DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 055 762 RE 003 886

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TITLE Rationale and Overview of the Wisconsin Design.
PUB DATE 4 Dec 71
NOTE 8p.; Paper presented at the National Reading Conference, Tampa, Fla., Dec. 1971
AVAILABLE FROM National Reading Conference, Inc., Marquette University, 1217 W. Wisconsin Ave., Milwaukee, Wis. 53233

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.65 HC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS Behavioral Objectives; Conference Reports; Criterion Referenced Tests; Elementary Grades; Individualized Instruction; *Instructional Design; Instructional Materials; Reading Comprehension; *Reading Instruction; *Reading Skills; *Research and Development Centers; *Skill Development; Study Skills; Word Study Skills

ABSTRACT

The Wisconsin Design for Reading Skill Development is a skill-centered approach to reading instruction in the elementary school. Skills in six areas have been identified: word attack, comprehension, study skills, self-directed reading, interpretive reading, and creative reading. The Design provides behavioral objectives and criterion-referenced tests for each skill. The results of the machine-scored tests indicate the skill strengths and deficits of each child. Resources including published materials and teacher-directed activities are also keyed to each skill. A management system in the form of a profile card provides a continuous record of each child's skill development and permits flexible grouping on the basis of skill needs. The intent of the Design is to provide individualized skill instruction as well as a continuous progress approach to reading. The Design is in its second year of field testing. (Author/AW)

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Rationale and Overview of the Wisconsin Design

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Published by the Wisconsin Research and Development Center for Cognitive Learning, supported in part as a research and development center by funds from the United States Office of Education, Department of Health, Education, and Welfare. The opinions expressed herein do not necessarily reflect the position or policy of the Office of Education and no official endorsement by the Office of Education should be inferred.
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Rationale and Overview of the Wisconsin Design*

Wayne Otto

University of Wisconsin

The Wisconsin Design for Reading Skill Development is based upon the assumption that reading can most effectively be taught by focusing upon the important subskills. A product of the Wisconsin Research and Development Center for Cognitive Learning, the Design is intended to assist teachers with the organization of instruction and the management of skill development in reading. Our purpose in this symposium is, first, to describe the Design to you, and second, to consider with you possibilities for its use in adult basic education programs.

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The Framework of the Design

In developing the Design, we have made use of a framework that includes the following elements:

1. Identification of Essential Content. Agreement regarding the content essential to success in a given curriculum area is necessary before there can be a straightforward approach to instruction. Efforts to specify essentials have not been very definitive except in the basic skill areas, where essential content can be reduced to essential skills. In the area of reading we have identified "essential" skills that have consensual, historical and limited empirical support.

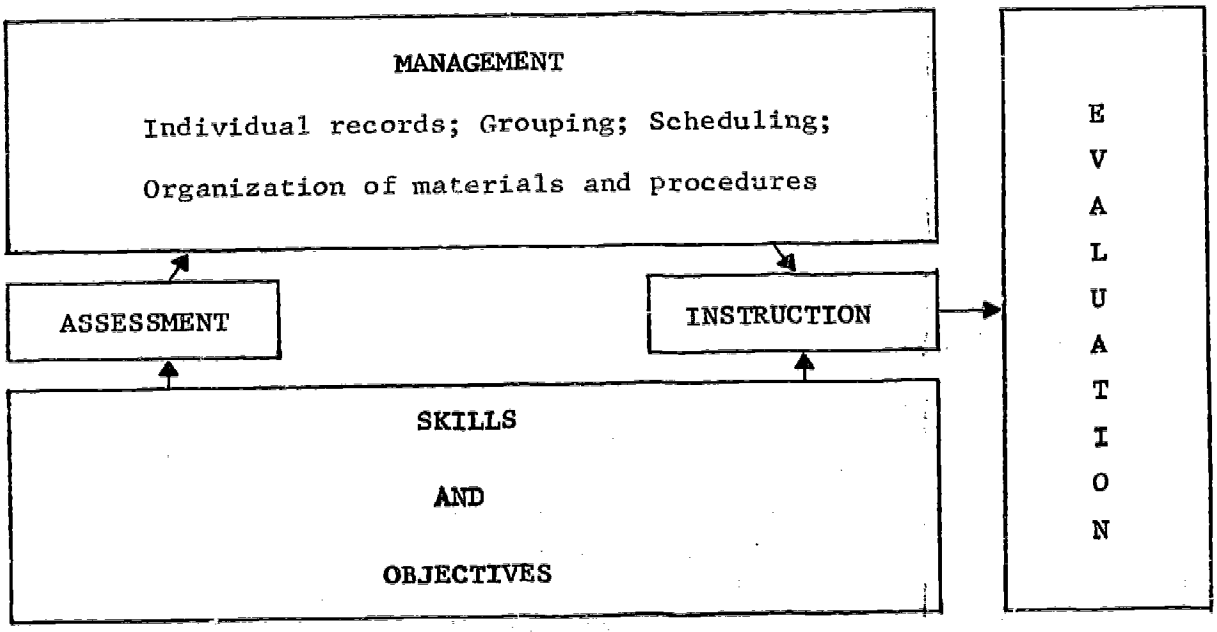
2. Statement of Objectives. Adequately stated objectives specify the criterion behaviors related to each essential skill. They specify the operational mastery levels that become the absolute or criterion referents for judging the adequacy of skill related performance.

3. Assessment. Objectives define essential skills in terms of observable behaviors. They make possible the assessment of individuals' skill development status through the use of criterion referenced tests, i.e. tests devised explicitly to sample the behaviors described in the objective.

4. Identification of Appropriate Teaching/Learning Activities. Given behavioral descriptions of acceptable skill-related performance and knowledge of individuals' skill development status, a teacher is in a position to devise instruction appropriate to meet specific needs. In practice, this means that the teacher can select from the array of available instructional materials and activities those that appear to be most appropriate for a given student in a given situation at a given point in time.

5. Evaluation. Functional reading ability, the ability to cope with the reading tasks encountered in the real world is the end product. Evaluation amounts to constant checking to be assured that functional reading ability is attained. If not, then there is reason to examine all aspects of the approach in order to determine where the process has broken down.

The framework is summarized in the schema that follows. Note that a management element has been added to deal with some of the essential aspects of implementing the approach that is implicit in the framework.



Components of the Wisconsin Design

In developing the Design, the skills included under a broad definition of reading were divided into six areas: Word Attack, Comprehension, Study Skills, Self-Directed Reading, Interpretive Reading, and Creative Reading. The skills were drawn from a carefully prepared curriculum guide and subse-

quently refined in view of feedback from teachers and reading specialists who have worked with the list in the field, extensive reviews of the related literature and instructional materials, the opinions of authoritative reviewers, and experience in pilot situations. The resulting list of skills serves as the basis for the entire Design.

Within the six areas the skills are clustered at levels that correspond generally to traditional grade levels. The six skill areas and traditional grade level equivalents of the skill levels are shown in the schema that follows. The grade designations are given only for transition purposes; they should be ignored as soon as a continuous progress approach to skill development becomes operational.

Skills by Area and by Traditional Grade Level

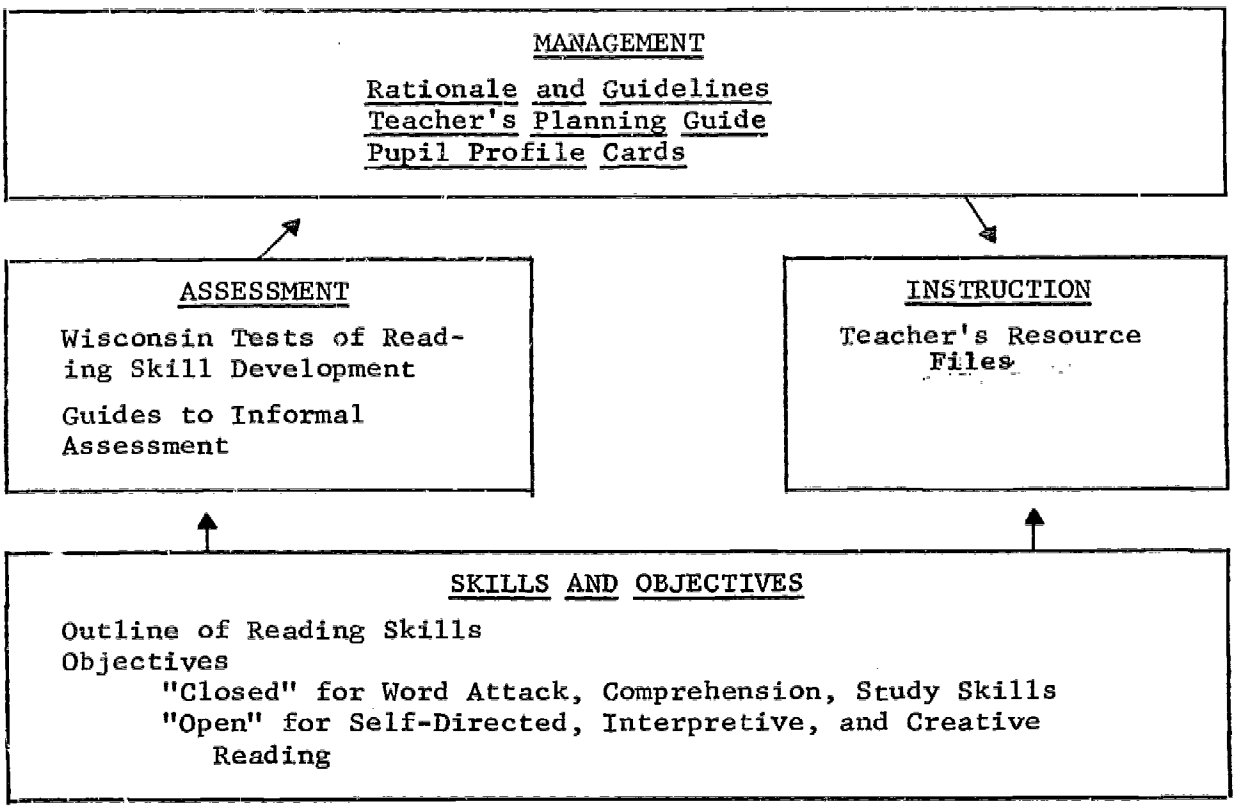
	Grade						
Skill Area	K	1	2	3	4	5	6
Word Attack	A	B	C	D	--	--	--
Comprehension	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
Study Skills	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
Self-Directed Reading	A	B	C	D	←——E——→		
Interpretive Reading	A	B	C	D	←——E——→		
Creative Reading	A	B	C	D	←——E——→		

In addition to the list of essential skills for each area, the Design includes a specific objective stated in behavioral terms for each skill in Word Attack, Comprehension and Study Skills areas and "open" objectives for the remaining areas; machine scorable criterion referenced tests and/or guides to informal assessment for each behavioral objective; pupil profile

cards that permit the systematic grouping and re-grouping of pupils according to skill development needs; and resource files of suggested published materials and teaching procedures keyed to specific skills for use in instruction. Thus, the Design provides the basis for a skill centered approach to reading instruction, a means for monitoring individuals' progress in skill development, and a management system for both students and instructional materials. In addition, manuals are provided to assist with the implementation of the Design. A Rationale and Guidelines is addressed to personnel who will provide leadership in planning and providing for implementation of the Design. Underlying assumptions and requisites of a total reading program are included as well as specific guidelines for implementation. The Teacher's Planning Guide is limited to the specifics required for implementation in the classroom. Both manuals reflect several years' experience in schools that have collaborated in developing the Design. The procedures suggested are compatible with most but not tied to any particular instructional set-up.

In the schema that follows, components of the Design are placed in the framework. The assessment components permit teachers to focus upon behaviors related to specific skills, which in turn permits them to organize instruction around the specific skill development needs of individuals.

Components of the Design



The Design amounts to a means for testing an important hypothesis derived from the basic assumption that underlies its development: A skill development focus in reading will result in improved overall reading achievement. The data that are available after one year of field testing of the word attack element are encouraging. Detailed reports of the field test results may be obtained from the Wisconsin Research and Development Center for Cognitive Learning, University of Wisconsin, Madison, Wisconsin 53706.