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ABSTRACT

This book is written for kindergarten teachers who are interested in acquainting children with reading, in developing skills in preparation for formal reading, and in guiding those who already can read or who wish to learn to read. Five chapters give the teacher a general structure and specific suggestions for helping children with reading: Chapter 1 provides an historical view of attitudes toward teaching reading before grade one, reviews the related research, and concludes that introducing reading in kindergarten is not an isolated event but should involve changes in the entire school's program; chapter 2 describes the kindergarten child and reports how characteristics could affect teaching strategies; chapter 3 tells how the teacher can foster interest and achievement; chapter 4 gives ideas on how to organize the kindergarten program for individualized instruction; and chapter 5 describes various instructional materials and suggests ways to use them with kindergartners. An appendix listing some of the best of children's literature is included. (MB)

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THE KINDERGARTEN CHILD AND READING

Lloyd O. Ollila, Editor
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Foreword

One of the major curriculum developments in recent years has been the infusion into the kindergarten of some of the formal instructional activities that had been the soul of grade one. Most notably, in many schools the rudiments of reading have seeped downward through a previously impermeable boundary into the kindergarten. It is probably not a coincidence that this flow has taken place at the very time that the nature of learning to read was itself being largely transmuted, in the public and professional mind, from a complex interplay between acquiring the alphabetic principle and educing meaning to learning a series of steps that lead to the accurate pronunciation of familiar words.

As a result of this general infusion of reading instruction into the kindergarten curriculum, teachers, administrators, school boards, and parents have been faced with many questions about the nature of reading instruction that is appropriate for kindergarten. What approaches are most effective? How much should be attempted? How are other aspects of the curriculum affected? What are the characteristics of kindergarten children that should be considered in planning reading instruction? Are special materials needed? How can individual needs be met?

There have been relatively few authoritative sources that teachers, and others who are concerned, could turn to for help with these problems. *The Kindergarten Child and Reading* helps fill that void. Many will turn to it gratefully as a source of sound, helpful counsel.

The Association welcomes this new volume into its growing list of publications.

Walter H. MacGinitie, *President*
International Reading Association
1976-1977

Introduction

This book is written for kindergarten teachers who are interested in helping children become acquainted with reading, developing skills in preparation for formal reading, and guiding those who are reading or wish to learn to read. Although most children initially meet formal reading instruction in grade one, it should be recognized that the groundwork for reading begins long before this. As the child grows from infant to toddler, through preschool level and into kindergarten, he is developing a variety of skills basic to a successful start at reading books. He is developing a background of experience, refining concepts, and developing auditory and visual perception. Each child develops these skills at his own pace. It is the writer's belief that the kindergarten teacher can do much to individualize instruction to help children have a successful start in reading. This book speaks to the specific problems of reading and to the teacher of five-year-olds. Its chapters are written to give the kindergarten teacher a general structure and specific suggestions for helping children with reading.

The Kindergarten Child and Reading is divided into five chapters. Chapter 1 provides an historical view of attitudes toward reading before grade one, reviews the research related to reading before grade one, and concludes that introducing reading in kindergarten is not an isolated event but should involve changes in the entire school's program. Chapter 2 describes the kindergarten child and reports how these characteristics could affect teaching strategies; Chapter 3 tells how the teacher can foster interest and achievement; Chapter 4 gives ideas on how to organize the kindergarten program for individualized instruction; and Chapter 5 describes various instructional materials and suggests ways to use them with kindergarteners.

Kindergarten teachers play a unique role in the child's development. We hope this book will help them meet this challenge with greater enthusiasm and insight.

Lloyd O. Ollila

Facts About Pre-First Grade Reading 1

Dolores Durkin

In 1958, it was my privilege to begin a study of children who had learned to read at home prior to entering first grade (5). At that time, reading for children younger than six was hardly being encouraged. Instead, both professional educators and society as a whole openly frowned upon this type of precociousness and predicted nothing but problems for early readers once school instruction began. Some soothsayers added to the gloom by claiming that, even if problems were avoided, the earlier learning would have no positive payoff in the future. Children who begin to read before their classmates, it was maintained, would not excel in ability in later years.

Although neither prediction was bolstered by research data, the correctness of both was taken for granted. One consequence was frequent warnings to parents *not* to teach their preschoolers to read; another was school policies that explicitly forbade reading instruction during kindergarten.

Research with Early Readers

Within such a setting, it was not surprising as I began my first study of early readers to find parents who came close to apologizing for their children's accomplishments. Nor was it surprising to hear them communicate concern via questions like, "Do you think she'll be bored in first grade?" "Should I have ignored his questions about words?" "Will she be confused when they start teaching reading in first grade?"

While parent attitudes and worries were predictable, given the beliefs of the times, the details of how their children had learned to read at home were not. Prior research was nonexistent; consequently, it was anyone's guess as to how the children did, in fact, learn. Because what was uncovered in the first study was duplicated in a second (5), a brief summary of some characteristics of the home learning seems warranted.

Characteristics of Early Reading

One characteristic was that the age of four was a common time for an interest in written language to show itself. Frequently, the interest was displayed by children through questions like, "What does that sign say?" or "Where does it say that?" At other times, interest became visible through an expressed desire to learn to print. Requests and questions such as "Make me my name" and "How do you make a h?" were common.

Also common was a home in which people read. Without exception, all the early readers in both studies had been read to regularly, a practice that sometimes began at a very early age. In addition, at least one parent was described, if not as an avid reader, at least as a frequent reader.

Parents of early readers also turned out to be people who enjoyed their young children; who frequently took them places; and who then spent time discussing what had been seen, answering questions, and stimulating still more. Thus, both oral and written language were common features of the lives of the early readers.

Deliberate attempts on the part of parents to teach their preschoolers to read were uncommon. Instead, the help given tended to be a response to children's questions and requests. If there were any "instructional materials," they were pencils and paper and the small chalkboards found in almost every early reader's home. Also influential was whatever had been read to the children—trade books, encyclopedia articles, comics, and so on. Other materials that aroused curiosity about written language included: words and numbers found on everyday things such as calendars; television commercials and weather reports; newspaper headlines; menus; directions for playing games; and labels on canned goods, packages, and boxes.

Whenever instruction that was school-like in character entered into research responses from parents, it was mentioned in connection with an older sibling who had played school with a younger child. As the data eventually showed, playing school was a frequent source of help with reading and writing whenever there was a female sibling who was approximately two years older than the child who was the early reader. When the older child taught school at home, parents said her behavior seemed to be an imitation of what was happening in her own classroom. Consequently, as she changed classrooms and teachers, the school at home changed accordingly.

As all these findings point up, the two studies of early readers indicated that a "language arts approach" was an apt description of the in-

structional program that took place in the homes. Stimulating growth in both oral and written language abilities were various combinations of 1) interesting experiences; 2) opportunities to discuss and ask questions; 3) availability of one or more persons to respond to questions and requests related to reading, writing, and spelling; 4) availability of materials for writing; 5) positive contacts with books and reading; and 6) displays of written words and numbers that related to the children's interests (birthdays, television programs, games).

Since it appeared that the children had enjoyed becoming readers and writers, and since the data collected over a six-year period showed anything but negative effects for achievement in reading (5), subsequent plans were made to develop a two-year language arts program that would begin with groups of four-year-olds (7, 9). The objective of the experiment was to assemble a curriculum that would closely match the language arts "program" in the homes of early readers. The hope was for new insights about better ways for teaching beginning reading in school (8).

Meanwhile, it is appropriate to ask, "What was happening nationally insofar as the timing of school instruction in reading was concerned?"

National Developments

For a while, most schools were untouched by rather dramatic developments that became highly visible in the early 1960s. Policies governing school practices still supported not only the no reading dictum for kindergartens but also a readiness rather than a reading program for the start of first grade. In time, however, most schools began to feel and show the effects of changing expectations for young children.

Impetus for this change had its roots in the educational revolution that quickly followed the launching of the satellite Sputnik by the Russians in October 1957. Soon afterwards, an atmosphere took hold that was characterized by the demands, "Let's teach more in our schools, and let's teach it earlier!" Fostered by what must have been a national inferiority complex, rapt attention soon went to proposals from psychologists that highlighted both the learning potential of young children and the unique importance of the early years for their intellectual development.

One of the most frequently quoted psychologists, Jerome Bruner, offered his proposals in *The Process of Education*, a brief and easily read book based on a ten-day meeting convened in 1959 by the National Academy of Sciences. Included was a chapter entitled "Readiness

for Learning," which Bruner introduced by stating: "We begin with the hypothesis that any subject can be taught effectively in some intellectually honest form to any child at any stage of development" (3:33). Those who took the time to read all of Bruner's book would have found little that was startling in his statement; it was simply urging schools to take another look at how they organized instruction in fields like science and mathematics. However, when the statement was quoted out of context—and it often was—it encouraged what could only be called wishful thinking about the learning potential of young children.

A publication that continued to encourage the wishing was Hunt's *Intelligence and Experience* (12), published in 1961. Unlike Bruner's book, this was a highly technical treatise in which Hunt reexamined and reinterpreted findings from a huge number of earlier studies, many dealing with animal learning. As a result of the reexamination, he proposed certain hypotheses about young children, all of which assigned special importance for intellectual development to the early years. Though offering only hypotheses to be tested, not facts to be implemented, Hunt's text was frequently referred to as providing support for "Let's teach more, and let's teach it sooner."

One other book merits attention in this discussion because it, too, exerted widespread influence on educators' notions about young children and what could be done to realize their potential. I refer to Bloom's *Stability and Change in Human Characteristics* (2), published in 1964. Like Hunt's work, Bloom's was a technical and detailed reexamination of earlier research—in this case, longitudinal studies of certain measurable characteristics that included intelligence. Concluding that the most rapid period for the development of intelligence is in the first five years of life, Bloom's book further reinforced the special importance being assigned to a child's early environment, in particular to the stimulation and learning opportunities it could and should provide.

Other National Developments

Not to be overlooked in the developments that took place in the 1960s was the new interest being shown for an age old problem: children from the lowest socioeconomic levels who start school with disadvantages that preclude adequate achievement. This concern became vocal at this period of time due to factors that were political, social, and economic in nature. Why the concern resulted in Head Start classes for young children of the poor is clearly linked to the climate of hope that had been engendered by the writings of individuals like Bruner, Hunt, and Bloom.

Although Head Start programs should have been carefully pre-planned, too much pressure in the form of federal funds and political interests led to quickly organized classes that were very similar to traditional nursery schools. Some teachers did give more than the usual amount of attention to language development; others worked hard at raising the children's scores on intelligence tests. In the main, however, efforts were rare to accumulate findings about the children and the curriculum; and to coordinate Head Start programs with kindergarten and first grade classes. One result is that less knowledge about early childhood education accumulated than would have been the case had important questions been asked and better studies been done to answer them.

Unfortunately, what has to be said about Head Start is very much like what must be said now about developments specifically related to young children and reading. Let me explain.

Developments Related to Young Children and Reading

Even though the excited talk by psychologists and politicians about the unique importance of the pre-first grade years never reflected verified facts, it naturally prompted some questions about school policies that were postponing reading instruction beyond the start of the first grade. Having learned from my research that children as young as three and four can enjoy becoming readers, I was of the opinion that the questioning was all to the good. I even went so far as to envisage classrooms in which young children would be given interesting and personalized opportunities to begin reading and writing, which would avoid both frustration and boredom. Now, however, that thinking also seems wishful for, over the years, questionable practices dealing with reading have become a part of school programs for young children. Why? Do research data support practices like whole class drill on phonics for kindergarteners or, for example, a common use of workbooks and worksheets?

As it happens, research data are able to say very little about pre-first graders and reading because, first, not many studies have been carried out and, second, what has been done is anything but flawless.

Elsewhere I have reviewed in some detail both the studies and the technical reasons why the findings are open to question (9). Here, let me just quickly describe research reported in the 1960s and 1970s that focused on school instruction in reading that was initiated before the first grade. This will be done in order to demonstrate how little is known about earlier reading, including its effects upon later achievement.

Research on Earlier Starts in Reading

One of the first publicized efforts to teach reading to pre-first graders was carried out with computerized typewriters by a sociologist named O. K. Moore. Although his work with a small number of children received both immediate and dramatic attention in magazines like *Harper's* and *Time* (10, 17), Moore never published any detailed account of the research. Expectedly, subsequent use of his "\$35,000 talking machine" was limited by its cost.

The earliest work with pre-first grade instruction on a schoolwide basis was done in Denver. Begun in the fall of 1961, the project can now be said to be typical of what has been done since. A few methodology or materials were introduced into the kindergarten teachers used readiness and easy reading materials in a basal series. Soon after the final report of the Denver longitudinal project (14) appeared, one reviewer lamented the excitement it would stir up because "findings were based on a weak research foundation" (15:399). Findings from the Denver project included encouraging achievement for children receiving help with reading during kindergarten, and a maintenance of their lead over nonearly readers only when "the reading program in subsequent years capitalized upon this early start" (14:59).

During the 1960s, two more studies of earlier school instruction in reading were reported in *The Reading Teacher*. One described the use of i.t.a. materials with kindergarten children and, in order to have a contrast group, with first graders too (18). When each group finished second grade and their reading scores were compared, findings indicated higher achievement for the children who used the materials one year earlier. Unfortunately, however, two kinds of data that are questionable for use in statistical tests figured in the comparison: subtest and grade-equivalent scores.

The other study reported in *The Reading Teacher* also used grade-equivalent scores to describe reading achievement (20). In addition, however, differences in intelligence test scores for the groups of children involved in the study were ignored when their reading ability was compared. In this research, the comparison was made at the end of grade three. The children involved divided among 1) some who began reading in kindergarten, 2) some who had been in the same kindergarten class but were not able to score on the reading test administered at the end of the year, and 3) some who had not lived in the community until first grade and "presumably had not been exposed to kindergarten reading experiences." (20:596) By the end of the third grade, the highest scores were achieved by the children known to have started

reading in kindergarten. Their scores from an intelligence test were also the highest, however.

In late 1970, another report of a study appeared in *Child Development* (11). This had to do with a program for children from low-income families (in this case, all-blacks) that had as its aim academic success once the children were old enough for elementary school. The 1970 article, one in a series of reports about the project, discussed findings at the end of fourth grade for two experimental groups that had participated in the early school program, and for two control groups that had not. Although prior articles had announced superior reading ability for the experimental groups, the 1970 report showed grade-equivalent scores that were closely similar to those obtained by the control subjects.

Two more reports published in the 1970s (13, 16) discussed children who could do some reading when they entered first grade; however, in neither case had the children learned as a result of school instruction.

One unpublished report (1) described the achievement of children who began to read as a result of kindergarten instruction, and also compared it with that of children who began in first grade. The data from this study prompted its author to conclude: Children who started to read in kindergarten did better in grades one to five than classmates who did not begin to read until first grade. (The early readers had higher scores on intelligence tests, but the differences were accounted for in the statistical analyses.) Because of the small number of children in the study, the researcher wisely suggested that the results "be viewed conservatively." The same suggestion applies equally well to all the other research mentioned.

Taken seriously, the phrase "View conservatively" suggests the following for professional educators who have responsibilities for kindergarten: Carefully make the decision about whether to teach reading in the kindergarten and if the decision is to teach it, thoughtfully plan the instruction so that what results is an instructional program suitable for five-year-olds.

Assuming this is a correct way to interpret the conservative view, then it is both accurate and fair to say that schools have not heeded the advice of the writer just referred to. Again, let me explain.

Kindergarten Changes

In the early 1960s, schools were pretty much as they had been for the three previous decades insofar as the timing of beginning reading was concerned. Given the "Let's teach it earlier" atmosphere, however,

it was inevitable that pressure would be exerted to teach reading in the kindergarten.

One source of pressure that developed fairly quickly was parents. Bombarded by books and articles bearing titles like "Why Waste Our Five-Year-Olds?" and "You Can Teach Your Baby to Read" (4, 19), many parents questioned and complained about play-oriented programs in kindergarten. I cannot help but recall one instance of parental pressure. In this case, a highly traditional school in a small town was involved. Like so many other schools in the early 1960s, this one not only forbade reading instruction in kindergarten but also required a readiness program at the start of first grade. On a number of occasions I had discussed with the principal the possibility of introducing reading in the kindergarten in ways likely to be of interest to five-year-olds. However, each time I made the suggestion, the principal referred to the existing schedule saying, "That is the way it will be." When I pointed out that some of the first graders involved in the readiness program were able to read, he still resisted considering a change.

About a year later I happened to return to the school and, to my surprise, found the kindergarten teachers trying to teach reading. Why? Was it because the principal had sat down with the kindergarten and first grade teachers, carefully weighed with them all the relevant factors, and then made the decision to start teaching reading earlier? No, not at all.

What happened was that word got around the community that in the next town, kindergarten children were doing some reading in school. As a result, parents put the pressure on both the superintendent and the principal. One direct consequence was efforts by kindergarten teachers to teach reading even though they had had no professional preparation for such instruction.

Some reasons why schools in other parts of the country started to teach reading earlier can be explained via the verbatim comments of kindergarten teachers. Among the explanations I have heard are the following:

"The other kindergarten teacher in this building started to teach reading so I thought I had better start, too."

"A book salesman told our principal he'd provide free phonics workbooks if they'd be used in kindergarten, so I'm using them."

"Last year my principal was curious about i/t/a readers but didn't want to risk using them in first grade. He asked me to use them here."

Perhaps these few explanations are sufficient to make one important point about the move to kindergarten reading: Decisions to teach reading in kindergarten have not always been made for reasons that would be easy to defend.

Current Instruction in Kindergarten

Whether the reasons have been questionable or sound, the fact is that most kindergartens are now attempting to teach reading. Thus, the current concern must be for the ways chosen to introduce it.

Every source of information available indicates that a program closely tied to commercially prepared materials has typically been chosen. Especially prominent among the materials are all sorts of phonics workbooks, which is why it is common to find a whole class of kindergarteners being drilled on sounds. Someone once remarked, "The saving feature of such a practice is that the children don't know what in the world is going on." While that might be so, the fact remains that some kindergarteners are experiencing instruction not likely to foster enthusiasm for reading—nor for school.

Reasons for Current Practices

Why has kindergarten instruction tended to follow commercially-lined paths? There are a number of reasons, but let me name just the two that probably have been most influential.

Certainly, one reason is that very few kindergarten teachers were prepared to teach reading when it suddenly became their responsibility. Not knowing what else to do, they naturally turned to manuals and workbooks. Since most administrators associate reading with materials like basals and workbooks, they rarely encourage teachers to try something else with the younger children. Thus, there was little incentive for kindergarten teachers to try to rise above "the same old thing."

Another sad but factual reason for some current practices is that, when a workbook is visible, it is easy to convince parents that reading is being taught. This has meant that kindergarten teachers who had both the competence and motivation to develop imaginative, child-centered instruction also had to learn how to communicate to parents that they were teaching reading even though they were not using the usual textbooks. Only exceptional individuals would be willing to undertake both tasks; consequently, it is only in exceptional schools that reading is being taught to kindergarteners in ways that will foster the ability to read and the desire to read as well.

If more schools are to join the ranks of these exceptional ones, certain steps must be taken, and the sooner the better. As a start, it is imperative that colleges and universities, or the schools themselves, develop reading methods courses designed especially for kindergarten teachers. Such courses will not always be necessary but, for the present, they could help teachers acquire a security and a competence that all too few have.

Until such courses become available, it is the hope of the International Reading Association that this booklet will provide some of the specific help required for developing an interesting, successful reading program for five-year-olds. Before turning to the next chapter, however, it might be of assistance to summarize the points made thus far.

A Brief Summary

This discussion of "Facts about Pre-First Grade Reading," has shown that there really aren't very many facts because relatively little research on the topic has been done. The studies that have been carried out have flaws; thus they provide little in the way of carefully documented findings. Although none of the studies (at least none that has been reported)—indicates that pre-first grade help with reading is harmful, it is suggested that future benefits will be reaped only if schools alter their instructional programs to accommodate the pre-first grade learnings. This clearly means that schools undertaking reading instruction in kindergarten must change their instruction from first grade on so that what is accomplished in the kindergarten can be used and extended in subsequent years. Introducing reading in the kindergarten, therefore, is not an isolated event but, rather, is something that ought to have repercussions throughout the entire school.

If reading instruction is initiated earlier than has been traditional, it also ought to be of a kind that will add enjoyment and greater self-esteem to the fifth year of a child's life. As this chapter has pointed out, the recommendation stands in great contrast to some current practices in which reading is being introduced with nothing but whole-class instruction characterized for the most part by drill and rote learning.

To effect improvement, the chapter recommended the development of reading methods courses designed especially for teachers of young children. It also points to this IRA publication as one step in the direction of needed help. That help begins with the following chapter, in which the question of a child's readiness for reading is discussed.

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The Child: Ready or Not? 2

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This chapter continues the examination of early childhood reading by focusing on the characteristics of kindergarten children, the relationships of these characteristics to reading, and the skills needed before reading begins.

Young children come to kindergarten excited about the prospects of beginning what so many of them call "real school." On the first day of school, their excitement is displayed in many ways: the confident youngster building with blocks, playing with floor toys, dressing up in the playhouse, or working with art or manipulative materials; the cautious child quietly coloring a picture; the hesitant child standing off at the side watching—just watching; the fearful child holding back tears with his knuckles; the shy child looking at a book, working a puzzle, or, perhaps, just watching. These behaviors reflect the onset of very important developmental tasks of children, the tasks associated with the beginning of formal education and learning the skills and gaining knowledge considered important by society. Learning to read is one of these tasks, and young children are aware of the function of the school in relation to achieving this task.

In describing the characteristics of kindergarten children, it must be emphasized that a range of behavior and development exists among the individuals of any group and that differences among developmental characteristics exist within the individual.

Physical Characteristics of Kindergarteners

Muscular Development

The most obvious characteristic of kindergarten children is activity. Seventy-five percent of a five-year-old's increase in weight is due to muscular development (29). The five-year-old's propensity for running, jumping, and climbing reflects this muscular development. To allow for this high activity level, any instructional period of more than

fifteen minutes should include physical activity. Games, such as "clapping games," and the use of manipulative materials meet the young child's action needs in reading-related instruction.

The above comments should not be taken to mean that the young child needs to be bombarded with stimuli or that he should be allowed to jump up and down all the time. Quite the contrary. Teachers must recognize that the child's growing body requires physical activity and that the wiggles of inattentiveness can and should be avoided.

Vision and Perceptual Development

Children come into this world farsighted and gradually develop near-point and standard distance visual acuity, with the 20/20 level achieved at about five or six years of age (39). Some research (18) claimed that the near vision of most kindergarten age children was still immature and, therefore, reading should be postponed until around age seven or eight. Eames (14:432) refuted these claims and stated: "Children five years of age were found to have more accommodative power than at any subsequent age." Screening tests such as the New York School Vision Tester (Bausch and Lomb, Rochester, New York) include a test for vision at thirteen inches.

Teachers should be alert to symptoms of visual problems: fatigue after activities requiring near vision and persistent avoidance of such activities, frequent headaches, complaints of blurred vision, and tilting of the head to one side (45). Other symptoms which warrant referral for vision examination are eye(s) that turn inward, outward, or upward involuntarily and eyes that squint to see a chart story, picture, or writing on the chalkboard, sometimes accompanied by pressing under the eyes with the fingers.

In the past decade, many programs for perceptual development and perceptual training have emerged (Ayers, Frostig, Kephart). While visual discrimination and auditory discrimination activities have long been a part of reading readiness programs, questions have been raised about the value of some perceptual activities in relation to reading. Questions have been raised, for example, about the effects on reading of activities such as visual discrimination of geometric forms, auditory discrimination of environmental sounds, and activities concerned with motor coordination and balance. Recent reviews of the research are inconclusive regarding perceptual training to "improve reading." Hammill, Goodman and Wiederholt (20:476) in their review of studies regarding several visual-motor programs, noted:

We have little doubt that any interested person who reads the efficacy literature will conclude that the value of perceptual training, especially those programs often used in schools, has not been clearly established. He concludes that such training lacks solid support, he may question the purchase of attractively packaged materials which some companies offer teachers along with unsubstantiated claims concerning their merits, the practice of providing perceptual-motor training to all school children in the name of readiness training, and the assumption that a lack of perceptual-motor adequacy causes a considerable amount of academic failure.

Robinson (36:145), who questioned the adequacy of perceptual tests in identifying components of the reading process, concluded:

The research shows no conclusive answers to the question of the effectiveness of perceptual training to improve reading. While some programs appear to improve perceptual performance in the areas trained, the long-term effect on reading is uncertain. Nor is it clear whether the usual program of reading instruction may, in itself, include crucial elements which result in improved scores on perceptual tests.

While the research is inconclusive regarding the relationship of perceptual training and reading, perceptual training activities may have other benefits, such as developing confidence and self-esteem, which are also necessary parts of the kindergarten program.

Visual discrimination of letter forms long has been recognized as a basic process of reading. Form discrimination activities which focus on distinguishing features of letters would seem to be important learning components related to reading (35).

Hearing and Auditory Discrimination

Auditory acuity appears to be well developed at five years of age. Research studies (39:137-138) point out that poor auditory acuity for high-frequency sounds (such as *f*, *v*, *d*, *p*, *t*, *g*, *k*, *sh*, and *th*) may retard reading achievement. Smith and Dechart (39) note the greater incidence of high-frequency loss for boys than girls. Symptoms which indicate possible hearing loss are: frequent earaches, turning the head or cupping the ear to hear, speaking in a loud voice, distorted speech, inability to follow directions, and frequent inattentiveness (45). Wax accumulation in the ears may develop so gradually that the young child is not aware of the hearing loss. When investigating behavior changes, especially difficulty in following directions or inattentiveness, the possibility of a hearing loss should be considered.

Defects of hearing, as well as of vision, may go unnoticed at home. The kindergarten teacher is often the first adult outside the home to notice possible problems in vision and hearing.

Auditory discrimination of language sounds has been long recognized as a basic process of reading. Most five-year-olds respond with delight and enthusiasm to rhyming activities, and numerous kinds of these activities have been a part of many kindergarten programs. The children readily seem to grasp the idea of rhyme and often engage in rhyming games. Discrimination of similarity and differences of beginning sounds of words appears to be more difficult for children at this age level. It is not that the child cannot distinguish between words such as *bat* and *put* in the flow of speech; rather, the initial sounds are not as obvious. Encouraging children to "play" with alliteration may make this more obvious, as well as provide an opportunity to enjoy words. One group of kindergarten children composed the following chant which, of course, was enacted with appropriate sound effects:

Two teeny tiny tigers tumbled to the town,
Roaring, rumbling, running round and round.

Studies of language development (44) suggest that the very young child engages in what might be called linguistic play. Playing with language has not usually been included in the beginning reading program, but it is suggested here that such activities may foster continued linguistic growth, including that of auditory discrimination.

Social/Emotional Characteristics of Kindergarteners

"Hey, teacher, look at me!" proudly shouts a kindergarten youngster as he stands high on the jungle gym. Such confidence and endeavor points to the child's attainment of what Erickson (16) termed autonomy, initiative, and the beginning of the stage of industry, wherein the child becomes productively task-oriented and persevering. Children described by teachers as mature kindergarteners often are youngsters who are well into the stage of industry and who evidence mastery of the earlier stages in which the ego qualities of trust, autonomy, and initiative originate. These are confident youngsters who trust themselves and others, have the autonomy to function relatively independently, have the initiative to assume what Erikson (16) calls "responsible participation," can attend to learning situations and exhibit perseverance in learning activities. Conversely, youngsters described by teachers as immature children are those whose behaviors (or misbehaviors) evidence problems in mastery of these ego qualities. The

teacher who understands the meaning of children's behaviors and misbehaviors can provide opportunities for children to grow in emotional maturity.

To the young child, success is a validation of oneself. The kindergarten child's "Hey, teacher, look at me!" reflects not only the child's pride in accomplishment but also the importance of having such achievements recognized by adults. Five-year-olds are still quite adult-oriented. Kindergarten teachers frequently hear questions such as, "Did I do good?" or "Is this good?" In one sense, these questions are rhetorical, for the child recognizes his achievement but the teacher's acknowledgement validates it. In another sense, however, the questions are genuine queries because the child's understanding of achievement, as a result of effort, is still emerging.

The recognition of oneself as an effective producer contributes to filling the gaps in trust, autonomy, and initiative and develops industry in both immature and mature five-year-olds. Children at this age level need adult focus so that they can understand that their products and accomplishments are the result of their own efforts. Teachers can readily help by including in their acclaim of a youngster's work specific references to the child and his effort. Instead of saying, "What a lovely picture," comments such as "The way you arranged colors is so interesting," or "You made a lovely picture," direct attention to the child and further his growth in positive ego qualities.

Most young children like to return to their accomplishments. Activities that result in products with some degree of permanence are especially helpful for immature children because, when displayed at school or at home, such products serve as reminders of achievement and sources of renewed pleasure in accomplishment. Paintings may, indeed, create readiness for reading. So, too, may other art activities and construction endeavors, including block construction if not dismantled. Tape recordings of creative dramatics, singing, and discussions help immature children retain feelings of achievement regarding these activities. A child's dictated titles, comments, or stories about the products or activities serve as reminders of these accomplishments and the child's thoughts about them. Such dictation is, itself, a product evidencing achievement, a product which tells the child that what he thinks and says is important enough to record and that what is written can be read again and again. The foregoing discursive activities, which will be discussed further in this chapter, produce language competencies associated with reading.

Emotional immaturity will not just go away as the child's age increases. Emotional maturity is related to learning to read (43). This component of readiness for reading will be heightened by providing opportunities for children to gain positive ego qualities.

Kindergarten children are beginning to learn the skills of social relations. As they progress in the development from an egocentric to a sociocentric orientation, conflict is inevitable in interaction with others. Such conflicts, which are short-lived, forcefully let children know that others hold different viewpoints. As viewpoints are reconciled, often with the teacher's help, egocentrism gives way to a sociocentric frame of reference.

Children this age generally enjoy one another and want to have friends. In the classroom, small group work can be used to encourage children to share ideas and materials. This sharing is important; it is a means through which young children gradually expand their egocentric frames of reference. The expansion of frame of reference enables children to understand the viewpoints of others, their ideas and their experiences. This kind of understanding has relevance for reading comprehension.

Competition is not yet fully understood by many kindergarten children, and it is not uncommon to see a group continuing a lotto game until everyone's card is full. Since children this age are learning to interact cooperatively, emphasis on competitive games is questionable.

Cognitive Development of Kindergarteners

Interest, activity, and curiosity are characteristic of the intellectual life of most five-year-olds: the silver trail of a snail is followed intently; a finger is thrust in the path of a busy ant; a toe swirls the puddled water to change the marbled colors; a story is reenacted in spontaneous dramatizations. The observing, experimenting, imitating, imagining, wondering, and talking all contribute to the child's thought and concept development.

Concepts develop as the child notes the similarities and differences of objects and events around him. The development of concepts proceeds from the simple to the complex, from the vague to the defined, from the concrete to the abstract. A kindergarten child's concepts tend to be simple and concrete, global and vague.

The fact that children know the name of something does not mean they have an adequate concept of it. For example, a group of kindergarten children, with whom one of the writers worked, identified by name an anchor appearing on a ship in a picture. When questioned

about the function of an anchor, individual children said it was used to catch big fish, drag things out of the ocean, clean the bay, stop the ship, start the ship, catch crabs. Had the assumption been made that the children understood the concept because they could name the object, and had their concepts not been ascertained, most of these children later would have misconstrued information read to them. They would have thought that in the process of docking a ship, the anchor is dropped to clean the water or catch seafood. Vague or global concepts can negatively affect reading comprehension.

Recognizing the function of reading is one important concept about reading (13). The kindergarten teacher can help develop this concept by involving students in a variety of reading activities: reading for pleasure, reading for information, reading labels. Recording children's experiences and periodically summarizing what they have learned also helps extend this concept.

The research of Piaget (33) revealed that a young child has limited understanding of familiar terms such as brother, sister, family, and country. For example, the young child does not recognize that he is his brother's brother nor that individuals who occupy the same household constitute a family, whether or not they have a kindred relationship, but grandparents not residing in the household are family members because they "used to" live with one of the parents. A Bill Keane cartoon amusingly exemplifies the child's thinking. Billy, watching his grandparents playing with two siblings, asks his mother: "How did we get to know Grandma and Grandpa?" What the young child does not understand is the relation inherent in relational concepts.

The young child also evidences limited understanding of the relations associated with conjunctions such as *because* and *but*. As Piaget (33:6-7) notes, the conjunction *because* has three types of relational meaning: 1) a causal meaning in which two events are related, for example, "The man fell off his bicycle because someone got in his way," 2) a logical meaning in which two ideas are related by implication and one judgment implies the other, for example, "That animal is not dead, because (or since) it is still moving,"; and 3) denotation of a psychological relation in which motive is the causal explanation, for example, "I slapped Paul's face because he was laughing at me." While the young child may understand the relations in observing events, Piaget found he has difficulty when interpreting narrative accounts. In completing the sentence, "The man fell off the bicycle because . . .," Piaget found that the young child will juxtapose another event, such as "he broke his arm." Rather than exhibiting logical inference, the young

child's thinking is characterized by juxtaposition in which two ideas are placed side by side, relationally unconnected and with an absence of logical necessity.

As a result of Piaget's extensive work, it now is widely recognized that cognitive growth proceeds through stages of development. Most five-year-old children generally are in the preoperational stage, a stage where thought is semilogical (34). Juxtaposition is one characteristic of this semilogical thought.

The nature of the child's thought has implications for reading comprehension. In a sense the development of reading comprehension begins before the child can read, occurring concomitantly with discussions about stories or other written materials that have been read to the child. Understanding cause and effect relationships is a reading comprehension skill common to many reading-readiness and reading programs. Piaget's work enables teachers to examine the type of relation involved in cause and effect questions about a story and to understand the child's reasoning when, in answer to such questions, the child responds with juxtaposition. In such cases (and here Piaget's work gives us direction), making the narrative event observational, as in role playing, may help the child gain understanding of the story event.

Much has been written about levels of comprehension (1). The first two levels frequently are delineated as: 1) literal or factual and 2) interpretive or inferential. Since, as Piaget's research indicates, the young child has difficulty with inference, activities concerned with comprehension of reading materials should be examined for the cognitive requirements placed upon the child. This is not to say that the teacher should not attempt the second level with kindergarten children. More research is needed on the relationship between cognitive stage and reading comprehension level. What is meant is that the inference required should be straightforward in relation to the content. It also seems that more time would be spent on the literal level, and the meaning of content. For one of the writers, dramatic play activities and related problem-solving proved to be productive sources for developing inferential thinking in kindergarten children.

Investigations concerned with Piaget's theory and the reading process are beginning to emerge in the field of reading research and, undoubtedly, much more research of this kind is on the horizon. Meanwhile, Piaget's work is invaluable to teachers of young children in the insights it provides regarding children's intellectual behavior—insights that render children's responses understandable, insights that enable teachers to provide learning experiences commensurate with the child's

stage of development and preparatory for the next stage of growth. The latter comment does not mean that one just stands by and waits for children to mature; nor does it mean that one pushes children ahead. As Piaget states, "... it is important that teachers present children with materials and situations and occasions that allow them to move forward" (15). In order to do so, teachers need to understand the stages of cognitive growth, of what they are comprised, and what they mean.

Environmental Factors Concerned with Kindergarteners

To paraphrase Walt Whitman, a child goes forth each day. His poem "There Was a Child" reminds us that the environment into which a child goes forth, has an impact on his life "... for the day or the certain part of the day. Or for many years or stretching cycles of year." Of all the environments children encounter, school is the one intended to enable them to reach their fullest potential, indeed, to provide positive stretching cycles of years.

The variety of home backgrounds from which children come creates a wide range of experiential differences. Consideration of these differences is essential in determining children's needs and in planning learning activities if school experiences are to be productive.

It is well known that children who see reading in the home tend to be successful in reading. Many children, from all social classes, come from homes where little reading is done and, as a result, the purposes of reading lack validation in their experience. Such validation then can come only from school. Enjoy the stories you read to children and they read to you, pursue information from books with your students, and discuss with them what has been read. Pause in reading aloud to linger over a particularly lovely phrase or to delight in one that "tickles the tongue." Instead of telling children the directions for a game or other activity, say, "Let's read the directions; they explain what to do." Let children experience in school the purposes of reading.

Children who come from homes where little verbal interaction occurs between child and adults will benefit from activities that necessitate their verbal participation. Dramatic play offers the opportunity for child-child verbal interaction. Small and large group discussions about a dramatic play or class projects or related problem solving offer other opportunities. One way a teacher can stimulate children's participation in discussions is to write their comments in a discussion notebook. This procedure also helps children learn the function of writing. Let the children know their comments are being written in the notebook "so that we can keep our ideas here and we won't forget them; we can go back

to them when we need to." It will be necessary at times for the teacher to ask for a brief pause in the discussion so I can finish writing down Mary's idea." An additional comment such as "I can't write as fast as you people think up ideas" brings a sense of satisfaction from five-year-olds and more and more verbal participation. Rereading the children's comments at the end of the discussion serves as a recapitulation, and attentive listening prevails. Taping ongoing discussions and replaying them is another means of stimulating verbal participation.

Children from poverty areas have limited experiences with the manipulative educational materials frequently found in middle-class homes and limited first-hand experiences that come from trips across town and beyond. In some poverty homes there are no materials available for the child's manipulative use. Pot, lids and clothespins are in continuous use when a parent washes for a large family with a bare minimum of supplies.

Utilizing manipulative materials in readiness and reading instruction is a means of filling this gap. It is a means of enhancing learning—a method recommended for all young children. Instead of using a chart of letters, for example, cardboard or paper letters can be handled by the child. Excursions, even walks around the school neighborhood, provide experiences that will help children find meaning to reading activities.

Much has been written about anxiety environments in educational literature, but not much has been written about the anxiety and despair of poverty parents live with daily. Middle-class parents learned of such anxiety upon losing their jobs in the mid-seventies. After living and working in urban and Appalachian poverty communities, one of the writers hypothesizes that young children incorporate anxiety and despair from their parents, but this anxiety is diffuse and general in the children because of the lack of recognition of the causal factors. After the year's study, the writer concludes that above all, school should be the safest place in the world for the children—not only a safe physical environment but, more importantly, a safe emotional and social environment.

A Kindergarten Child's Oral Language

The Importance of a Child's Language for Reading

A child's language is the raw material for reading. It contains the meaning the child knows and forms the base for the necessary pairings a child makes between oral and written symbols in learning to read. Language both limits and expands a child's ability to deal with reality. It is the medium through which children interpret their world; at the same

time, language shapes the world as they know it. Language both expresses and shapes thought as a child grows in controlling the symbols used in communication with others. Most important, for our discussion here, oral language is not only the vehicle but, in another form, printed language is what we teach children to read. The inseparable bonds between the forms of language make it impossible to consider either alone.

Language Development of Kindergarteners

Many five-year-olds would agree with the walrus in Lewis Carroll's *Through the Looking Glass*. Indeed, "the time has come to talk of many things." They, too, would talk of shoes and ships and cabbages and kings. During the busy busy periods of worktimes of a kindergarten classroom, one may observe the children engaging in many forms of oral expression: dramatic plays, conversations, narrations, and the inevitable disputes.

At one time it was found that children's language development took a downward turn upon beginning school, a circumstance attributed to the silence required in classrooms. Fortunately, today, the importance of oral language development is more widely recognized and steps have been taken to change this. While the preschool years comprise a period of substantial language learning, the five-year-old's language growth is by no means complete. The advent of transformational grammar created an invigorating impetus for research in the language development of children; here is a field where the "knowledge explosion" is most apparent. The data from several studies bearing directly on the language of kindergarten children are reported below, as well as additional comments resulting from the writers' observations of kindergarten children.

Vocabulary

Research findings on the size of children's vocabularies have varied as the definition of vocabulary and the means of determining its size have varied. Early researchers, who interpreted vocabulary as the number of words spoken, estimated the speaking vocabulary of five-year-olds to be 2,000 to 3,000 words. Later researchers, who defined vocabulary as the number of words understood as well as those spoken, reported that five-year-olds generally have a 5,000 to 6,000 word vocabulary. Recently, researchers have gone beyond counting the number of words in children's mental dictionaries but they have affirmed the fact that children continue gaining control of their language during the elementary school years.

Kindergarten children have a larger understanding vocabulary than a speaking vocabulary but many of their concepts are vaguely defined or formed. The teacher's role in vocabulary development must be to expand children's language to provide experiences which will help children develop concepts more fully and accurately; to encourage children to practice using language and to provide interesting models of language through involvement with people, recordings, films, first-hand experiences, and books. The language in books differs somewhat from speech, and children who are read to continue to outstrip in many areas of language performance those who are not read to. When children are surrounded with interesting language, and provided with activities and encouragement for using language, their vocabularies will grow. Children in kindergarten seem to be word collectors and show great delight in playing with language. Jingles, mad sense verse, tongue twisters, and parodies are quickly memorized and used repeatedly by young children. In *The Lore and Language of Schoolchildren*, Iona and Peter Opie (31:18) state:

These rhymes are in fact playthings to children. They seem to be one of the means of communication with each other. Language is still new to them, and they find difficulty in expressing themselves. When on their own they burst into rhyme, of no recognizable relevancy, as a cover in unexpected situations, to pass off an awkward meeting, to fill a silence, to hide a deep emotion, or in a grasp of excitement. And through these quaint ready-made formulas the ridiculousness of life is underlined, the absurdity of the adult world and their teachers proclaimed, danger and death mocked, and the curiosity of language itself savoured.

Children enjoy language play and will join in a rhyme as soon as they hear it. A book by Ruth Krauss, *A Very Special House* (Harper, 1953), illustrated by Maurice Sendak, and based on tape recordings of children's language while they were at play, shows the rhythm, rhyme, and nonsense that children incorporate in language play.

When children hear a new word that intrigues them, they tend to use it in all appropriate and many inappropriate ways. Teachers who read *Curious George* books by H. A. Rey, will hear curious this, curious that for many weeks. A five-year-old child who heard his mother exclaim, "Isn't that magnificent" about a magnolia tree in bloom, picked up the word and labeled everything "magnificent" for the rest of the day. Kindergarten children will do their part in vocabulary development if teachers do theirs by providing lots of experiences to talk about and encourage children to talk about them.

Phonology

On the basis of Templin's research (42), which reported the age levels at which accurate production of consonant sounds was achieved by the subjects in the study, five-year-olds would still be in the process of achieving articulation of *t*, *th* (voiced and unvoiced), *v*, *l*, *z*, and *zh*. Snow's study (40) of first grade children revealed between 100 and 1,067 "errors" in articulation of the following sounds: *l*, *ng*, *j*, *ch* as in child, *sh*, *s*, *v*, *r*, *z*, voiced and unvoiced *th*, and *z* as in azure. One may note in the pronunciation of words beginning with [l] and [r] the kindergarten child may substitute *w*, thus the word [love] is frequently pronounced [wovə] and run pronounced [wun]. The unvoiced *th* at the beginning of a word may become *t* as in [tink] for think and [tum] for thumb, but becomes *f* at the end of a word as in [wif] for with or following a medial [r] as in [free] for three.

Reduction and clustering of sounds in some words and combinations of words is a frequent occurrence in the speech of young children. The following are illustrative: *gimme*, for give me; *da yuh*, for do you; *wacha doin?* for what are you doing?; *gotta*, for got to; *wanna*, for want to; *meecha*, for meet you; *gonna* or *gunna*, for going to. These forms are also heard in the informal, casual speech of adult speakers of standard English. Children gradually learn how to adjust their pronunciation according to the degree of formality required by the situation.

The articulation features of five-year-olds' speech described above should not be considered speech defects; but neither should we assume that time will take care of the matter. Maturation includes much more than time; experience also plays a crucial role in maturation. The kindergarten child needs experiences which foster the development of articulation of speech sounds and pronunciation of words. As children learn new vocabulary, articulation and pronunciation develop also. Activities such as the alliteration exercise described under auditory discrimination may facilitate articulation of speech sounds. Creative dramatics and dramatic play may also help children acquire proper pronunciation. Furthermore, such play can increase children's awareness of the social functions of language.

Syntax

The preschool years comprise a period of particularly rapid growth in the acquisition of syntactic structures, and it has been stated that by the time a child reaches school age he has mastered the syntax of his language. Recent research suggests this may not be the case, as findings

indicate the productive control of syntax and acquisition of syntax continue throughout the elementary school years. O'Donnell, Griffin, and Norris (30:33) noted two periods of particularly rapid syntactic development in speech: kindergarten through first grade, and the end of fifth grade through the seventh grade. From kindergarten on there was a steady increase in the number of words per T-unit, defined as "a single independent predication together with any subordinate clauses that may be related to it." Parallel results were found in a longitudinal study by Loban (24). In relation to the increase in words, Menyuk (25:115) pointed out that this may not necessarily evidence syntactic maturity because some more complex syntactic structures may be shorter in form than less complex structures. She cited as an example: "The boy, who is lying on the ground, is hurt" versus "The boy lying on the ground is hurt," the latter being more complex.

O'Donnell, Griffin, and Norris found an increase from kindergarten through grade seven in sentence-combining transformations: that is, embedding one kernel sentence into another. At kindergarten, the mean number of transformations per T-unit was .81 with a range of .4 to 1.6 for boys and .62 with a range of .0 to 1.3 for girls. For comparison, the mean for seventh grade boys was 1.47 and for seventh grade girls, 1.21. Kindergarten children used nominal constructions to a much greater extent than adverbial constructions in sentence-combining transformations. The direct object was the grammatical function of the nominal constructions in the speech of kindergarten girls and boys; the indirect object and object complement did not appear in their speech.

The modifier used most frequently by kindergarten children in nominal constructions was noun plus genitive forms (possessive), with an occurrence of 11.43 per 100 T-units for boys and girls. The occurrence of other modifiers in nominal constructions for both boys and girls were: noun plus noun 8.00, noun plus adjective 6.47, noun plus relative clause 4.77, noun plus preposition phrase 3.90, noun plus infinitive phrase .79, noun plus participle or participle phrase .80, with adverbs not used at all.

In the use of coordinating conjunctions, both kindergarten boys and girls used a preponderance of *and*, as occurred at all other levels; kindergarten boys used *but* to a greater extent than *so* and to a much greater extent than the girls; girls appeared to use *so* much more than *but* and more than the boys; neither boys nor girls at this level used *or* as a coordinating conjunction.

The structural patterns of the main clauses did not vary a great deal from kindergarten to seventh grade. At all levels, the two predominant

patterns were subject-verb and subject-verb-object. To a lesser degree, children at all levels used subject-verb-predicate nominal and subject-verb-predicate adjectival. Kindergarten girls used the there-verb-subject pattern to a much greater extent than did kindergarten boys. Significant sex differences were not found in oral language development, but it should be noted that the boys surpassed the girls in a number of areas.

Chomsky (11), in a study of the acquisition of four complex syntactic structures in children from five to ten years of age, concluded that the acquisition of syntactic structures was a process still in effect at nine years of age. Although in this study she found considerable variation in the age at which children revealed acquisition of these structures, in a later study (4, 120) with children ages 5.9 to 9.9 developmental stages were evidenced. The structures employed in these studies require identification of deep structure functions as opposed to those of surface structure. The structures and their points of difficulty are quoted below from the first study.

Structure	Difficulty
1. John is easy to see.	1. subject of sentence subject of see
2. John promised Bill to go.	2. subject of go
3. John asked Bill what to do.	3. subject of do
4. He knew that John was going to win the race.	4. reference to see

The data delineated above provide information about the state of syntactical development of kindergarten children. This period is one of rapid growth in the development of syntax, but it should be reiterated that maturation is not just a matter of time. Children learn to talk by talking, and this learning is enhanced when children have something substantive about which to talk. Programs that provide a continuity of learning about content areas of interest to the children provide the substance around which language development occurs. As they delve into new content, talking about it, enacting it, building things in relation to it, syntactic structures also are learned. For example, in studying about airplanes and the airport, noun and adjective modification in nominal constructions appear in both subject and object functions as the children, engaging in discussion and dramatic play, talk about cargo planes, passenger planes, big planes, little planes, rainy weather, heavy snow, easy landings, and countless other combinations acquired as a result of learning about the content area.

Semantics

Earlier in the discussion of concept development, it was pointed out that a child may know the name of something and can identify the object but the child's concept may be vague or inadequate. A similarity prevails in the child's acquisition of words and their meanings. A Bill Keane "Family Circus" cartoon is amusingly illustrative. The little boy's mother finds him taking an armful of cookies from a cookie box. In response to her look of disapprobation, Jeffy says: "Daddy said I could have some cookies—how many is 'some'?" Jeffy's question and quick thinking in this case, one must add, rescued him in this most obvious of predicaments. Nevertheless, the genuineness of this question is supported by research. Finding words which have more than one meaning becomes an exciting game for children. Several of Peggy Parish's *Amelia Bedelia* books portray the humor of choosing the wrong meaning.

Recent research reveals that young children have limited understanding of relational terms. Adults often assume children understand these terms and use them as the adults do, but this does not seem to be the case. Clark (5:226) found a sequence of four stages in the acquisition of the meaning of the words *before* and *after*. She reported:

... first, children understand neither word; second, children understood *before* but not *after*; third, children interpreted *after* as if it meant *before*; and fourth, children understood both words correctly.

In a study of the use of the terms *same*, *more*, and *less* in comparisons of length, weight, and number of objects with subjects 49 to 62 months in age, Griffiths, Shantz, and Siegel (19) reported the following results: the terms *more* and *less* were used correctly more often than the term *same* in comparisons of length and weight; *more* was used more correctly in comparisons of length and weight than with number; *less* was used more correctly with comparisons of length than with those of weight and number; *same* was used more correctly with length than with weight and number. Thus, all three terms were used correctly more often for comparisons of length than for comparisons of weight and number. The term *same* proved to be the most difficult for the children in the study.

Bernaldsor and Wales (12), investigating the acquisition of relational terms with children ages three and a-half to five, reported that the terms *same* and *different* were used incorrectly, with the term *different* appearing to mean to the child a different item having the same attributes as the comparison item. In a second experiment using cardboard

trees and paper apples in which children were asked to judge which tree had more or less apples and in which the children were asked to make one tree have more or less apples, it was found, as in an earlier study (11) that many of the children consistently interpreted *less* as synonymous with *more*. In the case of same/different and more/less, the investigators stated "... indifferenciation of the antonyms occurs in both cases" (12).

In a discussion of Donaldson and Wales' results, Clark (6:271-272) pointed out that comparative adjectives are polar opposites and that only one of the terms "... designates physical extension along a dimension." For example, *wide* refers to the dimension of width, as in the statement, "The desk is three feet wide." The term identifying the physical dimension then has a nominal use; however, it also has a contrastive use as in the statement, "This desk is wider than that one." The other term has only the contrastive use as in, "This desk is narrower than that one." Clark posited a developmental sequence in children's understanding of relational terms. Using the terms *more* and *less* as examples, he explained:

First, the child uses *more* and *less* in the nominal noncomparative sense only. Second, since the nominal term refers to extension rather than to lack of extension, he uses both *more* and *less* to refer to the extended end of the scale. Finally, he learns to distinguish *less* from *more* and apply it to the less extended end of the scale comparatively.

It is in this third stage that the child used comparatives in their comparative meaning.

The information about relational terms has special relevance to many readiness activities in which young children are asked to determine similarities and differences of various kinds and to make various other comparative judgments. Teachers need to recognize that the comparative term may not yet function as a comparative for the child. One of the writers, in working with kindergarten children, found that helping children understand the comparative meaning of the word *more* facilitated achievement on Piagetian class inclusion tasks (38). Young children also have difficulty with other relational terms: taller, shorter, older/younger, higher/lower, larger/smaller, thicker/thinner, and wider/narrower. These terms are all comparatives, which may have only limited meaning for the young child.

The importance of oral language in kindergarten programs and in relation to reading was significantly evidenced in a study by Loban (24), in which it was found that children who ranked high in oral language

ability at the kindergarten level also ranked high in reading achievement in later years. Loban's conclusion that proficiency in oral language is basic to achieving competence in reading is in agreement with the findings of a number of other studies. Kindergarten teachers play a significant role in helping children expand their receptive and productive language competence.

Cultural Factors of Language in the Kindergarten

As educators learned more about the nature of language development and its relationship to school achievement, it became clear that oral language activities form the basis for the development of skill in the entire spectrum of the language arts. The importance of developing programs in oral English as a means to improve reading and writing at every level was stressed by the National Council of Teachers of English Task Force on Teaching English to the Disadvantaged.

Concurrent with the recognition of the importance of oral language to school achievement, educators began to focus more on preventative approaches to the reading failure among children who were considered to be high risks. Such children generally come from families whose incomes place them in the lower socioeconomic levels and they are most often members of a cultural minority group. In the sixties, programs such as Head Start and Follow Through were launched for these children in an effort to avert problems before they became overwhelming.

In addition to the many new programs that focused on the very young, intensive study was undertaken into a wide variety of components believed to be the cause of reading retardation among the disadvantaged. One of the factors given considerable attention was that of language. Specifically, it was the linguistic differences of children who were both poor and black that many linguists, psychologists, and educators began to investigate. The fact that the language of these children differed noticeably from the language of instruction in the schools was hypothesized to be a major cause of their reading failure. Though focused on blacks, these studies hold implications for any child who speaks a nonstandard dialect.

Traditionally, teachers have worried about the language of non-standard speakers largely because we thought it to be inferior. We sought to eradicate the "bad" grammar, the "poor English" these children were speaking. We would correct a student consistently for twelve long years only to discover that he or she would still say "They was" instead of "They were." Such failures were blamed on the child as we continued in our attempt to teach all children to speak the formal way

English textbooks said they should. It is no wonder we ignored the linguists coming onto the scene who told us we never taught textbook language in the first place. The linguists persisted and finally made us recognize that language just would not be contained in a rigid standard box. They shocked us even more by insisting there is no one correct English and that appropriateness is determined by factors such as the setting, the topic, and the speakers and their purpose in speaking. We floundered with these elusive guidelines because it had always been so comfortable to know that we were correct, and so ennobling to rid the world of *ain'ts* and *gottas*.

As we listened further to the sociolinguists we began to recognize that all languages vary, that the black English many of our low socio-economic black children were speaking is rule governed, systematic, and capable of expressing all levels of thought.

At this point, it would be well to define what is meant by the terms *standard English* and *nonstandard dialect*. Linguists agree that each individual uses language in ways that make him unique and, in reality, there is no such thing as a standard language. In order to develop guidelines for language instruction, however, a working definition was needed. Horn (21) reports that, in May 1968, a group of educators and linguists, concerned with language development and individual opportunities, met at the Center for Applied Linguistics in Washington, D.C. The committee drafted this definition of standard American English: "A socially unmarked variety of American English used as a reference point in school language instruction to increase the individual's repertoire of important and useful ways of communicating. This variety of American-English is often heard on network radio and television newscasts." Johnson (22) defines nonstandard dialect as the collective patterns of a subcultural group that does not have the prestige of the collective speech patterns (standard English) of the dominant cultural group (the middle class). Some linguists term the variety of English spoken by most disadvantaged black people as the nonstandard black dialect.

It is extremely important that the kindergarten teacher build a language program that encourages children to use their own dialect as a basis for oral and written expression. Nonstandard dialect should be accepted as readily as standard dialect during sharing time, storytelling, creative dramatics, and any other oral language experiences that might be provided. When the teacher acts as a scribe for children's written charts and stories, regular orthography should be used in recording the spelling. Any grammatical variations, however, should be recorded just

as they are expressed by the child. For example, Billy may tell a story which sounds like this: "I gonna git a new bike foe my burfday, an, an, an, it gonna be a two wheeler. Man." The teacher-scribe would record: Billy's Birthday Story. "I going to get a new bike for my birthday. And it going to be a two wheeler. Man." In this way, pupils can observe the relation between speech and print. They will see their own words written as they will see them in books. The notion that their very own stories can be written down and read by someone is a critical understanding in the language learning process; however, this does not occur if there is a great mismatch between what the child says and what is written down as the child's own composition. Standard spelling is maintained so that the visual forms remain consistent as the child moves toward reading from books.

The gradual acquisition of written communication skills in standard English is a desirable outcome for all children as they move through the grades. There is good reason to believe that the child who has learned to use language effectively (whether it be standard English or a non-standard dialect), both as a tool for communication and as a means for creative expression, will be more receptive to language learning in general. Thus, such children would be even more likely to acquire the standard English conventions generally expected in school and in the broader society.

The concerns related to the language of our increasing Spanish-speaking population are in many ways quite different from that of the nonstandard English speaker. Although such children are often called bilingual, the term applies to very few at the kindergarten stage. Homes where both English and Spanish are spoken as native languages are relatively rare, and the children of such families do not face the problems encountered by those who grow up in an environment where only Spanish is spoken. These children will experience confusion and failure during the kindergarten and primary grades unless the school is willing to make special provisions for their needs and to accept their native language as valid.

We have already stated that every attempt must be made to reduce the mismatch between the language of the nonstandard-speaking learner and the language of instruction. This same principle holds true for the child with little or no English as well. Before children can be expected to learn to read English, they must have a firm foundation in oral English. Otherwise, as Modiano (27) suggests, it may be best to introduce reading in the first language. Some schools have initiated bilingual/bicultural programs in which both languages and cultures serve as the medium of instruction.

Young children generally have little difficulty acquiring a new language. Pflaum (32) suggests that "guaranteeing the presence of a natural language environment in the preschool classroom seems to be provision enough for preschool children to learn English as a second language if they are required to speak English to communicate." Authorities agree it is essential to have an atmosphere that encourages an abundance of rich, natural conversation in the new language.

Since kindergarten teachers often are children's first teachers, what the teachers do and say has profound effects upon children's attitudes about school and their impressions of how the school views them. For this reason, kindergarten teachers must examine carefully their attitudes about children who speak a language other than standard English.

Kindergarten teachers must learn all they can about the language of the children they teach. They must be keenly sensitive to the fact that repeatedly correcting and rebuffing a child for "incorrect speech" will deter language learning in school. Knowledge of the children's language will assist the teacher in differentiating between phonological and syntactical differences which may occur in the nonstandard dialect speaker or emerging bilingual speaker and those speech habits which are due to immaturity. For example, the articulation of *th* as /d/ may reflect non-standard dialect rather than immature speech.

There is no evidence that correction of a child's language has ever had any positive effect on it. McNeill (26:69) describes the way children assimilate adult models into their current grammars, but he clearly distinguishes between assimilating imitations and changing a child's grammar. He cites one child, in the phase of producing double negatives while developing the negative transformation, who had the following exchange with his mother.

Child: Nobody don't like me.

Mother: No, say "nobody likes me."

Child: Nobody don't like me.

(eight repetitions of this dialogue)

Mother: No, now listen carefully; say "nobody likes me."

Child: Oh! Nobody don't likes me.

Not only do such practices of correcting not help, they may actually hinder a child's learning. In fact, Cazden (2:111) says:

The implication for education is that teachers may be interfering with the child's learning process by insisting on responses that superficially look or sound "correct."

The often used dictum that we should accept the language that children bring to school gains stronger support than ever. It is not through correction but through a rich and supportive language environment that children will expand their language power and control.

It is important that all children be provided many opportunities to engage in a variety of language activities in which their contributions are considered valuable regardless of dialect or stage of bilingualism. A teacher responds to children in terms of the ideas they are expressing and the intent of the expression—not the grammatical form.

Equally as important as accepting the language of the child as an individual is the development of an appreciation of language variation among all children. Thus the teacher's responsibility goes beyond a willingness to rethink the ways in which language variability is viewed. For, although ideas about language ability have changed, the greatest change has come in the ideas about the responsibilities of teachers. In essence, we have changed from focusing on children's failures to focusing on our responsibilities as teachers.

The National Council of Teachers of English Committee on Composition and Communication (8) clearly places the responsibility upon teachers to uphold the rights of students to their own language.

We affirm the students' right to their own patterns and varieties of language—the dialects of their nurture or whatever dialects in which they find their own identity and style. Language scholars long ago denied that the myth of a standard American dialect has any validity. The claim that any one dialect is unacceptable amounts to an attempt of one social group to exert its dominance over another. Such a claim leads to false advice for speakers and writers, and immoral advice for humans. A nation proud of its diverse heritage and its cultural and racial variety will preserve its heritage of dialects. We affirm strongly that teachers must have the experiences and training that will enable them to respect diversity and uphold the right of students to their own language.

Implications for Instructional Goals

The relationship between language development and reading achievement has been demonstrated repeatedly in studies by Loban (24), Strickland (41), and others. Some researchers have extended knowledge by exploring specific areas which contribute to that relationship. For example, Cohen (7) studied the effect of a special literature program on the vocabulary and reading achievement of second grade children. Children who had stories read aloud to them every day gained significantly more in vocabulary and reading achievement than did a control group. In a subsequent study, Cohen examined the ways that authors of children's books clarified concepts and unfamiliar terms in the books used. Techniques often involved sensory imagery and added to comprehension without interfering with the story line.

Fasick (17) compared the language of children's books with the content of children's television programs to see if the language used was similar. She found that children's books used a much wider range of syntactic patterns than did the television programs. Sentences in children's books were most often complex, while the sentences used on television were simple in structure. A strong literature program provided a richer language environment than the one experienced on television.

Chomsky (3) investigated the relationship between children's knowledge of complex syntactic structures and the amount of reading done by them as well as the amount of material read aloud to them. She found that children who were read to and who read more on their own had a significantly higher knowledge of complex structures than children who heard and read fewer books.

Cullinan, Jaggard, and Strickland (10) extended the work done by Cohen by examining more specifically which aspects of exposure to literature affected children's language development. In their study, both experimental and control groups had stories read aloud to them every day but only the experimental groups were involved in activities which stimulated active use of the language heard from reading the literature aloud. These children were involved in role playing, creative dramatics, choral speaking, a parroting game, story telling, puppetry, and group discussions of the books following the daily reading. The control group followed their daily story time with art activities, music, rhythmic activities, or activities which did not involve active participation in the use of the language heard from the story reading. At the kindergarten level, children who used language grew in their control of language significantly more than the children who merely heard language.

The active use of language versus the passive hearing of language has been examined in relation to television. Young children who watch a great deal of television have not demonstrated unusual growth in language control. Although they hear language extensively while viewing television, they are not actively involved in verbal interchange using the language. This would explain why nonstandard speakers generally do not increase their control of standard English, despite the fact that they may watch television for many hours each day. The personally involving language that nonstandard English speakers hear and practice is more likely the part that influences their language; it is not the passively observed standard English they may hear on television.

The implication for teachers is clear. Children must use language to grow in their control of language. Models and stimulation are important, but models without participation and active use by children are bound to have limited effect.

Literature provides teachers many opportunities for stimulating children's active use of language. Furthermore, books provide new experiences and introduce new words into children's vocabularies. Children hear a variety of sentence patterns and can be engaged in happy experiences which involve new ways to say things. The following suggestions are intended to stimulate the active use of language.

Flannelboard stories. For years, teachers have been cutting out shapes of characters and objects in a story and using them on a flannelboard to tell a story. The same idea works for having children tell stories. After hearing *Little Blue and Little Yellow* (Lionni) or *The Man Who Didn't Wash His Dishes* (Krasilovsky), children will use the flannel cutouts repeatedly as they retell the story to themselves and others.

Creative dramatics. After reading a story, children enjoy acting it out and playing the roles that were depicted. Folktales and old favorites, such as *The Three Billy Goats Gruff*, are excellent choices for creative dramatics. Discussing what the characters were like, how they would sound, and how they would behave makes the story come alive and results in a lively enactment. Children use their own language and the language of the characters to play out the story line.

Puppetry. Simple hand puppets or fancy commercial ones add zest to storytelling time. Children who may be shy and who will not speak in front of a group turn into chatterboxes when they are hidden behind a puppet stage. They become the characters represented by the puppets and use language freely.

Transparency stories. Storytelling sessions can be enhanced by using transparencies to picture the characters and events involved. Cumulative tales, such as *This is the House that Jack Built*, are easily adapted to the transparency sheets. Colored transparencies make it even better, so that when each character is added it builds the mosaic of the tale. The *Little Blue and Little Yellow* story is especially good for the transparency format. When Little Blue and Little Yellow overlap as they do in the story, they turn green right before your eyes.

Peter Parrot. A parrot puppet can tell children that, instead of his repeating things after people, this one wants them to repeat after him. Being a fussy parrot, Peter insists that children repeat everything exactly the way he says it. Peter asks the children to repeat sentences from the story or ones based on the story. Poetry is a favorite of Peter Parrot and he enjoys very much David McCord's *Pickety Fence*. Children try hard to repeat "Give it a lick it's the pickety fence, Give it a lick it's a clickety fence. Give it a lick it's a lickety fence."

Choral speaking. Poetry, stories with repetitive lines, and finger plays invite children to join in spontaneously. Teachers who read or recite rhythmic phrases with enthusiasm will soon have a chorus of children's voices joining theirs. Wanda Gag's *Millions of Cats* has "Hundreds of cats, thousands of cats, millions and billions and trillions of cats" repeated several times throughout the story and children join in repeating it spontaneously.

Fantasy, imagination, and language form the essence of literature and are central to children's development. Children who are not told stories and who are not read to will have little reason for wanting to learn to read. Hearing good stories and participating in the active use of language enriches children's language and leads them happily into reading on their own.

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The Teacher: Fostering Interest and Achievement **3** Bonnie Smith Schulwitz

The preceding chapter, focusing upon the young child, provides the proper perspective for the emphasis of this chapter—the teacher. Any quality educational program must begin with foremost attention to the children for whom the program is being developed before other aspects are considered. With this rationale, this discussion concerns issues pertinent to the role of the teacher in instructional reading programs for young children. Chapter 3 is divided into three major sections: 1) Motivation in the Kindergarten, 2) Creating and Sustaining Interest Throughout the Kindergarten Year, and 3) Our Goal: Interest for All—Beginning Reading for Some, followed by concluding statements.

Motivation in the Kindergarten

Learning to read depends upon two of the most basic principles of all learning—motivation and reinforcement. These principles specify that learning is more likely to occur 1) when an organism wants to reach a specific goal in order to seek satisfaction of a need, i.e., when the learner is motivated, and 2) when the response makes results in arriving at the goal, i.e., the response is then reinforced. For example, when a young child learns to say “Jenny” in response to the visual cue of the letter symbols which form the name, the source of motivation may be the desire to succeed in this new, exciting task of reading and the reinforcement is the teacher’s word of praise for the child’s success in this word recognition exercise. Reinforcements then, are consequences which facilitate and perpetuate learning.

Motivation is characterized by two types: extrinsic and intrinsic. The behavioristic view of humans as reactive organisms, which respond to outside forces acting upon them, forms the basis for the function of *extrinsic* motivation in learning. To illustrate this concept, the young child at school may be extrinsically motivated by the outside forces of:

- Immediate gratifications (a classroom or school-related privilege, a prize, a happy face sticker or "Good" written by the teacher on a paper, teacher attention, teacher approval, praise)
- Academic rewards (academic success, being able to achieve, conformity with peers, good papers)
- Social rewards (peer conformity, peer acceptance, peer approval)

Equally as significant in motivating learning are the inside forces—the learner's own innate characteristics, needs, and values. These function to create *intrinsic* motivation for learning. For example, the young child could be intrinsically motivated by:

- Natural curiosity
- Spontaneous learning
- Desire to please others
- Desire to succeed or excel

Generally, as individuals mature and satisfy the more primary needs (7) they derive satisfaction from an inner need to know and understand. They are then more motivated in the learning environment by intrinsic forces. The long-range goal of education is to make the value of learning become its own reward. Hopefully, the mature student is able to reach this goal.

When young children enter school, however, a substantial part of their motivation to learn must be teacher-generated. The following list cites some specific ways a teacher might accomplish this within the instructional reading program.

The teacher as a person

- Use a warm, enthusiastic voice and personality in relating to children. This enthusiasm is caught by the children and they, in turn, become excited about the reading task or activity.
- Insure that every child achieves some measure of success. Whether a child is motivated to attempt a task depends to an extent upon whether past efforts have produced success or failure.
- Give positive attention and approval to each child.
- Give generous verbal praise and extra concrete rewards (depending on the needs of the children) such as a touch, a handshake, a happygram, or positive words on papers.
- Convey a genuine personal interest in each child.

Methods and techniques in teaching

- Involve children in learning activities such as role playing and action-oriented lessons. One kindergarten teacher holds up

cards with action words such as *stand*, *jump*, and *hop* to which individual children respond if they can read the word card.

- Games, songs, rhymes to incorporate fun while learning skills.
- Simple visual aids: "Climb the ladder as you say the number words with me."
- A challenge: "I'll bet I can trick you!"
- Bulletin boards with children's work displayed at their eye level.
- "I can" displays. Each child's name is recorded when a task is accomplished. For example, "I can read my first and last name."

Materials in the learning environment

- Audiovisual materials.
- Printed materials that are colorful, appealing, and current.
- Action materials which the children manipulate while learning a concept.
- Child or teacher-made materials: experience stories, charts, labels made together, recorded dialogue about commonly shared classroom events.

The possibilities are limitless. This short listing functions to illustrate the concept of providing extrinsic motivation in the learning environment.

Fortunately for the teacher of young children, the children themselves offer a good measure of intrinsic motivation for learning. The very nature of the young child, his innate desire to please others, his unremitting curiosity to learn, and his inherent desire to explore, discover, and create provide intrinsic motivation. The competent teacher must capitalize on the natural motivation of young children, adding a generous measure of teacher-created motivation to set the stage for successful reading. To do this, the teacher makes full use of the functions of motivation in learning.

Since motivation is crucial in initiating all learning, it must be foremost in the minds of kindergarten teachers as they set out, not only to launch young children on a successful start in reading, but to create the kind of beginning which maintains lifetime motivation for reading. Initial motivation must be followed by the nurturing of factors which perpetuate the desire to continue reading. Motivation for reading in the kindergarten should include these factors (10:27):

1. Successful experiences so the students have feelings of personal worth and security.
2. A school curriculum emphasizing social utility in what is taught (with considerable emphasis on the usefulness, here and now, of what is

taught). In addition to its preparation for future life, school is accepted more importantly as preparation for life here and now. The result of learning to live here and now prepares one to live in an indefinable future.

3. Methodology to reinforce self-esteem in all girls and boys.
4. Maximum competition with one's own past record and minimum competition among all members of a class.

In planning motivational techniques, love for interest in reading should be the goal of any instruction—not instruction at the expense of interest. We should strive to create able readers, but a paramount goal is to create readers who *want* to read.

Creating and Sustaining Interest throughout the Kindergarten Year

The skilled teacher of young children not only should be aware of the significance of motivation in teaching and learning but cognizant of three other general principles: 1) the importance of child involvement in learning, 2) the progression of various modes of learning from concrete modes to more abstract ones, and 3) the function of task analysis in teaching and learning. A focus upon these principles seems warranted before attending to more specific suggestions for creating and sustaining interest.

The old Chinese proverb,

"I hear and I forget
I see and I remember
I do and I understand."

illustrates this important concept of involving young children in learning experiences to achieve optimal learning. As a teacher of young children, it is well worth remembering.

Bruner's modes (2) of learning—the *symbolic* (highly abstract experience), the *iconic* (pictorial experience), and the *enactive* (direct experience)—relate to the above concept of child involvement, for direct experiences form the vital basis for understanding concepts. For example, let's analyze the task of recognizing and comprehending a single word, *apple*. The enactive mode incorporates direct experience with an apple. This experience would include having children feel, look at, smell, and taste an apple. Achieving this vital stage of experience with the apple, the iconic mode (pictorial experience) could be subsequently utilized since the picture of an apple would recall the child's direct experience with it. At the symbolic (highly abstract experience) stage, the

word *apple* would be used (visually and/or auditorially) to cue the child to the mental image of an apple or to the child's actual experience with an apple.

Difficulties arise when the more abstract stages are used in teaching without the adequate foundations of direct experience. If a verbal symbol does not resemble anything a child has seen or experienced, the child may have difficulty understanding it. In precise words, if a teacher intends a symbol to stand for something, it must stand on something—a solid foundation of direct, relevant experience.

Dale's Cone of Experience (3:107-135) shows an elaborated progression of learning stages, including those which Bruner describes. The Cone illustrates the essential broad base of experience, suggesting that this concrete stage is the primary basis from which to begin purposeful learning. Successful learning experiences for young children begin with the concrete and then move upward in the direction of increasing abstractness.

Task analysis is another important principle which teachers of young children must continually remember. This concept refers to the analysis of any learning task so that its whole may be dissected into component parts. Next, these parts are analyzed and sorted along a continuum of simple to complex. The product of task analysis is then a series of increasingly more difficult steps which, when successfully accomplished, will usually lead to the ability to perform the complete learning task.

To utilize a personal example of the necessity for using task analysis in instruction, in the late 1960s I was teaching in a Head Start program for children aged three and four. In one class I had planned a simple art experience in which cutting with scissors was required. I was unaware that one three-year-old had probably never before used a pair of scissors. Of necessity, I had to analyze the motor task of cutting with scissors to teach him how to use them. I divided the composite task into ~~three~~ component parts, ranging from simple to more complex: 1) the pinching motion of the hand without the scissors; 2) working the scissors with this same motion; 3) cutting a piece of paper with simple cuts to make it fringed; 4) cutting on a straight line; and 5) cutting a straight-sided shape. We practiced each step until the child succeeded with each one and was able to proceed to the next step until the total task was accomplished.

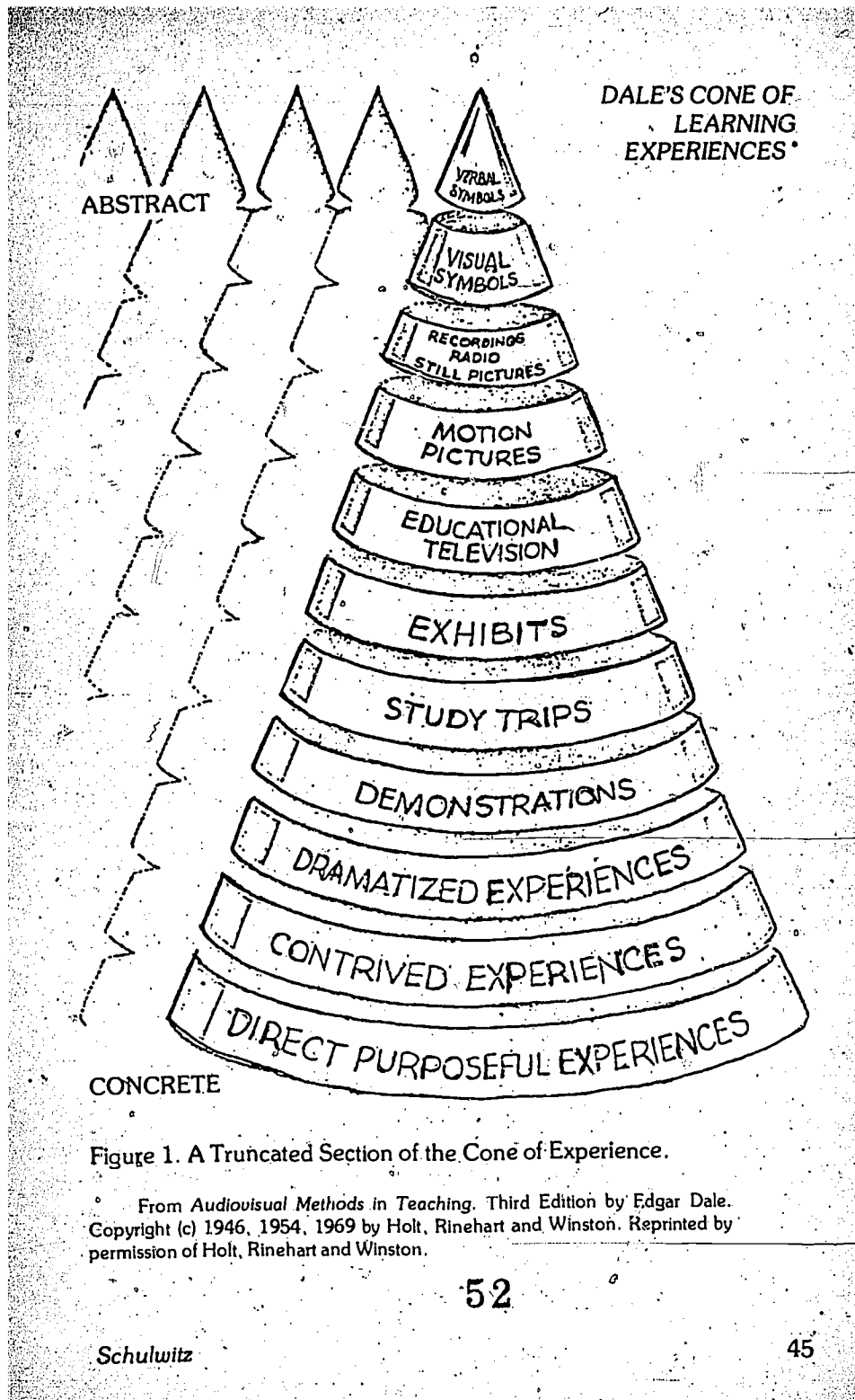


Figure 1. A Truncated Section of the Cone of Experience.

From *Audiovisual Methods in Teaching*, Third Edition by Edgar Dale. Copyright (c) 1946, 1954, 1969 by Holt, Rinehart and Winston. Reprinted by permission of Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

The same procedure can be applied to any learning task. In the analysis of a reading task (for example, visual discrimination), the following sequence could be utilized.

TASK: VISUAL DISCRIMINATION

DIRECTIONS: "Find the one that is different and mark it with an X."

Visual Discrimination of Shapes

○ ○ ○ □
 △ □ △ △
 ○ ○ ○ ○

Simple

NOTE
 THE
 SEQUENCE
 WITHIN
 EACH
 SET, i.e.,
 GROSS
 TO
 FINE
 DIFFERENCES

Visual Discrimination of Letter Symbols

l p p p
 k k l k
 b p b b

Visual Discrimination of Words

More complex

do do do go
 pat pat tap pat
 saw was saw saw
 lead lead bead lead

INCREASE
 IN
 NUMBER
 OF
 LETTERS

The significance of task analysis in teaching is that we should be cognizant of the "pieces of the puzzle" which lead to the accomplishment of the total task; we need to insure that tasks are built on accomplishing the necessary prerequisite steps; and when a child does have difficulty with a task, we are able to take the child back one or more steps to rebuild success.

With this general perspective in mind, we are now ready to examine some specific ways teachers of young children can create, captivate, and sustain interest in reading experiences throughout the kindergarten. Our goal is to capture interest without placing undue pressure on the young child.

Utilizing Direct Experiences

Involving children in direct experiences helps to build a rich experiential background that is essential not only for sustaining interest but for building concepts, extending vocabulary, and establishing the rich oral language base necessary to a successful beginning in reading.

Direct experiences are those experiences within the classroom, school building, schoolyard, and community (field trip experiences) which place the child in direct interaction with the environment and require vivid use of feelings, senses, and perceptions.

For example, a child could not *fully* understand what a "gerbil" is until that child observes, touches, holds, and perhaps strokes a live gerbil. Likewise, the word "snow" can be *fully* experienced only by watching snow fall, walking through snow, catching a few flakes of snow on one's tongue, or feeling the magical silence of snow as it falls. The letter "J" in Jennifer's name comes alive to her when she traces its shape, molds a J with clay, hears its name, and hears the sound of J in words which begin with the same sound as Jennifer.

Obviously, there are concepts and word meanings a teacher may find impossible to associate with a direct experience. This is understandable. But the teacher's goal should be to involve the children in concrete, direct experiences whenever possible. Only in situations where this is unrealistic or unachievable should vicarious or more abstract experiences be substituted, for example, the use of a photograph of an elephant when direct contact with such an animal cannot be arranged. All of these judgments, naturally, depend upon the characteristics of the pupils. Their abilities, deficiencies, and experiential backgrounds are paramount in guiding these instructional decisions.

Utilizing Creative Dramatics, Creative Movement, Creative Language

Fortunately for the teacher of young children, there are many enjoyable and creative activities which can be included in an instructional program to promote a successful start in reading. Such activities create interest because they are fun for children, yet produce instructional benefits. Sample activities are enumerated below, along with the skills these activities help to develop.

CREATIVE DRAMATICS

Activities

Housekeeping corner
Role playing
Story dramatizations
Puppets
Spontaneous drama
from music, poetry
Finger plays
Dramatic play kits

Skills

Self-expression
Creative thinking
Concept development
Vocabulary growth
Listening
Sequence of events
Characterization
Oral language

CREATIVE MOVEMENT

Activities

Exploring body movement
Moving in different ways,
levels, speeds
Imitating animals
Body shapes
Moving to music
Moving as objects

Skills

Self-expression
Creative thinking
Concept development
Vocabulary growth
Listening
Following directions
Rhythm
Problem solving

CREATIVE LANGUAGE

Activities

Storytelling
Reading stories
Reading poetry
Rhymes
Songs
Storyteller's Theatre (10)
(teacher tells story and
children join with sound
effects and motions to
correlate)
Games
Riddles
Recordings
Music

Skills

Concept development
Vocabulary growth
Listening
Sequence
Oral language
Rhyming
Auditory discrimination
Auditory memory
Rhythm

The list of sample activities for each general category includes appropriate activities for young children. The accompanying skills list suggests possible skills which may be developed from the activities. Illustrating one example will help clarify this point.

The dramatization, by children, of a well-known nursery rhyme could easily offer an opportunity for *self-expression*, as each child acts out a portion of the story line. *Creative thinking* is demonstrated by the interpretation of a character or object. The children gain practice in *listening* as they listen first to the story line and then to the nursery rhyme recited by the teacher. They gain an understanding of the *sequence of events* in listening to the story line, then acting out the sequence. Certainly, *characterization* abilities are developed in playing out the rhyme. *Oral language* may be developed if the dramatization is played out with speaking parts. This example is only one of many the

teacher of young children can use to create and sustain interest while concurrently developing some skills they can later bring to the reading process.

Use of Audiovisual Media

Audiovisual materials are a valuable source for captivating the interest of young children. Included among such aids are the following:

<i>Audiovisual Media</i>	<i>Suggested Uses</i>
Flannelboard	Storytelling, visual discrimination
Tape recorder	Auditory discrimination, oral language
Listening center	Listening, auditory skills
Slides	
Dukane projector	Storytelling, story sequence
Films	
Filmstrips	Visual skills
Records	Listening, auditory skills
Overhead projector	
Opaque projector	Visual skills
Videotape recorder	
Television	Listening, auditory/visual skills
Language master	
Typewriter	Fine motor, language experience

In addition to their value in focusing children's attention, many reading related skills can be developed in the process of utilizing these media. Some examples are visual discrimination, visual memory, auditory discrimination, auditory memory, left to right progression, sequence, oral language skills, picture interpretation, sound-symbol association, and sense of context.

The creative teacher finds novel approaches to teach reading skills with audiovisual media. One kindergarten teacher projects Alpha Bits dry cereal letters using the overhead projector. Her pupils are eager to learn letter names with this innovative approach. Another teacher varies the use of a filmstrip by showing the picture frames as individual children narrate the story sequence. No attempt is made to confine the storyteller to exact wording but, instead, the child's own unique interpretation of storyline in proper sequence is encouraged. Some vocabulary words or concepts can be taught only by a visual image (picture, photograph, filmstrip, film), for example, "icicle" to children in a warm climate; or some by an auditory mode (recording, sound filmstrip, film) as in the case of "gobble" if it is impossible to visit a turkey farm. Some teachers utilize a typewriter to encourage manipulative

learning of letter symbols and words. The typewriter can also be a good way to teach the association of oral and written language. As the teacher types a child dictated sentence or story, the child observes "talk" being transformed into a visual form. These are a few examples of the creative use of audiovisual materials to create and sustain interest in reading activities.

Utilizing Children's Literature

The world of children's literature offers a wealth of resources for creating and sustaining interest. And, like the preceding examples, reading related skills can be developed concurrently. Some suggested activities involving children's literature include the following:

- Oral reading to children
- Story record/tape sequences
- Storytelling based on familiar stories
- Puppetry/creative drama/flannelboard stories based on children's literature
- Providing time and opportunity for children to interact with books, whether this means a child telling a favorite story while that child turns the pages; children "reading" illustrations in the sequences of the book; or, for children who can already read, opportunity to read specific words or simple books in their entirety.

The point is that whether one or all of these activities are incorporated, exposure to good children's literature is vital in building interest in the printed page.

Locating good sources of children's literature should not be a difficult task. Your school or public librarian stands ready to aid you. A good anthology of children's literature such as that by Arbutnot (1) offers a convenient source for stories, poems, rhymes, and tales for a teacher to use in reading to children. Your commercial reading programs often have good selections or references included. Here are some additional sources.

Stories: To Tell and Read Aloud (\$1.25)
(graded list)
Office of Children's Services
New York Public Library
8 East 40 Street
New York, New York 11560

Bibliography of Books for Children (\$2.50)
(categories: ages, types of literature, subjects)
Association of Childhood Education International
3615 Wisconsin Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20016

Little Miss Muffet Fights Back (\$1.00)
(nonsexist books about girls)
Feminist Book Mart
162-11 Ninth Avenue
Whitestone, New York 11357

Reading with Your Child through Age 5 (\$1.50)
Child Study Press
50 Madison Avenue
New York, New York 10010

I Can Read It Myself (\$1.25)
(books for independent readers)

Frieda M. Heller, Compiler
The Ohio State University
Publications Office

242 West 18 Avenue
Columbus, Ohio 42310

Helping Young Children Learn (second edition)
Evelyn Pitcher, Miriam Lasher,
Sylvia Feinburg, and Linda Braun.
Charles E. Merrill Publishing Company
1300 Alum Creek Drive
Columbus, Ohio 42316

Utilizing other Printed Materials

In addition to the materials previously cited, there are other printed materials available which can function to create interest in reading. Language experience oriented reading materials, basal readers, and other commercial reading programs with their books and supplementary books fall into this category. Other books with simple repetitious vocabulary such as *Instant Readers* (6) easy reader books, and books with rhyming language are other resources. Printed charts, poems, rhymes, and riddles stimulate reading interest. Flash vocabulary and phrase cards, either commercially or teacher-made, might function to label objects or actions in the classroom.

Our Goal: Interest for All—Beginning Reading for Some

The fact that, in past years, some children have entered school already knowing how to read is not different from the fact that some children today also enter school with this skill. What is different is the attitude parents and educators now assume regarding early reading. First, a look at the past:

As recently as ten years ago, it was not uncommon to find reading authorities promoting the idea that children must have attained the magical age of 6.6 to profit from reading instruction. The proponents of this theory stressed the maturity level needed for beginning reading. They felt some stage of sensory and neurological development was critical (being attained by age 6.6) to the beginning reader. They insisted that instruction carried out prior to this age would probably physically damage the child.

We now know that, although some level of maturity is needed, it is completely invalid to pinpoint any specific age at which this universally occurs for all children. Furthermore, while the question which dominated this issue in past years was, "Should we teach preschoolers to read?" it is now more appropriate to ask, "To which preschool/kindergarten children should reading be taught?" and "What kind of instruction for these children?" A paramount role of the teacher, however, is to foster the interest of every child in *wanting* to learn to read, regardless of the child's level of readiness.

The children who are ready and eager to read often reveal their readiness by questions or comments. Their responses of "What does this word say?" or "Robert's name is on that sign." or "I see the same word in this book." are typical signs of increasing awareness of our language in printed form, and of their desire to learn more about reading. Many children who are ready for reading instruction may demonstrate knowledge of some words and/or letter names. A few children may be able to read simple books or stories. In some classrooms, a few individuals may even have developed some independent word recognition skills to the degree that, on their own, they are able to independently decode simple books they have not previously seen. The unique characteristics of the children then, help to determine the teacher's instructional decisions.

The uniqueness of kindergarten children dictates that some children will be ready and eager to read. For these children, appropriate instruction must be provided. This instruction should include graphic representation of direct oral language experiences within your classroom. Here are some examples of this concept to guide you.

Labeling

(It is helpful to utilize the context of a short phrase or sentence.)

Our Pet Corner

Robert's Tower
Hands Off!

Experience Charts (5)

(A shared classroom experience in one kindergarten at Easter time produced this story written together by the children.)

Our Eggs

Here are our eggs.
We are keeping them warm so they will hatch. We hope we can watch them hatch.

Conversation Chart

(This classroom spring planting project produced dictation which was simultaneously recorded by the teacher.)

The Garden

What's in our garden?
Billy says, "Soil and plants."
Dixie says, "We have to water our plants and keep them near the sunlight."

Using written language, which directly correlates with the language of thought and speech about child- or classroom-based experiences, is the most beneficial way to make this association between oral language and print. Using relevant experiences like the examples cited, we are encouraging children to discover that our thoughts can be expressed in "talk" and our talk can be expressed in print. The association between oral language and print is accomplished. In beginning reading, we are striving to help the child recognize words in print which are already a part of the child's oral meaning vocabulary.

Attention to other forms of graphic representation should be directed toward developing the children's concepts of what constitutes a letter, a word, a line of print, a paragraph, and an illustration. Too often, we automatically assume a child knows these concepts basic to the reading task.

After discovering which children exhibit knowledge or interest in reading, instruction appropriate to their needs and interests should be

provided. The direction this instruction assumes is affected by several variables: the characteristics of the pupils, the type of instructional program which exists, materials for reading instruction which may be available, the teacher and her/his philosophy, and influences of the school and community. Regardless of these specifics, however, the following categories of skill areas are generally incorporated in the reading program for beginning readers: Oral language development, whole word recognition, sense (context) of language, letter names, auditory discrimination, auditory memory, visual discrimination, visual memory, sequence, left to right/top to bottom progression, sound/symbol association, and sound/symbol/context association. Effective reading instruction for young children who are able and ready to read must equip them with the necessary foundation of skills to ensure their initial achievement. But in providing this instruction, the competent teacher maintains interest in reading. Appropriate reading instruction for young children builds beginning skills, but does so accentuating these factors:

1. The goal of instruction is continued child success and interest. It should not be instruction at the expense of interest.
2. Whenever possible, instruction should relate to the concrete life experiences of the children.
3. Creative teaching should be incorporated.
4. Context or the "sense of language" should be stressed in speaking, in listening, and in reading.

As instruction progresses, the natural eventuality facing any teacher is the necessity to provide for the individual differences in progress of the children. This responsibility is crucial for the teacher of reading. Good suggestions concerning planning for individual instruction are included in the following chapter. These suggestions include a sample progress chart which can easily be adapted to any sequence of skills.

This chapter has focused upon the teacher's role in reading instruction for kindergarten children. In summary, the role of the teacher is that of 1) motivation, 2) creating and sustaining interest in reading, and 3) insuring interest for all while providing instruction in reading for those children who are ready to read. Chapter 4 concerns organizing for individual instruction.

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The Schedule: Organizing for Individual Instruction

4

Joanne R. Nurss

Teaching reading in the kindergarten requires that the teacher individualize instruction, that is, provide instruction in reading/language skills appropriate to each child's level of development and learning. Such instruction may be provided on a one-to-one basis, to a small group, or to a large group of children, all of whom can benefit from that instruction at that time.

This concept of individualized instruction requires that teachers be expert jugglers with computer memories without losing their warm, loving concern for children. The purpose of this chapter is to suggest some ways to accomplish this feat.

Planning

Effective instruction of young children results only from careful planning by all concerned—teachers, aides, parents, and children. Figure 1 shows the Planning/Implementation/Evaluation (PIE) cycle, a graphic means of describing this essential planning.

The first task is to set goals and objectives for reading in kindergarten. Earlier chapters in this volume have presented the philosophy which underlies long term goals and the developmental considerations which set the parameters for intermediate and specific activity objectives. Frequently, long term goals are determined by the philosophy of the schools, and by discussions with the principal or director and the parents. The teacher then develops objectives for a quarter, month, or week. Specific activities are planned from these objectives. Insofar as possible, objectives need to be stated in behavioral terms so the teacher is readily able to determine when the child has achieved them. Figure 2

*PIE is a concept first used by Carol R. Foster for TEEM, a Follow Through Model.

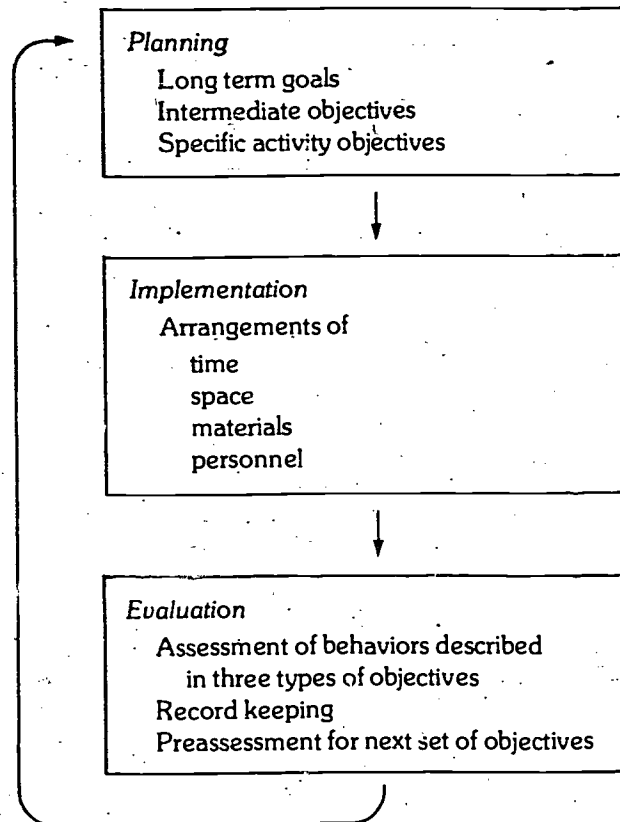


Figure 1. Planning-Implementation-Evaluation Cycle

illustrates one way such objectives might be listed. The specific objectives are written to cover several difficulty levels. The teacher must assess each child's individual development to determine which objectives and activities are appropriate for that child. This assessment might be achieved through standardized tests, formal observation instruments, informal classroom observations, reports from parents and from previous teachers, and/or use of actual instructional activities on a trial basis.

Once the objectives have been set and the child's development has been assessed, it is possible to choose specific activities for instruction. The teacher uses a wide variety of resources in planning and takes primary responsibility for developing a broad range of possible activities.

Long term Objective

To introduce children to reading and the world of books.

Intermediate Objectives

To become familiar with appropriate children's literature.

To be able to "read" and comprehend literature on an appropriate level of difficulty.

Specific Objectives

To "read" a story book by:

reading pictures to get the main idea of the story, the sequence of events, and specific details;

following along as the book is read on a tape or record; and reading some key words or phrases.

To demonstrate understanding of the books by:

answering questions to tell the main idea of the story, the sequence of events, and specific details of the story;

retelling the story in sequence giving the main idea and essential details illustrating the story, either the main idea or several parts in sequence; and dramatizing the story following the correct sequence of events.

Figure 2. Objectives for Reading in Kindergarten: An Illustration

The children can, and in most instances should, have some input into the planning process and some choice of activities. Some possible resources in planning for reading in the kindergarten are the following:

- local curriculum guides,
- basal reader series used locally,
- supplemental reading series,
- skills or phonics programs,
- reading consultants,
- teacher's experience,
- children's ideas,
- learning center activity books, and
- reading methods textbooks.

One way of obtaining children's ideas is through a group planning session in which themes or topics are selected for the class to study. Within a broad topic, the teacher can develop activities for specific levels. Children can be given choices of specific activities, time for working in certain areas, and materials with which to work. A word of caution is appropriate here. Choices offered to children should be from among genuine options. If everyone must eventually make a Halloween mask, don't ask *who* wants to make one but, rather, ask *when*

they want to do so. If working outdoors is not an option at this time, don't offer that as a choice.

Record-keeping becomes crucial to maintaining the juggling act and remembering where all the balls are. Records need to be simple, easy to keep, current, and used in planning as well as in evaluation. Figure 3 gives a sample record form. Alternate formats include index cards, manilla folders, looseleaf notebooks, and progress charts. The records should contain the skills listed in sequence (as much as possible), in behavioral terms, and in small enough increments to measure progress. Information to be recorded may include degree of mastery obtained, date achieved, and amount of time (or number of attempts) spent in achieving success.

The record is used by the teacher in a variety of ways: 1) pre-instructional assessment of the child's skill development; 2) daily and weekly planning of instruction; and 3) reporting progress to parents, school officials, and future teachers.

Child's Name _____

Skills	% Mastery Desired	% Mastery Achieved / Date	% Mastery Achieved / Date
Shows an interest in sounds			
Distinguishes rhyming from nonrhyming words			
Distinguishes letter sounds from spoken words			
Discriminates between beginning consonants			
Discriminates between ending consonants			
Identifies beginning consonants			
Identifies ending consonants			
Matches letter with beginning consonant			
Matches letter with ending consonant			

Figure 3. Sample Record of Progress

The record illustrated is of ongoing progress during the course of instruction. Summary evaluations at the end of a longer time period will still be necessary. Frequently, standardized tests or achievement measures accompanying a book series are used for these summary evaluations.

Another aspect of planning is providing continuity within the class over time, with the home, with preschool experiences, and with future grade activities. The kindergarten teacher needs to plan reading instruction so it meshes with the first grade curriculum. This means giving the first grade teacher accurate records of the child's progress so instruction is not needlessly repeated. It also means using an approach that is compatible with or complimentary to the first grade materials (for example, not beginning the child on i.t.a. in kindergarten when the first grade is using a linguistics approach). Continuity does not mean retarding a child's progress so as not to interfere with the "first grade curriculum." Rather, it implies steady growth in developing and using the reading skills from prekindergarten through kindergarten to the primary grades and on through the twelfth grade.

Grouping

Arranging the children for individualized instruction always raises questions about the pupil-teacher ratio and the feasibility of tutorial instruction in a public school setting. Individualized instruction does not mean one-to-one instruction. Rather, it means instruction that is appropriate for that particular child at that particular time, whether delivered individually, in small groups of three or four, or in large groups of twenty to twenty-five. Effective grouping then refers to planning and to creating a match between the child's level of skill development and the instructional goals, not to pupil-teacher ratio. Record keeping and instructional objectives provide the data for forming a variety of instructional groups for the day's or week's activities. These groups should be flexible so that children are allowed some choices and so that they may be regrouped according to progress.

There are two major bases for grouping: 1) skill development and 2) interest. The teacher has primary responsibility for arranging and maintaining skill development groups based upon preassessment of the skills of those children who have demonstrated an interest in print and reading. A few children who have demonstrated an interest in rhyming, perhaps while listening to poetry records or tapes, might be grouped together to learn the meaning of the term and to practice distinguishing rhyming from non-rhyming word pairs. A learning center might then be

set up to provide several rhyming games. Learning centers are areas of the room set aside for specific activities. Usually centers are arranged for one or more children to use independently with a minimum of assistance from the teacher. Individually or in pairs, children would select a time to use the center. One particular game or activity might be set aside by the teacher as the checkoff or test activity. Successful completion of this activity would be recorded and the child would be shifted to another skill group. Those children not successful in the test activity would continue in the rhyming instructional group. A child may be in more than one instructional group at a time; for example, one child might be in groups on rhyming, letter recognition, and oral comprehension of story sequence, another in groups on rhyming and visual matching.

The other type of group is based on the children's interests and thus contains children on many different levels of skills development. Interest groups are usually child-selected from specific activities around a teacher-selected general theme. For example, an area of the classroom might be turned into a supermarket with shelves, groceries, and a check-out stand. Activities could include the following:

- role playing,
- reading labels, shopping lists, prices,
- writing the bill,
- counting money and making change,
- restocking shelves (visual matching),
- filling orders (listening comprehension),
- reading books to find out how supermarkets function,
- planning a visit to a supermarket (yielding experience charts before and after the trip),
- dictating stories about the supermarket, and
- making word cards or a dictionary to learn supermarket words.

Children can be guided to pursue appropriate activities within an interest area and skill groups can be formed from interests shown. Once again, the groups will vary in size from large (how to use the store) to small (restocking shelves) to individual (writing a story about supermarkets).

Another example of grouping for individualized instruction is the use of a reading games center. The center would contain teacher-made and commercial games of a variety of reading skills. Such a center might include lotto and bingo games with letters; card games requiring children to match pictures; consonant or vowel substitution games; and alphabet games. These games should be coded by the teacher as to skill and level of difficulty. If a number code is used for the skills and a color code for difficulty, children can be told to play game #6-Blue, or any

game numbered 6, or any Blue game. The center can be used by many children at the same time playing games on their own appropriate instructional levels, alone, in pairs, or in small groups as determined by the game.

Successful grouping for individualized instruction, therefore, depends on flexibility and selection, not upon size or pupil-teacher ratio.

Half-day program

- 8:30 a.m. Arrival, group planning
- 8:45 a.m. Work period—selection of activities by children
- 10:15 a.m. Clean up (juice and bathroom if facilities don't allow these to be integrated into work period)
- 10:30 a.m. Music, story, group discussion
- 11:00 a.m. Special activities or centers (including outdoor play if facilities don't allow these to be integrated into work period)
- 12:00 noon Dismissal

Half-day program

- 8:30 a.m. Arrival, group planning
- 8:45 a.m. Work period—teacher assigns child to one or more activities; emphasis on skills groups and subject matter activities
- 10:15 a.m. Clean up, juice
- 10:30 a.m. Work period—child-selected activities; emphasis on outdoor play, art, blocks, trucks, puzzles, and games
- 11:30 a.m. Music, story, group discussion
- 12:00 noon Dismissal

Full-day program

- 8:30 a.m. Arrival, group planning
- 8:45 a.m. Work period—teacher assigns child to one or more activities; emphasis on skills groups and subject matter activities
- 10:15 a.m. Clean up, juice
- 10:30 a.m. Work period—child-selected activities; emphasis on outdoor play, art, blocks, trucks, puzzles, and games
- 11:30 a.m. Lunch
- 12:15 p.m. Quiet time—story, rest
- 1:00 p.m. Work period—child-selected activities
- 2:15 p.m. Physical activity—outdoors, if possible
- 3:00 p.m. Dismissal

Figure 4. Sample Time Schedules

Arrangements

Kindergartens have unusual opportunities for flexible use of time, space, and personnel. Possibilities exist for integrating into learning centers subject-matter curricula, skill development, social activities, and routines. Time modules can be combined to form large blocks of time for selecting and pursuing a variety of activities.

Figure 4 gives some sample time schedules, suggesting ways of achieving large blocks of time. The space available and the physical arrangements of such space have an influence on the degree of integration possible. If the kindergarten is in one large room, all activities can be available at the same time and can be supervised by one person. If, however, several rooms must be used, then certain activities must be restricted to times when that room can be supervised. For example, all art activities might be in a separate room with a sink, requiring a separate period for art. If the bathrooms are near the room, children may use them as necessary; if the bathrooms are separated from the room or shared by many other classes, there may need to be special times scheduled for use of the bathrooms. Combining activities into large blocks of time means that the teacher can schedule specific activities for individual children or small groups of children while the rest of the class works on other activities. Reading instruction might occur in small groups during any one of the work times. This type of scheduling allows a maximum of individualized instruction with a minimum of personnel. Figure 5 illustrates some possibilities.

Organizing the room into learning centers with activities and equipment grouped together and arranged so they may be managed by the child alone, also increases the flexibility. Figure 6 gives some ideas regarding centers and what equipment is needed. The concept of a learning center suggests that the activities in each center be designed so one child or more may use them alone without direct instruction from the teacher. The objective should be clear, directions and rules should be explicit, and the activity should be self-checking. Centers should be changed frequently to maintain interest. Often a center keeps the same basic format with the content changed often; for example, a writing center with a typewriter, paper and pencils, tape-recorder, and word box always there, but with story starters and stimulus pictures that change. The most useful centers are those containing activities which can be carried out on more than one level of difficulty.

During the morning planning period, the children make selections of the activities they want to do and the teacher makes assignments for other activities. A pegboard or pocketchart indicating who is to do what,

when, and where keeps the logistics simple. An alternate format, as children begin reading, is an assignment card for the day or week. Figure 7 illustrates some possible assignment systems.

Wherever possible, children should select many of their own activities either during planning or as the day progresses. The teacher, of course, needs to schedule some groups and activities and to allow for spontaneous events and interests.

Space that provides maximum flexibility is a large open room, well-lighted and well-ventilated, with adequate storage and display areas. If possible, the room should have a carpeted corner and a tiled wet-area with sinks; easy access to bathrooms and drinking fountains; and use of

Work Centers (Child-directed)

Child selects one or more centers and completes activities with minimal supervision:

1. Dramatic play: housekeeping, dress-up, blocks, trucks, puppet stage
2. Creative play: water, sand, clay, painting, woodworking, musical instruments, cooking
3. Active play: playground equipment, wheel toys, balls, jump ropes
4. Manipulative activities: puzzles, beads, small blocks, dominoes, measuring equipment
5. Communication activities: books, records, tapes, filmstrips, paper and pencils, typewriter, chalkboard
6. Instructional games: lotto, bingo, card games, board games (using these formats to teach various skills)
7. Subject matter activities: math, fine arts, science, social studies (perhaps organized around units)

Instructional Activities (Teacher-directed)

Teacher plans, selects group, schedules, and directs instruction while other children are engaged in activities in work centers. Time is scheduled so that all children receive some instruction in this manner, though not always daily. Teacher leaves flexibility for supervision of work center activities.

Examples:

- Group of six children working on beginning consonants (15 minutes, daily)
- Individual child reading primer level stories (10 minutes, three times per week)
- Group of eight children working on oral language comprehension of sequence (20 minutes, twice a week)
- Five children dictating stories for their own books that they illustrate and read (15 minutes individually, once per week)

Figure 5: Sample Activities Scheduled for First Work Period (1½ hours)

Story Reading Center

Contents: Books, tapes of those books, paper, pencils, and crayons

Activities:

- Look at pictures
- Listen to tape
- Follow tape with book
- Illustrate story (main idea or four-part sequence)
- Copy title of book and then illustrate

Alphabet Center

Contents: Alphabet cards, alphabet blocks, alphabet books, record of alphabet song, alphabet lotto, magazines, scissors, paste, paper and pencils

Activities:

- Match letters
- Pair upper and lowercase letters
- Place letters in sequence
- Make a dictionary of different written forms of each letter
- Write letters

Oral Language Center

Contents: Dress-up clothes, hats, puppets, masks, pictures

Activities:

- Role-playing (occupations, family activities, etc.)
- Dramatization of familiar stories, books, actual events, imaginary happenings
- Retelling of a story using props, pictures, book illustrations

Conversation Center

Contents: Rug with cushions or comfortable table and chairs, plants, framed pictures to make area attractive, interesting or beautiful object that is changed frequently, juice and cookies

Activities:

- Children are encouraged to come to center to sit, drink juice, and visit with other children and adults
- Conversation may be stimulated by interesting or beautiful object or current event brought in by teacher or children

Writing Center

Contents: Paper, pencils, crayons, felt pens, Old typewriter, Tape recorder, Stimulus pictures, objects, books

Activities:

- Children write words, sentences, stories about events, activities, pictures, objects, books
- Writing may be on any level: dictating to teacher, telling story on recorder, copying sentences dictated, writing or typing child's own story

Figure 6. Some Examples of Learning Centers for Kindergarten

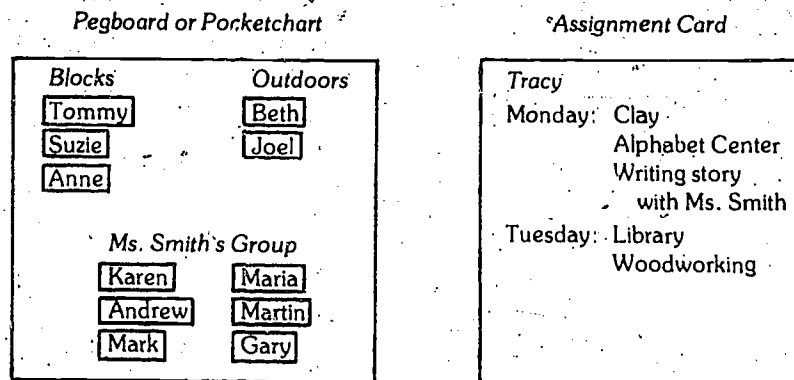


Figure 7. Sample Work Period Assignment Systems

an outdoor playground (fenced and visible from inside, for supervision). Ideally, an adequate supply of equipment; commercial toys, games, books, and instructional supplies and materials; and teacher-collected creative "junk" will be available for all types of activities such as those outlined in Figure 5. In reality, a minimum of these things is usually available. Use of parents to build and repair equipment (at home or in evening meetings) and enthusiastic saving and recycling of junk by teacher and parents can provide the necessary materials for work and learning centers.

Personnel needs are minimal for a program such as the one described. One teacher with an average sized class (25-28 pupils) could carry out the program as described. An aide available for preparation of materials and/or assistance during the work period would be helpful. If an aide is not available, the teacher should schedule regular volunteers (perhaps a parent or upper-grade pupil) on a rotating basis one morning per month. These volunteers could be trained to function as a paid aide might.

Parents are often quite willing to help, if asked. The teacher needs to offer a variety of tasks to fit parents' talents, interests, and time schedules. Some of the activities in which they might assist are:

Classroom (individual or small groups)

- Taking dictation in the writing center
- Talking with children in the conversation center
- Reading stories in the story center
- Playing games in the game center
- Teaching in an area of expertise

Classroom (larger groups)

Supervising group activities such as

Art projects

Sand and water play

Woodworking

Cooking

Outdoor play

Dramatization activities

Block building

Accompanying class on field trips and special activities

Classroom (preparation and clean-up)

Preparing, setting-up, cleaning-up

Juice and cookies

Art projects

Cooking

Special activities at home or at school during evenings or weekends

Making and repairing equipment

Preparing games, pictures (e.g., cutting, covering with clear plastic)

Saving materials and junk

Planning and implementing fund raising activities

Sponsoring school-community events

Conclusion

The schedule and related organizational needs for individualized instruction require the teacher to focus on individual pupils and to devote maximum time to planning and assessing each child's level of development. Arranging groups, time, space, and instructional personnel should be done as a part of this planning so that each child's individual needs are met within the typical group learning situation. Mastery of the organizational details for instruction allows the teacher to maintain the juggling act without thinking about organization and, therefore, to concentrate on the children and the content of the instruction.

Resources

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What is the Function of Kindergarten Reading Materials?

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Jean Dey
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Instructional materials can be useful in arousing interest and reinforcing prereading and early reading skills. They include such standard items as books, language or readiness kits, dittos, and word cards and continue through experience charts, puppets, paints, individual blackboards, and clay miniatures to the more unusual papier-mache maps, recipe booklets, and class suggestion boxes. The variety of instructional materials to acquaint children with reading is endless, bounded only by the teacher's imagination. At their best, materials not only teach the skill, but also make the learning fun and alive. Used poorly, they become busywork, turning the child off reading before he can know its joys. A lesson on visual perception (matching words) can become an engaging activity when a child dons his mailman hat and goes around mailing his valentine letters in his classmate's mailboxes. The child is learning a reading skill, but he is learning it with a smile. A creative teacher can provide him with that experience with little effort but with great success. Many varied opportunities to read can be provided to kindergarteners using appropriate instructional materials. This chapter discusses the function of instructional materials, suggests criteria for selecting and making them, and gives examples of materials teachers can make.

The Function of Kindergarten Reading Materials

Materials are used to teach a skill effectively. Materials are made and used for a reason, for example, to teach matching, following a sequence, or predicting outcomes. Materials never should be used simply to keep children occupied. Before making a game or other materials, the teacher should have specific goals and objectives in mind. The material is then prepared to achieve predetermined goals. Because a teacher has different individuals in her kindergarten each year,

Instructional goals and, consequently, the materials change. New materials are made each year as children with different needs and interests come into the room and as teachers learn more about helping children learn to read. Some older materials are highlighted while others are used to a lesser extent. Some materials are left at home for perhaps another year. Materials used in various kindergartens will also differ according to the range of abilities found in the district schools.

Once used, the material should be reevaluated. Could the child work with the material and arrive at the stated objectives? Did the child get too involved in the gadgetry, and miss the learning? Asking these types of questions about materials is important. Many trade books and magazines offer suggestions for teacher tested games and activities. The teacher should try the most promising ones, but she should also be ready to discard the duds. Did the activity help the child learn the skill? Commercially prepared kindergarten materials require this same close evaluation. Durkin (2:12) is rightly cautious when she agrees with Chall's statement that reading materials result more from convention than from research data, and that the claims and assurances made by various publishers are frequently ahead of empirical verifications. Teachers should be somewhat skeptical of claims made in advertising.

Materials should also provide for the development of systematic sequences of skills. For this purpose, many materials, at different levels of difficulty, should be made available. Below are two instructional teaching aids for developing a sequence of visual matching.

1. *The Little Rugs.* The object is for the child to distinguish similarities and differences in color, texture, and pattern and develop visual and tactile senses. The child matches loose textile squares with partner squares that have been mounted on tagboard.
2. *Letter Boxes.* The object is for the child to recognize similarities and differences, observe letter forms, match, and make comparisons. The child sorts letter cards into boxes with matching letters.

Both skills involve teaching perception, but the letter box activity requires a higher level skill. To teach a skill, some classroom materials should be very simple, and others should be so difficult that maybe only one or two in the class can do them. In any kindergarten class, the teacher has a wide range of individual differences to accommodate. There may be some children in the class who are reading, but there may be others who are unable to recognize any of the letters of the alphabet. Some children may have an attention span of only a few seconds, while others will be able to attend to a task for a long period of time. The teacher must decide whether to allow a child to select the

activity and form his own sequence or whether to withhold the higher level until the easier level has been mastered.

Materials must reinforce skills already taught. A large variety of materials is needed for this purpose. Books, puzzles, objects, puppets, paints, and crayons can all be used to give continued practice in whole class, group, or individual activities. They must be versatile in content, type, length, interest, and point of view so that children will have many different kinds of learning experiences with the same skill. Some children may need only a few practices to master a skill; others may take over forty trials. A variety of materials at each skill level will help to provide these extra practices and to maintain the child's interest.

Some materials should function as independent activities. After the teacher demonstrates and explains how to use a particular game or activity, the child should be able to use it without the teacher's constant attention. Materials should help free the teacher to aid children who need extra attention. Therefore, as a rule, materials should have simple, easy to follow instructions. Ideally, they should be self-correcting so that the child can get immediate feedback, and the teacher can perform a swift appraisal of the child's learning of the skill. The child should also have an understanding of the purpose of the task. For instance, in a letterbox task in which the child must sort objects whose names begin with various letters, the child should be able to tell classroom visitors why he put the rubber spider in the S box (because spider starts with the sound of S). Far too many times the writer has gone into a classroom and asked a child why he is doing a task and his response has been, "I don't know why I am doing this, but my teacher asked me to do it." It is very important for a child to comprehend what he is doing if he is going to learn from doing it. For a further discussion of the importance of the child's understanding of the task, read Smith's *Comprehension and Learning* (6).

Instructional materials can also be used as diagnostic tools. There are strictly diagnostic devices such as standardized tests, checklists, and anecdotal records which are useful to kindergarten teachers in analyzing a child's performance in readiness and reading. Instructional materials, however, provide several advantages. In the first place, the child is learning while his strengths and weaknesses are being diagnosed. His performance can be compared in different classroom situations. His interest in reading and his ability to perform a variety of reading tasks can be noted. Are some kindergarteners ready to read? Observing the child's interest and ability to use prereading reading materials will give the teacher an excellent idea. What type of reading instruction will be best

for him? Again, give the child instructional materials and watch what he can do with them. Giving kindergarteners many and varied opportunities with reading will help the teacher develop a program of readiness for those who need more background and a reading program for those who are ready to advance. Experience charts provide both of these. Abilities such as interest in reading, left to right orientation, word matching, remembrance of sight vocabulary, attention span, and comprehension can be observed and later recorded from experience charts.

Criteria for Selecting or Making Instructional Reading Materials

Instructional materials for kindergarteners must be geared to the kindergarten child and the particular children in the kindergarten room. Frequent, and unfortunately accurate, criticism of many kindergarten prereading and reading programs concerns the overreliance on drill and whole class pencil pushing activities. Too often, a commercial prereading workbook or kit plays the predominant role in introducing children to reading. Avoiding these pitfalls should be an important consideration in the choice of materials. Materials for kindergarten children should be attractive. The materials should cloak the concept to be learned in an appealing, colorful package. Remember, when the child chooses the activity, he chooses the material, not the concept. The goal should be to hook the child on the materials so he can teach himself. Class happenings can often be used as the basis for effective materials. New material can be related easily to something already known. The teacher builds upon the child's previous experiences and personalizes the new learning. For instance, Ronnie builds a tower and doesn't want it torn down, so Ronnie dictates a sign to his teacher saying, "This is my tower. Don't touch. Ronnie." This is hung by his tower and read by Ronnie to the class. After the class makes Easter mints, some children may want to copy the recipe so they can make mints at home.

Materials can be personalized for one particular child or designed around topics that the class is interested in and wants to study. Dinosaurs are a favorite topic for young children. Interested children could trace around templates of dinosaurs (hand-eye coordination), group dinosaur models from largest to smallest (classification), arrange in sequence pictures from a dinosaur story and find pictures of objects whose names begin like dinosaur (auditory discrimination). The creative teacher uses her imagination and possibilities are endless.

Manipulative materials are essential in a preschool setting. The preschooler is an active person. He needs and enjoys opportunities to manipulate things, to learn through his body, and, probably for the first

time, to use extensively the small muscles of his hands. With this in mind, teachers will find that many of their most effective teaching materials will be manipulative things. One kindergarten teacher, for example, found that a letter box game was her most effective material for teaching and developing interest in different letter sounds. Starting with an S box, she had the children bring from home small objects that begin with the S sound. The objects were dumped out of the box, examined, and put back into the box. As other boxes were made, the contents of two or more could be dumped together and sorted back into the appropriate boxes. Children enjoy this activity alone or with a friend. Because the learning materials are handled a great deal, they become bent and dirty, so the more indestructible they are, the better. They should also have easily replaceable parts. Laminators, thick cardboard, and clear paper are helpful in preserving materials. Taping edges helps prevent fraying.

Before a teacher orders from the catalog and/or hauls out the poster board and felt pens to make new materials, she should get to know her class. Remember that materials are made with goals and objectives in mind and that objectives, in turn, stem from the strength and weaknesses of the children. To assess what skills and abilities the children have, the teacher should give the children a variety of planned experiences with different prereading-reading tasks and carefully observe their performances. Children's interest in, comprehension of, and ability to perform the tasks are analyzed. Books by the following authors are recommended as having helpful checklists: Downing and Thackray (1), Ruddell (5), and Lamb and Arnold (3). From this information, the teacher can provide the proper range of prereading-reading activities for the children in her class. The teacher's observations also include a careful check of any hearing and vision problems. If she is in doubt about these, she should have the child referred to the school nurse. Too many children with vision and hearing problems go unnoticed until the later grades in school.

The teacher will want to have an interview with the parents, if possible. Many parents can provide good insights into their child's learning abilities, interests, and past experiences. Parental comments, combined with the teacher's own observations, will help the teacher understand the child better and develop a more individualized program.

In deciding what materials to make, the kindergarten teacher should attempt to complement the materials children will be using in the first grade. A child going into a heavy phonetic program may need different prerequisite skills from a child going into a language experience

program. Also, the vocabulary the first grade teacher uses in teaching her reading program can be useful to the children if they are introduced to it at the kindergarten level. The kindergarten teacher should carry on a continuous dialogue with the first grade teacher to find out the type of background experiences that would be useful for her children to have. Both teachers want to help children make a smooth transition from non-reading to reading. Exchanges of ideas, viewpoints, methods, and materials facilitate this smooth transition.

A Short Checklist for Materials

Below is a list of things to be considered when a teacher is buying or making reading materials for kindergarteners. Note that after the materials are used a while in the classroom, they should be evaluated and modified as necessary.

1. Are the materials prepared or selected for the particular group of kindergarteners in the class? To do this, the teacher must consider vocabulary, pictorial content, interest, length, and children's prior experiences with concepts and language patterns.
2. Does the material develop a required skill? For instance, "On completion of the activity with Letter Boxes the child will be able to discriminate the S sound."
3. Are the materials appealingly packaged? This includes such details as bright colors, pleasant textures, pretty or funny pictures, and catchy words.
4. Can the material be made or purchased at a reasonable cost? If certain materials are too expensive for the school's budget, could the teacher make something similar at less cost in the time she has available?
5. Are the materials durable? Do they have replaceable parts?
6. Are the materials self-correcting? When the child can get immediate feedback, the activity is more effective.
7. Do the materials have few and easy-to-follow directions so they can be used independently?
8. Can some of the materials be manipulated by children? Young children need to be actively involved physically with the materials.
9. Do the materials provide a balance between success and challenge? Learning prereading and reading skills should be a happy experience. The teacher should provide a learning climate and materials that make the child feel good about reading and about himself. When a teacher introduces a child to reading, she gives the child many varied opportunities at reading tasks. Commonsense tells us

that the child who is successful in these activities is more likely to want to learn to read. One of the major challenges in developing beginning reading materials of quality is providing a balance between success and challenge. The teacher needs to make the material easy enough so the child can use it successfully, yet challenging enough so the child learns something while using it. Materials that are too difficult, even though they are interestingly packaged, discourage children. Materials that are too easy often bore children.

10. Do the materials provide for sequential development? A sequence from concrete to abstract and from easy to difficult improves the chance of success.
11. Will the materials add variety to the classroom? If the teacher has ten board games, additional materials should be of other types.

Suggestions for Materials and Activities

Start with a good supply of books. There should be picture books for children to look at, books that act as resources for science and social studies projects, and books for story time with the teacher. A library or book center can be set up in a corner of the room. Suspend a sign from the ceiling, display book covers, place colorful bookworms on the wall. Make the area comfortable and inviting with rugs, pillows, chairs, and tables. During story time, for a change, invite grade one or older children, the principal, a parent, or a grandparent to read a story. (A list of recommended books for kindergarten developed by Norine Odland is listed in Appendix A.)

Some materials function throughout the year. Some materials are used daily as references, reminders, parts of the opening exercises, and aids in using the classroom. They are important and useful to the children, and therefore, serve as good starters to help them get acquainted with words and reading.

The helper's chart. This is a list of maintenance activities to be done in the classroom. Such jobs as group leaders, flag holders, blackboard erasers, plant waterers, animal feeders, and chair straighteners can be included with the job name and a picture clue (i.e., for a person elected to pass out milk, a picture of a milk carton). Some teachers list these on rectangular chart paper with pockets for children's names. Others use eye-catching themes such as an octopus or "helping hands." Every week, helpers may change and the class can go over the chart picking new helpers. In the process, a teacher can emphasize the reading aspect by pointing to the words as she announces each helper or asks different

children to read what the helper does. She can make various shapes for badges on which the job name is written. When the child does the job, he can find his badge and put it on.

The calendar. The teacher can transform one of her bulletin boards into a large calendar and the children can pin on the dates. Special holidays and school happenings such as Easter, a child's birthday, or a school cupcake sale, are noted on the calendar with words and pictures. A sample sentence is the following:

"Today is _____ (day) _____ (month) _____ (date) , 19__."

The class takes turns each day pinning on the date and reading the sentence. In connection with this, some teachers use words and symbols about the weather. "Today is sunny, rainy," or whatever. Similarly, some teachers chart children's birthdays on birthday trains or animal parades, with each car or animal representing a month.

Labels. Many teachers put labels on different pieces of furniture and materials in the classroom. For instance, *scissors* on the scissors box, *children's names* beneath coat hooks; and *puzzles, plasticine, and blocks* on the plastic tubs where they are kept. These labels help to keep the room in order, and the children have to pay attention to the words to put the proper equipment in the proper place. The labels are pointed out to the children and their meanings rehearsed many times during the year. Also, simple directions for feeding the gerbil, mixing paints, working with plasticine, building a model, and raising plants from seeds may be put on chart paper and placed around the room at appropriate times and places during the year.

Chart paper and felt pens. These are such simple materials but are essential for creating individual tutoring and small group learning involved in helping kindergarteners learn reading skills. Experience charts can be used to record the children's group experiences produced cooperatively by children and their teacher. Stories based on field trips, room pets (such as gerbils), science experiments, school plays, and funny happenings in the room are interesting and important to the children. Sometimes it is valuable to acknowledge the child who suggested a sentence for the chart. For instance, Janet said, "The turtle sure is slow." Also, rebus pictures, instead of words, help many children read the chart. Individual charts can be recorded by the teacher for those children who are interested. The teacher should also try charting nursery rhymes and repetitive songs like "Six Little Ducks" and "Row, Row, Row Your Boat." Children quickly learn to "read" these and their success encourages them to try other reading tasks.

Chalkboards. The teacher can use her big chalkboards for simple messages such as "Hi Boys and Girls." She should point to the words as she reads them and perhaps tell something important that is going to happen. For instance, she could say "Today someone special is coming to visit us." And, as she prints the word *policeman* on the board, she can point to it. Depending on the ability of her class, she can have someone read the word, tell only the first sound and ask the others to listen, or just tell them the word as she points to it. Children also like to use the teacher's chalkboard or the more easily handled little chalkboards. (If old chalkboards are taken down from a school, ask the maintenance staff to cut them into 12 inch squares. Kindergarten children always enjoy making letters and copying their own and other children's names.

The teacher can make individual games for children to learn reading skills. These can be used individually or as part of learning centers. They can be designed around special themes, holidays, or units of study. For example, in the dinosaur unit mentioned earlier, the teacher had the activity of finding a picture to put into the papier-mache *D* dinosaur. This same activity could stand by itself without the unit, could be transposed to Halloween with a *P* pumpkin, or become a mailing activity of sorting the pictures into five colorfully wrapped "mailboxes." Each mailbox would have its own letter name. Below is a list of examples of games which could be used in kindergarten to teach pre-reading and reading skills. References for other ideas for materials are listed at the end of the chapter.

1. To teach sequence, take a series of Polaroid pictures of a field trip and have the children put the pictures in order. Cut up books of fairy tales, have the pictures laminated, and ask the children to put them in some sequence. Put numbers on the back, so the children who know how to count can self-check this sequence for correctness.
2. To teach visual discrimination of letters, make a large cardboard "Katie the Kangaroo" with all those work pockets. On each pocket, put a letter. Give children a box of letters and have them put the right letter in the right pocket. This can be color coded on the back. The teacher may put a star chart next to the activity and put a star next to the name of the child who has completed the activity successfully. This activity can be increased in difficulty by changing from letters, to words, to short sentences.
3. Teach some action words in the gym. Hold word cards for *jump*, *run*, *walk*, and *skip*. Have the children follow with the actions.

4. To teach listening skills, use listening posts (tape recorder, plus ear phones). Record directions for making a simple art project, then have the children make it. Teach a song. Record a story and let the children listen to it at their leisure and draw or paint a picture from the story.
5. Encourage language and concept formation through the use of concrete objects such as small models, statues, and figurines. Create a farm, zoo, or village setting. Provide inhabitants, trees, hills, signs, and cars to populate them. Discuss these with the children. Give group of two or three children the chance to play with the villages and farms. Let them do the setting up and taking down. These activities are useful in increasing vocabulary and encouraging cooperative play. They are also rich sources for chart stories.
6. Teaching basic discriminations of color and classifying skills are useful to some children. Purchase Airwick containers. These are made of plastic in many colors and tints. The base is usually made of one color; the top has a matching spot of color. Collect two of each color and tint. Have the children match colors of two parts, group the tints of the same color together (e.g., bright yellow and gold group), warm (orange and yellow group), and cool (green, blue group).

Use centers frequently. The writing or word center stimulates kindergarten interest in reading. This center is used by children who would like to make a special card for Mom's birthday or a get-well card for Dougie, record a special message (e.g., "I need a shoe bag." or "Thank you for letting me stay up so late last night."), or learn a new word to add to their key vocabulary ring. Each child has her own hook or pocket in a large pocketchart for storing her own words. The teacher prints the words on manilla tag board, using two sheets of colorful construction paper with a piece of manuscript paper stapled in between for the cards and messages. The cards do not have to be square; try slim-jims, holiday shapes, and so on. Also, the center should provide drawing paper with a strip of manuscript paper at the bottom for a caption or perhaps the signature of the artist. In one classroom, the teacher read Leaf's book, *Safety Can Be Fun* (4). A few of the children then wanted to draw their own nitwits doing silly and unsafe things. Joe drew a nitwit playing with matches. He told the teacher to write "This guy could get burned up." The teacher could expand this activity into a class book. She would staple together between a front and back cover all the pictures with captions. The children then could suggest or vote on a

title. (This is a good time for the teacher to clarify the concept of *book title* for the children.) The above class picked *The Dumb Nitwits*. Several children drew pictures of incredibly dumb nitwits for the cover, and the book was put in the library for the class to read.

In the center, individual blackboards are useful for practicing letters. For variation, instead of chalk, let the children print with paint brushes and water. Samples of letters should be available for children to trace or copy.

Depending on the child, the amount written in the center may be as little as one word only. Later, the same child may expand his one word to short sentences. The teacher should be careful in the number of words she presents to the child, so she does not overload and overwhelm him with the immensity of the task. This really can become frustrating. With practice, some of the children may want to have the teacher spell the words for them as they write them down. The teacher has to be careful, however, in seeing that the child is printing the words properly. From these activities, the child will often begin to learn the sounds of letters when he is asking the teacher, "What is the first letter in boy?" as the teacher is writing it. Another child may say, "That word boy has the same beginning sound as my name, *Bill*." He may ask the teacher to write some other words with the same sound (ball, Betty, bell, and boat).

The key to this type of center is that the children who come to it do so on their own, as the materials they are working with come from their own interests. The children's own interests can be the best type of motivation. The teacher may subtly promote the center occasionally by saying something like, "Alice made a really nice picture today and she would like to read what she wrote about her picture to you." Or, if Bill seems proud of the way his key vocabulary word pile is growing, the teacher might suggest that he could read them to the class. Drawing attention to the center, every so often, will encourage the other children to participate. Changing the look of the center with new pictures or props will help, too. For instance, in the Fall, make a giant cardboard tree framing one corner of the center. On it, put pictures of owls writing or pin small stuffed animals reading words. At Halloween, change the center's look again. Perhaps the children could paint a spooky mural for the back of the center, and the teacher could have the class redecorate the tree with Halloween symbols. The word card for the symbol could be pinned below the symbol.

This is just one example of a reading-type center for kindergarteners. Other centers, such as puppet play, building and blocks, science,

numberwork, and games, also involve materials and activities designed to help children learn to read.

Include parent or teacher aides when possible. While most of the activities mentioned above can be done by the kindergarten teacher in her classroom, it is helpful to have the assistance of an aide. This is especially true in types of activities where the children are asking the teacher to write words or stories for them, or where the children need help in reading their stories. Many reading activities in kindergarten are small group or individually tutored and this frequently leaves the rest of the class on their own. With an aide this potential problem can be partially avoided. The aide can help or supervise some of the children while the teacher individualizes her teaching with others.

A Brief Summary

Every kindergarten child is unique and responds to reading in his own way. Each one needs to be shown by examples throughout the year how reading can be important to him. Some will become interested as the year goes by and may ask the teacher for help with reading activities. The teacher encourages and watches for these signs. She is also prepared to find quickly any child losing interest in reading in favor of water play or building blocks. She takes her cues from the children. Some children will want to learn to read and others may be reading when they first come to kindergarten. A variety of materials can provide alternatives to introducing various children to reading. There is no one way to learn to read. Each child is unique and responds to various reading materials in different ways. One may love to have his stories recorded so he can "read" them. Another may want to learn the names of his favorite trucks in a truck book. Still another likes to form letters out of plasticine. Each is growing in reading skills, but is doing it in his own way.

Kindergarten reading materials can and should broaden the possible avenues in learning to read. Overreliance on one type of material limits the possibilities. This is what happens in some kindergarten classrooms where reading readiness is thought of as prereading and, thus, is taught only during a daily twenty minute period with a reading readiness kit. Children can learn from kits but they need opportunities to select other materials with which they want to work. Their own choice of materials helps to create a learning atmosphere that is likely to be meaningful to them. A potentially more useful conception of learning to read is that readiness skills *are reading*, only in a very gross manner, and that with continued and refined practice, reading skills will gradually become more highly complex, varied, and meaningful.

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Appendix A

THE BEST IS NONE TOO GOOD—for the Kindergarten

Norine Odland, 1976
University of Minnesota

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