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ABSTRACT

An individualized reading program designed to improve pupils' attitudes toward reading is evaluated. A classroom was equipped with paperback novels chosen by the students, and an informal reading environment was provided. Reading skills lessons and remedial activities were administered when necessary. Test results indicated that pupils made significant gains in the abilities measured. Reactions of parents, an outside observer, and pupils were favorable. Appendices include reading test score distributions and a summary of pupil questionnaire responses. (MS)

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RESEARCH REPORT

An Evaluation of "A Novel Approach to Reading" (an individualized reading program in Grade 7, Queen Mary Elementary School, Vancouver, for the 1970-71 school year)

August, 1971  
E.N. Ellis, D.S. North and E.M. Hardie  
Research Report 71-21

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Research-Report 71-21

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"A NOVEL APPROACH TO READING"\*

FOREWORD

THE APPRECIATION OF NOVELS

For both students and teachers, the study of the novel can be one of the most enjoyable and rewarding experiences in the elementary Language Arts program.

The most important reason for teaching the basic skills of reading is to help pupils become readers. If pupils are to grow not only in reading but also through reading, there must be a balance and close liaison between reading and literature. An over-emphasis on the basic instructional program may result in a neglect of literature in the elementary school. The skills and abilities of reading must be coupled with a sensitivity to the best in writing. Growth in skill proficiency is important, but of great significance is the development of permanent interests which will make reading skills serve life-long needs.

The most important single facet of a program designed to promote a growing appreciation of the novel as a literary form is the child's experience with the literature itself. The study of the novel should exist mainly for the purposes of enjoyment, of supplying rich language, and of providing emotional experiences. The more enjoyable the child's reading experiences are, the more proficient he will become in using reading skills. Literature within the readability level of the pupils should be used not as a basis for teaching reading skills but as a medium for applying skills in enjoyable, purposeful reading.

\* A Guide to Teaching the English Language Arts in the Intermediate Years, Victoria, B.C., Department of Education, 1968. p. 55.

AN EVALUATION OF  
"A NOVEL APPROACH TO READING"

Statement of the Problem

Early in the Fall term, one of the writers (the class teacher) was disturbed to find that while the reading skills of his pupils were at a high level (see Table I), their interest and activity in reading appeared to be relatively undeveloped.<sup>1</sup> His professional training<sup>2</sup> had provided insights, techniques and materials for the development of interest in reading and he applied this knowledge and skill to develop a "novel approach to reading".

Purposes of the Program

The principal aim was to reawaken in each pupil a keen interest and develop a positive, healthy attitude toward reading.<sup>3</sup> Another objective was to improve the reading skills of 'average or better' readers with techniques that have proven to be helpful to poor readers.

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1. On the Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test, Level E, Form 1M, 17 of the 31 pupils were in the top three stanines and only 2 pupils were in the bottom three stanines, using Vancouver norms. On the San Diego County Inventory of Reading Attitude, 18 of the 30 pupils were in the bottom four stanines, while none were in the top two stanines (9 and 8), and only one pupil was in the stanine seven. See Appendix A for these distributions.

2. Particularly, courses in Developmental Reading (Ed. 472/3) and Remedial Reading (Ed. 475/6) at the University of B. C.

3. One of the stated objectives of the reading program is "the development of the maximum reading potential of each individual by cultivating strong motives for and permanent interests in materials of high literary quality." A Guide to Teaching the English Language Arts, Victoria, B.C., Department of Education, 1963, p. 44.

### Description of the Program

1. The following tests were given to all pupils in Division 3, Grade 7, during the first week of September, 1970, to assess the level of their reading abilities, to provide a profile of the strengths and weaknesses of each pupil and to determine the style of reading program for the year:

Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test, Survey E, Form 1M  
 San Diego County Inventory of Reading Attitudes  
 Gray's Oral Reading Paragraphs  
 Informal Reading Inventory based on the "Passport  
 to Reading Series"

Individualized remedial programs were set up on the basis of test information.

2. A program of reading paperback novels, similar to the "Hooked on Books" program<sup>4</sup>, was planned to provide enjoyment of good stories and to generate an enthusiastic interest in reading.
3. In October, 1970, two of the prescribed novels, "Big Red" and "Banner in the Sky", were studied formally to provide some background on the novel<sup>5</sup>.
4. The Principal made application to the Vancouver School Board for financial support of the program and two sums of \$100 each were granted in November and March. With this money, the pupils purchased under the supervision of their teacher<sup>6</sup>, a collection of paperback novels. These were attractively displayed in the classroom of Division 3. Pupils in all three Grade 7 classes were free to borrow books at any time. The students set up lending procedures on an honour system. When an inventory of books was taken later in the term there were no books missing.
5. Twice during the year, when there were new selections of novels and interest was high, class time was spent on reading them; but generally, the reading and discussion of novels took up less than 15% of the time allotted for language arts.

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4. Fader, Daniel N., and Elton B. McNeil: "Hooked on Books: Program and Proof." New York, Berkley Medallion Books, 1968.

5. Intermediate and Long Range Goals in Teaching the Novel. Covell, Harold M., lecture notes, U.B.C., Summer, 1970.

6. In November, the books were ordered by catalogue. In March the students were taken in groups of five or six to the wholesaler's warehouse and allowed to choose books from the shelves.

- 6. The students were told that there would be no formal assignments, no examinations, and no marks based on work with the novels. Instead there were individual pupil-teacher conferences to guide the pupil in his reading and to help evaluate his progress. There were group discussions to explore the students' reactions to the novels.
- 7. Other language arts activities focussed on how-to-study, the PQRS<sup>7</sup> study techniques, silent reading skills and analysis of specific selections.
- 8. A series that extended over two weeks on how to read the newspaper generated considerable interest. The Vancouver Sun supplied a newspaper daily to each pupil and an integrated program of language arts, social studies, science and mathematics was derived from the newspaper. The series included a talk by a stockbroker and visits to the Stock Exchange and to the Vancouver Sun Publishing Company.
- 9. Throughout the year, the pupils kept an annotated record of the novels they had read.

Evaluation of the Programme

Section I - Improvement in Reading Abilities

The Gates-MacGinitie Reading Tests were given at three times during the year:

September, 1970 - Level E, Form 1M was given to pupils in Division 3 only.

February, 1971 - Level E, Form 2M was given to pupils in all three divisions.

June, 1971 - Level E, Form 3M was given to pupils in all three divisions.

The results appear in Table I, on the next page.

7. Covell, Harold M., and McGechaen, John: "Effective Reading 1" Ryerson Press & the Macmillan Co. of Canada Ltd., 1968.





TABLE I. MEAN TOTAL RAW SCORES, CORRESPONDING STANDARD SCORES, AND APPROXIMATE GRADE EQUIVALENTS ON THE GATES-MACGINNIE READING TEST, SURVEY E, GRADE 7, QUEEN MARY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, VANCOUVER, DURING THE 1970-71 SCHOOL YEAR WITH "t" VALUES FOR SIGNIFICANCE OF THE GAINS BETWEEN FEBRUARY AND JUNE, 1971.

<u>Date</u>	<u>Form</u>	<u>Division 1</u> Mean Raw Score Standard Grade Equiv.	<u>Division 2</u> Mean Raw Score Standard Grade Equiv.	<u>Division 3</u> Mean Raw Score Standard Grade Equiv.	<u>Total Group</u> Mean Raw Score Standard Grade Equiv.
Sept. 1970	E1M				
Feb. 1971	E2M	89.2    61    10.9	77.7    56    9.1	(82.6) 59    9.7	86.8    60    10.4
June 1971	E3M	94.5    63    11.9	82.9    58    9.6	96.3    64    12.3	91.7    62    11.3
Gain		5.3    2	5.2    2	4.0    1	4.9    2
t		8.64	6.55	2.64	8.03
Significance Level		.01	.01	.05	.01

The Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test, Form 2M was given to all classes in Grade 7 in February. All pupils in Division 3 made gains in scores over their previous ones except for one pupil who was already at a high level. Form 3M of the test was administered to all classes in June. The gains made by pupils in all three divisions were significant as indicated in Table I above.

### Section II - Attitudes toward Reading

A questionnaire was completed by pupils in all three divisions in February, 1971. The items are listed and the responses are summarized in Appendix B.

The typical pupil in Grade 7 at Queen Mary School:

1. felt that his reading ability was a little better in February than September
2. had read three books that others had recommended
3. liked to read at home
4. read the newspaper almost every day
5. did not like to answer questions about things he had read but he enjoyed talking with others about books
6. would like to be able to choose more novels to have in class
7. felt that a silent reading period is a good part of the day
8. did not like to read aloud
9. did not find it difficult to read for more than five minutes
10. liked having novels in class
11. "was made to feel good by reading"
12. believed that his reading interest had increased since September and that he could get information more quickly
13. acknowledged that he was interested in becoming a better reader.

An examination of Appendix B will reveal that pupils in Division 3 held more positive attitudes toward reading than pupils of the other classes.

### Section III - Speed of Reading

Pupils in Division 3 were given an exercise to determine their reading rates. The selection was taken from the Grade 7 literature textbook "Sense and Feeling". Pupils read at speeds from 119 words per minute to 509 words per minute. The median reading rate was 287 words per minute. Sixteen of the pupils were reading at rates above those reasonably expected from pupils in Grade 7 and three were slow readers. The teacher felt that rate of reading was not the most important aspect of reading. It is quite far down the list of priorities. However, the Neurological Impress Method was used specifically to improve the rate of reading for these three pupils.

#### Section IV - Extent of Reading

Throughout the terms November to February and February to June the pupils kept records of the novels they had read and their reactions to them. The numbers of books read by pupils in Grade 7 are presented in Table II.

TABLE II

NUMBERS OF PAPERBACK NOVELS READ BY PUPILS IN GRADE 7  
OF QUEEN MARY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, NOVEMBER 1970 TO JUNE 1971

	<u>Div. 1</u>	<u>Div. 2</u>	<u>Div. 3</u>	<u>Total Group</u>
No. of Pupils	32	26	30	88
<u>No. of Books Read:</u>				
Nov. to Feb.	61	66	255	382
Feb. to June	<u>80</u>	<u>87</u>	<u>293</u>	<u>460</u>
<b>Total</b>	<b>141</b>	<b>153</b>	<b>548</b>	<b>842</b>
Median Number of Books Read	3	4	17	6
Average (per pupil)	4.4	5.9	18.3	9.6
(per pupil per month)	0.6	0.7	2.3	1.2
Range of Number of Books Read	0-26	0-16	1-41	0-41
<u>Distributions</u>				
0	6	1	0	7
1-5	17	16	2	35
6-10	7	5	6	18
11-15	1	3	5	9
16-20	0	1	7	8
21-25	0	0	3	3
26-30	1	0	3	4
31-35	0	0	2	2
36-40	0	0	1	1
41-45	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>
	<b>32</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>88</b>

From Table II it will be noted that a typical pupil read 6 paperback novels. The average number of books read was 9.6. This corresponds to 1.2 per pupil per month. The number of books read ranged from 0 to 41. The difference is impressive between the number of books read by pupils in Division 3 and by those in the other classes. Apparently having the novels available in the classroom is an inducement.

#### Section V - Parental Reactions

An independent observer interviewed a random selection of six parents to see if they had observed any effects of the program. In all

cases the parents were aware that their children were bringing paperbacks home. Three of the six felt that for their children, who had already been interested in reading, their range of reading had broadened. The other three parents noticed a definite increase in the amount their children were reading. In summary there was a positive reaction from all the parents interviewed.

The observer visited the classroom of Division 3. She got the impression that it was a comfortable place to read. It was apparent to her that the paperbacks were being well-used and she was impressed by the involvement of the pupils in literary activities.

### Summary and Conclusions

This report has attempted to evaluate an individualized reading program that operated during the 1970-71 school year in Queen Mary Elementary School. The purpose of the program was to improve pupils' attitudes toward reading by equipping a classroom with a collection of attractive paperback novels chosen by the students, and by providing an informal environment that would enable pupils to derive maximum pleasure from their reading.

Early in the program a battery of tests was used to generate individual profiles of strengths and weaknesses in reading abilities. This enabled the teacher to provide appropriate remedial activities.

Throughout the year reading tests were given. Pupils in all three classes made significant gains in the abilities measured. The response of pupils to a questionnaire reflected a favourable attitude towards reading. Throughout the year pupils made good use of the paperbacks and on the average read more than one novel per month. The reactions of parents and the objective comments of an outside observer reflected favourably on the program.

APPENDIX A

Distributions of Scores Corresponding to Stanines on the Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test, Survey E, Form 1M, and the San Diego County Inventory of Reading Attitude for pupils in Division 3, Grade 7, Queen Mary Elementary School, September, 1970.

<u>Stanine</u>	<u>Letter Grade</u>	<u>Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test</u>	<u>San Diego County Inventory of Reading Attitude</u>
9	A	3	0
8	B+	7	0
7	B	7	1
6	C+	4	3
5	C	6	8
4	C-	2	9
3	D	0	6
2	D-	1	2
1	E	1	1

## APPENDIX B

## SUMMARY OF RESPONSES OF PUPILS TO A QUESTIONNAIRE, FEBRUARY, 1971

(Note: Pupils were not required to respond to every item.)

	Div. 1 (N = 31)	Div. 2 (N = 27)	Div. 3 (N = 26)	Total Group (N = 84)
1. How has your reading ability changed since September?				
Much better	7 (23%)	5 (19%)	11 (42%)	23 (28%)
A little better	17 (57%)	14 (52%)	13 (50%)	44 (53%)
About the same	5 (17%)	8 (30%)	2 (8%)	15 (18%)
Somewhat poorer	1 (3%)	-	-	1 (1%)
Much poorer	-	-	-	-
2. Since September how many books have you read that others have recommended to you?				
None	3 (10%)	5 (19%)	4 (15%)	12 (14%)
1 or 2	12 (40%)	9 (33%)	7 (27%)	28 (34%)
3, 4, 5	11 (37%)	9 (33%)	8 (31%)	28 (34%)
More than 5	4 (13%)	4 (15%)	7 (37%)	15 (18%)
3. Do you like to read at home?				
Yes	30 (97%)	23 (85%)	22 (100%)	75 (94%)
No	1 (3%)	4 (15%)	-	5 (6%)
4. How regularly do you read the newspaper?				
Every day	6 (21%)	11 (41%)	12 (46%)	29 (35%)
Most days	12 (41%)	10 (37%)	5 (19%)	27 (33%)
About half the time	3 (10%)	2 (7%)	3 (12%)	8 (10%)
Occasionally	7 (24%)	3 (11%)	6 (23%)	16 (20%)
Never	1 (3%)	1 (4%)	-	2 (2%)
5. Do you like to answer questions about things you have read?				
Yes	10 (33%)	12 (44%)	4 (15%)	26 (31%)
No	20 (67%)	15 (66%)	22 (85%)	57 (69%)
6. Do you like to talk to others about books that you have read?				
Yes	23 (74%)	22 (81%)	16 (62%)	61 (73%)
No	8 (26%)	5 (19%)	10 (38%)	23 (27%)
7. Would you like to be able to choose some more novels to have in class?				
Yes	18 (62%)	20 (74%)	26 (100%)	64 (78%)
No	11 (38%)	7 (26%)	-	18 (22%)
8. Do you feel that a Silent Reading period is a good part of the day?				
Yes	28 (93%)	25 (93%)	26 (100%)	79 (95%)
No	2 (7%)	2 (7%)	-	4 (5%)

	<u>Div. 1</u>	<u>Div. 2</u>	<u>Div. 3</u>	<u>Total</u>
	<u>(N = 31)</u>	<u>(N = 27)</u>	<u>(N = 26)</u>	<u>(N = 84)</u>
9. Do you like to read aloud?				
Yes	7 (23%)	2 (7%)	6 (23%)	15 (18%)
No	23 (77%)	25 (93%)	20 (77%)	68 (82%)
10. Do you find it difficult to read for more than 5 minutes?				
Yes	1 (3%)	2 (7%)	2 (7%)	5 (6%)
No	28 (97%)	25 (93%)	24 (93%)	77 (94%)
11. Have you liked having novels to read in class?				
Yes	26 (87%)	22 (81%)	26 (100%)	74 (89%)
No	4 (13%)	5 (19%)	-	9 (11%)
12. How do you react to your reading?				
Reading makes me feel good.	17 (55%)	18 (67%)	17 (65%)	52 (63%)
Reading bores me.	2 (7%)	2 (7%)	-	4 (5%)
Reading doesn't affect me one way or another.	11 (37%)	7 (26%)	9 (35%)	27 (33%)
13. Since September how has your interest in reading changed?				
Increased markedly	11 (35%)	11 (41%)	10 (38%)	32 (38%)
Increased slightly	13 (42%)	9 (33%)	12 (46%)	34 (40%)
No change	6 (19%)	7 (26%)	4 (15%)	17 (20%)
Somewhat less interested	1 (3%)	-	-	1 (1%)
Much less interested	-	-	-	-
14. Since September how has your ability to locate information developed?				
I can get information much more quickly now.	8 (27%)	8 (30%)	13 (50%)	29 (35%)
I can get information somewhat more quickly now.	18 (60%)	12 (44%)	8 (31%)	38 (46%)
No change.	4 (13%)	7 (26%)	5 (19%)	16 (19%)
I am somewhat slower locating information.	-	-	-	-
I am much slower locating information.	-	-	-	-
15. How do you feel about your reading ability?				
I am very keen to become a better reader.	7 (23%)	9 (33%)	13 (50%)	29 (35%)
I am somewhat interested in improving my reading.	10 (33%)	14 (52%)	11 (42%)	35 (42%)
I read well enough now.	11 (37%)	3 (11%)	2 (8%)	16 (19%)
I am really not interested in reading.	2 (7%)	1 (4%)	-	3 (4%)