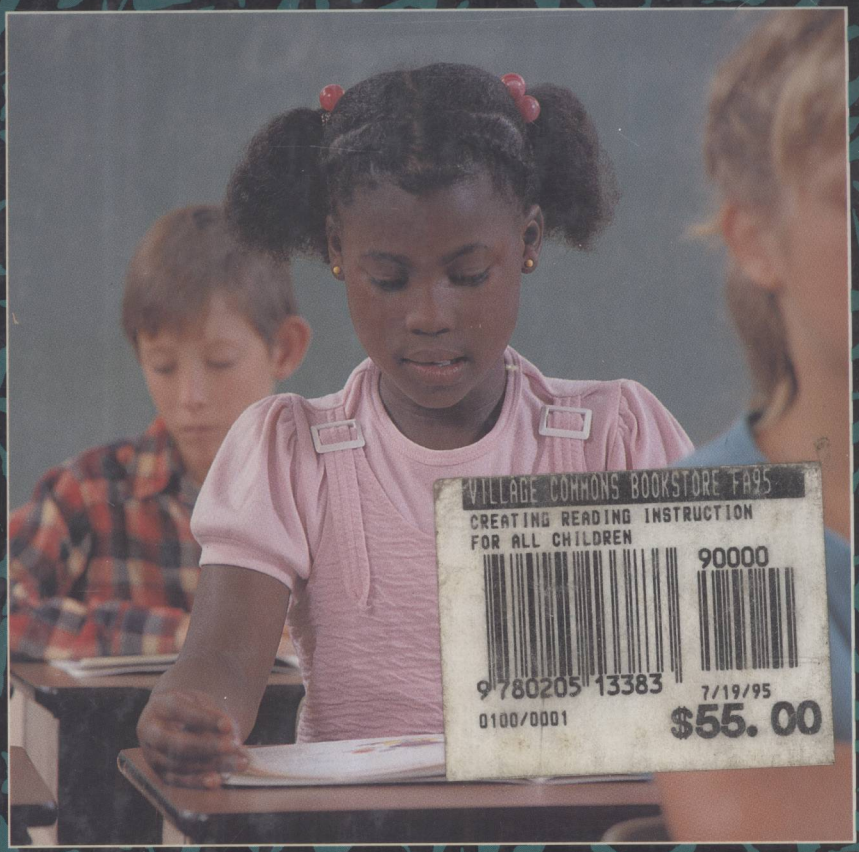

CREATING

READING INSTRUCTION FOR ALL CHILDREN

THOMAS G. GUNNING

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Creating Reading Instruction For All Children

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For Alex Prescott Gunning

The manuscript for this book and Alex were born at just about the same time. I hope that this text will somehow enrich the literacy instruction that Alex, big sister Paige, and their contemporaries receive.

Preface

This book will not tell you how to teach reading. Teaching reading is in large measure a matter of making choices: Should I use basal readers or should I use children's books? Should I do both? Should I teach children to read whole words, or should I teach them to sound out words letter by letter? Or should I do both? Should I have three groups or four groups or no groups?

There are no right answers to these questions. Answers depend on your personal philosophy, your interpretation of the research, the level at which you may be teaching, the kinds of students you are teaching, the desires of the community, the school or school district's reading program, and the freedom you have as a professional to choose your own techniques.

What this book will do is to help you discover approaches and techniques that fit you and your teaching situation. The aim of this text is to present as fairly, completely, and clearly as possible major approaches and techniques that research and practice indicate have been successful. This text will also attempt to present the theory behind the methods so you will be free to choose, adapt, and/or construct those approaches and techniques that best fit your style and your teaching situation. You will be creating reading instruction.

To help make the descriptions of teaching techniques come alive, examples of exemplary teaching are placed throughout the book. All are true-life accounts; many have been drawn from the memoirs of gifted teachers, others were garnered from newspaper reports or observation.

Although strategies and techniques are emphasized in the text, methods are only a portion of the equation. Reading isn't just a process. It's also very much a content area. What students read does matter, and therefore specific children's books and other reading materials are recommended. The basic premise of the book is that the best reading programs are a combination of effective techniques and plenty of worthwhile reading material.

Because children differ greatly in their backgrounds, needs, and interests, a variety of suggestions are provided for both techniques and types of books to be used. The intent is to provide you with a sufficient background of knowledge of teaching methods, and children's books and other materials, so that you will be able to create effective instruction for all the children you teach whether they be rich or poor; bright, average, or slow; regular ed or special ed; urban or suburban; mainstream middle America or members of a minority group.

The book also recognizes that reading is part of a larger language process, so considerable attention is paid to writing and the other language arts, especially as these relate to reading instruction. Whether reading or writing is being addressed, emphasis is on making the student the center of instruction. For instance, activities are recommended that allow students to choose writing topics and reading materials. Approaches that foster a personal response to reading are also advocated. Just as you the reader are encouraged to create your

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own instruction, this text champions having students create their own literacy.

The organization of the text attempts to reflect the order of the growth of literacy. After the introductory chapter, the early chapters discuss emergent literacy and early reading strategies including phonics. Chapters 5 and 6 complement the coverage of phonics, presenting additional word attack skills and techniques for teaching vocabulary. Chapters 7 through 10 are devoted to comprehension. Chapter 7 emphasizes comprehension strategies that students might use; Chapter 8 focuses on text structures and teaching procedures; Chapters 9 and 10 provide for application of comprehension skills in the content areas and through studying. Chapter 11 takes a step beyond mere comprehension by focusing on responding to literature.

Chapters 2 through 11, which emphasize essential reading strategies, constitute the core of the book. Chapters 12 through 16 provide information on creating a well-rounded reading program. Chapter 12 discusses approaches to reading. Chapter 13 explains the process approach to writing and discusses how reading and writing are related. Chapter 14 suggests how previously presented strategies might be adapted to children who have special needs. Chapter 15 discusses techniques for evaluating individuals and programs. Chapter 16 attempts to put all the topics together by discussing principles for organizing and implementing a reading program. Also included in the final chapter is a discussion of technology and its place in a program of literacy instruction.

Including many topics, the text is necessarily lengthy; however, it is designed to be practical. Detailed explanations, often with examples of application, are provided for every major technique or strategy. Numerous suggestions for practice activities and reading materials are also included. It is hoped that this text will furnish you with an in-depth knowledge of reading methods and materials so that you will be able to construct lively, effective reading instruction for all the students whom you teach.

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I am deeply indebted to Sean Wakely of Allyn & Bacon who saw the possibilities of a suggestion that I sent him and helped me to expand the suggestion into this volume. I am also grateful to Carol Chernaik of Allyn & Bacon for her timely assistance.

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They challenged me to make the best book I could and for this I am grateful.

My wife Joan offered both thoughtful comments and continuous encouragement. Despite her own busy professional schedule, she also typed the original manuscript and revised versions. I deeply appreciate her loving assistance.

Tom Gunning

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Creating Reading Instruction For All Children

Chapter 1

The Nature of Reading and Today's Children

CHAPTER OUTLINE

Using What You Know

Adapted Anticipation Guide

The Nature of Reading

The Reader's Role

Approaches to Reading: Whole Versus Part Learning

Stages of Reading Development

Today's Students as Readers

A Reading and Writing Program for Today's Students

Using What You Know

This first chapter is a general introduction to reading instruction in the elementary school. Before plunging into the material, probe your personal knowledge of the topic so that you will be better prepared to interact with the information. Think over what you know about the nature of reading. What do you think reading is? What do you do when you read? What do you think the reader's role is? Is it simply to receive the author's message, or should it include some personal input?

What about the status of today's readers? How well are your students reading? What do you think should be the basic principles of a reading program? What has worked especially well in programs with which you're familiar?

After thinking over what you already know about this chapter's major topics, try the adapted anticipation guide that follows. It is another device to help you interact more fully with the chapter, and is designed to probe your attitudes and beliefs about topics and issues. Often there are no right or wrong answers, but the questions will alert you to your attitudes about reading instruction. They also will encourage you to become aware of areas where you might require additional information. An anticipation guide works best if you discuss responses with classmates before plunging into the text. At the end of the chapter, you will be asked to complete the anticipation guide again to see if your responses have changed in the light of what you have read.

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