# THE SCHOOL READING PROGRAM

## A Handbook for Teachers, Supervisors, and Specialists

Richard J. Smith
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Lee Hansen

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**Richard J. Smith**  *University of Wisconsin*

**Wayne Otto**  *University of Wisconsin*

**Lee Hansen**  *Poudre R-1 School District, Fort Collins, Colorado*

# Preface

*The School Reading Program* is addressed to reading specialists, classroom teachers, and administrators concerned with reading curriculum development. The reason for addressing the book to professionals in all three roles is that the greatest potential for curriculum improvement lies in the combined efforts of all three. The narrower the working distance between instructional leaders and teachers, the greater the opportunities for improving the quality of instruction that students receive. Therefore, this book is intended to be a resource for educators working together to improve the quality of reading instruction in both elementary and secondary schools.

The professional experiences of the three authors allow them to speak from firsthand experiences as public school teachers, reading specialists, school administrators, researchers, and university professors of reading methods courses. In the book each of the three discusses the aspects of reading program development about which he is most knowledgeable and with which he has worked. The suggestions for reading program improvement offered in each chapter are, therefore, drawn from the author's work experiences as well as from studies and the writing of others in the area of reading curriculum and instruction.

The book has been compiled to serve as a basic text in courses designed for the study of reading curriculum development, such as "The Supervision of Reading Programs," "Guiding the School Reading Program," "Administrators and Reading," and "Improving Reading Instruction." Professors and students in advanced courses in reading methodology may also find the book useful as a basic or supplementary text, especially in courses that raise curriculum issues or focus upon programmatic aspects of reading instruction.

*Administering the School Reading Program* (Wayne Otto and Richard Smith, Houghton Mifflin, 1970) was the starting point for this new text. Because of the extensive changes and additions

that were made, however, *The School Reading Program* is more than a revision. The authors and publishers sampled opinion widely about what was needed in a textbook that gave direction in the development of school reading programs, and their findings pointed toward a substantially expanded version of *Administering the School Reading Program.* Accordingly, an additional author was added to the writing team, and the present book was written to reflect the expressed needs of the professionals whose opinions were surveyed.

The authors and the publisher are grateful for the assistance of those who made professional reviews of the manuscript. These reviewers, to whom we give thanks, are H. Donald Jacobs, Arizona State University; Karl D. Hesse, University of Oregon; and P. David Pearson, University of Minnesota.

# Contents

# The School Reading Program

# Chapter 1 An orientation to the reading program

This handbook is for teachers, supervisors, and specialists who are responsible for school reading programs. As a resource for people with diverse roles and specific responsibilities, the contents must address diverse aspects of both the reading program and the reading process. The overall purpose is to provide direction for collaborative efforts to improve the teaching of reading through program improvement.

But diversity can obscure.

Chapter 1, then, provides the reader with a broad view of the book and the reading program, which are dealt with in separate sections. Both sections include the authors' beliefs and inclinations regarding the development of reading programs, and taken together they should orient the readers to the organization and content of the book.

## About the book

The most important factor in reading program development is the teacher. Therefore, this book is designed to help teachers do the best possible job of teaching students to read. But teachers do not work alone. To do their jobs well they need training, instructional materials, supervision, and all the other components that make good reading programs. With this in mind we have addressed a broader audience than teachers themselves: supervisors, reading specialists, administrators, and other educators, as well as teachers, who contribute to students' development in reading.

Many topics included in this book are usually not discussed in length in reading methods textbooks. For example, we give considerable attention to the in-service education of teachers, the evaluation of school reading programs, the role of reading spe-

cialists, the development of programs for students with reading problems, and other topics that are important to program development but are not necessarily germane to discussions of teaching methods. Nevertheless, program-related topics cannot be discussed without regard for instructional methodology. In addition, a discussion of instructional materials cannot ignore how the materials are used; one on evaluating reading programs cannot ignore pupil evaluation; one on programs for correcting reading problems cannot stop short of teaching methodology. Consequently, some redundancies may appear in this book. We decided that showing the interrelatedness of program components was more important than eliminating redundancy. The coherence of the individual chapters should benefit from that decision.

TWO REALITIES

One of the first realities that a student of reading program development must accept is that no two school settings are alike. Each classroom, school building, and school district involve unique personalities, personality combinations, political power bases, financial resources, community standards, and other factors that interact in the development of reading programs. Because of the uniqueness of school settings within which reading programs function, no book about reading program development can speak directly to all of the immediate concerns of a particular teacher, supervisor, or specialist. Yet philosophies, theories, research findings, model programs, opinions, and observations can cut across idiosyncratic interests and needs by offering counsel and guidelines that can be adapted to fit given conditions. Therefore, readers of this book will find clear-cut answers to some of their personal questions, guidelines for arriving at answers to other questions, and at least some direction for seeking out answers to most of their questions about reading program development. This book, then, is a handbook of facts and ideas that must be combined, adapted, and tried out to meet unique needs at particular times. In short, the book is offered as a resource for building dynamic reading programs, not as a blueprint for a preconceived program.

Another reality is that reading programs for the elementary and the secondary school share many needs, resources, and responsibilities, but each has some that are unique. Because this is a handbook for both levels, we discuss aspects of program development that are shared by both without reference to level. We

also identify and discuss separately those aspects of program de-
velopment that seem to be different for elementary and secon-
dary schools. We have, however, chosen to stress the similarities
more than the differences because teachers, supervisors, and spe-
cialists at all academic levels are working with the same process
and are trying to attain the same goal of having every student re-
alize his or her full reading potential. But equally important is
the fact that teachers, supervisors, and specialists who participate
in reading program development must frequently work at both
academic levels. In fact, as such concepts as *individualized instruc-
tion, continuous progress,* and *mainstreaming* gain impetus, the line
that separates the elementary from the secondary school is di-
minished, especially insofar as the reading curriculum is con-
cerned. Although teachers, supervisors, and specialists may con-
tinue to focus their work at one academic level, their need for
knowledge of all levels becomes increasingly important.

FROM THEORY TO PRACTICE

Like teaching, program development requires the application of
philosophy and theory to practice. Program developers who
know only philosophy and theory are not fully prepared for their
jobs. On the other hand, a study of case histories, descriptions of
programs, and procedures for building certain kinds of programs
is not sufficient preparation for facing the uncertainty of future
needs and becoming involved in the decision-making process.
Therefore, we have attempted to include philosophy, theory,
opinion, research findings, and practical concerns in our discus-
sions because decision making and program development
require a sensible melding of all these ingredients. The readers'
task is to put them together to meet personal challenges.

One way for teachers, supervisors, and specialists to prepare
for working with actual problems that test their beliefs, theoreti-
cal background, and practical knowledge is to practice with some
tough ones. The final chapter in this book presents eleven mul-
tifaceted problems that should present a real challenge. We offer
solutions for each problem in eleven coordinated responses.
Readers can test their problem-solving abilities and then com-
pare their solutions with the authors'.

The problems can be used most effectively if they are saved
until all the chapters have been studied. Although each problem
is keyed to specific chapters, the complexity of the problems
makes responding to them easier and more productive if the en-
tire book has been studied first. In courses on reading program

development, the problems can be used effectively as a final activity. Students in the course form study groups, and each group is assigned one or more problems. The group prepares a response to its assigned problem or problems and makes a presentation to the entire class. After each presentation, the entire class—including the presenters—reads the response in this book and compares the solutions. Alternatively students can prepare responses individually and then compare them to those of the authors. However they are used, the problems should help students bring their philosophies, theoretical knowledge, and experiential backgrounds together in the search for solutions to practical problems related to reading program development.

## About the program

In the second edition of *Corrective and Remedial Teaching* (1973), Otto, McMenemy, and Smith drew a distinction between *developmental program* and *developmental teaching:*

> The term *developmental program* generally has a broad meaning, whereas the meaning of *developmental teaching* usually is somewhat more restricted. Typically, the goal of the developmental program is achievement in the basic school subjects that approaches the limit of each pupil's capacity. Thus, the developmental program subsumes the entire curriculum at all grade levels as well as specialized instructional programs designed for pupils with particular needs. Developmental teaching, on the other hand, usually is designed for the normal child who moves through the school experience without special problems. The result is that when we speak of a school's overall developmental program we typically are speaking not only of regular classroom instruction (developmental teaching) but of special instruction—corrective, remedial, adapted, accelerated—as well. (p. 33)

We have preserved this distinction and the broad definition of the developmental program in this book.

COMPONENTS OF THE READING PROGRAM

The overall developmental reading program as we conceive it is schematically represented in figure 1.1. The essential point is that

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Figure 1.1 **A schematic of the reading program**

| The overall developmental reading program | | | |
|---|---|---|---|

**The overall developmental reading program**

*Goal:* Reading achievement approaching the limits of each person's capacity

**Accelerated instruction**

*Focus:* Enrichment and challenge for bright, well motivated, successful achievers

**Developmental instruction**

*Focus:*

Sequential development of reading skills in phase with expanding reading tasks

**Corrective instruction**

*Focus:* Immediate diagnosis and corrective help to eliminate gaps and minor deficiencies in skill development

**Adapted instruction**

*Focus:* Adaption of pace and expectations in view of the limitations of slow learners

**Remedial instruction**

*Focus:* Intensive diagnosis and special tutoring for the disabled readers

Source: Adapted from Wayne Otto and Richard J. Smith, *Administering the School Reading Program* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1970), p. 28. © 1970 by Wayne Otto and Richard J. Smith.

there should be a single, overall reading program. The several specialized instructional programs are interrelated and contributing but subsidiary parts. We shall define and describe model subsidiary instructional programs, but we encourage teachers, supervisors, and specialists to make their own adaptations.

*The overall developmental reading program*

The ultimate goal of the reading program is reading achievement that approaches the limits of each person's capacity. The focus is upon the individual, not upon groups or grade-level performance, because mean scores of groups can be misleading and

grade-level performance may be beneath the aspirations and capabilities of some individuals and beyond the grasp of others. All instructional efforts are clearly subsumed by the goal of near-capacity achievement for each individual, whether the efforts are essentially classroom developmental or clinic remedial. The overall program must provide a master plan that includes the articulation of objectives and a coordination of instructional efforts. The specifics of the master plan—objectives, administrative arrangements, specialized personnel—are discussed in detail in the chapters that follow. They must, of course, be arranged in ways that are appropriate and practicable in given situations.

There *must* be a master plan. Without it special programs, provisions for specialized personnel, and within-classroom developmental teaching programs are likely to be disorganized. Remedial teaching, for example, is isolated drill unless it is coordinated with the learner's experiences in the classroom. Similarly, second-grade reading is only an arbitrary collection of skills unless it is coordinated with first-grade and third-grade reading. Reading coordinators are likely to do little more than fight brush-fires unless they have some overall guidelines. With a well-conceived overall plan, the whole can be more than the sum of its parts.

Keeping in mind the need for coordination, we can examine some specific instructional plans within the total program. Subprograms and classification schemes do not necessarily add up to a total program, but a consideration of several aspects can help to clarify the scope of an adequate program.

### Developmental instruction

The focus of developmental instruction is upon the sequential development of reading skills in phase with expanding reading tasks. Schiffman (1966) has stated it well:

> The developmental program involves systematic instruction at all school levels and in all content areas for those who are developing language abilities commensurate with their general capacity levels. This developmental program is the responsibility of every teacher, affects all the pupils, is provided for in the regular curriculum, and is a continuous, ongoing process. A balanced program includes instruction in the basal, curricular and recreational reading areas. (p. 241)

Put another way, *developmental instruction* is the regular classroom teaching program that is pitched to and adequate for

the normal child who moves through the skill development
sequence without complications. This is not to say that any
slapdash approach will do. On the contrary, because develop-
mental instruction carries the main thrust of the overall program,
it should receive major attention in planning and substantial
support in execution. There is still no definitive research to show
that a particular administrative setup (for example, graded or
ungraded, interclass or intraclass grouping) or a particular in-
structional approach (basal, multibasal, experience, self-selec-
tion) is best. Probably there never will be. The most satisfactory
approach is to offer the best possible developmental instruction
with existing resources and personnel. This approach can be suc-
cessful if the emphasis is placed upon the individuals in the
program.

Corrective, accelerated, adapted, and remedial instruction—to
respond to special problems and/or needs—must, of course, be
carefully coordinated with the ongoing developmental program.

### Corrective instruction

The purpose of corrective instruction is to provide immediate
diagnosis and corrective teaching to eliminate gaps and minor
deficiencies in skill development. Offered by the classroom
teacher within the framework of regular developmental instruc-
tion, it is actually an integral part of the general program. It is
differentiated from developmental instruction here mainly to un-
derscore the need for constant assessment of skill development
and prompt provision of additional instruction when needed.
Many skill development problems can be corrected with relative
ease if they are detected and corrected before they lead to more
generalized breakdowns in the skill development process and, in
turn, to the failure-frustration-failure effect that saps motivation
and destroys positive self-evaluation.

Efficient corrective instruction can be provided only if there is
a continual, systematic assessment of individual skill develop-
ment. Once-a-year achievement testing is far from adequate for
spotting problems in skill development. What is needed is a
scheme for constant and specific skill assessment. If teachers are
given assistance in becoming aware of the scope and sequence of
skills involved in the reading process and provided with concrete
bases for making judgments about their pupils' skill develop-
ment status, they will be able to make the assessments. (The mat-
ter of skill-based teaching is discussed in detail in chapter 3.)

Corrective instruction, which is provided within the frame-
work of regular developmental instruction, is used when the
need is detected and for the individuals who need it. Thus, a