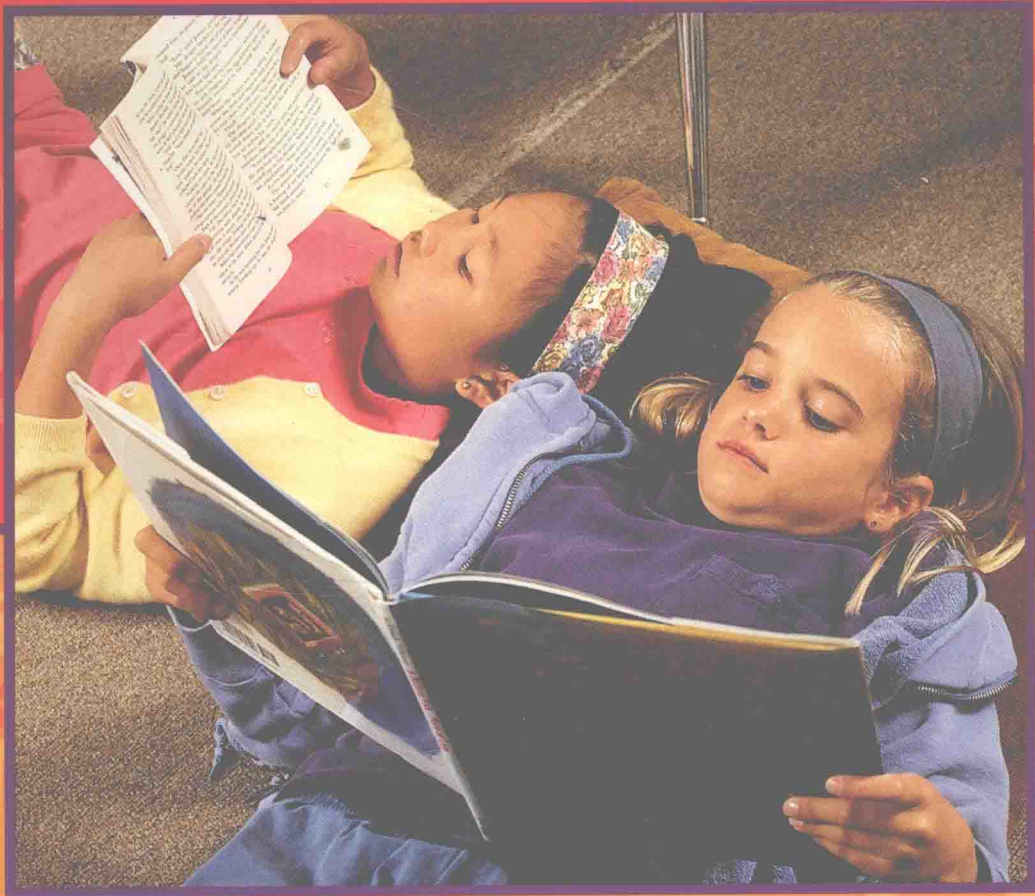


LANGUAGE ARTS



PROCESS, PRODUCT, AND ASSESSMENT

SECOND
EDITION

Pamela J. Farris

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Pamela J. Farris
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D e d i c a t i o n




To Dick and Kurtis,
who provided encouragement, support, patience, and love

Preface

Shortly after the turn of the century, John Dewey extolled the values of allowing children to be active participants in their learning. Dewey referred to this as “learning by doing.” Now as we approach the twenty-first century, Dewey’s premise still holds true. By emphasizing the learning process, teachers can serve as facilitators in the classroom as children enthusiastically engage in relevant language arts activities in which they are interested. Self-motivation drives students to pursue new knowledge and to challenge themselves.

This book stresses the teaching of the language arts via an integrated curriculum. As such, it presents both the product/content-oriented view of learning and the process approach so that readers may compare and contrast the two educational views. While many school districts have adopted the process approach (nontraditional whole language and literature-based instruction), a number of school districts still maintain a product/content, traditional focus. Thus, readers of this book need a clear understanding of both the traditional and nontraditional approaches.

For those readers who believe in a process approach to learning and in assessing the child’s development in the language arts, this book offers a plethora of activity suggestions, references to quality children’s literature, and listening, speaking, and writing ideas. For those who favor the product approach, direct instruction ideas are included as well. Most readers will adopt aspects of each approach to meet their teaching needs.

Throughout, the text provides assistance to both the novice and the experienced classroom teacher. “Focus Boxes”  give brief explanations and descriptions of various concepts. “In the Classroom Mini Lessons” and “In the Classroom Teaching Hints”  offer examples of language arts activities that can be easily adopted for classroom use. Assessment suggestions are offered throughout the text. At the back of the book are a series of sections entitled “Fingertip References,”  which include lists of key reference books for teacher use, prominent journals in the area of language arts, Caldecott and Newbery Award winners and honor books from 1970 through 1996, and multicultural children’s books. The inserts depicting children, teachers, and current classroom practices help make the text come alive.

The accompanying instructor’s manual contains chapter goals and objectives. A suggested portfolio for preservice teachers, as well as additional class readings, are included. Questions may either be used for group or class discussion or as essay test items. Several recently produced videos that complement the various chapters are described. In addition, transparency masters are available.

The test items at the back of the instructor’s manual, as well as those in the Test Bank, have been used in the examinations of undergraduate students as part of their language arts methods. Each test item is rated according to its level of difficulty as obtained through actual testing conditions.

This text is part of the Brown & Benchmark Methods Series. This means that you can choose the chapters you want, in the order you want them, to create your own course-specific black and white language arts text. You can combine these chapters with chapters from *Elementary & Middle School Social Studies: A Whole Language Approach*, Second Edition, by Farris and Cooper and *Reading for Success in Elementary Schools*, by Cheek, Flippo, and Lindsey, or even add your own material to create the custom text that best meets your needs. Talk to your Brown & Benchmark sales representative for more information on custom text option.

In writing this book, I observed and taught in numerous elementary classrooms. I watched several outstanding teachers and hundreds upon hundreds of energized, highly motivated children actively engaged in listening, speaking, reading, writing, and thinking throughout the entire school day, across the entire school curriculum. Many teachers shared a wealth of ideas, concerns, problems, and suggestions with me. An untold number of stories, reports, books, and poems written by children were also shared with me. To those teachers and children, I owe a great debt of thanks.

In turn, I must thank my former and current teachers, including my elementary, secondary, and college teachers as well as my own students. My current and former students, elementary, undergraduate, masters, and doctoral, all helped me formulate the ideas and suggestions contained in this book. I continue to learn from them. Likewise, I wish to thank the students and their teachers in the many classrooms I visit each year. They, too, teach me new ways of thinking and learning.

This book was critiqued by several reviewers whose suggestions proved to be helpful. Their comments were appreciated. I want to extend particular appreciation to the following individuals for their in-depth reviews of the manuscript:

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My deep appreciation goes to Sue Pulvermacher-Alt, Managing Editor, Suzanne Guinn, Developmental Editor, and Terry Routley, Production Editor, for all their assistance and guidance.

My hope is that every reader of this book will come away with new insights and ideas that he or she will carry back to an elementary classroom to light up the eyes of enthusiastic children. Then all the time and effort put forth in writing this book will have been worthwhile.

I teach because it is what I enjoy. Teaching is what I do best. And, most of all, teaching is what I love. Being in a classroom teaching is an electrifying experience for me as I see students turn a glimmer of knowledge into a roaring flame. This happens day after day, year after year. What more exciting profession is there?

Pamela J. Farris
Presidential Teaching Professor
Northern Illinois University

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Children and Teachers in the Classroom



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**Live a balanced life—learn some and think
some and draw and paint and sing and dance
and play and work every day some.**

—Robert Fulghum

*All I Really Needed to Know I Learned in
Kindergarten*

Introduction

*T*he school doors open at 8:15 A.M. for yet another day of learning. Kim McNamara's fourth graders scurry into the classroom. Two girls offer their services to Miss McNamara to unpack the paperback book order that has just arrived. Other students quickly hang up their jackets and book bags and then head to one of the activity tables Miss McNamara has set up in the back of the classroom—a writing center on parodies, a table filled with humor and joke books, a computer with math games, and a science center with the materials necessary to make a homemade camera. Two students who were previously assigned the responsibility of feeding the classroom pets are carefully measuring the appropriate amounts of food for the two gerbils and an aquarium of guppies. Next, the two students will give the box turtle the house flies they caught before school.

A few students go to a box labeled "Concerns" to scribble a brief note about a problem that they are struggling to overcome—for example, the death of a family cat or a lost necklace. Having changed their "concerns" from mental worries to tangible notes, they deposit their "concerns" for the day into the box; they will pick up the notes when school is over and they can try to resolve their problems without interfering with their learning.

It is only the fifth week of the school year, but all the children appear to be confident and at ease as they pursue the many different opportunities available to them. Electricity permeates the air as the children excitedly immerse themselves in the day's activities that Miss McNamara has carefully planned.

The classroom itself is enticing. Two bulletin boards offer variety and color, containing timely themes that coincide with a learning goal of the class or of the school. The bulletin boards, which are changed biweekly, typically are working bulletin boards that the students can manipulate. One of the bulletin boards has parodies written by the students and Miss McNamara. The other is an action bulletin board with questions about photography, the current science topic.

Looking around the classroom, one observes library books prominently displayed on chalk rails and tables and colorful posters of popular sports and movie heroes and heroines. Three simple rules describing acceptable classroom behavior are listed above the chalkboard. Mobiles hanging overhead depict the students' favorite characters in recently read books. Clearly, students' attitudes and interests have been considered in the creation of the classroom environment.

A bell rings, signaling the official beginning of the school day. What was a silent classroom when Kim McNamara arrived at 7:30 A.M. has now become one marked by low murmuring voices, an occasional giggle followed by laughter, the rattling of papers and books as the students take their seats—the sounds of children readying themselves for a day of learning.

Only one year ago, Kim McNamara had been studying methods of teaching—learning techniques of instruction in language arts, reading, mathematics, science, and social studies, among other subjects—to elementary students. As she was learning theories about teaching, she was able to observe and participate with elementary students as part of her preservice teacher education program. Kim is now *the teacher*. She must put theory into practice, making decisions that could affect her students for the rest of their lives. How well she is prepared, how much time she has devoted to the planning of the lessons, and how enthusiastic she is about each lesson are reflected in the learning of her students.

Kim has discovered that as a teacher she is also a “student,” learning something new about children and teaching every day. She has students with different cultural and ethnic backgrounds and a wide range of abilities and interests. According to Kim, “Teaching has proved to be a major challenge, the greatest I’ve ever encountered. But I’ve found that I love every minute of it!”

Kim has made a special attempt to communicate with each of her fourth graders. Prior to the beginning of school, she wrote a letter to each of her students introducing herself. She described her hobbies of playing golf and swimming as well as her interest in reading mysteries. Kim also asked what the students enjoyed doing after school. She asked each one to think of something he or she wanted to learn more about, promising to try to include it some time during the school year. Kim has continued the open communication pattern by regularly writing achievement notes to parents and students. Each student has a mailbox encouraging rather than discouraging “note passing.” “My goal is to be supportive of literacy (reading and writing). If a student writes a note and the recipient reads it, literacy has been reinforced and promoted,” Kim states. “Communication has taken place between an author (the note writer) and the reader (the note’s recipient).”

Kim closely monitors the pulse of her class as she meets the academic needs of her students in ways they find stimulating. Kim McNamara is aware that students have many needs and concerns. This chapter discusses children and their teachers, as well as classroom organization and management.

Children and Their Teachers

Children possess a natural curiosity and desire to learn that is coupled with their wanting to be accepted by others. To kindergartners and primary-grade children, their teacher is nothing short of a god. Young children are amazed to see their teacher, dressed in jeans and a sweatshirt, shopping in the local supermarket or eating at McDonald’s. For them, it is difficult to conceive that their teacher is but a mere mortal.

The enthusiasm and energy that children have when they enter school must be nurtured by understanding teachers who set realistic but challenging goals. Teaching is not an easy profession, but it is a rewarding one in that teachers help others to better their lives. Such satisfaction accompanies very few other career