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ABSTRACT

The objectives presented in this booklet are those that were prepared for the second assessment in the area of reading. The objectives are only one step in the total National Assessment project and provide the foundation upon which the exercises are based. The contents include "Development of Revised Reading Objectives," which presents a brief history of the development of reading assessment objectives, subject-matter review, lay and subject-matter review, weighting of objectives, and the second cycle reading objectives; and "Revised Reading Objectives," which outlines four basic objectives: "Demonstrate Behavior Conducive to Reading," which examines reader self-awareness and sensitivity to factors affecting reading (including motivations and knowledge of reading skills); "Demonstrate Work Identification Skills," which presents a variety of abilities to aid readers in decoding unfamiliar words; "Possess Skills for Reading Comprehension" and "Use a Variety of Approaches in Gathering Information," which examines study skills, efficient use of reference materials, and flexibility. Appendixes are also included which list the members of the 1970 Reading Objectives: Review and Revision Conference, and the 1970 Lay and Subject-Matter Review. (WR)

National Assessment of Educational Progress

Reading Objectives

Second Assessment

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) is designed to furnish information to all those interested in American education regarding the educational achievements of our children, youth and young adults, indicating both the progress we are making and the problems we face. This kind of information is necessary if intelligent decisions are to be made regarding the allocation of resources for educational purposes.

In the summer of 1963, the idea of developing an educational census of this sort was proposed in a meeting of laymen and professional educators concerned with the strengthening of American education. The idea was discussed further in two conferences held in the winter of 1963-64, and a rough plan emerged. The Carnegie Corporation of New York, a private foundation, granted the funds to get started and appointed the Exploratory Committee on Assessing the Progress of Education. The committee's assignment was to confer at greater length with teachers, administrators, school board members and other laymen deeply interested in education to get advice on ways in which such a project could be designed and conducted to be constructively helpful to the schools and to avoid possible injuries. The committee was also charged with the responsibility for getting assessment instruments constructed and tried out and for developing a detailed plan for the conduct of the assessment. These tasks required four years to complete.

On July 1, 1968, the Exploratory Committee issued its final report and turned over the assessment instruments and the plan that had been developed to the Committee on Assessing the Progress of Education, which was responsible for the national assessment that began in February of 1969.

In July 1969, governance of the project was assumed by the Education Commission of the States, a compact of 45 states and two territories whose purpose is to promote cooperative action in improving education at all levels — preschool through postsecondary. At that time, funding was obtained from the U.S. Office of Education and the committee became the National Assessment of Educational Progress.

In the early conferences, teachers, administrators and laymen all emphasized the need to assess the progress of children and youth in the several fields of instruction, not limiting the appraisal to the three Rs alone. Presently, the assessment includes 10 areas: Art, Career and Occupational Development (originally called Vocational Education), Citizenship, Literature, Mathematics, Music, Reading, Science, Social Studies and Writing.

Because the purpose of the assessment is to provide helpful information about the progress of education that can be understood and accepted

by laymen as well as professional educators, some new procedures were followed in constructing the assessment instruments that are not commonly employed in test building.

These procedures are perhaps most evident and important in the formulation of the educational objectives which govern the direction of the assessment in a given subject matter area. Objectives define a set of goals which are agreed upon as desirable directions in the education of children. For National Assessment, goals must be acceptable to three important groups of people. First, they must be considered important by scholars in the discipline of a given subject area. Second, objectives should be acceptable to most educators and be considered desirable teaching goals in most schools. Finally, and perhaps most uniquely, National Assessment objectives must be considered desirable by thoughtful lay citizens. Parents and others interested in education should agree that an objective is important for youth of the country to attain and that it is of value in modern life.

This careful attention to the identification of objectives should help to minimize the criticism frequently encountered with current tests in which some item is attacked by the scholar as representing shoddy scholarship, or criticized by school people as something not in the curriculum or challenged by laymen as being unimportant or technical trivia.

National Assessment objectives must also be a clear guide to the actual development of assessment exercises. For example, one Reading objective is to "make qualitative judgments about what is read." An exercise measuring this objective might ask the respondent to evaluate the adequacy of information given in a selected passage as a basis for drawing conclusions or to identify statements which do not fit the context or the style of a given passage. It should be noted that exercises are not intended to set standards which all children are or should be achieving; rather, they are offered as a means to estimate what proportion of our population exhibits the behaviors implicit in the objectives.

The objectives presented in this booklet are those prepared for the second assessment in the area of Reading. National Assessment recognizes that areas of emphasis if not actual content of objectives change over time and provides for revision of the objectives before each cycle of exercise development and assessment.

While the objectives are only one step in the total National Assessment project, they provide the foundation upon which the assessment exercises are based. The careful attention given to objectives development and refinement is typical of other assessment activities — from exercise development and field administration through data analysis and reporting. The project is an evolving one and each activity is subject to continuous reexamination and refinement to provide accurate and meaningful information on the outputs of the American educational system.

CHAPTER 2

DEVELOPMENT OF REVISED READING OBJECTIVES

The first assessment of Reading was conducted by National Assessment in 1970-71. This assessment provided baseline data against which changes in attainment levels in Reading could be measured. Although many of the knowledges and skills to be assessed in the area of Reading will remain the same throughout the years, National Assessment recognizes that changing education practices and innovations in curricula require flexibility in the objectives being assessed by National Assessment. Thus, the objectives are revised prior to exercise development for each assessment cycle so that they will accurately reflect current thinking and practices in the field.

Objectives and exercises for the first Reading assessment were developed for National Assessment by Science Research Associates, Chicago, IL. However, the practice of having one contractor develop both objectives and exercises was found to be unsatisfactory. It was recognized that there was a danger that contractors might draw upon objectives which had proved successful in the past rather than seeking consensus objectives representing the views of diverse groups within the society. It was also felt that contractors might favor objectives which were easy to measure rather than those which, although important, might be difficult to translate into measurable terms. Thus, it was decided that the development of objectives should be an in-house task, to be accomplished by National Assessment staff with the assistance of outside consultants. Second cycle Reading was the first area for which this policy was applied.

Preparations for reviews and revision of the Reading objectives were begun in February 1970. National Assessment consulted many different types of people in the reviews and revisions of the Reading objectives: persons with expertise in the subject area, such as university professors or professionals in the field; persons with knowledge of current trends in education, such as professors of education; persons with knowledge of current practices in education, such as classroom teachers and curriculum supervisors; and lay persons with an interest in education and civic affairs. Members of professional organizations — in the case of Reading, the International Reading Association and the National Council of Teachers of English — were also included. Every effort was made to involve representatives from different regions of the country and from various ethnic and minority groups, so that all sections of the nation would be represented and the objectives would not be biased in favor of any one group.

Mail Review

Actual revision of the objectives was preceded by a staff review of the literature on reading objectives and a large mail review of the 1970-71

National Assessment Reading objectives by reading specialists for the different age levels and by interested lay persons. Approximately 200 people were invited to participate in this review.

Subject-Matter Review

The 1970-71 Reading objectives were also reviewed by a group of six subject-matter experts in Ann Arbor, MI., on March 15-16, 1970.* This group did not feel that major changes in the content of the objectives were necessary but suggested several alterations in the organization of the objectives. The consultants were also concerned about a possible overlap between the Reading and Literature objectives and emphasized that the Reading objectives should focus on reading skills rather than the literary qualities of the materials read.

The advantages and disadvantages of behaviorally-stated objectives were discussed but no firm recommendation on the manner of statement which should be used by National Assessment was given. The consultants wished reading achievement to be viewed both as a process and a product in the revised objectives and also felt that reading readiness should be included as an objective if it could be defined broadly enough to be applicable at all age levels.

Following this conference, National Assessment staff members with the assistance of S. Jay Samuels, associate professor of educational psychology, University of Minnesota, revised the Reading objectives in view of the consultants' recommendations.

Lay and Subject-Matter Review

The first draft of the revised objectives was reviewed at a conference held on September 25-26, 1970 in Ann Arbor. This conference was comprised of university English and reading professors, lay persons, classroom teachers and English and reading coordinators.** The four groups met separately and their recommendations were compiled at the close of the conference.

One major concern of the group was that the language of the objectives was pedantic and not sufficiently clear. There was some feeling that the subobjectives describing the major objectives were not inclusive enough, leaving too much to the judgment and inclinations of the exercise writer. Some flexibility was deliberately built into the objectives to allow freedom to the exercise writers; however, it was agreed that more specifics should be added. The lay group had some fear that the objectives and thus the exercises might discriminate against various minority and socio-

*Members of the review panel are listed in Appendix A.

**Members of the review panel are listed in Appendix B.

economic groups and asked that difference in environments be considered in the development of exercises.

Weighting of Objectives

Jerry Walker, associate professor of English education, University of Illinois, further revised the objectives in accord with the comments of the September review group. This second draft was sent to the participants of the September conference in December 1970 for their review and approval. These consultants were also asked to weight the major objectives on their relative importance. Their comments were used by Walker in making revisions to the second draft of the objectives in February 1971.

Due to the moving of National Assessment offices from Ann Arbor to Denver, CO., in July 1971 and the resultant staff readjustments, it was decided that the Reading exercises would be prepared by an outside contractor. Specifications were prepared and the contract for the redevelopment of the area of Reading was awarded to American Institutes for Research (AIR), Palo Alto, CA. AIR, using the second draft of objectives as revised by Walker, began developing prototype exercises.

In October 1971, budgetary considerations and reordering of priorities within the U.S. Office of Education necessitated a change in the assessment cycles. Reading, which was originally scheduled to be reassessed in 1973-74, was rescheduled to be assessed in 1975-76, thus providing additional time for the development of objectives and exercises.

S. Jay Samuels consulted with National Assessment staff in August 1972 to review the Reading objectives and to determine whether the exercises developed were in accord with the objectives. The descriptive passages were amplified and some of the examples for the various subobjectives which had been referenced to specific age levels were revised to indicate that many reading behaviors are not age-specific and will be assessed, with differing degrees of complexity, at several age levels.

Further revisions of the objectives were made in June 1973, again with the assistance of Samuels. At this time, some reorganization of the objectives took place. This final version was reviewed and approved by those who had taken part in the March and September 1970 conferences.

The Second Cycle Reading Objectives

Any survey of reading progress must begin with a set of basic assumptions about goals. Reading, whether oral or silent, is a means of verbal communication and thus is closely related to listening, speaking and writing. The definition of "effective reading" varies with the writer's intent and the reader's purpose. It may mean attention to every word or it may mean rapid skimming to grasp the central idea of a passage. As for the rewards of reading, these cover a broad range of experience, from clarification and information-gathering to the profoundest emotional impact.

The four major objectives and their subobjectives define various steps in the reading process, here for convenience viewed as separate elements. Reading tasks based on these objectives encompass a hierarchy of knowledge and skills ranging from elementary to complex.

The objectives are not intended to be a comprehensive set of objectives or a prescription for what should be taught in the schools. They are rather meant to cover knowledge, skills, and attitudes seen as important by educators, professionals and scholars in the field and concerned lay persons. They reflect a consensus of the many groups involved in American education and as such will provide a basis for the development of measurement tools to assess the nation's progress in reading.

CHAPTER 3

REVISED READING OBJECTIVES

I. DEMONSTRATE BEHAVIOR CONDUCIVE TO READING

This section examines reader self-awareness and sensitivity to factors affecting reading. These factors include motivations, attitudes and knowledge of reading skills, as well as ability to judge complexity of reading materials.

A. *Demonstrate values related to reading.*

1. Express an interest in reading.
   Examples:
   Include reading among leisure-time activities.
   Express preferences for certain kinds of reading matter.
   Purchase reading material; obtain reading material from a library or friends.

2. Indicate an awareness of the value of reading.
   Examples:
   Name ways in which reading is helpful in everyday life.
   Recognize value of reading as a means of gaining information.
   Identify problems encountered by those who cannot read.

3. Express a commitment to reading.
   Examples:
   Recommend books or magazines to friends.
   Describe books read.
   Discuss with friends books and magazines they have read.
   Read newspapers and magazines with some regularity.

4. Read to fulfill personal needs.
   Example:
   Describe occasions when reading has been done for enjoyment, escape, information, prestige or aesthetic satisfaction.

B. *Assess the readability of materials.*

1. Determine readability of a particular selection.
   Examples:
   Identify the easiest or most difficult of several reading passages.
   Assess the readability of a passage for their own age group.

2. Identify factors which affect readability.
   Examples:
   Recognize that word complexity affects readability.
   Recognize that sentence length and complexity affect readability.
   Recognize that the nature of the subject matter affects readability.

C. *Demonstrate knowledge of their own reading ability.*

1. Identify material they can read and understand with ease.
   Examples:
   Distinguish from a variety of passages those which they can read with understanding.
   Verify their selection of reading materials by demonstrating comprehension.

2. Know the adequacy of their reading performance.
   Example:
   Determine whether or not they have performed adequately on tasks requiring various reading skills or knowledge.

3. Know their own reading strengths and weaknesses.
   Example:
   Identify factors which affect their ability to comprehend what they read.

II. DEMONSTRATE WORD IDENTIFICATION SKILLS

A variety of abilities aid readers in decoding unfamiliar words. This section contains some of those important skills.

A. *Know the letters of the alphabet.*

Examples:

Name upper and lower case and cursive letters.
Identify letters upon hearing them pronounced.
Match upper and lower case and cursive letters.

B. *Apply knowledge of sound symbol relationships.*

Examples:

Pronounce words containing consonants, vowels, blends, digraphs and diphthongs.
Identify words having the same beginning or ending sounds.
Utilize letter position in a word to determine the sound/symbol relationship.

C. *Apply structural analysis techniques.*

1. Use syllabication as an aid to pronunciation.

   Examples:

   Pronounce polysyllabic words by breaking them into syllables.
   Determine the number of syllables in words.

2. Identify the components of words.

   Examples:

   Identify the prefixes, roots and suffixes of words.
   Identify parts of a compound word.

D. *Possess basic sight vocabulary.*

Examples:

Pronounce commonly used words shown in print.
Identify printed words upon hearing them pronounced.

E. *Use context for word identification.*

Examples:

Use rhyme or meter to determine the pronunciation of words.
Pronounce a word based on its function or usage in a sentence.
Select a word based on its function in a sentence.

III. POSSESS SKILLS FOR READING COMPREHENSION

There are times when it is necessary to grasp only the literal or obvious meaning of what is read. On other occasions readers must determine meaning by drawing inferences from what they read. Knowledge of written language conventions aids readers in either case. Some of the skills necessary for reading comprehension are presented in this section.

A. *Utilize written language conventions as comprehension aids.*

1. Understand the relationship of word order to meaning.

   Examples:

   Recognize that word order may indicate interrogative or declarative statements.

   Recognize differences in meaning when the words of a sentence are ordered in different ways.

2. Use punctuation marks as an aid to understanding.

   Examples:

   Explain the function and purpose of various punctuation marks — e.g. quotation marks, apostrophe, question mark — when they are presented in sentences.

   Demonstrate knowledge of the function and purpose of punctuation by their intonation pattern when reading passages aloud.

B. *Demonstrate literal understanding of material read.*

1. Identify the literal meaning of a word, phrase, or longer passage.

   Examples:

   State the denotative meaning of a given word.

   Identify a fact or other obvious piece of information presented in a phrase, sentence or longer passage.

   Follow a set of clearly stated directions.

2. Recognize prefixes and suffixes as meaningful units.
   Examples:

   Comprehend the meanings of prefixes and suffixes apart from the meaning of the root word.

   Recognize ways in which the addition of prefixes or suffixes may change the meaning of a word.

3. Use function words as an aid to understanding.
   Examples:

   Determine the effect of a given function word on meaning.

   Select the appropriate function word to achieve a given meaning.

C. *Demonstrate inferential understanding of material read.*

1. Derive implied meaning of a word, phrase, sentence or longer passage.
   Examples:

   Explain how the meaning of an unknown word can be determined from the context in which it appears.

   Identify the appropriate meaning for a word with multiple meanings when it is presented in a sentence.

   Determine the general idea or theme of a given passage when it is not clearly stated.

2. Use the connotation of a word as an aid to comprehension.
   Examples:

   Distinguish between the emotional or affective meaning of a word and its explicit or denotative meaning.

   Indicate how the selection of a word for its connotation affects meaning.

3. Use style or manner of expression as an aid to comprehension.
   Examples:

   Identify the mood conveyed by a particular passage.

   Determine the author's attitude toward the subject of his passage.

4. Understand the relationship of organization to meaning.

   Examples:

   Identify the organizing principle of a passage, e.g. chronology, general to specific, specific to general.

   Identify reasons behind the location of particular sentences or particular information in given passages.

5. Identify the writer's intent.

   Examples:

   Recognize whether the intent is to entertain, persuade, inform, etc.

   Determine the intent of statements in advertisements, editorials, campaign literature, etc.

   Identify the audience for which certain information is intended.

6. Identify the underlying assumptions of the writer.

   Examples:

   Explain the beliefs that the writer used as a basis for attacking a problem.

   Recognize the assumptions on which statements and claims are based.

7. Make qualitative judgments about what is read.

   Examples:

   Identify phrases and statements which are not internally consistent or do not make sense.

   Evaluate clarity of various passages.

   Evaluate sufficiency of information given in passages as a basis for drawing conclusions.

   Recognize sentences or phrases which do not fit the context or style of the passage in which they are found.

8. Relate what is read to other reading.

   Example:

   Compare passages on the same topic for the purpose of generalization, verification, refutation or classification.

9. Relate what is read to reality.
   Examples:

   Distinguish between fact and opinion.

   Compare what is read to personal experiences.

   Assess relevance of given reading material to their own lives and/or to the lives of others.

   Cite an instance from their own experience relating material they have read to their own life and/or the lives of others.

IV. USE A VARIETY OF APPROACHES IN GATHERING INFORMATION

Successful readers possess a variety of approaches for gathering information. Study skills, efficient use of reference materials and flexibility in adapting reading rate to their purpose and the type of material are examined in this section.

A. *Demonstrate flexibility in adapting their rate of reading to suit their purpose(s) and the nature of the material.*

1. Scan to locate specific information.
   Example:

   Adjust reading speed to search rapidly through a passage to find a specific piece of information.

2. Skim for an overall impression.
   Example:

   Adjust reading speed to obtain a general impression of the content.

3. Read for maximum comprehension.
   Example:

   Adjust reading speed to carefully comprehend the meaning(s) of a passage.

B. *Possess reading study skills.*

1. Demonstrate efficient study techniques.

   Examples:

   Identify main topics within a designated chapter of a non-fiction book.

   Demonstrate ability to pre-read, take notes, ask questions about material, survey and summarize.

2. Use various parts of a book as study aids.

   Example:

   Demonstrate use of title page, preface, introduction, table of contents, footnotes, index, charts, glossary, bibliography, appendix, and taglines to locate various kinds of information.

C. *Use reference materials efficiently.*

1. Demonstrate dictionary skills.

   Examples:

   Locate words in a dictionary.
   Use a dictionary to determine the correct pronunciation of a word.

   Know that the plural spelling of a word is found in the dictionary.

   Use a dictionary to determine the meaning of a word.

   Use a dictionary to determine the part of speech of a word.

2. Demonstrate skills in using an encyclopedia.

   Examples:

   Identify key words in a passage that can be used to locate additional information in an encyclopedia.

   Select the correct volume of an encyclopedia in which to find information on a given subject.

   Use the index volume of an encyclopedia to locate information on a given topic.

3. Know other source materials and how to use them, e.g. card catalog, newspapers, directories, bibliography, abstracts, periodicals, indexes.

   Examples:

   Explain the meaning of entries on a card from a library card catalog.

   Locate particular sections of a newspaper by using the index.

   Select the appropriate source materials for a given reference task.

APPENDIX A

READING OBJECTIVES: REVIEW AND REVISION CONFERENCE*

March 15-16, 1970
Ann Arbor, Michigan

Subject-matter specialists

Paul Berg, Director, Reading Clinic, University of South Carolina, Columbia, South Carolina

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Scott Newcomb, Assistant to the Director/Exercise Development
Jane Russell, Consultant in Reading

*The affiliations noted here are those of the individuals at the time they participated in the review.

APPENDIX B

READING OBJECTIVES: LAY AND SUBJECT-MATTER REVIEW

September 24-26, 1970
Ann Arbor, Michigan

Lay participants

Darvin Allen, House of Representatives, Kentucky, Royalton, Kentucky
Helen Hafley, National Congress of Parents and Teachers, Tucson, Arizona
Paul Parks, Model Cities Administration, Boston, Massachusetts

University professors

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