



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute
1978 Volume I: Language and Writing

A Language Arts Program With a Student-Centered Approach

Curriculum Unit 78.01.01
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General Orientation and Statement of the Problem

The teacher of language arts faces the very difficult task of creating in the classroom the types of conditions that make the use of language easy and natural. Students have varying backgrounds in understanding, appreciation, and use of language, and are different in intellectual, social, and physical maturity. The teacher must accept every student, helping him/her to develop greater ability in speaking and listening as well as teaching him/her to read and write.

The functions of language make it clear that the several areas of the language arts are not separate subjects in the school curriculum to be studied only for content, or for cultural or disciplinary purposes. Language, in its receptive and expressive forms, is a tool constantly needed in every walk of life. To teach students to use language functionally, respecting its social nature, one must call attention to the following:

1. Learning in the language arts, as in other areas of the curriculum, is essentially an individual matter. Mastery of skills comes, not through formal explanation and rules, but as a result of each student's individual activities, effort, understanding, and exercise of the skills.
2. The language the student brings to school from home provides the basis for the instruction he/she should receive. The early environment of the student must be respected and built upon.
3. Ability to use language in its expressive aspects and understand it in its receptive aspects is largely a matter of habit. Skill is acquired through imitation, direct instruction, and use in situations which are meaningful rather than from the teacher's explanations, learning of rules, or studying of information unrelated to use.

Each student possesses qualities which make him different from all other individuals. Most people consider this true, but observation in the "average classroom" indicates that many teachers apparently do not take the statement seriously or do not know how to make use of it in their teaching. Many teachers of language arts expect the same instructional procedures and standards for achievements to be suitable for all students. The

teacher faces a hopeless task if he/she expects to instruct the “class” so that all members will perform at the same level.

My assumption is that students learn at different rates. Students learn best by doing—by actively engaging in what is to be learned. If it is the goal of the teacher for students to learn the language, then they must be given the opportunity to use it. Students should use language far more than they customarily do in most classrooms today. If the goals of teachers are to help students learn to think, speak, listen, write, and read to the limits of their capacities, then the most reasonable premise is that students should be doing exactly that. The problem then is how to create a program (structure) that takes into account the unique qualities of each student and allows the student to become actively engaged in the use of the language.

The language arts program developed here will use a “student-centered” approach. Emphasis is on the active input and output by the students, on their speech production and their response to other people’s work. The goals of the program are not substantially different from conventional ones; the main departure is the means.

Principles and Purposes

Following are the main assumptions and beliefs that underlie this program:

1. Educational authorities generally favor “integration”—relating subject areas to one another as much as possible. Every student must learn that language skills are the tools by which he/she receives and transmits ideas and information about all of his/her daily activities, in school and out. These activities are the content around which a successful language arts program operates. Thus, language skills should be integrated into every area of the school curriculum at every opportunity.
2. A course of language learning is a course in thinking.
3. The material to be conceived and verbalized is, primarily, the raw stuff of life, not language matters themselves.
4. What a learner needs most of all is to perceive how he/she is using language and how he/she might use it. First this requires awareness and then information.
5. The role of the teacher is to help learners expand their cognitive and verbal repertory, starting with their initial limits.
6. The role of the student is to become capable of producing and receiving different kinds of discourse, compositional forms, points of view, styles, vocabulary, and sentence structures.
7. There are many patterns of learning and no one teaching method meets the varied needs of all students. It is vitally important to provide alternatives in the language arts program.
8. The teacher cannot tell a student how to think, but must provide him/her with the freedom, the encouragement, and the opportunity to do so.
9. Learning is not a passive, but an active process. A student should participate in a task rather than merely absorb information.
10. Students need to have successful experiences, but vary greatly in their levels and rates of achievement.
11. Setting goals and evaluating progress are the privilege and responsibility of the student, and

are essential to long-term learning. Teachers must not let a marking system distort evaluation.

12. Students learn from each other, through observation, imitation, and cooperative consideration of a mutually challenging task.

13. Learning is both positive and negative. When the activity does not fit the student's unique personal need, negative learning is certain to occur.

14. Intrinsic motivation makes students capable of meaningful self-selection and self-correction of appropriate learning activities.

During the development of this program special consideration was given to the following points by the teacher:

1. Think of the curriculum as an entity resulting from the interrelatedness of various subjects.
2. Build the program so that it takes into account the background and everyday life experiences of the student.
3. Provide opportunities for students to be directly involved in their own learning.
4. Begin to think of how you can shift emphasis away from the mere acquisition of information toward the process of learning.
5. Plan with students and develop with them acceptable choices that can be made in the classroom.
6. Begin to use texts as resource materials rather than as courses of study.
7. Talk with students. Help them to know that you care about them as individuals.
8. Spend some time observing students carefully. Try to identify some of the ways they learn.
9. Listen to students. Find out their interests. Build on these interests so that you develop a range of appropriate and worthwhile activities.
10. Find ways to vary time patterns in a day so that you can accommodate the diverse interests and learning rates of students.

The Program

This program will use a student-centered approach. The student will be actively engaged in using the language. The goal is to expose the students to a wide range of discourse. In effect, this program will use an action-response model of learning: the student speaks, writes, or reads, and others respond to his/her statement, composition, or interpretation.

Though suitable to all, this program is primarily designed for the student whom teachers have identified as “general,” meaning, all too often, that the school system has few specific programs to satisfy his/her educational needs. This is the same student who is sometimes identified as disadvantaged, though more often characterized as impoverished. This approach to learning is designed to provide the student with motivation for reading and writing, at the same time giving her/him appropriate materials with which to practice and reinforce his/her literacy.

The assumptions of this program are that the primary problem in teaching language arts, specifically reading and writing, is not caused by students’ intellectual deficiencies but by their lack of motivation. The program further assumes that a student’s desire to learn makes learning possible. The student’s attitude, therefore, is of much concern to the teacher.

This program moves from the traditional language arts curriculum with its fixed scope and sequence to a curriculum that is student-centered and open-ended. The assumptions of a fixed scope and sequence curriculum are that all students must be exposed to a set body of knowledge, that there is a basic amount of information to cover, that there are required skills which must be taught in a certain order, and that all students learn the same things in the same way, often in the same amount of time. The student-centered approach emphasizes the acquisition of basic skills, but at the same time stresses the growth of independent thinking, a sense of responsibility, and a humanistic view of the world.

The program developed here will not use a curriculum guide or a program of study based on a single textbook. Instead, the program will be structured around a broad selection of diverse materials, teaching tools, and techniques. As students explore reading materials, read their own compositions, share books, newspapers, and magazines, study themes, and are helped to classify and categorize information, they are participating in a flexible curriculum largely of their own making. Working with the teacher, the students will help the teacher shape the curriculum for the year. The teacher will provide inspiration and guidance for the students and create opportunities for the student to learn skills in a natural manner. The teacher will develop a range of opportunities to meet the diverse interests, needs, and developmental level of the class, and individualize each student’s rate of progression. The teacher sees to it that the students have opportunities for the building of concepts and the development of skills.

The success of this program relies on the teacher’s understanding and belief that each student learns at his/her own rate and internalizes experience in his/her own way. Respecting the student as an individual means that the teacher provides a variety of materials, makes them easily available, and helps students make choices. The teacher in this program is a diagnostician who watches students carefully, listens to them, and finds out about individual interests, abilities, and needs. He develops and suggests specific learning experiences based on these needs. He groups some students; he lets others work individually. He pays a great deal of attention to students’ feelings.

What the Program Will Do: Content Objectives

1. Move away from reading and writing as “subjects” and begin to think of them in broader terms as an important part of the total language experience.
2. Provide ways to help students find enjoyment in reading and writing.
3. Talk with students and find out what their individual reading interests are. Provide ways to help them enhance and extend their interests.
4. Provide a variety of reading materials for students and help them grow toward self-selection.
5. Provide the student with the fundamental reading skills in:
 - a. recognizing words
 - b. defining word meanings
 - c. comprehending and interpreting what is read
 - d. reading silently at speeds appropriate to the material and purpose of reading
 - e. reading orally
 - f. using books efficiently.
6. Encourage students to talk freely in the classroom. Help students verbalize experiences as an aid to learning.
7. Provide students with opportunities to share experiences and listen to each other.
8. Stimulate students to write meaningfully about a variety of personal observations, explorations, and ideas.
9. Make writing a natural, daily, continuous part of living in the classroom.
10. Provide students with an individualized approach to helping them with punctuation, grammar, and spelling.
11. Provide students with an individualized approach to reading and writing.

Special Note on the Teaching of Language Skills in This Program

As was stated earlier, the goals of this program are not substantially different from conventional ones; the main departure is in the means. This program is concerned with each student attaining the highest skill level possible. However, at no time in this program will specific skills be taught to an individual student, small group, or the whole class solely because the teacher feels that students need them. Skills will be taught only when the teacher, through observation and using a diagnostic approach, determines that a particular student or group of students are in need of a specific skill. When the teacher determines that students share a similar skill deficiency they will be grouped and regrouped according to instructional needs, interests, or difficulties. Grouping is a fast way to teach the same skill to a lot of students at the same time, when you are sure they need that skill. A skill will not be taught until the teacher is satisfied that the students have the necessary background to understand and use the skill.

Teaching Tools and Techniques to be Used in the Program

1. Student-Centered Reading—An Individualized Approach

In this program reading is taught both individually and in small groups, and it is the teacher who decides which is the best individual approach for each student. Teaching individualized reading can be as varied as the creative insights of the teacher and the diverse needs of the student. Self-selection is part of the process; students can choose from a wide range of reading materials. When he/she wishes, a student may read a variety of books and stories, concentrating if he/she chooses on mysteries, poetry, novels, history, science, or sports. From the beginning, the student is encouraged to browse, to pursue individual interests, to read for pleasure and for information. This is the “saturation” approach to reading. “Saturation” surrounds the student with newspapers, magazines and paperbound books, textbooks, literary novels, plays, poems, pamphlets, catalogs, legal documents, and religious books (see Appendix I). The only restraints placed on the student are that he/she must read something during a given period of time, be responsible for completing a reading report form, attend a student-teacher reading conference, and be prepared to share the book with a small group of fellow students.

An important part of this reading approach is keeping a record of the student’s progress. The teacher does this through general observation of behavior, through talks with parents, through a constant review of the reading report forms, a weekly review of the written record he keeps for each student, and, most importantly, through frequent sessions with the student (see Appendix II). During an individual reading conference the teacher and student discuss a variety of things. The teacher may be especially interested in the student’s growth in comprehension, or with the student’s attitude toward reading. What the teacher does in the conference depends upon what he knows about the student—his/her present level of progress and how he/she can be helped to grow in skills and attitude. For example, through a series of conferences, the student is helped to sound out words, to be aware of blends, to see configurations, to engage in various techniques for decoding the printed word. It is in the conference that the teacher has the greatest opportunity to give each student the necessary few moments that only he and the student can share. Often, this brief but crucial individual contact provides the student with the very impetus needed for future individual growth.

In this program group experiences are varied. Students will be grouped heterogeneously for the purpose of

sharing books that were read the previous week. The membership of these groups will change throughout the year. Students will be encouraged to form groups according to reading interests, either for information or general enjoyment. This could be done with or without the aid of the teacher. Upon reviewing the individual records of the conferences, the teacher will group students according to identifiable needs and abilities and will help them with specific skills. Once the skills are grasped by the students, the group will be dismissed and the process will be repeated.

Again, variety and individualization are the keys to this reading program. This reading program, like the language arts program presented here, takes advantage of eclecticism. It is the teacher's responsibility to know different approaches and methods and materials and to apply this knowledge to the individual student. An awareness of the different techniques that have been developed will better qualify the teacher to select an approach that will offer a student his/her greatest chance of success.

The general view taken in this program of "non-readers" or "poor readers" is that these students' problems result either from an inadequate decoding instruction or from personal characteristics such as faulty perception, poor motivation, or emotional disturbance that are general learning problems not confined only to reading and, therefore, not treatable solely as reading problems.

This program takes the position that a key feature of remedial work is an emphasis on decoding, usually involving explicit instruction in phonetics. To serve those students who are experiencing extreme difficulty with reading, this program will utilize the approach to reading developed by Caleb Gattegno, called *Words in Color*. It is important to note that phonics itself is no panacea: a mastery of decoding does not guarantee that a student will want to read, will pay attention to a text, or will learn new ideas. General learning problems of motivation, conceptual development, and emotional health must be remedied by a variety of means that are suggested in this program. Plentiful oral speech and dramatic expression, involvement in selecting books, playing logical games, and the general emphasis on meaningful reception and production of language are all parts of this program. The individualized reading approach developed may be most important for the poorly motivated or less successful reader. Freedom from fear, individual coaching, and help from classmates are all remedial aspects of this approach. As the reader continues through this program, it is important to remember that every writing assignment is a reading assignment and all the techniques suggested are to be integrated into a total language arts program.

2. Student-Centered Spelling — An Individualized Approach

This approach takes the position that an early, intensive instruction in sound-letter correspondences should establish a strong spelling base. The main issue is that, aside from knowledge of prefixes and suffixes, there is very little that can be taught that should not already have been taught in the initial presentation of the sound-letter relation. For those students who have severe spelling deficiencies, Caleb Gattegno's materials, *Words in Color*, will be used to provide these students with that base. However, the primary aim of this program is to develop the student's self-correction and self-diagnosis. Students take responsibility for spelling, but the teacher sets up processes that make this possible.

- a. The teacher occasionally classifies the kinds of errors a student is making and thus teaches him/her to diagnose them on his/her own. Some errors can be corrected by referring to the phonic regularities or by mentioning some rarer spelling pattern not covered by phonic rules. Some errors stem from faulty pronunciation, and some can be corrected only by memorizing the word. The main point is that students do not always make the same mistakes.

- b. From the very beginning, students point out errors to each other in the writing groups when they exchange papers. Proofreading in groups teaches each individual to proofread alone. This will be explained more fully during the presentation of the writing aspect of this program.
- c. Each student will have his/her own pocket dictionary. This program calls for abundant writing and the dictionary becomes a major help in learning to spell, because the student is constantly trying to spell out what he/she has to say. Along with the pocket dictionary, each student will have a personalized dictionary. This dictionary will be made by the student. The student will be encouraged to write words he/she needs and wants to know. The teacher will inspect this dictionary during the reading conference and writing conference. The teacher will feel free to write those words for the student that he/she can't manage. In effect, this dictionary will serve as a diagnostic tool. The dictionary will represent a cumulative record of the kinds of spelling problems the student has. Through observing the dictionary the teacher should be able to determine a spelling pattern and recommend the necessary activities for eliminating the particular problem.

Special Note on the Study of the Structure of Language

There is a difference between studying language and using the results of these studies to teach reading and writing. For example, it is one thing to study grammar and another to use grammar as a means of teaching writing. The obsession with grammar (diagramming sentences, breaking down sentences into parts which can be named) gets in the way of learning to write. It interferes with the development of a natural voice in writing and ease in reading. The study of language is fascinating and people should be aware, as much as possible, of the nature and development of the language they use the most. However, it is probably easiest to pursue the serious study of language after one has already learned to read and write with confidence and ease. The natural acquisition of skills of reading and writing (which should develop hand in hand) does not require the formal use of grammar and structural linguistics. For those students who the teacher feels are ready to engage in the serious study of the structure of language, specific lessons will be developed to meet those needs.

3. Student-Centered Writing Approach

The teacher's attitude should be informal, relaxed, unhurried, and supportive. In this program writing is rooted in speaking. The teacher encourages the student to be free and spontaneous about his/her conversation, and to be involved, literally, in talks and discussions. Students must have constant opportunities to talk in order to build a variety of experiences about which they can write. Just as talking and writing are related, reading and writing are also related, and in this approach they develop and grow together. Motivation to write is as important as having something to say. Students must write because they want to—either for the joy of it or because it is necessary to their lives. They will not truly write unless there is something for them to say. Student-centered writing uses the student's own personality, thoughts, and feelings in fostering the teaching of writing skills. This does not mean that a student should be stopped in the middle of a sentence to insert punctuation or to determine whether or not his/her statement is a "run-on sentence." It does mean that by

encouraging him/her to proofread, and by helping him/her change the order of words in a sentence, a teacher can functionally teach writing skills and still refrain from suppressing spontaneity and originality of expression.

There are many ways to care for the individual writing and language needs of a class. Here are examples of specific techniques and methods to be used in this approach:

- a. Tabulate errors which occur frequently in students' writing and then give instructional attention only to these errors. At one time you may tabulate one sort of error—punctuation, for example—and at another time, poor paragraphing.
- b. Keep a folder of samples of a student's writing; appraise these periodically for instructional needs.
- c. Group students for instruction, relying upon the students in a small group to help one another with language needs. Grouping will be done on the basis of needs, interests, ability to help one another, and so forth, rather than simply on "ability."
- d. Have individual students practice proofreading and self-editing, and follow this up with work on practice exercises which will help them eliminate errors.
- e. Reconsider the grouping from time to time. Remain flexible enough to shift students in and out of groups as each situation requires.
- f. *Individual student-teacher conference:* At least once a week a student will attend a writing conference with the teacher. This conference follows the same format as the reading conference mentioned earlier. The student will read aloud writing projects that he/she has done during the week. This writing will be placed in the student's individual folder.
- g. *Writing projects:* Every day during the school year each student will be required to complete a daily writing project. This project may consist of a short story, essay, poem, etc. During the writing conference this material will be shared with the teacher and the evaluation will be conducted by both. At least once every two weeks the student will share a writing project with a small group of students. Proofreading and editing will be stressed in the group sharing experience (see Appendix III).
- h. *Writing workshop:* The workshop will be a whole class experience. The workshop will be conducted twice a week. It is during this time that the teacher will provide the class with writing ideas that students can try on their own during the week and throughout the year. The workshop will provide the students with varied experiences in different forms of writing and an introduction to the different tools that are used by writers. During the workshop period the students will be engaged in the same activity. Toward the end of the workshop the students will be asked to read to the whole class what they have written (see Appendix III).
- i. *The journal:* Each student will have a spiral notebook that will be called a writing journal. The student will have to write in this journal daily. This may be done in school or at home. This journal, the student is told has only one reason for its existence: to provide him/her with a field upon which he/she can practice writing. The student will be required to write a minimum number of pages each week and he/she will be asked each Wednesday to turn in the journal to the teacher. The teacher will return the journal on Friday. Under no circumstances will the journal be corrected. It will be assessed for quantity, nothing else.

4. Language Games to be Used in This Program: Independent Activities

When students are not reading, writing or working with the teacher, they will be provided with a number of games of language and logic. Most of the students may choose the activities they wish to do. Others may be required to complete the games as an assignment. The following is a list of games to be used:

a. *Scrabble board games*: This game affords practice in using the dictionary, since the players must frequently consult an authority to find out if they are spelling a familiar word correctly or if a certain combination of letters creates some actual word or merely a phonetically possible word. The game is, of course, one way of learning spelling and vocabulary. A less obvious feature is that trying out various letter combinations can reinforce phonic understanding and flexibility in assigning possible sound values to letters.

b. *Anagrams*: Trying to make up words that can become other words merely by transposing letters.

c. *Unscrambling words*

d. *Unscrambling sentences*: Starting with a whole paragraph and unscrambling a mixed set of sentences leads to logical issues concerning which sequences of sentences can “make sense” and which cannot. The original sequence might sometimes be a story, sometimes a set of directions, thus creating different logical problems. Although the point is to reconstruct the original sequence, learning occurs in trying out different sequences and deciding which ones make sense.

e. *Crossword puzzles*

f. *Transformation game*: This game, which was developed by Caleb Gattegno, will be required for all students who are considered minimal readers. Of course, all students are welcomed to play the game. The transformation game—creating a new word from a given word—is one which the students will enjoy very much after they have become familiar with the rules. The object of the game is to go from one word to another through a succession of changes, using only four operations, and making only one change at a time. The four rules are: (s) substitution, (a) addition, (i) insertion and (r) reversal. Each step must produce a legitimate English word. For a more detailed description of this game see Gattegno’s book *Teaching Reading with Words in Color* .

Materials Needed for the Program

Each student will need the following: (1) pocket dictionary, (2) personalized dictionary, (3) a journal, (4) writing folder, (5) reading report form folder, and (6) pen, pencil and paper.

The classroom should have the following: (1) hundreds of paperback books, (2) history texts, science texts, etc., (3) typewriters, (4) tape recorder, (5) magazines and newspapers, (6) two unabridged college dictionaries, (7) thesauruses, and (8) overhead projector.

Special note on Classroom Setting and the Use of Visual Aids

The overall atmosphere of the room is very important. Books, magazines, journals, periodicals, and newspapers should be displayed in a neat and attractive manner. It would be very inviting to the students. On the walls and other convenient places, teaching aids should be displayed. Saturate the room with reading materials writing ideas, story starters, writing forms and poetry forms. The point is to make the classroom a learning tool. The following should be placed in the room as the year progresses:

1. *Word charts* for developing more precise vocabulary in describing objects. Students add to list as the year progresses.

Color Pattern

pale irregular

vivid flowered

apple parallel

Size Shape

tiny spherical

elephantine conical

microscopic round

Condition Sound

weathered cushioned

shining soft

dull harsh

Texture Taste

silky sour

rough bitter

furrowed buttery

Odor Motion

musty swirling

rancid rhythmic

fresh

2. *Word List to Help Describe Setting :*

<i>Climate</i>	<i>Feelings</i>
tropical	scarey
damp	feeling of fear
humid	an evil place
warm	danger
moist	spooky
oppressive	eier

Colors and Sights

darkish green
shadowy
brown slimy mud
canopy of trees

3. The rules of writing Cinquain, Haiku, and limerick should be displayed in the classroom.

4. *Story Starters*

- a. If I had \$1,000 to spend
- b. What Mother forgot
- c. Walking home in the rain
- d. An ideal place to be

5. *Make List of Words to Use*, i. e., words to use instead of "said":.

sobbed
declared
suggested
argued
cried
questioned

6. A chart describing personification, onomatopoeia, alliteration.

It is important to understand that the only time a teaching aid is displayed is after it has been introduced during a writing workshop.

The Structure

Independent Reading

1. Each student will read at least one paperback every eight days.
2. Upon completing the book, the student will fill out a reading report form.
3. As soon as the form is completed, the student will attend a student-teacher reading conference.
4. Once a week the student will attend a book-sharing group meeting.

Independent Writing

1. Each student will complete one writing project per day. This will be placed in the student's writing folder.
2. Once every two weeks the student will attend a writing group to share one or two of his/her writing projects.
3. Each day the student will do free writing in his/her journal. This may be done in or out of school. Every Wednesday the journal must be handed in to the teacher. The teacher will hand back the journal on Fridays.
4. Every student will participate in the Writing Workshop. The Workshop will be conducted on Mondays and Thursdays. The length of the workshop will be commensurate with the topic presented.
5. At least once per week the student will attend a student-teacher writing conference. In many instances this conference and the reading conference will be combined. The duration of this conference should be 10 to 15 minutes per student.
6. At the writing conference the student will also share his/her personalized spelling dictionary. This dictionary will be handed in every Friday and passed back to the student on Monday.
7. After the writing and reading conference the teacher will complete the student record form. Once the program and its requirements have been fully explained to the students, the typical day should follow this structure: as soon as the students enter the classroom, they should follow this schedule, which will be posted in the room.

Independent Activities

1. Independent reading
2. Reading report form
3. Daily writing project
4. Journal writing
5. Language games
6. Individual skill worksheets to be assigned to students by the teacher.

While the students are engaged in independent activities, the teacher will be engaged in the following:.

1. Reading and writing conferences
2. Small group instruction, i. e., *Words in Color* , etc.
3. Book sharing group meetings
4. Writing sharing group meetings
5. Working with groups of students on group projects, i. e., writing a newspaper, practicing a play, conducting, interviewing, etc.

Mondays and Thursdays the whole class will be involved in the writing workshop.

While the overall structure will remain the same throughout the year, the content will change according to the interests and needs of the students. For example, at the beginning of the year independent activities consist of six activities. By the end of the year this may be increased to include such things as typing practice, work with the tape recorder, and penmanship practice.

This structure is designed to foster students working independently and to free the teacher to work with individuals and small groups of students without interference. The Independent Activities are activities that do not require the aid of the teacher. It is hoped that this structure will force students to seek the aid and cooperation of fellow students.

Appendix I

The classroom should have hundreds and hundreds of books and general reading materials. A good portion of the books may be ordered using school funds; the remainder must be provided by the teacher, students, and friends of the class. The books should fall into the following categories: survival, American history, history and historical fiction, parents and young people, values, Black studies, death and how to handle it, people in conflict, women's studies, movies, sports, teens in trouble, crime, mythology, short story collections and anthologies, poetry and drama, media, adventure, teenage fiction, romance and family relationships, biography, jokes and cartoons, science and mathematics, self-help and "how to," world literature, plays, the classics.

Appendix II

The Reading Report Form

Name _____ Date _____

Title _____ Author _____

Type of book _____ Number of pages _____

Please answer the following questions and be prepared to discuss them with the teacher during your conference.

1. What is the book about?
2. Who are the chief characters?
3. Where does the story take place?
4. Has it a good plot?
5. Do you like it? Why? Why not?
6. Are the characters interesting? Why? Why not?
7. Do you like the way in which it is written? Give reasons.
8. Is the title well chosen? Why do you think so?
9. Does the beginning make you want to go on reading?
10. Did you skip any passages? What sort of passages were they?
11. Do you think other people would like to read it? Give reasons.
12. List the new words that you did not understand:

Student Reading/Writing Record Form

Name _____ Date _____

Reading conference _____

Writing conference _____

Inefficient reading habits

Habit of pointing

Physical habits:

Vision

Hearing

Voice and speech control

Body movements showing tension

Position of book, relation to eyes

Body position

Fluency of reading

Word-by-word reading Inadequate phrasing

Habitual repetitions Disregard for punctuation

Attempts to read too fast

Dawdling over reading material

Word recognition/Word analysis

Lack of basic sight vocabulary

Errors on easy words

Failure to use context clues

Ineffective visual analysis of words

Ineffective knowledge of visual, structural, and phonetic elements

Overanalytical:

Analyzes known words

Breaks words into too many parts

Uses a spelling attack

Unable to attack common words

Fails to get word meaning

Comprehension skills

Failure to get main idea

Failure to see important details

Inability to reproduce thought

Inability to make inferences

Inability to skim

Inability to outline

Inability to adjust rate to different

types of comprehensions

Inability to discuss reading

Inability to do elaborate thinking

Inability to organize topics

Lack of sense of paragraph organization

Lack of phrasing ability

Insufficient sentence sense

Insufficient experience to understand reading section

Inability to use index

Lack of skill in use of dictionary

Inability to alphabetize

Reading attitude

An aversion toward reading

Indifference to books (reads only

as directed, not on own)

A short attention span

Easily distracted

Idiosyncrasies in reading

Unnecessary vocalization

Overdependence on marker

Loses place easily

Lip movements in silent reading

Unnatural voice

Irregular eye movements

Head movements

Other types of reading deficiencies

No ear for sound

Omitting portions of sentences

Dependency on others to pronounce words

Poor word recognition of words similar in meaning

Eyestrain, evidenced by frowning, squinting, rubbing eyes

Poor work-study habits

Inability to express or sense feeling

Writing

Expresses himself/herself effectively and correctly in situations requiring written language proficiency

Understands and uses proper grammatical forms

Shows originality in his/her writing

Spells correctly in all of his/her written work

Writes legibly and with good speed

Strategy

Recommendation

Appendix III

Ideas for Writing Project and Writing Workshop

The following books will be used as resources to this writing approach:

The Whole Word Catalogue is the best collection of ideas, themes, materials, and strategies for developing writing I have seen. It can be obtained from the Teachers and Writers Collaborative, 186 West 4th Street, New York, NY 10014, or at The Teacher Center, Inc., 425 College Street, New Haven, CT 06515. The Teachers and Writers Collaborative also has available two other valuable curricula units and a newsletter full of practical ideas and diary accounts of particular classroom experiences.

A Day Dream I Had at Night by Roger Landrum and Children from PS 1 and PS 42 (Teachers and Writers Collaborative, Summer, 1971).

Imaginary Worlds by Richard Murphy (Teachers and Writers Collaborative, Summer, 1971) Some interesting essays on teaching writing, written primarily by writers who also happen to be teachers, and which emphasize the process of writing, rather than ideas or materials, are:

Somebody Turned on a Tap in These Kids, ed. by Nancy Larrick (Delacorte Press, 1971).

Writers as Teachers, Teachers as Writers, ed. by Jonathan Baumbach (Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1970).

Some workbooks provide interesting exercises in metaphor and fantasy. I have used the two mentioned here quite selectively, pulling out a page here, an idea there. Other teachers I know use the whole books.

Making It Strange, Books 1, 2, 3, 4, prepared by Sunectices, Inc. (Harper & Row, 1968).

Experiential English, Sandra Fluck (Glencoe Press, 1973).

There are many collections of writing by young people available these days. The ones I like best and use are:

The Voice of the Children, collected by June Jordan and Terri Bush (Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1970).

The Best of 40 Acres, ed. by Cyril James (40 Acres and a Mule, New York, 1972).

Miracles, ed. by Richard Lewis (Simon & Schuster, 1966).

Journeys, ed. by Richard Lewis (Simon & Schuster, 1969).

There Are Two Lives, ed. by Richard Lewis (Simon & Schuster, 1970).

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