Diagnostic and Prescriptive Strategies Designed to Bring Back the Joy.

ABSTRACT

The diagnostic and prescriptive strategies presented in this paper are based on the assumption that reading is language, reading is understanding, reading is not an exact process, reading is responding, and reading is enjoyable. The principles of diagnosis based on these assumptions are that diagnosis will be based on the goals of the reading program, will be an ongoing process, will be combined with instruction into diagnostic teaching, will be concentrated on those aspects of reading that can be measured, will include a student's self-appraisal, will evidence a concern for the student's "felt" needs, will include students' interests and attitudes, and will have a developmental emphasis. The diagnostic information needed includes basic skills as well as attitudes toward reading and reading interests. Sources for obtaining this information include a variety of group methods, such as administering standardized intelligence and achievement tests, and individual procedures, such as administering a miscue analysis inventory and holding individual conferences. Prescriptive strategies for bringing the joy of reading to students include making a wide variety of books available for student selection and scheduling a reading time in addition to skill instruction time. (MKM)
DIAGNOSTIC AND PRESCRIPTIVE STRATEGIES DESIGNED TO BRING BACK THE JOY

Presented at the California Reading Association Conference

Fresno, California

November 8, 1975

June Dempsey
Diagnostic and Prescriptive Strategies Designed to Bring Back the Joy

In considering diagnostic and prescriptive strategies designed to "bring back the joy of reading," it is necessary to examine some basic assumptions about the reading process and the goals of a reading program.

The reading process has been variously described and defined. Before an instructor makes decisions concerning the diagnosis of the reading process or prescriptions to facilitate learning to read, he should examine and explore these descriptions and definitions and then formulate a definition that reflects his understanding of the process. To do otherwise would be comparable to a physician attempting to determine whether a person is healthy without knowing that which constitutes good health.

The instructor's understanding of the reading process should be reflected in the goals of the reading program. The goals provide guidelines concerning measurement, instruction, and evaluation.

The following assumptions underlie the diagnostic and prescriptive strategies presented in this paper:

ASSUMPTIONS UNDERLYING READING

1. Reading is language.
2. Language has universals.
3. Everybody has language.
4. Reading is understanding.
5. Reading is not an exact process.
6. Reading is responding.
7. Effective reading is purposeful.
8. Reading involves personal development.
9. Reading is enjoyable.
1. The first major assumption that reading is language suggests that reading is a communication process. It involves understanding the nature and structure of English. It involves an understanding that written language is the codification of the spoken language, and that the decodification requires seeing the connection between English orthography and the phonological system of English. But it also requires understanding that words are not the basic units of English speech or print! Language begins with the sentence. Words are only segmental units which derive their meaning from the larger unit—the sentence. In order to comprehend a sentence, the reader must be able to relate the deep structure of the sentence to the surface structure. These syntactic and semantic in-depth interpretations are active processes which require the reader to react and respond.

2. Language has universals that must be considered in the teaching of reading if reading is viewed as a language-related process. Two of the linguistic universals of greatest significance in the teaching of reading are: 1) that dialects occur in most languages and 2) that dialects have identifiable features. Dialects should be accepted without labels such as sub-standard or non-standard and teachers should be aware of the features of the dialects of his students in order to distinguish between reading difficulties and systematic features of the dialect. (Why is it that a New England dialect is not considered sub-standard, but Black English tends to be?)


Children who speak fully functioning dialects should not be required to learn an artificial dialect that may be of little value to them. That does not mean the children should be taught to read only their dialect; standard English orthography is adequate for teaching reading to speakers of any dialect of English. This poses no problem as long as the instructor accepts a definition of reading that stresses meaning over word-calling. A good reader translates printed symbols into meaningful messages. The meaning need not be represented by an exact reproduction of the print. In fact, one cannot be certain that a reader understands until he puts the author's thoughts in his own words. Many students of foreign languages learn to decode the new language without comprehending beyond the surface structure.

3. Everybody has language. Native speakers come to school knowing their language. It is evident they know it as they speak it. The child brings grammatical, lexical, and phonological knowledge of his language to the reading task. The key is for the reading instructor to capitalize on this knowledge.

4. Reading is understanding—nothing else will suffice to stand alone as a definition. Understanding occurs on several levels: the first level is reproduction of the surface structure or reading the lines. Each word in the line, or sentence, may be readily defined and yet the meaning may be obscured or uncertain. Consider the sentence, "The wheel has too much play." A reader may be able to define "wheel," "too much," and "play" without comprehending the semantic relationship between wheel and play. Therefore, reading goes beyond merely reproduction.

The second level is interpretation of the author's thought. Interpretation depends on the reader's background of experience with the author's concepts. The sentence "The wheel has too much play" can only be understood by those who are familiar with driving. Interpretation requires the arousal of visual, auditory or motor images. Understanding at the second level involves reading between the lines. Critical reading involving examination of ideas occurs at this level.
The third level of comprehension is making inferences and generalizations and drawing conclusions. To develop these skills one must grasp the author's pattern of thought as a whole, note relationships among the details, and check the ideas against one's own experience and information. The reader goes beyond the lines; he thinks, relates, examines, explores, reflects, evaluates and creates. The reader at this level is engaging in an active, dynamic process.

5. Reading is not an exact process. One has only to listen to student's oral reading while following the printed version to observe this. In a given selection when a reader says "ocean" for "water" or "down" for "deep", it is not an indication that he is guessing or lacks word attack skills, rather it demonstrates that he is "caught up" in the selection. An efficient reader does not correct or even attend to those miscues that do not affect understanding; he is aware of that which should be ignored.

6. Reading is responding—acting and reacting. Not only does the reader get ideas, but ideas get him! Reading requires him to think, to feel and to use his imagination. He gets involved. He may experience joy, sadness, anger, frustration, fear or excitement. Consider your reactions as you read the unfolding drama of the Watergate situation.

7. Effective reading is purposeful. It is used in some ways: to learn, to enjoy, to communicate, to discover. The reader with a purpose attends to the reading task and derives satisfaction when he achieves his purpose.

Purposeful reading can be taught. It is the basis for most study skills or power reading techniques. The purpose determines the technique the reader will use: skimming, scanning, or outlining after detailed reading and relating.

8. The end result of reading is personal growth and development. The reader experiences changes in attitudes, points of view, feelings and behavior. Growth through reading is the ultimate goal of reading instruction, while growth in reading is the means to that end.

9. Another goal of the reading program is the enjoyment of reading. If reading is synonymous with workbooks, word drills and skills lessons rather than reading books, students may well learn to read, but may seldom choose to read.

A literate society is comprised of persons who do read, not just persons who know how to read.

We have made our assumptions about the reading process. Now how do we apply these toward diagnosis?

PRINCIPLES OF DIAGNOSIS:

The principles of diagnosis based on the previously stated assumptions are:

1. Diagnosis will be based on the goals of the reading program.
2. Diagnosis will be a continual, on-going process.
3. Diagnosis will be combined with instruction into diagnostic teaching. In other words, tests and other diagnostic methods and means will be used to improve status as well as measure it.
4. Diagnosis will be concentrated on those aspects of reading that can be measured.
5. The student's self-appraisal will be a part of diagnosis.
6. A concern for the student's "felt" needs will be evidenced during diagnosis.
7. Diagnosis will include the student's interests and attitudes.
8. Diagnosis will have a developmental emphasis.

What kind of diagnostic information is needed?

DIAGNOSTIC INFORMATION NEEDED

In seeking answers to the following questions, the instructor will obtain three categories of information about the student: reading performance, reading potential, and causes and correlates of specific abilities and conditions that underlie his reading performance:

How does he approach reading tasks?
How well does he read silently? orally?
How does he attack unfamiliar and difficult words?
How much influence does his dialectal variation have on his reading performance?
What is his concept of reading?
How does he feel about reading?
How does he respond to help?
What enjoyment does he get from reading?
What progress is he making?
What does he read voluntarily?
How often does he read by choice?
What are his reading interests?
What are his purposes in reading?
How quickly does he learn?
How effectively does he use reading to obtain ideas and information?
Is he flexible and efficient?
What conditions are favorable/unfavorable to his reading development?
Finally-How can they best be modified?

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

To obtain the desired information, the reading instructor has a variety of group and individual procedures at his disposal. Some of the group procedures are:

1. Observation day by day, of reading achievement, attitudes, and interests. (Use checklist to record observations.)

2. Interest inventories and questionnaires. (unstructured)

3. The reading autobiography. (development and genesis of his difficulties as well as revealing attitudes, interests, satisfactions, and dissatisfaction)

4. The daily schedule. (pattern of his daily activities) (several forms are available or class can make one)

5. The Dolch Basic Sight Word Test. 5

6. Informal reading tests. (two types of questions: those calling for a creative or free response, such as "What did the author say?" and short-answer or objective questions on different aspects of reading and in a testing teaching-self appraisal procedure.

7. Standardized group intelligence and achievement tests. (ability and achievement in comparison with subtest scores and analysis of the student's responses yield additional information)

8. Listening comprehension tests. (useful in determining reading potential)

9. Classroom projective-type tests. (incomplete sentences, incomplete stories, and the draw-a-person techniques used by clinically trained person yield clues to feelings and relationships that may cause reading difficulties.


Some individual procedures are:
1. Visual and Hearing screening tests.
2. Diagnostic reading tests.
3. Tests of visual and auditory perception, discrimination, and closure. (See Appendix A.)
4. Individual intelligence tests.
5. Individual reading inventories.
6. Interviews with the student and with his parents. (Encourage introspection, about the individual's reading process.)
7. Individually administered projective techniques. (unstructured situations)
8. Case study conferences.

INDIVIDUAL CONFERENCE

The most useful and rewarding diagnostic procedure is the individual conference where the instructor assesses performance, potential, and causes and correlates while instructing and establishing a personal relationship. Education seems to seldom provide opportunities for the I-thou moments that foster friendliness, warmth, and caring concern. The individual conference provided the opportunity for the instructor to demonstrate positive regard, interest in performance, and awareness of the student's abilities and strengths. In addition, it is time for the student to be able to feel free to express his concerns, to share his interests, and to become involved in self-appraisal. The relationship established in these informal settings fosters a continuing realization that the teacher really knows and cares about the student's performance, but moreso an awareness that the student's success is a shared responsibility and concern.

How does an instructor find time for a conference with each student in a classroom of 35 students? Perhaps the question might be worded, "How can a teacher not find time for individual conferences considering the educational and personal benefits? One method is to schedule them before and after school. However, that requires a longer day for the student and reveals an attitude that the conference is not important enough to occupy regularly scheduled school hours. Another alternative is to include the conference as part of the parent-
teacher conference, which should usually include the student. But that necessitates
a delay of several weeks and sometimes months, too long a time to delay gather-
ing information. Therefore, the best plan is to include the conference as part
of the teaching day in the first weeks of school. This requires good organization
so that the other students will be occupied with learning and be able to allow
the teacher and student the privacy and freedom from interruptions necessary
for a conference. This can be easily accomplished in a classroom that allows
for individualized instruction in learning situations, but it can also be ac-
complished in more traditional settings by involving the students in the planning
and execution of the conference structure.

ASSESSING READING PERFORMANCE

During the conference the instructor can use a miscue analysis inventory
6
to assess oral reading performance and comprehension, silent reading comprehension,
and his ability to use location skills. Instructions for miscue analysis and a
copy of the reading passages used at Delta College are included in the handouts.

Miscue analysis recognizes the inexactitude of the reading process, the rel-
ation of reading and language and the importance of the learners experience in
providing meaning. It measures the most important aspects of reading—meaning, but
it also provides a wealth of other diagnostic information: sight vocabulary,
word analysis, vocabulary understanding, fluency, phrasing, attention to punctu-
ation and pronunciation. When problems are noted in these areas, other diagnostic
methods can be employed to ascertain the complexity of the difficulty. Where
perceptual difficulties are noted, individual tests can be used to assess these
as well.

To gain understanding of reading potential, the instructor can use Holmes' findings that intelligence, linguistic abilities, and auding (listening comprehension) have the greatest weight in reading power and speed. The Durrell Analysis of Reading Difficulty has an excellent Listening Comprehension subtest.

CAUSES AND CORRELATES

To determine the causes and correlates influencing reading and resulting in a discrepancy between potential and performance, the instructor should evaluate:

1) physical factors through screening devices, visual and auditory, motor coordination, and general health; 2) interests and vocational aims; 3) attitudes—an self-concept and his view of reading; 4) emotional stability (test anxiety in high school and college students can have a significant impact on academic performance); 5) home and school conditions (parental expectations, opportunities to learn, parent-child and sibling relationships, previous school experiences, and linguistic environment in the home; and 6) values (What are the student's purposes in reading?)

PRESCRIPTIVE STRATEGIES

When the information is assembled, what can the instructor do to bring the joy of reading to students? What are the prescriptive strategies to be employed?

Since reading is understanding—utilizing skills in an efficient manner to comprehend a wide range of reading materials—prescriptive strategies should be designed to facilitate understanding. The first task is to provide a linguistic understanding of reading. Even first graders need to know the process they are beginning to learn.

The examination of oral language and the comparison to written language should precede reading instruction. The importance of obtaining an understanding, not of merely saying words, should be continually emphasized.

Pleasure in reading should start with a child's first day in school. Loving to read doesn't just happen. The teacher must foster a climate which encourages reading—the reading of books. In this kind of climate, there are a wide variety of books available. Get them off the shelves and into the hands of the children. Get books out into the open; line the hallways with books, fill the tables with books, and cover the desks with books. Availability is often the determining factor in whether a child picks up a book and begins to read it. Encouragement and time allowance are the factors in whether he completes it.

Provide sharing and discussion time. Recall how eager you were to discuss the latest novel you had read with someone else who had read it. Children share the same desire to tell what they learned and express how they feel about it. Did you sit down and write a precis or a characterization, find all the multisyllabic words or answer questions about time sequence when you completed the novel? Perhaps students would enjoy reading more if they could discuss their reading experiences.

A committed involvement with a book can provide a strong force for personal insistence upon expecting meaning from print. Students find it difficult to achieve the same degree of commitment with a book selected for him as he does with one he selects for himself. The self-selection interest approach allows him to select something he likes, something of interest to him. He feels confident and powerful when he can take command of his own book.

A wide range of books on a variety of levels should be available in every classroom. And ample time regularly scheduled should be provided for reading. This time should be called Reading. Regular skills lessons should be taught as part of language skills time or some time other than Reading. Children should
read books during Reading time.

Questionnaires have revealed that one of the most enjoyable and memorable classroom experiences is when the teacher reads to the class. This is the time that the teacher serves as a reading model by demonstrating good phrasing, intonation, pronunciation, and expression. Also, the teacher shows that he values reading and listening experiences. Instruction in good listening habits can be provided and listening comprehension can be checked through a variety of means. Comprehension skills can be taught in listening situations and then applied to reading situations.

Language experience lessons for beginning readers at any level have value in the reading program. They are particularly helpful in demonstrating to the adult non-reader with low self-esteem as a reader that he can read his own thoughts that have been recorded. A logical extension of this is reading the thoughts of others. This helps to extend the reader's experiences and foster personal growth and development. Students are eager to move on to reading what others have thought and written.

Many prescriptive techniques can foster the goals of understanding and enjoyment. And even severely disabled readers who need perceptual training, phonological training and visual memory skills can still have experiences with understanding and enjoyment if the instructor begins instructions through listening comprehension while remediating the skills prohibiting successful translation of print to meaningful units.

The student should be involved in planning, recording and appraising the prescriptive strategies that will help modify the conditions unfavorably affecting reading performance. These strategies should be discussed and recorded during the diagnostic conference. Then the students can assume partial responsibility for completing and evaluating the tasks. The prescriptive plan should include a place to record his efforts as well as charts to show gains. Visual symbols of success are important to all of us. Emphasis should be placed on success; record the correct responses out of the number tried, not the number wrong. Students should
be encouraged and rewarded for learning from their incorrect responses; second, attempts at answering questions or completing tasks should count as well as the first attempts.

Subsequent conferences should be planned in order to continue diagnosis and evaluation and to plan further prescriptive lessons that acknowledge the importance of comprehension and enjoyment.
APPENDIX A

TESTS

Basic sight word test. W. E. DOLCH. Champaign, Ill.: Garrard Press, 1942. (Grades 1-2)


Bender visual motor Gestalt test for children. AILEEN CLAWSON. Beverly Hills, Calif.: Western Psychological Services, 1962. (Ages 7-11)


Davis reading test. F. B. DAVIS & CHARLOTTE C. DAVIS. New York: Psychological Corp., 1956-62. (Grades 8-11, 11-13)
Detroit tests of learning aptitude. H. J. BAKER & BERNICE LELAND
Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Co., 1935-55 (Ages 3 and over)

Diagnostic reading tests, survey section, auditory comprehension.
COMMITTEE ON DIAGNOSTIC READING TESTS. Mountain Home, N. C.: 
Author, 1957-63. (Grades K-4)

Differential aptitude tests. C. K. BENNETT, H. G. SEASHORE, & A. 
G. WESMAN. New York: Psychological Corp., 1947-63. (Grades 
8-13 and adults)

Durfee analysis of reading difficulty. D. D. DURRELL. New York: 
Harcourt, Brace & World, 1937-55. (Grades 1-6)

Embedded figures test. H. A. WITKIN. Brooklyn, N.Y.: Witkin State 
University College of Medicine, 1950-62. (ages 10 and over)

Examining for aphasia: a manual for the examination of aphasia and 
related disturbances. J. EISENSON. New York: Psychological 
Corp., 1946-54.

Frostig developmental test of visual perception. MARIANNE FROSTIG, 
D. W. LEFEVER, J. WHITTLESEY, & PHYLLIS MASLOW. Palo Alto, 
Calif.: Consulting Psychologist Press, 1961-64. (Ages 3-8)

Gates reading readiness tests. A. I. GATES. New York: Bureau of 
Publications, Teachers College, Columbia University, 1939-42. 
(Grade 1)

Gilmore oral reading test. J. V. GILMORE. New York: Harcourt, Brace & 
World, 1951-52. (Grades 1-8)

Graded word reading test, test RI. F. J. SCHONELL. Edinburgh, Scot-
land: Oliver Boyd, Ltd., 1942. (ages 5-15

Gray oral reading test. HELEN M. ROBINSON & W. S. GRAY. Indian-
apolis: Bobbs Merrill Co., 1963. (grades 1-16 and adults)

Harris test of lateral dominance. A. J. HARRIS. New York: Psychologi-
cal Corp., 1947-58

Harrison-Stroud reading readiness profiles. M. LUCILLE HARRISON & J. 
B. STROUD. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1949-56. (Grades K-1)

J. J. McCARTHY & S. A. KIRK. Urbana, Ill.: University of 


Lorge-Thorndike intelligence tests. I LORGE & R. L. THORNDIKE. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1954-62. (grades K-1. 2-3, 4-6, 7-9, 10-12)

McCullough word analysis tests. CONSTANCE M. McCULLOUGH. Boston: Ginn, 1962-63. (grades 4-6)

Memory-for-designs test. F. K. GRAHAM & BARBARA S. KENDALL. Missoula, Montana: Psychological Test Specialists, 1946-60. (Ages 8.5 and over)


Metropolitan readiness tests. GERTRUDE H. HILDRETH & NELLIE GRIFFITHS. New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1933-50. (Grades K-1)


Monroe reading aptitude test. MARIAN MONROE. Boston: Houghton Mifflin 1935. (Grades K-1)


Non-Language multi-mental test. E. L. TERMAN, W. MCCALL, & I LORGE. New York: Bureau of Publications, Teachers College, Columbia University, 1942. (Grades 2 and over)


Perceptual forms test. WINTER HAVEN LIONS CLUB. Winter Haven, Fla.: Winter Haven Lions Research Foundation, Inc., 1955-63. (Ages 6-8.5)


Robbins speech-sound discrimination and verbal imagery type tests. S. D. ROBBINS & ROSA S. ROBBINS. Magnolia, Mass.; Expression Company, 1948-58. (Ages 4-8, 8 and over)


The visual motor Gestalt test two, copy drawing form. WESTERN PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES. Beverly Hills, Calif.: Author, 1964


APPENDIX B

Background Readings for
How Standardized Test Fail


MacGinitie, Walter, Editor. ASSESSMENT PROBLEMS IN READING. Newark, Del.: International Reading Association, 1973.


Additions


Finley, Carmen, and Frances S. Berdie. THE NATIONAL ASSESSMENT APPROACH TO EXERCISE DEVELOPMENT. Ann Arbor, Mich.: National Assessment of Educational Progress, 1970. (National Assessment Staff Offices, Room 201A Huron Towers, 2223 Fuller Road, Ann Arbor, Michigan 48105)
