IMPLICATIONS OF RECENT TRENDS IN THE TEACHING OF READING FOR AN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL LIBRARY

A THESIS PRESENTED FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS

by

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M.M.F.
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INTRODUCTION

The problem of this thesis is stated in the title. It is to discover, state, and evaluate recent trends in the teaching of reading in elementary schools, and to trace certain implications. Trends are the general tendencies or directions in the practices under consideration. Implications, in general, deal with findings from which it may be inferred that, if certain facts exist, some specific procedure or consequence should follow. Not all the implications of recent trends in the teaching of reading are within the scope of this study. The limitations are suggested in the title and developed more fully later in this chapter.

The elementary school, as considered here, refers to that phase of school life which begins with the first grade and continues through the sixth grade.

The term "teaching" is used to refer to more than formal instruction, and to include systematic stimulation and guidance of children so that they may grow through their own activities and experiences.

Reading has been variously defined by different writers and at different periods in history. At one time a narrow conception of reading prevailed. Not infrequently it was defined as the process of recognizing printed or written symbols, involving such habits as accuracy in recognizing the words that make up a passage, span of recognition, rate at which words and phrases are recognized, rhythmical progress of perceptions along the lines, and accurate return sweep of the eyes from the end of one line to the beginning of the next. The proponents of this view maintained that the comprehension and interpretation of meaning were not an integral part of the reading act, but involved supplementary
thought processes.

No one questions today the need for accurate, fluent habits of recognition. However, programs of teaching based upon the foregoing definition would be very narrow, and would provide primarily for the mastery of the mechanics of reading. This would make the very process of mastery more mechanical than it should be.

A broader view of the nature of reading is that it involves the recognition of the important elements of meaning in their essential relations, including accuracy and thoroughness in comprehension. This definition, while implying a thorough mastery of word recognition, attaches major importance to thought-getting. Those who hold this view believe that reading involves both the recognition of the meaning of words and phrases, and the fusing or organization of the various elements of meaning into a chain of ideas or an integrated system of thought.

The need is urgent today for greater accuracy, precision, and thoroughness in teaching reading comprehension among both elementary and secondary school pupils. It is imperative that the teachers of the so-called content fields, as well as those who teach reading, devote themselves with increased vigor to the exacting obligations involved in promoting efficient habits of comprehension. The fact should be pointed out, however, that comprehension, as the term is used here, provides merely for a grasp of meaning in the form in which it is presented. It does not include the reader's reaction to the facts or view apprehended or the discovery of their value or significance. It follows that a definition of reading limited to desirable habits of recognition and comprehension is also inadequate to meet current needs.

A third definition implies that reading is a much more inclusive process than either of the preceding. It assumes that the reader not only
recognizes the essential factors or ideas presented, but also reflects
on their significance, interprets them in relation to his own experiences
and his stock of ideas, evaluates them critically, discovers relationships
between them, and clarifies his understanding of the ideas apprehended.
In reading for a particular purpose, such as to determine the relative
merits of the views presented by two authors, the reader may select and
organize pertinent facts as he reads and may weigh values carefully. The
superior quality and unique advantage of reading of this type have been
discussed pointedly by Wheat:

The active selection, organization, and assimilation
of thought from the printed page in terms of the author's
purpose is coming to be recognized as a mental activity
that is not only more important but also of a higher
order. In the former activity, the writer controls the
thinking of the reader; in the latter the reader controls
his own thinking.¹

The writer takes the position that any conception of reading that
fails to include reflection, critical evaluation, and the clarification of
meaning is inadequate.

The elementary school library is thought of here as an organized,
usable collection of certain materials which would contribute to the
education of the child. These materials should include books of all
kinds, newspapers, periodicals, pamphlets, maps, slides, moving picture
films, a stereoscope with accompanying views, a globe, and other pertinent
materials to be added as they appear on the market. Most of these materi-
als should be accessible to children on various grade levels and should
be located in a room known as the library. They should be arranged and
catalogued in a manner such that they are easily and economically avail-

¹Harry G. Wheat, The Psychology of the Elementary School, Silver
able for all children who can make intelligent use of them.

The widespread and growing interest in the effective teaching of reading existing today and an increasing awareness of the values of an elementary school library have stimulated the writer to make this study. Moreover, daily personal experiences in teaching reading, courses dealing with reading taken on the Campus at Ohio State University, and a course in Library science taken under Miss Frieda Heller at Ohio State University led the writer to believe that such a study would suggest the breadth and significance of the work which teachers may do and the notable contributions which they may thus make to the enrichment of child life.

There are several reasons why a study such as this may be justified. One is the scope and complexity of conflicting philosophies of modern education, and the confusion of values which conflicting aims cause. A second reason is the existing consequences of a wide array of conflicting methods of teaching reading. A third reason is the recognition of a growing need for teachers to be aware of the pertinence of recent basic educational trends for the reading problems which we face today. A fourth, and final reason, is the recognition of the fact that teachers in all fields of education need to feel a deeper appreciation for the types of growth that may be stimulated through reading and the need for richer reading resources than schools commonly provide.

Data to support this study were gathered from such authoritative sources as are subsequently cited in the text and in the bibliography.

SUMMARY

The writer has attempted to state the problem of this thesis, clarify the meaning of all terms included in the title, explain why the study was made, justify the need for such a study, and indicate the sources of
data used.
CHAPTER I
RECENT TRENDS IN EDUCATION

Recent trends in teaching reading are, in part, a reflection and embodiment of recent trends in education. Therefore, before examining recent trends in teaching reading, it seemed necessary that attention be given to recent trends in education.

Under the old doctrine, it was the function of the teacher to assign lessons, hear recitations, and impose discipline. As psychology developed, considerable attention was given to a modified conception of the older theory of teaching and a minute methodology for each subject was worked out. The recitation was standardized into types and formal steps enumerated and described for the recitation in general. Wrightstone has admirably summarized the immediate principles of the older educational concepts which in turn illuminate the piecemeal nature of many improvements in traditional practices.

The practices of a standard-type school are founded upon an educational theory which has the following principles or hypothesis: First, the classroom is a restricted form of social life, and the children's experiences are limited therein to academic lessons. Second, the quickest and most thorough method of learning lessons is to allot a certain portion of the school day to instruction in separate subjects, such as reading, phonics, word drill, language, arithmetic, history, geography, health, and stories. Third, children's interests which do not conform with the curriculum should be disregarded. Fourth, the real objectives of classroom instruction consist to a major degree in the acquisition of the content matter of each subject. Fifth, teaching the conventional subjects is the wisest method of acquiring social progress.2

The theory of this practice goes back to a false psychology of childhood and only recently was disproved and replaced by quite an opposite theory.

Since about 1900 there has arisen widespread dissatisfaction with this formalism in educational procedures. Parker, Dewey, and others in experimental schools have demonstrated that children learn best when placed upon their own resources and responsibilities. They teach that the child cannot be educated by others: he must educate himself. "Education should enable the individual to educate himself when the time comes." To do this he must engage in activities in which he is vitally interested and which challenge all of his capacities, interests, abilities, and aptitudes. The child, instead of the teacher, becomes the focal point of discussion in modern education.

When defining education, Wheeler and Perkins state: "Education is the process of preparing human beings for the art of living." It would seem that there are two essential forces at work in the education of the child. One is environmental stimulus and the other is individual responses. If the stimulus causes the response, the response in turn causes the stimulus to change. These changes take place in the neural mechanisms of the child. Growth takes place as the result of this activity. Activity, therefore, becomes the key to growth because it is through activity that continuous changes take place both in the child's responses and in the environmental stimuli. Growth changes the functioning of the child's neural mechanisms and the natural results are purposing, planning, executing, and judging. The process is unitary and continuous and the growing process is the educative process. Education is, therefore, continuous growing-contin-

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uous changing in the child's neural mechanisms.

The child has the inalienable right to grow, for this is life itself. To do this, he must have a large degree of freedom to make changes, to plan, to discover, to try out, to experiment, to reach out and to judge for himself the degree of success of his own activities. Wheeler and Perkins state:

Growth is spontaneous only in the presence of opportunity; there is incentive only when there is something in which to be interested; there is potential only where surroundings provide the conditions for potential. The child is equally helpless, independent, and aggressive. Therefore, it is the job of the parent and the teacher to stimulate and to guide the child's activity and growth, rather than to arbitrarily dictate and mechanically administer a system of education.

From among the newer educational trends and practices the following have been selected as consistent with the foregoing philosophy and significant for education today.

1. A trend toward a functional concept of maturation levels.
2. A trend toward placing emphasis upon health, physical and mental.
3. A trend toward freedom and responsibility.
4. A trend toward learning by doing.
5. A trend toward individualization of instruction with a full recognition of the need for developing social sensitivity, through group activities.
6. A trend away from deadly uniformity and extreme standardization in organization, administration, and supervision.
7. A trend toward placing emphasis on functional control as well as verbal mastery of the tools and facts.

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5 Ibid. p. 13.
8. A trend toward a concept of education as guidance. Each of these trends will be discussed in turn on the following pages.

1. A Trend Toward a Functional Concept of Maturation Levels.

The nature and processes of maturation are seen to be basic to any understanding of the individual and hence, to the development of instructional practices. The Ohio State Department of Education in setting up a curriculum for Ohio states that: "Genuine thinking demands that children face real problems in keeping with their maturity."\(^6\)

The concept of failure is replaced by the theory of continuous progress at a rate commensurate with the rate and level of maturation of the learner. In keeping with this, the Faculty of University School at Ohio State University published a revised Child Development Study of how children develop from the age of three to the age of eighteen. It brings together the results of some of the most significant research in child development supplemented by staff observations.\(^7\)

It would seem that the problem of education becomes a problem of directing growth, and the technical name for organic growth toward maturity is maturation. Wheeler and Perkins explain that:

> The child is born with practically no intelligence, with the lines of growth by now partly fixed and partly flexible. While this growth comes from within, necessary energy comes from without, whether the growth be physical or mental.\(^8\)

In their discussion of *The Child and His Curriculum*, Lee and Lee

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\(^6\) Living and Learning with the Children of Ohio. Curriculum Bulletin Number 6. The State Department of Education, Columbus, Ohio, 1944. p. 11.

\(^7\) How Children Develop. University School Faculty, Series No. 3 Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio, 1946.

indicate that consideration for maturation is one of the basic conditions of learning. It is most efficient to start with the child where he is and build from there. To attempt to teach beyond the child's maturation is something akin to an attempt to cultivate fruit before a plant has flowered, or like trying to build an upper story of a skyscraper without a foundation. There must be a sound basis of learning and experience all the way up to the level on which we wish learning to occur in order to have efficient results:

2. **A Trend Toward Placing Emphasis Upon Health, Physical and Mental Health** is universally accepted as a cardinal objective of all education. "Although not unique to democracy, vigorous physical and sound mental health are characteristic of democratic living." Health instruction in the experimental schools tends to build the program around activities often correlated with science or social studies as well as units of work more directly derived from aspects of health and hygiene. In physical education the newer trends are toward activities of a free sort and toward emphasis on play. In the primary grades, for instance, the creative dance is emphasized; in the upper elementary grades games and sports make up a major part of the program, whereas, in conventional schools the physical education program tends to be formal in nature, and places an emphasis upon gymnastic exercises and skills with games and sports as incidental factors only.

The problem of mental hygiene and emotional tranquillity is also a focus of attention, and newer instructional practices are aimed at removing causes of emotional unbalance and tension. Brim reminds us that:

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10 *Living and Learning with Children of Ohio*, op. cit., p. 11.
Education's task is to raise the growth potential. This it can do by insuring good physical health, emotional poise, the absence of repressions and fears, and by providing a stimulating environment that develops motive.  

Other factors that influence emotional poise may be mentioned. One is the outlook of the teaching personnel. If the teachers are happy, alert, and healthy, they will do much toward instilling the same qualities in their charges. Irritability, lack of interest, and a pessimistic outlook are equally contagious. The type of discipline in the school as a whole is important. Whether it is repressive, is lacking in control, or is firm and reasonable in giving direction makes a great deal of difference in the child's personality. Ryan, in his book, Mental Health Through Education, states:

Some of the more serious of the obstacles to mental health and sound education are:
- Grades and promotions
- Recitations and homework
- Examinations and marks
- Discipline

In keeping with this Zirbes says:

There can be no doubt of the need for substitute procedures in the case of such problems as over-anxiety concerning marks, grades, and promotion. They are under criticism because they have diverted effort and attention from worthwhile ends. They are at the bottom of dishonesty to secure marks and to pass examinations, of subterfuges used to get by. The demoralizing effects of competition on the children who are most in need of encouragement and least able to compete fairly for marks and promotion are only a part of this story.

A third very important factor in this category is the curriculum. A free
and active curriculum, involving ideas and materials interesting to the child and within his comprehension, helps to develop a happy, secure, and useful type of person.

During the very years in which children should and could learn much by exploring their environments and by making such experiences the point of departure from constructive planning, purposeful reading and doing, they are put at verbal, abstract tasks and pre-planned assignments which have no intrinsic meaning for them, and which must, therefore, be bolstered up with marks, grades, and devices to stimulate effort and interest artificially.\(^1\)

The formal rigid procedure dependent largely on memorization of facts is apt to kill interest and initiative and because much of it is beyond his comprehension, it leads to a sense of inadequacy and insecurity. Thus, personnel, general control, and the curriculum are definite factors in the child's mental health and since mental health is a large factor in physical health, they must be considered.


Freedom and Responsibility are important words in modern education. The Curriculum Committee for the schools of Ohio stated:

"Freedom and responsibility go hand in hand. It is well to keep in mind the fact that schools can help create responsible citizens only if children have opportunities to accept responsibility. Unless they are growing up in classrooms in which there is freedom, boys and girls are robbed of the chance to become responsible for themselves. The successful school curriculum is one through which pupils become increasingly capable of caring for themselves.\(^2\)"

The aim is to put the child "on his own" as much as possible, give him freedom and hold him responsible. This means that the home, classroom, and

\(^1\) Laura Zirbes, *op. cit.*, p. 167.

\(^2\) *Living and Learning with Children of Ohio*, *op. cit.* p. 11.
the school should be as free as possible from unnecessary and unsocial restraints and exterior compulsions. Hockett and Jacobsen believe that:

The teacher who removes restraints without simultaneously helping children to grow in insight and in the disposition to accept larger responsibilities for their own conduct is harming rather than educating them.\(^{16}\)

The children feel the school to be theirs. They help make the rules which govern their own academic and social conduct. Hence, they have an intense loyalty to their school and to the rules which govern it. In this same discussion Hockett and Jacobsen say:

The development of standards and regulations always should be a cooperative undertaking of teacher and pupils working together. If pupils take part in formulating the standards and procedures for their conduct, they not only will understand and value these standards but also will be disposed to live up to them and to resent the failure of others to do so.\(^{17}\)

Children need not only freedom in matters of discipline, but also freedom of mind, and freedom of spirit. Authorities in education seem to agree that these freedoms stabilized by responsibilities adjusted to growth levels are embodied in the newer educational trends.

4. The Trend Toward "Learning by Doing."

Much emphasis is being placed in the newer trends of education on learning to do by doing, that is, learning through self-activity; in a word, expression rather than repression; learning through forming one's own purposes, doing one's own planning, executing, and judging. The process of learning is experiencing which means doing and undergoing anything which changes the organism. Bode sums it up by saying: "Stated in positive


\(^{17}\) Ibid, p. 24.
terms, learning is a process by which experiences are changed so as to become more serviceable for future guidance."  

Each experience utilizes meaning from previous experiences and in turn adds new meaning to them. This is what is meant by reconstruction of experience. The process is continuous and interactive. Interaction with other individuals and with the environment is the essence of the process. This is the type of learning referred to by Hockett and Jacobsen when they say:

The school cannot neglect or short-circuit this universal method of learning. It can guide the child in each step of the experience process. It can lead him to be more and more critical of the purposes he forms and increasingly aware of their implications for himself and others. It can aid him in planning wisely and executing effectively the various steps and procedures involved in fulfilling his purposes. It can help him to become aware of possible alternatives and to be astute in making choices in each step and aspect of an experience. But it cannot experience for him, and must not take from him, any of the steps and processes necessary for his development.  

The implications of the newer principles of learning are revolutionary. They have had, in fact, revolutionary effect upon instructional procedures. The school becomes an active factor in sustaining and continuing the integration of the learner.

The curriculum heretofore largely concerned with the cultural heritage, and almost divorced from the problem of the community, now tends to unify these two. The subject matter and the problems of study originate in the life of the learner and the community. The organized subject

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19 Hockett and Jacobsen, op. cit., p. 8.
matter of the past is drawn upon as needed to give insight into current problems.

Learning activities originate in the purposes of the learner. Instruction is aimed at developing independence in the use of sources, in the making of decisions, in the choosing of values, and in the solving of problems. The child's need for learning to recognize and state problems, his ability to locate and organize materials of solution, all will become concerns of instruction. The making of choices on the basis of fact and creative thinking instead of upon prejudice, tradition, emotion, or authority become important outcomes.

5. The Trend Toward Individualization of Instruction with a Full Recognition of the Need For Developing Social Sensitivity Through Group Activities.

Societies have not evolved by an accumulation of individuals. Too be sure, populations have increased but the increase does not furnish the law of social evolution. The social group is a fundamental phenomenon in the evolution of mankind. The history of man is the history of tribes, nations, races, cultural groups, to which individuals have always been subordinate.

The newer and wider concept of individualization rejects the traditional common standards of achievement for all, and even the notion that three or four different standards of achievement in terms of ability groups will suffice. The new program takes its cue from the concept of democracy that holds that the maximal growth of the individual can best be attained through a situation in which the individual is stimulated and encouraged to make his unique contribution to common ends and purposes without raising the question as to the relative values of the contributions as

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20 Wheeler and Perkins, op. cit., p. 25.
formerly compared, ranked and graded by reference to some fixed standard or set pattern.

The progress of humanity consists in variation forward, not in repetition of type. Modern schools allow for differences in personality, encourage them and provide a rich environment in which the native ability of each child may blossom and bear fruit. In their discussion of the individual, Wheeler and Perkins state:

"Individuality of a given person emerges as one totality from the human nature pattern around it; it is figured, so to speak, upon a ground of human nature. The emergence of personality in the individual----is an invention process. This invention process is called growth."

A school in which each pupil is given opportunities to work out his own salvation under the guidance and encouragement of an understanding teacher, where the rights of all are mutually respected in good will, is a fertile training spot for the development of individual growth. In their Tentative Report, the Committee on Philosophy of Education referred to this as follows: "A culture which does not provide an adequate variety of experience, or which makes inevitable qualitatively inappropriate experiences, will warp and twist growth, stunt personality."

Ryan points out that:

Individualization in education has been abundantly demonstrated, not merely in the conventional school subjects, where it is subject to abuse, but also in the newer programs of certain of the experimental schools, where skillful, resourceful teachers have shown that, if there is a determination to act on the conviction that children are individuals, the principle of individual differences can be applied successfully in everything the

21 Ibid, p. 23.

Individual differences are priceless. In a democratic and progressive social group, individual differences are not to be ironed out but fostered.

A society based on custom will utilize individual variations only up to a limit of conformity with usage; uniformity is the chief ideal within each class. A progressive society counts individual variations as precious since it finds in them the means of its own growth. Hence a democratic society must, in consistency with its ideal, allow for intellectual freedom and the play of diverse gifts and interests in its educational measures.

Life would be unbearable either within or without the school if all persons were exactly alike. The experiences of any group are enriched just to the extent that each individual is enabled to make his unique contribution to the life of the group. Rugg says: "We shall need to produce multitudes of individuals."

The very essence of what America stands for was founded on the rights of the individual. The following words of the late Franklin D. Roosevelt reveal the two-fold nature of the original American tradition:

I believe the individual should have full liberty of action to make the most of himself; but I do not believe that in the name of the sacred work, individualism, a few powerful interests should be permitted to make industrial cannon fodder of the lives of half of the population of the United States.---I believe that our industrial and economic system is made for individual men and women--and not individual men and women for the benefit of the system.

23 W. Carson Ryan, op. cit., p. 53.
26 Reprint from Rugg, op. cit., p. 84.
Here, then is the characteristic American interpretation of democracy. Each man is free to make the most of himself, but every man's freedom leaves off where every other man's freedom begins.

6. The Trend Away From Deadly Uniformity and Extreme Standardization In Organization, Administration and Supervision.

"Education, which is guided living and which aims at intelligent self-direction, must likewise be dominated by intelligence."27 It's form and processes must be flexible rather than mechanical. Uniform objectives, uniform grade standards, the same textbook and lessons for all are examples of the traditional concept. In the traditional school the child is expected to find his place in a fixed and common curriculum. Rate might be changed to some extent or content added or subtracted, but the type and goal are common and fixed.

 Authorities in modern education agree that flexible standards, a flexible curriculum, flexible organization, flexible processes are essential if children are to realize fullness of life and contribute maximally to the enrichment and progress of the common life. This flexibility implies a new freedom on the part of the teacher as well as the pupils, for it is useless to talk of creative self-expression for children if the teacher is regimented and forced into a lockstep system. In addition to a flexible system, there must be democratic and creative administration and supervision, leadership that liberates and builds vision and power for intelligent child-guidance on the part of the teacher. A mechanical and automatic solution of an educational problem is impossible.

7. The Trend Toward Placing Emphasis on Functional Control

As Well as Verbal Mastery of the Tools and Facts.

Modern schools approach the problem of developing skill by means of experience in a child world with a child-sized environment. These schools show an understanding of child nature, with its inherent hunger for experience and expression. Child initiative and child performance in real child-life situations are the fundamental criteria. Abundant opportunities are provided for creative activity in social cooperation.28

Skill cannot be attained by the "laying on of hands," by isolated drill, or by wishful thinking. Skill may be attained by practice in functional variation. In his discussion of "Developing Command of Skills" Caswell indicates that:

(1) If practice is to be rewarding, the learner must see that the skill sought has functional value for him in meeting situations with which he is concerned.
(2) If the skill is to be integrated into general behavior, practice must be in the setting of the complete activity in which skill is sought.
(3) If a high level of competence is to be developed, the skill must be practiced under many varying conditions and in relation to diverse purposes.29

When examining language textbooks on the market in 1941, Salt found an indication that the authors of the textbooks believe implicitly that exercises consisting of copying and drill on isolated skills of writing will without further concern result in transfer in the use of these skills to the writing of children.

Most of these exercises have not come as a result of any felt need on


the part of the children but merely as another routine lesson or arbitrary task. When pursued in this manner the lack of concern reduces the intensity of each impression to such an extent that numerous repetitions, even when spaced, have slight cumulative effect. Dewey tell us that: "the isolation of subject matter from a social context is the chief obstruction to securing an intelligent use of it."31

Salt32 found that when some phase of writing is taken out of its natural context and isolated for drill purposes, there seems to be little guarantee that the individual having the drill will use the particular skill correctly at a time of real need, unless that practice has been done by the student with genuine concern for the mastery of the techniques involved to serve his own needs or uses. Salt presented data to show that: "Children who are educated through a guided experience curriculum in which they write when there is a genuine need, find it necessary to do many types of writing."33

Even when the textbook attempts to have children write many of the same kind of things, it does so in terms of specific aims and imposed requirements, rather than as the result of the related educational values that arise in group living, and the interaction of a cooperative teacher who plans with her children in terms of individual needs.

Salt concludes that:

Instead of a textbook for everyone to use there seems to be a very evident need for handbooks or reference books which children may use to locate the material which will help them solve their language problems as


32 Salt. op. cit.

33 Ibid., p. 50.
they arise.---The textbooks lack the qualities which flexible, functional language learning requires. Nor do work books give any promise in this respect. They are exercise books which supplement lesson books, but they divert time which might well be used for functional writing to formal, repetitive practice of unrelated skills.  

The above may be applied to all phases of functional learning, including reading.

Dewey in his discussion of "The Nature of Method" states:

When the subject matter is not used in carrying forward impulses and habits to significant results, it is just something to be learned. The pupil's attitude to it is just that of having to learn it. Conditions more unfavorable to an alert and concentrated response would be hard to devise. Frontal attacks are even more wasteful in learning than in war.  

This does not mean that students are to be seduced unaware into preoccupation with lessons. It means that they shall be occupied with them for real reasons or ends, and not just as something to be learned. This is accomplished whenever the pupil perceives the place occupied by the subject matter in the fulfilling of some experience. This is what is meant by functional learning.

Children do not need to become walking encyclopedias. Access to facts are at every hand; in libraries, in the school, and in the home. Children are trained in research methods, by learning how and where to find the facts they need and by acquiring the ability to gather and formulate information which they really seek. As a result, they are possessed of something far more pervasive than specific drill outcomes, and more valuable than an undigested mass of knowledge, even if this latter could

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34 Salt, op. cit., p. 139.

be successfully acquired. This need not be a hit and miss affair.

Functional learning is seldom that.

It may be pointed out that the modern programs of education are achieving equally as good or better results than the more traditional programs in developing the so-called fundamental skills. Wrightstone recently summarized a large number of studies on this point and concluded:

Despite the fact that the basic skills, as they are taught in the modern school have become more elaborate in character and have less aggregate time devoted to formal skill instruction, the accumulated evidence shows that growth in the basic skills equals or exceeds the standards achieved in the older and more traditional curriculum. 36

Functional learning is both more valuable and more joyous. It uses life situations and real purposes. It gives impetus to effort and insures carry over to life situations.

8. The Trend Toward a Concept of Education as Guidance.

Guidance, both general and specialized, both special and personal, is found upon all levels of education. Betts reminds us that: "In theory, guidance as now conceived applies at all school levels and includes such direction of each child as may be necessary to secure acceptable physical, mental and social adjustments." 37

Emphasis varies with circumstances. The concept of guidance is, perhaps, just another way of expressing the clearer and finer insight into individual differences and developmental values. Intelligent living is wise choosing, and, since individuals and situations vary, it is always a unique problem.


Only a liberalized and disciplined mind ever on the job in a flexible organization is adequate to meet the challenge of individual differences or the problems of guidance. Life is too complex, too fluid, for us to hope to solve any of its vital problems by mechanical pressure. According to Brim:

Guidance is replacing the principle of freedom. The present child, his disposition, his interests, are looked upon as products of experience not the gift of the gods. They seek to reconstruct and enrich the child life by the same process, i.e., they in general observe the principle that a change in the child should be secured through changing the environment rather than through request or command.

Summary

In this chapter the writer has stated eight recent trends in education which seem to be significant to the process of education for the child of today. It will be the purpose of the following chapter to discover what effect these trends have upon the teaching of reading in the elementary school.

38 Brim, op. cit., p. 11.
CHAPTER II

RECENT TRENDS IN READING

"Reading is basic in all learning where printed material is used." Ability to read not only marks the difference between the literate and illiterate person; it is also an absolutely necessary basis for other subjects in the curriculum.

It would be extravagant to say that the schools have made a concerted attack upon the reading problem or that any one method of development has been accepted. There are areas of our country which are still committed to the sudden and immediate introduction of the primer at the very beginning of first grade work. The methods used in teaching reading include the phonetic, the look-and-say, the sentence-phrase-word, and the method which broadens and extends language development and proceeds to teach children rather than to teach reading.

According to Zirbes:

By this method we tend to treat reading as a variety of experience, to be encouraged and guided; as one of the essential modes of interpreting communications and records of experience, as a way of appropriating the thought and expressions of others who are far or near in time or space; and thus we redeem it and assign it an educative role to which mass methods could not hope to aspire. We tend to guide it and use it throughout the school day and let it function early as a means to worthwhile ends rather than an end in itself. 

To define stages of educational development by setting dates by way of identification is a dangerous procedure as changes are going on slowly.


below the surface at all times. In attempting to designate periods in the
development of reading in our schools, this reservation should be kept in
mind as the following are suggested: the stage of learning-to-read, from
the beginning of our Country to 1925; the stage of reading-to-learn from
1925 to 1936; the stage of reading as a phase of social development from
1936 to the present.

For many years in American elementary schools it was assumed that
the beginners in the first grade were to be taught reading regardless of
any factors which might seem to interfere with the process. Once letters
and sounds were learned, reading became a matter of word recognition; that
child was considered a good reader who could recognize instantly from flash
cards some one hundred words during his first term in school. That he might
not have the slightest idea what the words meant, that he might have missed
the experiences which could have made those words meaningful to him, that
he might memorize whole pages of sentences made up in the synthetic manner--
all this meant little to the primary teacher of that period. Reading was
then defined as the ability to call words. Apparently, many primary teachers
today have not progressed very far from those primitive views on reading.

McKee is frank about the matter:

Recent evidence shows that verbalism--mere word recogni-
tion and word production--is prevalent in much of the reading
that goes on in school, and that teachers are easily misled
into accepting the child's oral or written reproduction of
word forms as valid measures of satisfactory understanding of
what he has read. Additional evidence shows that too many
children do not know the meanings of words, that they do not
realize their deficiencies, and that they make little, if any,
effort to discover the meanings of unknown words.41

Educators agree that the publications in 1925 of the Twenty-Fourth

41 Paul McKee "The Teaching of Reading," Thirty-Sixth Yearbook, National
pp. 277-78.
Yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education was a colossal event in the history of the development of reading in elementary schools. Part One of the Yearbook was entitled Report of the National Committee on Reading, and its effect was to revolutionize the teaching of reading wherever intelligent school men and women were in positions to carry out the new ideas. The essence of this new philosophy of reading may be summed up viz:

From the Adult Standpoint:

(1) That reading is nearly universal in the United States.
(2) That reading (as a phase of the language arts) is a form of social behavior, permeating most of our daily experiences.
(3) That most persons read with definite motives for reading.
(4) That the primary motives in adult reading are reading to obtain information and to secure enjoyment.

From the Teacher's Standpoint:

(1) That reading should enlarge and enrich the child's experience.
(2) That the reading program in school should develop a life-long interest in reading.
(3) That the reading program should develop desirable habits, skills, and attitudes.
(4) That reading is a complex of many specific abilities, each of which must be taught if success in reading is to be attained.
(5) That reading is not an end in itself, but the means to an end—the realization of increased power and enjoyment in everyday life.
The reading program was conceived of as being divided into four major parts:

1. Teaching the art of reading.
2. Using reading to enrich the day's work.
3. Diagnosis of specific difficulties.
4. Remedial measures to remove disabilities.

The Yearbook devoted considerable space to the idea that reading is a complex of many specific abilities. This was revolutionary in itself in view of the fact that, even then, there were thousands of American school-rooms where the prevailing reading instruction consisted of "pouring in" and "drawing out." This report points out that:

The primary purpose of reading in school is to extend the experiences of boys and girls, to stimulate their thinking powers, and to elevate their tastes. The ultimate end of instruction in reading is to enable the reader to participate intelligently in the thought life of the world and appreciatively in its recreational activities. This objective emphasizes the importance of the content of what is read and attaches new significance to it. \(^\text{43}\)

The appearance of the Thirty-Sixth Yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education in 1937 was another milestone in the history of teaching reading. Part One, The Teaching of Reading: A Second Report is primarily a record of the development of instruction in reading during the twelve years which had elapsed since the appearance of the Twenty-Fourth Yearbook.

The major contribution of the Second Report is that reading is no longer regarded as a school subject to be taught in isolation from all other subjects, but rather as a necessary accompaniment to nearly all

\(^\text{43}\)ibid., p. 9.
human action. From this standpoint, reading in the schools cuts across all subject-matter lines. The child reads in the social living period to learn about world events, in the science period to learn about the pollination of plants, in the language arts period to enjoy a good story or to prepare material for a dramatization—every phase of school activity is conditioned by reading. It points out that:

Reading can do much in promoting clear understanding, developing habits of good thinking, stimulating broad interests, cultivating appreciations, and establishing stable personalities.44

True, practice in reading is needed to acquire and improve reading skill but before any attempt is made to help a pupil to read he should see the value in reading, the value in terms of living better and more happily, not in terms of getting good grades, being promoted, or having his name at the top of a class list.

The Thirty-Sixth Yearbook lists some of the trends which are discernible in reading in the modern school:

(a) That every teacher should be a teacher of reading.
(b) That guidance in reading habits and attitudes can best be developed in the setting in which guidance is necessary—guidance in reading in the social studies field should be given as part of the social studies program.
(c) That "reading readiness" depends upon many factors for which mental maturity (brightness or dullness) is only one factor.
(d) That reading materials need to be easy to read (that is, not present mechanical difficulties which hinder the child's enjoyment of what he reads); should recognize children's inter-

44 Ibid. p. 5.
ests and needs; should challenge the child to think; should be available in all subject-matter fields and should be contained in books which are attractive, scientifically designed, and mechanically perfect.

(e) That reading materials should be organized around large centers of interest or areas of experience rather than in isolated and unrelated morsels.

(f) That school libraries should be extended as major helps to the reading program.

(g) That tests should be devised which measure children's attitudes toward reading as well as measure children's achievements in reading, and that personality factors should be seriously considered in adjusting the reading program to individual needs and tastes.

(h) That strong motives for reading by children should be provided and stimulated through the administration of the reading program.

(i) That definite practice in the various specific reading skills and abilities should be related to the general reading program and should not be kept in isolation as an end in itself.

In her article in Educational Method, entitled "What is a Modern Reading Program?", Zirbes sets down the essential characteristics that differentiate a modern reading program from a program which is a mere continuance and improvement of outworn ways. They are:

    First, reading is to be conceived and treated as an integral phase or aspect of total language development.

    Second, reading is ever and always a matter of meanings.
Third, the reader's purpose and his immediate desire to find out are the energizing dynamic factors that must be engaged and adjusted in the ongoing reading process at every level.

Fourth, the modern program recognizes that we learn to read by reading, that children learn to fail by failing, that they learn to stumble by stumbling. Not only good but bad reading habits are established in use.

Fifth, so-called specific reading abilities are related to particular uses of reading and purposes for reading and are developed in functional situations.

Sixth, breadth and variety of reading experience are so important for enrichment and abiding attitudes that the modern program must be concerned with them as well as with intensive instruction in reading.

Seventh, the modern reading program finds its true realization and justification in the contribution it makes to the development of personalities and the further free and discriminating use of reading in life.

These statements of trends are full of implications for the reconstruction of practices in teaching reading today. It would seem that they could be more effectively executed by having access to a collection of organized, usable material housed, perhaps, in the school library.

At about the same time that the above article was being published, Lee and Lee released an excellent book, The Child and His Curriculum. In it they list fifteen of what seem to be significant trends in reading. They mention that many of the trends are suggested by the Thirty-Sixth Yearbook. The final trend in their series is a plea for library facilities.

In 1944, the State Department of Ohio published a curriculum bulletin


"The Language Arts in the Elementary Schools of Ohio." One section is devoted to some characteristics of a "Good Reading Program." Here they place the levels of reading and learning not on the basis of grade levels but on the basis of maturation levels. They summarize their reading program by stating:

A good reading program is characterized by good teaching, which includes planning by the individual teacher and cooperative planning by all members of the staff; it includes procedures that are based on diagnosis of the needs of the group and the best way to meet those needs. A good reading program is organized around a sequence of learnings consistent with the way that children grow and develop. A good reading program is flexible and makes provision for individual differences. A good reading program is enriched by many resources, including audio-visual materials, community excursions, discussions, dramatizations, choral speech, and other group activities. Chiefly, however, a good reading program is enriched by a wealth of good reading material.

It would seem that the final statement carries an implied need for a school library.

In their report to the Board of Regents in the State of New York in 1939, Gray and Leary summarized their recommendations for an improved reading program as follows:

except in those schools which have adopted progressive methods, the purpose, organization, and scope of basic instruction in reading have been narrowly conceived. Desirable types of reforms will be summarized briefly at this point.

(a) The basic reading program as a whole should be organized in terms of successive stages of development in reading which are based on a clear recognition of the needs and interests of child life, the increasing demands made by the curriculum upon the learner, and the possibilities of attainment among children at different levels of advancement. Five such stages of development extending throughout the

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48 Ibid., p. 34.
period of general education are identified in *The Teaching of Reading: A Second Report*.

(b) The activities of the reading period should be notably enriched. There should be a large amount of reading material that is closely related to the interests and needs of pupils, that stimulate inquiring attitudes among them, and that has real worth in terms of values contributed.

(c) The instruction provided should be differentiated far more than in the past, in harmony with the varying needs, interests, and capacities of the pupils at each grade level. This implies basic instruction in reading of two, three, or more levels of advancement in practically every grade. Experience teaches that instruction which is adapted to individual needs not only promotes more rapid growth on the part of each pupil, but also decidedly reduces the need for special corrective and remedial training.

(d) The types of training provided at each level of advancement should be correlated more closely than at present with the reading activities of pupils in the various curriculum fields. For example, the motives for many reading lessons should be based on reading needs and problems that have arisen in specific fields. Indeed the reading period may often be used for continuing types of training in reading that were begun in a content field. Furthermore, the activities of the reading period should anticipate needs which will arise shortly in the general reading and study activities of the pupils.

(e) Minimum standards of achievement in reading are desirable at various levels of advancement throughout the grades. Every effort should be made to help all pupils attain them insofar as their varying abilities permit. The fact has been ascertained experimentally, for example, that grade scores of 4.0 and 7.0 in reading are essential if pupils are to engage successfully in the reading activities normally assigned in the middle grades and in the junior high school respectively. But the fact is clearly recognized that pupils who have not attained such standards should be advanced to the next grade if their general needs can be best served there. In such cases basic reading instruction should be continued at the pupils present levels of attainment and should be organized to insure continuous successful progress in essential reading attitudes, habits, and interests. The materials assigned in the various curriculum fields should correspond in difficulty with their level of reading ability.

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These recommendations are significant of the trend of teaching elementary reading in the State of New York. Sections (b) and (c) in the recommendations seem to imply a need for elementary school libraries.

Reading is primarily a thinking process. What shall be done about preparing pupils for reading obviously depends on the teacher's concept of reading. If reading were conceived as a word-calling process, then a readiness program probably would deal entirely with speech production, the visual perception and recognition of word forms and the oral "calling" of words recognized. On the other hand, if reading were conceived as a memorizing process, then the preparatory program would be delayed until the child had a certain minimum memory span, and attention would be focused upon effective techniques of memorization. In either of these cases, not all pupils would be ready at a given age.

The writer believes that the accepted philosophy of learning through experience is reflected in a modern reading program. The beginners first reading material is developed through experience reading, or reading simple accounts made by his classmates and himself of actual group experiences inside and outside of school. His life experiences are discussed and evaluated to the end that they may help him interpret similar experiences of other children of the child's own age as he discovers them on the printed page. The reading program should work out into large and richer experiences in real life:

If reading is to serve its largest function in social life, teachers face real problems and responsibilities; they must promote clear understanding and discriminating insight in each of the broader phases of contemporary life; familiarize young people with persistent social issues and current problems; -- promote greater power in applying the content of what is read, thus contributing to intelligent self-direction and social reconstruction; stimulate interests that will contribute both to the wholesome use of
leisure time and to the solution of personal and social problems.\textsuperscript{50}

The philosophy of education prevalent in the modern school (as was pointed out in the preceding chapter of this thesis) stresses the fact that the child passes successively through stages of growth which are conditional to his psychological, mental, and emotional development. Sufficient progress has been made in studying growth stages to make it possible to predict certain reading achievements as likely to be reached as the child matures. Gray names five stages of development in reading which are important enough to warrant future study:

(a) The stage at which reading readiness is attained (pre-school years, kindergarten, and the early months of the first grade.)
(b) The initial stage in learning to read (first grade, and for some children, the second grade.)
(c) The stage of rapid progress in fundamental reading attitudes and habits (second and third grades.)
(d) The stage of extension of experience and increase in reading efficiency (fourth, fifth, and sixth grades.)
(e) The stage of refinement of reading attitudes, habits, and tastes. (Junior high school, senior high school and junior college.)\textsuperscript{51}

By setting goals within the ability of the children; by providing scientifically devised, rich, and varied materials based upon child interests and needs; by the use of proper instructional methods; and by setting standards of achievement at each of these stages, it should be possible to devise a basic course of reading worthy of the modern school.

\textsuperscript{50} Thirty-Sixth Yearbook, Part One, op. cit., p. 13.
\textsuperscript{51} Ibid., Part I. Chapter IV.
Attention to adequate functional oral reading in our schools should do much to improve the diction of the pupils, to develop soft, pleasing voices and to eliminate the flat, uninflected speech which makes the American suffer by comparison with the cultured foreigner. This is no plea for emphasis on oral reading. It is a plea for a balance between oral and silent reading.

In her defense of oral reading, Dorothy Bergen, Supervisor of Elementary Grades in the Public Schools in Long Branch, New Jersey, gives four reasons for having functional oral reading:

1. To afford the child the pleasure of reading to mother.

2. Children use oral reading in pursuing many of their interests and there is always economy of learning when one makes use of real interests.

3. Oral reading is necessary in order to meet best many real needs in society, as evidenced in the activities of camp, school, church, home, and radio.

4. Functional oral reading usually takes place in a situation which gives the children other important learnings, such as taking care of one's self, facing and solving problems intelligently and calmly, distinguishing between truth and opinion, and evaluating critically. 52

Examination of any one of the popular modern series of elementary school readers now in use indicates clearly the great advance which has been made in textbooks during the last fifteen years. One company, for example, offers a completely integrated program consisting of basic readers accompanied by supplemental series in social studies, elementary science, art, and arithmetic. 53

This expansion of textbooks and didactic materials has gone beyond

the point of optimal worth. It keeps children out of non-textbook readings far too long and unnecessarily when they should be given a richer source for the selection of purposeful readings of the informative or study type and still more extended resources for recreatory individual selection. This implies a definite need for an elementary school library.

Two other features found in modern elementary school readers merit notice. Several series of readers accompany each basic textbook in primary reading with a number of short-paper-bound supplementary readers, each complete in itself so that the young child may feel the pride of accomplishment in reading several complete books during the school term. In another series the same result is obtained by issuing each basic text in sections, each of which represents a slightly different level of reading difficulty. It is apparent that modern readers are attempting to make the mastery of the mechanics of reading as delightful as possible and to provide children with reading materials likely to appeal to them at each age level. If this tends to become a mere means of getting schools to buy more sets of readers to enhance the publisher's source of profit, it may need to be challenged by studies in which the relative values of more and better texts compared with the values to be gained or the expenditure of equivalent funds for more diverse school and classroom collections of books not prepared for instructional purposes. Readers are, after all, something which schools should help children outgrow in order that they may become intelligent, independent users of books as literature and as a rich source of information and vicarious experiences that expands with maturity.

If reading serves its highest purpose in contemporary life it should modify helpfully the personality of the reader. One of the vital needs today

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is social rather than selfish personalities. Some of the more obvious values of reading in this connection are that it broadens and deepens the interest of the reader, develops ideals and appropriate attitudes, and elevates tastes. This list of values may be greatly extended. The fact is widely recognized that teachers should plan definitely to help pupils acquire new and compelling interests as they read and to develop high ideals and appropriate attitudes which will modify conduct. In these and other ways reading may aid materially in developing a generation of citizens with social, stable, and enriched personalities.

In this chapter the writer has collected recent facts and opinions of authorities in the field of reading and has examined various newer reading materials to discover the nature of recent trends in reading. After examining these facts and opinions, it would seem that there is a significant correlation between recent trends in education and recent trends in reading—the latter being a natural outgrowth of the former. Each takes its cue from the philosophy of experimentalism—experience is the raw material of intellectual growth and purpose in education is an outgrowth of experience; each gives due consideration to the wholesome individual growth and development of the child—physically, mentally, socially, and emotionally; each is realistic in its attitude toward the basic individual needs of children; each views the whole concept of teaching as guidance; and, each strives for the preservation of democracy and the good life.

Reading is a culturally essential mode of communication with which education helps children to become proficient, and reading materials should facilitate this process and help pupils to find their way in the widening vista of vicarious experience by which our culture is enriched and advanced. This conception of the function of reading in the modern school and in life today is a far cry from the days of the Town Crier, The Horn Book and The McGuffey Reader. These are the days of color lithography and beautiful books at low
prices.

These are the days of the Bookmobile in remote rural areas; of the public library, and its branches in every sizeable community.

It is a sad commentary on the public relations of the schools that so many parents and patrons do not know that reading was never so well taught as it is today; it is sadder to find so many elementary schools depending on sets of books of a single grade level dispensed from a central store room or book closet, with no opportunity for adjustment or selection in terms of individual needs or interests. Reading texts are better than they ever were, but children should outgrow them.

The renaissance in reading in the American elementary school during the last twenty years has created a juvenile reading public which supports a host of creditable authors, artists and publishers of trade books. This juvenile reading public is served by special reviews, by book weeks and book festivals, by special magazines and newspapers. Each season brings forth a veritable flood of new titles diverse and attractive in style and format.

The wider accessibility of good books for children is attested by the interesting arrays of new books and of old favorites in new editions on the shelves and counters of book departments and ten cent stores; by the popularity of children's rooms in public libraries, and by the publication of numerous lists and special bibliographies related to children's interests on various levels.

The challenge is clear, although there is still an educational lag that is disturbing. Every elementary school owes its children an opportunity to learn from guided first hand experience what a rich resource a library is for information, recreation and study; what a library can offer every man's child toward a fuller realization of the purposes of our democracy. 55

55 Laura Zirbes, Unpublished Lecture Notes.
CHAPTER III

IMPLICATIONS FOR AN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL LIBRARY

A basic assumption in this chapter is that although some elementary schools have libraries far too many are without such a source of materials.

In a survey of elementary school libraries throughout the State of Ohio, Carolyn Niswonger found that:

Many elementary schools have not provided for library facilities in their budget and the survey reveals that the principals in these schools are aware that they cannot hope to realize, to any marked degree, the generally recognized aims and objectives of elementary education, without minimum library facilities.\(^\text{56}\)

Of the 108 replies received to questionnaires:

The majority of the schools included in the survey use textbooks and only a few (4) prefer that the library replace textbooks.\(^\text{57}\) The survey replies indicate that 92 schools have classroom libraries, however, as many prefer the school library to the classroom library.\(^\text{57}\) The majority of the principals indicate that they would prefer a separate room. The values listed for a separate room seem to outweigh those listed for the classroom library.\(^\text{57}\)

It is assumed, also, that although library services to elementary schools have been greatly expanded and extended during recent years, countless schools which have such facilities find them to be inadequate.

As was indicated in Chapters I and II of this thesis, education and the teaching of reading at the elementary level have undergone some basic changes and modifications during recent years. It will be the purpose of this Chapter to determine what implications there are in these changes for an elementary school library.


\(^{57}\)Ibid., pp. 118-119.
Because of modifications in their basic philosophy, instead of defining their function primarily in terms of mastery of subject matter, schools now recognize that their major purpose is to promote as far as possible the total development—physical, mental, social, and emotional—of the youth of this country. Equally important is the cultivation of the special abilities, interests, and ambitions of each child. Contrary to the views often expressed, this concept of the school increases the importance of appropriate subject matter and the need of library facilities.

In this connection the 1938 report of the Superintendent of Schools of Milwaukee, Wisconsin, may well be considered. The title of this treatise, "Library Technique in all Fields," stresses the importance of interest and adaptation of materials to the abilities of the students. To quote:

Somewhere between mechanistic acceptance of tools and devices on the one hand and acquiescent scholasticism on the other there lies a land of vivid infantile interest and adolescent wonder. Lincoln lying on his stomach before the cabin fireplace, reading his books by its flickering light, was in a free school, following the leads of his own interests along juvenile paths illuminated by his own wonder. Thus Thomas B. Macaulay, Washington Irving, Herbert Spencer, Sir Walter, and Robert Louis followed their interest leads and kept their skills and knowledges alive and growing by feeding their insatiable wonder. Each romped freely in an old library of easily accessible books, not a single one required or imposed, and therefore, all devoured with avidity, with shops and woods and fields for laboratory application and redirection—

So the really elect have therefore and elsewhere enjoyed a "library technique." In the western world where "every man is a king," it is more than desirable or humane or pleasant, it is a counsel of high statesmanship that the young princes shall follow their own interest leads and live free lives in free schools. The humblest child from the lowest home in a real democracy is entitled to the same technique enjoyed by social or intellectual aristocrats. Of course for a long while it is hard for the oldsters. Who ever said it wasn't? But it may eventually be heaven for the youngsters, and though it might be thought tough on the teachers who first try this technique, it may eventually bring us in all fields to a greater freedom than we have ever known. If and when understood it is easier for public school teachers than the old lockstep. Then coercive dis-
cipline fades away and the great problem becomes to find enough material. 58

This concept of the school also helps to clarify the purpose and character of the school experiences provided and greatly increases the demands for many aids to learning. "The newer instructional practices indicate that an abundance of materials suited to the various needs and interests of the children is necessary." 59

The new philosophy, while seeking to promote the maximum development of the individual, aims definitely to prepare him to live effectively and creatively in a democratic society. In its broader aspects this implies healthful living, civic efficiency, vocational competence, efficient home membership, and the profitable use of leisure.

Leisure is a characteristic of life at all age levels which merits emphasis. Large numbers of boys and girls, for example, do not participate freely in extra-curricular activities during the school year nor can they afford the privileges of camps or other recreational facilities available for promoting their physical, mental, social, and emotional development during vacation months. The shortened hours of labor for millions of workers, excepting in periods of emergency, provide greater opportunity for home life as well as reading and other leisurely pursuits. The use made of free time thus created is of great significance in a democracy since it provides needed opportunity for enriching the life of the individual and for building


a better civilization.

An important implication of the foregoing statement is that schools should stimulate interests among pupils that will enrich their lives daily and result, as they mature, in leisure time activities of great personal and social value. An editorial in the April, 1935, Wilson Bulletin for Librarians warns that libraries have lost as borrowers and book readers a large part of the younger generation that has recently come of library age. Some of this loss of patronage, they attributed to the depression budgets of public libraries, which resulted in curtailed service, shabby books, and a paucity of fresh material. An even more serious factor, is pointed out as being the direct competition of new and aggressive claimants for the leisure of boys and girls:

The radio, the motion picture, and organized sport have captured the child's world, laid hold on his imagination, excited his senses, so that he has little time and patience left for the printed word. . . . Librarians and educators must work hand in hand to reacquaint children with the deep and abiding delights of literature. 60

The importance of library facilities at school is emphasized by the fact that a large portion of the homes in most communities cannot provide either children or adults with the books and magazines or the physical conditions essential for recreational reading and for the study of personal and social problems. Any community which does not provide adequate library facilities, either school or public, or both, or which fails to make them available to persons of all ages is failing to meet one of its major social obligations.

Our democratic way of life depends for its very existence on intelligent and informed citizens. Rugg is quite definite in his thinking on the matter when he states: "In a truly democratic society government is education, and education on the social side is the practice of government. The two form an indivisible unity." 61

During recent years conflicting social and political theories have been vigorously discussed over the radio, in the press, and through other agencies of communication. Some of the information presented has often been biased and designed to influence people unduly to a particular course of action or mistaken beliefs. As a result, the public faces the responsibility of studying current issues deliberately, of distinguishing between fact and opinion, of identifying propaganda, and of coming to reasonable conclusions. The Committee on the evaluation of Reading in the Eight Year Study reports that it has been sufficiently established within recent years that: "The sorts of people who read the more genuine sorts of writing in largest amount are also the sorts of people best able to organize and maintain a satisfactory community life, whether in this or in other countries." 62

The children of today will be the adults of tomorrow, and if they are to be qualified to help preserve and improve our form of government they must acquire, while in school, an appreciation of the democratic way of life, a keen desire to aid in the solution of its problems, a broad acquaintance with sources of information, and ability to use these sources intelligently.


and critically in the search for truth. Ability to choose intelligently what one should read, look at, or listen to comes to most individuals as a result of proper guidance throughout the formative period of education, with systematic participation in purposeful activities that require discrimination in the selection of books and other aids to learning.

What is referred to above as "other aids to learning" may include pictures, slides, charts, dioramas, museum exhibits, recordings, the radio, and motion pictures. The use of a wide variety of these materials is justified by the fact that:

An understanding of some things is gained more readily through certain means than through others, that pupils differ in the ease with which they learn through any given medium, and that understandings gained in one way re-enforce or modify those gained in other ways. 63

It follows that pupils should have ready access to all the aids to learning needed in the study of given units. This implies that library service should be expanded to include a generous supply of these "added aids to learning." To use such materials so that they do indeed "re-enforce or modify" concept gained in other ways makes it necessary to bring them all to bear in the very process of education, and that requires provision for library resources in the elementary school.

School systems today, especially in urban areas, report that regardless of what the casual factors may be in individual cases, schools now face the responsibility of serving the needs of a larger number of children than at any previous period. Experience shows that the greater the number of pupils in school during any given period, the more diverse are their

backgrounds, interests, ambitions, and needs. It follows that the instructional materials provided both in classrooms and libraries should be correspondingly broad in scope and varied in type if individual needs are to be met.

Inasmuch as modern education takes its cue from the theory of experimentalism, and experimentalism uses experience as its teacher, it must follow that; whereas reading was formerly thought of primarily as the process of recognizing words and comprehending meanings, it is now conceived largely as a form of experience that may alter the outlook of the pupil, deepen his understanding, modify his behavior, and promote the development of personality. According to this concept, the reader not only recognizes words readily and apprehends clearly the ideas presented, but he also reflects on their significance and evaluates them in light of previous experience. He then transfers them into thought and action patterns of his own. According to this concept, growth in reading is not confined to any grade level or to school years, but it is a process which should continue to develop throughout the reading life of the individual. It follows that in order to read extensively and critically the individual must have access to a variety of materials like those which would be found in the public libraries. It follows, also, that these adult individuals would be able to react critically to the ideas apprehended, to clarify their thinking concerning the issues involved, to reach valid conclusions, to select appropriate materials to read, and secure a clear grasp of the author's meaning if they could have experienced guidance of this type beginning with their earliest days in the elementary school. In discussing library service at the elementary school level, Anna Kennedy, Senior Supervisor of School Libraries for the State of New York states:
The library in action in the elementary school is effective in stimulating reading, in providing appropriate materials, and in helping children to learn how to use books and libraries. With changes in social objectives, in courses of study, and in teaching methods has come the realization that the library forms an active teaching agency and an aid to learning and to teaching and that the library is as essential at the elementary level as at the secondary and college levels. The elementary-school library is in a strategic position to prepare children for library use throughout their entire lives.  

J. E. Morgan, Editor of the Journal of the National Education Association puts it more forcefully:

The elementary school library is more important than the high school or college libraries because the habits which are formed through the elementary school years are persistent and tend to continue throughout life. Whatever enriches the elementary school makes the task of all other schools easier and adds to the certainty and joy of learning.

Obviously the guidance in library experiences should be broad if schools succeed in developing a generation of readers capable of wise discrimination and intelligent self-direction. Without doubt classroom teachers should direct the study activities of pupils in the elementary library to a great extent. The nature of the librarian's responsibility should be defined cooperatively by the administration and teaching staff of each school. In the opinion of the writer, the most important point in the librarian's personal qualifications is an abiding and joyous love of both children and books. Without these two, the most beautiful library room and the best collections of books will reach only a few book worms and without proper guidance even book worms frequently devour only trash.

From the White House Conference on Child Health in the study of what child-

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ren read, there comes to us this conclusion: "It is fairly clear, for in-
stance, that gifted children read more than normal children and more widely,
but it is not clear that their reading is of a higher order; frequently
the bookworm devours only trash."66

There is need for renewed effort on the part of teachers to broaden
the reading interests of children and to evaluate and develop their tastes.
This view is supported, first, by the fact that wide independent reading
is essential if pupils acquire even a reasonable part of the information and
enriching experience that schools may provide. It is essential also if the
guidance received in the elementary school is effective in starting youth
successfully on the road to self-education. Fargo reminds us that:

Boys and girls must educate themselves and there is
no spot better adapted to self education than the library.
It is the librarian’s task to provide the right conditions
and scatter the food—and to keep at least one chair
dusted for the dreamer of dreams.67

In the third place, the need is urgent for continuous, vigorous effort to
extend the reading interests of boys and girls and to stimulate preference
for the better types of literature. According to Gray: "Recent studies
show that the reading interest and tastes of the present generation of
young people and adults are far from satisfactory."68

To achieve these ends, boards of education, administrators, and teachers
must cooperate in discovering the present interests and needs of their
children, in establishing library facilities and attractive reading corners
in classrooms, in providing an adequate supply of attractive books of

66 White House Conference on Child Health. "Children’s Reading" by the


68 William S. Gray, Reading and Pupil Development. op. cit., p. 4.
various levels of difficulty, and in utilizing the most effective methods possible in setting purposes for reading, in arousing interest, and in elevating tastes.

Summary

At least two significant conclusions are justified by the facts presented in this Chapter. In the first place, we stand at the threshold of a new era in respect to the breadth and character of the services which an elementary library should render to our children. The broad concept of its function is a direct outgrowth of recent trends in education and in reading which make new and significant demands on elementary children.

In the second place, the basic and all-inclusive purpose of the elementary school library is to contribute to the attainment of the objectives of the school program of which it is a part. Three distinctive purposes to which a library should make direct and significant contributions stand out impressively; the first is to help develop interests, attitudes, and habits of study which lead to the frequent, if not the continuous, use of the library in solving personal and group problems that arise in daily living. The second is to help develop the specific skills which insure the economical and efficient use of the library in attaining worth-while aims. The third is to contribute to the establishment of the habit of reading regularly for recreation, enjoyment, and stimulation and to the evaluation of interests and tastes. "The school library has the power to increase greatly the efficiency of individuals and ultimately to lift the thinking of a whole generation to higher levels." 69

69 Fargo, op. cit., p. 11.
CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE STUDY

This investigation has led the writer to certain conclusions concerning recent trends in education and recent trends in reading and their implications for an elementary-school library. These conclusions will be stated in the order mentioned.

(1) Since 1900 a philosophic view of life and education has come into prominence and has had a distinctive interpretation and emphasis in America. This view is variously referred to, the more common designations being "pragmatism" and "experimentalism." To many educational workers "the Dewey philosophy" may be the more enlightening term. This philosophic position is a fundamental expression of values, relationships, and processes flowing directly out of the American experience. It is significant that this philosophical position has been applied most carefully and fully to the development of the program of the elementary school. From 1900 to the present the forefront of change in elementary school theory and practice has been increasingly dominated by this distinctively American philosophy. Whether in the development of the curriculum, the modification of instructional materials, the changes in school equipment or the recognition of the individual as a unique personality with the purpose of providing for the fullest possible individual expression and development; the basic values sought and the processes employed have been evaluated generally in terms defined by the experimentalist's view of life and learning.

(2) There are three facts relating to teaching elementary reading which merit emphasis: first, a broader conception of teaching elementary reading is essential if reading is to serve its largest function as a means of individual growth and development. All too frequently instruction in reading has aimed primarily to develop good habits of recognition and com-
prehension, to promote speed of reading, and to stimulate independent reading. Of greater importance, both in school and adult life, are the reader's reactions to the idea apprehended. The child, who has had functional guidance in using reading as an aid in acquiring adequate power of self-direction and in solving personal and social problems, not only recognizes the essential facts or ideas presented but also reflects on their significance, evaluates them critically, discovers relationships between them, and applies them to his own mode of thinking and acting.

A second fact is that growth in reading is a continuous process throughout the elementary-school, high-school, and college period. Contrary to earlier beliefs that children must learn to read before they read to learn, it is now widely accepted that children read to learn from the beginning. As the demands made on them increase, new habits and insights are needed, and these require new types of guidance and new resources.

Reading instruction should aim to achieve particular goals through a broad program that stresses purposeful reading of a wide variety of materials adapted to the needs and the interests of pupils. It should provide for extensive and intensive reading; for a healthy balance between oral and silent reading; for the correction of reading difficulties whenever they appear; and for the development of meaningful concepts through excursions, conversations, discussions, construction projects, simple and informal dramatization, pictures and exhibits, and oral and written composition.

A third fact is that during recent years reading has assumed a far more vital relation to the curriculum than was true in the past. Not only does the modern curriculum call for a large amount of reading which serves many purposes, but it utilizes many aids to learning besides reading,
most of which depend upon, are aided by, or encourage reading. Furthermore, a well-conceived curriculum is so closely related to the learner's interests and needs, and opens up so many interesting lines of inquiry and discovery that it invites purposeful reading in many fields. As a means of promoting the development of appropriate reading interests and habits, it would seem that carefully planned guidance in reading should be provided in every school activity where reading serves a useful purpose. This guidance should include organizing reading experiences around common centers of interest, providing free-reading periods, encouraging book-sharing, relating reading to every subject in the curriculum and to every experience of the group.

(3) The elementary-school library has a vital role to play in the realization of an experience reading program. The provision of materials to implement the program is perhaps its largest contribution, but in

The new education is an active, not a passive education. It sees the child as an individual, actively engaged in work suited to his own needs. This means a shift in the scene. More and more pupils must search through books for those sections which solve particular problems; more and more a variety of sources of material must come into use. The library rather than the classroom is frequently the scene of action.70

addition, it may be held responsible in a peculiar sense for at least two objectives; first, to develop in pupils those attitudes and habits of study which lead to the continuous use of such tools of learning as the library can provide; and, second, to develop in pupils the ability to use such tools effectively. With changes in school objectives, in courses of study, and in teaching methods has come the realization that the library

forms an active teaching agency and an aid to learning and to teaching and that the library is as essential at the elementary level as at the secondary and college levels. The elementary-school library is in a strategic position to prepare children for library use throughout their lives. The elementary-school should not be conceived or designed without a library as a functioning center for the development of such abiding attitudes. The library can, and should become a dynamic element in the educational processes which constitute the concern and responsibility of the public elementary school.

Future Studies

This investigation also leads to suggestions for future study. They are:

(1) As was pointed out in Chapter II of this Thesis, Gray names five stages of development in reading which are important enough to warrant future study:

(a) The stage at which reading readiness is attained (pre-school years, kindergarten, and the early months of the first grade.)
(b) The initial stage in learning to read (first grade, and for some children, the second grade.)
(c) The stage of rapid progress in fundamental reading, attitudes and habits (second and third grades.)
(d) the stage of extension of experience and increase in reading efficiency (fourth, fifth, and sixth grades.)
(e) The stage of refinement of reading attitudes, habits, and tastes. (Junior high-school, senior-high school and junior college.)

(2) Studies should be made to determine the amount of correlation between functional library usage and pupil growth and development.

(3) The increasing use of non-book materials in school libraries today opens up a wide field for educational experimentation. How satisfactory is the radio as a teaching instrument, and how does its effectiveness compare
with that of books? Similarly, the great emphasis being devoted to the film should be justified by evidence as to instructional power. In this post-war era, schools everywhere are embarking on programs of expansion, both in buildings and in new devices and new techniques, and we need to know more about the educational effectiveness of these new devices and techniques.
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