the Handicapped Act, Vocational Education Act and other legislations whose total funding is \$500 million annually. Right To Read support for state programs is on a competitive basis in the hope that all states will develop at least a provisional or experimental program. About two-thirds of the school-based demonstration projects and half the community-based ones are being shifted to total local funding.

## RIGHT TO READ BELIEVES

Right To Read operates under eight basic assumptions USOE feels are valid:

1. All but 1% of the population can be taught to read.
2. Parents have the right to expect that each one of their children will learn how to read.
3. Drastic reform is necessary of that part of the educational system which has so consistently produced a large number of functionally illiterate individuals.
4. The needed reform is apparently not something that can be purchased because no solution appears to be for sale. Money alone will not solve the problem, and the solution will need to be built rather than bought.
5. The needed reform must be comprehensive in that rural as well as urban, small as well as large, and non-public as well as public school districts are served equally.
6. The needed reform must be systematic and pervasive.
7. The plan for reform must be replicable.
8. The plan for reform must have clearly stated objectives, defined action steps, the necessary human and dollar resources, a broad base of support, and a limited amount of time in which to complete the task.

## RIGHT TO READ STRATEGY

Schools involved in the program spend most of the first year analyzing where they are in reading programming and accomplishment, what resources they have, what proficiency they want to achieve, what skills the teachers need to develop, and how they will accomplish these objectives.

Some key requirements for participating schools include: conducting a needs assessment of the current program, utilizing a local unit task force for program planning, staff development, student evaluation, use of the diagnostic/prescriptive approach to reading instruction, parent participation, and on-going evaluation.

Each of the 244 centers presently involved in the effort has the goal of planning the best possible program for its particular needs through the use of Right To Read materials, information and assistance.

Each site has a representative unit task force responsible for planning and implementing the program, which stresses parental and community involvement and the use of local resources. Emphasis is also placed on diagnostic-prescriptive and individualized instruction using multiple reading methods.

For school administrators interested in improving their reading programs, but fearful of increased costs at the local level after Right To Read funding ceases, one of the most important aspects of the plan is the focus on development of existing staff so an effective reading program will be able to continue when federal funding stops.

In addition to its efforts in the school and community-based sites, Right To Read is also funding a number of special projects. Some current ones include assessment of reading proficiency in 17-year-olds to determine tasks necessary for functional literacy; materials and guidelines to help meet the needs of capable disadvantaged children whose reading problems cannot be helped by regular classroom teachers; preparation of TV scripts for adult bilingual education, and establishment of a reading program for children using TV as the instructional medium.

## STATE LEADERSHIP CRITICAL

Perhaps the most important element in the overall success of the Right To Read program is the involvement of the state departments of education, which will be responsible for training the initial

cadre of reading specialists and providing leadership and support for the local school districts.

Holloway makes the state role clear: "The state must provide much more than a policy statement — much more than an *offer* of assistance, if *requested*. This must be an aggressive state initiative, aimed at assisting each adult and each child in every community through a program based upon diagnosis of the existing reading programs and reading problems of each local unit, a prescription for needed changes, and access to necessary resources, so that the goals can and will be met."

According to Holloway, "The mere fact that reading is being taught by individual teachers in a school district does not prove the existence of a reading program. 'Program' connotes a unified and pervasive effort in a predetermined direction."

To be a true instructional program in reading, she feels the school must include three components: a specified curriculum (*i.e.*, what is to be taught), recommended methodology (*i.e.*, how it is that the curriculum components may best be taught), and a defined, complete system of organizational procedure and administrative practices.

## FUTURE DIRECTIONS

As for the future of the Right To Read program, Holloway outlines the following priorities:

- A series of "on-the-job literacy programs" for adults in business and industry around the country. These programs, she said, would develop a "special kind of relationship within industry" whereby employees would be trained to tutor other employees in developing better reading skills. One company, the Xerox Corp., she said, already has plans for 250 Right To Read programs in its branches and offices around the nation.
- A series of national "adult academies," modeled on the Peace Corps, where "the young, the old and the retired," Holloway said, "will join the academies and give us a year of their lives to teach other adults to read." These academies, she said, could be located in libraries, churches, community facilities — almost anyplace. In them, tutors, specially trained, would spend from 3 to 10 hours a week "working to eliminate illiteracy in this country."

- The distribution of "parent kits," for parents of preschool children, to encourage more parents to begin to help their children with reading readiness right in the home. Such kits, Holloway said, could make a dramatic impact on the problem of reading readiness on the inner-city child.
- A program to evaluate how schools of education are teaching teachers to teach reading. "We want to find out what they're teaching," the Right To Read director said, "and we want to find out who's teaching it, how much follow-up there is, and how much time is spent with kids." When such questions are answered, she said, the project will launch "demonstration efforts" throughout the country with the cooperation of college deans, principals and teachers to teach reading teachers how to teach.
- A "multimedia package" of Right To Read program materials, prepared especially for big cities and state departments of education. This package, she said, will deal with the diversity and complexity of such large educational jurisdictions as states and big cities as they cope with teaching pupils of many different needs, environments and ability levels. The package, she said, would literally be a "how-to" manual on the teaching of reading.
- Production of 25 half-hour television programs to teach reading. One series will be in English, another in Spanish. Both are intended for adult viewers and will include teachers' guides, student workbooks and other materials. The programs will be available in reel-to-reel and video-cassette form to public TV broadcasters and other agencies. Pilot programs will be tested and evaluated in Right To Read projects and others funded by USOE's Division of Adult Education.

Business and industry must become heavily involved in a "national movement to eliminate illiteracy," Holloway says, in discussing Right To Read's new thrust. She says one of the principal strategies of the Right To Read program is to have "the private sector and government come together to marshal their forces" to attack the problem of illiteracy.

The Right To Read Program, she adds, currently is involved in a "national search of effective reading programs," intended to uncover the most successful processes. Already, she said, certain characteristics are becoming evident in successful reading programs. "Almost every program that worked well," she contends, "had some kind of peer teaching involved," leading educators to begin to study far more closely the effect of having older children teach younger children to read. Also in effective programs, she said, "almost every child underwent a diagnosis of what his needs were," lending credence to the theory that individual needs assessment is an absolute necessity in a successful reading program.

## READING AND ESEA

Title VII, of the Education Amendments of 1974, which sets up a National Reading Improvement Program, represents the most comprehensive attack yet by the federal government on the reading problem. It is larger, and its direction more specific, than the current Right To Read program.

Title VII's potential funding level over a four-year period — although even the most wide-eyed optimists concede that appropriations rarely come close to authorizations — is a staggering \$414 million, beginning with \$53 million for 1974-75 and escalating to \$110 million for 1975-76. This compares with the present funding level of approximately \$12 million for Right To Read.

The aim of the National Reading Improvement Program, according to U.S. Comr. of Education Terrel H. Bell, is "to continue, expand and follow up work begun by the Right To Read office . . . to strengthen reading instruction for all age groups — preschool children, elementary school students with serious reading deficiencies, and youth and adults who are no longer in school but still need help."

Title VII places emphasis on three major areas: innovative reading projects in individual schools, comprehensive programs emanating from state departments of education, and "special emphasis" areas, such as use of reading specialists, in-service training for reading teachers and specialists, and "reading academies" for out-of-school youth and adults.

Bell says that under the new reading program the shotgun approach of funding innovative programs as they spring up around the country will be a thing of the past. He puts it this way: "Unlike an

inexperienced farmer who may haphazardly scatter handfuls of seed over a patch of plowed ground, USOE is going to plant these funds deliberately, in definite rows -- because that's the only way to know where to look to see whether something is growing.

"If we're going to be accountable for our actions," he says, "if we want real, measurable results, and if we really want to help people -- and we want to do all of these things -- we must know where we're planting."

And according to very specific Title VII legislation, the seeds must be a combination of many components. Speaking of applications for innovative programs under the title, the legislation stipulates 14 areas which must be involved, including:

- ✓ Diagnostic testing before the program begins, periodic testing during the project, and testing for evaluation at the end.
- ✓ Publication of test results by grade level and by school.
- ✓ Sharing of test results with parents or guardians.
- ✓ Preservice training for teachers and teacher aides.
- ✓ Direct involvement of school board members, community representatives, and cultural institutions such as libraries and museums.
- ✓ Participation of children in nonprofit private elementary schools.

The legislation also mandates that any plan submitted must include specific objectives to obtain a goal of having all participants read at or above grade level by the end of grade three.

As Bell says in somewhat of an understatement: "The innovative projects for reading improvement won't be vague, random efforts."

The second major thrust of the Title VII legislation is to strengthen and improve the role of the state department of education in the reading process. The bill calls upon the state "to provide leadership in the planning, improving, execution and evaluation of reading programs in elementary schools," to "develop comprehensive programs to improve reading proficiency and instruction in reading," and to "assist in the training of special reading personnel."

One of the chief provisions of the legislation is for the establishment of an Advisory Council on Reading in every state receiving federal funds. Composition of the council must include school and college and university representatives, parents, professional educators and reading experts. The councils will have wide-ranging duties, including:

- Coordinating reading improvement activities throughout the state.
- Providing technical assistance to local school districts drawing up their own reading improvement programs.
- Advising the state department of education on the approval or rejection of local reading programs.
- Overseeing the evaluation of federally funded reading programs throughout the state.

In the third major thrust of Title VII, the legislation seeks to promote, among other things, the use of trained reading teachers and highly trained reading specialists.

Language in this area of the legislation calls for projects to include the use of a reading specialist for *all* children in first and second grades, and for children with "reading problems" in grades three through six. It also calls for "intensive vacation reading programs" for elementary school children reading below grade level.

And it directs states to certify reading specialists and to help local school districts in determining where and how their services may be used most effectively.

In another "special emphasis" area, Title VII legislation directs that in-service training be made available on public television to help teachers become better reading instructors or even certified reading specialists.

Under the law, according to Bell, state and local school districts will be "encouraged to allow academic credit to their teachers for TV courses in reading instruction, just as they do for courses they attend at colleges and universities."

Still another special emphasis section of the Education Amendments of 1974 calls for establishment, through both state departments and local school districts, of "reading academies," in which volunteers will help tutor out-of-school youth and adults, not only in schools, but also in community facilities such as churches, clubs, community centers and libraries.

Technical assistance for these academies and their volunteers will be provided by USOE through a system of regional service centers whose job it will be to aid the function of the academies throughout the country.

So Congress has, at long last, enacted into law a comprehensive attack on the nation's reading problems. Yet there was, as this Special Report went to press, considerable debate on the funding level that would finally be allotted to this nation-

wide movement against illiteracy. Skeptics contended that with the prevailing anti-inflation mood in Washington during the latter part of 1974, Title VII would be lucky to get away with an appropriation of \$15 million of its total \$53 million authorization.

But despite the debate, a federal blueprint finally began to emerge; a blueprint charting a slow but specific course toward literacy for legions of future Johnnies who still have a chance to learn to read.



## It Can Be Done

"I have certain beliefs about reading, as stark as the granite of Vermont and as earthy as the soil of Missouri. These beliefs may provide an approach toward meeting the problem of a national reading disaster." So said Paul D. Leedy, director of the Graduate Reading Education Program, American U. Leedy's statement before a Senate Subcommittee on Education (September 19, 1973) follows.

I believe that there are more people in America who have learned to read than those who suffer reading failure. They constitute a mighty army of potential instructional power.

I believe that most nonreaders want to learn to read, if only they had some sympathetic help and genuine interest shown in them by another human being.

I believe that we have millions of human beings in this country who would willingly give of their time, effort, energy, and ability to teach a child or an adult to read if only they had the proper organizational structure to corral their collective energies into one massive national effort. We have such wasted "teaching power" in this Nation that if it were all enlisted in one massive thrust reading disability we might be amazed at what would happen. We have millions of students on our college campuses who never thought of teaching a child to read. They can. I've seen them do it.

Housewives, fathers, mothers can teach — not their own child — but a neighbor's son or daughter. Teaching your "own" never works; but you can teach a neighbor's child, if he will teach yours. We have organizations: Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, youth groups, adult organizations. They certainly should be able to do more than collect cans and bottles and papers for community projects, laudable as these efforts may be. Let's put our effort where the greatest need is!

I believe that the Government cannot purchase reading remediation by programs imposed from without. Government can have a powerful influence in spearheading the drive, as it has demonstrably spearheaded many in the face of a national emergency, and been successful in the effort. Why not a governmental thrust to underwrite a massive campaign in the Laubach tradition: "Each one, teach one!" Administratively someone ought to be able to devise the logistics for such a program of offensive educational warfare.

## Chapter 2



# The Role of the States

As the nation's reading problems generate heat in the halls of Congress, the temperature is rising, too, in many of the state legislatures around the country. As a result, legislatures and state boards of education are becoming increasingly involved in providing leadership, monetary support and technical assistance to local school districts for reading curriculum development.

As California Gov. Ronald Reagan said in replying to an *Education U.S.A.* survey for this Special Report:

I agree with those who are concerned about the fact that there are so many functionally illiterate people in the United States. We can ill afford such a situation in a free and open society which requires a reasonably informed and enlightened citizenry for its very existence. Since functionally illiterate people are unable to meet fully their responsibilities to society or to share fully in the economic and social benefits to be derived from it, they become a burden to all of us. Because of its many implications and ramifications, this is a problem requiring immediate and continuing attention.

### MINNESOTA: THE MODEL STATE

One of the states that has tackled the problem directly and with considerable success is Minnesota, whose program of leadership development led to the state's being selected in 1973 as the nationwide model for all other states participating in the federal Right To Read program.

The Minnesota Plan is a four-phase, three and one-half year effort scheduled to end on December 31, 1975. It has two basic dimensions:

1. Making direct technical assistance available to each public school district and to each private and parochial school administrative unit, for a

sustained period of time, so that a total reading program can be built which will meet the state's "criteria of excellence."

2. Encouraging the identification of a director of reading for each local education agency to be prepared by the state Right To Read staff with the full range of competencies to assure that local reading programs will be directed by a highly qualified person.

Participation in Minnesota's program requires a formal commitment from each school district and board of education. The state's initial commitment plan has since been adopted nationally by Right To Read and is a part of its recommended program for developing a comprehensive reading effort at the local level. The commitment requested from Minnesota education agencies includes:

1. Authorization of a local Right To Read advisory council consisting of 9 to 13 members, including: a board member, school administrator, teacher(s), parent(s), librarian(s), and representatives of local organizations.
2. Adoption of a formal resolution affirming reading as a priority.
3. Designation of a reading director, who is given the authority necessary to execute the school's reading program. Although the directorship need not be a full-time position, sufficient time must be provided by the board of education to allow the director to perform his or her duties. The director may be a principal, curriculum coordinator, remedial reading teacher, classroom teacher, or any other qualified person.
4. Provision of time for the local reading director to attend a series of 30 full-day work

sessions, with the state underwriting transportation, food and lodging costs and the local district assuming the salary costs of the reading director.

5. Support of the teaching and administrative staffs prior to entering into a Minnesota Right To Read local education agency contract.

In Minnesota, one of the primary evaluation tools is a 14-page document "State of Minnesota Criteria of Excellence in Reading Programing," approved by the state's Right To Read advisory council on November 20, 1972. The document provides a definition of what the state believes should characterize a quality reading program, and it is against these 24 criteria that the local advisory councils are requested to evaluate their programs.

Included among the 24 criteria for excellence are the following recommendations: coordination of all administrative facets of the reading curriculum; a complete testing system which includes the use of criterion-referenced measures; intensive, ongoing in-service education for the total certificated teaching, supportive, and administrative staffs; development of a cadre of trained volunteer reading helpers; inclusion of an adult basic education component; involvement and education of parents; and provision for the availability of the achievement levels of all pupils in reading by grade and/or age level.

Evaluation — by an outside agency — of the state program has also been a component of the Minnesota plan. The first such evaluation, prepared by the Dept. of Programs and Services of CTB/McGraw-Hill of Monterey, Calif., was released in late summer, 1973. The focus of the evaluation was on student achievement in reading, and criterion-referenced reading tests (the Prescriptive Reading Inventory) were administered on a pre-test/posttest basis to samples of Right To Read and non-Right To Read students in 22 Minnesota school districts in grades two, four and six.

While warning about the inadvisability of extending conclusions until more comprehensive, broadly based design could be incorporated, the researchers did conclude that the data gathered favored the Right To Read students.

Phase I of the Minnesota plan, which ended Dec. 31, 1972, included 19 public and three non-public schools (representing 39,095 pupils, 2,053 teachers, and all the adult illiterates within the boundaries of the participating schools). By 1973 (Phase II) the program had grown to include an additional

119 public school districts and 23 non-public schools. During the initial 12-month period after the program officially began, more than 30% of the state's public school districts committed themselves to participation, with total involvement including over 25% of the entire public and non-public student population in Minnesota.

Phase III and IV will be conducted in a like manner, attempting to increase the schools involved until every school in the state is participating by the conclusion of the Right To Read program in Minnesota in 1975. At that time, state leaders plan to take steps to institutionalize the operation to allow the local education agencies to continue and to refine their reading programs.

One key element of the Minnesota Right To Read program is strong public support from Gov. Wendell R. Anderson, as well as from a number of major educators, political leaders and a variety of special interest groups and educational organizations.

According to Hugh Schoephoerster, Minnesota Right To Read director, massive, formal public support by influential figures and organizations is critical to the success of Minnesota's program. He feels the strong stand taken by Gov. Anderson has been especially valuable in gaining backing for the state's reading program and cites the governor's Dec. 2, 1971, Schoolmen's Day address as an example of Anderson's support:

The diversity and complexity of the educational enterprise has made it difficult for the public to adequately assess school programs. Very seldom are specific, achievable goals identified and spoken of in a way that enlists public support and understanding and on which educators are willing to stand or fall. . . . I see in a Right To Read program the potential for a specific identifiable goal in education — a goal which is understood, which stands out clearly amidst the complexities of the many current education endeavors. It can be the rallying point for renewed confidence in our schools.

The Minnesota Right To Read staff views the reading program as a totality involving three major components: curriculum, method, and organization and administration. According to Schoephoerster, "Local education agencies can buy their curriculum and method from publishers and this they do, but they cannot buy organization and administration from a commercial source." This, he feels, can be provided, in part, by the state and

the Right To Read reading specialists.

The key ingredient, usually found missing in many earlier reform programs in reading education, is a systematic, comprehensive and unified plan of action coupled with a mobilization of massive public support in order to achieve the goal.

(For further information, contact Hugh Schoephoerster, Director, Right To Read Program, Dept. of Education, Capitol Square, 550 Cedar St., St. Paul, Minn. 55101.)

## NEW YORK'S PROJECT ALERT

Although New York is another funded Right To Read state and its education department offers many services similar to Minnesota's, special emphasis has been placed on a massive in-service training program for current teachers, in addition to stiffening certification requirements for all elementary teachers.

Based on a Regents' position paper on reading in July 1971 which cited improved teaching of reading as a top priority concern, the Bureau of Reading in the New York State Education Dept. (NYSED) created Project Reading Alert (*i.e.*, A Learning Enterprise to Retrain Teachers). The program is designed to provide training for teachers in the use of a diagnostic-prescriptive approach to individualized reading instruction. It entered its third phase of teacher training and work in the classroom on methods and diagnosis of reading during the 1972-73 school year.

Project Alert was designed to overcome the negative response to traditional in-service programs, which normally use outside experts for a short-term course having little emphasis on practical classroom demonstration, according to NYSED. Believing the use of local talent appeared to enhance the potential for in-service training, Project Alert officials organized the efforts of a core of trained reading specialists functioning in classrooms at the local level to generate and guide teacher self-improvement.

Additionally, the Reading Bureau prepared a reading resource kit -- now available for in-service programs to all districts in the state -- for use in each of the 50 districts initially selected for participation in the program. The multimedia kit contains six packages on exploring readiness skills, informal reading inventory, word recognition skills, listening, readability formula, and classroom management. It is designed to permit the teacher to select areas of interest and to work through the

readings, tasks and evaluations either singly or in interested groups.

The cadre of 50 reading consultants initiated their training under NYSED sponsorship during an intensive two-week session in March 1972. While there they explored the resource package, investigated diagnostic-prescriptive techniques and visited Albany area schools to observe the methods in practice, rehearsed the techniques they would need to act as trainers for teachers in their own districts, and worked on refining in-service models.

That summer, Phase II of the program also began as Title I funds were used to help finance the 50 specialists, who returned to their local communities to manage a summer instructional program for children and in-service training for 670 teachers. By fall of the 1972-73 school year, these teachers had been trained in the individualized learning procedures in reading, and massive teacher-training in the home districts began.

In Freeport, new elementary teachers are now introduced to their materials through in-service courses, where items from the state's reading resource kits are combined with those prepared by Freeport teachers. District officials claim good results from their efforts.

In North Syracuse, a team of reading teachers worked out their own resource kits, complete with cassettes, filmstrips and tapes, and have introduced the new materials to teachers at several schools.

At the regional Boards of Cooperative Educational Services, master copies of in-service resource kits for elementary teachers are available, and seven regional consultants in upstate New York and two in New York City are available to assist local districts in developing and evaluating programs, in-service education, and parent workshops.

Early evaluation of the Project Alert program was based on data collected from the project directors, project monitors, teachers and children. Included among the major conclusions of that evaluation were:

1. On an overall basis, children who participated in Project Alert summer programs made significant gains in reading as measured by pre- and post-reading tests. (Children took part in summer programs for an average time of 4.5 weeks and the average gain in reading scores was approximately 12.5 weeks.)
2. Reading directors reported they accomplished less than they planned in every area about which they were questioned.

3. Factors such as years of teaching and academic background were unrelated to the gains pupils made in reading.

Also in New York, as part of the Right To Read effort, schools are seeking to better inform parents about reading methods, problems and the meanings of test scores; public libraries are extending their programs to reach a wider variety of the state's citizens, including reservation Indians and inmates in prisons and county jails; and adult volunteers are being trained to go into the schools as reading helpers.

(For further information, contact Jame Algozzine, Chief, Bureau of Reading Education, U. of the State of New York, State Education Dept., Albany, N.Y. 12224.)

### MICHIGAN ASSESSMENT AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Michigan's State Board of Education (MSBE) has created what are perhaps the nation's most extensive, ongoing assessment and accountability programs, and each has strong ties with reading.

The Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP) was initiated by the state board, supported by the governor and funded by the legislature initially in 1969. The state board has adopted a six-step educational management system as a guide for improving Michigan education, and the Michigan plan is not only influencing the state's school districts, but also is making its impact felt across the nation, as it has implications for all the nation's schools.

The six steps of the Michigan plan include:

1. *The identification of common goals:* To date, MSBE has developed "Common Goals of Michigan Education" guidelines and has been encouraging local school districts to develop local goals.

2. *The development of performance objectives:* According to the state board, performance objectives are the "things children ought to know at various stages in their development — certain measures of performance." K-6 objectives in reading and math have already been approved for the purpose of assessment. In addition to these efforts, tests and performance objectives are now being developed by Michigan educators in other priority skills

areas, such as: science, social studies, fine arts, health education, physical education, and occupational skills.

3. *The assessment of educational needs:* Assessment tests of fourth- and seventh-grade students in reading and other areas have been conducted in Michigan, statewide since 1970, to provide a common educational needs assessment program for all of the more than 500 school districts in the state.

4. *The analysis of delivery systems:* MSBE says simply that if some children are not growing in some skills as they should, local educators are then in a better position to analyze the present educational services to see if better ways should be sought to help children learn.

5. *The evaluation and testing of these systems or programs:* The MSBE feels any changes in methods of instruction or educational services, based upon the analysis in step four, call for testing and evaluation to help local educators decide if those changes helped children learn better.

6. *Recommendations for educational improvement:* The recommendation phase completes the process of educational accountability in Michigan. The recommendations are to be made to local school district policy-makers to suggest the best means to help children learn better, based on the results of the previous steps of the program.

The results of the assessment tests are reported back to the local school districts so they can compare (1) how well they are achieving their educational goals in reading and math and (2) their students' scores with those of other students throughout the state.

The tests are moving from a norm-referenced base to a criterion-referenced format. At this time the test results are not used as a means of accountability for the local schools; however, the state has developed a program of accountability in compensatory education, which, according to Michael Hunter of the MSBE research staff, is having implications at the national level.

During the 1971-72 school year, under Section 3 of the State School Aid Act, the state legislature appropriated \$22.5 million for compensatory education. The 740 schools participating in the pro-

gram were selected on the basis of the composite achievement scores of their students on the 1970-71 MEAP, and the money (*i.e.*, \$200 per eligible pupil) was to be used to improve the reading and arithmetic skills of children with serious deficiencies in these areas. It could not be used to supplant local expenditures.

The section 3 program is a three-year performance contract between the local school district and the state, and each participating district had to submit a proposal describing its goals, objectives, and instructional processes. The minimum accomplishment objectives — at least a month's gain for every month of instruction — have been established as performance objectives for each student.

For each student achieving 75% of the accomplishment level, the school district would receive a full allocation per pupil for the following fiscal year. For each pupil achieving less than the minimum objective, the district would receive an amount proportional to the gains attained. Because of the late implementation of the compensatory education program, which wasn't funded until October 1971, the legislature authorized a one-year waiver of fiscal accountability so there was no penalty in the 1972-73 school year.

However, first year results were impressive. According to Hunter, speaking at Western Michigan U. in Kalamazoo, Mich., in October 1973, "Michigan has *the* Title I program in the United States" and is having a "tremendous impact on federal funding and programming."

The results of the first year's efforts showed:

1. Among the students with matched pre-and posttest scores, more than half achieved at or above the 100% accomplishment level of at least one month gain in achievement per month in the program.
2. Twenty-eight percent of the students achieved at or above the 200% accomplishment level.
3. Twelve percent of these students made the 300% of accomplishment level or above.
4. Sixty-six percent of the students, for whom matched pre-and posttest scores were available, achieved at the 75% or above level.

The State Dept. of Education concluded that these data indicate a large percentage of students who previously had performed below average can perform at an average or above average pace when

the programs are designed to meet their needs.

Yet, despite these impressive gains, the issue of financial accountability in Michigan is still impaled squarely on the horns of teacher opposition and public apathy. In fact, State Supt. John Porter, who was instrumental in launching the accountability process, said in May 1974 that he doesn't think it's going to work. Porter, speaking at an educational conference near Chicago, said that without considerably more public support he feared the whole accountability process in Michigan would come to a "screeching halt."

In departing from a prepared text to answer a question, Porter said hundreds of school districts around the state who volunteered to work up accountability models are "literally frozen" at steps two and three, which define objectives and tests to assess current needs. "What," he asked gloomily, "are they going to do when they reach four and five," which involve analysis of delivery systems and evaluation of how well the schools are meeting their objectives?

Although Porter lauded the educational gains coming out of the process and the increased emphasis it has placed on reading, he said he felt that actual accountability "can't succeed in the long run," because "people aren't willing to support it and won't put their necks out" when real accountability is on the line.

The superintendent said "professional educators are too powerful" and that teacher opposition eventually will scrap the plan. "I don't see our ever pulling it off politically," he said, adding later that for the accountability process to survive in Michigan, "I'm going to need far more support than I've been getting."

Porter cites as evidence of public apathy a statewide survey by Market Opinion Research, of Detroit, which revealed that only 4% of the general public questioned was aware of the existence of the accountability program and, perhaps even worse, little more than half the state's teachers (54%) expressed familiarity with the plan.

Nevertheless, the superintendent said, once the plan was explained by survey takers, 69% of the general public favored it. The state department of education is sending thousands of leaflets throughout the state explaining the six-step accountability process and seeking public support for it.

(For further information, contact Michael G. Hunter, Research Data and Evaluation Programs, Michigan Dept. of Education, Lansing, Mich.)

## READING ACHIEVEMENT IN COLORADO

The major assistance provided Colorado local school districts in improving remedial reading instruction began in 1969, according to Robert Chevront of the Compensatory Education Services Division of the Colorado Dept. of Education. In the May 1973 issue of *Education Colorado*, Chevront stated that the results of the Colorado General Assembly Education Achievement Act, (EAA) of 1969 have lead to a variety of conclusions for educators:

1. Poor readers should not be written off as helpless.
2. School districts need money to make significant changes in traditional practices, and these funds should be used to help retrain teachers and provide new materials and equipment.
3. Perhaps the exact method to be used with low-achieving students is less important than the fact that they receive attention which is related to their needs.

Funds appropriated under EAA were distributed among approximately 68 local districts in roughly four program types. Differing emphasis on providing remedial instruction was used for each program: *Program A* emphasized the utilization of adult teacher aides to assist the regular classroom teachers; *Program B* emphasized the use of commercially prepared instructional programs; *Program C* emphasized the use of teaching machines and programmed materials for the machines; and *Program D* represented a variety of different projects in five districts. State funding was maintained in approximately the same districts from fall 1969 until June 1972.

Thirteen projects in 60 districts were involved in the adult teacher aide program at an average per-pupil cost of \$185 for the three-year period. Chevront stated that the major reason for the aides was to provide greater personal attention to each student. In these projects elementary pupils showed a gain for 1972 of approximately 1.3 years and junior high students increased their reading ability by 2.9 years. Aides were not provided at the senior high level.

Two large districts participated in Program B, using commercially prepared reading instructional materials and methods. The average cost per pupil

for the three-year period was \$95. Conducted at the elementary level only in 1971-72, pupils showed an average gain of approximately one year.

Programmed teaching materials and machines were used in five different districts, with an average cost of \$221 per pupil. In Program C, students in elementary, junior high, and senior high grades were included in the project. Reading gains averaged approximately one year in the elementary, 1.1 years in the junior high, and 2.3 years in the senior high grades in 1971-72.

Five schools participated in the various Program D projects, which cost \$289 per pupil over the three-year period. Students in these programs gained an average of 1.3 years in the elementary and junior high grades and 2.3 years in the senior high grades. Included among the Program D projects was the pairing of older students with younger ones with the older student assisting the younger. Another district used the national Follow Through program principles to continue the work begun by Head Start in the elementary grades.

(For further information, contact Robert F. Chevront, Compensatory Education Services, Colorado Dept. of Education, Denver, Colo.).

## IN OTHER STATES

Many other state boards of education throughout the United States are also going beyond rhetoric and are attempting to provide leadership and/or additional monetary support for local school districts working to improve their reading programs. Included among these are:

- Mississippi, where an elective achievement testing program in reading, math and language was made available to all school districts beginning in 1970-71 and the state department of education has developed *Guidelines To Reading*, a document designed to provide ideas for reading teachers in grades 1-6, where reading is a compulsory subject.
- New Jersey, where the department of education conducted a statewide survey of reading practices K-12 to establish baseline data to use when planning future services and materials for local school districts. A recent state Supreme Court ruling has initiated a department study to define a "thorough and efficient" education program in reading and other curriculum areas, and field-testing of

in-service sessions on the diagnostic approach to classroom reading was underway in 1973. Also, reading supervisory certification requirements have been upgraded, effective July 1, 1975.

- **Nebraska**, where a number of reading projects have been developed under grants from Title III of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) and designated as model programs for adoption in other school districts. The model programs range from early childhood to high school, and as local school personnel identify their needs, the state can help by providing programs to fit these needs. The criteria for model programs require uniqueness, evaluation showing positive student gains in reading, low cost of adoption, and easy adoptability for other schools with similar needs.
- **Florida**, where reading was selected in 1972 as the first subject area to be assessed in the initial statewide objective-based test. The statewide assessment program resulted from the Accountability Act of 1971, which required that statewide objectives be established and student achievement of each objective be assessed. Floyd Christian, former commissioner of education, said in November 1972 that the ultimate effect of the assessment effort would be to provide information for tailoring instructional experiences to the specific needs of individual students.
- **Connecticut**, where the state has identified, through a statewide reading assessment in 1971-72, the state's most severe reading problems; has developed an instrument "Criteria For Assessing School Reading Programs" for local schools to use in evaluating and improving their reading programs, and has adopted a 12-point, 10-year plan to help the state's children read to their full potential.
- **Utah**, where the state law forbids the legislature or state board of education to prescribe textbooks. However, the state board has developed a comprehensive reading guide *Reading for Information and Enjoyment* and a *Reading Position Paper* for guidance of local school district personnel. Additionally, the state has developed a four-part *Reading Hand-*
- book*, which deals with teachers and students, diagnosis, vocabulary, functional reading, recreational reading, oral reading, reading in the content area, and writing and reading programs.
- **Maryland**, where responses from 11,000 state residents during an education needs assessment survey revealed that the primary concern of the citizenry was that their children learn to read. The survey was prompted by a 1971 state law requiring (1) school accountability and (2) that the state report in January 1975 on accomplishments for the 1973-74 school year. According to State Supt. of Public Instruction James A. Sensenbaugh, the high points of the new law include: accountability for the operation and management of the public schools; educational goals and objectives, subject areas including, but not limited to, reading, writing and math; programs for meeting needs based on priorities; evaluation programs; re-evaluation of programs, goals, objectives and guidelines; assistance and coordination; and a report and recommendations for changes in legislation.
- **Oregon**, where the state department of education has prepared a planning statement "Emphasis on Prevention - A Statement on the Teaching of Reading" for districts to use as a guide in developing their local plans for improving their reading program. Each district in the state has used the plan and filed a district reading plan with the state.
- **Arkansas**, where the state board has conducted a needs assessment program in grades 3, 4, 6, 8 and 9 and has prepared a guide book on reading, *READING: A Guide For Elementary Teachers*, to assist both elementary teachers and administrators.
- **Wisconsin**, where reading and mathematics were selected as the first areas to be assessed in the spring of 1973 following a mandate from the state legislature to do educational assessment. Additionally, the state has updated certification requirements for reading teachers and specialists and has changed the certification code to include course work in developmental reading for all teachers regardless of grade level or subject area.

## Chapter 3



# What's Happening in the Schools?

When Russian scientists successfully hurled a small metal ball into earth orbit in the fall of 1957, the historic radio signals from that first Sputnik signaled not only triumph for the U.S.S.R. but also trouble for the U.S. public schools.

Once Americans got over the shock of being beaten into space by a supposedly backward, ice-covered country of fur coats and salt mines, they began to take a deep, critical look at U.S. public schools.

They were searching for reasons why these schools, believed routinely for many years to be the best the world had to offer, hadn't turned out the scientific talent to orbit a satellite of their own.

But what they found was not that Johnny was having trouble with his science and physics. Far worse, they found that Johnny couldn't read. And ever since, as the iceberg of reading problems in the schools has come more and more into the public view, critics have been asking at an ever increasing rate: "What's happening in the schools."

What the public, parents and politicians alike want to know is whether reading programs are being developed that will produce positive, measured results, like a month's growth for each month of reading instruction. And if not, why not?

The answer, according to results from an *Education U.S.A.* survey of the nation's schools, is that extensive reading programs have been developed in most districts and many are beginning to produce results, even if an overall solution, particularly in the inner-city, is still a long way down the road.

For example, 62% of the schools responding to the survey indicated they now have either a coordinated K-12 (53%) or K-8 reading program, and many other schools indicated they were planning such an effort.

Additionally, 90% of the schools have conducted a recent assessment of their reading program, and 27% of them do so on a yearly basis. As

a result of these surveys, over 70% of the schools have instituted changes in their system, primarily through the expansion of their current programs to include more diversified individualized materials and of their staff to include more reading teachers and/or specialists.

Scores of schools have now developed or are working to create successful programs, and a few of those are discussed in the following pages.

### RICHMOND, VA.: 'STUDENTS CAN AND MUST LEARN TO READ'

... I have grown tired of hearing excuses as to why children in urban schools can't read. I don't believe any of them.

These words underlie a deep conviction of Thomas C. Little, superintendent of the Richmond, Va., public schools. And the conviction became the base for a direct, bold – and controversial – plan to teach reading to everyone enrolled in the schools.

The Richmond public schools enroll some 40,000 children in grades K-12. It is an urban district and in recent years has experienced the movement of large sections of the middle-class whites and some middle-class blacks to the suburbs. Nearly one-third of the children come from families whose incomes are at the poverty level. Overall, 75% of the students are black.

To Little, the mastery of reading and its allied skills is the basic problem confronting the children attending public schools. But here was what was happening to reading achievement in his schools.

In a citywide testing program conducted in the spring of 1972, the results of the sixth-grade tests indicated that approximately 11% were reading 4 years or more below grade level; 31% were 3 years or more below level; and 51% were 2 years or more below grade level. In the ninth grade, 54% of

the students and approximately 47% of the grade 11 students scored at or below the 25th percentile on the sequential tests of educational progress in reading (STEP).

According to Little, the factors which contributed to the reading problems were:

- There were no defined and consistent developmental programs to build reading skills
- Changing programs and approaches from level to level were confusing to children and left gaps in their reading skill development
- There were no means of checking on teacher efficiency in such a loosely defined program
- There could be little teacher in-service training for the teaching of reading with so many materials and so many approaches
- There were many materials of a book nature only, and few visual and correlated activities.

Supt. Little continues with the story:

In December 1972 I spoke at some length with the principals and other administrators in the Richmond public schools and told them that we would have to do a better job in reading. In January 1973 I outlined my concerns in writing to all our personnel, in these words:

... every professional employe in this system, including my immediate staff, will be evaluated next year on the basis of how well he contributes to improving the reading skills of our children. This does not mean there will be no other factors used in evaluation; it does mean the contribution to the reading program will be the main one. Quite frankly, I have grown tired of hearing excuses as to why children in urban schools can't read. I don't believe any of them. Further, I am also convinced that children from an urban school system, particularly children from a poverty background, need to read just as much if not more than the so-called advantaged children. . . .

Elementary teachers, in particular, are going to have to reorder their sense of priorities and use all the means at their disposal to achieve this goal. Those who administer and supervise the schools are going to have to set the example in

leadership and ordering of their own priorities. Our children deserve no less and, I feel, the parents and citizens of this city will support this emphasis on reading without regard to economic status, race or class.

Several weeks after having outlined our expectations with regard to reading, we put into writing the specific steps which we are implementing in our schools.

(1) All elementary school teachers, all middle-school teachers and all high school teachers of English, who have not satisfactorily completed a recent course in the teaching of reading or an approved in-service training program in the teaching of reading, will do so before the end of the 1973-74 school year. Those who do not do so will not be eligible for any salary increment or increase which might be offered.

Adequate opportunity for these teachers to enroll free of charge in either in-service training or college level classes will be provided. The in-service training programs in the teaching of reading will receive the first priority for funds from our new staff development program.

(2) Effective immediately, I have instructed our personnel department that they are not to employ any elementary school teacher, any middle school teacher or any high school teacher of English who has not completed or will not complete a course in the teaching of reading by the end of the first semester of the 1973-74 school year. This is a preemployment requirement which new employes shall complete at their own expense.

(3) The teaching of reading in the Richmond public schools will be conducted within the following framework:

a. Developmental reading will be taught in kindergarten through grade 5. Each principal will make appropriate groupings and vary the time allotted in the teaching of reading to each child according to the progress, or lack of it, which each child is showing.

b. At the end of grade 5, any child who is reading 2 or more years behind grade level will be retained in a holding class for 1 year. This class will be completely oriented around diagnostic and remedial reading.

c. In grades 6 through 8, any child found to be reading 2 or more years behind grade

level will have his schedule so adjusted that one-fourth to one-third of his school day is spent correcting this deficiency.

d. At the senior high school level, any student scoring in the 25th percentile or below shall schedule a special reading course as a part of his curriculum in addition to the regular requirements for graduation. This special reading course shall be continued throughout the pupil's high school career or until the deficiency is corrected, even if an additional year is spent for the student to graduate.

In summary, let me say that we have concluded that when all the rhetoric and furor subsides, when all the theses and dissertations have been evaluated, there are four factors over which the school has control which most directly influence success in reading. These are:

- (1) The creation of a wholesome learning environment.
- (2) The ability of the teacher.
- (3) The amount of time spent on direct reading activities.
- (4) The use of materials within the students' comprehension.

I am aware that there is much that the home can do to insure a child's success in reading or in any other school-related activity. In the urban school, however, many homes are not equipped with time or education to give this support to their children. Therefore, the schools must do the job.

There are many exemplary reading programs that have been developed by local school districts, either on their own or with financial or leadership assistance from state or federal agencies. However, from those reported here and as the result of the *Education U.S.A.* survey, a pattern of common elements seems to have developed in a majority of schools and school districts where students are experiencing reading success.

Elements found in most of the successful schools include:

- ✓ a needs assessment of the entire school system, as well as an assessment of individual student weakness;
- ✓ a multitext and materials approach, as opposed to reliance on a single commercial series of books;

- ✓ parent involvement through in-service meetings between school personnel and parents, home visitations and instruction in school-student needs, and the use of parents as paraprofessionals and/or volunteers;
- ✓ regular staff in-service training in reading methods, priorities, and objectives;
- ✓ follow-up assessment of programs and objectives to determine if the initial goals are being met and where new emphasis should be directed;
- ✓ a planned, systematic approach to attacking the reading problem;
- ✓ one-to-one help, where possible, with slow learners, especially through the use of volunteers, older students, and parents at home; program flexibility;
- ✓ and a commitment to reading as a priority, not just in English classes, but within the entire school system in all content areas.

### ... AND IT WORKED

During the 1973-74 school year, these specific implementations of the Richmond program were begun:

- Reading is now formally taught to kindergarten children who are ready to learn.
- A special reading class is required for fifth graders with substantial difficulties.
- Four elementary schools, one middle school and one high school now have special reading centers.
- Reading specialists assigned in each of the system's three geographical areas supervise and coordinate reading programs.
- A standard, phonics-based reading program (Lippincott) is in use in all elementary schools.
- Some 850 teachers have completed courses in the teaching of reading.

Teachers who lacked such a course received 1974-75 contracts at last year's salary levels

In August 1974, Little reported to the school board. He said there was "substantial progress . . . toward closing the gap between where our children are and where they should be." The rate of reading gain for a seven month period had almost doubled, going from an average gain of 4 months of reading improvement to a gain of 7 months under the new program. "In some cases," his report stated, "at both the middle and high school levels, classes of children gained three and four times their average gain during their preceding school year." And 12% (854 students) of those who completed the post-test were eligible for release from the program.

The range of average gain scores, by school, was from three months to one year, four months. The greatest gains were made in the middle schools, confirming "the wisdom of our pre-middle school holding classes," Little said.

Approximately \$1.4 million was spent on the program, of which \$250,000 was received from the State Board of Education. The program was conducted as a pilot program of the State Board of Education. A follow up on teacher-by-teacher results is projected to identify resource teachers who can assist others in learning from demonstrated successes.

The Richmond report concludes: "The overall decline in reading performance which so many of our children have shown has been arrested. . . . We have demonstrated that competent teachers, adequate materials, proper attitude and sufficient time can result in vast improvement. . . . We have made a substantial beginning in overcoming poor reading in Richmond."

#### DADE COUNTY, FLA DIAGNOSIS, INDIVIDUALIZATION

The Dade County Public School System (Miami) is the sixth largest in the nation and is located in a sprawling metropolis that encompasses farm lands and city ghettos, middle class suburbia and blue collar housing developments, and thousands of Cuban refugees.

In line with Florida State Dept. of Education guidance, the system has declared the improvement of reading competence as its number one priority for its 240,000 students.

Dade County's efforts to revise their reading curriculum began in 1968-69 when a reading task force of educators with expertise in reading instruction recommended the establishment of indi-

vidualized diagnostic-prescriptive, developmental reading programs. In 1970-71, they began compiling and releasing systemwide test scores, which indicated improvement was needed in basic skills instruction, including reading, in the system.

Dade County's reading push is a coordinated one, involving students from kindergarten through twelfth grade. For example, at the kindergarten level some 10,000 of the county's 12,000 five-year-olds in 161 of 173 elementary schools were involved during the 1973-74 school year in the Southwest Regional Laboratory's reading readiness program SWRL.

Initiated the previous year, the program, according to school officials, is highly popular with the staff and the board of education, which matched a \$50,000 federal grant for the program during the 1973-74 school year. The 12 other elementary schools are using other structured reading skill programs similar to SWRL.

A systems approach to reading is being used for first- through sixth-grade youngsters. This management technique permits the classroom teacher to diagnose what skills a student has and/or needs, prescribe the proper techniques for learning, and assess the results.

To get training in classroom management techniques, some 1200 elementary school teachers attended special summer training sessions in 1972 and 1973. During these sessions, the teachers were given instruction in how to rearrange their conventional classrooms into learning centers, group children according to skill development, work with one group while others work independently, use materials from a variety of sources, and keep the records necessary for a viable systems approach.

Teachers were not the only staff members involved in the special training either. A group of 100 principals and assistant principals were also involved in the summer learning programs. Included among their instruction were such practical items as how to get local carpet companies to donate remnants so youngsters could sit comfortably on the floor in small groups; how to get fathers and interested parent-teacher groups to build shelves for the stacks of materials used in systems approach, and how to function in a classroom where noise is not prohibited as youngsters tutor their peers.

Development of the systems approach has been one of the major tasks of the school system since 1970. During this time, staff members have worked to identify effective components of existing commercially produced materials and adapt them to

the sequential skill development program.

Performance objectives have also been established, and assessment items to measure these objectives were designed, field tested and revised. Finally, the objectives and assessment items were organized into usable banks, procedures for using the banks were developed, and staff development programs were organized.

In addition to regular teaching personnel, volunteers figure heavily in the Dade County systems approach. Parents, college students, and public school students – sometimes as young as fifth and sixth graders – are all being used to help the students improve their reading skills.

In 12 of the county's 39 junior high schools, High Intensity Reading Labs – each staffed by a teacher and an aide – were being established in late 1973. The other junior highs received an extra \$1,000 allocation for reading materials to begin reading lab establishment, with the promise that additional monies would be forthcoming when available. At the senior high level, Title I and Model Cities funds are also being used to establish similar reading labs.

(For further information, contact Richard O. White, Director, Dept. of Program Development, Dade County Public Schools, 1410 NE Second Avenue, Miami, Fla. 33132.)

#### ALBUQUERQUE, N.M.: ATTACK ON ILLITERACY

In 1972, 30% of the students at La Luz Elementary School in Albuquerque, N.M., couldn't read at all. In November 1973, the school was featured in *American Education* as having one of the best reading programs in the country.

Selected as a Right To Read school for the 1972-73 school year, La Luz was targeted as the pilot school for the entire Albuquerque School System due to its severe reading problems.

The La Luz school has a racially mixed student population of more than 600 students in grades K-6: 350 Mexican Americans, 250 whites, 35 Indians, and one black.

According to Henrietta Sanchez, who took over the La Luz principalship after the 1971-72 school year, parental involvement at the school was "almost nil." The teachers were frustrated in their efforts and they needed help in specific reading techniques. Student absenteeism was running as high as 40%, attitudes were poor, and an assessment test of student reading abilities showed discour-

agingly low scores, as most of the children were reading below their grade levels.

Her first effort at remodeling the school's program involved working with the teachers, explaining the Right To Read program and exchanging ideas. After her initial work with the staff, Sanchez identified 17 parents who were active in school affairs and immediately enlisted them as members of a planning team for the new program. Many of these parents were later signed on as paraprofessional classroom aides.

Broad-gauged testing of the La Luz students was then initiated to determine exactly at what level the youngsters were in their reading abilities. This initial testing was followed by additional testing by commercial and staff-designed instruments to further determine areas where student reading skills were weakest.

The next major move Sanchez initiated was communication with the school's parents.

"From the beginning we let the parents know where their children stood in reading skill. If they were poor readers, we were honest and told them so. We wanted them to know precisely the situation that confronted us. How could they possibly help in the workshop if they didn't have the true picture?" she said.

In a project summary by Right To Read, three of the strongest components for the success of the La Luz program were identified as staff development, a diagnostic-prescriptive approach and strong parental involvement.

Additionally, Sanchez mobilized another corps of reading aides to complement the parent paraprofessionals. This group initially included 31 tutors from the Special Education Department and 16 student teachers from the Education Department of the U. of New Mexico, six teaching assistants from Freedom High School, three interested girls from a nearby detention home and two girls from a neighborhood youth center. During the ensuing year, as many as 104 people were involved in teaching reading at the school.

And, the parents and the student aides proved highly effective in working on a one-to-one basis with the slow readers, especially in the lower grades.

Other actions included a program to enter the homes of preschool parents and provide four- and five-year-olds and their parents with prereading training, based on 45-minute instruction periods. Finally, Sanchez bought the most advanced teaching aids and materials she could.

Included among the changes noted after one

year in the program were:

1. Many children achieved a two-or three-grade jump in reading ability.
2. The first graders progressed fastest of all.
3. The high absenteeism rate plummeted, while low student morale and negative attitudes completely reversed themselves into positive factors at the school.

(For further information, contact Henrietta Sanchez, principal, La Luz Elementary School, North Area, Albuquerque Public Schools, Albuquerque, N.M.)

#### FORT WORTH, TEX.: READING SKILLS, K-12

In an attempt to head off reading problems before they develop, the majority of American schools have traditionally centered their reading instructional efforts at the elementary level, growing increasingly lax as students progress through the grades. However, as indicated by the *Education U.S.A.* survey, more and more administrators and teachers are working to develop a coordinated K-12 reading program that provides reading diagnosis and instruction throughout a student's school years.

Since 1970, the Fort Worth Independent School District has been making a concentrated effort in this area, with special emphasis on developing its reading program at the middle school and secondary levels.

At the elementary level, the school district has adopted six basal reading programs for students. In addition, spelling and English textbooks and a variety of auxiliary reading materials, used under a modified systems approach, are used to reinforce and extend the reading program skills.

The adoption of multiple textbooks and the use of the modified systems approach are designed to help the classroom teacher correlate the materials and approaches needed to meet the individual needs of the children, who operate on a continuum of 25 reading levels in the elementary schools, moving to new skill areas after they meet the objectives at their current level.

To continue this reading effort, the district has implemented a continuous progress skills program at the secondary level (grades 6-12). This program includes five major skill areas (*i.e.*, improving word study, reading with understanding, using various

reading speeds effectively, practicing study skills, and independent reading), with 800 subcategory skills and seven phase levels.

In the middle schools, grades six through eight, the teachers are organized into teams, including a team leader, regular teachers, resource teachers, instructional and clerical aides, and student and parent volunteers. During his years in the middle school, a pupil is rotated between skill areas, being placed where he needs the most assistance and on a phase level where he can function, regardless of his grade level.

In the high schools, reading centers have been created to help any pupil at any given time, regardless of his grade or ability level, and the teachers provide individualized programs for each student. The students work in small groups, moving from one assignment to the next under the direction of a teacher.

At the completion of each phase of his work, a pupil must demonstrate his ability to perform the objectives for that phase through teacher observations, standardized tests, informal tests, pupil questionnaires, charts, self-evaluation check lists and other evaluation methods.

According to reading consultant Ruby Mills, the program has been successful and better than the multiple text, basal reader program used in the elementary schools because students are allowed to work in skill areas on an individual need basis, as opposed to a sequential developmental pattern.

Assessments of the middle school and high school levels are conducted yearly, using a pre- and post-*Gates MacGinitie Reading Test* to help determine problem areas and to determine teaching strategy for coming years. Additional testing includes the use of various forms of the *Gray Oral Reading Test* for further specific diagnostic purposes, and school reading specialists administer the *Quick Test* and the *Cattell Culture Fair Test* to determine potential levels of students.

Teacher in-service training is also a major part of the Fort Worth program. Each reading consultant is responsible for several days of in-service programming of the 10 days required yearly.

The secondary reading teachers have also taken 14 hours of college graduate work to write a *Continuous-Progress Reading Program* for secondary schools and the *Basic Studies - Secondary Reading Program*.

Although the administration and faculty have been working for the past three years to develop the program, they are not finished yet. Included in their reading efforts for the 1973-74 school year

was development of a materials retrieval system and a criterion-referenced test based on the 800 objectives program.

(For further information, contact Ruby Mills, Reading Consultant, Fort Worth Independent School District, 3210 W. Lancaster, Fort Worth, Tex. 76107.)

### LINDEN, N.J.: CRITERION READING

A community located within 20 miles of New York City, Linden, N.J., has a population of more than 41,000 residents with a wide variety of ethnic backgrounds. Some 17,000 are either foreign born or the children of at least one foreign-born parent.

A district-wide student assessment using the Stanford Achievement Test indicated that most students in grades two through six scored below national norms.

Reading deficiencies increased as the students progressed through school, which indicated to school officials a strong need for emphasis at the readiness and prereading levels. During the 1971-72 school year, the school district received an initial allocation of \$107,923 from ESEA Title I funds and initiated its highly publicized "Criterion Reading Instructional Project".

Diagnostic tests and teacher recommendations were used to select the 220 students who participated in the first-year program.

Based on a "test-teach-test" method to identify individual student needs on a hierarchy of skills, small group or individualized instruction was the most commonly used teaching method. The team approach was used in some schools and learning centers were set up within the classes to teach or reinforce the skills which the assessment identified. Students who worked in small groups of two to four were then rotated from center to center as they completed assigned activities.

Among the wide variety of instructional materials and educational equipment used to supplement the criterion reading hierarchy of skills were: Language Masters, controlled readers, language development kits, individualized phonics kits, educational games and prepared and teacher-created tapes and cassettes.

During the project year, in-service teacher training included visits by Title I teachers to the classrooms throughout the district, workshops by publishing companies, and Title I staff programs designed to familiarize the teachers with the wide

variety of materials available.

A number of teachers aides were also used to assist in the program, as were parents of children either participating or eligible to participate in the program. These parents were organized at each school into a parent council, which met four times yearly to make recommendations to a city-wide executive parent council. The executive council met monthly with community and school personnel who acted in an advisory capacity.

During the first year of the program, two of the three major performance objectives were achieved and significant progress was made in the third. The primary objectives of the program, which were tested after seven months of participation, included:

1. Kindergarten students will demonstrate an average gain of seven months in reading as measured by the ABC Inventory. (In fact, the average gain was 14 months, double the objective level.)
2. A minimum of 80% of the first-grade students will demonstrate the cognitive skills required to gain one or more levels for readiness as measured by the Harrison-Stroud Reading Readiness Profile. (Of the 103 students who took the posttest, 95 met the desired proficiency level, representing 92% success.)
3. A minimum of 66% of the first-grade students will demonstrate the cognitive skills required for reading readiness as measured by their scoring at the sixtieth percentile or above on the individual subtests of the Harrison-Stroud Reading Readiness Profile. (Of the five areas tested, the students scored well above the minimum level in three of the five subtest areas, but did not meet the objective in two others.)

(For further information, contact Anita Schmidt, Office of the Superintendent, 16 W. Elizabeth Ave., Linden, N.J. 07036.)

### WICHITA, KAN.: CORRECTIVE READING

Although more than 50% of the schools responding to the *Education U.S.A.* survey indicated they had established a coordinated K-12 reading programs, Wichita's Corrective Reading Program is one of the oldest and most effective.

A metropolitan community of approximately 263,000 people, Wichita is located in south central Kansas. The public school system began its compensatory education program in the spring of 1966 as a Title I project with corrective reading as its focus. However, reading efforts have not been limited to just Title I students at Wichita, as teachers and students in other reading programs and curricula have benefited from spinoffs of this primary effort.

The major emphasis of the program is the correction reading problems in grades one, two and three. The program operates K-9.

In the 1973-74 school year, the system added to its staff a special reading teacher to direct even greater attention toward pupils with reading problems in grades 4-6.

Regular needs assessment, primarily through the use of standardized instruments like the Metropolitan Readiness Test in first grade, the Metropolitan Achievement Test in second grade, and the Iowa Test of Basic Skills in the upper grades, is a major part of the school's efforts. Individual deficiencies and instructional needs are assessed from pupil personnel records, the results of the tests and specific skill deficiencies indicated through criterion referenced tests. Basically, three levels of needs are identified: mild corrective, one to two years below grade level; corrective, over two years below grade level; and severe corrective, nonreading.

The program uses a team approach that combines the efforts of administrators, classroom teachers, nurses, counselors, parents, and special reading teachers to correct the deficiencies. Additionally, experimental approaches are encouraged and evaluated, with the more successful ones continued. Priority help is aimed at the mild corrective and corrective cases, especially in the lower grades, where school officials feel the students can best be prevented from developing even greater reading and social problems in the future.

Six major phases are included in the program: identification of students with reading problems, screening, diagnosis, scheduling, instruction and evaluation. Special reading teachers and paraprofessionals are assigned to one or more attendance centers to meet students in groups of two to eight for 30- to 60-minute periods three to five times per week.

Parents have also been a factor in the program since its inception, and the special reading teachers' time allocation requires 80% for pupil instruction and 20% for planning, visitations and conferences

with parents. Included among the procedures is the involvement of a Title I Parent Council in the recruitment of paraprofessional aides.

According to James Howell, director of reading, the system uses 850 volunteers K-12 and they have proven "very effective" in providing reading guidance for students and support for the teachers.

"Tutors receive 20 hours of preservice and 20 hours of in-service training," he said. "They work with individual students under the supervision of the classroom teacher."

Reading teachers in the system also receive extensive in-service training on an annual basis, including four in-service sessions after school, paid summer curriculum workshops, and an annual in-service session in the system's Reading Services Center.

"We have not eliminated any of the systems that we are using," said Howell. "It is our experience that the teacher - not materials - is the critical factor. Most of our programs are eclectic at the teacher's discretion."

(For further information, contact James Howell, Director of Reading, Wichita Public Schools, Community Education Center, 1847 N. Chautauqua, Wichita, Kan. 67214.)

## MANHATTAN: SUCCESS IN THE INNER CITY

Manhattan's P.S. 11 (K-5) in Chelsea is an unlikely candidate for national recognition. A hard-core inner-city school, with an average class size of 32, the building is old and the pupils are both poor (*i.e.*, approximately 80% qualify for free lunch.) and racially mixed. Roughly half are Puerto Rican and 17% are black.

However, following a nation-wide search for schools with proven success in teaching poor children to read well in 1970-71 by George Weber of the Council for Basic Education (CBE), P.S. 11 was selected as one of four outstanding inner-city school in the country. (*n.b.*, The others were the John H. Finley School (P.S. 129) in Manhattan, Woodland School in Kansas City, and the Ann Street School in Los Angeles.)

According to the results of regular evaluation of pupil progress, on-the-site visitations by Weber, and test scores on a culturally unbiased instrument devised and field tested in advance by Weber, the students at P.S. 11 were achieving reading success significantly higher than others in "typical inner-city schools". For example, 42% to 46% of the

third-graders tested scored at the fourth grade or higher level on a national norm basis, compared with the 15% to 25% normally found in such schools.

Although constructed in 1925, P.S. 11 is a clean, orderly and business-like school with an optimistic atmosphere, according to Weber. Murray A. Goldberg, principal, is highly concerned with the school and its reading program. He runs a "tight ship" and operates from a well organized base.

The school's teachers have a great deal of freedom in selecting materials and programs, since P.S. 11 has no single reading program. Eight or nine sets of reading materials are available to the instructors, including the Scott, Foresman basals, the Bank Street readers, the Science Research Associates' *We Are Black* series, SRA's reading laboratory the McCormick-Mathers phonics workbooks, and a variety of other commercial materials, games and teacher-created materials. In addition to a large school library, every classroom has a library of its own with a wide variety of storybooks.

Students are grouped on a carefully constructed heterogeneous basis, ranked in terms of reading achievement and assigned to classes by random distribution of each of the various achievement groups. The school provides additional help for the regular classroom teacher through the use of supplementary "cluster teachers" (i.e., a fourth teacher for every three classes), who visit each of their three classes 1.5 hours daily and either instructs the class or aides the regular teacher by working with groups of students within the class.

A specialized reading teacher works with the poorer reading students in groups of six during two 45-minute sessions weekly, and she uses a large variety of phonics materials not used in the regular classrooms. Her efforts, as well as those of the regular classroom teachers, focus on individualization, with diagnosis of pupil ability a key element in the program. Regular classroom reading instruction includes from 1.5 to 2 hours a day of work.

"At P.S. 11 there is the order and purpose of a well run school. High expectations and concern for every pupil are reflected in many things, including the atmosphere of individualization. Most of all, there is an obvious emphasis on early reading achievement and the importance given to phonics instruction," said Weber.

(For further information, contact Murray A. Goldberg, Principal, P.S. 11, Manhattan, 320 W. 21st St., New York, N.Y. 10011.)

## EVANSVILLE-VANDERBURGH, IND.: SUMMER TELEVISION PROJECT

Officials in the Evansville-Vanderburgh (Ind.) Schools became increasingly concerned in the late 1960s with student learning losses during the summer vacation months, especially in reading and mathematics. Comprehensive educational studies and an extensive examination of local school records reinforced their feeling that something must be done to help students avoid losing during the summer much of what they learned during the school year.

Their concern extended beyond just the poor readers, who often had the opportunity to attend remedial classes during the summer. According to school officials, there was no accommodation to help all children to maintain their learning achievement during the summer months.

With financial aid through Title III, school reading specialists initiated an ambitious project to develop reading and mathematics instruction for all youngsters – not just those in the local school district – during summer vacation. (An initial grant of \$153,257 was approved in May 1970. Since then, more than \$440,000 has been awarded to the school district to continue development of the project.)

The project had three major goals: to maintain basic academic skills over the summer months, to involve parents in the learning process and to involve teachers in reading in-service training.

Since it first initiated its project, the district has produced five color television programs for students in grades two through nine. Additional materials developed by the district include a brochure, a 30-minute program for parents entitled *Tips for Parents of Preschoolers*, and a *Reading In-Service Television Series* for teachers, which consists of ten half-hour programs that present practical ideas and techniques to help teachers meet the needs of today's students.

Arrangements were made with educational and commercial television stations throughout Indiana to telecast the programs. In an attempt to inform as many people as possible of the special programs, an intensive information campaign was conducted by disseminating information about the project to all principals and superintendents in the state prior to the start of each series.

During the project period, 66,000 workbooks to be read at home while reviewing the programs were sold to youngsters, and commercial TV advertising executives estimated that for every child who

purchased a book there were ten more watching without workbooks. Workbooks were available for each series and contained materials designed to help maintain the skills the students already have, as well as to enhance their normal learning rate. An estimated 3,000 teachers viewed the *Reading In-Service Series* and 10,000 parents watched the *Tips for Parents of Preschoolers*.

Evaluation results have proven the effectiveness of the program. For instance, a study of approximately 25,000 first-grade children in a control and an experimental group showed that first graders normally lose two months in reading achievement during the summer. But children watching over half of the 40 telecasts in the *Ride the Reading Rocket* series gained a full month in reading achievement during the summer.

Pre- and posttests, using the Nelson Reading Tests, of third and fourth grade students watching *Up Up and Away* showed a mean gain of 1.6 months of reading achievement during the summer, and the math program studies produced even more impressive results.

Positive comments by the thousands were forwarded from parents and teachers who participated in the program or had children who did so. On a questionnaire, 75% of the teachers responded that in-service training via television was effective.

One of the key items of interest for local school district personnel is the exportability factor built into the project. The television programs have been produced on video tape and can be distributed to other areas. Currently available are *Ride the Reading Rocket* and *Summer Journal*, which cost \$2,500 to lease for broadcast on the air or \$7,200 to purchase as 40 half-hour U-Matic Videocassette lessons. The *Catch A Bubble* series is also ready for distribution. The preview materials and programs are being distributed by the Great Plains National Instructional Television, Library, P.O. Box 80669, Lincoln, Neb. 68501.

The program has proven so effective that the Evansville-Vanderburgh Schools were selected to receive an "Educational Pacesetter Award" for their efforts by USOE. According to Joy Tredway, Evansville-Vanderburgh reading clinician, the school district will continue televising the various series locally, since they have been so effective, even though the system must pay for the television time itself.

(For further information, contact Jack Humphrey, Summer TV Project Director, Reading Center, Evansville-Vanderburgh School Corp.,

Administration Building, 1 SE 9th St., Evansville, Ind. 47708.)

## NEW LONDON: STRESSING THE JOY OF READING

Telephone directories, bird feeders and a walk around the block are among the resources that New London (Conn.) Public Schools use to teach children to read. The New London reading program in the primary grades is built around a commercially produced basal reader series, according to Alice M. Neilan, assistant superintendent. That is just the core, however, and teachers are encouraged to use any and all devices their ingenuity can construct — not only to teach children how to read, but to instill in them a desire to read.

Neilan, a former English and reading teacher, feels strongly about imparting the joys of reading to youngsters. There are fundamental skills that are necessary and must be taught, she says, but the successful teachers transmit this knowledge well mixed with the excitement of reading.

When this is done, the pupil does not develop the feeling that reading is either boring or difficult. "Children should have opportunities for joy so they remember that, rather than tests and drills," Ms. Neilan says.

"Basically, the teacher is the most important element," she says. "The problem always is that there is not enough material at any given time. So our teachers make their own materials and they show a tremendous amount of ingenuity."

If a student is having difficulty with the alphabet, a teacher may take a telephone directory and devise simple teaching procedures utilizing this resource. The pupil might be asked to find names that begin with the same letter his name does. He notes whether it is near the front, in the middle or near the end of the phone book.

Teachers strive to develop material from the child's background. A first grade might go for a walk for which the teacher will set a particular theme, such as "kinds of homes people live in." The illustrations in the basal readers may show a particular type of home not readily identifiable by the pupils. New London is a small, core city with many older two- or three-family homes and apartments. The different kinds of homes are pointed out as the pupils walk along. Upon return to the classroom they "write" a report by dictating to the teacher what they saw. The teacher writes the

report on the blackboard using words that are being studied:

"We saw a high rise."

"We saw a very old house."

"We saw a new apartment house."

In some classes youngsters have made bird feeders out of pine cones and in still others pupils have been "turned on" to reading with the use of recipes for food they like. The point of all this activity is to use material the child is interested in for its own sake. A reading program needs that "concrete relationship," Ms. Neilan says.

"Who has a name that begins with a sound like 'B'?" the teacher asks. Billy stands up. "Anyone else?" Bob stands up. In such simple ways, New London teachers continually relate what is being taught to the pupil's life.

The point, Neilan notes, is that pupils have "immediate personal input." The approach fulfills a prime dictum of many reading specialists: The reading material being used must be of direct interest to the pupil.

(For further information, contact Alice M. Neilan, Assistant Superintendent of Schools, New London, Conn. 06320.)

#### BOURNE, MASS: INSERVICE TRAINING

Intensive, continuing in-service training is the hallmark of the reading instruction efforts in the Bourne (Mass.) Public School system.

"The best place to learn is on the job," Raymond L. Matthews, reading coordinator in Bourne, believes. Reading teachers in this district are given many opportunities to learn, ranging from weekly half-day sessions to eight-day in-service programs. A cadre of reading specialists is available to help regular classroom teachers with everyday problems.

The regular classroom teachers' acceptance of the specialist has been positive, Matthews says. "In eight years we have gone from the 'I don't want anyone in my room' attitude to 'When are you going to get here?'"

Bourne has become a well-known training ground for area teachers, a mixed blessing since teacher mobility (60 or more a year) has always been a problem. The problem of teacher turnover is compounded by an exceptionally mobile pupil population. Bourne is the site of a large military installation. Pupil population is about 3,700. Of

151 pupils who started fourth grade in one school, only 49 remained throughout the year.

Despite this mobility of teachers and pupils, available test results show pupils reading at or above national norms. In 1970 an extensive evaluation of reading conducted by a committee of teachers and administrators pinpointed problems created by the excessive mobility of teachers and pupils. "The lack of stability of the teacher (and student) population does not permit the accumulation of the positive benefits from the special services and training we provide. We find ourselves constantly rebuilding our programs, retraining our teachers and beginning again with new students at a primary level of therapeutic treatment," the evaluation stated.

The survey called for more time for in-service teacher training and "for teachers to share ideas, especially with the number of teachers new to the profession and new to our system each year."

Bourne has moved to meet the need for in-service training in a number of ways, not only for its classroom teachers, but also for its reading specialists and principals.

All teachers participate in monthly half-day in-service training programs. Reading is often the topic. A typical agenda for a grade-level meeting (September 1973) included these items:

- ✓ Evaluation of reading performance (how to use reading test records, screening tests, and follow-up testing)
- ✓ Suggested lesson plans for the first three weeks of school
- ✓ Reading department services (what help the classroom teacher can get from the reading resource teachers)

Besides the reading coordinator, Bourne's reading staff consists of an elementary reading supervisor for grades K-6; four reading resource specialists for grades 4-6; and five reading specialists for grades 7-12. In addition there are 11 paraprofessionals or teacher aides, a speech teacher, a psychologist, two adjustment counselors and two special educators to serve as support personnel.

The program also uses between 35 and 40 adult volunteers and 60 to 70 student volunteers for clerical or tutorial services.

(For further information, contact Raymond L. Matthews, Reading Coordinator, Bourne Reading Dept., Otis Memorial Elementary School, Curtis Blvd., Otis Air Force Base, Mass. 02542.)

## Chapter 4



# The Great Methodology Debate

The educational jargon of reading instruction and the often heated academic debates over the "best" method of teaching reading are enough to boggle the mind of the most dedicated administrator attempting to develop a successful reading program in his school.

Speaking before the National Assn. of Elementary School Principals about the Right To Read program in April 1970, former U.S. Comr. of Education James E. Allen specifically warned the principals not to become enmeshed in the methods debate: "Methods, of course, are important, but it is the results that matter, and one of your most important contributions will be to see that the Right To Read effort does not become bogged down in debates over method."

Yet, more than four years later, the debate continues among publishers, reading specialists, teachers and school administrators as to the "best" method of teaching Johnny, at long last, to read.

There is, despite the volume and hyperbole of the great methodology debate, at least some agreement. Most agree, for instance, that the ideal reading program should be designed to meet the individual needs of children. It should provide, according to George D. Spache in Phi Delta Kappa's 1972 *The Teaching of Reading*, for the adequate development of fundamental reading skills (*i.e.*, word recognition, word analysis, comprehension, rates of reading, critical reading, etc.) and should offer a wide experience with types of reading matter to provide a foundation for the development of permanent reading interests and for the vocational needs of the student.

Considering the agreement as to what a desirable reading program should do, the obvious question is why hasn't one been developed? Spache cites two major reasons:

1. Progress toward the maximally effective reading program desired by all concerned is thwarted by the well meaning but naive

attempts of pressure groups, teachers, and school administrators to find simple answers to a multifaceted problem." This pressure leads to all kinds of claims by innovators and publishers as change of any kind is conceived of as a step toward improvement, and initial, temporary success all too often is considered valid proof of the desirability of the change.

2. Realistically, the implications of sound reading research take years to trickle into the content of teacher training courses and to influence teachers.

### RESEARCH FINDINGS: NO HELP FOR THE PURIST

Yet, even if the administrator or teacher does look to research for guidance in selecting a reading method, there is little that will provide him or her with a conclusive answer, many contend, regardless of the claims of advocates of any single method. For example, *The Information Base for Reading* (IBR) research, which did attempt to look for the most effective teaching models, concluded that — if acceptance is defined as "general use" — most teachers use an unidentifiable eclectic method of reading instruction based upon some use of a basal reading series.

Yet, since an "eclectic method" is one that uses a variety of approaches, a definite, authenticated answer to the methods question just doesn't exist. Other research findings seem to confirm this. According to Spache, one of the major findings of the Cooperative Research Program in First Grade Reading was that no method of teaching reading was superior to others in promoting reading skills, improving attitudes or creating interests.

Another IBR result regarding methods stated: "All methods of reading instruction instruct some children (probably the same ones) as well and do

not succeed with some small proportion of others that have been studied. Again, little help is offered if a safe single answer is being sought”.

Therefore, what guidelines should the local school district follow concerning methods when implementing or remodeling a reading program? Mary Woodfin, associate professor of elementary education at California State U. (Long Beach), offered the following suggestions in the April 1973 issue of *Educational Leadership*:

1. The teacher is usually more successful using the reading method(s) he believes to be best.
2. Student learning styles can be identified and used in reading instruction.
3. Attention to student and teacher self-concept may be more productive in teaching reading than any new method.
4. Self choice in learning methods usually succeeds better than forced choice, both for teacher and student.
5. In-service methods designed to help teachers look at self have often resulted in concrete, significant increases in results from standardized reading tests, as the teacher is better able to recognize and accept what the student really is, not what the teacher wishes him to be.

#### BREAKING DOWN READING JARGON: A TRANSLATION

Because of the extensive debate over the various reading methods and the specialized language of the curriculum, many administrators, board of education members, classroom teachers and members of the lay public are often overwhelmed by the “educationese” they encounter in researching the best method (or methods) for their schools.

According to Mortimer Smith, CBE Executive Director, Robert C. Aukerman’s 1971 book *Approaches to Beginning Reading* can be a valuable guide in this area. Aukerman describes scores of systems for teaching reading, including some information about their origins, creators, and research findings, where available.

Another major study in reading methodology that is generally available to educators is the late Jeanne Chall’s *Learning to Read: The Great De-*

*bate*. In fact, in a summary of the IBR study, Paul Diederich recommends that educators wishing to delve more deeply into research on reading would do well to start with Chall.

Chall’s study is a “readable” survey of research on reading from 1910 to 1965. Specifically, it is concerned with the effects of early and systematic instruction in phonics versus the “whole-word” method of teaching reading.

Some state boards of education also have attempted to provide assistance to the local school districts in deciphering the methods’ jargon. For example, both the Arkansas (i.e., *Language Arts Book 1: Reading For Elementary Schools*, 1972) and Utah State Boards of Education (i.e., *Reading For Information and Enjoyment*, 1970) have prepared reading guides for local schools that list and define some of the major, current approaches to teaching of reading.

Descriptions of these programs, as prepared by the two states, attempt to highlight the major emphasis and – in some cases – objectives of the programs:

**Language Experience Approach:** This approach draws on the actual experiences of the children and their own language, combining reading and the other communications skills in the instruction program.

According to R.V. Allen, U. of Arizona, the three major emphases of the program include: “(a) extending experiences to include words that express ‘hem – through oral and written sharing of personal experiences, discussing selected topics, listening to and telling stories, writing independently, and making and reading individual books; (b) studying the English language – through developing an understanding of speaking, reading and writing relationships, expanding vocabularies, reading a variety of symbols in the environment, improving style and form of personal expression, studying words, and gaining some awareness of the nature of the English language; and (c) relating ideas of authors to personal experiences – through reading whole stories and books, learning to use a variety of printed resources, summarizing, outlining, reading for specific purposes, and determining the validity and reliability of statements.”

**Phonic Approach:** Basic phonetic approaches, according to Aukerman, are systems where letter-sound relationships are taught as first steps to beginning reading. Other terms associated with this method include: “breaking the code”, “code emphasis”, “synthetic phonics” and “phonetic.”

Reading with Phonics, according to Monmouth

College's Charles E. Wingo, is a system which develops efficiency in word recognition by utilizing the 44 most frequently used speech sounds in English. This method begins with the teaching of sounds of five vowels and progresses to the study of the most frequently used consonants. In each early lesson, a consonant is blended with the vowels in pronouncing units or syllables, then whole words. Progression is from the known to the unknown and from the simple to the more complex.

**Basal Reader Approach:** The Utah State Board of Education explains that there are many good basal reader programs, which are typically supported by six main principles: vocabulary control; content of importance and relevancy; complete organization of reading experiences; variety in reading activities; a developmental and integrated approach to phonics; and continuity of growth in reading skills, habits, and attitudes.

A. Sterl Artley of the U. of Missouri says that if basal materials are to be an effective part of a total reading program, two key elements are necessary:

1. The teacher must be able to adapt the use of basal materials in keeping with the learning rates of the pupils, their backgrounds of experience and their levels of skill.
2. The teacher must be able to supplement the basal program with a wide variety of materials (e.g., trade books, magazines, reference books) on various levels of readability to meet the personal interests and needs of the students.

"A basal program," he says, "is not a prescription but a base of operations . . . it should be considered as only part of a well rounded reading program."

**Individualized Reading:** Willard Olson, U. of Michigan, explained the primary techniques of the individualized methods in the Arkansas study, stating that this approach seeks guidelines to practice from within the child more than from "extrinsic considerations of learning or reading method."

Teachers using an individualized method require a variety of books for browsing and include conversation, storytelling and reading aloud as a part of the program. The teacher provides, often with child participation, a supply of books varied in range of difficulty and interests. A child's ability is judged by the teacher, and evaluation is generally

based upon performance with materials selected by the pupil.

The individualized approach, explains Olson, emphasizes success and satisfaction for the learner, and asks for constructive language and approval techniques from the teacher.

**Multilevel Reading Instruction:** In this type of program, says Don Parker, Emlimar, Big Sur, Calif., the teacher introduces the learning laboratory process (SRA Laboratories) to the class and supervises students individually. Each child, as identified with a placement test, starts on the skill track at a spot where he can, with effort, achieve success. Continuous testing provides pupil feedback, reinforcement or redirection, and self-programming frees the teacher to help each child as needed.

This approach calls for the student to learn the names and sounds of the ordinary English alphabet, its phonic and structural sight-sound combinations, and linguistic word patternings as units of thought. After completing these steps, he goes on to decoding meanings from more complex units, such as paragraphs, stories, and chapters of stories.

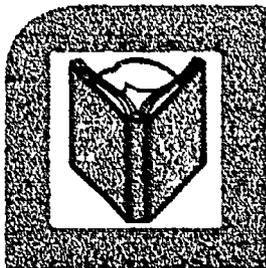
"Paralleling this multilevel individualized reading instructional program," says Parker, "the pupil moves readily into individualized reading, selecting books at his own level for pleasure or study, for a balance between skill-getting and skill-using."

**Initial Teaching Alphabet (ITA):** The Utah booklet explains that ITA is a two-state approach to teaching reading where the student first learns to read and write using the "Initial Teaching Alphabet" of 44 characters, where sounds and written symbols have a consistent relationship.

Once a pupil learns to read and write using ITA, a transition is made to reading materials prepared with the traditional 26-letter alphabet. Not proposed as a spelling reform of the English language, ITA is designed as a means of providing temporarily the advantage of a consistent spelling form at the time its need is most critical for a youngster — when he is first learning to read and write.

**Words in Color:** Words in Color was originated by educator Caleb Gattegno to teach reading in a direct way, especially with children in beginning reading, other children who are having difficulty with reading, and adults who do not read.

A strong phonic approach is used with this method, as 39 colors are used, each representing an English speech sound. Any letter or combination of letters representing a given sound is presented as a visual stimulus in the particular color assigned that sound.



# READING: ISSUES AND ACTIONS

CURRENT TRENDS in School Policies & Programs

## Memories of Reading Instruction That Succeeded

Students' memories of what they liked and didn't like about their reading teachers may not be a scientifically accurate body of data about reading instruction, but they provide provocative insights.

A. Sterl Artley, professor of education at the U. of Missouri, asked his junior and senior education students: "1. From what you can recall, what did your teachers (on any level) do that you feel promoted your competence and interest in reading? 2. Was there anything your teachers did that detracted from your interest in reading? 3. Was there someone or something besides your teacher who contributed to your competence and interest in reading?"

Among the things students reported they remembered and enjoyed:

- \* The teacher reading aloud to the class or group (on all levels -- even junior high).
- \* Free time made available for personal reading -- a given period of time, on a regular basis, when everyone read.
- \* The teacher talked about books she thought students might enjoy, or told about a book she was reading, for her own information or enjoyment.
- \* An abundance of good things to read, readily available in school libraries or learning centers, plus time to browse.
- \* Personalized attention -- ranging from recognition and praise for work well done, through extra help after illness or other difficulties.
- \* The teacher's enthusiasm and capacity for making reading fun, a pleasure, spiced with variety and imagination.

On the negative side, students reported the following:

- \* Things that made reading "just plain boring" -- too much skill drill; stereotyped, unvarying activities; busywork; "self-instruction" or programmed materials that gave children no opportunity to react.
- \* Required book reports -- according to these students, one of the most hated and negative influences on their development as readers.
- \* Round-robin oral reading. Artley comments, "I know of no reading authority who would condone this type of activity, and certainly students recalled its use with contempt."
- \* Competitive activities and extrinsic awards (stars or charts showing how many books a pupil has read, certificates of merit, etc.) Although a few good readers liked this kind of competition, they later looked back on it with disfavor. The damage done to slow or indifferent readers by public humiliation was great. Artley remarks, "The reward for reading is most effective when it is intrinsic. . . . Gold stars can never equal the thrill of reading *Charlotte's Web*."

**Linguistics:** The linguistic approach proposes that teachers recognize and describe the English language to better understand it and have it serve our needs.

Linguistics advocates maintain that students do not get meaning directly from writing, but proceed from writing to sound to reading; therefore, beginning readers participate in a great deal of speech activity while reading. Although the linguistic approach varies with each series, it is basically the process of turning printed symbols into sounds in order for the pupil to "hear what they say." The goals of the approach are recognition and comprehension of the printed word.

While there is no standard linguistic approach, many of the available series of programs combine reading, language, spelling and writing - particularly in the first and second grades. These series separate words that are consistently or regularly spelled and present those that are irregularly spelled as exceptions.

**Program for Learning in Accordance with Needs (PLAN):** is a program identified for consideration by the Utah State Board of Education. Developed by the Westinghouse Learning Corp., PLAN, which uses a computer, is built around the idea that children have different abilities and learning rates and encourages students to assume responsibility and planning for their own learning. It is designed to fit the needs of students from first grade through senior high. Beginning students are tested to determine which program best fits their needs and on what level they are to begin. Constant reevaluation and revision, when needed, is a part of the method.

Students are guided by the teacher through a series of Teaching Learning Units (TLU's), which have been prepared to allow for individual learning styles and to use contemporary learning tools and techniques. The teacher selects the TLU for each student on the basis of his ability, established objectives and interests.

The program aims at allowing the teacher to spend most classroom time working with individual students through the use of a computer which performs most non-teaching tasks: storing and assessing tests, providing suggestions for direction, keeping records up to date, and using programmed knowledge to recommend the next TLU for a student to study.

**Programmed Reading:** The programmed instruction approach to teaching reading places consider-

able emphasis on phonics or associating printed letters with speech sounds. The method is also linguistically oriented in that words are arranged in patterns of words of similar spelling.

Nila Banton Smith of the U. of Southern California, and a former president of IRA states that the key principles of programmed reading instruction are:

1. *Active response.* The pupil must make continuous responses involving explicit practice.
2. *Immediate confirmation.* Each response must be checked immediately by the student to see whether the response was right or wrong.
3. *Small steps.* The material to be learned is broken down into small steps and carefully sequenced.
4. *Reinforcement.* Each step must be given repeated practice in order to establish the initial learning.
5. *Self-pacing.* Each pupil proceeds on an individual basis at his own rate.

It is essentially an individualized approach to the teaching of reading. Beginning readers in programmed instruction classes are provided with programmed texts, which move from easy to increasingly more complex reading situations and call for them to monitor their own progress.

### 'DO YOUR OWN THING'

And there are many more new approaches to reading instruction being developed each passing year as the pressure mounts to come up with the "best" method to teach children to read. Yet, perhaps the "best" advice to educators seeking a definitive answer to the great methodology debate comes from the conclusion contained in Arkansas' *Reading for the Elementary Schools*, which states:

"It has never been possible in the history of reading in the United States to adopt any one approach exclusively. Freedom to choose, however, carries with it responsibility for an evaluation based on the needs of children in each situation. Every possible means should be used to meet the reading problems of all children, including the hard-to-reach and the talented child.

## Chapter 5



# Building a Successful Reading Program

"There is no reading problem. There are problem teachers and problem schools. Most people who fail to learn how to read in our society are victims of a fiercely competitive system of training that requires failure. If talking and walking were taught in most schools we might end up with as many mutes and cripples as we now have non-readers," contends Herbert Kohl in *Reading, How To*.

Although Kohl's opening statement is not designed to win instant acceptance from professional educators, especially reading specialists, he does offer what he feels are some basic conditions "sufficient to enable people to acquire the skill of reading . . .", contending that learning to read is no more difficult than learning to walk or talk. Kohl's conditions are:

1. a person who knows how to read and is interested in sharing that skill, and who has
2. a nonelitist, noncompetitive attitude toward sharing knowledge and information as well as
3. some understanding of the process of learning to read and
4. a belief that reading is an important human activity that the young should master;
5. pencils or pens, writing surfaces and printed material, if possible;
6. a context for learning in which learners feel secure enough to make mistakes and ask questions;
7. respect for the culture and mind of the learner and, therefore, an ability to understand and use what the student brings to the situation; and finally
8. patience, a sense that there is time to learn.

Obviously, Kohl does not provide all the answers for the district administrator seeking to expand or improve his or her reading program. However, he does touch upon many areas identified by USOE

and a number of educators and research agencies as elements found in successful reading programs.

### SUCCESS FACTORS IN ELEMENTARY READING PROGRAMS

The National Assn. of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) reemphasized its concerns in this area in 1972 when it passed a resolution urging "all elementary school principals to develop with their faculties and their communities programs that will study and diagnose the needs of each child so that he may enjoy reading and work toward his potential through effective reading."

The question, of course, is how does the principal establish such a program? George Weber's Council for Basic Education study of inner-city schools with successful reading programs provides some direction, especially since his findings were related to schools with high percentages of students generally expected to fall below standard reading norms.

Warning that "the matter is made more complicated because successful schools always seem to do so many things differently," and openly admitting that what works in one school may not work in another, Weber lists eight factors which he finds to be most common in successful reading programs:

1. **Strong leadership:** All four schools had clearly identifiable leaders -- three principals and one superintendent -- who specifically led the beginning reading program, supporting it at its inception and following up to see that it kept on a productive course.
2. **High expectations:** The school staff all evidenced high expectation with regard to the potential achievements of their children and believed that the youngsters could succeed.

3. *A good atmosphere*: Noting that a "good atmosphere" is hard to define, Weber stated that the "order, sense of purpose, relative quiet, and pleasure in learning of these schools play a role in their achievements."
4. *Strong emphasis on reading*: While not concentrating all their attention on reading, the four successful schools all recognized that reading is the first concern of the primary grades.
5. *Additional reading personnel*: All four schools have reading specialists working with the primary grades.
6. *Use of phonics*: Although each of the schools did not necessarily use a specific phonics (*i.e.*, word decoding) oriented reader as a basic text, all included extensive supplemental phonics material.
7. *Individualization*: Individualization, as identified by Weber, meant that there was a "concern for each child's progress and a willingness to modify a child's work assignments, if necessary, to take account of his stage of learning to read and his particular learning programs."
8. *Careful evaluation of pupil progress*: All of the schools included regular evaluations of pupil progress, either through diagnostic test, text objective achievements, and/or a variety of other formal/informal methods.

Yet, Weber did not stop with simply identifying common elements found in the successful elementary programs. He also looked at some characteristics generally thought important to reading achievement that were *not* common to the four successful schools. Since these characteristics were not present in all of the schools, Weber concluded that they "apparently are not essential to success" in reading programs. These items include:

- *Class size*, which ranged from an average of 22 to 29.
- *Achievement grouping*, which was not present at all in one school, although used in some way by the other three schools.

- *Ethnic background of principals and teachers*, which varied widely in each of the systems, regardless of the student ethnic backgrounds.
- *The existence of preschool education*, which had been available to only a small minority of the children studied.
- *Physical facilities*, which Weber concedes are nice, but costly and not vital to success, since not one of the successful schools was modern and two were "noticeably old."
- *The quality of teaching*, which ranged from excellent to poor among the different instructors in the schools.

"Naturally any program is better by virtue of its being implemented by good teachers," Weber noted. But he added: "The relevant point here is that not one of the four schools had, in the primary grades, a group of teachers all of whom were outstanding." Weber felt this point was important because, he says, outstanding teachers can teach beginning reading successfully with "any materials and under a wide range of conditions," while poor teachers will fail regardless of materials and procedures.

A final observation by Weber cautions: "None of the successes were achieved overnight; they required from three to nine years."

#### READING AT THE SECONDARY LEVEL: A STEPCHILD

Margaret Early, professor of education at Syracuse U., made a sweeping indictment of secondary schools in the February 1973, *Journal of Reading*, charging that in the past 30 years the status of reading instruction in secondary schools has changed very little.

"We are still debating the merits of special reading services and urging the whole school faculty to teaching reading in content fields," she said. "Despite the steady increase in professional books and courses in secondary reading, it is the exceptional school system that offers courses in reading and study skills beyond eighth grade."

Nor is Early alone in her critical opinion of secondary school efforts in reading. Shortly after her article ("*Taking Stock: Secondary School Reading in the 1970s*") appeared, Signe Harlow,

president of the Lewis and Clark Reading Council and a reading teacher at the Helena (Mont.) Capital High School, also accused educators of trying for too long and in vain to hold the elementary schools solely accountable for teaching reading skills which would insure competency for the high school student.

"The results have not been successful, as is graphically shown by the number of students who are being graduated from secondary schools today who fail to qualify for employment because they lack the necessary reading skills," she stated in the April 1973 issue of *Montana Education*.

Harlow contends that motivation of students who can read, but won't, is one of the keys to unlocking most high school reading programs. Additionally, she feels secondary school readers usually resent elementary materials, procedures and techniques.

To combat this problem, she recommends that teachers avoid excessive drill work and overuse of programmed workbooks and skill building exercises, concentrating instead on providing a variety of "stimulating materials" (i.e., a large selection of paperbacks, current books, the daily newspaper, and numerous magazines) more appropriate to the interests of high school students.

Specifically, she makes a number of recommendations for secondary educators to improve their reading programs. Included among these are:

1. Elementary schools are sending better readers to secondary teachers, so secondary efforts should focus on study skills and higher thought processes.
2. Educators should welcome the framework of elective courses and modular scheduling to develop mature reading and study skills.
3. Educators must rekindle interest in books — hardback and paperback — to help students learn a love for books that record the past as well as forecast the future.
4. Secondary educators must work to avoid the two extremes of losing a skills emphasis altogether or overemphasizing mechanistic approaches.
5. Advantage should be taken of schemes that permit staff development within the school day.

A number of characteristics of a good reading program at the secondary level were identified and forwarded with materials submitted along with the *Education U.S.A.* survey on reading. These characteristics include:

- ✓ a thorough analysis of the reading difficulties being experienced by the school's students.
- ✓ development of planned objectives in accordance with initial diagnostic results.
- ✓ systematic instruction to correct the problem area,
- ✓ materials selected with motivational effect in mind (i.e., interesting and relatively easy at first and gradually becoming more difficult as success and improvement result), and
- ✓ provisions for a variety of reading experiences and activities.
- ✓ an optimistic and encouraging attitude from teachers,
- ✓ distribution of practice to avoid fatigue and boredom,
- ✓ recognition of successes,
- ✓ measured pupil progress through testing.
- ✓ elimination of new programs that fail to produce positive results after a fair trial,
- ✓ postevaluation of objectives, along with re-planning to work on weak areas.

Earle W. Wiltse, professor emeritus of Northern Illinois U., attempted to provide definitive guidelines for school administrators in the Northern Illinois Cooperative in Education (NiCE) October 1972 Occasional Paper No. 6.

Addressing himself to administrators wishing to organize a schoolwide approach to reading improvement, Wiltse identified two major problems involved in the effort: the need for involving the entire teaching staff in reading improvement and the techniques all teachers can use in order to help students become better readers.

Wiltse offered a number of suggestions to help local administrators provide leadership in develop-

ing staff involvement in reading program improvement:

1. *In-Service Training:* In cooperation with selected co-workers, including teachers, plan a program of in-service training related to reading improvement. This may include pre-opening workshops, staff meetings, and college courses in reading. Invite reading specialists to assist with seminars. Ask counselors to interpret the results of standardized reading tests that dramatize the critical reading problems in your school. Explore the possibility of giving college credit for work done in the workshop.
2. *Strategy Committees:* An overall strategy committee can be organized to plan and promote the reading improvement program. For example, it might include such school-wide activities as: (a) the preparation of local pooling and sharing bulletins, (b) appraising the several elements in the reading program, (c) planning, preparing and using reading filmstrips in class, (d) writing a study-habits manual for students, and (e) setting the theme for each year. Theme setting gives the program a new direction each year. For example, one year the theme might be "establishing effective habits of study." Another year it might be "building vocabulary essential to the understanding of each subject. . ." Then, a local reading improvement committee can be organized in each building. This committee will have the responsibility of carrying out the strategy plans, evaluating progress, and suggesting improvements. Committee members can also report on progress of the reading improvement program at departmental and general staff meetings.
3. *The Reading Coordinator:* A reading coordinator will be needed who is familiar with reading problems and able to work cooperatively with staff. Although it is important that the superintendent and the principal recognize that reading improvement should be a fundamental and on-going part of a well-organized modern high school, its implementation should not be left to the administrators alone. It requires the guidance and direction of a knowledgeable person who can give full time to reading improvement on a permanent basis. . . . The importance of such a person is

not reduced in the smaller high schools even though he may also be required to do some teaching.

4. *The Reading Budget:* Provide a budget for promotion of reading. Its size will depend upon financial resources and the extent of the program. Funds are required for such things as the purchase and scoring of standardized reading tests, an abundance of reading materials, teaching machines, slides, projectors, film strips, cassettes, study carrels, consultant services, and clerical assistance. It may be possible to secure federal and state funds through the Economic Opportunity Act or the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. The budget might also include funds for professional materials, travel, workshops and institutes.

Wiltse also identified the four elements most frequently found in well-organized, ongoing high school reading programs. These are:

1. *A Reading Center:* There should be a well-equipped, attractive area in every school to which students may go for help in becoming better readers. It should contain the latest equipment as well as a wide variety of reading materials and a staff of specially trained reading teachers. The center should be designed to attract both college-bound students and those needing remedial instruction. Remediation, Wiltse feels, loses its stigma when slow readers discover the center is also used by average and superior students.
2. *Motivation:* When students see the need for improving their ability to read, Wiltse feels they often develop a desire to improve. Assembly programs devoted to reading improvement are sometimes used. Other ideas include displaying reading motivation posters developed by the art department and organizing reading clubs through the reading center.
3. *Vocabulary Development:* Every teacher can be responsible for developing the technical vocabulary needed in his own discipline. In one high school, teachers decided to develop the meaning of five basic technical words daily as part of the next day's assignment, meaning a student taking only four courses

per semester was introduced to approximately 3500 new words yearly.

4. *Reading in the Subject-Matter Fields:* Certain reading skills (e.g., following directions) can probably be taught better in one discipline (e.g., science) than another. Subject-matter teachers should be able to isolate them and work on their development.

#### EXCEPTIONAL STUDENTS PRESENT SPECIAL PROBLEMS

The challenge of teaching average students to read is difficult enough. Yet, school districts are burdened with the additional obligation of providing reading instruction for a variety of "exceptional" students with special reading needs: educationally and economically deprived children, gifted children, and — increasingly — adult nonreaders in the community.

#### The Disadvantaged Reader

Massive federal support to develop reading programs for the educationally and economically deprived students has provided local school districts with perhaps the most heavily researched guidelines for developing of reading programs for these youngsters. The foremost example is the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), which was enacted in 1965 and has funded special compensatory education reading programs in every state and the majority of school districts in the nation.

Following nine years of extensive effort to provide adequate instruction for these youngsters, USOE's Division of Compensatory Education has been able to identify eight characteristics common to successful programs. But just as CBE's Weber did in his report of common elements in the successful schools he studied, USOE also cautions that while the characteristics do provide guidelines for program initiation, they are no guarantee for instant success with disadvantaged students. The main ingredient of successful programs, according to USOE, is a committed, competent staff.

The eight characteristics common to successful ESEA programs include:

1. *Systematic planning*, which begins with formal policy decisions to increase support for

quality compensatory programs. These decisions are the basis for the necessary partnerships among board members, educators and parents as they plan the program's design, implementation and evaluation.

2. *Clear objectives*, which must be written and stated in specific measurable terms. Instructional techniques and materials must closely relate to those objectives.

3. *Intensity of treatment*, which includes the amount of time the child spends in the program and the staff/pupil ratio within the classroom. The programs studied, according to USOE, exhibited a wide variance in the number of instructional hours per week, ranging from three-fourths of an hour per day twice weekly to seven hours a day, five days a week. The staff/pupil ratio varied from 1:1 to 1:15.

4. *Attention to individual needs*, which includes a careful diagnosis and individualized plan for each student.

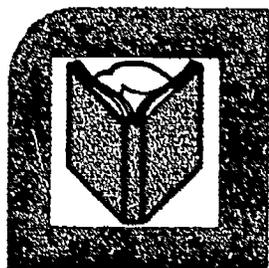
5. *Flexibility in grouping*, which allows staff opportunities to provide small group instruction and to teach frequently on a one-to-one basis, while not confining students to the same group for more than several days without reassessment of both the teachers' and students' strengths.

6. *Personnel management*, which allows key staff personnel to work individually with teachers in the classroom. USOE stresses the need for coordination and cooperation among staff members and a well designed in-service program.

7. *Structured program approach*, which stresses sequential order and activities, along with frequent and immediate feedback to students.

8. *Parental involvement*, which means the home must support what the child learns in school. Parents, according to USOE, must also be committed to work as partners with school personnel and students.

But perhaps of equal importance for local school districts are the conditions that have been identified as pitfalls in remedial reading program devel-



# READING: ISSUES AND ACTIONS

CURRENT TRENDS in School Policies & Programs

## The Principal Can Make a Difference

Methodology and materials certainly are important to a successful reading program, yet it just may be that the human element is the most important of all. And perhaps, according to a recent study in New York City, the leadership ability of the school principal is the main human ingredient in the recipe for reading success.

Consider schools A and B surveyed by New York State's Office of Education Performance Review in its March 1974 paper: "School Factors Influencing Reading Achievement: A Case Study of Two Inner City Schools."

In both schools, according to the study, the teachers "are all working with student populations characterized by high mobility, low mastery of basic skills and a wide range of motivational levels." In both schools, the faculties "could be described as experienced and well educated." Both were Title I schools. The majority of both faculties were white and lived outside of the schools' boundaries. In both schools, "the teachers interviewed reported an almost universal dislike for reading, other than for newspapers and magazines," and "there was little evidence in the classes observed that the majority of the teachers understood the developmental sequence of reading, or how to teach, reinforce or assess knowledge of reading skills."

Both schools were well equipped with reading materials and library books, and both offered basically the same reading methodology. Both principals were bound by the teachers union contract. In one of the few differences between the schools, School B had a pupil-teacher ratio of 28-1 and School A's was 33-1.

Yet, according to the study, more than half the students in School A were reading at or above an acceptable level on the state's *Pupil Evaluation Program* tests, and 25% were reading at or above grade levels on the city's *Metropolitan Achievement Tests*. On the other hand, only 16% of the students in School B were reading at acceptable state levels and just 10% were reading at or above city grade level.

The difference, according to Daniel Kiepak, director of state's Office of Education Performance Review, was the "sound managerial practices and instructional leadership" of the principal in School A.

And one of the most "striking differences" between the two schools, the study revealed, was the way in which the principals handled problems arising out of the union contract. Principal A, according to the report "was able to manipulate the union contract because of his reputation with the staff for fairness." In the sixth grade, the study points out, all classes exceeded the size mandated by the contract, and the principal explained that "the staff is very understanding." In his 12 years at the school, only one teacher grievance had been filed, and a "friendly, cooperative climate" existed.

In School B, however, 18 teacher grievances were brought in the month of June 1973 alone, as "the lack of flexibility with which Principal B administered the rules

created problems for him." Said the report: "His legalistic stance brought a legalistic response from the teaching staff. . . . All classes adhered to the mandates size except for one in the fourth grade and reorganization of classes to meet with the regulations was not an unusual occurrence." And teacher morale, the study said, "was low."

"Stability of administrative leadership characterized School A," the report said, while "instability of administrative leadership was the hallmark of School B." Principal A, the report contended, "explained the district plan and the school plan for reading improvement which established a number of practices." Conversely, "in School B it was difficult to find evidence of any plan for the teaching of reading. Nor did there appear to be a significant administrative involvement in the school's reading program."

And nowhere was the effect of the different types of administrative leadership more evident, the study reported, than in the climate of the two schools:

"School A had achieved a collaborative relationship between parents, pupils and staff. Each of these three groups was seen as having a unique role with a set of rights and responsibilities. There was evidence that the decision-making process was a joint one. The social climate of a 'happy family' led the staff to contribute extra time, money and even a sewing machine to the school. Staff would occasionally visit homes or stay late for parent conferences."

"School B was characterized by divisiveness, disorder and disillusionment. The children tended to be hostile or timid in their relations with teachers and with the study team. The school had the air of being under attack. The insecurity of the principal was mirrored throughout the school. Teachers skirmished over assignments. Children tore down bulletin boards, dirtied the halls, and broke the windows. Parents were angry at the way their children had been treated. The district superintendent was annoyed with the number of union grievances coming to his attention.

"The findings of this study suggest that the differences in pupils' reading achievement in these two schools were primarily attributable to administrative policies, behavior, procedures and practices," the study concludes. "Effectiveness of teaching, training and experience of teachers, appropriateness and availability of materials, and approaches to teaching reading did not differ significantly between the schools.

"The abilities of the schools' administrative teams, however, were very different. In School A, the principal and his assistant principals were able to run an orderly, peaceful and efficient school with a high degree of cooperation from pupils, teachers and parents. In this atmosphere, decisions based on educational criteria could be put in practice and children could learn more. In School B, the principal and his assistant principals had difficulty eliciting cooperation from staff, community and pupils and implementing educational policy. Children in School B had less opportunity to learn."

"This study had demonstrated that schools with comparable student populations and resources can produce students with significantly different reading skills. This finding demonstrates that although nonschool factors cannot be ignored, school factors can be much more significant than generally acknowledged. The stress on nonschool factors too often leads educators to act as if the children cannot learn, which in turn produces the atmosphere in which the children in fact do not learn."

opment. USOE, in a PREP (Putting Research into Educational Practice) study released in 1972, noted a number of potential problem areas to be avoided.

Included among these were: a lack of definition of responsibility and authority for the reading specialists; scheduling 15 to 20 students per hour into a remedial class: assuming that a good classroom teacher — who generally does not have the specialized skills and technical knowledge needed for remedial instruction — will make a good reading specialist, inadequate physical facilities; and inadequate funding for materials (According to the PREP report, \$2,500 to \$3,000 is needed to adequately supply one remedial reading teacher.)

Other problem areas included: selecting students for participation in the program solely on the basis of a score on a standardized group reading test or on the difference between his reading level and grade placement; providing once-a-week reading sessions of 60 minutes or more; terminating instruction at the end of an arbitrary time period (e.g., six weeks), as opposed to continuing instruction until the student's progress indicates he can profit from regular classroom instruction; and determining progress by scores on standardized group tests, which ordinarily do not measure the skills taught in a remedial reading class.

## The Gifted Reader

The present needs of the gifted and the creative pupil in the nation's schools also are acute, according to Paul Witty, editor of the International Reading Assn.'s (IRA) 1972 book *Reading for the Gifted and the Creative Student*.

Gifted children, he notes, have seldom been sufficiently challenged to develop their unusual abilities in the public schools, and large numbers often fail to achieve their youthful promise. "Of all groups of exceptional children, perhaps the most neglected is the gifted," Witty says. "In many schools today, the abilities of gifted children are unrecognized; and in others, they are unchallenged or neglected."

Witty's charges of educational neglect of the gifted aren't aimed merely at public school personnel. Teacher-training institutions do little to cultivate appreciation of the needs of the gifted, and even the professional literature on the teaching of reading and in books on the education of the gifted, discussion of the topic of reading for the gifted is "conspicuously meager or absent," accord-

ing to Witty.

Joan Nelson and Donald Cleland's article, "The Role of the Teacher of Gifted and Creative Children" in the IRA monograph, note, that while reading programs for gifted children will deviate in methods, materials and content, certain features are necessary components of reading programs for gifted students. These include:

1. *Early assessment of intellectual, perceptual and reading abilities:* Many gifted children learn to read before coming to school, often as a result of "high interest, extraordinary discrimination, and generalizing abilities." The authors explain that if these youngsters are placed with other children in a readiness program, they may become bored, restless, and disruptive or withdraw into fantasy to escape the boredom, lose their eagerness to read and become disillusioned with school in general.
2. *A highly individualized reading program:* Following early and accurate assessment of a gifted child's abilities, the teacher should analyze strengths and weaknesses in reading skills, permitting each child to move ahead as rapidly as he or she desires and is able to proceed. Nelson and Cleland also sound a warning about letting the child move too rapidly, however, pointing out that basic word recognition skills should be stressed to provide the foundation for reading growth.
3. *Emphasis on the development of higher mental processes:* Since gifted children attain independence in reading earlier than other students, they are also ready earlier for instruction in inferential, interpretive, and critical reading.
4. *Efforts to extend the student's interest in reading:* "The importance of adequate reading skills instruction for the gifted cannot be overstated, but reading is much more than just knowing how to read," note the authors. An abundance of reading material is required to be certain the gifted youth are being provided with the best possible reading instruction, not only to develop skill in reading but also to nurture a love of learning that guarantees their education will continue as long as there are good books to read.

## The Adult Nonreader

The federal Right To Read effort, as noted earlier, is not aimed just at developing effective reading programs to eliminate illiteracy in high school graduates, but it is also concerned with teaching adult functional illiterates how to read. As a result of this emphasis from the federal level, more and more states and local school districts are becoming involved in adult basic education programs.

"Revolutionary changes have occurred in the field of adult basic education (ABE) over the past few years. A wealth of new approaches, methodologies, and materials has been developed and tried," said Catherine White in the 1970 IRA text *Reading and Revolution*. "ABE classes are attracting more and more students each year. Some communities now have set aside whole schools as adult education centers."

The difficulties of initiating an ABE program in reading presents school administrators with an entirely different set of problems from what they normally face in the battle against illiteracy in their community. Perhaps the greatest of these is simply locating the student and convincing him to return to school, where he has often experienced little more than failure.

Additionally, illiterate adults are often reluctant to admit their deficiency and must be persuaded to try school again and encouraged to believe in their own ability to read, according to Edwin and Marie Smith of National Assn. for Public Continuing and Adult Education.

## Teaching Adults To Read

Following the successful implementation in several communities of the Laubach Method of teaching reading to adults, Minnesota, Right To Read's model state, decided to incorporate the method as its model for statewide use. According to Peter Enich of Minnesota's Right To Read staff, the Laubach Method includes many of the elements necessary for a successful ABE program and the instructional materials "appear to be as good as anything on the market today and in many respects better than most."

Enich listed 10 elements of the Laubach Method which he felt were necessary to the success of an ABE reading program.

1. The material has been developed specifically

for adults. Both the story material and the methodology are geared to the adult mind.

2. The program is based on a proven method, which has been used with adults learning to read in most countries of the world over the past 40 years. The first edition of the series was published more than 20 years ago and has been used by thousands of teachers and students in the United States and abroad.
  3. A reading program is provided for adults from the zero level to seventh grade, which provides a comprehensive program in terms of reading skill scope and sequence.
  4. Lessons are presented in small learning increments in consistent lesson patterns.
  5. Independence in reading is encouraged through self-help devices and correlated readers. Pictures and aids for pronunciation of new words provide for maximum self-help and minimum teacher help.
  6. Problems of English spelling are considered. In addition to controlled vocabulary, the series uses existing phonetic regularities, emphasizes regular spellings and provides aids to irregular spellings.
  7. Meaning, as well as word recognition, is emphasized. Each lesson contains a story structured around the key words and sounds being taught. Checkups are provided to test comprehension.
  8. Reading and writing lessons are correlated to reinforce skills.
  9. Vocabulary is controlled, introducing most frequently used words.
  10. The materials have been planned for ease of teaching. The detailed guides for teachers make it possible for relatively inexperienced teachers to use the material successfully. (In Minnesota, a special teacher-training workshop, offered by the Right To Read regional reading director, is recommended also.)
- Enich added that other advantages offered by the Laubach method include an extensive use of volunteers, which serves the double purpose of (1) easing the financial burdens involved in developing

an ABE reading program and (2) helping to protect the anonymity of the students, who often fear to expose themselves as nonreaders.

### SUCCESSFUL PROGRAMS: SOME GENERAL CONCLUSIONS

"Although there are many combinations of ways to overcome environmental obstacles to reading, one fact emerges clearly: Schools must take the lead in initiating change before improvement can come about," the 1970 PREP study concluded, adding "...the crucial factor in improvement is change initiated by the school principal."

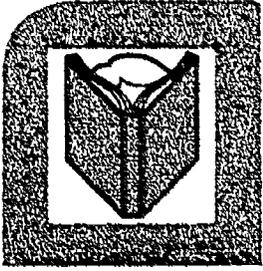
The PREP report conceded that given the magnitude and complexity of environmental effects on reading, it is possible even well conceived, planned, structured programs might fail. Nevertheless, the ultimate conclusion was that the principal was the key individual within the school district who had the power to reduce the possibility of failure and to enhance the chances for success.

Although a number of elements of successful programs have already been discussed, the question remains how does a principal proceed in a logical way to establish a reading program. PREP findings indicate there are eight basic steps to follow:

1. *Survey the needs related to reading.* What factors in the neighborhood may interfere with the reading performance of some, or even all, of the children? Examples are: poor self-image, lack of language stimulation, non-standard dialect, and negative attitude toward school and authority. Use study committees, questionnaires, and school records to determine these factors.
2. *Assess Resources.* What people, facilities, money and procedures can you use to act on the needs? Examples are: interested teachers and community groups, temporary buildings, contingency funds and federal grants, and participation in pilot programs.
3. *Consider possible solutions-programs.* What do research, demonstration programs, or common sense suggest as ways that will ease the reading problems in your school district?

Examples might include: ungraded classes, home-school teachers, family library programs, tutors, directed field trips, stimulating materials.

4. *Include the community in planning and in execution.* What groups or individuals should help solve some of the reading problems? Examples are: PTA, local business associations, political pressure groups, professional associations and interested parents. These people are important not only for generating good will, but also for selling the programs to the community and for finding resources to operate the proposed programs.
5. *Set specific objectives.* What should the children (or adults) be able to do as a result of your programs? For example, with a home-school coordinator program, the child and the parent should be able to conduct a simple reading and comprehension exercise after a visit from the coordinator. Establishing specific objectives is an important factor both in "selling" the program to others and in evaluating its effectiveness.
6. *Clarify operational procedures.* Who are the people with the responsibility and what are the rules for the programs? For example, publicize the leader of the program and the guidelines for its operation. A necessary condition is that the principal must give the program leader freedom to operate. Innovative programs, like innovative teachers, must be free to make mistakes or it is unlikely that anything exciting can happen.
7. *Submit a proposal.* If the program needs central approval for any reason, write a proposal that describes the first six steps and gives a budget.
8. *Evaluate the program.* Are the procedures being carried out? Have the objectives been realized to some degree? Be willing to evaluate in terms of the response of the teaching staff, the pupils, and the local community, and use some format measures of achievement.



# READING: ISSUES AND ACTIONS

CURRENT TRENDS in School Policies & Programs

## Practices Which May Cause Problems

Delwyn Schubert and Theodore Torgerson, in their 1972 edition of *Improving the Reading Program*, contend that knowing what not to do can provide as many valuable guidelines and program implications as knowledge about successful elements of program development and administration. According to the authors, the following conditions and practices tend to produce or aggravate reading disabilities:

- Beginning formal instruction in reading before a child has attained readiness.
- Accepting a low level of mastery of word recognition in primary grades.
- Failing to develop independent reading habits in all pupils in the primary grades.
- Failing to use instructional material diversified in difficulty and content in each grade.
- Requiring retarded readers to use material on a frustration level of difficulty.
- Relying on group instruction to meet the reading needs of all pupils.
- Failing to promote a balanced program with a variety of materials.
- Failing to motivate children to read widely.
- Assuming that teaching, instead of learning, is the goal of education.
- Failing to promote wholesome teacher-pupil relationships.
- Failing to detect hazards to learning, such as physical impairment, emotional immaturity and cultural deprivation.
- Failing to estimate accurately the potential of all children.
- Failing to discover the educational causes underlying individual reading problems.
- Failing to adequately utilize cumulative records.
- Failing to provide a systematic and objective testing program.
- Assuming that retardation is nonexistent when the class average reaches or exceeds the norm.
- Failing to consider competence in the teaching of reading when hiring new teachers.
- Failing to provide in-service education for all teachers in the area of reading instruction.
- Failing to provide the ample material needed for meeting the wide range of reading abilities and interests in each classroom.
- Failing to interpret the school's reading program to the public.
- Failing to provide a well staffed and well equipped school library.

## Chapter 6



# The Use and Abuse of Tests

Educators are receiving two mutually contradictory demands from the public today. One urges the abandonment of testing, especially in reading, as damaging and misleading. The other urges "accountability," which implies some form of testing as a measure of effectiveness.

The public's misunderstanding of tests is a major irritant for the administrator, and it is a rare superintendent who has not been startled at the way newspapers and other elements of the mass media have misinterpreted test results. However, not as many ask themselves if the misinterpretation doesn't reflect a lack of agreement among educators themselves as to what tests are supposed to do, and a failure of educators to communicate this purpose clearly to the mass media and the public.

Among the reasons for testing are to find out what instruction and help a child needs to continue the development of his reading skills and to determine whether a particular program is (or isn't) working. There are two basic types of tests: norm-referenced and criterion-referenced. The latter is growing in popularity today. The two types may differ in how they are designed and scored, but the most significant difference is in how they are used and interpreted.

Norm-referenced tests report a student's score by comparing him with other students. Criterion-referenced tests report a student's score by comparison with learning objectives.

Edward Fry, director of the reading center at Rutgers U., says, "I would urge you to give school administrators a little lesson in interpretation of test statistics. Half the children are below average. This is not a fault of education; it is a definition of average. Administrators must stop getting the blame for the way tests are constructed — and enlightening newspaper reporters would help also.

"Please do not blame reading teachers for individual differences, the sex of the child, or the child's father's income. Nor should you blame

them for the fact that some people can't interpret test statistics."

When asked, "What are the best current tests?" Malcolm P. Douglass, professor of education at Claremont (Calif.) Graduate School, gave this answer:

We ought to stand more in awe of reading behavior. We really don't know how a person learns to read, nor do we know what to do specifically in order to get someone to read. There are no known systems that work while others do not. People appear to learn to read very largely on their own. When we interfere with the natural proclivity for language in all its forms, we get trouble. We need to know more about the kind of environment that stimulates language behavior of all kinds; we don't need more tests because any test is only going to give you a distant view of the tip of the iceberg.

The "Political Use of Educational Test Results" was the title of an address Thomas J. Fitzgibbon, an officer of Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., gave at the 1973 convention of the American Personnel and Guidance Assn. (APGA).

Looking back over 20 years, Fitzgibbon noted that there was once very little interest or controversy about testing. Now, everyone is keenly interested, and Fitzgibbon warned, "Things will never be the same because testing means too many things to too many people within our society."

### THE 'POLITICS' OF TESTING

Tests are used, he goes on to say, "by those who wish to show that their children have had inferior schooling, and by those who wish to show just the opposite; by those who wish to show that some school teacher or school administrator has failed,

and by those who wish to hold *others* accountable."

Fitzgibbon was talking about educational tests, primarily achievement tests, not solely reading. But he notes that "by and large educational politics, when they do involve tests, focus upon basic skills or the three Rs."

He made these specific observations:

- ✓ There are no such things as test results which cannot be used for political purposes . . . any test can and will be used for political purposes.
- ✓ Political use of test results is not necessarily an evil, only an inevitability. Test information standing alone is not harmful if the test instrument has been properly selected and administered.

### TESTERS BEWARE

Stressing that the value of tests is "entirely dependent" on how a professional uses the results, Fitzgibbon says, "Teacher and counselor training in the use of tests is inadequate and is not getting any better.

"Goodwill is prerequisite to good interpretation. Results from the best of tests can be perverted and misconstrued if one wishes to do so," Fitzgibbon says. A particular use of test results that he cautions against is for evaluating teacher performance:

Needless to say the achievement test does not exist, nor will it ever, which allows this type of unilateral judgment of teaching excellence. There are too many variables and factors not under teacher control which affect pupil performance on any test.

Testing at its best is "a form of communication between a person and those who are supposed to do their utmost to help him develop within the framework of time and abilities present. . . ." Fitzgibbon states, and when the communication is "garbled" the use of the test is "perverted." "We shall have to spend far more time on the 'why' of testing in the future," he says.

Agreement comes readily from George Weber, associate director of the Council for Basic Education, in his "Uses and Abuses of Standardized

Testing in the Schools." While conceding that there are many valid uses for standardized tests if they are properly, competently and honestly applied for specific purposes, Weber hits hard at the indiscriminate use of tests and test results, particularly as they are applied to the individual student.

Group IQ tests are among the worst offenders, he says, charging that while such tests "have been under attack in recent years and have been banned by the New York City and Washington, D.C., schools, they are still widely used, misused and misunderstood." Basically, he charges, the tests measure "a kind of academic achievement in standard English," rather than a student's intelligence quotient. "In fairness to the publishers," Weber adds, the 'fine print' of the administration manuals sometimes points this out and cautions against the conclusion that the tests measure an inherent or constant mental ability." But such obscure warnings, he says, "have about as much value as the phrase, 'If pain persists, see your doctor'."

The worst abuse of IQ tests, Weber says, is to use them to label students 'bright, average or dull,' and then to place the 'dull' children in a class for slow learners, where "a deliberate, slower speed of instruction may well help to fulfill the prophecy of low academic success."

Unless relabeled "general achievement tests" and used as such, group IQ tests, Weber says, "should be abolished." They provide no useful information that cannot be gained from achievement tests, he adds, "and what they do provide — an IQ number for a cumulative card and the teacher's head — retards the academic progress of many children."

Of similar danger, Weber contends, is the reading readiness test, because "the pictures, words and concepts of these tests are biased in favor of children from educated families." Accordingly, he says, "the use of one of the tests often result in delaying reading instruction for the very children who are already behind." Then, he says, "because they have been taught less in the first grade, they are behind in the second grade and probably never catch up to their contemporaries who were judged on the basis of one test to be more ready to begin reading instruction.

"On the whole," he says, "these reading readiness tests and the approach of which they are a part do more harm than good." It would be a wiser policy, he says, "to begin formal reading instruction, as some schools do, by attempting to teach all children the same thing, without prejudging or predicting their success." Then, he suggests, after a

six months or a year "the pupils could be grouped for further instruction on the basis of their demonstrated achievement."

Two advantages would be inherent in such a policy, Weber says. "First, it would give all children a better chance to respond to instruction and to allow factors other than those measured by a reading readiness test to come into play. Secondly, it would shift the task of evaluation from a single test to the teacher, which is where it ought to be."

Weber also has some harsh words for standard achievement tests in the elementary and secondary grades. One major problem, he says, is that "not one of these tests tries to measure directly either of two important skills: speaking and writing." Nor, he says, "do they attempt to test many other things that many people believe are important outcomes of good schooling," such as "interest in learning, initiative, imagination, morality, and self-discipline."

And generally, he says, the purposes of standardized tests "are more poorly served in reading than in other areas." Overall, he says, the tests "provide less information about the student's achievements . . . than is already known to his teachers, assuming them to be even moderately competent."

One of the more evident faults of standardized reading tests at the elementary level, Weber says, "is the frequency of inappropriate vocabulary," where some test makers expect second-graders to know words like chimney, ribbon, village, chatting, sapling, baggage and harvest. While the breadth of vocabulary "is one aspect of reading skill in the higher grades and in high school," he says, "in testing the mechanical skills of beginning reading it penalizes the child with the small hearing vocabulary."

This, he said, instills in some tests a "cultural bias" against children from the inner city and from homes where a foreign language is spoken. While children from these homes "should learn to read standard English, and it is appropriate that tests should try to determine their ability to do so," Weber says, "selection of vocabulary, pictures and subject matter should not bias the tests in favor of some groups of children, and in some cases it does." Some progress is being made, since "the newest tests are less culturally biased than those of a decade or two ago," Weber says. But, he adds, "much improvement remains to be accomplished."

While Weber charges flatly that "the standardized achievement tests given in the elementary and secondary schools are of little or no value to

competent teachers in appraising the work of individual students," group scores, he says, are another matter. Group scores for classes, other groups of students, schools and whole school systems "serve purposes quite different from those served by individual scores," he contends.

Group scores, Weber says, can be used with at least some validity, for instance, by a teacher "to judge the progress of the class in several skills." The reason for the validity of group scores, Weber says, "is statistical: while a given pupil's score on a few long division questions is subject to considerable chance, the combined scores of 25 pupils is subject to a great deal less." Similarly, he says, group scores can be used by the principal to judge the progress of his school.

But for people "physically outside the school," like researchers, central office administrators, school boards, parents and the public. Weber says, "there is no convenient way to evaluate the students' collective achievements except by the group scores on the tests." In these cases, he contends, "the tests, despite their shortcomings and abuses, provide the best information available." But, "the scores must be interpreted with great care," he adds.

"Unfortunately," he says, "these scores cannot always be taken at face value." Two problems, he adds, are incompetent administration of the tests, which would tend to lower scores, and "cheating," such as teaching to the test, which would tend to make them higher. In any given school district, Weber says, "even though perhaps 90% of the schools have roughly accurate scores, there is usually no way for the outsider to know, short of conducting an independent evaluation, whether a given school's scores are sound."

He also says, in interpreting a school's scores it must be kept in mind that "an average score means true accomplishment for a school where the background of its students is poor, whereas it means the opposite for a school where the background of the students is good." Thus, he says, "the quality of the school's effort cannot be inferred simply from its test scores." In addition, he says, a school's score is usually reported as a single figure average, yet many students score both above and below that figure. In one study of inner-city schools he made, Weber says, the school with the overall lowest reading achievement at the third grade level still had 19% of its third graders scoring above the third-grade level.

In addition, Weber says, "a fair comparison of achievement scores between school systems is

difficult and often impossible." The reasons, he says, are that different school systems use different achievement tests, "and the norms are not easily comparable," and that different systems have different student populations with different environmental backgrounds, again making comparisons "risky" at best.

And another risky area, Weber adds, "is the use of achievement test scores to evaluate the performance of teachers." It's "theoretically possible, perhaps," Weber says, "but not now practical." One difficulty, he says, "is that the teacher to be rated is giving the test herself." Another "obvious difficulty," he adds, "lies in the fact that most teachers have their students only one year."

In most subjects, he says, "the teacher of one year is building on what others have done, and the subjects are too extensive to be mastered in a year." Accordingly, he recommends, "a judgement as to what a teacher has achieved during the year should take into account not just the level of achievement at the year's end, but the level of achievement at the beginning of the year and the learning ability of the students she had to teach."

But another positive use of group scores, Weber says, is to assess curriculum. For instance, he says, it was through the use of standardized tests over a period of seven or eight years that enabled the states of California and New York to uncover a definite decline in mathematical computation scores consistent with the states' adoption of "new math" series of textbooks. "Without widespread routine achievement testing," Weber concludes, "there probably would have been great argument

about whether computational skills were declining, and, if so, whether the 'new math' programs were responsible."

## THE NEED FOR VALID INFORMATION

Tests can be useful sources of information for planning instruction, for estimating students' growth, and for assessing a school district's success in achieving goals. Given this need for information, why the controversy over the use of tests? Roger Farr, Indiana U., and Nancy Roser, U. of Texas at Austin, posed this question in a paper presented at a meeting of representatives of the Council of the Great City Schools in October 1973 and subsequently published in an IRA Journal. They suggested five major reasons for the controversy, which can be stated in the form of five "DON'TS" for school administrators:

1. Don't give tests when there is no clearly stated purpose for administering them. This leads to questions of what to do with the results, which, if there were a clear purpose, would be obvious.
2. Don't use test results as the sole criterion on which to judge the success of a program. The authors characterize this practice as a "naive and simplistic view of education and educational management" that "seems to be quite prevalent."



## Standardized Testing: Stuck on the Humps of Cultural Bias

In discussing cultural biases in standardized achievement tests, Philadelphia researchers have at least one concrete example that test makers don't always have the city kids in mind when they're putting a test together.

One question on an elementary school test showed pictures of animals such as a dog, a rabbit, a horse, a cow and a camel, and asked students to pick out the one that lived farthest away from them.

Well, it just so happens that at one inner-city elementary school in Philadelphia, a great many of the pupils got that one wrong. The school was next door to the Philadelphia Zoo and most of the kids had a camel living right in their neighborhood.

Cows are somewhat scarce, however, in downtown Philadelphia.

3. Don't use specific tests, designed to assess specific goals, to assess the achievement of all goals.
4. Don't release test results to the news media and the public without background information and interpretation. "Uninterpreted and falsely interpreted information breeds fear, anger and suspicion at all tests," the authors say.
5. Don't use test results to "rigorously label and inflexibly track students." When this happens, the authors say, it is "small wonder that members of minority groups and persons of lower socioeconomic levels have been angered and frustrated by what they [consider] to be a double jeopardy: unfair tests and unfair use of results."

Noting the parallel rise of attacks on testing and demands for more testing, Farr and Roser say tests must provide both educators and laymen "with valid information leading toward more rational education decisions." Most attacks aim at the validity of the test, the authors feel, and demands for more testing spring from the need for more valid information.

Farr and Roser point out that "too little is known about reading behaviors to develop completely valid reading assessments. Little knowledge has led some educators into deep traps. Among these are (1) the tendency to measure that which can be easily measured; (2) to disregard that which cannot be measured; and (3) to presume that what cannot be measured easily diminishes in importance. The authors compare criterion-referenced tests and standardized or norm-referenced tests and conclude that "the differences are not in two different types of tests but rather in the different interpretations or scores derived from the tests."

Criterion-referenced tests are particularly useful in helping teachers make instructional decisions. Norm-referenced scores are used because reading behaviors are complex and specialists have difficulty agreeing on specific subskills of reading, or what reading vocabulary is, or how many sight vocabulary words a child should know to begin reading. "When we don't completely understand certain human behaviors, we often use comparisons rather than absolute standards," the authors say.

"Norms, therefore, provide a reference point for behaviors which are difficult to understand in the abstract."

### CLEARLY STATED POLICIES NEEDED

To improve the use of tests, Farr and Roser suggest that boards of education, administrators and teachers should:

- List the decisions for which they need information
- List all of the information needed to make the stated decisions
- Give tests only if they assess some aspect of the school district's goals.

The authors stress that the "essential step" is listing decisions to be made, and note that boards, administrators and teachers "are interested in different decisions." Boards, for example, are interested in allocating financial resources. Teachers are concerned about what needs to be taught.

The authors recommend that school districts develop policies and guidelines for the use and interpretation of tests that would include the following:

- No test should be administered to any child unless the information . . . is needed for a specific educational decision, which should be stated before the test is given.
- A test should be viewed as only one piece of information for making decisions . . . and all proposed decisions should be accompanied by a list of the information needed.
- Competent measurements and curriculum specialists should prepare assessment reports that should include the agreement between the test goals and the curriculum goals, and other information needed to judge the degree to which goals are being met.
- The interpretation of normed scores should be under the direction of highly competent measurement specialists.

## Chapter 7



# The Great Void: Training for Teachers

One of the basic assumptions of principals and board of education members – that state-certified graduates of accredited teacher training institutes possess at least a minimal understanding of how to teach reading – is not necessarily valid. In fact, according to Harold Roeder, State U. College, New York, “Nothing could be more remote from reality!”

Roeder, in the fall 1973 *Journal of Research and Development in Education*, said there is no guarantee that graduates of accredited elementary, secondary and junior high school education sequences have completed a course in reading methods or have demonstrated a fundamental understanding of how to teach reading prior to being graduated and awarded certification.

“In fact,” charges Roeder, “the majority of Johnny’s teachers have no doubt spent more time in college gymnasiums learning to play volley-ball and similar games than they have spent in college classes learning how to teach reading.”

The seriousness of the situation, he explains, is especially critical since numerous research studies have revealed that the teacher is one of the most important – if not *the* most important – variables in successful reading instruction.

“Perhaps Johnny is experiencing difficulty in learning to read because many of his teachers have not been adequately prepared to teach reading,” charges Roeder, adding one more reason among many as to why students’ reading achievement isn’t as high as desired.

Roeder made his indictment of teacher-training institutions following a three-year (1970-73), nationwide investigation of every four-year institution in the 50 states and the District of Columbia which offered an accredited elementary, secondary or junior high school teacher education program and graduated students who were awarded state certification.

For example, the survey of 940 teacher-training institutes offering elementary programs revealed

that 10% had no requirements at all for courses in reading, and only 94 schools required teacher trainees to complete more than three hours in reading methods courses. In contrast, Roeder noted that 305 of the institutions required over three hours in religion, 300 required more than three hours in physical education, and 133 required more than three hours in music.

While admitting that a course in teaching of reading isn’t a guarantee of success in the classroom, Roeder feels requiring a course in reading methods, or a related course does offer certain advantages, including emphasizing the importance of reading as an area of instruction to prospective teachers.

“If cliches such as ‘every teacher is a teacher of reading’ and prophecies such as the ‘Right To Read’ are to become realities, then the colleges and universities which are responsible for the preservice preparation of teachers need to continue to close the gap between what a classroom teacher needs to know about the teaching of reading and what teacher education curricula are doing in order to prepare teachers to teach reading,” concluded Roeder. “Until this is done, all the impressive cliches and slogans will remain unfulfilled promises and Johnny will grow older watching his offspring experience some of the same reading difficulties which plagued him.”

But as Johnny waits for teacher training institutions to do something about the sorry state of teacher preparation in reading, more and more school districts are turning to the development of their own training courses for teachers of reading through in-service education.

A useful booklet on in-service education, written by Wayne Otto, U. of Wisconsin at Madison, and Lawrence Erickson, Madison, Wis., schools, has been published by the International Reading Assn.: *In-service Education To Improve Reading Instruction*. The authors see these benefits from an in-service program:

- Unify and motivate educators to work toward common goals
- Help schools develop total reading programs in which teachers become aware of a broader sequence of reading skills
- Clarify problems and suggest solutions
- Introduce and implement new ideas and procedures
- Improve accountability procedures
- Involve parents and others from the community to increase public support.

The authors' assessment of current in-service programs is critical. They write that "in-service programs have tended to be unsystematic and poorly focused. . . ." They see the main reasons for this poor showing as the lack of adequate financial support and the lack of comprehensive planning and implementation.

IRA staff members stress the need for involvement on the part of all administrators if a reading program or an in-service training program is to be successful. They warn that programs should not be imposed from above and that teachers should be involved in planning and preparing programs. And superintendents, principals and other administrators must be 100% supportive. Otto and Erickson review the roles that the different individuals must play in a strong in-service program. They say this about the superintendent:

As the most influential educational leader in the school district the superintendent's leadership in improving reading instruction is crucial. His interest, involvement and commitment to in-service education in reading is directly related to the quality of the school district reading program. In this regard the superintendent should accept or specifically delegate these responsibilities:

1. He should provide an accountability arrangement consisting of written policies which charge specific personnel with specific responsibilities for the district reading program.
2. He is responsible for selecting a qualified, adequate number of staff who will carry out the reading program.

3. He is responsible for insuring that budgeted funds are available to support continuing reading in-service programs.
4. He should communicate his interest in improved reading instruction and listen to teachers, principals and reading in-service personnel.
5. He should support worthwhile proposals by allowing in-service activities during the school day, by participating when possible, by reviewing research and by suggesting further in-service study."

Many districts require some form of in-service training in teaching reading, especially for reading teachers. IBR surveyed 20 major cities and found that about one-third require in-service training for reading teachers. "In some districts, this is provided on an 'as needed' basis, while others report special workshops or regular monthly in-service education." Harsh reports "the most extensive requirements for in-service education were found in Seattle, where 20 hours of in-service course work as well as continuous in-service classes throughout the year are required of reading center counselors."

#### WHAT'S BEING DONE NOW

Nearly all of the districts replying to the *Education U.S.A.* survey reported that they provided in-service training for reading teachers. Here are some of their comments on what they have been doing:

Seminars, small group meetings and full reading staff meetings are held in Buffalo (N.Y.) Public Schools. The emphasis is on diagnostic and prescriptive reading program development, implementation and evaluation.

In the Beverly Hills (Calif.) Unified School District, a Reading Instructional Council meets four times a year and provides training in topics suggested by teachers. Many teachers are released to attend local, state and national reading conferences. Reading specialists are invited to the district.

Authorities are invited into the district to speak and to conduct workshops in East Baton Rouge Parish (La.) Schools. Workshops are also conducted by local staff. Interschool visitation, both locally and nationally, is encouraged.

Rochester, N.Y., provides in-service training designed to enable reading teachers and regular teachers to offer pupils the "best possible diagnostic-prescriptive-evaluative individualized reading program." Content includes diagnosing, prescribing, readability formulas, classroom management, thinking skills and reading comprehension.

In-service training is an integral part of the program for professional growth in the Ferguson-Florissant School District, Ferguson, Mo. In the 1973-74 school year the workshops dealt directly with reading. Preorientation workshops are held the week before school opening and these usually focus on specific reading programs. A Curriculum Day, sponsored by the school district, provides opportunities for teachers to become more familiar with methods and techniques of reading instruction. A popular workshop at the spring 1973 Curriculum Day dealt with reading games. Courses for college credit are given in the district in late afternoon or evening. These are presented in cooperation with the U. of Missouri or Webster College.

The San Diego (Calif.) Unified School District has offered college credit courses in individualizing instruction in elementary school reading for "the last few years." At the junior and senior high school levels, Title III demonstration centers are available to teachers, who are released from their home schools for nine weeks to attend sessions. The district has prepared a series of 12 television programs and a guide on reading for elementary school teachers. Contact sessions with a college instructor employed by the district enables teachers to gain college credit. The use of a videotape recorder for staff development is an important feature of the San Diego in-service program.

An in-service training course is offered for Seattle, Wash., school teachers, for which they receive salary increments. The district also cooperates with local colleges and universities that offer evening classes leading to a masters degree as well as a summer school program that trains teachers to solve pupils' reading problems.

Extensive in-service training in the methodology of teaching reading and the proper use of teaching materials is given in Independent School District 625, St. Paul, Minn. Secondary-level classroom teachers are trained in skills. In-service training covers the actual reading program used. Aides also receive extensive training in using machines and remedial techniques.

In the Washoe County (Nev.) School District, in-service training is offered in a wide variety of forms at the grade, building and county level. It is given in small groups, large groups and in workshops. Teachers select special topics such as skill development, vocabulary, creative dramatics and literature, and remedial reading.

Worcester (Mass.) Public Schools offer citywide staff development programs, monthly meetings for reading personnel, small group meetings for special needs, workshops, seminars and conferences. The staff meetings include workshop meetings, demonstration of new materials and equipment, sharing ideas, developing programs, and orientation to new concepts. It is then the responsibility of the reading resource teachers to convey the information gained at these in-service training meetings to the classroom teachers in their schools.

In Memphis, Tenn., 1,400 grade K-3 teachers attended a week-long session in 1972-73 for a refresher and retraining course on the use of tests. In the 1973-74 year, the same number of grade 4-6 teachers participated in a similar program at the Reading Center. How to interpret tests and how to prescribe for strengths and weaknesses were covered.

In-service meetings are conducted throughout the school year by the area reading supervisor in Prince George's County, Md. In addition, the coordinating reading supervisor plans and conducts in-service training to introduce new materials or to help with the implementation of various phases of a program.

## Chapter 8



# Volunteers and Reading Success

Schools use volunteers and paraprofessionals extensively to help students attain reading skills. Spokesmen for schools surveyed by *Education U.S.A.* feel the impact of volunteers and paraprofessionals is significant. Ninety-five percent of the responding schools use volunteers and/or paraprofessionals and report that both faculty and administrators are pleased with the results. The favorable reaction of school personnel to the use of nonprofessionals is indicated by such comments as:

*"Great!" – Metropolitan Public Schools, Nashville, Tenn.*

*"Volunteers have proved invaluable..." – Norfolk (Va.) City Schools.*

*"They have built confidence in the children as much as helping them to improve in reading skills" – Cincinnati (Ohio) Public Schools.*

*"Tremendous... Some students have [exceeded] three years of achievement in one year of instruction." – Dallas (Tex.) Independent School District.*

The use of volunteers or paid aides for many purposes – including reading – is increasing rapidly. Los Angeles launched a volunteer program in 1963 with 380 aides; by 1973 it grew to more than 10,000 volunteers, donating 45,000 man-hours a week. In Boston the volunteer program expanded from 28 unpaid assistants in six schools in 1966 to more than 1,500 in 130 schools in 1972. Today there are more than 300,000 paraprofessionals in America's public schools, and observers predict that more than 1.5 million may be employed in schools by 1977. Not all, of course, are used in reading.

It is in reading, though, that volunteers and paraprofessionals have had a great impact. Probably this is because the use of the volunteers and

aides make it possible to provide one-to-one tutoring, which research indicates is one effective way to teach reading skills.

Volunteer tutors are found not only among adults. Classmates tutoring slower learners or upper-grade children tutoring lower-grade ones are among the approaches tried successfully by many districts. In some instances, pupils as young as those in fifth grade have been used to tutor others – and both the tutor and the one being tutored gained in skills and ability.

### POSSIBLE PITFALLS

Plans involving the use of paraprofessionals and volunteers often face problems. Staff resistance can be a major block to a successful program. Resistance tends to disappear, however, once a program gets underway and teachers adjust to the presence of aides in the classroom. National Education Assn. (NEA) studies have indicated that nine out of ten teachers who have worked with aides have found them helpful. Involving the staff in the planning and implementation of any program does much to reduce initial resistance.

Other problems encountered, especially in the use of unpaid volunteers, include:

- ✓ Irregular attendance
- ✓ A high drop-out and turnover rate
- ✓ Recruitment difficulties
- ✓ Making certain the aides are properly used.

### SOME ANSWERS

Among measures a district can take to avoid these problems are:

- Determine district's needs which can be met with the help of aides

- Establish clear objectives for aide functions
- Establish criteria for and a method of recruiting aides
- Clearly define roles of teachers, aides and volunteers to avoid conflicts of interest and responsibilities
- Provide in-service training for both teachers and aides
- Sell the program to the public
- Evaluate results and alter the program as needed.

(For an in-depth discussion on how to avoid or minimize problems, see the NSPRA publication, *School Volunteers: Districts Recruit Aides To Meet Rising Costs, Student Needs.*)

### THE MESA EXPERIENCE

Douglas Barnard, director of reading in the Mesa (Ariz.) Public Schools, feels the use of paraprofessionals has been one of the "most significant educational movements in the past decade."

Mesa reading officials say the main qualification of an aide should be that he or she "is personable, relates to others, and is interested in the job to be done with the children." Barnard identifies two criteria for selecting reading aides:

1. Is the applicant personable, with that "twinkle" (i.e., enthusiasm and intelligence) in his eye?
2. Does the applicant demonstrate human compassion?

"Other criteria such as educational level, writing or printing ability, fluency of speech and correct speech might be important for certain paraprofessional roles," Barnard says, "but were not considered critical to the Mesa Reading Program." If the individual has the "twinkle" and human compassion, the necessary skills can be taught to him, Barnard says.

Reading aides at Mesa receive 20 hours of preservice training in four-hour daily sessions for one week. Upon completion of the training, the aide is assigned to a reading resource teacher at a

school where further in-service training is held — along lines determined by test results and teacher observation. No aides are placed in a school unless they score 75% or more on a criterion-referenced test.

Once placed, each aide serves a six-week probationary period and is evaluated by his supervisor before being fully accepted into the program.

Aides perform some or all of the following functions:

- Provide one-to-one tutoring for pupils in need. (Prior to any tutoring, the teacher discusses specific needs of the pupil with the aide and prepares a "prescription" of measures needed to overcome the deficiencies.)
- Help provide consistent adult guidance to pupil.
- Provide observable help to children in need.
- Provide feedback data to use during parent/teacher conferences.

(For further information, contact Douglas P. Barnard, Director of Reading, Mesa Public Schools, 549 N. Stapley Dr., Mesa, Ariz. 85203.)

### THE FERGUSON-FLORISSANT EXPERIENCE

Doris M. Stumpe of the Ferguson-Florissant (Mo.) School District reports success with the use of parent volunteers at the preschool through grade six levels. Positive results have included:

- More individualized attention for students
- Better parent understanding of our methods of teaching reading
- Increased skills for parents in helping their own children.

Ferguson-Florissant's parent volunteer program, which is only one aspect of its overall effort to teach reading, meets the criteria of a successful volunteer program by having established goals, providing in-service training, specifying activities for aides, and evaluating results.

The 1973 report on the district's elementary education programs said that three of the major goals of the parent volunteer program were to

enlist the cooperation of the parents in the education of their children; provide volunteer help to the classroom teacher and support staff to meet individual needs of children; and develop an environment that encourages friendly two-way communication between home and school.

During the 1972-73 school year some 53 parents from 15 of the district's elementary schools were trained in the "arts" of tutoring. The parents attended 16 sessions that were held on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. Parents were trained in either math or language arts. Three hours college credit was granted, with the tuition paid by a grant under the Education Professions Development Act.

The parents were prepared to provide the following services for either students or the teachers: using manipulative objects with slow learners; reviewing work with pupils; providing a one-to-one relationship for those children who need this ratio of adult assistance to experience success in school.

Specifically, parents read favorite books to small groups of children in classrooms and in the libraries; led small group discussions; helped children check their work; helped in the use of a wide variety of multimedia with children in libraries; helped children master library skills and the use of reference materials (under the direction of librarians). In addition, aides helped repair and reinforce books and processed materials for the libraries.

### PEER OR CROSS-AGE TUTORING

The Ferguson-Florissant School District is also using cross-age tutoring on a regular basis in eight elementary schools. Involved are 18 to 20 intermediate students, on the average. The students work with kindergarten through third-grade pupils with the emphasis on K-2. The tutors work in both math and reading.

"Many of the intermediate students involved in tutoring are of low ability and they become 'teachers' in areas in which they themselves are having trouble. This gives them an added incentive to learn. As is true many times, the student that is having trouble in school academically is also a discipline problem. Cross-age tutoring gives this student a chance to 'be somebody' and, as many of them have stated, 'that kid gave me a lot of trouble and I saw myself in him.' The discipline in these students generally improves significantly. The low achiever and discipline problem students make dependable and sincere tutors."

(For further information, contact Doris M. Stumpe, Ferguson-Florissant School District, 655 January Ave., Ferguson, Mo. 63135.)

### OTHER EXPERIENCES

The Newark, Del., school district has found the impact of volunteers on the reading program to be positive, and each year uses more and more. Currently nearly 500 are being used at all levels — as tutors, as makers of instructional materials and as classroom aides. "The training they receive depends on the capacity in which they are used," says W. John Cassidy Jr., supervisor of reading. "Tutors attend a three-day preservice workshop and two follow-up workshops. Makers of instructional materials attend a one-day preservice workshop. Classroom aides are individually trained."

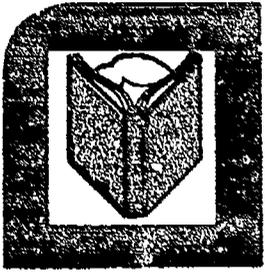
Some 2,500 volunteers work at all grade levels in Prince George's County (Md.) Public Schools. The volunteers attend a three-day workshop, in which they are acquainted with various reading techniques. Their greatest impact has been in making it possible to give additional assistance to a child or a small group of children, says a district spokesman.

Approximately 500 volunteers are used in the Kanawha County (W. Va.) Schools, where they are trained by the department of tutorial services. They teach or coach students not only during the school day, but also in the evenings. Their impact on the reading program is said to be positive.

Unpaid volunteers are used in the elementary reading program of the Peoria (Ill.) Public Schools with a double benefit: "Pupils benefit from the individual attention and volunteers become enthusiastic and involved in the schools."

Volunteer tutors in reading attend a 20-hour in-service training course before they begin tutoring pupils in Worcester (Mass.) Schools, where approximately 47 are used. The tutors also receive on-the-job training from the reading resource teachers. Most of their work is to reinforce skills taught by the classroom teacher. "Volunteers have been very effective in reading to children and working in the media centers," Doryce M. Moosey, director of reading, reports.

Volunteers and paid tutors are used at all grade levels in the Baltimore (Md.) Public Schools. Volunteers who serve as tutors in reading participate in a three-day workshop on a citywide basis. In addition, many schools conduct extensive preservice and in-service activities. Volunteers in Baltimore have served to "supplement the classroom



# READING: ISSUES AND ACTIONS

CURRENT TRENDS in School Policies & Programs

## Reading is FUNDamental

RIF, a national, nonprofit, tax-exempt organization designed to motivate children to read has a two-fold goal: to create the desire to read among all children at an early age by showing them that reading is fun, not a chore; and to demonstrate that books are as essential to a child as are paper, pen and ink and should be available to all children to own, to borrow and to buy.

The word "motivation" is the key element of the RIF program, initiated in 1966 by Margaret McNamara, wife of former Secy. of Defense Robert S. McNamara. Since its inception, over 3,000,000 paperback books have been distributed in participating communities to more than 750,000 children.

As of September 1974, there were 200 active RIF projects underway in 46 states, including 18 organized within the Right to Read program. In addition to these operational projects, an additional 89 RIF programs were in the process of development.

The national RIF program, in association with the Smithsonian Institution, sets goals and guidelines, provides project-development materials and technical assistance to local RIF projects throughout the United States. But the strength of RIF projects lies in their grass-roots involvement: for each community organizes, develops, funds and runs its own program.

While most RIF programs have been implemented with the cooperation of local school systems, the program has not been designed as an educational resource for the school. Rather, it is meant as a recreational resource for the child with obvious and tangible educational benefits. RIF programs work closely with school boards, principals, librarians and teachers to insure that the values of "free choice" and "pride of ownership" are preserved while capitalizing on the children's newly found interest in books and reading.

Important to the success of a RIF program is community involvement. In practical terms, volunteer help is necessary for the implementation of the program: selection of books, inventory and storage, displaying the books and helping the children during distribution all demand many hours of work. More essential, however, is involving the parents of the children who are receiving the books in the program. The byproducts of parent involvement, cited in city after city, are greater interest and ability to cope with the educational needs of their children. And, as has happened in several cities, as the program has progressed, book fairs have been instituted for parents. In making books and reading a natural part of a child's daily experience -- by allowing the child to bring his or her own books home -- RIF has found that the entire family is stimulated to read, enjoy and own books.

(For further information, write: Reading is Fundamental, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. 20560.)

teacher's role, to personalize instruction, to stimulate community involvement in school activities, and to improve the self-concepts of both the tutor and the pupil being tutored."

In Seattle, Wash., volunteers and paid tutors are trained by specialists and experts in reading. "No attempt has ever been made to factor out the impact of volunteers on the reading program," said Floyd W. Davis, for the school system. "The attitude of everyone from tutors to principals, teachers and children is positive, and for that reason, if no other, the tutors and volunteers have been encouraged to continue in that role."

Volunteer reading tutors, used K-9 in Norfolk, Va., schools, receive 10 hours of orientation by reading consultants in language experience methodology, interpersonal relationships, and materials and techniques. Monthly follow-up sessions are provided.

"Volunteers have proved invaluable," June Curry reports from Norfolk, "but we have never received sufficient numbers. We train 60 to 80 per year, yet maintain only about 60 centrally trained volunteers working at any one time."

Student volunteers are used successfully at all levels in the Beverly Hills (Calif.) Unified School District. The student tutors are given basic instruc-

tion by the special reading teacher and then work in a one-to-one relationship with younger pupils who need special attention.

Volunteer tutors receive general training in reading during two all-day sessions in Rochester, N.Y., where 300 are used throughout all grades. In addition, volunteers are given training by the reading teachers and classroom teachers with whom they work. Mary L. Burkhardt reports: "Tutors have added an extra touch to the reading program. They have been the individuals who have taken the time to care and have come to the schools to assist pupils."

Not all experiences with volunteers have been good. A district that reports using "many" volunteers in grades K-5 had mixed results. The impact of volunteers on the reading program depends on the quality of the individual, the district reports. "Some were good and some horrible."

Another district found that reading aides were successful when they were trained and closely supervised, but otherwise the results were somewhat indifferent.

Yet, overwhelming acceptance of volunteers and aides in schools across the country would seem to indicate that paraprofessionals are here to stay as an integral part in the fight for reading improvement.

## Chapter 9



# Reading and Public Relations

In Minnesota, much of the success of the state's model Right To Read program is attributed to "massive formal public support," from Gov. Wendell Anderson down to the man in the street. According to the governor, the Right To Read program has become a "rallying point for renewed public confidence in our schools."

In Indiana, educators credit much of the success of the summer television project of the Evansville-Vanderburgh public schools to an "intensive information campaign" that alerted the public to the program.

In Michigan, however, State Supt. John Porter said that public apathy may bring the state's pioneering efforts at educational accountability to a "screeching halt," adding that if the project is to survive, "I'm going to need far more support than I've been getting."

Shortly thereafter, his fears materialized as a public opinion poll showed that only 4% of the general public were even aware of the existence of the accountability effort, although 69% supported it once they were told what it was all about.

Porter's solution to this aspect of the problem was a massive statewide accountability information campaign explaining, through thousands of leaflets, the six-step accountability process and seeking the public's support for it.

And in New York, according to *The Reading Newsreport*, some parents vote against school bond issues because of their children's reading difficulties: "If they don't teach my child to read, why should I vote for a new school building?"

The simple fact is that a school's instructional program in general, and its reading program in particular, have a profound impact on its public relations posture in the community. The moral: involve parents and the public in the reading program.

And perhaps the most direct way to the parents is through the children themselves. If a child becomes excited about his latest reading project,

it's a sure bet the parent will be excited, too. And it won't be long before the word is spread through the supermarket, the beauty parlor and the local bar.

One reading project that elicits this kind of public interest is having pupils write their own books. Educators call it the life-experience method, and it works like this: The children dictate to the teacher, either separately or as a group, sentences or simple stories about their real life experiences. The teacher writes down what they say, a few lines to the page, in the children's own exact words.

The struggling young reader is transformed, at least in his or her own eyes, into not only a reader but a writer, and it doesn't take long before the pupil brings home the book, the excitement and the motivation derived from the experience. And on this basic idea, teachers are developing many variations:

- Children in a Washington, D.C., school use Polaroid cameras to illustrate their personal experience stories, which they bind into books, pass back and forth, and share with other grades through the school library. Some books are big, some matchbox size, all have hard tagboard covers like "real books." "The authors dive into their own work gladly, and bestow on 'instant books,' as they've come to be called, a flattering attention they've rarely shown for the usual early grade (basal) readers," said *The Washington Post* in a Sunday magazine feature about this innovative method. The children write busily, kneeling, standing or bending over, nose to dictionary page. One youngster is cruising the room, snapping pictures. Another staples his poem, "Brontosaurus on the Moon," to a bulletin board headed WE ARE GREAT WRITERS. WE CAN READ WHAT WE WRITE.

- One kindergarten teacher prepares blank books for children with a story to tell. They are made by stapling sheets of newsprint into a construction paper cover. The child makes crayon drawings, in sequence, on the pages, then dictates his story to the teacher who writes it under the drawings. The child soon learns to read his own words.
- As the year ends, most children have illustrated and dictated to the teacher at least one book that is typed and bound. Mothers always help with the typing and binding "They become excited, just like the children, when they come in contact with the personal language, creative ideas and interpretive illustrations of young children," says *Attitudes and the Art of Teaching Reading*, published by NEA's Dept. of Elementary-Kindergarten-Nursery Education.
- Children sometimes record stories they have written. When a child is ready to record, he hangs out a sign that announces, "Quiet, Please, Recording." When this sign is displayed, everyone is quiet. At the end of the day, the recordings are played back. The children listen to the stories intently and comment on such things as good sentences, story content, oral expression, choice of words, and new words that the youngsters have never before used.
- Children often enjoy sharing their ideas in a series of pictures, which are mounted on cardboard for showing on the opaque projector. Some children write a script and read it as the pictures appear on the screen. Others tell the story without a script. As a follow-up, the teacher helps these youngsters understand that if they can tell a story, they can write it, or someone can write it for them.
- When second graders think of a good title for a story, they put it in a class suggestion box (a shoe box decorated with construction paper). The teacher also drops in file cards with imaginary story titles, plus a few beginning lines to start young writers' creativity flowing. When the youngsters cannot think of a subject to write about, they dip into the suggestion box for ideas.

There are other techniques that work, too, and

at the same time provide some much needed home and community PR for the reading program:

- Many teachers have their pupils keep diaries of each day's events throughout the school year, using everything from actual diaries to regular notebooks. This practice teaches students to summarize, write concisely and consider which of the day's events mean most to them. The project also provides a record of priceless grade school memories.
- A teacher in Bowling Green, Ky., used the pizza method of improving reading. To enrich students' vocabulary, give them practice in arranging directions in logical order and sharpen their ability to visualize, she had them make pizza in school. The students listed new words, materials and directions on posters, and evaluated the procedure on forms prepared by the teacher before they actually began to make the pizza. The youngsters showed real satisfaction in their finished product.

But perhaps the best of all such attempts to motivate youngsters to read was *The 1969 Kindergarten Cook Book* of Susan Westland's kindergarten class at the John Marshall School in Wausau, Wis. It was a book of holiday recipes dictated by students and sent home with them to their parents. A sample recipe:

#### PUMPKIN PIE

A lot of seeds  
 Some of that gushy stuff ( a lot more)  
 Cook it for about a half hour  
 at about medium heat  
*Pie Crust*  
 ½ a scoop of sugar  
 Just a little grapefruit juice  
 Put on the pan under the pumpkin  
 and over the pumpkin  
 It's ready to eat.  
 Serves 5 people but daddy usually eats it all.

The note accompanying the cook book, when it is sent to parents, says:

Dear Mother: This Chirstmas Cook Book was dictated to me with deep thought by your children. I know it will amuse you, but it will also remind you of how much your child has yet to

learn from you and me. May you and your family have the happiest of Christmases.

A gimmick, and a little corny too? Maybe. But each one of those books that went home to mom and dad carried a message, and that message said that the school and the teacher cared enough to really "turn on" young people to the wonders and the fun of reading, even as early as kindergarten. It was a public relations message worth its weight in gold.

And there are many ways to involve the parent *directly* in the school reading program:

- "How you can help your child learn to read" was the topic of discussion when parents of kindergartners and prekindergartners met with teachers in one big-city school. The series of get-togethers was designed so participants could exchange ideas, problems, and possible ways of solving those problems. Meetings were held informally, in the teachers' lounge.
- There was almost 100% parent attendance when one school held a special meeting to explain programmed reading. The principal and teachers were each responsible for explaining a different part of the program, and parents visited the classrooms to watch the new teaching techniques being used. A question-and-answer period was included. It proved an excellent way to promote good parent-school rapport.
- When a third-grade teacher sent reading books home with the pupils, parents were asked to do more than just listen to the reading. They were asked to send back a note telling whether their child enjoyed the reading, whether the book seemed too difficult, along with any other comments. The teacher answered many of these notes, starting a pipeline of communication between the parents and the school. Parent response was excellent.
- Parents of first graders were delighted when they found that their children could read on the first day of school. The teacher had each youngster draw a picture of himself coming to school. Under each picture she printed an appropriate sentence: "I ride the bus to school," "I walk to school," etc. The children read the sentences back to her easily because they knew how they go to school. She used

those sentences as springboards for reading instruction in the following days.

- Teachers are using tape recorders to report reading progress during individual conferences with parents. A recording of the child's reading from time to time can show the parent this rate of improvement, and can also reveal problems that need to be solved by cooperative parent/teacher efforts.
- Reading parties are popular events in one second-grade classroom. Parents receive invitations, designed by the children, inviting them to come to the school at a certain time. When they arrive, they hear their child read aloud in his own reading group. During recess, the teacher explains goals, methods, materials and needs to the parents, answers their questions and suggests how they can help their children at home.
- A first-grade teacher won the regard of parents when she delivered report cards in person at the end of the first grading period. This had two positive results: she was able to explain the grading methods used and to answer parent questions, and she met fathers and mothers face to face, gaining an impression of the child's surroundings and home life.

Yet, while person-to-person contact on the parent-teacher level is imperative, good, solid presentations at school district-wide meetings are essential for proper PR for the reading program.

And one of the most effective ways of making this kind of a presentation at a meeting of the Board of Education, or the annual meeting of the PTA or Chamber of Commerce, is a "schoolmade" slide-tape presentation on how reading is taught in the school district.

A well planned slide-tape presentation can show more in 15 minutes about the teaching of reading than could many days of actual classroom visitation by scores of parents and community leaders.

Pictures can be taken in actual classroom settings around the school system with new fast films and improved automatic cameras that make it easier than ever to get good pictures with a minimum of disruption to learning activities. A principal, a teacher, a parent, or an older student can do the actual picture-taking. And the cost of film and processing comes to only about \$100 to

\$150 for 10 to 15 rolls of 36 exposure film from which some 80 to 100 slides should be selected.

A script for such a production can be written by reading specialists or classroom teachers, and some of it can be performed by students themselves on a good cassette tape recorder costing less than \$100.

The result can be a good, solid PR vehicle for a school district's reading program, a vehicle that gets beneath the veneer of standardized test results to report to the public what's actually going on in classrooms throughout the community.

Or in the case of a big city system like Philadelphia with 270,000 pupils, 290 schools and a membership of some 250,000 parents in local groups throughout the city, school districts can turn to the printed word.

Philadelphia, faced, like other large city systems, with low test results despite an intense effort to overcome the reading problems in its schools, turned out a 36-page publication, on newsprint, entitled: *Who Says Johnny Can't Read?*

A front page editorial in the publication stated bluntly:

The Spring 1969 Iowa Tests of Basic Skills indicated that two out of every five Philadelphia public school pupils in grades three through eight are performing below what can be considered a minimum functioning reading level. This figure of about 40% is compared with the national figure of 16% who perform below this established minimum level. That is one side of the picture, the objective side, and it is not pretty.

This publication is about another, little publicized and more subjective aspect of the basic skills situation: what actually happens in the classroom. On the pages that follow, kindergarten and elementary teachers, contacted

throughout the school system, describe for us their philosophies, their hopes, their successes — and, in some cases, their disappointments — as they see them. And in almost every case, they detail specific activities that they are using to improve achievement in reading and related skills for the children they serve. The picture, viewed from this angle, looks refreshingly bright.

It is not the intention of this publication to diminish the gravity of the situation, nor to raise false hopes about easy solutions to Philadelphia's reading problem. Rather, we believe that the material presented here will provide several concrete benefits to the school district as a whole. . . .

What followed was page upon page of illustrated stories about what was going on in the schools, written by teachers out in the field, complete with student-authored stories and art, tracing reading instruction in the school district from kindergarten through high school.

The publication was distributed widely among parent and community groups, teachers and administrative staff, and it helped bolster the determination and spirit of community and staff alike during the very height of the reading crisis in urban America.

Thus, whether the impact came in the form of a renewed public confidence in education in Minnesota, in happy, excited children in Washington, D.C., or Bowling Green, Ky., in satisfied parents across middle America, or in an involved school community in Philadelphia, it was the result of public relations, in many forms, getting out the story that Johnny, despite some admittedly formidable problems, is, perhaps slowly, but nevertheless surely, learning to read.