THE DEVELOPMENT OF LITERACY: PRACTICE AND INTENT

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THE DEVELOPMENT OF LITERACY: PRACTICE AND INTENT

by

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On the first day in the new school year all the teachers in one private school received the following note from their principal:

Dear Teacher:

I am a survivor of a concentration camp. My eyes saw what no man should witness:

Gas chambers built by learned engineers.
Children poisoned by educated physicians.
Infants killed by trained nurses.
Women and babies shot and burned by
high school and college graduates.

So I am suspicious of education. My request is:

Help your students become more human. Your efforts must never produce learned monsters, skilled psychopaths, educated Eichmanns.

Reading, writing, arithmetic are important only if they serve to make our children more humane. (Ginott, p. 18)

I TAUGHT THEM ALL

I have taught in high school for ten years. During that time I have given assignments, among others, to a murderer, an evangelist, a pugilist, a thief, and an imbecile.

The murderer was a quiet little boy who sat on the front seat and regarded me with pale blue eyes; the evangelist, easily the most popular boy in the school, had the lead in the junior play; the pugilist lounged by the window and let loose at intervals a raucous laugh that startled even the geraniums; the thief was a gay-hearted Lothario with a song on his lips; and the imbecile, a soft-eyed little animal seeking the shadows.

The murderer awaits death in the state penitentiary; the evangelist has lain a year now in the village churchyard; the pugilist lost an eye in a brawl in Hong Kong; the thief, by standing on tiptoe, can see the windows of my room from the county jail; and the once gentle-eyed little moron beats his head against a padded wall in the state asylum.

All of these pupils once sat in my room, sat and looked at me gravely across worn brown desks. I must have been a great help to those pupils -- I taught them the rhyming scheme of the Elizabethan sonnet and how to diagram a complex sentence. (Schorling, 1949, p. 29)

ABSTRACT

This thesis is a response to what has been popularly termed the "literacy crisis." The concept of literacy is examined in historical perspective. Subsequently, a humanistic conception of literacy is presented.

A practical application of literacy instruction theory is provided through the description of an innovative curriculum project carried out in 1979-1980. While this project addressed the needs apparent in a specific school context, implications for any secondary school curriculum were made evident.

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This thesis would never have been completed without the continuous love and support offered me freely by my parents, my family and, in particular, my wife Debbie.

To Dr. Frank Wolfe I extend a sincere and humble thank you. After fourteen years of schooling, I came to your class and learned to read.

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CHAPTER ONE

THE NATURE OF LITERACY

The Literacy Crisis - Fact and Fiction

> There have been horror stories in the press indicating that significant numbers of high school graduates are both illiterate and unable to perform (such) simple everyday tasks. (Crain and Watson, 1984, p. 28)

During the past twenty years articles in the popular press and in professional publications have focused on what has come to be called the "literacy crisis." One writer who addressed this issue was Malcolm Scully in 1974:

> Stories of students who can't write or who are functionally illiterate come not only from two-year colleges and four-year institutions with open admissions, but also from private colleges and major public institutions that have traditionally attracted verbally skilled students. (p. 1)

Scully provided evidence from a survey of English department chairpersons, conducted by the Association of Departments of English. Before long the popular media took up the cry. In November of that same year Phillip Hager noted:

> Of the 2,718 new students admitted to Berkeley this year, a record number - 48% - was found to need remedial instruction in Basic English Composition on the basis of a three page text. (p. 6)

An outpouring of articles from newspapers and magazines including the Christian Science Monitor, the Wall Street Journal, the New York Times, Time, Newsweek, Yale Alumni Magazine, Harper's, and the National Observer, followed. The well-known article entitled "Why Johnny Can't Write" was perhaps the most controversial:

> If your children are attending college, the chances are that when they graduate they will be unable to write ordinary, expository English with any real degree of structure and ludicity. If they are in high school and planning to attend college, the chances are less than even that they will be able to write English at the minimum college level when they get there. If they are not planning to attend college, their skills in writing English may not even qualify them for secretarial or clerical work. And if they are attending elementary school, they are almost certainly not being given the kind of required reading material much less writing instruction that might make it possible for them eventually to write comprehensible English. (Skells, p. 58)

The United States was not the only country dispensing the nausea. In Great Britain a six hundred page study of the state of English in the schools revealed that the level of literacy among British students had declined from about 1970-1975. A nineteen-member committee recommended:

> That a national center for language education be established, one concerned with the teaching of English from infancy to advanced studies. (Council - Gram, National Council of Teachers of English, 36, 1975, p. 23)

In such fashion, the wave swept over much of the industrialized world, including Canada. In Newfoundland, reading instruction has been a foremost concern since a 1963 Newfoundland Department of Education Newsletter attributed the highest dropout rate in Canada to "weakness in reading." Little has changed. Twenty-one years later the most recent comprehensive report on student retention in Newfoundland and Labrador identified "low scholastic and reading ability" as a significant concern. (Leaving Early - A Study of Student Retention in Newfoundland and Labrador, 1984).

Our post-secondary institutions continue to claim that entrants do not possess the skills to generate satisfactory written text, while performance on minimal competency tests (public exams) seems to reinforce such views.

The subsequent demand for public accountability is nowhere more heartfelt than by the high school English teacher who must implement and complement a range of language arts courses. Whether he wishes to accept the role or not, he is the expert who necessarily assumes a coordinating position for the development of the literate graduate.

Certainly, "language across the curriculum" strategies are fully recognized as valuable and even necessary. However, these too often translate into periodic corrections pencilled in on student writing, upholding the rather vague tenets of something loosely referred to as "good grammar." Such haphazard efforts miss the mark; teachers do not understand their roles in language teaching with respect to literacy training.

Genuine concern for the development of literate graduates has metamorphosed into the pursuit of high pass rates on public exams. A powerful numbers game has surfaced at all levels of the system; as long as a high percentage of students receive at least minimal pass test scores, satisfaction is generated. Consequently, standards are shifted, marks are juggled, and content cramming becomes a common activity. As the school year moves to its close, classrooms come to resemble battle strategy summits where "how to pass" is the daily concern. Under the

circumstances, it is not surprising that "language across the curriculum" must fall by the wayside. Content must be covered, retaught, and rehearsed - there is no time for anything else. Development of language facility occurs, if at all, in spite of the system - not because of it. In the final analysis, snippets of content are deemed acceptable. Predictably, the plea for literacy skills instruction is turned back to the English Department.

Unfortunately, English teachers may find themselves in much the same situation. A case in point is the recent implementation of an oral literature course in the revised high school program. Folk Literature 3203 has become a home for the weaker student who had not demonstrated proficiency in traditional literature courses and more often than not had completed general stream language courses. (The 1984-85 Folk Literature class at Queen Elizabeth Regional High School included thirty-two students. One had an academic background; ten were general students; thirteen had received remedial attention; and eight had spent at least two years in special education). The approach seemed plausible - materials could be easily pulled from the richly oral Newfoundland setting, meeting students' needs through their natural strengths; that is, colloquial language skills. An immediately identifiable concern was whether the experience of oral literature could ever be demonstrated through the pen and paper instruction which was necessary to satisfy public exam standards. The worst fears were realized when the course software arrived, packed with reams of material to be memorized (i.e., lists of characteristics pertaining

to particular genres). The course became rather intimidating for students and teachers alike. A teacher who decides to ignore the hovering demands for high pass rates and concentrate on his students' needs is opening the door to recrimination. Certainly this course will improve; it is now in a stage of relative infancy. (For the 1985-86 school year versions of Beowulf and the Vinland Sagas, both scholarly renditions, have been dropped from the program). But at present it remains a demonstration of the original point here.

Folk Literature 3203 can provide the opportunity for students to exercise and develop their oral/aural language skills and to become more appreciative of these skills as demonstrated by others. Furthermore, an understanding of the intangibles associated with one's culture as realized in the oral tradition may be encouraged. However, the likelihood of either consequence may be remote when regurgitation of assigned content is the focus of evaluation.

One is puzzled as to why our curriculum has continued to move in such a direction in the light of so much concern about literacy. Two particular questions are relevant: What does Western society expect of a high school graduate? What are we actually referring to when we coin the term literacy?

Bernstein has suggested that educational failure is often:

> ...in a real and very deep sense, language failure. The child who does not succeed in the school system may be one who is not using language in the ways required by the school. (Halliday, 1973, p. 18).

He is referring to a mismatch between the student's linguistic capabilities and the demands that are made upon them. Ironically, our present system of evaluation tends to inhibit instruction which might satisfactorily attend to this cacaphony.

> Educators often fall back on statements of objectives (minimum competencies, essential learner outcomes) that are limited to the literacy skills that can be assessed by using standardized tests. (Beach and Pearson, 1977, p. 3)

This development is intimately related to deeper cultural trends.

Western society has developed the notion that a satisfactory existence can only be achieved if a person can function in the world of work. The underlying goal of instruction at the high school level has become the attainment of skills which satisfy job qualifications or at least the requirements for admittance to a post-secondary institution as a precursor to employment opportunity. This development is closely linked with our attention to materialism as realized through increasing production.

> Improvements in the Gross National Product and the national standard of living are easy to measure and almost universally applauded. Two chickens are an improvement over one chicken ... A ten-room house is an improvement over a five-room house. (Hardison, p. 119)

This Faustian impulse has been written in the gospel of progress. It is spread by mass advertising which first became possible with the increase of mass literacy during the nineteenth century and reassures industrial man that each new possession is a new increment of happiness, a step toward an elusive called "success." After World War II rapid changes in the occupational

and social structure created sharp new demands for education as many more opportunities for employment in such fields as education, health, recreation, social services, administration, accounting, and engineering surfaced. Jobs requiring no schooling became few in number.

> Schools are now expected to educate all (or nearly all) children rather than to sort out high performers ... and to encourage members of that group alone to go on with their education. (Bailey and Forsheim (Eds.), p. 198)

However, Tyler may have misjudged the capacity of the job market to satisfy such a belief system. Our present economic woes have dictated that a secondary or post-secondary education does not guarantee a job. A terrible irony has become apparent; no matter what it is that the schools actually do they are necessarily seen as having failed. There is simply no confidence that formal education provides people with the means to satisfy their materialistic urges.

One may be moved to question how the schools may better function to meet job market needs. On the other hand, it becomes frightening that our students are too often singularly motivated by the aforementioned concerns.

This is not to deny the distinct connection between self-understanding and work. John Street (1983) described the direct effect which work has on the self-perception of an individual. Ideally, the work place allows for freedom of expression, self-development, and equality. Ideally, industrial society condones

participation as a way to increase both the efficiency of the enterprise and the responsibility of the workers.

As we move from an industrial society to an information society, the capacity of work to satisfy certain human urges remains.

Toffler (1983) in Previews and Premises agrees that education is most often equated with employment opportunity. He advocates a shift in the direction of education to meet the needs presented by his "computer cottage." This is sound enough if one accepts that the individual must deal with change in a functional sense with respect to the work place. However, there is a missing link between this and Toffler's original premise as presented in Future Shock.

In his premier effort, Toffler saw individuals as transient; their goal was one of self-identity. They found themselves cut off from rewarding personal relationships and were not satisfied with the quasi-solution of traditional male/female marriage. The result was an upswing in group marriages, homosexuality, and other innovative lifestyles. Ten years later, Toffler's world is still "on the move." However, the movement is that of the urban dweller, commuting hours daily to meet employment demands. The vague ideals of the sixties have been seemingly abandoned with possibly little gain towards satisfaction of personal needs. The long-haired hitch-hiker now wears an Oxford collar and is a Toyota-driving yuppie. Certainly there is something positive about a computer cottage industry which neatly accommodates

an information society. There may be greater possibilities for the development of community through interpersonal communication. The question remains: Will the individual be able to take advantage of these possibilities? One is obliged to return to Mill (1910):

> The firm foundation is that of the social feelings of mankind; the desire to be in unity with our fellow creatures, which is already a powerful principle in human nature, and happily one of those which tend to become stronger, even without express inculcation, from the influences of advancing civilizations. (p. 29)

Unfortunately, as Goudzwaard (1979) pointed out, a shift from lasting personal bonds towards ties with things is seen in all facets of our existence including leisure, sexuality, and work.

There remains the impression that we are involved with the production of literate graduates. At the core is a misconception of what the term "literacy" actually entails.

> It is assumed that the ability to function in the world of work consists of a set of easily definable literacy skills which can be taught in the schools (Beach and Pearson, 1977, p. 1).

Demanding skills attainment and content mastery which can be demonstrated on minimal competency tests is not demanding literacy.

Literacy - A Definition

> ... when one takes a close look at what our schools are actually doing, it turns out they are not very interested in literacy at all. If schools were teaching literacy they would in effect be educating students in the rational uses of language. (Postman, 1973, p. 83)

Postman's view is acceptable pending the qualification of a rational use of language. However, he did perceive an important

difference between the attainment of skills and the ability to apply these skills. His distinction between literacy and letteracy is widely accepted.

> In everyday usage the term literate has two main ideas, one referring to the ability to read and one referring to wideness of education, and both these uses are relative to cultural experiences. (Stubbs, 1980, p. 14)

Permeating such comments is the notion that the attainment of letteracy precedes literacy in a cause-effect linear relationship. In this sense it seems that the person who has achieved some competency in the three "R's" is able to make well reasoned independent decisions. This can be traced to the liberalistic ideals of John Stuart Mill (1861):

> I regard it as wholly inadmissable that any person should participate in the suffrage without being able to read, write and I will add perform the common operations of the arithmetic.

Mill's ideas must be understood in terms of the context in which they were uttered; such is true of any definition of literacy. For example, historically there has been noticeable change in the instruments by which literacy has been measured. During the period 1750-1850 the ability to write one's name was an accepted standard. From 1850-1900 a person was required to demonstrate familiarity with passages from great literature. World War I brought with it comprehension tests for prospective army entrants, and by 1950 similar tests had been adopted for students. (Myers, 1984)

It is not this writer's intention to provide or validate a method for measuring the skills component of literacy. The importance of context is the overriding factor here. (There is little doubt that today's high school graduates may be considered literate by past standards). Rather, the focus must turn to a more complete rendering of the alternate arm of literacy - this world view, which is believed to follow so closely on the heels of skills attainment. This relationship is not as clearcut as one might believe.

> It would seem to be more correct to say that by teaching a man to read and write, you teach him to read and write. He has learned mechanical skills but the acquisition of these skills in itself gives him no special insight into the creative or advantageous use of these skills. (Pattison, 1982, p. 173)

This is quite the opposite of the theory offered by the late Malcolm X.

> I have often reflected upon the new vista that reading opened to me. I knew right there in prison that reading had changed forever the course of my life. As I see it today, the ability to read awoke inside me some dormant craving to be alive. (Pattison, 1982, p. 134)

Actually, his curiosity was not a direct result of his ability to read. His curiosity was energized through his oral interaction with the man who became his mentor, Elijah Mohammed. His new-found interest in reading was an avenue by which his curiosity could be satisfied. As Pattison (1982) suggested:

> Literacy can only alter our lines when some small voice urges us on to seek change. This maxim helps explain why high school graduates are often dull witted even though they can read and write. No voice invited them to take up the book. (p. 136)

Pattison's comment obviously complicates the issue. The students who demonstrate letteracy (most often understood as literacy) may in some ways be no better off than the students who cannot demonstrate letteracy. However, there are ways to alter this dilemma and the necessary theory has been developed.

The 1960s provided one of the most important educational developments to date. Attention was given to the effects of inductive versus deductive thinking as it relates to learning. This development came about through curriculum experimentation that lent itself to inductive learning. In deductive thinking the student infers concepts from information prescribed for him. He is required to study through methods organized by the teacher and materials furnished by the schools. The teacher and the materials are the authorities from which inferences must be made. Lesson plans, assignments, and formal testing procedures reinforce the authority role of the teacher and text. The student arrives at a point where he achieves competency on a measure external to himself. This is in effect what Matson (1973) referred to as:

> Ameaningful thought or inquiry ... It presumes that knowledge is an almost automatic result of a gimmerickery, an assembly line ... It assumes that inquiring action is so rigidly and fully regulated by rule that in its conception of inquiry it often allows the rules to displace their human users. (p. 81)

Inductive thinking places emphasis on the student's discovering for himself what he needs to know through a heuristic process. This does not mean that the authority of teachers or materials is

discarded. Nor does it dismiss the usefulness of practice and skills development. It is, in essence, a healthy attitude of self-motivated learning. To quote Matson (1973) on meaningful thinking:

> There is an organic determination of the form and substance of thought by the real properties of the object, the terms of the problem. And these are real in the fullest most vivid electric, undeniable way. The mind caresses, flows joyously into and around the relational matrix defined by the problem. There is a meeting of persons and object or problem. (p. 81)

Still, this meeting can only be fruitful if the necessary skills are present by which the individual may examine what is there. Inductive or meaningful inquiry is then an awakening of consciousness which can turn to letteracy for fulfillment. The cultivation of literacy can only occur within this dual framework.

The unifying bond is language. Essentially, we are concerned with the shaping of the self through interaction with others - very much a language mediated process.

Attitude, Motivation and Need

The nature of the link between students' attitudes and achievement has been debated countless times. Byrne (1984) postulated a triangular relationship binding thinking, motivation, and self-concept as intangible factors which in some part determine achievement. In diagram form, this approach is envisioned as:

Self-Concept

Motivation

Thinking

This writer is moved to agree. However, the attempted trisection of these is a mental exercise which leads to an inevitable conclusion - they are inseparable, perhaps synonomous. We must consider how the classroom teacher may approach the cultivation of a positive attitude in the learner. For present purposes this writer will hereafter regard all three elements of Byrne's configuration as one holistic notion.

Goudzwaard (1979) identified growing ties with things rather than persons as a characteristic of present society. This seems directly related to the egocentric theory of perceptual knowledge presented by traditional epistemology. Things may be easily manipulated. They are passive receptors of one's actions and in this fashion pose little threat to one's security. They become an extension of one's personality - a presentation of what I see as 'me.' The automobile is an obvious example. As discussed previously, Western society seems highly motivated by this materialism.

A more desirable mode of consciousness would direct individuals towards the communion of interaction with others. We must pursue:

> the ultimate datum ... not the pure ego or the solitary 'I,' but I with others - we. (Banerjee, 1963, p. 30)

Banerjee (1963) does not dismiss the tie between the 'I' and itself as meaningless. He accepts Descartes' famous dictum as a starting point. However, he has qualified this acceptance.

> The 'I' is a person, not unto itself but unto other persons ... 'I am' as <u>others are</u>. Thus the affirmation of the 'I' as a person presupposes the affirmation of others as persons. (p. 34)

Students demonstrate this schema daily. As Kegan (1974) in Chomsky (1976) pointed out, much of the time the only way a child can tell if he is progressing adequately towards a goal is by checking to see how other children his age are doing. If he is advancing at the same rate as they are he feels confident and continues to work. If he perceives he is far behind, he is apt to conclude that he is incompetent and ceases investing effort. Thus the individual seeks reinforcement from his peers.

Hiebert's (1983) configuration is worth noting here. In reading theory, we often speak of the rapport which must develop between student and teacher, the coming together of student and text, and the multivarious relationships between student and peers. One must emphasize the effect of compounding these factors.

Teacher

Student

Peers

Text

Our schools are founded on the principle of healthy competition. Ironically, this competition may lead to the isolation of underachievers (whether through conscious ability grouping by administration or staff or within the heterogenously aligned classroom) and a corresponding decrease in the motivation which is so much a part of literacy.

A. S. Neill presented a romantic ideal of motivation and natural behaviour.

> The alienated student according to this point of view comes to school in psychological fetters. Not until the fetters are removed can the process of inner development go forward. Education is not an imposing of standards but a removing of barriers ... In other words, motivation is natural and lack of it a sickness contracted from family, society, and a perverse educational system. (Hardison, 1972, p. 99)

It would seem that while our schools may potentially undermine an individual's spirit, the process may have begun shortly after his ejection from the womb. For the teacher, however, the problem is manifested in the classroom and aside from occasional interaction with parents, must be addressed in the classroom setting. Traditionally, it has been dealt with, but in a most dangerous manner.

> A. S. Neill and Charles Silberman warn that our school system is operated through the regular use of intimidation and shame, and gradually dehumanizes its victims, one symptom of this process being that it turns so many of them permanently against learning. (Hardison, 1972, pp. 108-109)

Byrne (1984) suggested that the notion of motivation as a prod was at the root of our misdirection:

> If we accept that it (is) then do we not also accept as axiomatic that our conception of the learner is

> already formed and that we are placing both the student learner and ourselves, the teachers, in opposition? ... Motivation is rather a self maintained presence that all individuals hold to varying degrees. (p. 49)

This more humanistic approach equates motivation with intrinsic individual needs. The teacher, then, must attempt to address students' needs as the key to addressing motivation.

To this end Maslow's Hierarchy of Motivation functions well as a framework of general concerns. These levels of motivation are arranged in the order in which they seem to come into force. For example, the lowest level of motivation - physiological needs - must be fulfilled to some extent (or at least the opportunity to fulfill these needs must be beyond question) if the higher levels of need are to come into play. The possibility of simultaneous multiplicity of needs is accepted. Instruction should always be motivational in the sense that it should fulfill basic needs on as many levels as possible.

Beyond this the teacher should attend to the humanistic concerns which must be the core of his own motivation for teaching. Alice Meil (1961) proposed that we are engaged in teaching for the purpose of developing students as individuals who have acquired the disposition and the skills for obtaining knowledge on their own.

In Newfoundland, our recent provincial election provided a vehicle for the public outcry that teachers are money hungry capitalists who reap fantastic monetary rewards, lounge hedonistically for most of the year, and do little to enhance the develop-

ment of young people. Teachers must shed this attack much as ducks do water and strengthen their own motivation. Legge (1984) offers a pertinent comment:

> There may never be any way found to accurately measure the degree to which the success or failure of a student is related to the quality of teaching and the interpersonal relationships developed between students and teachers. But there is a wealth of evidence for the conclusion that one of the most important elements in the student's school life is the teacher. (p. 13)

Given the stresses of modern existence we cannot always provide young people with ready-made answers and certainly not ready-made professions, careers or occupations. No one can anticipate fully the future course of society. For the student's sake this should be verbalized, explicitly addressing his immediate situation. Seely (1967) said it abruptly: "Level with the kids." The best we can provide is some resiliency, some help in developing Kohlberg's cognitive moral awareness. It is important, however, that while we must make students aware of the real world and its often confounding difficulties we must sustain hope - a belief in what the future can provide.

> If we take away the sparkle of high expectancy from a child's eye we slam a door in his mind. He grows sullen and discontented with himself and others if the future looks devoid of excitement. If with our well meant efforts to deter our young people from wrong we paint too gloomy a picture of the world and its problems, we rob them of the incentive to do well. We lower the perspective of life so that the silhouettes of forboding blot out the horizon. (Allegro, 1970, p. iv)

Unfortunately, the plight of too many of our students is that the blot has already engulfed most expectations. Therefore,

we are faced with a much more difficult task - not merely to sustain hope but to revitalize it.

> Insofar as one wishes to create individuals from the largest possible sphere of inner freedom, the way to do it is to teach people quite explicitly the techniques they might use to free themselves. (Klinger, 1977)

Both Locke and Johnson sensed that language and the use of it is the all important gateway by which literacy must be sought. But this must be taken much further. One has:

> ... to account for the place of written language both in relation to the forms of spoken language and also in relation to the communicative function served by different types of language in social settings. (Stubbs, 1980, pp. 15-16)

Language Competency

A popular misconception is solidly in place. We live in a society where it is possible for a person to retrieve and transmit information while rarely exercising the skills of reading and writing. At the extreme, a force is leading many to believe that reading and writing are therefore outdated or at least are rapidly becoming more and more insignificant.

It is possible, of course, to defend the necessity of competency in these skills simply to satisfy the demands of pen and paper evaluation which dominate our educational system. However, this would not justify instruction in terms of the life of the individual beyond schooling.

As an alternative one may point to the reams of written text generated daily in response to bureaucracy. Friere (1983) and

Postman (1973), among others, point out the need for reading/writing ability as a vehicle for good citizenship. People must know how to read and fill out an infinite variety of applications, tax returns, and the like in order to function in western society. Coupled with this is the role of reading as information source- street signs, labels on consumer goods, appliance manuals, etc.

Stoodt (1981) summed it up well:

> People in today's world not only have more materials to read but they also read for a wider variety of reasons than in the past. Physicians read to learn about new medications and treatments for disease. Lawyers read about current legal decisions that may establish new precedents. Consumers read warranty information for nutritional content on food labels or operational and warranty information in appliance manuals. Voters read voting registration details and policy statements of candidates. Those seeking employment read job advertisements, personnel applications and fringe benefits materials. Travellers read maps, street names, hotel and motel signs and travel guide descriptions of scenic attractions. Reading is also required for one's entertainment and such diversions often involve reading theater and movie schedules and contact reviews. And of course all of us read books, newspapers and magazines for pleasure as well as information each week. Thus if for no other reason one must be able to read because, "What do you do when the television set breaks down?" - oral communication from Jerry Price, September, 1978. (p. 6).

Stoodt (1981) has made one point amply - our existence is intimately intertwined with reading and writing. However, the allusion to Price weakens the argument. What if the television set never breaks down? Surely we are not educating people in specific literacy skills as a secondary back-up system.

Rather, we must pay heed to the ultimate power of the word.

> Symbols that represent events, cognitive operations and relationships serve as the vehicles of thought. Thinking depends to a large extent upon language symbols ... Symbols provide the instructions of thought. (Bandura, 1977, p. 172)

Certainly electronic media have realized their potential for replacing written communication as a source of information to some degree. They will continue to do so. Strassman (1983) has outlined the significance of changing communication mediums as they relate to the economic organization and goals of civilization. He suggests that the social and economic challenge of literacy in the future is to achieve global understanding and global communication. This, he feels, can only occur through carrier languages capable of cementing international relationships by overriding national and cultural content. These languages, of course, are the stuff of software packages which link human beings and computers. Thus, the understanding of the content, syntax, and grammar of computer programming is conceived as the primary component of literacy in the electronic age - "the new literacy." However, this "new literacy" does not supplant the necessity of language as the most significant learning for the human being ... Language is a basic tool for thinking, problem solving and other more complex activities.

In this sense, technology does not move towards replacing language - it merely provides some means for using forms of language more efficiently.

> Milton united the classical literacy of the medieval church with the revolutionary literacy of the Protestant Reformation. In our own day we will have to learn to

> master the methods and styles of the old print literacy and adopt them to the creative impulse of the new electronic media. An official literacy closely allied with print tries desperately to maintain its authority in the force of a new literacy tied to electronics. (Pattison, 1982, p. 117)

This writer respectfully suggests that maintaining authority should not be the concern. Rather, the sense of literacy as established in this paper and electronic literacy must be seen as two necessary but distinct elements of our developing civilization. Each will function only in recognition of the power of the other.

The Issue of Instruction

Language facility is demonstrated in four identifiable skills - reading, writing, listening, and speaking. They are intimately related; proficiency in one is often reflected by proficiency in the others. Reading instruction best functions when these skills are not regarded as isolated but as interdependent and non-linear in that oral language facility does not precede written language facility in any way other than a chronological development for first-language learning. Stubbs (1980) offers the following schemata:

Language: ABSTRACT SYSTEM

SPEECH/WRITING: Realizations of language in different media.

He emphasized that a theory of literacy could not avoid a discussion both of how written-language works and what it is used for. Both speech and writing are seen as representations of

language with corresponding approach strategies which must be taught to "readers."

There are obvious repercussions for early language instruction. Since written language is a representation of oral language, readers may not decode from visual symbols to sound symbols. Rather, one might decode at the level of syllables, morphemes, or words.

A theory of reading may, of course, select a specific strategy. Not surprisingly, a plethora of techniques and partial theories abound.

> The consensus view at present appears to be that exclusive reliance on any single technique is a mistake. After waves of enthusiasm and disillusionment for different approaches to the teaching of reading, the consensus now seems to be that there is no single best way to teach reading ... the use of such terms as eclectic approach or mixed method amounts to a tacit admission that there is no coherent theory that works ... (Stubbs, 1980, p. 7)

> The suspicion remains that the psychological and psycholinguistic factors on which the bulk of research has been done are quite easily swamped by much more powerful social and cultural effects such as the learner's motivation, the value which the community places on literacy or on education as a whole, or simply the skill of individual teachers. (Stubbs, 1980, p. 8)

The student reaches high school having demonstrated a minimal competency in language use. However, he has quite likely not examined the relative advantages of the various mediums of language and consequently is not motivated to develop his proficiency in any. Skills related to reading are quite different from those involved in speaking, and instruction must necessarily address

these differences. Furthermore, the demands of context make possible a variety of strategies within each medium: speaking formally as opposed to informally, reading fiction for pleasure as opposed to reading a geography text in preparation for an exam.

Most importantly, students should experience language, in whatever medium, as a vehicle for meaning - of making sense of what is there. The remedial student has often suffered from a lack of such reasoning.

> Many students identified as having reading problems in high school struggle to get every word right, drawing on all their resources of phonics and in this way they may succeed. But they show no apparent concern for meaning and no evident expectation that sense has any bearing on what they are trying to do. As a cure for this disability, they may often be removed entirely from any possibility of reading meaningful text and returned to a meaningless form of beginning reading. (Frank Smith, p. 391)

How then should we approach these students? The most promising research comes from the areas of cognitive and developmental psychology which offer a number of theoretical frameworks speaking to the classroom teacher. The effects have been felt in every niche of the educational spectrum.

Jean Piaget in <u>The Growth of Logical Thinking from Childhood to Adolescence</u> (1958) and in subsequent offerings identifies four stages of cognitive development in children: the sensory-motor, preoperational, concrete, and formal. He suggests that all normal young people move towards cognitive potential and can achieve the final stage if the proper stimulation is realized. Certain kinds of teaching are not suited to certain levels. He

receives much support; however, there are dissenters. Kohlberg (1981), for one, felt that Piaget's fourth stage was not a sufficient condition for obtaining the highest moral level. Vygotsky's (1978) tri-level formation included the notion that the initial stage may be retained as an individual moves onward. James Moffet (1968) drew on developmental psychology to suggest that language arts instruction progresses through recording to reporting to generalizing to theorizing.

One is compelled to regard persons as being at various stages of moral and cognitive development - certainly a complex consideration for classroom instruction. Lack of achievement by an individual may be attributed to his not having reached the necessary stage for which specified instruction was intended.

There are other complicating factors. Julian Jaynes (1977) addresses the notion of right brain - left brain dominance with regards to the functional origins of poetry. Winterowd (1978) seems convinced that it is possible to predict brain lateralization on the basis of prose style. It is plausible then that the success of various styles of language instruction may not work for certain individuals because of the pathological make up of the individual brain. In the same light male and female brains seem to operate differently. Goleman (1978) specified different levels of electrical activity in different brain areas noting that certain enzymes that affect the transmission of neurotransmitters are suppressed by estrogen. In another corner, Epstein

was much concerned with "proper timing" in the sense that cognitive development is enhanced if instruction matches brain development.

In spite of concentrated research in these areas, one is obliged to accept that there is much more to be learned before the pragmatics of the everyday classroom can be directly addressed. Chall (1978) states:

> The greatest danger of all is that what has been learned about teaching and learning from educational research and practice may be abandoned in the rush to study the effects of various neurological functions. Some students may not learn to read and write well not because they are right brained or left brained but because they have not been taught well. (p. 376)

Falk (1979) similarly provides perspective:

> Children acquiring a language require a lengthy exposure to it before they master it themselves. They learn holistically, unconsciously in a significant content where they have an intense need to communicate; their syntactic patterns develop through a process of hypothesis forming and testing; ... they vary in strategies and rates of development. (p. 445)

We should not obviously disregard the information which psychology has provided. Rather, we must hold it in pocket, making reference when a felt need arises. Our primary concerns remain with the classroom where the intricacy of psychological and sociological factors affecting the learning process may be overwhelming. James Tanner (1981) has adopted such a view. There are no magical answers to account for how and how well a student learns.

However, one may be encouraged to offer possibilities. What follows is a possibility as experienced in the school setting.

CHAPTER TWO

THE CLARENVILLE PROJECT

Introduction

By the latter stages of the 1978-1979 school year, the staff of Clarenville Integrated High School had grown concerned about a group of approximately thirty grade eight and nine students. The group was destined to become the 9-4 class of 1979-1980, in line with the heterogeneous grouping scheme used at the school (see Figure 1).

Grade	Class	Designation
8	1	Homogeneous
8	2	Homogeneous
8	3	Homogeneous
8	4	Homogeneous
8	5	Homogeneous
9	1	Academic
9	2	Academic
9	3	Academic
9	4	General
9	5	General
10	1	Academic
10	2	Academic
10	3	Academic
10	4	General
10	5	General
11	1	Academic
11	2	Academic
11	3	Academic
11	4	General

Grouping Scheme 1979-1980
Clarenville Integrated High School
Figure 1

Nine of the students would be repeaters; the remainder were from various homogeneously grouped grade eight classes. According

to course area grade scores and the subjective evaluations of classroom teachers, the entire group demonstrated striking weaknesses in language facility and exhibited negative self-concepts. Generally, they had been labelled "poor readers" with a host of weak attitudinal and ability-related characteristics.

A recent study of student retention in the Newfoundland school setting identified factors which contribute to a student's decision to leave school early. (Leaving Early - A Study of Student Retention in Newfoundland and Labrador, St. John's, Newfoundland, August, 1984). These include:

- Failure to achieve in regular school work.
- Grade level placement two or more years below average.
- Irregular attendance.
- Dislike of teachers and principals.
- Low scholastic and reading ability.
- Unhappy, non-supportive family situations.
- Performance consistently below potential.
- Non-participation in extracurricular activities.
- Serious physical or emotional handicap.
- Disciplinary problems.
- Pregnancy.
- Delinquency.

Interestingly, with the exception of the items pertaining to serious physical handicap and pregnancy, these very same concerns had been voiced in description of the 9-4 class. We were dealing

with a group of students who quite likely would not finish a high school education.

The administration was quite dismayed over predicted pass-rates for the group as they encountered the senior high school curriculum. Consequently, the school's English department was approached to develop a special program which would address the vaguely identified language-related weaknesses. The goal was to raise scores on teacher made and standardized tests across the curriculum.

Predictably, teachers were reluctant to suggest what might be done and were unwilling to assume responsibility for such a program. Eventually the least experienced English teacher on staff accepted the task; others had exercised their right (by seniority) to refuse. This teacher had no academic back- ground in secondary school reading instruction and, in fact, had taught for only one year.

An increase in student population made possible the hiring of one additional English teacher. The administration sensed the possible advantages of some team-teaching in the 9-4 program and a suitable candidate was sought out. As the successful applicant, this author arrived with one course in reading instruction and no teaching experience beyond that dictated by degree program requirements.

By September, the stage was set for what is termed here <u>The Clarenville Project</u>.

Initial Planning

In early September we sat down with the English department head to establish a procedural framework for the program. It was made clear that the development and implementation of such would be totally in our hands.

Initially, grave reservations about the size of the group were expressed. While the team-teaching schedule was certainly advantageous in that more one-to-one teacher/student contact would be made possible (see Figure 2), the ratio of students to teachers still seemed too high in light of desired outcomes. Consequently, it was decided that efforts would be made to limit group size, although no immediate decision could be reached as to how this might be logically accomplished.

Discussion then turned to program design. It was agreed that the regular grade nine language/literature curriculum was not adequate for these students; although at some point in the school year (tentatively February) we would have to switch back to this curriculum in order to satisfy the administration's requirements for grade ten.

At this point the sheer magnitude of the task at hand was revealed. In just over four months these students were to be changed from supposedly plodding underachievers to at least successful general stream students.

Recognizing that the class was expected to show improvement across the curriculum, we identified the value of work in content-

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1	Team		Team		T_2				T_2	
2		T_1					Team			
3									T_1	
4			T_2			T_1				
5		Team								
6	T_1						T_1			
7				Team		T_1		T_1		Team

T_1 - Teacher No. 1
T_2 - Teacher No. 2
Team - Team Teaching

Teaching Schedule for 9-4
Special Program
Figure 2

area reading skills. Several possible resource texts were named including Robinson's (1977) Improving Reading in Every Class, which proved to be quite valuable. As well, the department head had received a class set of the Be A Better Reader series - a content-area approach workbook which we concluded would be helpful. (Elaboration in Appendix A)

Related to this was the consensus that the students likely possessed poor study skills in general. We decided to address this problem by sharing effective study techniques with the group, followed by individual counselling.

Unfortunately, this was about as far as we could go with program design. We believed that the students likely possessed highly developed colloquial language skills in that they encountered little difficulty communicating with family and peers in a relaxed context. However, they were unable to function in the classroom setting. They demonstrated short attention spans and insufficient confidence to speak up voluntarily or to respond adequately when called upon. Furthermore, their written work was practically void of the accepted tenets of "school grammar" in spite of years of traditional classroom instruction. A host of seemingly unanswerable questions followed: How much of this could be remedied in the short time available? What materials could we use to meet the students' needs? How could their self-concept be improved? Was self-fulfilling prophecy a major factor in their lack of achievement or did they simply not possess the ability to cope with the curriculum? We concurred that we needed a qualified

resource person, someone who could help us answer some of these rather difficult questions.

It was made clear that the language arts coordinator at the school board would not be available. After some discussion, it was suggested that Dr. Frank Wolfe, then an Associate Professor at Memorial University of Newfoundland, should be approached. Dr. Wolfe was responsible for the secondary school language and literature methodology courses and also taught several courses in reading instruction. A phone call was rewarded with an enthusiastic response. He agreed to come to the school the following week for a full day workshop and assured us that he would be available for additional assistance as required. He also flatly refused any monetary incentives. He asked that we administer an acceptable classroom reading inventory to the class before he arrived and assured us that the Silvaroli (see Appendix B) which we had on hand would be suitable.

The session with Dr. Wolfe was very informative. He brought forth many workable suggestions and allayed many of our fears. Before the day was over we had agreed on a sequence of operation which incorporated the following: (Results pertaining to implementation are included appropriately).

Limiting Group Size (initial realization of group identity)

The Silvaroli Classroom Reading Inventory (Appendix B) revealed that the group ranged in ability from level two to level eight. We determined that the two students at the lowest level

and the seven at the highest would be moved to other classes. It is important to note that the validity or reliability of the instrument was not in question. We had applied it as an enabling device, acceptable for our purposes. Unexpectedly, great insight as to the strength of the students' group identity became apparent when we approached the students who were to be reassigned.

Dr. Wolfe stressed the need to establish a positive group identity. We conjectured that consistent lack of academic success had moved the students towards passive acceptance of the inevitability of such. They had consequently turned to the achievement levels of their peers as reinforcement for their own results. This defense mechanism had been firmly established; security for each was available within the group setting.

Our suspicions in this regard were strongly confirmed; the response to possible reassignment was uniformly negative. We eventually relented to the students' wishes because we perceived rather positive forces to be acting here. The students were unified and dependent on this communion. We agreed that channeling these attributes towards a purposeful academic enterprise would be a key to success.

Resource Material

Our frustration with an apparent lack of resource material was alleviated with Dr. Wolfe's assurance that everything we needed was already at our fingertips.

Sections from two school-owned SRA laboratories were deemed suitable for work on word recognition skills. (These were used periodically for ten-to-fifteen-minute sessions. See Figure 3).

The Be A Better Reader series would become a regular feature as well. (About twice a week the students worked with their individual booklets). We allowed for wide rate variability. The fact that this material was arranged under content area headings made for convenient long-and-short-term planning.

It was further agreed that the students should get regular opportunities to read materials of their own choice in class time. Our approach was quite similar to current, well documented Uninterrupted Sustained Silent Reading methodology (Legge, 1984) (see Appendix C). A fairly wide range of titles were made available from the school resource center but students were encouraged to bring along personal favourites. The fact that we read during these sessions enhanced student performance. They liked the idea that all of us were working on something together.

Periodically, students submitted critiques of their reading. These were quite short as directed and were rewarded with consistently high grades.

We also decided to generate our own materials in response to perceived student strengths in aural language facility. We would tape passages from popular adolescent fiction and construct comprehension questions for these passages. The students were given the questions, then brought to the school speech laboratory where they would listen to the tapes and respond to the questions. In

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1	T/LAB		T/LAB		T/LAB				2/SW	
2		1 WR/SP					T/WR/SP			
3									1/LAB	
4		2/SW				1/BBR				
5		T/BBR								
6	2/BBR						1/BBR			
7				2/SSR		1/WR/SP		1/SSR		T/REW

SW - Sustained Writing
SSR - Sustained Silent Reading
WR - Word Recognition
SP - Spelling

REW - Reward Session
LAB - Speech Laboratory
BBR - Content Area Reading Skills

Sample
One Cycle Schedule
Figure 3

the same period they would be provided with copies of the passages to read along with the same questions.

This proved to work well. Their interaction with the aural manifest text prior to interaction with the written manifest text boosted the accuracy of their comprehension question responses. They consequently came to feel less and less imtimidated by exposure to written text in general. Later, content area passages were presented following the same sequence. Coupled with skills development through the Be A Better Reader series, this resulted in higher test scores in their content area classes.

It is noteworthy that various subject area teachers became interested in this methodology and generally became more receptive to teaching reading skills appropriate to their particular areas. We have no indication as to how much of this actually went on, but we modestly concur that there was some beneficial effort.

We were aware that the students' reading comprehension levels were much below that posed by standard grade nine textbooks. Fry Readability Level (Appendix D) testing supported this. Consequently, our work in developing comprehension followed a sequential pattern, based on the difficulty level ranking of the passages selected.

At all times we were very honest with the students as to what was being done. We tried to avoid disrespect for the material they encountered since initially it was much simpler than the students were accustomed to. Fortunately, their progress was swift and no problems were encountered.

Student Writing

Dr. Wolfe stressed the importance of having the students write as much as possible. Several of the aforementioned activities incorporated such opportunity. However, we decided to set aside one period per week for sustained writing which could be completed at home.

(We presented a simple step-by-step writing method to the students. Topics were selected and approved so as to encourage efforts in all types of writing development. A loose restriction of one page maximum length for final copy was imposed for the first several pieces.

The students' writing was not criticized for substandard grammar. All comments which were written on their papers were devoted to praise for any and all positive characteristics. We kept a record of common errors which were periodically shared with the class.

Penmanship was quite poor in some cases. This was addressed through individual instruction, although the entire class was encouraged to improve in this regard).

Individual File Folders

A filing system was to be set up with a separate folder for each student. All student written work was dated and placed in these folders. This proved to be quite convenient for reference when we evaluated their progress. Positive reactions were received from both parents and students; they could see improvement.

Self-Concept

As discussed previously, we were very concerned about group and individual attitudes. Dr. Wolfe suggested that we should not avoid verbalizing their special status. Rather, since they were a special group they deserved special rewards. This led to the design of a regular reward feature: one period per cycle was set aside for class-selected activities. All fitted well with other aspects of the program.

Several sessions were spent listening to records and discussing the music and the lyrics.

Others involved informal discussions initiated by the students on a wide range of topics. On several occasions abstract graphics supplied by the Art teacher served as starting points.

A number of gratifyingly popular sessions involved our reading aloud to the group. Selections ranged from newspaper articles to Beowulf.

Our efforts to reward the students for recognized progress proved to be quite rewarding in themselves. The students gained much greater skill at verbal interaction in the classroom setting. This led to a modification of our original plans. After six weeks, we began a public-speaking instructional sequence. Our goal was to have each student address the class for one to two minutes on a topic of his choice. After initial instruction in the basics of oral presentation, each student constructed a short talk on a familiar subject. These were presented in four-student groups. As confidence was attained, the talks were given in

eight-student groups, then sixteen-student groups and finally before the entire class.

In many classrooms the talks would have been judged as poor quality. However, for most of these students it was the first time such an assignment had been undertaken, and they were rewarded with much praise and good grades.

General Evaluation Concerns

As noted in several places the grades which the students received during the program were rather high. Consequently, prior to the shift back to the standard curriculum we advised the students that their marks for English would possibly drop. They accepted this readily; especially since we emphasized that their grades in other subject areas should continue to show improvement. This was, in effect, the case (see Figure 4).

Communication with Parents

Dr. Wolfe advised us to draft a letter to the parents prior to the program's inception, explaining fully what was being attempted. This met with almost universal encouragement, although several parents phoned for further explanation.

Two subsequent letters were sent out, one in November and one in late January, advising the parents of current progress.

No.	Sex	Age	Grade Previous	GRADES RECEIVED															
				Subject	English		Algebra		Geometry		Science		Geography		History		Art	
				Term	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2
1	F	14	8		70	57	57	52	69	74	76	74	67	56	68	78	57	74
2	M	16	9		60	55	38	55	56	50	55	50	37	60	44	50	56	66
3	M	15	9		68	53	85	76	79	67	56	53	64	63	36	44	70	62
4	M	15	9		70	50	54	68	67	67	61	69	43	63	51	52	68	58
5	M	16	9		70	60	85	55	68	61	70	66	75	50	43	40	64	50
6	M	15	9		65	65	80	68	72	71	67	73	67	63	50	50	59	71
7	M	15	9		60	69	88	66	68	57	67	71	67	63	60	52	65	69
8	M	15	8		65	60	73	74	74	72	58	71	77	54	68	65	64	72
9	F	16	9		75	65	35	35	55	50	78	74	57	46	45	50	68	
10	M	14	8		60	53	63	67	58	57	51	51	56	66	51	37	66	62
11	M	14	8		70	51	78	79	59	61	59	51	65	59	39	50	70	52
12	M	14	8		65	60	63	40	51	50	53	62	72	67	52	64	66	79
13	F	16	9		70	60	63	56	53	53	90	71	60	65	50	51	75	73
14	F	15	9		80	85	80	80	75	75	89	77	70	62	58	70	80	79
15	M	14	8		65	55	85	73	69	63	69	72	61	61	47	57	67	69
16	M	16	8		80	60	62	50	60	68	58	55	38	70	72	75	59	70
17	M	14	8		80	68	85	78	70	68	92	84	70	69	65	70	52	48
18	F	16	8		60	60	38	63	70	71	79	67	69	56	45	71	67	50
19	F	17	8		60	50	64	47	61	54	53	57	51	56	40	26	74	52
20	F	17	8		55	73	80	68	65	67	89	84	78	78	73	70	68	68
21	F	14	8		85	55	64	40	54	45	51	51	66	42	52	30	63	60
22	F	14	8		70	60	68	58	55	62	58	64	69	54	62	68	66	58
23	M	15	8		70	65	51	53	62	68	75	80	65	68	71	70	72	66
24	M	14	8		70	46	52	55	50	48	51	53	66	48	43	40	69	53
25	M	14	8		75	43	37	35	51	33	73	66	64	64	63	30	79	52
26	M	14	8		70	45	75	70	66	73	50	45	45	37	26	25	66	58
27	F	15	8		75	64	66	82	62	77	69	71	54	60	55	54	66	63
28	F	15	8		75	70	47	73	56	59	61	68	71	64	63	61	65	
29	M	15	8		70	57	78	81	78	75	73	74	41	51	57	63	65	70
30	M	14	8		70	46	57	60	67	52	42	45	56	61	55	65	69	60
30	11/19																	

Figure 4

Class Schedule

A sample schedule for a typical two-week cycle is included as Figure 3. The total schedule for all courses is included as Figure 5.

Teacher Schedules

The actual teacher schedules are included as Figures 6 and 7.

Comparison of Results

Comparisons of 1979-1980 and 1978-1979 school results are included as Figures 7 and 8.

Program Evaluation

Teacher predictions of academic achievement for class 9-4 suggested that the majority of these students would not complete grade nine. Few were expected to complete grade eleven pass requirements. When first-term results (November 1979) were released, the immediate reaction was one of surprise (see Figure 8). The pass rate for the class was the highest in the school - 100 percent. Out of a total of 210 marks posted for the group, only 19 were below the minimal pass level of 50 percent (see Figure 3). The subsequent staff meeting to address first-term results indicated that all teachers were enthused about the progress which the marks indicated. Something very positive was happening to these students. Not only had their grades exceeded all expectations, but various teachers verbalized a perceived change in the self-concept of the group.

CLASS: 9-4

TIME	DAY 1	DAY 2	DAY 3	DAY 4	DAY 5	DAY 6	DAY 7	DAY 8	DAY 9	DAY 10
9:25 10:05	(229) English	(210) Geography	(229) English	DVS	(229) English	(156) Science	(210) Geography	(156) P.E./ Science	(229) English	Art
10:05 10:45	Art	English	(209) History	DVS	(210) Geography	(203) Mathematics	(229) English	(210) Geography	(156) Science	(210) Geography
10:45 10:55			R	E	C	E	S	S		
10:55 11:35	(156) Science	(203) Mathematics	(156) Science	DVS	P.E./ Mathematics	(210) Geography	Art	(203) Mathematics	(229) English	(203) Mathematics
11:35 12:15	Lunch	Lunch	(229) English	DVS	Lunch	(229) English	(203) Mathematics	P.E./ Science	(203) Mathematics	(156) Science
12:15 12:55	(203) Mathematics	(229) English	Lunch	Lunch	Mathematics/ P.E.	(209) History	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch
12:55 1:35	(210) Geography	(209) History	(203) Mathematics	(203) Mathematics	(209) History	Lunch	(203) Mathematics	Art	DVS	(203) Mathematics
1:35 1:45			R	E	C	E	S	S		
1:45 2:25	(229) English	(203) Mathematics	Art	(209) History	(156) Science	(203) Mathematics	(229) English	Art	DVS	History
2:25 3:05	(203) Mathematics	(156) Science	Art	(229) English	Art	(229) English	(209) History	(229) English	DVS	(229) English

Figure 5

CLASS:

TEACHER: B. Ash

TIME	DAY 1	DAY 2	DAY 3	DAY 4	DAY 5	DAY 6	DAY 7	DAY 8	DAY 9	DAY 10
9:25 10:05	9-4		9-4	"T"	9-4	11-2	10-2	11-2	9-4	11-2
10:05 10:45	10-2	8-4	8-4		11-2	10-2	9-4	8-4	8-4	8-4
10:45 10:55			R	E	C	E	S	S		
10:55 11:35	11-2	10-2	11-2	10-2	8-4	11-2	8-4		10-2	
11:35 12:15	8-4	8-4	9-4	11-2	Lunch	8-4	Lunch	8-4	Lunch Supervision	10-2
12:15 12:55	Lunch	9-4	Lunch	8-4	11-2	10-2	10-2	10-2	Lunch	11-2
12:55 1:35		Lunch	10-2	Lunch	8-4	Lunch		Lunch		Lunch
1:35 1:45			R	E	C	E	S	S		
1:45 2:25	9-4	11-2			10-2		9-4	11-2	11-2	8-4
2:25 3:05	10-2	10-2	11-2	9-4		9-4	11-2	8-4	10-2	9-4

Figure 6

CLASS:

TEACHER: R. Stanford

TIME	DAY 1	DAY 2	DAY 3	DAY 4	DAY 5	DAY 6	DAY 7	DAY 8	DAY 9	DAY 10
9:25 10:05	9-4		9-4	8-2	105/ Phys. Ed.	9-2		9-2	9-2	9-2
10:05 10:45		9-4	8-5	8-5	9-2	8-2	9-4	8-2	8-5	8-5
10:45 10:55			R	E	C	E	S	S		
10:55 11:35	9-2	8-2	9-2		8-2	9-2	8-2	8-5	9-4	8-2
11:35 12:15	Lunch	Lunch	8-2	9-2	8-5	9-4	Lunch	Lunch		8-5
12:15 12:55	8-5	9-4		Lunch	9-2		8-5	8-5	Lunch	9-2
12:55 1:35	Lunch Supervision	8-2	Lunch	8-2	Lunch	Lunch	8-2	8-2	8-2	Lunch
1:35 1:45			R	E	C	E	S	S		
1:45 2:25	8-5	9-2	8-5		8-2	8-2	8-5	9-2		
2:25 3:05	8-2	8-5	9-2	105/ Phys. Ed.	8-5	8-5	9-2	9-4		9-4

Figure 7

First Term Results 1979-80

Number and Per Cent Passes by Class

Class	Number in Class		Number Passing		Per Cent Passing	
	Nov. 78	Nov. 79	Nov. 78	Nov. 79	Nov. 78	Nov. 79
81	33	36	25	36	76	100
82	30	35	21	22	70	63
83	30	36	22	14	73	39
84	32	32	22	16	69	50
85	31	36	17	20	55	56
- - - - -						
91 (A)	31	37	26	36	84	97
92 (A)	82	28	31	27	97	96
93 (A)	39	20	28	17	72	85
94 (A)	42	30	20	30	49	100
95 (G)	32	26	16	16	50	62
- - - - -						
101 (A)	31	28	27	25	87	89
102 (A)	28	36	22	28	80	78
103 (A)	25	33	11	25	44	76
104 (G)	22	18	14	16	64	89
105 (G)		19		11		58
- - - - -						
111 (A)	33	31	29	27	88	87
112 (A)	33	34	18	26	55	76
113 (A)	23	28	16	15	70	54
114 (G)	36		17		47	

Number and Per Cent Passes by Grade

Grade	Number in Grade		Number Passes		Per Cent Passes	
	Nov. 78	Nov. 79	Nov. 78	Nov. 79	Nov. 78	Nov. 79
VIII	156	175	107	108	68	62
IX	176	141	121	126	70	89
X	106	134	74	105	70	78
XI	125	93	80	68	64	73
TOTALS	563	543	382	407	68	75

Figure 8

We were obviously pleased with the situation, but several unanswered questions remained. The students had been on the program a scant six weeks. What influence could we possibly have had in such a short period? The English marks were, in line with our directives, higher than would normally have been realized if the students had been on the regular program. These grades would definitely drop when we returned to the standard curriculum. What would be the effect on overall student achievement? Teachers had been aware that the students were working on a special program. Had some halo effect been realized, moving teachers to boost these students' grades?

In light of these considerations, we proceeded, somewhat tentatively, with the program. In early March 1980 when term two results were released (see Figure 9), student achievement remained at a high level. Eighty-three percent had fulfilled pass requirements. (Four of the five students who did not had failed English. The grade was based on standard procedures for grade nine evaluation and the decline in English grades had been expected). More importantly, scores in other subject areas had been consistent with first-term results. The 9-4 class had demonstrated the ability to succeed academically in the regular classroom. Teachers again actively noted perceived improvement in the attitudes demonstrated by the group. As well, it was indicated that reading and study skills had improved markedly as reflected by test and assignment scores. Most note-worthy were comments as to in-class behaviours; many had become quite active

First Term Results 1980-81 (and Comparison)

Number and Per Cent Passes by Class

Class	Number in Class		Number Passing		Per Cent Passing	
	Nov. 79	Nov. 80	Nov. 79	Nov. 80	Nov. 79	Nov. 80
81	36	31	36	28	100	90
82	35	35	22	19	63	54
83	36	35	14	21	39	60
84	32	35	16	23	50	66
85	36	34	20	24	56	71
			- - - - -			
91 (A)	37	40	36	40	97	100
92 (A)	28	40	27	38	96	95
93 (A)	20	40	17	28	85	70
94 (G)	30	29	30	21	100	72
			- - - - -			
101 (A)	28	34	25	32	89	94
102 (A)	36	35	28	29	78	83
103 (A)	33	36	25	18	76	50
104 (G)	18	30	16	18	89	60
			- - - - -			
111 (A)	31	30	27	30	87	100
112 (A)	34	27	26	23	76	85
113 (A)	28	28	15	21	54	75
114 (G)		36		19		53

Number and Per Cent Passes by Grade

Grade	Number in Grade		Number Passes		Per Cent Passes	
	Nov. 79	Nov. 80	Nov. 79	Nov. 80	Nov. 79	Nov. 80
VIII	175	170	108	115	62	68
IX	141	149	126	127	89	85
X	134	135	105	97	78	72
XI	93	121	68	93	73	77
TOTALS	543	575	407	432	75	76

Figure 9

in discussion and question/answer sessions. In all cases these behaviours were contrary to teacher expectations for these students.

In general, these students were no longer under-achievers with dubious academic ability. Most had become active learners who were registering satisfactory grade scores.

It should be noted that in spite of the rather positive results, the program was discontinued at the end of the 1979-1980 school year. No resources or allocations had been allotted for 1980-1981.

However, in 1982, the administration of the school in retrospect of the program's success attempted to institute a carbon copy procedure.

One ill-prepared individual was provided with a collection of dusty materials, a short report on the project, and forty students. His success was predictably rather limited.

CHAPTER THREE

TOWARD LITERACY

This thesis began with a discussion of literacy instruction as it pertains to our secondary schools. The public sector's demand for literate graduates was revealed to be, in the main, a demand for employment opportunity.

A more humanistic notion of literacy is based on two related concerns: The first, a necessary precursor to the second, is an attitude towards learning as an inductive, heuristic process. The second, a vehicle by which the first may be realized, is language facility. As Shaffer (1978) stated:

> Humanistic conceptions of education (would) generally try to eliminate the distinction between means and ends so that learning is experienced as a source of pleasure in its own right, rather than as an instrument for guaranteeing one's social status in the future. (p. 95)

Unfortunately, our schools are in the rather uncompromising position of being unable to guarantee financial security for graduates. Ironically, competition for grades encourages passivity and regurgitation to satisfy examination standards.

Students who do well in this system are ostensibly rewarded with a range of material and psychological stroking. Few may have attained any appreciable measure of literacy. Students at the other end of the scale are committed to a different scenario. Drew (1974) commented:

> [Those] who do not behave in accordance with the schools' established rules of conduct are labelled unintelligent, hyperactive, obstreperous, disturbed and especially unmotivated. (p. 6)

Motivation may well be the key factor. However, it must be understood in terms of the learner's needs. Generally speaking, Maslow's Hierarchy provides a suitable framework for understanding these needs.

Paul Kurtz (1977) has addressed the needs of students in a rapidly changing society. He has quite correctly identified adaptability as an all important quality. We must prepare students for what may be, providing them with the means to cope with change through the strength of communion with others.

In 1985 this means more than providing students with the basic skills for vocational mobility: It means preparing them for the absence of vocational opportunity and perhaps excessive threatening of personal autonomy.

This kind of adaptability will not be generated in classrooms geared to passive absorption. In this light, adaptability and literacy may be one and the same. (See Banerjee's (1963) - "I with others = we").

Such lofty ideals are present in the writings of more than a few theorists. This writer offers nothing new. Presented is an instance where a group of students who were considered unsalvageable rose to a positive measure of literacy. There is probably no foolproof recipe for success. A recipe presumes the fruits of practice, error, and correction. The Clarenville Project could

not benefit from such. Nobody said to us, "Here's the recipe. Start cooking!" Instead, we generated a project curriculum as we went along.

In the long term only five students from the group did not meet grade eleven pass requirements. Two of these dropped out of school in grade ten. One who had been undergoing psychiatric care for severe emotional disturbances was eventually removed from the school system. Sadly, in a testimony to Shapiro, two of the students were killed in a car accident a few short weeks after graduation.

The success demonstrated through grades and pass results is relatively insignificant in the light of other considerations. While there was no strict experimental design implemented in the present circumstances, there was deployed a sober, reasoned instructional design. No formal statistics were generated - indeed, such could not have been generated given the situational constraints of the particular school setting. In effect, results were not arranged numerically in response to an experimental treatment administered in a controlled environment. All activities involved actual students, actual teachers, and actual materials during an entire academic year.

Still, this investigator questions whether there are any guaranteed treatments in educating for literacy. The magic occurs as a consequence of the utter humanness of the interaction-setting of student, instructor, and curriculum. The changes in attitude exhibited by these students was the critical consequence.

They garnered satisfaction from being able to function in the classroom while becoming literate.

One noteworthy undertaking by the group (as class 11-4) was the presentation of a one-act play before the entire school. It was a ragged performance I am told, but gutsy and sincere. Their faith in each other carried them through.

This writer left Clarenville in 1980. With him went strong feelings of accomplishment tempered with many haunting questions. He had been introduced to the workings of the school and knew that there were some things out of place.

This thesis is written in retrospect and is an attempt to kindle faith in what might be accomplished if one is willing to try. More than that, it is an attempt to identify the working tenets of literacy - not merely the development of skills but the realization of intent.

Literacy: The Underachiever and the Adult

With so much concern over literacy development, it is not surprising that the field of adult education has also been addressed. Recent research offers some interesting observations which are very applicable to the secondary school situation. Two federal government task forces, for example, have identified adult literacy education as a priority concern. The report of the Allmand Commission, Work for Tomorrow (1981), called for a ten-year national right to read program. Perhaps more interesting

are the actual activities which are used in the adult education classroom.

Two surveys by A. Thomas (1976, 1983) suggested that two types of methodologies exist. Material-directed programs rely almost exclusively on commercially published materials prescribed by an outside agency or selected by the teachers. In all of these programs, the materials focus on the sequential development of skills traditionally taught in school literacy programs; for example, word identification, comprehension, grammar, and writing mechanics. Teachers assume managerial roles while students passively work through prescribed exercises. (One is obliged to note the comments of Matson on ameaningful thinking and of this writer on deductive thinking).

In far less common use are teacher-student directed programs where a collaborative atmosphere is prevalent. These evolve on a daily basis as needs are identified. Commercial materials are still used but serve as resource options rather than as complete packages. In effect, this is the strategy used in the Clarenville Project. There are still other considerations.

Margaret O'Brien (1984) pointed out that instructors' and administrators' definitions of <u>literacy</u> are not reflected in classroom practice. Rather, the programs reflect notions of <u>literacy learning</u>. This is a subtle but important distinction. While many instructors and administrators define literacy in a functional sense (the literate person is able to function or cope

in society), there is little evidence of related activities in materials-centered programs.

Of course, definitions of literacy which include references to the reading and writing demands of everyday social life are common as addressed earlier. Hunter and Harman (1979), however, refer to such definitions as conventional definitions. The distinction is worth noting. Conventional literacy is the ability to read, write, and comprehend texts on familiar subjects and to understand whatever signs, labels, instructions, and directions are necessary to get along in one's environment. Functional literacy is seen as the possession of skills perceived as necessary in particular persons and groups to fulfill their own self-determined objectives as family and community members, citizens, consumers, job holders, and members of social, religious, or other associations.

The latter is, of course, much more in line with the concept of literacy as developed by this writer. The literate person has the powers of letteracy as a vehicle for self-determined development.

Many programs emphasize grade-level attainment as a program goal. Consequently, the preparation of the student for the work force or for entry into a work-related training program is a primary or secondary goal. This is the very same focus which has been developed in our secondary schools. A grade ten level is rapidly becoming the minimum requirement for even minimum skill jobs and for entry into job training programs. (Thomas, 1983)

We have come full circle. The standardized tests used by vocational schools and Canada Employment (CEIC) training programs are modelled on traditional school curriculums. The majority of students in these classes are the same ones who could not cope in our secondary schools. Again they meet the very same methodologies which did not satisfy their needs in that former setting.

The Road Taken

With all due respect to Allegro, this is not "the end of a road." We can teach our young people to think critically and to think for themselves. The urge for literacy remains a part of human nature. Faith that it might be attained is the necessary element.

Teachers must reassess their position. The foundations of inductive thinking are facts which form the necessary prelude to investigation. However, increasing constraints on time and classroom space tend to make these facts ends in themselves. This narrow concept of acquisition of basic skills is not literacy. When one teaches towards arbitrary standards, experiences are splintered into component parts so that proficiency in the parts can be ascertained. In this case, the sum of the parts may well not make the whole.

Still, growth and variety are only healthy within the sphere of control; the curriculum must supply coherence. Courses must reflect a conscious educational philosophy rather than a haphazard

list from which students pull choices until they acquire the magic number of credits needed for graduation.

Literacy is a relative quality and must be defined in terms of both the needs of a society and the resources which that society is willing to allocate to it. Beech and Pearson (1977) argued that schools differ considerably in their effectiveness. Citing research, they note that school programs characterized by a well-defined policy, effective leadership, the presence of extra personnel, allocation of sufficient resources for individualization, increased instructional time and positive attitudes towards students result in higher literacy test scores than schools lacking these characteristics. The validity of these test scores in terms of the notion of literacy developed in this paper may, of course, be called to question. As well, many of these emphases are curtailed by lack of financial support, but the ethos which may be created within the four-wall boundary of the classroom is not dependent on such.

Sterile learning environments are created by teachers who narrow instruction to include basic skills only - a tedious approach to learning. For students, affective aspects of the learning situation are the salient characteristics. (Jones and Charnley, 1978; and Thomas, 1976). Students rate the caring attitude of teachers and the individual attention they receive as positive components.

Thomas (1983) found that the majority of students in ABE (Adult Basic Education) classes are young failures of the Canadian

public school system. These students sensed a lack of caring and individual attention in their earlier schooling. As Jones and Charnley (1978), in a British study, pointed out, teachers and administrators look to standardized tests as benchmarks of progress, but students report growth in self-confidence as evidence of progress - perhaps recognizing an element of true literacy.

Postscript

In the 1985-86 school year, this teacher will accept responsibility for the 9-5 general English class at Queen Elizabeth Regional High School. In many ways this class is analogous to the Clarenville group. They present discipline problems, low academic achievement, and weakness in reading. They are products of the system and yet, most assuredly, do possess the abilities to succeed within it. Present curriculum guidelines for grade nine English do not seem adequate to promote this success.

Of course, the Clarenville Project cannot be inserted neatly into the Queen Elizabeth setting. Some strategies which apparently worked there may be dismal failures here. Methodologies will be incorporated at the outset and will change perhaps daily as need dictates. The philosophical underpinnings, however, will remain constant.

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APPENDIX A

BE A BETTER READER

This series is designed to:

(1) improve the basic common skills needed in reading all types of material, and

(2) develop special skills needed for effective reading in science, social studies, mathematics, and literature.

The unit topics are selected because of their appeal to students and because of their frequency of occurrence in junior high and high school textbooks. The skills are those most often needed in studying text and reference books at these levels. The special vocabularies include words common to the most widely used texts in science, social studies, and mathematics. Because of these features, the book may be used effectively for developmental or remedial instruction.

APPENDIX B

SILVAROLI

The CRI (Classroom Reading Inventory) was designed for teachers and students who have not had prior experience with individual diagnostic reading measures. It is composed of two main parts:

Part I - Graded Word Lists, and

Part II - Graded Oral Paragraphs

A Graded Spelling Survey, Part III, is also included. On the average, the teacher should be able to check ten children on Parts I and II in approximately two hours.

The Inventory provides the teacher with information concerning the child's independent, instructional frustration, and hearing capacity reading level. Realistic reading levels including specific word recognition and comprehension abilities may be assessed.

APPENDIX C

U.S.S.R.

Uninterrupted Sustained Silent Reading (U.S.S.R.) or Sustained Silent Reading (S.S.R.) for those who object to the connotations of the first is a structured silent reading program. It refers to a specific time in the timetable when everyone in your school - students, teachers, administrators, etc. - read. Yes, that is all they do. What is the purpose of this reading? Enjoyment. Adults who read recreationally know the enjoyment that reading brings. For many children reading is only associated with study and homework, and we all know that some children don't even get time at home for this. U.S.S.R. attempts to give them an opportunity in school to find out that reading can be fun.

In order to accomplish this all reading during U.S.S.R. periods must be in self-selected books. Also, students must be made aware that their reading will not be tested. No textbook reading, no studying, no reviewing for exams, can take place during this time. Afterwards, children will not be quizzed on what they have read. If a child volunteers to share some reading experience with you, well and good, but each child must feel that reading is a personal experience.

And what is the teacher going to be doing during this time? Reading too! Yes, the teacher can sit in the class doing some of the reading he always wished he had time for. In doing so he will be accomplishing the most important part of the program -

providing an adult role model so that students will see adults doing and enjoying what they have asked students to do. We have long known that students learn a great deal by imitation. Here you will be providing an opportunity for them to imitate a worthwhile activity. Remember, many of them probably never see adults reading regularly at home. Your only restriction is that you not read textbooks or correct papers and exams. After all, this is supposed to be perceived as enjoyment - not work.

By now that idea of self-selected reading material is probably beginning to give you some trouble. The problem for children in earlier grades will be to select a book they can read. The teacher may want to suggest titles of books that are of appropriate reading level, but this will not always be necessary. Children will not stay with a book that they can't make sense of. And research has shown that once a child can handle a book or reading level with ease, he will want to move into reading material that presents some challenge. When the child no longer finds The Hardy Boys stimulating it will be very natural to move into more stimulating reading.

But what of the older kids? Their self-selection may result in reading material that is "smutty," "degrading" or "offensive." Certainly your concern is warranted, but remember that reading will be taking place in a class situation. Most children will be embarrassed to bring these books along. Those who do will probably do so for shock effect - shocking the teacher. After a

few classes when no one notices, most of these students go back to reading material that is not objectionable. And what of Harlequin Romances? Like The Hardy Boys, if students are into reading regularly they will outgrow them.

There is a control on what can be read - no school textbooks. Secondly, the teacher has to read, not correct tests and assignments or make up tests. Finally, the reading period is a regular, permanent part of the timetable. It is not listed as a free period but as U.S.S.R. Students begin to feel it is considered in the same light as other subjects. It has importance. The only thing different is that it won't be evaluated.

APPENDIX D

FRY READABILITY LEVEL

Fry's (1969) graph for estimating readability was developed with simplicity as the prime consideration. This was the key to its selection; the sheer time consumption and difficulty are factors which cause many formulas to languish in term papers and magazine articles. Analysis of the text in consideration requires the selection of three one hundred-word passages, computing of certain averages and reference to a graph provided.