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ABSTRACT

This document presents nine papers which were originally prepared for the 1974 Annual Language Arts Conference at Memphis State University. Included are: "Proxemics" by Dale F. Baltus; "Reading and Study Skill Hints for Intermediate and Secondary Teachers" by Stuart W. Bray; "A Reading Game License" by Flora C. Fowler; "Teach Kids to Think" by Duane M. Giannangelo and Marilou Mulrooney; "The Group Diagnostic Inventory" by Robert A. Kaiser; "Reading: Re-Created for Enjoyment" by Thomas A. Rakes and Emily J. Canter; "Identifying the Mentally Retarded for Increasing Their Reading Skills" by John W. Schifani; "Pictures, Postcards, and Propaganda: Building Language through Art" by Betty J. Strong; and "Helping Children Develop Spoken Language" by Betty J. Webster. (TS)

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DECISION MAKING:

An Imperative for Language Learning

Highlights of the Seventh
Annual Language Arts Conference
of Memphis State University

June 12-14, 1974

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FOREWORD

Since 1968 the Annual Language Arts Conference has represented a portion of Memphis State University's service and interchange of new ideas with educators throughout the Mid-South. This volume, Decision Making: Imperative For Language Learning, reflects a continuation of interdisciplinary concern for the children and teachers within the region.

As in the past, multiple emphases are evident throughout the conference. The ultimate goal of the teaching of language skills is to guide in the development of thoughtful listening, effective speaking, critical reading, and expressive writing.

It is with sincere concern and a demonstrated pride that we continue our efforts to expand and improve our understanding and expertise in the area of language development. Toward this end, another conference has passed and a step taken toward this goal.

Robert L. Saunders, Dean
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INTRODUCTION

As was true in preceding conferences, multiple emphases were apparent throughout the '74 program. Decision Making: Imperative For Language Learning reflects the unique wholeness of language development, a process accurately termed as languaging. Perhaps there are no educational areas that need blending as do language skills. The expression of self is uniquely human through a phenomenon known as language. The Seventh Annual Conference Proceedings represent a diversity of communicative elements including proxemics, thinking, artistic expression, literature, reading, and other vital components.

Our special thanks go to Robert Wilson and Roger Farr for their excellent large group presentations. We are appreciative of the sparkling presentations and demonstrations conducted by Andrina Briney, Emily Jackson, Imogene Forte, Flora Fowler, and Rosemary Martin. A unique acknowledgement is extended to numerous Memphis State University faculty, Memphis and Shelby County public school leaders, and area private school educators who served in multiple roles to ensure that the numerous sessions were successful. Under the direction of Harold Robbins, physical and administrative arrangements were developed with precision.

The three-day conference featured twenty-nine different sessions including major addresses, action workshops, and interest sessions. This volume contains a portion on the program content; that is, it intends to capture a sample of the thoughts and dreams that were aired during the conference. As we know, thoughts are but a continuing progression of cognitive reactions to the moment; the maintenance of recording of thought is but a facsimile of the original.

MY THOUGHT

My thought was that a star fell out of the sky.
It was beautiful.
It was big.
I played with it all day.
I liked it, too.

Janice, Grade 2

With this in mind, the following thoughts are provided for your reaction.

Thomas A. Rakes

Sophia Brotherton

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PROXEMICS[1]

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Introduction

Proxemics is a simulation designed to show how man exhibits different behaviors in given distances. Additionally, the simulation, in most instances, shows how people are feeling toward one another at the time a particular distance is used.

The four main distances that man observes are intimate, personal, social, and public. Each of these distances has a close and a far phase and, in general, varies from culture to culture.

Directions

1. Ask the participants to select a partner that they do not know personally. If that is impossible, ignore this rule. Additionally, and whenever possible, ask that two whites not be partners in this simulation.

2. Give the participants a distance mind set. For example, explain to them that each floor tile represents so many inches. If the simulation is conducted on a carpet, you can give each participant a piece of plain typing paper (eight and one-half by eleven inches).

3. Inform the participants that after you have gone through the first set of distances you will ask them to be seated as partners. Explain that at first this may seem strange but that you are going to go through several standing distances and verbally debrief after each

distance has been experienced. To debrief while they remain standing will prove to be uncomfortable.

4. Ask each participant to stand as close to his partner as possible without touching and to look him in the eyes and talk. Try to have them hold this distance for at least five seconds (intimate distance, close phase). Observe every behavior they exhibit (such as giggling, moving away, looking away, shuffling, and embarrassment). Then, ask each participant to look down and see how far apart they are from one another and note the distance. Finally, ask each pair of participants to move eighteen inches apart and look each other in the eyes and talk. Observe their behaviors. Now ask the participants to be seated for the debriefing. (See debriefing and application for the intimate cultural distance.)

5. Again, ask the participants to rise and face their partners at a distance of eighteen inches. (Note: Do not allow participants to have an object between them; i.e., a chair, purse, desk, bench, etc., because this will expand the distance.) Slowly, ask them to move twenty-four inches away, look each other in the eyes, and talk for about thirty seconds. After you have observed their behaviors at twenty-four inches, ask them to move four feet apart, look each other in the eyes, and talk for about sixty seconds. Now, ask them to move to a distance with which they feel comfortable, somewhere between eighteen inches and four feet. Instruct them to look each other in the eyes and talk at this distance. After approximately sixty seconds, interrupt them and ask them to be seated for debriefing. (See debriefing and application for the personal culture distance. Note: It will be difficult to interrupt them as they will be engrossed in their conversation. You may have to clap your hands or make some other loud noise.)

6. Participants are asked to rise and assume the far phase of the personal distance (four feet) with their partners. Soon after reaching this distance, they are asked to step away from each other and spend fifteen second intervals facing one another at five-, six-, seven-, eight-, nine-, ten-, eleven-, and twelve-foot intervals. After their behaviors have been observed, participants are asked to sit for the debriefing. (See debriefing and application for the social cultural distance.)

7. Space permitting, participants are asked to rise and move at least twelve feet from their partners. They are then asked to talk to one another for at least ten seconds. This is repeated at distances of fourteen, sixteen, eighteen, twenty, twenty-two, and twenty-five feet. After this exercise has been completed, participants are asked to sit for a final debriefing and application. (See debriefing and application for the public cultural distance. Note: If space does not permit each participant to move twenty-five feet from his partner, the exercise can be accomplished by the group observing selected participants experiencing these distances.)

Debriefing and Application

After each distance has been experienced, the facilitator should ask the participants for their comments on the distance experienced. A good lead question would be, "Did you feel uncomfortable at this distance?" Following their comments the facilitator should explain each distance and as much as possible give examples of their behavior throughout the debriefing.

Intimate Cultural Distance (zero to eighteen inches)

At the intimate distance one feels uncomfortable and tends to move about because of increased sensory inputs. Sight is often distorted at this distance, and one can smell, see, hear, and feel the body heat of his partner. Physical contact is uppermost in the awareness of both persons. People tend to whisper at this distance because it has the effect of expanding the distance. Vocalizations that do occur at this distance tend to be involuntary. Most people in public tend to move away from one another at this distance. They cannot look one another in the eyes, and a shuffling of the feet occurs until the distance from one another is expanded.

The use of the intimate distance in public is not considered proper by adult, middle-class Americans. Think of crowded subways and elevators. In this type of spatial relationship, riders have defensive mechanisms. They bring their feet closely together, put their hands at their sides, and become immobile; they do not look at one another and, if they should touch, withdraw as soon as possible. In the main, the eyes are fixed on infinity and are not brought to bear on anyone for more than a passing glance. It should be noted that the measured distances vary with differences in personality and environmental factors: for example, a high noise level or low illumination will ordinarily bring people closer together. Other exceptions to this rule are cultural in nature. American proxemic patterns for intimate distance are not universal. Many of the features characteristic of American intimate distance are present in Russian social distance. Middle Eastern subjects in public places do not express the outraged reaction to being touched by strangers that one encounters in American subjects.

Application

Ask the participants how they can apply this knowledge of the intimate distance to their educational settings; for example: Are small children uncomfortable at the intimate distance? Should colognes or perfumes be worn by teachers and at what levels of instruction? Will high school students look you "in the eye" at this distance? Will Latin Americans tend to stand closer than white, middle-class Americans? Will blacks, not acculturated to the white, middle-class American intimate distance, stand closer and to what effect? How can administrators and teachers use this distance to their advantage?

Personal Cultural Distance (eighteen inches to four feet)

At personal distance, close phase (one and a half to two and a half feet) kinetic sense of closeness derives in part from what each participant can do to the other with his extremities. One can grasp the other person. There is noticeable feedback from muscles that control the eyes. The face is seen with exceptional clarity. Three dimensional quality of objects is pronounced. Surface textures are very prominent and clearly differentiated from each other. Where people stand in relation to each other signals either their relationship or how they feel towards each other, or both. A wife can stay inside the circle of her husband's close personal zone with impunity. For another woman to do so is a different story.

The personal distance, far phase (two and a half to four feet) extends from a point just outside easy touching distance by one person to a point where two people can touch fingers if they extend both arms. This is the limit of physical domination. Subjects of personal interest and involvement can be discussed at this distance. Head size is perceived as normal and details of the other person's features are clearly visible. Foveal vision covers an area the size of one eye so that the gaze must wander about the face. Movement of the hands is detected, but fingers cannot be counted. The voice level is moderate. No body heat is perceptible. Olfaction is not normally present for Americans, but other people use colognes to create an olfactory bubble. Breath odor can sometimes be detected at this distance, but Americans are trained to direct their breath away from others. At a distance of between three and four feet people tend to talk comfortably with one another. In mos cases if someone does not say something, uneasiness is felt until someone does. At this distance resides that person you just cannot get away from.

Application

If you really want to talk to a student or colleague, where should you stand? Where should students sit in your classroom? Why do students in the back of a classroom tend to misbehave more than those in the front? How can you correct this situation by knowing the personal distance?

Social Cultural Distance (four to twelve feet)

The boundary line between personal distance and social distance marks the "limit of domination." There is no intimate facial detail, no touching another person, and little change between far and close phases. This is also within the range of the normal American voice level.

At social distance, close phase (four to seven feet) people tend to shift their gaze back and forth from eye to eye or from eyes to mouth. Impersonal business occurs at this distance. There is more involvement than in the distant phase. People [illegible] together tend to use close social distance. It is a common distance for people who are attending a casual social gathering. To stand and look down at a person at this distance has a domineering effect.

Social distance, far phase (seven to twelve feet) is the distance to which people move when someone says "Stand away so I can look at you." Business and social discourse conducted at this distance is more formal. Desks in the offices of important people are large enough to hold visitors at the far phase of social distance. Chairs in an office are eight or nine feet away from the man behind the desk. The finest details of the face are lost. Skin texture, hair, condition of teeth, and condition of clothes are all readily visible. Feedback from the eye muscles used to hold the eyes inward on a single spot falls off rapidly. The eyes and mouth of the other person are seen in the area of sharpest vision.

Proxemic behavior of this sort is culturally conditioned and entirely arbitrary. It is binding on all concerned. To fail to hold the other person's eye is to shut him out and bring conversation to a halt. When one person is seated and the other is standing, prolonged visual contact at less than ten or twelve feet tires the neck muscles and is generally avoided by subordinates who are sensitive to their employer's comfort. If the status of the two is reversed so that the subordinate is seated, the other party may often come closer. At this distant phase, the voice is louder. Raising the voice can have the effect of reducing social distance to personal distance.

A proxemic feature of social distance, far phase is that it can be used to insulate people from each other. This makes it possible for them to continue to work in the presence of another person without appearing to be rude. If the receptionist is less than ten feet from another person, even a stranger, she will be sufficiently involved to be virtually compelled to converse. If she has more space, she can work quite freely without having to talk. The back-to-back seating arrangement is an appropriate solution to minimum space because it is possible for two people to stay uninvolved if that is their desire.

Application

Should teachers use the social distance in their classrooms? How can teachers become more personal with their students? How can administrators utilizing the social distance increase the effectiveness of their office staffs? How can you improve parent conferences?

Public Cultural Distance (twelve to twenty-five feet or more)

Public distance (twelve feet to more than twenty-five) is well outside the circle of involvement. Public distance, close phase ranges from twelve to twenty-five feet. At twelve feet, an alert subject can take defensive action if threatened. The distance may cue a flight reaction. The voice is loud but not full of volume. Careful choices of words, phrasings of sentences, and grammatical shifts occur. "Formal style" is descriptive. Formal texts demand advance planning. The angle of sharpest vision covers the whole face. At sixteen feet, the body begins to look flat. The color of the eyes begins to be imperceivable; only the white of the eye is visible. Head size is perceived as under life-size; e.g., Charlie Chaplin walking away.

At public distance, far phase (twenty-five feet or more) everything must be amplified. Thirty feet is the distance that is automatically set around important public figures. At thirty feet or more, the subtle shades of meaning conveyed by the normal voice are lost as are the details of facial expression and movement. The nonverbal part of the communication shifts to gestures and body stance. The tempo of the voice drops. When people look like ants, contact with them as human beings fades rapidly.

Application

With what frequency and for how long should large convocations be scheduled? Can you correctly interpret what someone says to you at a distance of twelve, fourteen, sixteen, eighteen, twenty, twenty-two, and twenty-five feet? How can you effectively supervise large convocations, athletic events, or co-curricular activities?

Footnote

[1] Proxemics is a term coined for the interrelated observations and theories of man's use of space as a specialized elaboration of culture. More information concerning distances can be obtained from the book by Edward T. Hall, The Hidden Dimension (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Co., Inc., 1966; Anchor Books edition, 1969).

READING AND STUDY-SKILL HINTS FOR INTERMEDIATE AND SECONDARY CONTENT TEACHERS

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Teachers in intermediate and secondary grades often assume that students have reading and study skills necessary to understand textbooks they are using. Since content teachers are not reading specialists, and many claim that they do not have time to teach reading in addition to subject matter, they simply assign materials to be read without providing much help to students in understanding what is assigned. After giving a unit test it is not unusual for a content teacher to exclaim. "My students did not understand what they read and studied."

Unless they are shown how to read, many youngsters who possess basic reading skills have almost as much difficulty as those with lesser skills in getting meaning from text material. The purpose of this paper is to provide some practical suggestions for making the teaching of subject content easier and more meaningful. One does not have to be a reading specialist to make a reading task a simpler, more rewarding endeavor.

Initially, a question teachers often ask is, "How can I tell at what reading level this book is written?" The answer is not a simple one although a number of formulae exist to determine objective estimates. Two basic ingredients that have been most popular in determining readability are (1) sentence length and (2) vocabulary difficulty. Few readability measures include interest, length, number of appropriate pictures, or general organization. Textbooks, even more than story books, are difficult to measure in terms of readability because of technical vocabularies or vocabularies unique to the particular subject area. Nevertheless, teachers like to quantify, and they do seek objective measures. They usually prefer quick assessments of readability because of lack of time. Actually, such measures are merely estimates anyway because reading difficulty depends on such things as motivation, background of the reader, and other factors.

In a booklet by Fry there is a graph for determining a relatively quick estimate of readability.[1] The one-page graph and explanation can easily be followed. Another formula for determining a quick approximation is the Fog Index as explained by Dulin.[2] The cloze procedure is still another technique for determining the difficulty of reading material and perhaps is more accurate for content material than the previous two measures. While not recommended as being extremely accurate for determining individual student capability, it can be a valuable aid in determining percentages for a class or group having difficulty in reading a particular textbook. A teacher may discover that a large percentage of his class has trouble understanding an assigned subject text. The procedure would provide some objective data to present the principal or supervisor to justify purchasing multi-level texts and supplementary materials. Dulin gives four steps for developing a cloze test. Bortnick and Lopardo give some applications of the cloze technique for teaching comprehension, word analysis, and other skills.[3]

Dulin suggests criteria for determining the independent, instructional, and frustrational levels for an individual student who is asked to read selected articles of varying difficulty. In the same journal issue, Levin gives step-by-step guidelines for preparing an informal reading inventory geared for classroom group administration.[4] While standardized group reading tests tend to place a student above his instructional level, an informal inventory based on material available in the classroom may give a truer indication and be more diagnostic as well. After group screening, a similar reading inventory may be given to those individual students for whom the teacher desires a more complete diagnosis. An inexpensive booklet from the International Reading Association that is helpful in preparing reading inventories is Informal Reading Inventories by Johnson and Kress.[5]

There are a number of ways teachers can help students achieve more from their assigned reading. Assuming that material can be located that is on an instructional level for a group of students, the teacher may occasionally prepare three-level study guides, which should be used as aids for studying and should not be graded:

1. Level two (inference) questions may be prepared first. The teacher should ask, "What concepts or understandings do I expect my students to derive?"

2. Level one (fact) questions may be organized to identify further detail and support inferences from level two questions.

3. Level three (application) questions may be developed by asking, "What generalized conclusions or universal truths do I expect my students to derive?"

Groups of questions may then be presented to students in the sequence of fact, inference, and application. A three-level study guide may consist of multiple-choice, true-false, or other types of questions. Students may work in small groups to decide on answers or may meet in groups after individuals or pairs of students have written their answers. Sharing provides repetition and the reinforcement of findings. In addition, and perhaps most importantly, group discussion allows for appreciation of differing opinions and interpretations. By emphasizing interpretive and implied levels of understanding, the necessity for sheer recall or memorization of facts is eliminated. Study guides can promote inductive, self-discovery learning as opposed to teacher-lecture or other passive modes of learning.

Niles believes that youngsters often have difficulty understanding material because they are unaware of common organizational patterns.[6] Sample paragraphs may be selected to demonstrate (1) temporal order (sequence), (2) simple listing, (3) comparison-contrast, and (4) cause-effect relationships. Students may then be instructed to find other paragraphs organized according to each of the above patterns.

Categorization exercises in which youngsters are asked to list terms under one or more topics are beneficial for building vocabulary and promoting word awareness. For example, lists of words, such as volcano, delta, iceberg, fissure, tundra, and moraine, from a fourth grade geography chapter may be presented. Pupils could be directed to relist the terms under one or more of the following headings: (1) Description of Earth, (2) Changing Force, and (3) Effect Caused by Changing Force. Youngsters could be told that they will be expected to defend their choices. Such would demonstrate their familiarity with each term.

The teacher's use of the chalkboard to assimilate concepts that are important to the understanding of a chapter or unit of study is another way of helping readers to better organize their thinking before reading. In preparation for a presentation and discussion, the teacher could (1) pull new or difficult terms from the text and arrange them in a diagram fashion until interrelationships among the concepts are depicted; (2) add concepts that are believed to be already familiar to the group, which allows the teacher to make use of a well-known learning principle, association; (3) introduce the diagram to students by explaining how the interrelationship of concepts explains what they will be reading and possibly ask them to contribute as much as possible to help in tying together the concepts; and (4) leave the diagram or structured overview on the board throughout the period during which the unit is to be read, referring to it regularly and adding additional information when appropriate.

Discussion of the origin of words is stimulating to some readers, particularly if the teacher has a flair for story telling or does a little investigation of meanings of word stems and affixes. Still other activities that provide motivation and stimulate vocabulary development are word puzzles and word games. In order to secure a number of content-vocabulary-crossword puzzles at minimal expense, the teacher could make one and then ask that each class member develop one from instructions similar to those which follow:

> Pick one vocabulary word with which the class should become familiar from the chapter or unit. Print the word horizontally in the middle, top third of a sheet of paper. Using letters from the first word, form other words vertically. Additional words from the unit may be printed horizontally or vertically by using any common letter or letters from previous words. After producing such a word maze, put one small box around each letter, and number the first letter box of each word. List meanings of words under Across and Down in the two columns at the bottom of the page.

You now have the key from which to make an identical puzzle maze except that the boxes will be left blank. You may request that each puzzle be made on a ditto master, or simply on sheets of paper. In either case, the wide variety of puzzles developed may now be exchanged among the group for further practice in learning important concepts from the unit.

G R A M O or some similar bingo-type game may be made from regular classroom materials. In G R A M O the teacher writes on the board the parts of speech that the teacher wishes the students to practice. The class is asked to form on a piece of paper a grid of twenty-five boxes. Players may write the name of a part of speech from the board as often as desired in the boxes. Only one part of speech may be written in each box. The words "Free Space" are written in the one box in the center of the grid. Ahead of time the teacher prepares words on separate small squares of paper. The teacher also records the part of speech and one letter from the word G R A M O on each of the squares. These separate squares become the "caller's" words from which the teacher or a student pronounces a word and then uses it in a sentence. This is to reinforce knowledge of the part of speech intended. For instance, the word show may have been designated a verb, noun, or adjective. It is the caller's responsibility to use show correctly in a sentence. It is each player's job to write the word beside the correct part of speech in the appropriate column. The caller may say, "Under column G, the word 'show.' I went to a show last night." A player who has noun written in any unused box in the column under G may write show beside it. The first player to write words correctly in each of five consecutive boxes, either horizontally, vertically, or diagonally, wins the game. If the player grid sheets are to be used for more than one game, a number of small blank cardboard squares may be given to each player as in BINGO. The player then writes the called word on the cardboard square and places the square on the correct part of speech in the appropriate column. The same rules may be used to play VOCAB, in which each player writes terms from the board and matches definitions provided by the caller.

It is hoped that activities such as the ones presented here will help make reading comprehension and vocabulary building easier and more meaningful for students in content subjects. Teachers are encouraged to think of learning to read as an ongoing process. A mature reader reads different materials at different rates and in various ways (skimming, scanning). It depends on the type of material and the reader's purposes. Subject-area teachers can reinforce and nurture the reading process while at the same time making their own jobs easier and subject content more meaningful.

Footnotes

[1] Edward Fry, The Emergency Reading Teacher's Manual (Highland Park, New Jersey: Drier Educational Systems, Inc., 1969), p. 16.

[2] Kenneth L. Dulin, "Measuring the Difficulty of Reading Materials," Reading Improvement, Vol. 8, No. 1 (Spring, 1971), 3-6.

[3] Robert Bortnick and Genevieve Lopardo, "An Instructional Application of the Cloze Procedure," Journal of Reading, Vol. 16, No. 4 (January, 1973).

[4] Beatrice J. Levin, "The Informal Reading Inventory," Reading Improvement, Vol. 8, No. 1 (Spring, 1971), 18-20.

[5] Marjorie S. Johnson and Roy A. Kress, Informal Reading Inventories (Newark, Delaware: International Reading Association, 1965).

[6] Olive Niles, "Organization Perceived," Developing Study Skills in Secondary Schools (Newark, Delaware: International Reading Association, 1965).

A READING GAME LICENSE

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Teachers of reading should consider the following three statements:

1. All children of all ages enjoy games.
2. However, all children of all ages do not enjoy reading.
3. ALL READING SKILLS CAN BE REINFORCED THROUGH GAMES.

The use of games in teaching reading, while not a new idea, seems to be reaching new heights of sophistication. In the past some teachers have used games only as a device to break the monotony of the day or to use up some spare time. Others have strictly dichotomized "learning" and "playing," thereby making reading a book-centered course with repetition and drill as the main techniques for teaching the student what he needed to know. Still others have felt that the development and improvement of reading skills had to be painful to be effective. Charles Silberman in Crisis in the Classroom said:

> Schools can be humane and still educate well. They can be genuinely concerned with gaiety and joy and individual growth and fulfillment without sacrificing concern for intellectual discipline and development. They can be simultaneously child centered and subject or knowledge centered.[1]

Games are potentially an important source of instruction for every student. Each individual teacher must make the decision of how and when to use games and with which students to use them. Possibilities for developing games that may be used to enhance reading skills are endless and are limited only to the creative imagination of the teacher and students involved. Many activities in which students enjoy participating in their spare time may be developed into a game activity to build reading skills. Such activities may be developed from sports, comics, television programs, or card games. The following will provide an illustration demonstrating how such activities may be developed for reading.

Reading Poker

Purpose

The purpose of READING POKER is to capitalize on an activity that students enjoy in order to develop specific reading skills of word recognition and/or comprehension.

Materials Needed

A deck of playing cards will be needed for this activity. A regular deck may be used or a special deck may be prepared. This special deck may be any size--from the size of a regular deck of cards (to be used instead of a regular deck for those who object to the use of "playing cards") to an extra large deck that may be used so that an entire classroom can view the activity with ease. This special large deck may be prepared by cutting 13 sheets of white poster board (22" x 28") into four cards, each 11" x 14". Four different solid colors of construction paper or self-adhesive contact paper can be used to cut numbers and letters. These four colors may substitute for the four suits found in a typical deck of playing cards. The numbers two through ten and the letters K, Q, J, and A may be used.

Preparation and Instructional Procedures

1. For each round twenty-eight questions that relate to the skills studied should be prepared. (One sample round is provided.)
2. All participating students should be divided into four teams. One member at a time from each team should participate, or questions may rotate among team members so that more may participate.
3. The twenty-eight questions are asked -- one at a time -- until each team has been asked a total of seven questions. As each player answers a question correctly, his team is given a card that may be exposed to the class. If a question is missed the team does not receive a card. Each team, therefore, may accumulate from 0-7 cards. Cards may be held in the chalk tray as they are accumulated, thereby displaying all "hands" at once.
4. After all twenty-eight questions have been asked, the accumulated cards are examined -- team by team. The team with the best "hand" is declared the winner. This best hand is determined according to the regular rules of poker, which are as follows:

High: STRAIGHT FLUSH (five consecutive of the same suit)
FOUR OF A KIND
FULL HOUSE (three of a kind and a pair)
FLUSH (five of one suit)
STRAIGHT (five consecutive of any suits)
THREE OF A KIND
TWO PAIRS
ONE PAIR
Low: HIGH CARD

Students should understand the meaning of each of the above terms. If desired, a transparency may be prepared and flashed during the game so that students will not have to memorize them.

Scoring

Four points are awarded to the team with the best hand, three for second best, two for third best, and one for the remaining team. Scores may be accumulated and the game may be continued over a period of several weeks.

Caution

This game should not be used if families of any participants have religious or personal beliefs that conflict with this activity. If this does happen, the following adaptations are offered as alternatives:

1. Take out the A (Ace), K (King), Q (Queen), and J (Jack) cards and change the terminology of the winning hands to the following:

High: FIVE CONSECUTIVE CARDS OF THE SAME COLOR
FOUR CARDS WITH THE SAME NUMBER
THREE OF THE SAME NUMBER WITH ONE PAIR
FIVE OF ONE COLOR
FIVE CONSECUTIVE OF ANY COLORS
THREE OF THE SAME NUMBER
TWO PAIRS
ONE PAIR
Low: HIGH NUMBER

(Note that the word color is used to replace the word suit for the deck that has four different colors to represent the four different suits.)

2. For another adaptation, take out the A (Ace), K (King), Q (Queen), and J (Jack) cards and let the winning team be determined by the addition of the highest number of points. A card containing the number one (1) may be added to this version.

SAMPLE QUESTIONS FOR READING POKER
(For use without a specific reading selection)

The following is a list of the first half of many common expressions that you may encounter in your reading materials. The teacher's responsibility is to supply the name or word that is usually linked with the half presented.

1. Bread and (butter)
2. Assault and (battery)
3. Curds and (whey)
4. Procter and (Gamble)
5. Jack and (Jill)
6. Ball and (chain, bat)
7. William and (Mary)
8. Bow and (arrow)
9. Tweedledum and (Tweedledee)
10. Amos and (Andy)
11. Lock and (key)
12. Anthony and (Cleopatra)
13. Sound and (Fury)
14. Tom and (Jerry)
15. Gilbert and (Sullivan)
16. Hansel and (Gretel)
17. Stress and (strain)
18. Hill and (dale)
19. Bed and (board)
20. Mason and (Dixon)
21. Frankie and (Johnny)
22. Stocks and (bonds)
23. Checks and (balances)
24. Chapter and (verse)
25. Lewis and (Clark)

26. Nip and (tuck)
27. Pomp and (circumstance)
28. Cloak and (dagger)

Footnote

[1] Charles Silberman, Crisis in the Classroom (New York, N. Y.: Vintage Books, 1971).

TEACH KIDS TO THINK

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"Why teach thinking?" The main objective of a language arts program is to teach a child to communicate and function as an individual in society. Without the foundation of the thinking process the child cannot achieve this goal. Thinking is actually the basis of all language arts skills. If a child is to speak, read, listen, or write creatively, he must develop criteria with which to do so.

It is the responsibility of the teacher to develop and stimulate the thinking of a child. In order to accomplish this task, the teacher must be knowledgeable about the various levels of thinking so that she can incorporate suitable activities into the program. The complexity of the activities would naturally relate to the age level of the child.

The literal level of thinking is the most utilized level of all classroom thinking activities. At this level the child recalls and recognizes facts and the main ideas of the author. Guszak estimated that in the curricular area of reading about 86 per cent of the questions asked in grades two, four, and six deal with comprehension at this level.[1] Facts are only the raw materials with which thoughts can be developed, so they must be kept until they are needed. Teachers tend to use close-ended questions, thus eliminating the opportunity for the child to think at higher levels. If the teacher limits the number of factual questions to about 50 per cent of the discussion time, she can provide more opportunities for interpretive thinking.

At the inferential level of thinking the child is able to interpret facts in a manner that allows the reader to read between the lines. Although the child's background experiences and knowledge are important, the reader must stay within the bounds of concrete data when utilizing this level of thinking. A reader can handle analogies and compare present situations with similar ones that have been experienced in the past.[2] The teacher must employ open-ended questions in order to allow the child freedom of thought for the inferences he is to make.

Critical thinking is the next level of thinking. At this stage the child can go beyond inferences and draw conclusions. The youngster is able to support specific answers with logic and supposition. He can make judgments, analyze, solve problems, compare points of view, categorize ideas, and determine differences among fact, opinion, and propaganda.

Creative thinking is the highest level of perception. Creativity is a way of thinking and acting that is natural to the makeup of man; in other words, it is an emotional response. Teachers must remember that all children can be creative, so they must continuously stimulate and nurture this thinking process in the classroom. The key to developing creative thinking is teaching in alternatives.[3] The teacher can arouse the imaginations of the children simply by asking them to end a story in another way. Teachers should make youngsters aware that stories may have multiple endings. Too many times, teachers think in terms of the one right answer, thus stifling the creative thinking of the children. In order to secure mastery in creative thought the interest and spirit must be kept alive.

Educators should develop techniques or motivational activities to stimulate the minds of children. Children have ideas but with help from the teacher, they can better organize and develop them. If a person spends the afternoon with a young child at the zoo or circus, he experiences the excited reactions that arise within the child. The questions are endless and seemingly disconnected. The lack of patience on the part of the teacher by imposing a strict logical way of thinking may tend to inhibit the child and could result in his lack of interest in discussion. Teachers must guide the child's thinking but not squelch it.

"Let's pretend" is a technique used to encourage children from kindergarten to the second grade to be more imaginative in their thinking and more entertaining in their presentations. A teacher takes the old theory of "show and tell" and spices it up to create a motivational setting. In the old, monotonous routine the children would bring objects to school and identify them for the class. In the new dimension the teacher takes the object a child brings (for example, a jet plane) and tells the class to "Pretend you are a jet plane. What would you feel like doing today? Where would you go? What would you be thinking?" The pretenders and listeners are the classmates. This creates competition because the children are looking for different ways to express their ideas.[4]

Another "help-the-child-to-think" approach helps children acquire active patterns of thinking through creative problem solving. The process of thinking in alternatives leads the child's thoughts to a desired goal. This approach brings the "playfully creative" and the "goal oriented" into the closely woven process of creative problem solving. The teacher can direct this process by adapting worthwhile questions to particular situations that are vague familiar to the child. Complete familiarity with a problem, as well as unfamiliarity, can result in a non-learning situation. Children must move toward divergent thinking as they progress through the four general areas to creative problem solving, which are defining the problem, discussing alternative ways the problem can be solved, planning a procedure with open thoughts, and an evaluation of the problem.[5]

The kindergarten teacher can use divergent questions about how, why, and if to bring about creative problem solving. The primary teacher may develop the process of "thinking groups."[6] This type of training does not develop overnight, and only under the close supervision and ardent direction of the teacher can the child progress from a problem through the stages of development to a rewarding solution. Teachers need to improve the way they ask questions. Many times they consistently ask few questions that require thinking. Good questions are key techniques to the thinking process. Once the child grasps this type of thinking process, he can incorporate it into his reading, spelling, and writing.

The use of short episode situations, together with role-playing, is another technique that can be utilized to develop the concept of creative problem solving. The children develop episodes supplied by the teacher and apply the steps of problem solving to a real situation.

The use of role playing gives the children opportunities to act out these situations, thus resulting in a rewarding decision making process. This technique can be geared to any level by adjusting the complexity of the problem to the maturity of the children.

The ability to think critically and formulate conclusions does not develop instantly; it must be fostered, stimulated, and developed.[7] Children must be directed and taught how to evaluate criteria. For example, many teachers instruct children to read books and write reports. Youngsters cannot be expected to judge a book if they do not know what to look for. One approach would be to read excerpts aloud from a book with a definite pronounced style; for example, Uncle Remus stories. Children need help identifying such aspects as the style used, choice of words and dialects, character traits, and the signs of humor and tragedy. If taught how, a child can learn to make a critical analysis. Children can be taught to evaluate art, movies, and even filmstrips if given the essentials to look for in each situation.

Children can also be taught to be critics by evaluating their teachers. Many times this technique is used in college and high school, but rarely do youngsters in the elementary grades have the chance to voice an opinion about their teachers and classrooms. Children at this age are perceptive and candid. The teacher should explain her purposes so that the children will feel more comfortable in this role. This also allows for more effective thought processes.[8]

Two other techniques for helping stimulate creative thinking in children are "morphological analysis" and "toss out, bounce back."[9] The purpose of the morphological analysis is to show children that new ideas can be enhanced by simply examining existing ones. It can be applied to any classroom problem or school situation. In the process, the teacher uses columns to list similar concepts. For example, in Column I a teacher might place similar items such as children's names, while in Column II she might use actions. By combining a name from the first column and an action from the second column a satisfying combination may be developed. The teacher would then ask the child to discuss the meaning of a particular combination. Another alternative would be to select items according to some numerical order. The available choices do not always contain words. In the earlier levels pictures may be used, while in the intermediate stages there may be several envelopes with ideas for selection in each. Such a thinking process may develop into a creative writing lesson. In junior high this could be related to examining issues for an election campaign with column headings such as candidates, propaganda, methods, and party platform planks.[10]

How rewarding it must be for a teacher to "toss out" an idea and have a creative solution "bounce back." Actual examples of this technique follow:

Toss out:	Some of the best things in life are round . . . .
Bounce back:	The possibilities are unlimited - bursting sun, happy faces, rings, doughnuts, money, Charlie Brown's head, Papa's beer belly.
Toss out:	How many proverbs can you recall? Find as many proverbs as you can and illustrate with a magazine article.
Bounce back:	Maytag - "A woman's work is never done." Campbell Soup - "Too many cooks spoil the broth." Sominex - "All's well that ends well."

This technique is especially good in stimulating ideas of older children. It also teaches children to categorize related ideas, many of which can be incorporated into other language skills such as reading, writing, and speaking.

Creative dramatics as a teaching method is important to children to children of all ages from preschool through high school because it builds confidence, teaches children to express themselves, and strengthens the imagination which leads to inquiring and healthy minds. Imaginative dramatics is more than acting out stories and plays, for it uses several forms of creativity. Its philosophy is to stimulate the children's imagination to the point of creative thinking and learning.[12] The process is not necessarily an audience-oriented activity; each child takes part and, since there are no outsiders watching, can relax and exercise his imagination without feeling inhibited. This technique also provides new means of viewing problems and situations.

Pantomime, improvisation, puppetry, role playing, dramatic readings, choral readings, play writing, and play production are a few of the ways the teacher can spark the minds of her children -- not all forms are means of verbal communication. In some instances, through the use of a non-verbal method, youngsters can reflect ideas, moods, and feelings. Their gestures, facial expressions, and sign language are ways of speaking without words. Teachers may arouse thoughts by devising mountain climbing expeditions, moon flights, and even trips to a rodeo.[13] An entire class can participate since the school is the demonstration laboratory. Only through the teacher's innovative directions can this creative adventure produce active thoughts.

Puppetry is probably one of the oldest forms of the creative arts. Imagination is required to create and decorate a puppet character and plan a show. Puppets offer avenues for thought and feelings. They may be used to dramatize a story or library book, a favorite piece of music, a holiday, or nearly any situation. A value of puppetry may be derived from its summing up of the language arts through creative use of language on a verbal and non-verbal level.[14]

Role playing is a widely used technique that helps students develop sensitivity to other people and their points of view. It stimulates thinking, since students see more than one solution to a problem, and it encourages consideration of long range effects of choices. The teacher may direct the child to be a fireman going to a fire and putting it out; or a lawyer in a courtroom pleading his client's case. These are but a few of the techniques a teacher might use in stimulating creative thoughts. Children love to perform, and in what better way can they learn than by doing. The teacher plays an essential role in developing the thinking processes of a child. There are no set rules to follow to increase idea production, but through the ingenuity and patience of the teacher productive thoughts can be stimulated and developed.

Footnotes

[1] Frank Guszak, "Teaching Questioning and Reading," The Reading Teacher, XXI (December, 1967), 260.

[2] Michael A. Balasa, "Teaching Inference Comprehension," Elementary English, L (February, 1973), 276.

[3] Alvin Granowsky and Morton Bell, "Creative Thinking, Reading, and Writing in the Classroom," Elementary English, LI (May, 1974), 653.

[4] Lillian Yelowitz, "Pretend with K-2's," Instructor, LXXXI (April, 1972), 34.

[5] Sara W. Lundsteen, "Questioning to Develop Creative Problem Solving," Elementary English, LI (May, 1974), 645-49.

[6] Ibid.

[7] Frances G. Smith, "Teaching Children to Evaluate," Elementary English, XLV (December, 1968), 1075-76.

[8] James R. Watson, "Kids as Critics: Can They Evaluate?" Instructor, LXXXIII (April, 1974), 40.

[9] Leonore W. Dickman and Sister Bridget Haase, "Experiments in Creative Thinking," Instructor, LXXXIII (May, 1974), 46-8.

[10] Ibid.

[11] Ibid.

[12] Saundra M. Hall and Beth Lemon, "An Hour of Creativity," Elementary English, LI (January, 1974), 33.

[13] Harriett Azemove, "Mountain Climbing - Classroom Style," Instructor, LXXXIII (December, 1973), 36-7.

[14] Myra Weiger, "Puppetry," Elementary English, LI (January, 1974), 55-6.

GROUP DIAGNOSTIC INVENTORY

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The Informal Reading Inventory has long been used by reading teachers. The fact that it must be administered individually to each student has been recognized as a major weakness and as such as contributed to the development of another technique known as the Group Diagnostic Inventory (GDI), which is an instrument that measures how well a student understands the content information included in his textbook material. However, its use reflects more than a technique of measurement, rather a philosophy of instruction that is centered on the individual, not on subject material. It is best defined as a diagnostic/prescriptive approach to instruction and should be viewed as a method of individualizing instruction.

Constructing the Group Diagnostic Inventory

The GDI is constructed as a pretest from the textbooks a teacher uses in her classroom. It is organized into three sections that may be constructed and administered separately. The first section measures the student's capacity to listen and understand and requires that the teacher select a passage that will be read orally. The second section tests the student's ability to decode or identify vocabulary words found in the textbooks. This task requires that the teacher scan the textbook material and select those words that may be difficult. The third section is a reading test. It, too, is constructed from the textbook material and requires the selection of a passage that will be read silently by each student.

Section I

To assess a student's capacity to understand concepts in a subject area, the teacher must select and read a portion of the textbook to the students. The length of the listening selection will vary with the circumstances of grade level and subject, but it is suggested that the selection be long enough to support the answering of eight to ten questions. These teacher-devised questions should reflect main ideas, details, inferences, sequence, and judgmental comprehension. The questions should not be limited to literal comprehension and should reflect several levels or depths of understanding.

Multiple choice, matching, true-false, or fill-in-the-blank formats may be used for this section. It is suggested that the test be devised so that it is easily scored, but the questions should be phrased in such a way that they stimulate discussion after the listening test is over. Questions in this section will be read to the students, and each student will have his own duplicated copy to follow. A separate answer sheet may be used to record the responses of each student in the class.

An optional task that may be included in the first section of the inventory is a reading test based on the cloze test procedures, which require the selection of a 250-word passage from which every fifth word is deleted. Students are required to fill in the exact fifty words deleted, so it is necessary to type this passage with blank spaces permeating the material.

The eight to ten questions from the listening selection, together with the cloze test, comprise the first section of the GDI. It should be one typed page having appropriate headings for identifying the textbook, author, date, and student.

Section II

This section of the inventory is concerned with vocabulary and word identification skills. It tests a student's ability to recognize or identify new or difficult words found in the textbook.

To construct this section the teacher needs to survey the textbooks used and locate new, unusual, or difficult words. These words should be written on a master list. As the list is being compiled the teacher should notice how certain words relate to one another. For example, several words may have the same root, prefix, or suffix. Other words may have two spellings or have the characteristic of being commonly misspelled.

Whatever grouping may result, each reflects a method of attacking the word for rapid identification. Having five or six words in each of several groups the teacher can then begin to construct what might be termed a short skills reference test. The typical GDI contains at least five tests in this section. Root words, prefixes, suffixes, antonyms, synonyms, homonyms (context), phonics (sounds), and syllabication are examples of some of the techniques that were found in Section II. Each of these skills tests serves as the nucleus for an instructional group formed after the students have taken the tests.

Students who miss one-third or more of the six item sub-test will probably experience difficulty decoding the words from the textbooks.

Where a larger number of items is used this percentage can be increased. Cutoff points of 75 percent or 80 percent have seemed appropriate in situations where ten or more items were used on a sub-test.

Section II, like the first section, should be formulated to fit on one typed page. Each sub-test should contain its own set of directions, and the total section should take about thirty minutes of testing time.

Section III

This section of the GDI is a silent reading test. To construct it the teacher needs to select a reading passage several thousand words in length. The length of the passage will vary from grade level to grade level, so an appropriate guideline for selecting the passage would be to choose about ten minutes of silent reading material. Consider that the average reader reads at about 200 to 250 words per minute; therefore the passage is from 2000 to 2500 words in length. It is recommended that the passage contain between 2000 and 4000 words and that the exact number be tabulated so that students can figure their reading rates, which are calculated by dividing reading time into the total number of words. For example, 2400 words read in ten minutes yields a reading rate of 240 words per minute.

To eliminate confusion, it is recommended that this section be administered within a specific time period (ten minutes). This will help teachers in planning their test administration time, and it will also help students to calculate their reading time.

Questions for this section should be constructed parallel to those used for the listening test in Section I. Main idea, detail, sequence, inference, and judgmental questions in a format similar to Section I will allow the teacher to make conclusions about a student's specific comprehension abilities.

A minimum of ten questions should be used to ascertain how well a student reads. Literal levels of questions should be asked as well as questions requiring a greater depth of understanding. Students should be asked questions that require the use of previous knowledge or understanding. They should be asked to predict or infer outcomes. In general, the reading selection should be long enough to ensure no shortage of questions.

Students should be able to answer eight out of ten questions without looking back to find their answers. An 80 per cent comprehension rate on the reading pretest will most certainly assure a teacher that the student can handle the textual material at the instructional level. However, teachers may want to vary this administrative procedure and allow students to reread and answer their questions. In this situation it is suggested that additional questions be added to the inventory and incorporated into a special section entitled "Locating Information."

The format for the third section may vary. Some teachers may allow students to read directly from their textbooks. Others may prefer to retype and duplicate the reading passage so that they are not dependent on the textbook should it not be available for some reason. Regardless of the format, the reading passage and the questions should appear separately. Directions for the section, along with directions for computing reading rate, should appear so that students can compute their own rates.

On the separate sheet used for the questions the student will respond to multiple choice, true-false, matching, or short answer fill-in-the-blank questions. Some questions might be designed to require short answers in sentence or paragraph form. This may be especially desirable where a sample of a student's writing ability is necessary. However, this type of assessment might be considered out of the range of the GDI and the subject of another kind of test.

A Look at Results of the GDI

The Group Diagnostic Inventory, appropriately constructed, will yield a variety of information useful in classroom planning, organization, and instruction. Information from Section I of the inventory (Listening Capacity) enables the teacher to decide which students can profit from her planned instruction. Indeed, she may find several students who do not have the mental ability or the experiential background to handle the concepts she teaches. For some students failure in this section of the inventory may be motivational in nature. Regardless of the cause, students who cannot listen and discuss questions based on textual material should not be working in that textbook for reading assignments.

Another group with a little more readiness for learning should emerge from the analysis of Sections I and III. This group is composed of those who passed or performed well in the listening section but failed the reading section. In other words, the students have the capacity to understand, but they cannot read. For these students direct instruction in reading is necessary. Vocabulary and comprehension, as well as the language of the content, must be taught. Often, simple words like scale, charge, or battery, which have multiple meanings, offer significant stumbling blocks to comprehension. The teacher might find that she has to rewrite or illustrate textual material for this group of students.

The third group to emerge from the analysis of student performance is composed of those who listen, discuss, and read well. These will be your top students if properly motivated. Research and study techniques will be handy reading skills to teach these students. They must become more independent learners. Thus, the GDI leaves the teacher with three clearly defined groups for planning her instructional program: one group that cannot handle the material, another that can work with the concepts but cannot read well enough to use the textbook material, and the third group that can both read and discuss what is presented to them in printed form.

Section II of the GDI offers the teacher significant information for developing her instructional plan. Its results tell the teacher how well students identify new words. It can tell her directly which words she has to teach and which she does not. It also gives her an indication of which approach to use. For example, a student's failure to identify cognition on one of the sub-tests would indicate that the root cogni (thinking, perceiving, or knowing) should be taught along with several other related terms like recognize, recognition, or cognizant. Students who identify "pronounciation" as the correct form of pronunciation reveal a spelling problem and dictate the need for an instruction group in spelling. If athlete is given three syllables and mischievous four, then the student has some problem with the sounds of the language and needs assistance with breaking words into syllables.

Generally, Section II returns to the teacher as much information as she programs into her tests. The important point to remember is that these tests are the basis for developing instructional groups that are designed to better teach specific skills in reading and vocabulary.

Examples from a GDI

The following examples have been developed to illustrate the format of a GDI. The inventory does not appear in complete form, but there is a sufficient description to allow teachers to add their own creative ideas.

Name____________________ Date _/_/_ Class______________

Section I

Part A. Listening Capacity

Directions: Listen as your teacher reads a passage from the book The Changing Old World (p. 42). After you have listened to the story answer the following questions. Write your answer in the space provided and be prepared to discuss your answers.

(M.I.) ___ 1. A title for this story would be ______________.

(comparison) ___ 2. Christ to Christians is like Mohammed is to ______________.

(detail) ___ 3. Moslems count the years since
a. Mohammed reached Mecca
b. Mohammed left Mecca
c. Mohammed left Medina

Fig. 1 An Illustration of the Directions and Questions Found in Section I of a Typical GDI

Note how questions are labeled and how they might promote discussion once they have been answered.

Figure 2 illustrates the format of a cloze passage. The passage should contain 250 words, and each fifth word should be deleted. Students scoring between twenty-two and twenty-nine correct are at their instructional level. (Note that they must provide the exact word for this scoring technique.) Scores above or below this range should indicate that the textbook is either too hard (low score) or too easy (high score).

Part B. Cloze Technique

Directions: This is a test to determine how well you can read social studies textbooks. Read the passages below and fill in the word that has been left out. Spell the words as best you can. You may guess at words.

Moslems believe in the __________ of Mohammed, who lived __________ Arabia about six hundred __________ after the...

Fig. 2 The Optional Cloze Test Included in Section I of the GDI

Section II provides the teacher with instructional information for developing vocabulary. Syllabication, root words, sounds, spelling, and meaning have been used here. Note that additional decoding techniques should be added.

Students should be able to answer three out of four of these questions within each sub-test. Any score below eight of ten or six of eight would indicate that the student needs help instructionally with this approach.

Section II — Vocabulary/Word Attack

Part A — Syllabication

Directions: Mark the number of sounds in the following words and divide the words into syllables.
Example: __2__ a. Mos/lem

___ a. parable
___ b. Mecca

Part B — Root Words

Directions: Follow the instructions under column II. Use the list of words under column I.

I	II
majority	A. circle the root meaning of "forgiveness"
mercifully	B. cross out the root meaning "most" of "important"

Part C

Directions: Match the word in column I with the statement in column II.

I	Rhymes With
1. Damascus	famus
2. Amos	the "a" sounds like the "a" in cat

Part D — Spelling

Directions: Circle the correct spelling

1. neighbor	nieghbor	neihbor
2. treson	treason	treasan

Part E — Word Meaning

Directions: Answer true or false or don't know

You can be timid in Turkey.	T	F	DK
Judaism is mostly Jewish.	T	F	DK

Fig. 3 Examples of Items Found in Section II of the GDI.

Section III is composed of a typed reading selection and a list of ten or twelve questions much like those listed for the listening capacity section. In addition there should be an opportunity to calculate reading rate. To simplify this calculation a format similar to that illustrated in Figure 4 is suggested.

Your reading time has been 10 minutes. Calculate your reading rate by dividing the number of words you read by the reading time:

(time) 10 $\overline{)225}$ (total words) = words per minute (wpm)

Fig. 4 The Format for Calculating Reading Rate.

Note that this process could be made more efficient by counting the number of words and placing the cumulative total at the end of each line.

It is frequently expedient to look at the performance of your students as a total class. For this purpose a summary sheet is always handy. Figure 5 illustrates one form of a summary sheet that may be used. This summary sheet stresses the formation of instructional groups derived from Section II of the inventory. Other formats may be useful to teachers and alterations to this one are encouraged.

GROUP DIAGNOSTIC INVENTORY
Class Summary Sheet

Class ______________________ Unit ______________
Teacher ____________________ Date ______________

Student's Name	Syll.	Roots	Phonic	Spell.	Mean.	List.	Rdng.	Comments

Fig. 5 GDI Summary Sheet

Summary

The GDI has the potential to become to secondary and content area teachers what the IRI has become to reading teachers. If the technique is popularized, it may well be a signal for a shift toward individualizing instruction. This article has been offered to illustrate one perspective of the GDI. Other articles have been written and deserve review. It is this educator's hope that this perspective will be the stimulus for further development and application of this worthy diagnostic technique.

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READING: RE-CREATED FOR ENJOYMENT

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Introduction

The importance of boys and girls being interested in books, stories, and poems cannot be overestimated. Their interest makes it possible for them to remember a story or poem studied, and it creates a desire to study more. The shortest road to knowledge is trod by the child who reads easily and has been taught to find information in books for himself. It may take him only a few hours to learn facts that would otherwise take a lifetime of experiences to be learned or never encountered at all. Open to this child is a wealth of recreation and entertainment that cannot be duplicated in any other form.[1]

For a child presently involved in learning to read, there may be an overwhelming amount of time spent on the skills and drills of learning to read.[2] For this child, and for everyone who has gone through this process, there is some transfer into the area of recreational reading. A re-creating of the reading process takes place, transforming it into the world of boundless reading enjoyment. How this comes about is dependent upon a child's home and school environment, both of which deal directly with a child's interests and needs.

Home Background and School Involvement

The home should play a fundamental role in preparing eager readers.[3] It is believed by some educators that book reading goes by families; that is, families in which one or both parents read heavily invariably have heavy readers among their children.[4] Nevertheless, there are some children in reading families who find the going tough.

Complaints have been made that mass media is distracting children from reading. Yet today, children's books are part of the mass media.[5] In a study by Himmelweit and Schramm, it was found that at the advent of television, reading time did suffer.[6] But the kind of reading that declined was that most linked to the types of needs met by television--visual escape forms such as comics and magazines. Books, newspapers and better magazines tended to hold their own in leisure time allotments.

For many boys and girls, both leisure and quiet time have disappeared, and so they read while "waiting their turn for the barber's or dentist's chair. They read standing at the gate waiting for the school bus; they read at the public library; and they read--more than we realize--at school."[7]

Some data on reading suggests that home influences are quite strong in establishing the reading habit. Yet, how can the school create a reading child from a television-watching family? What can the school do to encourage children with activity-filled lives to make room for the enjoyment of reading? Schools should concern themselves with their future students before these children arrive at school. They need to provide information to parents on how to create in their children during their preschool years enthusiastic attitudes toward reading.[8]

Kindergarten Influence

Children who are exposed to kindergarten may there develop a love of books and the desire to read on their own. A child's first experiences with literature should provide him with sheer enjoyment. As he is delighted by stories and poems, the pleasures of the wonderful world of books begin to unfold.

Children develop an early appreciation of the beauty of words and the power of language from hearing stories and poems that capture the imagination. Through a sound foundation of experiences with literature, kindergarten children are led to discover the doors to the world that books can open. Books can answer their questions, bring them new ideas, lead them into different activities, introduce them to new friends, offer constant companionship, and, above all, furnish fun and laughter. Literature in the kindergarten "keeps alive that delightful sense of wonder that belongs so rightly to childhood."[9]

Interest Levels of Children

Children, like all people, read for escape, for adventure, or for a vicarious brush with remote people in far places. But they read also for information on an infinite variety of subjects and for instruction in how to do things.[10] There are three elements in literature that children always desire. The first is action; the second, human interest; and the third, imaginative appeal. Other things may help to make a book interesting, but children do not always demand them as they do these three.[11]

Children read because of three fundamental characteristics of their nature: curiosity, the desire for wish-fulfillment, and the tendency to imitate. First, to take advantage of the child's natural curiosity, teachers should strive to discover what subjects are uppermost in his mind. This can be done through a simple analysis of the questions he most frequently asks. Second, because of the part played by wish-fulfillment in a child's reading, he should have only books that tend to arouse normal and healthful desires and lead to fruitful activity. Third, because the child is a creature of imitation, he should not be exposed to objectionable material at the onset of reading. An environment should be created to encourage the reading of instructive and inspirational, as well as entertaining books.[12]

It is most important that parents, teachers, and librarians recognize the wide variation of children's interests and strive to provide reading that will satisfy every need. To know children and their present interests, they have only to stop, look, and listen to them.[13] Lady Eastlake, an English woman, wrote on the subject of reading in the 1840's:

> The real secret of a child's book consists not in it being less dry and less difficult, but in its being more rich in interest, more true to nature, more exquisite in art, more abundant in every quality that replies to childhood's keener and fresher perceptions.[14]

Guidance

An appreciation of good literature must be systematically taught. Just as a student is led to form good habits of eating and exercise, he must also be led to form good reading habits. These are not guaranteed by inheritance or natural endowment.[15] An activity that comes to be no more than a "habit" must surely lose its freshness and zest. What is needed is to help boys and girls enjoy reading, not just to "get them to read."[16] Perhaps the most effective way to encourage good reading habits is to link reading with everyday life; not only scientific and technical books, but also the more literary and cultural writings as well, may be brought to his attention in this way.[17]

It should be remembered that not only the reading habit, but also the taste for good or bad literature, is formed in childhood.[18] A major problem that confronts parents and teachers is the process of guiding the child's reading until a taste for good literature has been formed. If the child is allowed to choose his own books, then only the best should be presented for his choice.[19]

When teachers share their pleasure in books by reading along with children, the value far exceeds the interest coming directly from the printed page. This not only opens up to them a whole world of books they may not yet be able to read for themselves, but it also provides two-way communication. We give to them our enthusiasms and judgements about the beauty, humor, or integrity of the books we are reading, and they, by their responses, tell us much about their own likes and dislikes to help us guide their choices.

Reading is perhaps for each according to his need. In a magazine, an encyclopedia, a newspaper or even on a cereal box cover, one may find a piece of reading that will both delight and inform the mind. Reading, even very good reading, need not come between hard covers as some of the paperback books and magazines are proving to us everyday.[20]

This is meant in no way to suggest that adults should bow out and leave children to their own resources. It is rather a plea for adults to be providers, not prodders. Our best guidance may be a well-timed push or a nudge toward one book or another.[21]

Letting Children Read

Children, with help from the school and the public library, find their ways to the Kingdom of Reading with its highways and byways, its high hills and enchanted forests. The pictures on the television screen quickly disappear, words are heard once on a radio then lost forever, and recorders and record players must have an outside source of energy. But a book is an old friend that can be returned to again and again.[22]

Perhaps what is most overlooked in developing a child's enjoyment in reading is the time to let him read. We dwell on mechanics and mastery of skills without giving enough time to let a child explore a book himself. And, for the child who might be considered a poor reader, to spend valuable minutes listening to someone else's error-filled oral reading is very frustrating.[23]

> We must not give them (children) just a splendid or an intriguing juvenile list. We must give them BOOKS. Books that will become tattered and grimy from use, not books too handsome to gravel with. Books that will make them weep; books that will rack them with laughter. Books that absorb them so they have to be shaken loose from them. Books that they will put under their pillows at night. Books that will give them gooseflesh and glimpses of glory.[24]

Through knowledge of children, their books, their interests, and their reading background from home, a teacher may guide a child into re-creative reading.

Footnotes

[1] Lewis M. Terman and Margaret Lima, Children's Reading (New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1925), p. 3.

[2] Thomas A. Rakes, "Drill Me, Skill Me, But Please Let Me Read," Elementary English, L (March, 1973), 452.

[3] George W. Norvell, What Boys and Girls Like to Read (Morristown, N.J.: Silver Burdett Co., 1958), p. 180.

[4] J. T. Feeley, "Television and Children's Reading," Elementary English, L (January, 1973), 141.

[5] Frank Josette, "What are Children Reading in This TV Age?" Child Study, XXXIV (Spring, 1957), 3.

[6] Feeley, 143.

[7] Josette, 4.

[8] Constance McCullough, "A Log of Children's Out-of-School Activities," Elementary School Journal, LVIII (December, 1957), 165.

[9] Alice I. Fitzgerald, "Literature Approved by Today's Kindergarten Children," Elementary English, XLVIII (December, 1971), 5.

[10] Josette, 4.

[11] Terman, p. 16.

[12] Ibid., p. 17.

[13] Ibid., p. 46

[14] Ibid., p. 15.

[15] Ibid., p. 3.

[16] Josette, p. 6.

[17] Terman, p. 6.

[18] Ibid., p. 8.

[19] Ibid.

[20] Josette, p. 6.

[21] Ibid.

[22] Anne T. Eaton, "Be Glad, Thou Reader," Child Study, XXIV, 2 (Spring, 1957), 15.

[23] Rakes, 452.

[24] Fitzgerald, 5.

IDENTIFYING THE MENTALLY RETARDED FOR INCREASING THEIR READING SKILLS

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Introduction

For educational purposes, "diagnosis" is a clinical procedure administered by a person trained in the use of clinical instruments and skilled in evaluating the individual's responses to test items designed to reveal the level of functioning and the potential for success in various areas of learning. It includes a rating or score that compares the individual's actual performance with what is expected of him at his age level. It also includes an analysis of areas of strength and weakness that may be useful in educational planning.

The classroom teacher plays a vital role in assisting with the diagnosis. Day-by-day observations of the children's behavior, health, learning problems, social reactions, and special interest provide information that cannot be obtained from any other source. While it is desirable for the teacher to have a formal orientation to the problems of deviant children, any competent teacher can develop the observational techniques required to assist with a diagnosis.

It is difficult to identify mildly retarded children by any standard group of characteristics. There are, however, a number of learning and behavioral characteristics frequently found among them that can be used as a basis for referral for more intensive study. Characteristics that need further investigation are:

1. Learning Problems
2. Poor Achievement
3. Poor Work Habits
4. Distractibility
5. Poor Motor Ability
6. Poor Language Development
7. Immature Art Work
8. Problems of Social Adjustment

Learning Problems

A learning problem is generally the first clue to the presence of a mildly mentally retarded condition. His difficulties during the first years of school are frequently attributed to immaturity, which implies that the difficulty will be overcome with the passage of time. With the truly mildly mentally retarded, however, early learning problems will not be dispelled by time or maturity; they will become more pronounced with time.

Mildly retarded children generally function on a concrete level. They may be able to tell what they see or what activity is taking place but be unable to relate it to other objects or events or to interpret the meaning in relation to the setting. Ability to see relationships is often impaired. The child has difficulty in anticipating events that may happen before or after the event presently under discussion.

Perceptual motor problems are common among mildly retarded children. They frequently have difficulty in seeing differences between objects with similar features. Such inabilities to discriminate are reflected in beginning reading activities and in the failure to differentiate among the letters "d," "b," and "p," or in words such as "saw" and "was." They respond to parts of a concept separately rather than to the total concept.

Poor Achievement

Their achievement patterns from the beginning of their school years to their present grade levels contribute valuable information regarding their diagnoses. Regardless of the achievement of the first few grades, if they are mildly mentally retarded, there is usually an indication of poor achievement by grades three or four when the work begins to be more abstract and require generalization. With each year, they seem to fall farther behind their classmates. A profile of achievement scores from year to year will show gains of less than a year for each year in school, which indicate a slower learning rate than is expected of a normal child.

Poor Work Habits

Work habits of the mildly mentally retarded are usually poorly developed or inefficient. For many pupils the assignments are too long or too difficult. They avoid the tasks they seem destined to fail, while other children take refuge from failure and frustration in daydreaming. A lack of regard for accuracy may be a result of carelessness, poor judgement that does not warn the child that his answer is not sensible, or a general lack of ability to relate his present task to things he knows.

Distractibility

Duration of interest among the mildly retarded is generally quite brief, especially if the task is not-initiated. They tend to respond to auditory and visual stimuli ignored by other children. These distractions are disturbing both to the children and to those who work with them.

Poor Motor Ability

Many mildly retarded children demonstrate motor ability at the level below that of their peers. In many cases, the conditions that cause the mentally retarded problems also cause neurological impairment. These may be a lack of precision in movement, clumsiness, and poor coordination or other more severely handicapping conditions. Inadequate motor ability may be detached in the large-muscle activities, which include walking, running, skipping, hopping, throwing, and other physical activities. Small muscle coordination is exhibited by writing, cutting, drawing, and craft activities.

Language Development

Among the major identifying characteristics of the mildly mentally retarded are poor language development and a general lack of ability in effective communication. Language inadequacy may be noticed in their poor language patterns, poor articulation, limited vocabulary, and the tendency to speak in words or phrases instead of sentences, or in a refusal to talk at all. Inadequate language development may be due to their limited interests in their environments, to sensory or expressive disorders, or to an environment that has not provided good speech models or language stimulation.

Immature Art Work

Much can be learned about the mildly mentally retarded child's level of development and perception of his surroundings through his free art expression. Their figures are primitive and show little relation to reality, which may reveal a distorted concept of their environment. Bizzare associations, disorganization, or poorly conceived ideas in their art work may indicate immature or abnormal functionings, which directly affect their attitudes, habits, and motivations towards learning.

Problem of Social Adjustment

Social maladjustment is common among the mildly mentally retarded. Problems may be manifested in aggressive, belligerent, negative behavior, indifferent attitudes, and withdrawn or passive acceptance. The aggressive learners are generally the most readily identified because of their disturbing influence. They make themselves unpopular by their inappropriate behavior, lack of control, thoughtlessness, boisterousness or destructive manner. The learners with negative attitudes may want to participate in the activities of the group, but, because of the anticipation of failure and rejection, they may adopt an attitude of indifference or negativism. The withdrawn or passive learners may be rejecting an unsatisfactory existence by having no part of it. They may engage in daydreaming, coloring, playing with small toys, or sitting.

The teacher's sensitivity to these learners' needs is the keynote for providing the security necessary to school adjustment. Much can be done, with additional effort, to establish a classroom atmosphere conducive to security. Consideration should be given to these factors:

1. Planning activities that allow for all levels of participation
2. Advance preparation of the materials to be used
3. Establishment of classroom rules and boundaries
4. Consistency in classroom procedures
5. Careful directions regarding assignments
6. Encouragement of self-control among students
7. Avoidance of tension-producing situations
8. An understanding that mistakes may be considered a way of learning
9. A pleasant, respectful pupil-teacher relationship

In addition to these general considerations the mildly mentally retarded may require additional provisions to strengthen his security in the nature of:

1. Curricular adjustments that assure achievement commensurate with ability
2. More time to learn new process
3. Teaching aids to facilitate understanding
4. Work checked at frequent intervals to avoid misunderstanding
5. Assignments short enough to permit completion in the time allowed
6. Parental understanding of the school program
7. An understanding that the teacher and others can disapprove of conduct without disapproving of the child.

Summary

In diagnosing the mildly mentally retarded one needs to know how much a child can learn, under what circumstances, and with what materials. To accomplish this, three steps are necessary. First, a study of the mildly retarded would be necessary to discover what learning behaviors and abilities they have acquired. Secondly, a decision should be made to determine what they need to know, considering their deficiencies, to make them functioning learners. Thirdly, a sequential program should be developed to move them forward. In presenting the program, different reinforcers under various conditions should be used. Since the instructional program itself becomes the diagnostic device, failures by the mildly mentally retarded learner are program failures, not pupil failures. In the final analysis, teachers can be guided by Bruner's words that almost any child can be taught almost anything if it is programmed correctly.

PICTURES, POSTCARDS, AND PROPAGANDA:
BUILDING LANGUAGE THROUGH ART

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How is art related to reading and language building? What role should teachers play in making children aware of the power of the visual arts? Increased vocabulary and the development of language fluency are merely steps toward a sensitive response to critical reading/thinking and ideas. Reading teachers are well served by the eradication of artificial disciplinary boundaries as hailed by Shuy[1] and are discovering that the arts hold numerous possibilities for language development. Although in the past art has often been regarded as an academic exercise, it can, when taught properly, ". . . help the young explore both the nature and the range of their own visual experience."[2]

Counteracting the passive viewer syndrome in pupils is a contemporary concern. Jones in Sunday Night at the Movies alerts us to subtleties of film arts. He tells of film makers' knowledge and use of predictable audience reactions to various kinds of camera shots and different transitions between shots, as well as other aspects of film production. A shot taken from a high angle might make a character seem "weak, lost, or unable to cope," or a low shot might convey power or threat. There is even the suggestion that the direction of movement on the screen has a subtle influence upon the viewer. For example, a victorious army usually enters from the left and a defeated army comes back into view from right to left, ". . . another concomitant of our ingrained reading habit. . . ."[3]

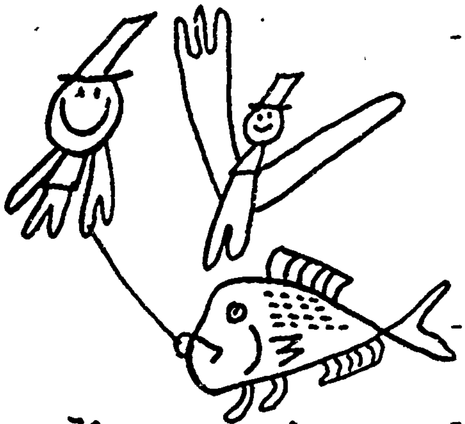
In an era of sophisticated use of media, the child should become a discriminating member of the audience in order to understand the visual experiences of his time, participate in the demand for integrity in media, and avoid being victimized by propaganda. A discriminating viewer becomes a participant in aesthetic education, and an objective of the teacher must be to help the youngster develop appropriate language for this experience. The educator should provide activities designed to sharpen a child's perceptions and selective judgments of television and films.

How does a teacher respond to the use of films and television as teaching tools when many children are saturated with screen experience (or non-experience)? Jones, in Landing Rightside Up in TV and Film, presents guidelines for the use of film with different age groups.[4] One key criterion for film selection is that the film should raise questions rather than provide definite answers. Teachers should be sensitive to a youngster's response in terms of both content and form. Indeed, the form of the presentation may cue the child to the time it was made and influence his concept of its authenticity.

Jackson reminds us that aesthetic education, of which joy is an important catalyst, is a personal matter and that the teacher must invite the child to experience.[5] In considering a program that includes such intangibles, there are some possible guidelines:

A teacher may:

- ensure that the child's decision-making in externalizing perceptions is without fear or demeaning comparison with others.
- provide opportunities for the pupil to respond with language to experiences with line, color, texture, and form.
- recognize opportunities for the child to sense (to touch, watch, listen, move about, communicate), and elicit language/thinking responses to these experiences.
- encourage development of language from interaction of senses; find words for the visual-tactile experience as well as the primary tactile experience; that is, to verbalize what his eyes tell him about the feel or texture.
- be aware of the nature of the creative process, including knowledge of typical developmental stages in children's drawings; for example, the teacher should accept a kinesthetic drawing as a natural step in a process, and in this, as well as other responses, the teacher should refrain from imposing his or her own perceptions.
- provide ample exercises calling for a "no wrong-answer" response.
- permit repetition of worthy activities that the child enjoys.
- ensure that the child is given time for his experience to incubate; that is, that he is given time to react.



"My cousin— he tried to grab the fish I caught."

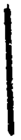
The material that follows provides a sampling of activities suggested through the approaches of evocative exercises, juxtaposition, and understatement. The evocative exercises suggest designs for eliciting responses, brainstorming, and beginning the flow of ideas. Juxtaposition of the many elements of these responses expands the learning process through discrimination and refinement. Remembering to present learning activities in a manner of understatement provides the learner more freedom of response.

Evocative Exercises

The pupil should be able, when presented with open-ended evocative exercises:

- to demonstrate growth in language fluency
- to produce descriptive phrases
- to interpret pictures
- to obtain sensory impressions and supply appropriate language
- to present ideas represented by various visual forms
- to describe the quality of visual statements

Basic graphic symbols may be used to demonstrate evocative exercises in language building.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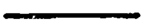
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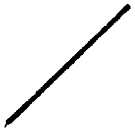
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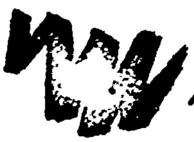
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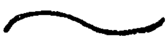
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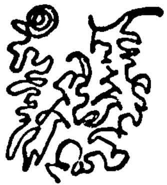
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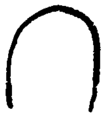
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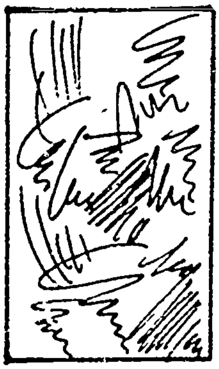
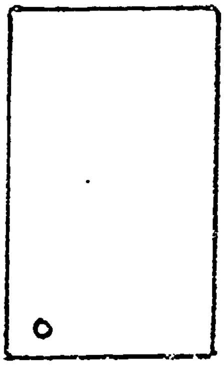
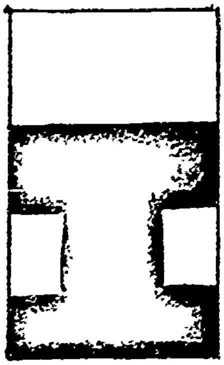
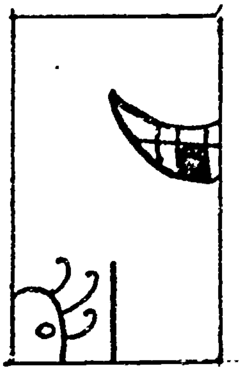
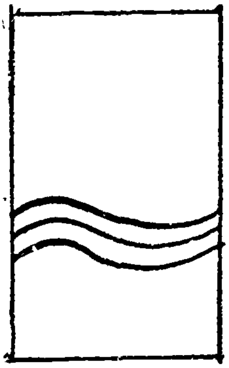
Placed on a slide, a card, or on the blackboard, such simple symbols may be used in LOOK-THINK-FEEL games to set the creative process in motion and to stimulate the flow of words. These games may move from ↔ symbol to word or from word to symbol. Children may be asked to write or say as many words as they can think of while looking at symbols. In a relaxed atmosphere that has no emphasis on spelling, they might be asked to write responses to questions such as: What do you think of when you look at this line? How does it feel to look at this? After responding individually, the children may group and discover how their word lists grow when they brainstorm together.

Conversely, a group may be supplied with a number of words and symbols and permitted to match them. As in the exercise above, there is no wrong answer, but following initial responses subsequent questions will be asked to encourage the child's refinement of his responses.

Match the following slides and words: graceful, bold, agitated, fanciful, sturdy, timid.

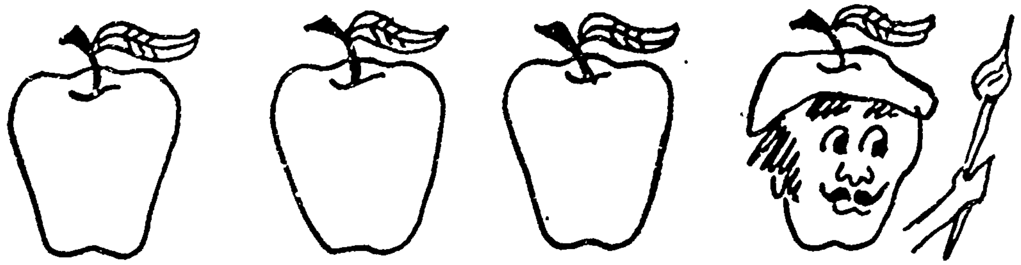
Children usually enjoy making their own slides or drawings to illustrate a word. Materials needed for making slides are blank slides or slide frames; heavy, clear plastic such as that used for overlays or to make transparencies; wax pencil or bamboo tipped magic marker; scissors; bits of tissue paper; string; feathers; and Elmer's glue. Tissue paper, string, and feathers may be used to make slides suggesting motion (caused by projector fan).

Pictures and Postcards

Photography magazines and such magazines as Arizona Highways provide a source of appropriate pictures to be used in evocative exercises. Pictures may be mounted on cardboard and laminated or covered with clear contact paper.

Postcards with prints of masterpieces may be obtained through many art galleries and museums. These postcards and other types of tourist or commercially oriented postcards may be used effectively on bulletin boards and in interest centers. When covered with clear contact paper they represent a tool that children may hold, talk about, and use in language games. Youngsters may look at a card and then tell or write what they remember seeing. Story writing about the picture, developing titles, and original phrase and sentence writing may be stimulated from pictures and from postcards.

Juxtaposition



The visual discrimination activities of readiness years may mature and expand into a myriad of juxtaposition activities. Likenesses and differences should be revisited for the discovery of the nature of relationships, of their nuances, and for corresponding language development.

Color

One color may be placed in several different contexts to demonstrate how its surroundings change its appearance. The child may find words to express differences, manipulate colors, or give verbal responses to mood changes caused by color or change in color.

Pictures

Two masterpieces such as Ingres' Madame Leblanc and Renoir's Madame Renoir may be placed side by side on the bulletin board. Common responses such as "pretty," "nice," and "ugly" may be expanded by having children look for similarities, differences, emotions, gestures,

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colors, details, and conflicts.[7] These two pictures present one example of the type of juxtaposition exercises that might be used for school children of any age.

Depending on age and capabilities the student might:

1. contrast the appearance of the women
2. discuss what the pictures tell about the way of life of the times
3. indicate what the clothing worn tells about their ways of life and about their personalities
4. describe how the history of France is reflected in these works of art
5. identify elements which reveal something of family relationships
6. contrast mood created by color

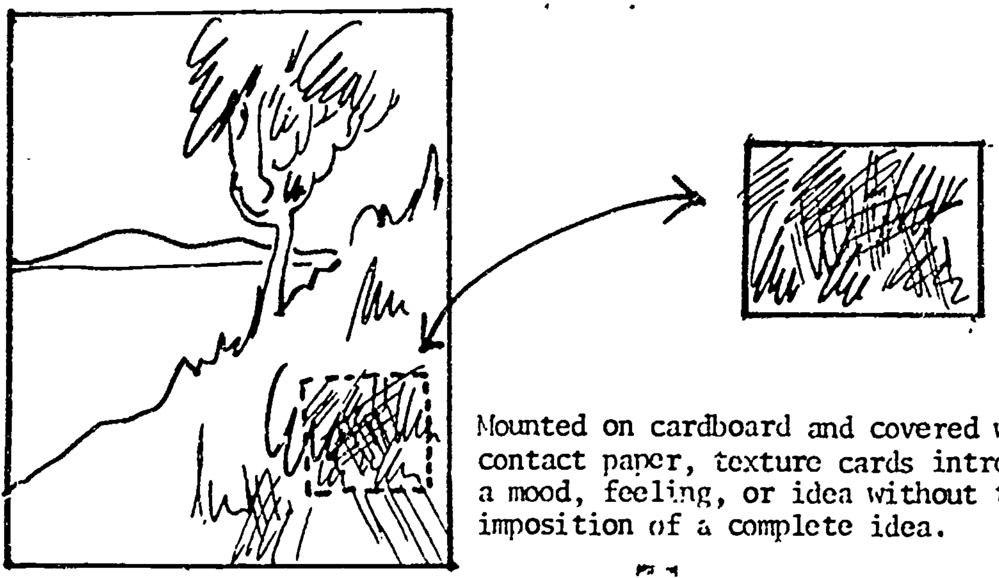
Other Possibilities

Try follow-up language activities after juxtaposing music and a painting or sculpture, music and color, solid and fragile forms, or a full bulletin board one week followed by a single provocative item.

Understatement

Teachers often talk too much and select learning materials that tend to talk too much. Evocative language exercises are enhanced if the selection of material sometimes provides an understatement.

Try: Cutting shapes of textures from colorful pictures.



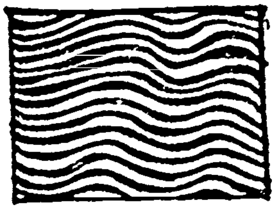
Mounted on cardboard and covered with contact paper, texture cards introduce a mood, feeling, or idea without the imposition of a complete idea.

Given questions such as: How do you think this would feel? smell? move? Are you reminded of noises or movement when you see this?

A child might:

- collect words for a card as he experiments with its possibilities
- write a poem
- contrast textures, moods

Example:



One fourth grader responded to an Op art card (extracted from a tire advertisement) with a magnificent poem about the Zig Zag Zebra in the Zoo!

Pictures

When selecting pictures to cut out and mount on cardboard for language games, choose some pictures with understated content. For example, a picture with nothing visible except two hands grasping rungs of a fence leaves more to the imagination than a picture with an explicit story revealed by its content.

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Select other pictures with opposite criterion; that is, pictures which are so full that a child must extract and eliminate information.

Language and art, inexorably bound components of the learning process, offer exciting possibilities for education. Children's natural inclinations for joy, creativity, and growth provide the teacher with a dynamic teaching tool.

Footnotes

[1] John Canaday, "What Is A Painting" (Metropolitan Museum of Art, N. Y.: Metropolitan Seminars in Art, 1958), p. 10.

[2] Vincent Lanier, "A Plague on All Your Houses," Art Education, Journal of National Art Education Association, Vol. 27, No. 3 (March, 1974), 5, 14.

[3] G. William Jones, Sunday Night at the Movies (Richmond, Va.: John Knox Press, 1967), pp. 65-66.

[4] G. William Jones, Landing Rightside Up in TV and Film (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1973), p. 63.

[5] Robert S. Jackson, "What Children Want," Insight, Teacher (April, 1974), 25.

[6] Hart D. Leavitt and David A. Sohn, Stop, Look, and Write (New York: Bantam Pathfinder Editions, 1964).

[7] Jean Mary Morman, Art: Of Wonder and A World (Blauvelt, N. Y.: Art Education, Inc., 1967), p. 17.

[8] Roger W. Shuy, "Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Change in Teacher Education," Modular Preparation for Teaching Reading (Newark, Delaware: International Reading Association, 1974), p. 274.

HELPING CHILDREN DEVELOP SPOKEN LANGUAGE SKILLS

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Studies of child language are being pursued by researchers in such various fields as linguistics, psychology, education, and speech pathology.[1] Part of the fascination about knowing what very young children do as they acquire their first and succeeding language patterns is the potential application of this knowledge to the language training of older children. This discussion centers on several findings about early child language that are applicable to activities for increasing the language skills of children in preschool and early elementary classrooms. The emphasis herein is on spoken language because skill in speaking precedes ability in other areas such as reading.

It is known that children do not learn language through simple imitation of an adult model.[2] Where children imitate adult models, they do so by reducing the adult utterance to contain only those words most pertinent to the message.[3] For example, an adult might say to a child, "Daddy is going in the car," and the child would repeat that sentence as "Daddy go car." The most telling evidence that children do not learn language through simple imitation is the fact that young children generate many sentences they have never heard; for example, few adults use a sentence such as "Car no," but such a construction is fairly common in the language of eighteen-month-old children.

If children's language is creative rather than simply imitative, how can its development be explained? The best current thinking is that children's knowledge of a few basic rules of the language permits them to generate a number of sentences to reflect the meanings they wish to convey. For example, the basic English rule that a noun phrase is followed by a verb phrase permits a child to generate numerous two- and three-word sentences such as, "Baby go," and "Daddy come here."

The above examples demonstrate that very young children verbalize the important content words in any sentence; i.e., they use the items of content that best convey their messages. They do not use verbiage. Their speech is telegraphic. Children seem to edit the speech of their adult models. This means that they probably process only the important items from the adult message. Children probably understand which are the important words in an adult's message because adults reveal through intonation patterns those words to which they expect the child to respond. A person can say aloud the sentence, "No, you cannot go out there," as if he were directing a child, and he will see that he emphasizes those words that he wants the child to respond to; he may emphasize "not" and "out" while de-emphasizing the rest of the sentence.

Adults who work with preschool and early elementary age children often behave as if they believed language learning were a direct result of imitation. They reveal this belief when they ask children to "listen and say the sentence exactly as I do." Whatever the attempt to imitate does for a child, it probably has limited usefulness in helping him learn and retain new spoken language patterns. It might be more meaningful to the child for the adult to set up a language activity in which the child picked out the important words in a sentence, told what the words meant, and generated new sentences including those words.

By the time normally developing children are about four years old, they have mastered the basic deep structure rules of their language.[5] This means that normal children come to preschool with the knowledge of the deep structure rules of their language. It is erroneous to say that they do not have language; it is more correct to say that they will now exercise their language in a different context. It is also erroneous to think that preschoolers must be taught all of the basic rules of their language. In fact, teachers often hear children making words to fit the rules that they know. A familiar example of this is the preschooler who knows the past tense of regular verbs but has not yet sorted out the past tense for irregular verbs; instead of saying "He went," the child will say what is perfectly understandable, "He goed." The teacher who listens to young children is impressed with the richness of their knowledge of language, and yet he does not try to teach what the child has already learned.

Another fact about early child language is that children will use those surface structures that provide them with positive rather than negative reinforcement; that is, they will use those language patterns for which adults reward them rather than those for which they receive no reward or punishment.

Rewards may be social or material. In order for a reward to function as such, however, the child must feel that he is being rewarded. Although an adult may feel that a certain reward is perfect for a specific child, if the child does not feel rewarded, then that particular reward is not worth much to him. All teachers have probably had the experience of praising a child by saying "Good!" only to have the child say, "No, that wasn't good." All teachers can think of examples of rewards that seem particularly meaningful to certain children and not so to others. For many children their biggest reward is a chance to participate in an activity. This has implications for language stimulation activities. If a child is working on a particular item of language and is asked to perform with relative success before he gets to perform the activity, he may do well because he has the idea that he will then get a payoff; that is, he will get a chance to do the activity.

The teacher who attempts to help children develop language should spend some time examining the types of reinforcers to be used. Reinforcers, to be useful, must fit the following criteria: (1) they should be manageable; it is usually much easier to use colored stars or applause in a classroom than to lug in bags and boxes of M&M's or Cheerios; (2) the reinforcers should have the meaning of a reward to the child; (3) the reinforcer should be amenable to being administered by another child as well as by an adult; for example, groups of preschoolers can be encouraged to clap for a child who has been successful in a given language performance.

Adults who attempt to teach new language patterns to children should remember that children have been and are being reinforced at home for certain language patterns -- not necessarily those patterns that the teacher will reinforce in school. Because being reinforced at home is of crucial importance to the child, the teacher should be careful not to openly or subtly demean those language patterns that the child has learned to use successfully at home. It is becoming more clear that when teachers approach the teaching of school language patterns as if they were second languages they are more successful in helping children learn those patterns for school purposes. For example, a four-year-old who knows the rule for pluralizing the verb "to be" may repeat the teacher's sentence, "They are absent," with "They be absent." In this case the teacher need not teach the plural rule; rather he can concentrate on helping the child substitute one plural verb for the one he is using.

It is general knowledge that children learn language in the context of verbal interaction with adults. A major implication of this fact is that the entire classroom day can be viewed as language activity. While a certain period of the day may be set aside for language arts activities or "language time," all of the activities of the classroom have language components: teachers give instructions; the medium is language. Teachers ask children to speak, and, when they do so, teachers give them positive or negative reinforcement. Teachers and children converse, plan, pass out materials, read, tell stories, and talk about things they think are funny. All of these interactions between teachers and children involve language, and all can be used as language activities. In thinking about language development activities for preschoolers and children in the early elementary years, focus should be on the numbers of classroom activities that involve language and attempt consciously to use more of these as a means for helping children use language successfully. For example, Johnny is assigned to pass out paper to the other children. Instead of having Johnny do just the mechanics of the activity, the teacher could ask Johnny to say something to each child to whom he will give paper. The teacher could set the language pattern Johnny should use, or Johnny could be given an option to use a sentence of his choice. Once Johnny has made the utterance, he can be reinforced both by words of praise and getting to hand the paper to another child. Using the paper-passing activity for language and for distribution probably takes a few moments longer; this time is not wasted because it is language activity both for Johnny and the other children.

Children reduce adult utterances to a size that is manageable for them. An implication of this fact is that adults who work with young children should be cautious not to over-verbalize. Children register only those things that are important to them, and the rest is so much noise. If there is a fifty-word explanation for why a child is to do something, it should be reduced to ten or twelve. If there is an instruction that involves the child's performing four operations, help the child's comprehension be helped by pausing to let him register one or two of the operations before he is given the other two?

It is the responsibility of adults who teach language to young children to try to build on the language patterns the children know and use. The process of listening to young children and elaborating on their sentences has been called "expansion."[6] Simply stated, this occurs when the child makes an utterance and the adult repeats and elaborates on some part of that utterance without changing the child's intended meaning. This process is engaged in by parents with their young children. It also can be accomplished in the classroom, thus providing children with other ways of amplifying their thoughts in more elaborate language.

In summary, there are findings from studies of what children do in their earliest attempts at language that have implications for use in classroom activities for older children. Some of the knowledge from these studies can be applied in order to make the child's classroom experience a more complete experience of language learning.

Footnotes

[1] P. S. Dale, Language Development: Structure and Function (Hinsdale, Illinois: Dryden, 1972), Chapter 2.

[2] D. McNeill, "The Creation of Language by Children," in A. Bar-Adon and W. F. Leopold, Child Language: A Book of Readings (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, 1971), pp. 349-59.

[3] R. Brown and U. Bellugi-Klima, "Three Processes in the Child's Acquisition of Syntax," in A. Bar-Adon and W. F. Leopold, Child Language: A Book of Readings (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, 1971), pp. 307-18.

[4] Dale.

[5] *Ibid.*

[6] Brown.