Principles and Practices of Reading Instruction Provided in Grades K-5 in the Fairport Central Schools

Sheila M. Spiesz

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PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICES OF READING INSTRUCTION
PROVIDED IN GRADES K-5 IN THE FAIRPORT CENTRAL
SCHOOLS

THESIS

Submitted to the Graduate Committee of the
Department of Education and Human Development
State University of New York
College at Brockport
in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Science in Education

by
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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to identify the principles and practices currently implemented in providing reading instruction in kindergarten through grade five in the Fairport Central School District.

The subjects in this study included 149 elementary classroom teachers and 11 elementary reading teachers from the four elementary school buildings in the Fairport Central School District. Of these 160 teachers, 10 of them were also interviewed. The survey responses were presented quantitatively. All of the answers on the survey questions were compared by percentages of the total number of responses. Both the survey results and the interview responses were analyzed qualitatively to locate any patterns or trends that occurred.

The findings revealed that there are a wide variety of professional principles and practices being currently implemented in teaching reading in Fairport in grades K-5. The district adopted the Houghton Mifflin Literary Reader about ten years ago, and it is still used in a variety of ways. There is an emphasis on early intervention, and reading instruction incorporates reading, writing, listening, and speaking through a variety of methods. The administration and teachers support each other in efforts to bring about reading success for all students. Flexibility, team teaching, daily reading, and providing successful reading opportunities were other key pieces of teachers' reading philosophies and instruction. The teachers' experience, with an
average of twenty years, coupled with a high level of professionalism, allows for continuous growth in the well-rounded reading program.
Dedication

To my mother, Mary Bonner Spiesz, my first and best reading teacher who showed me that you can go anywhere through a book, and to my father, Edward Worthington Spiesz, who never really loved to read but supported Mom out of his love for her.

Also, to my lifetime partner, Nicholas Cocilova, whose unending support throughout graduate school has made all the difference to me.

Last, but definitely not least, to my daughter, Caitlin Mary Spiesz, who showed me just how well children can learn with a lot of love and a lot of books!
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## Chapter I

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Statement of the Problem</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purpose</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Need for the Study</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Question</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Chapter II

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Review of the Literature</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History of Reading-Instruction</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current Trends and Practices</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basal Programs/Materials Selection</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading Groups/Organization</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading Programs/Interventions</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading Assessment</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher's Role/Future Implications</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Chapter III

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Design of the Study</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purpose</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Question</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methodology</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subjects</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Materials/Instruments</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Procedures</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analysis</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter IV

Analysis of the Data ............................................... 29
  Purpose ............................................................ 29
  Research Question ............................................... 29
  Data Summary ..................................................... 29
  Survey Results ................................................... 30
    Area 1: Teacher Demographics ............................... 30
    Area 2: Philosophy of Reading ............................... 31
    Area 3: Assessments/Groupings ............................. 39
    Area 4: Strategies ............................................. 43
    Area 5: Teaming/Partnerships/Involvement in Reading .... 46
  Interview Results ............................................... 48
    Area 1: Demographics/Training .............................. 48
    Area 2: Reading Philosophies ............................... 49
    Area 3: Instruction ............................................ 49
    Area 4: Types of Readers .................................... 53
    Area 5: Collaboration in Reading ............................ 55
    Area 6: Handling Reading .................................... 57
    Area 7: Monitoring Enjoyment ............................... 58
  Summary ........................................................... 58

Chapter V

Conclusions .......................................................... 60
  Implications for Schools ........................................ 60
  Implications for District ....................................... 61
  Reflections on the Survey ...................................... 64
  Implications for Research ...................................... 65

References ............................................................. 67

Appendix
  A. Permission Letter ............................................. 72
CHAPTER I
Statement of the Problem

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to identify the principles and practices currently implemented in providing reading instruction in kindergarten through grade five in the Fairport Central School District in upstate New York.

Need for the Study

Researchers have examined reading programs and components of such programs in many ways, identifying both effective constituents as well as those that are not conducive to learning how to read. Many teachers have used this research in establishing quality reading instruction in their classrooms.

In recent years educators have come a long way in their thinking about helping beginning readers. Many classrooms are print-rich and have the best reading materials that money can buy such as: big books, charts, and an abundance of quality children's literature. However, although whole-class experiences such as shared reading and literature discussions offer children many important benefits, it is difficult for teachers to observe reading behaviors in individual children in order to
help them build an effective independent reading process.

There have also been many debates about teaching practices and how best to reach all students. As Giacobbe (1996) states, "Some educators believe the problem is an emphasis on phonics versus no phonics, basal readers versus literature-based instruction, homogeneous grouping versus heterogeneous grouping, early intervention versus wait-and-see, accepting approximations versus expecting correctness, and direct (explicit) instruction versus discovery" (p. x). As these key issues in reading instruction are debated and researched, it is important to keep in mind the important role of the classroom teacher in both understanding how children acquire literacy and the role he or she plays in helping each child acquire his or her potential (Giacobbe, 1996).

As changes continue to occur in reading education, teachers are often left with the dilemma of how to provide readers with instruction and materials that match their individual needs. For a teacher, this enormous endeavor involves combining professionalism, experience, personal philosophy, school/district policies, materials and curriculum in order to meet the variety of needs of each pupil encountered.

In addition, defining the needs of each student has become a more difficult task as the demands for higher educational standards and levels of literacy have increased. Such increases include the ability to
express one's ideas effectively, the ability to identify propaganda and use reasoning and disciplined thought, and the ability to evaluate, not merely remember, information read. Increased standards such as these mean that teachers must do more than just teach children to read fluently and comprehend text information. They must also teach students to be reflective thinkers, capable of analyzing and judging information, and able to express themselves in written as well as oral form. Literacy instruction must be seen as an active, problem-solving activity in order to prepare our students for the technologically advanced society that we live in today (Mason & Au, 1986).

In the Fairport schools, the overall reading philosophy is unstated and there is no formal written policy regarding reading instruction. Within the last ten years, one basal was adopted as a literary reader, yet there is no district mandate as to how reading is currently taught across the district. As the standards for curriculum and instruction change in New York State, there is little doubt that the reading program in the Fairport schools will be re-evaluated to meet these changing goals.
Research Question

What principles and practices are followed in the reading instruction provided in grades K-5 in the Fairport Central Schools?
CHAPTER II
Review of the Literature

"The Philosophy of Reading developed by any school district is a statement of that school district's feelings about reading" (Sabin, 1987, p. 2). School districts may alter their reading instruction over the years to reflect the current research, trends, and practices. With the wide variety of choices available to districts today, it may be helpful first to take a look at where reading instruction has been, where it is now, and what trends and directions it may be taking in the future.

History of Reading Instruction

The background of reading instruction and children's literature is quite diverse. Huck (1996) described a time in the history of our country when "there were no books written for children's enjoyment, only gloomy religious texts such as The New England Primer that began with 'In Adam's fall, we sinned all.' Children first spelled out these words and then memorized them" (p. 24). Shortly thereafter, between 1834 and 1900, the McGuffey graded series of readers emphasizing patriotism, good citizenship, and industry were so widely used that they literally comprised the elementary curriculum for
reading. Finally, in 1906 Moore opened the children's department in the New York Public Library, and the idea that children needed books to encourage a love of reading began to be established (Huck, 1996).

As children's literature became more readily available to the public, numerous changes were still taking place in the schools. In the 1920s readers such as The Elson Readers included many folktales such as "The Little Red Hen," the "Three Billy Goats Gruff," and a version of "The Gingerbread Man." These readers did recognize that the way into reading for young children was through good stories, and since there were few libraries then, basal readers were essential to providing reading materials for children. Also in the twenties, individualized reading was initiated through the Winnetka Plan in which children proceeded at their own pace in reading, mathematics, and spelling in the mornings and worked as a group in the afternoon (Huck, 1996).

From about 1930 to the mid 1950s, the basal reader approach was the primary method of teaching reading. Staiger (1958) conducted a national survey of instructional practices in reading and he found that 100% of the respondents reported using basals. Graves and Dykstra (1997) found that "a common feature of most basals of that day, was their laid-back approach to phonics instruction. ...phonics was typically taught as a back-up word identification strategy, one to be used only
after meaning clues and word structure analysis were unsuccessful" (p. 342).

In the 1950s, traditional tales were eliminated in favor of simplified stories about Dick and Jane or Tom and Jerry which, in Huck's (1996) opinion, "attempted to tell of the activities of the so-called 'universal family' " (p. 24). In 1955 Flesch published the book entitled, *Why Johnny Can't Read*, which advocated a return to phonics and the teaching of basic skills versus using basals.

"It was not until 1965, when the Elementary and Secondary Education Act was passed, that school libraries became a reality in nearly every school" (Huck, 1996, p. 25). As the amount of children's literature increased, strategies to teach reading were continuing to be researched. K. Goodman's (1965) study of oral reading miscues played a role in what eventually became known as the whole language movement. At the time, word recognition was often emphasized in isolation rather than from meaningful contexts. Goodman found that children could recognize words in context that they could not in isolation (Goodman, 1965). Whole language went on to include an emphasis on the integration of subjects, using real books for reading, and using reading and writing for a variety of functional purposes.

Huck (1996) believes that "the primary purpose of using real books in the classroom is to develop readers, students who not only know how to read, but enjoy reading and are on their way to becoming
life-long readers" (p. 29). Books written by teachers such as Atwell's (1987) *In the Middle*, explore teachers' own changes in teaching as they began to use literature and writing via whole language methods. Books like this that chronicle teacher research may impact methods used in the reading classroom.

Other research has also contributed to the current practices of teaching reading. Graves and Dykstra (1997) compiled data from twenty-seven individual studies on first grade reading instruction, using Bond and Dykstra's original study that was done in 1967. As the debate involving basals, whole language, and skill and drill continues, research such as this may play a key role in the directions that reading instruction takes. For example, Bond and Dykstra (1967) found that, "In general, Basal programs accompanied by supplementary phonics materials produced significantly greater achievement in reading than did Basal materials alone" (Graves & Dykstra, 1997, p. 414).

Teachers may need to take a look at combinations of programs to meet the changing needs of students. Furthermore, Graves and Dykstra (1997) noted that "no one approach to reading is so distinctly better in all situations and respects than the others that it should be considered the one best method and the one to be used exclusively" (p. 416).
After exploring the history of reading instruction, it is important to consider why it is significant to continue to assess methods of reading instruction today. According to Sabin (1987):

The ability to read is a skill that is fundamental to the achievement of the goals of the individual and the goals of the society. Through reading, the individual can continue to learn, grow and adjust to the demands of an ever-changing society. The knowledge gained from reading also increases the individual's ability to participate in the democratic process . . . Reading instruction should utilize the unique talents, capabilities and interests of the individual in providing a planned, sequential development of skills that will enable the individual to achieve maximum growth in reading ability. (p. 3)

Many would agree that reading is an important skill to acquire, yet the debate as to what constitutes sound reading instruction continues. Somerfield, Torbe, and Ward (1985) define a reading program as the following:

The total set of activities and materials a school uses to teach reading. . . . Usually the core (of the reading program) is one of these: a published reading series, a mixture of different reading series, a program with central materials, or a wide selection of trade books. (p. 33)

In establishing a valid reading program, school districts must
consider several areas including existing programs, models of instruction, research and current trends. As Bonds and Sida (1990) stated, "If each child is to receive the best possible instruction, the development of a comprehensive reading program to meet the individual needs of each student must be evident" (p. 2). Bonds went on to develop Bonds' Comprehensive Reading Paradigm which includes seven key components to reading instruction to address such needs. Bonds and Sida (1990) list these components as follows:

... (1) developmental reading, (2) corrective reading, (3) remedial reading, (4) adaptive reading, (5) content reading, (6) accelerated/enrichment reading, and (7) recreational reading. Whether one evaluates a total reading instructional setting such as a school or a single instructional unit such as a self-contained heterogeneous classroom, the components should be evident. (p. 4)

**Basal Programs/Materials Selection**

One component of many reading programs throughout the years has been the basal reader. In a study by Kletzien (1996) that examined reading programs reported by 300 private and public elementary schools, it was found that "70% of schools reported using literature as either a supplement to basal programs or as a basis for their entire reading program in 1991-92. Only about 15% of the sample reported using a structured phonics approach" (p. 265).
In a related study by Baumann and Heubach (1996), the question of whether or not basal reading programs control or limit teachers' freedom through a process referred to as deskilling was asked. "Deskilling is when teachers surrender control of or responsibility for curricular and instructional decisions in reading to the materials, thus abrogating their previously learned and acquired skills" (Baumann & Heubach, 1996, p. 512). Once the data from the 553 surveys were gathered, the findings suggested that teachers are not deskilled by the basals. Baumann and Heubach (1996) reported that "most teachers are discriminating consumers who view basal readers as just one instructional tool available to them as they plan literacy lessons" (p. 524).

In their book entitled, *Report Card on Basal Readers*, Goodman, Shannon, Freeman, and Murphy (1988) shared their opinion on basals noting that "more than anything else the basals are built around control: They control reading; they control language; they control learners; they control teachers. And this control becomes essential to the tight organization and sequence" (p. 125). The strength of organization in basal materials that the publishers push for is seen as a negative, controlling factor by these authors.

In a related article by K. Goodman (1989), different basal publishers were investigated. "The basal study (Goodman et al., 1988) also found that the quality of basals is not controlled through
competition, since the products are very similar" (p. 303). However, a later study done in Texas by Hoffinan, McCaMthey, Abbott, Christian, Corman; Curry, Dressman, Elliott, Matherne, and Stahle (1994) found that although five different publishers produced similar products, the products were very different from basals of previous years. This analysis compared five new basals of 1993 with 1986/87 basals used in Texas, comparing both elements of pupil texts and teacher editions. The results indicated significant changes in the more recent series at the first grade level, including "diversity in format and organization, less stringently controlled and more demanding vocabulary, less skills pages, more predictable literature, fewer adaptations made to language and content for literature, and broader assessment methods" (p. 65).

In a descriptive article by Noll and Goodman (1995), basal materials were again scrutinized. These authors looked at how literature is taught with basals based on publishers' recommendations.

Responding to widespread demand from teachers and school authorities in recent years, basal publishers have loudly and proudly announced that their new programs are literature-based and include award-winning authors. Although it is encouraging to see the high quality of stories and poetry presented in these programs, the instructional materials that accompany them are still problematic. (p. 243)

In their recent examination of basal reading programs published between 1991 and 1995, Noll and Goodman (1995) found that
although the outward appearance of instructional materials in many basal programs has undergone major face-lifting, the kinds of experiences offered to children remain essentially the same. "The core of their programs is in fact, not the literature but the skill sequences and vocabulary drills that surround and overwhelm the literature" (p. 244). For example, detailed and explicit directions for teaching a story five pages long, cover twenty-six pages in the teacher's edition. It is the opinion of these two writers that "the detailed instructional plans basal publishers provide, treat teachers as though they don't have the knowledge and expertise to determine what and how to teach" (p. 253). For example, basals supply not only the content of the lessons, but also the exact words to say to students.

In a similar article, Durkin (1990) comments on basal manuals by saying "The possibility that such a heavy, persistent dose of instruction may be an overdose is a thought meriting consideration by any faculty that uses a basal series to define the reading curriculum" (p. 476). Keeping in mind that basals are only one tool used in teaching reading, their long history of usage has allowed for close examination and discussion to occur.

Reading Groups/Organization

Another key area in reading instruction to consider is the
organization or groupings that occur. Kletzien's (1996) study included a majority of the schools reporting that they used heterogeneous grouping in self-contained elementary classes. Most schools attempted to balance the composition of the classes by paying attention to achievement level, gender, teaching style, parent preference, learning style, and student behavior and needs. Kletzien (1996) reported:

Within classes students were usually grouped according to achievement level for reading instruction, generally three groups per class. . . . cross-class and cross-grade grouping patterns were more common in grades four and up. . . . More schools are rejecting homogeneous classroom grouping by ability indicating that they felt it would be harmful to their self-esteem. (p. 263-264)

There are a variety of ways that teachers can group students for reading, and flexibility seemed to be the key factor throughout the research. Teachers can use test scores, ability, achievement, student interests, friendships, and project/research topics as a means of grouping students for instruction. In a study by Kleitzien (1996) it was noted that "the instructional technique that has shown the greatest growth across the years is cooperative learning" (p. 266). This increasingly popular way of grouping is proving successful for some teachers.

In a related article by Marottoli-Heyman (1995), two parts of an
inclusive reading program are described: the reading group and the reading period. Before establishing reading groups, the author recommends using some framework for formally assessing reading development. The direction each group takes, in Marottoli-Heyman's opinion, should in some way relate to the initial assessment and address what each student needs. "There should be an emphasis on multisensory activities and teaching isolated comprehension skills within a framework such as the following: 5-10 minutes of word analysis, 5-10 minutes of comprehension skills/worksheets, 5-10 minutes of pre-reading, and 15-20 minutes of connected reading/comprehension" (p. 39). Groupings and subsequent instruction should definitely be connected in some way according to Marottoli-Heyman.

In addition to classroom groupings, pairing up readers is a method that had been tried in several ways. Caserta-Henry (1996) describes the Reading Buddies Program in which high school students became tutors for 16 first graders who were behind in reading, writing and spelling. The tutors received training provided by professors from the University of Nevada, and conducted a number of reading activities with their first grade buddies. Activities included things like: reading and rereading predictable books, writing in journals, and doing word study activities. All of the involved students experienced growth on standardized tests and it was observed that they all had more positive
attitudes toward reading.

Reading Programs/Interventions

The timing of teaching reading is another topic to take into consideration. Manning (1995) believes that "for those children who have not learned to read prior to school entrance, the kindergarten/grade one years are most important" (p. 653). Some schools have taken a proactive approach to teaching reading. In an article by Green (1995), he describes the steps that he and his staff in Wilmington, Delaware used to ensure reading success by the end of third grade. Their approach involved using what Green calls "safety nets" for students in grades kindergarten through grade three.

Green's program involved several key features. First of all, the program required no extra money as it utilized current staff. There was no stigma attached to pull-outs as teachers/tutors were brought into the child's class where they worked together with the classroom teacher to help the student. In this way, weak readers received consistent attention. Classroom teachers assessed children in a variety of ways and their aides would help children master tasks or skills that were difficult. Children were grouped based upon their mastery of skills and learned at their own pace. Every nine weeks the teachers tested
reading comprehension and each test alerted the teachers to trouble spots to focus on. Finally, standard achievement tests were given at the end of each year. This program proved to be successful in creating good readers by the end of third grade.

A comparable reading program was implemented at Public School 225 in New York to raise the reading levels of all students in their building. In this situation, both the assistant principal and the principal, Comcowich and Quinn (1995) established a program with the following key components:

1.) hire only teachers whose expertise was reading, having both professional courses and experience in teaching reading
2.) train office staff members to protect the teaching/learning process by minimizing interruptions
3.) assign teachers based on needs - the most capable reading teachers were paired with students reading at or slightly below level
4.) observe teachers in reading - look for print-rich environments, a variety of genre, daily sustained silent reading, structured oral language development and encouraged dialogue
5.) provide staff development programs for reading
6.) develop a reading action plan
7.) use available research such as learning styles, cooperative learning, etc. and share this with the teachers
8.) involve students and parents - have a book club, breakfast with administration, certificates and free books for reading
9.) make parents partners - hold parent meetings, share ideas, have book sales, send home letters with recommended books
10.) use time management skills and delegate responsibilities
11.) collaborate and use shared decision making skills.

(PP. 7-9)

On a larger scale, Richard Riley, U.S. Secretary of Education launched Read*Write*Now!, an American Initiative on Reading and Writing in May, 1995. This program was set up to encourage early and frequent reading, as well as summer reading, and had several goals such as: to increase America's literacy rate, to improve the reading and writing proficiency of America's children and youth, to boost the reading and writing performance of at-risk populations, to provide free materials from the U.S. Department of Education to over 425,000 young readers and writers, their families, and primary providers, to include reading and writing activities for preschool and kindergarten children, and to distribute bibliographies of books for children. Approximately 125,000 reading partners in the U.S. volunteered during the summer to meet with children at least thirty minutes a day for reading, and it was reported that everyone involved in the program benefited in some way (Riley, 1996).

Some reading programs have attempted to incorporate successful elements from several sources in order to have an overall balanced program. For example, many variations on Clay's work with Reading Recovery have been attempted throughout the years. Reading Recovery is a preventive, intensive reading program that began in the
1970s through the work of Clay. Daily 30-minute lessons with a trained teacher include: reading familiar books/rereading them, completing running record analysis, working with letters such as magnets or manipulatives (only if needed), writing a message or a story and putting together cut-up sentences, and reading a new book (Clay, 1993).

In a study by Pinnell, Lyons, DeFord, Bryk, and Seltzer (1994), 324 of the lowest achieving first grade readers from 10 school districts (rural, urban, and suburban) were involved in one of four programs/interventions. The first intervention was Reading Recovery itself. The second was a treatment modeled on Reading Recovery, in which teachers were trained in a shortened program. The third group used a one-on-one skills practice model. The fourth group used a group treatment taught by Reading Recovery teachers. The results of this study showed that group one, the Reading Recovery group's children, performed significantly better on four different measures compared to all of the other treatment groups. The essential components that were noted in Reading Recovery were: the one-on-one lessons, the lesson framework, and the Reading Recovery teacher staff development model.

In establishing programs such as the above-mentioned Reading Recovery, it is important to look at the long term benefits of such programs. In a study done by McKenna, Kear, and Ellsworth (1995),
18,185 U.S. children in Grades 1-6 were sampled to investigate their reading attitudes. A total of 229 schools were involved, including 18 schools in New York State. The following results were noted:

First, recreational and academic reading attitudes, on average, were observed to become more negative gradually, but steadily, throughout the elementary school years, beginning at a relatively positive point and ending in relative indifference. Second, the trend toward more negative recreational attitudes was clearly related to ability and was steepest for least able readers. (p. 935)

As this study shows, if students reading skills continue to be poor, their subsequent attitudes will be poor as well. This is just one more reason to promote early reading intervention and support strong reading programs.

In lieu of the importance of early intervention, a study was conducted by Bean and Hamilton (1995) that focused on Chapter 1 reading programs. This study involved reading specialists, classroom teachers, and principals and found that the keys to success in Chapter 1 programs were communication and collaboration between specialists and teachers. The overall strengths of these programs included: promoting self-esteem, fostering a love of reading, providing specialized instruction, serving as a student advocate, and facilitating parent involvement.

In many reading programs, it was noted that some independent
seatwork is a necessary component. Blair and Rupley (1987) explored this area of assigning and supervising seatwork by observing 12 primary teachers. After conducting these observations, they recommended the following procedures for providing quality seatwork and maintaining student engagement:

1.) independent assignments should match learners' needs, 2.) give directions both verbally and in writing, 3.) go over first few exercises, 4.) have a pre-determined method for questions and difficulties, 5.) seatwork should be monitored and feedback given to students, 6.) vary independent assignments, and 7.) the purpose should be to reinforce a skill taught earlier. (p. 392)

Some schools incorporate reading using programs with incentives. For example, Baumann (1995) described the success her K-5 school in Georgia had with implementing *The Reading Millionaire's Club*, a schoolwide program that had students accumulate one million minutes of independent, self-selected reading done out of school in 1993. Baumann, the school's librarian, added extra D.E.A.R. time on Fridays, conducted weekly raffles for free paperbacks, and utilized Savings Books, records of time read. She also initiated a Reading Hall of Fame on the wall. The results were 1,230,407 minutes of completed reading time during the 27 weeks of the program.

As the above study has shown, the school librarian can be a key
player in the teaching of reading in schools. In their book on reading, Somerfield, Torbe, and Ward (1985) describe the librarian's role with teachers in the following ways:

... help select and assemble the best available teaching materials which relate to reading and literature, coordinates library resources with what is being taught in the classroom, bringing in book trucks of library materials to supplement ongoing special projects and units of instruction, enlists teachers' help in ordering new books and in recommending them to students, assists teachers by demonstrating to children research skills they'll need in classroom to perform specific tasks, helps with special class projects such as Book Week exhibits, reinforces and reaffirms value of reading aloud by sponsoring read-aloud workshops and compiling read-aloud booklists, designs eye-catching bulletin boards for reading-related materials, keeps teachers up-to-date on book reviews related to special subject areas or monthly reading themes, shares literacy games, and develops and uses media evaluation forms which ask questions such as: In what ways do/don't library resources meet the needs of your reading program? (pp. 77-78)

Reading Assessment

Once material selection and grouping of students has been decided, the area of assessment must be addressed in reading programs. Some educators have broken down reading assessment into five areas. The first area involves the standardized reading test which covers anything from prereading competence tests to word recognition,
vocabulary, and comprehension tests. The second system of assessment uses the reading series itself, and progress through it at each level. The third area is formal and informal observation of the student. The fourth method is diagnostic teaching which involves using the cloze procedure, predictions, sequencing, and informal reading inventories. The fifth and final system is keeping a record of books read (Somerfield, Torbe, & Ward, 1985). Teachers use a variety of combinations of the above assessments in reading.

**Teacher's Role/Future Implications**

A key player in any successful reading program is the teacher. With the vast amount of material and numerous strategies available, teachers must determine how to effectively focus reading instruction to develop readers. Durkin (1990) believes that there is "... the need for introspective teachers who persist in asking themselves, 'Why am I doing what I'm doing?'" (p. 476). Throughout their careers it is important for teachers to adapt their teaching and remain current in literacy instruction.

Literacy instruction has changed in many ways over the years. Shanahan and Neuman (1997) discussed several of these trends, including the following:

- Literacy is taught both earlier (kindergarten and preschool) and
later (adult literacy) than before....Phonemic awareness, fluency instruction, and the use of invented spelling have all become part of the literacy curriculum....The minilesson and the literacy club have emerged as popular instructional activities....Textbooks and trade books have become more reflective of diversity in the U.S., so minority children in 1996 read stories more reflective of their racial and ethnic heritages....more instruction devoted to reading comprehension than before....ideas like strategic comprehension, metacognition, mapping, story structure summaries, and other related techniques have greatly expanded the repertoires of many teachers....Parents in the 1990s receive more encouragement to help their children with academic work....family literacy and workplace literacy programs....teaching children to use literacy with various technological tools(word processors, CD-ROM reference materials, hypercards, Internet)....teacher research has grown. (p. 204-205)

As Sabin (1987) stated, "The Philosophy of Reading may be periodically reviewed and revised as feelings about reading change in the academic community and the community at large" (p. 2). As the research develops and changes, it is the responsibility of the schools and the professionals that make up the schools to monitor and adjust the teaching of reading for optimal learning to take place.
CHAPTER III
Design of the Study

Purpose
The purpose of this study was to identify the principles and practices currently implemented in providing reading instruction in kindergarten through grade five in the Fairport Central School District.

Research Question
What principles and practices are followed in the reading instruction provided in grades K-5 in the Fairport Central Schools?

Methodology
Subjects
The subjects in this study included 149 elementary classroom teachers and 11 elementary reading teachers from the four elementary school buildings in the Fairport Central School District. Of these 160
teachers, 10 of them were also interviewed. The set-up of the four elementary buildings is as follows:

1.) Dudley School houses grades K-2
2.) Northside School houses grades 3-5
3.) Brooks Hill School houses grades K-5
4.) Jefferson Avenue School houses grades K-5.

**Materials/Instruments**

The following materials/instruments were used in this study:

- permission letter (Appendix A)
- letter of introduction (Appendix B)
- a comprehensive survey (Appendix C) with return envelope
- reminder postcard/thank-you note (Appendix D)
- tape recorded interviews
- written notes from interviews
Procedures

First, a letter requesting permission to both distribute the surveys and to conduct the teacher interviews was sent to each of the four building principals. Once permission was obtained, the researcher sent a comprehensive survey to all K-5 classroom teachers and reading teachers, accompanied by a letter of introduction and a labeled return envelope. Surveys were returned via the district mail. The surveys were color-coded, one color per building to keep track of the numbers represented. The surveys were anonymous in that teachers were not asked to put their names on the surveys. A reminder postcard/thank you was sent to each teacher one week after the initial survey was sent. Of the 160 surveys sent, 116 surveys were returned for an overall return rate of 73%.

Once the surveys were collected, individual interviews were set up with a few teachers in each of the four buildings. Both remedial reading and classroom teachers were interviewed in each building with a total of 10 interviews conducted in all. Remedial reading teachers were automatically selected for the interviews, and classroom teachers were randomly selected from each building.
Analysis of Data

The survey responses were presented quantitatively. All of the answers on the survey questions were compared by percentages of the total number of responses. Both the survey results and the interview responses were analyzed qualitatively to locate any patterns or trends that occurred.
CHAPTER IV
Analysis of the Data

Purpose
The purpose of this study was to identify the principles and practices currently implemented in providing reading instruction in kindergarten through grade five in the Fairport Central School District.

Research Question
What principles and practices are followed in the reading instruction provided in grades K-5 in the Fairport Central Schools?

Data Summary
The data from the teachers' surveys were collected and the responses were presented quantitatively. Answers to the survey questions were compared by percentages of the total number of responses. Of the 160 surveys sent, 116 were returned for an overall return rate of 73%. This included 11 remedial reading teachers (9%) and 105 regular classroom teachers (91%). Representative responses
from the 10 interviews were recounted in narrative form. Both the survey results and the interview responses were analyzed qualitatively to locate any patterns or trends that occurred.

The reading survey (See Appendix C) was divided into five main areas. These areas were: teacher demographics, philosophy of reading/materials used, assessments/groupings, strategies, and teaming/partnerships/involvement in reading.

Survey Results

Area 1: Teacher demographics

The range of grades taught was from kindergarten to fifth grade, including pre-first grade as well as remedial reading teachers. Although only 116 surveys were returned, a total of 139 responses were given for the category "grade(s) taught" as some teachers reported teaching more than one grade. The breakdown for grades taught was as follows:

- kindergarten: 11
- pre-first grade: 2
- first grade: 25
- second grade: 23
- third grade: 23
- fourth grade: 22
- fifth grade: 22
- remedial reading: 11
The reported years of teaching experience ranged from one half of a year to 40 years. The mean years of teaching experience from all 116 surveys was 20 years. Many Fairport teachers have had quite a few years experience in teaching reading.

Area 2: Philosophy of reading/materials used

Teacher response:

Check one that's most indicative of your reading classroom in Fairport.

- 20% I don't use basals.
- 54% I'm free to use alternatives to basals.
- 25% Some basal use is required, but I may supplement.
- 1% Basals are required with little or no flexibility in how I use them.

Representative comments on this section:

First statement ("I don't use basals."")
- except for skills books
- on occasion I will use for a specific theme if I can't find enough trade books

Second statement ("I'm free to use alternatives to basals."")
- Do you call a literary anthology a basal?
- story box books, Scholastic books, phonic readers, novels
Third statement ("Some basal use is required, but I may supplement."")
- definitely, literature based Houghton Mifflin plus supplemental materials
- some teachers crossed off the word "may" and wrote "always" referring to supplementing

Fourth statement ("Basals are required with little or no flexibility in how I use them.")
- no comments

Exceptions: Four teachers gave more than one answer on this section. Two teachers didn't check off an answer, but instead wrote their own comments. One said that it didn't apply to kindergarten children-they use the Houghton Mifflin traditional phonics book as well as the sound and literary journal. The other said they used other literature based basal.

These results show that most Fairport teachers use a combination of materials in their reading classrooms, and are not limited to or required to use any one basal. One fourth of the teachers supplement the basal with a wide variety of resources. Over half of the teachers use alternatives to basals. One fifth of the teachers do not use basals at all.
Which one best reflects your philosophical views on reading?

24%  I believe in a literature-based approach in which trade books would be used exclusively.

73%  I believe in a literature-based approach in which trade books would be used with basals.

3%   I believe in a skill-based approach in which basals would be used exclusively.

Representative comments on this section:

First statement ("I believe in a literature-based approach in which trade books would be used exclusively.")
- with skills materials from basals
- sometimes with weaker students to teach skills
- with structured lessons/mini-lessons
- in remedial reading
- while teaching phonics skills simultaneously
- except for skills book

Second statement ("I believe in a literature-based approach in which trade books would be used with basals.")
- in classroom for structure in covering all skills instead of "hit and miss"
- trade books for stories and basals for skills only
Third statement ("I believe in a skill-based approach in which basals would be used exclusively.")
- crossed off "exclusively" and wrote trade books, library books, etc.

Exceptions: One teacher answered two times and two teachers left it blank, substituting that they use a combination of the three choices.

In terms of the Fairport teachers' philosophical views on reading, almost three fourths of the teachers surveyed believe in a literature-based approach in which trade books would be used with basals. About one fourth of the teachers believe in a literature-based approach in which trade books would be used exclusively. However, some teachers did qualify this statement by adding on skills lessons from the basals as a qualifier. The overwhelming response of teachers was that the approach should be literature-based.

Teacher response:
In terms of basals, I use:
- 10% compliance - follow basal guides, skill lessons, and workbooks
- 51% flexibility - use basal as a source for ideas, a starting point
- 39% individualization - supplement, modify, and select to fit
Representative comments on this section:

First statement ("compliance - follow basal guides, skill lessons, and workbooks")
- trade books

Second statement ("flexibility - use basal as a source for ideas, a starting point")
- combination of second and third statements
- I read stories in basals and complete student resource pages, but supplement with poetry, related stories, and holiday materials: incorporate social studies and science topics where applicable.
- Fairport has no reading skills continuum. No consistency or appropriateness of skills being taught without some use of basal.

Third statement ("individualization - supplement, modify, and select to fit")
- Using basals and other sources

Exceptions: Twelve teachers left this section blank. One such teacher wrote instead that she meets with group needs. Some learn best with basal depending how they process information and how well they've internalized language. Also, one teacher gave two responses.

In terms of basals, over half of the Fairport teachers reported using flexibility, or using the basal as a source for ideas or a starting point.
point. Only one tenth of the teachers reported compliance with basals, or following basal guides, skill lessons, and workbooks. Many teachers also reported that they supplement, modify, and select to fit in terms of basal usage.

Predominant Basal(s) used:

- 79 teachers (68%) reported some use of the Houghton Mifflin basal.
- 24 teachers (21%) wrote not applicable
- 13 teachers (11%) left this section blank

Of the 79 teachers who reported some use of the Houghton Mifflin, some also reported using the following other basals: Heath, 1989, Holt "Impressions," Story Box Books (books by level), Sunshine Books, New Phonics, ALPHA books, and Harcourt-Brace 1970. One teacher also included that she references with Stanchfield Readers which are out of print.

These data show that the Houghton Mifflin basal that was adopted by the Fairport Central School District about ten years ago is widely used in some capacity by the majority of teachers in the district.
### Supplemental Materials:

Circle one letter per item as follows in terms of reading class:

- **O** = Often use
- **S** = Sometimes use
- **N** = Never use

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>O(%)</th>
<th>S(%)</th>
<th>N(%)</th>
<th>Blank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.) trade books</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.) audiovisual materials</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.) computer ass. inst.</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.) computer games</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.) accelerated readers</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.) other basal series</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.) books by level/step</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.) interdisciplinary mat.</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.) teacher-made mat.</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.) rdg. logs/journals</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Other/Comments:** poetry, Recipe for Reading flashcards, Story Box Books which teach a skill and produce meaning
- various published skill books
- student-made books
- There are two stories that I use from the basal readers because they correlate well with social studies units.
- I use the basal practice books as practice following skill lessons.
- I make up a lot of my own materials.
- Houghton Mifflin Literary Reader for some whole class themes
- I use the old but wonderful Alpha One Phonic Program often called, "The Letter People."
- units of listening, poetry, chapter book read to class, content materials, newspapers, magazines
- whatever meets their individual needs
- One problem I see is a lot of readers have not been taught skills.
- My program is about 75% trade books, 25% anthology - at various levels, according to ability.
- Occasionally I use skill sheets to reinforce skills I have taught.
- I read to the class daily and try to give 10-15 minutes of "free" reading time. In our building, we call the time D.E.A.R.
- I think the quality of material used in basals has deteriorated over the years. Yes, there is a multi-cultural aspect that is very good but many stories are insipid. Kids like to read stories with strong characters and deep meaning. Also, standards are changing and so are expectations. If the state expects 4th graders to interpret poetry, then good examples must be included in reading texts.
- Many of the current "terms" are unknown to me. In 20+ years of teaching, things change and I've incorporated so much into teaching reading that it just unfolds - you could probably note the methods employed by observation.

In terms of supplemental reading materials, a majority of the Fairport teachers often use trade books, teacher-made materials, and
reading logs/journals. Furthermore, a majority of the teachers sometimes use audiovisual materials, computer games, other basal series, books by level/step, and interdisciplinary materials. In addition, many of the teachers never use computer assisted instruction or computer games to teach reading.

**Area 3: Assessments/groupings**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>O = Often use</th>
<th>S = Sometimes use</th>
<th>N = Never use</th>
<th>blank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1.) standardized reading tests</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a.) word recognition</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b.) vocabulary</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c.) comprehension</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2.) reading attitudes/interest surveys</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3.) reading series itself, progress through it</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>4.) formal/informal observations</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>5.) record of books read</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>6.) portfolios</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>7.) skill sheets</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
8.) **Other/Comments:** my own choice of books - each student reads the same one together

- student journals/individual conferences, group discussions, projects
- running records, informal reading inventories
- skills assessment from reading series
- discussions, written compositions in class, general writing
- book talks
- student self-assessment
- P.E.P. test
- individual oral assessment of letter identification, letter sounds, and word recognition
- I use what works well with the children that year.
- Students keep a reading journal answering questions and making observations and predictions.
- We have not been using standardized tests at the grade one level. I do use informal vocabulary, reading, spelling and phonics surveys.

In terms of assessment in reading, over half of the Fairport teachers use standardized reading tests in some capacity. Many of these teachers sometimes use word recognition tests, vocabulary tests, and comprehension tests. About half of the responding teachers sometimes use reading attitudes/interest surveys. About one third of teachers polled use the reading series itself, and progress through it.
All of the teachers that responded said that they use both formal and informal observations in assessing students. About half of the teachers often keep a record of books read, too. A majority of educators use portfolios to some degree as well. Finally, most teachers reported using skill sheets for assessment.

Grouping (out of 106 responses - 10 were left blank)

How do you group students for reading instruction? (Check all that apply.)

Teacher response:

- 52% homogeneous grouping
- 75% heterogeneous grouping
- 18% by test scores
- 52% by ability
- 36% by achievement
- 45% by interest
- 11% by friendship
- 35% by project/research topic
- 58% pupil pairs
- 77% large groups
- 81% small groups

Other/Comments: usually 8-10 students per group

- I also ask them to try reading the book for "appropriate level" and
allow switching during the first week
- by reading level
- whole class
- response groups of 5-6 students
- skill groups
- no groups at this level yet (kindergarten)
- very flexible
- remedial reading group
- self-grouping
- needs grouping
- book selection
- Many projects/reports require a variety of groupings.
- We team (five of us at the 5th grade level) and I have the accelerated group.

A wide variety of groupings were used by many teachers. The top four ways that Fairport teachers grouped their students for reading are: heterogeneous groups, pupil pairs, large groups, and small groups. The two ways that are used the least for grouping are grouping by test scores and grouping by friendship. Over one third of teachers responding noted that they also group students homogeneously, by ability, by achievement, by interest, and by project/research topic.
Overall, there appears to be quite a mixture of groupings that take place in the Fairport Schools.

**Area 4: Strategies**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>O = Often use</th>
<th>S = Sometimes use</th>
<th>N = Never use</th>
<th>blank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hesitant reader:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.) wait time</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.) wrong word:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. let carry on...</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. ask to reread...</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. reread and supply...</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. you read and pause...</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.) child is silent:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. ask to guess using...</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. parts of the word...</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. reread fluently to...</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Comments:** My students are mostly non-readers and are in the readiness stage (kindergarten).
- I say, "The blank must have sounds and make sense."
- We don't do a lot of oral reading in fifth grade.
- For items 1 and 2b, two answers were given by one person.
Strategies used in helping the hesitant reader varied among the teachers. About three fourths said that they often give students wait time in order to work it out successfully. If a child supplies the wrong word, almost half of the teachers often let the student complete the sentence/paragraph and then ask the child if it makes sense. About half of the teachers sometimes asked the child to reread the sentence. Over half of the teachers sometimes asked the child to reread the sentence while the teacher supplied the correct word. About half of the teachers sometimes reread the sentence for the child, pausing for the child to supply the word.

When readers come across a difficult word and remain silent, several approaches are also used by teachers. Almost every teacher reported that they have the child guess the word, using the rest of text, picture clues, or anything else that might help. A large majority of teachers also draw the child's attention to parts of the word. Finally, fewer teachers choose to frequently reread the sentence up to the problem word to provide some fluency that may help in terms of creating a meaningful context.
**Other strategies:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>O</th>
<th>S</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1.) Phonics Drills</strong></td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2.) Cloze Procedure</strong></td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3.) Prediction</strong></td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>4.) Sequencing</strong></td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>5.) Informal Reading</strong></td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inventories</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>6.) Echoic Reading</strong></td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>7.) Neurological</strong></td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impress Method</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>8.) Repeated Reading</strong></td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>9.) Simultaneous Reading</strong></td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>10.) Teacher Read Alouds</strong></td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>11.) Sustained Silent Reading</strong></td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Comments:** Not sure if this was when dealing with hesitant reader
- phonics instruction in context, not worksheets
- not in kindergarten
- Two answers were given for question #3.
- A few teachers stated that they were unfamiliar with the neurological impress method.
- Simultaneous reading depends on the genre.
- We often use phonics strategies.

A wide variety of other strategies are used by teachers in Fairport. First of all, at least two thirds of teachers use phonics drills, repeated reading, and simultaneous reading in some way. Over half of the teachers use the cloze procedure, and almost all of the teachers reported using prediction as a reading strategy. A majority of teachers also use sequencing, informal reading inventories, teacher read alouds, and sustained silent reading with students. Two strategies that were not reported as being highly used were echoic reading and the neurological impress method.

Area 5: Teaming/Partnerships/Involvement in Reading

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>With:</th>
<th>O = Often use</th>
<th>S = Sometimes use</th>
<th>N = Never use</th>
<th>blank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.) other teachers</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.) school librarian</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.) parents/guardians</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.) other specialists 30% 45% 11% 14%
5.) community resources
   3% 48% 33% 16%
6.) With administration 2% 46% 37% 15%

Comments:
- Two answers were given for question #5.
- speech/language teacher
- public library
- parents - weekly volunteers in the classroom
- guest readers
- with kindergarten and 3rd grade "Little Buddies"
- A push-in reading teacher comes into the room daily to work with me.
- Most of my program is team-teaching.

It is obvious from the data that reading teachers in Fairport utilize a variety of teaming approaches, partnerships, and outside involvement in the teaching of reading. Three fourths of the teachers surveyed reported some level of teaming up with other teachers. Over half of the teachers form a partnership with the school librarian. A majority of teachers also involve the parents/guardians in the process of reading. A third of the teachers often use other specialists, and about half of the teachers sometimes use other specialists. Finally, approximately one half of the teachers polled use community resources and form partnerships with the administration to some degree.
During each of the ten interviews, a general outline of areas to discuss was utilized. However, additional questions/areas of further exploration were a natural component of each meeting.

Area 1: Demographics/Training

Several teachers had quite a strong background in reading, both in coursework and in personal experience. The majority of those interviewed had Masters degrees in reading as well as firsthand experience with teaching reading.

In terms of the district's inservice offerings, teachers reported that while there are many excellent offerings that can be linked to reading in a global way, rarely are there inservice courses directly addressing or specifically set up for reading. Teachers do have several other opportunities to discuss reading concerns and develop reading expertise. For example, all of the remedial reading teachers meet at least once a month as a department, and classroom teachers have grade level meetings, student support team meetings, lead teachers, and other school specialists to help facilitate reading growth. Fairport also has a strong mentor program for all new teachers that provides on-going support, guidance, and help in developing each teacher's professionalism to the highest possible standards. Furthermore, the
increasing amount of team teaching that takes place gives teachers an opportunity to discuss and reflect with colleagues upon what methods work, what needs to be changed or adjusted, and what new ideas to attempt to incorporate in the reading classroom.

Area 2: Reading Philosophies

While each of the four elementary buildings have mission statements and/or school mottoes, none of them have an established written reading philosophy. The general consensus from the teachers was that there is an emphasis on early intervention, that reading instruction should include a broad range of activities and skills that incorporate reading, writing, listening and speaking, and that the administration and teachers support each other in efforts to bring about reading success for all students. Flexibility, team teaching, daily reading, and providing successful reading opportunities were other key pieces of teachers' reading philosophies.

Area 3: Instruction

The Fairport School District has a form that is utilized in all of the four buildings that keeps track of reading services used by students each year, test results, reading levels, other services utilized and recommendations for the following year. This form stays in the student's file from year to year and is periodically updated.

In determining student eligibility for remedial reading services
which begin in first grade in Fairport, the classroom teacher's recommendation is generally the factor that initiates the process. Once a student is referred to the remedial teacher, a variety of tests, both formal and informal are used to assess strengths and areas of need. Each grade level has reading criteria, tests and measures, and various types of reading services for students. Typically, students receiving special education services do not receive remedial reading as well.

In first grade, the criteria for service includes reading below grade level and the ways that this might be determined include Marie Clay's Concepts About Print Test, running records, retellings, informal reading inventories, letter recognition/letter sound relationships, and writing samples. At this grade, teacher referrals are made directly to the reading teacher for assessment. Instruction is typically pull out in first grade remedial reading.

In second grade, criterion for remediation includes reading between six months to one year below grade level. Measures used to assess students in this grade include informal reading inventories, performance in first grade, writing samples, and the Woodcock Reading Mastery Test. Second grade teachers make referrals for assessment directly to the remedial reading teacher. Services used include pull out, small groups, and some push-in.

In grades three, four and five, criterion for remediation includes
students reading one year or more below grade level and receiving no resource room support, scoring below level on NYS PEP Test at the end of third grade, scoring in the 30% ile or lower on SAT Tests at the end of fourth or fifth grade in comprehension or total reading, and degrees of reading power in grades three, four, and five. In addition, the Woodcock Reading Mastery Test, informal reading inventories, classroom performance, outside testing, and cumulative folder data are used in determining eligibility for remedial services. All students in grades three through five that do not qualify for mandated service can only be admitted to remedial reading through the building teaming procedure. Services offered include push-in, pull out, team teaching, and consulting.

Students that have exceptional reading abilities are also offered services in Fairport. At all grade levels accommodations are made for readers who excel. Teachers provide more challenging books, find interesting and thought-provoking materials, let students work on projects, and use literature circles to enhance their skills. In addition, beginning in grade three, students may be identified as gifted readers and participate in small groups of eight or nine students pulled out for enrichment in reading.

Common yearly goals for reading instruction K-5 that developed from the interviews included teaching students skills necessary to be
successful readers, helping students to enjoy reading, and allowing students to both develop their own goals in reading, spelling and writing and to periodically review and update these. Also, the teachers reported focusing on improving areas of need, writing congruency reports that summarize a student's current performance, and developing goals in conjunction with the classroom teacher. Remedial reading teachers also reported meeting with the classroom reading teacher at least once a month to discuss their students.

Several typical examples of annual goals were shared with the interviewer. For example, in second grade a goal may be that the student will demonstrate inferential understanding of grade one level text read by making inferences, drawing conclusions, justifying opinions and relating events to own experiences as measured by class assignments and mid year and end of year assessments. An example of a fourth grade reading goal is that the student will learn and apply common prefixes, common suffixes and common sound patterns, practicing them in class exercises and recognizing them in words as he/she reads. A fifth grade reading goal may be that the student will read five times a week at home for about 20 minutes to strengthen his/her level and fluency. He/she will record progress on a chart.

Time spent on reading instruction varied slightly through the grades. Remedial teachers generally met with students in grades one
and two daily for 30-35 minutes. In grades three, four and five, remedial reading generally lasts between 40-45 minutes daily. Some of these sessions are push-in and some are pull out. In the classroom, daily reading instruction ranges from 30-60 minutes.

Daily planning or typical lessons included quite a variety of activities. Common activities mentioned as being used in reading instruction were using word cards or word rings to study, keeping a list of books read, journal entries, comprehension questions (both literal and inferential), choosing leisure reading materials, completing cloze messages, reading poetry, working on phonic skills, and using themes. Other activities that were mentioned included using games for reviewing sounds, blends, and skills taught, choral reading, oral reading, making reading and writing connections, story predictions, connecting the content area classes to reading, integrating materials, and using a wide variety of materials to teach reading.

**Area 4: Types of readers**

In planning for reading instruction, teachers keep in mind the continuum of readers involved and plan accordingly. During the interviews, teachers were asked to describe good readers, average readers, and poor readers. It was reported that good readers have acquired strategies that are at the automatic level. They are able to analyze material, make predictions, have strong decoding and
comprehension skills, they are fluent and expressive oral readers, make personal connections to what they read, have internalized both literal and inferential comprehension strategies, read at or above grade level, their miscues are insignificant to their understanding of the material, and they may not be able to explain how they know, they just know. Typically, their writing skills are also well-developed.

Average readers in grades K-5 have fairly decent skills, yet they are not as automatic as the good reader's skills. They typically can handle grade level texts and have begun to internalize some strategies. They occasionally need teachers to "walk them through" the material and they often can think it out themselves if given time. They have good literal comprehension skills that are age-appropriate, but their inferential skills are not fully developed. They are fluent at their grade level, but reading is at a more conscious level. They can read for meaning if the material is not too difficult for them to decode.

Poor readers have the most difficult time. They struggle with decoding as well as reading for meaning. A poor reader is often a "word caller" who merely says words, yet makes no connections. They typically have poor comprehension and need to be walked through each time. These readers generally do not even know what they do not know as they have weak metacognition skills. Sight vocabulary is very limited in poor readers. Grade level material is often too difficult for
these readers, and they become easily bored. As years progress, if their skills do not improve, these readers tend to put forth less effort, their motivation decreases, and grade level content material continues to become more difficult to handle. For all types of readers, background knowledge and students interests are key factors in reading.

**Area 5: Collaboration in reading**

There is much to be written about collaboration in reading instruction. Parents, teachers, administrators, librarians, and other specialists work together to insure the best possible reading program. Teachers stated that it was the parents' role to set aside daily reading time, to model reading for their child, and to talk about what they read. They should be active in their child's education by attending both fall and spring conferences, reading and responding to correspondence from school, and supporting what the school was doing in reading by following through at home. There were also numerous opportunities for parents to participate in such as volunteering at the book fair, being a "book ambassador" by giving a book talk, volunteering in the classroom, and supporting P.T.A. programs such as Parents As Reading Partners or P.A.R.P.

The teacher's role in reading was also significant. The remedial reading teachers all strived to support the classroom teachers' reading
programs, and kept the lines of communication open. The classroom teachers, in turn, informed the remedial teachers as to what the student was doing in class. Both sets of teachers encouraged reading as a lifelong habit, taught reading strategies, modeled reading, provided time for students to enjoy books, read aloud to students, and communicated effectively with parents and school specialists.

The administrator's role in reading was reported as being a bit more removed. The overwhelming response was that administrators were supportive of existing reading programs, supplied classrooms with books and materials, and shared current, professional reading information with teachers. Administrators also added to the reading programs by getting to know the students through books. They read to students and discuss what is read, thus providing another role model for students.

The school librarian was also a vital player in reading instruction. In this supportive role, librarians kept teachers informed of new books and materials, purchased class sets for teachers to use, and helped to organize author visits and reader clubs. They also read to children, assisted students in selecting appropriate yet challenging books, and were a resource for both teachers and students.

Some programs and activities in Fairport that promote collaboration in reading were also reported. P.T.A. sponsored
activities, literacy clubs, author visits, school-wide reading programs, and book fairs promoted reading. Also, a school newspaper, a school post office, sustained silent reading time, leisure reading with rewards for accumulated minutes and books, and summer reading programs were all ways that reading in Fairport was enhanced.

**Area 6: Handling reading**

Phonics instruction was handled in many ways in Fairport. While it was up to the individual teacher to decide, phonics workbooks and skills materials were readily available. Some teachers taught phonics in the context of reading, some separated skills into more sequential steps, and some used a combination of the two. Common tools that were reported as being used included Recipe for Reading, look in the middle of the word, and guided reading.

Reading comprehension was developed in Fairport through various activities. Many teachers used the literature series, trade books, Bloom's Taxonomy, and journal writing to develop comprehension skills in students. Graphic organizers were also frequently used.

Fluency was handled differently depending upon the grade level. The Neurological Impress Method was used mainly by remedial teachers and was often done in small groups rather than one on one. Some teachers used an index card with the middle cut out for finger
pointing. Fluency was also discussed with students and modeled for them by teachers. Some teachers reported using partner reading, choral reading, individual oral reading to help with fluency. Some of the upper grades such as grades four and five reported that less oral reading is done at these levels; so fluency was not as big of an issue.

**Area 7: Monitoring enjoyment**

Teachers unanimously reported that student interest in reading was a key factor in developing life long readers. Teachers also monitored this using a variety of methods. They provided students with reading choices, asked students their opinions of books, looked for excitement in readers, and wrote letters to authors. Furthermore, teachers often read several different stories written by a favorite author, relied on student summaries and recommendations, completed favorite author studies, had students put on "book talks," allowed for repeated readings of favorite stories (especially in the younger grades), read two versions of the same story, and compared and contrasted literature. These ways of monitoring enjoyment proved successful.

**Summary**

The data collected through both the surveys and teacher interviews demonstrate that there is a wide variety of professional principles and practices being currently implemented in teaching
reading K-5 in the Fairport Central Schools. According to the results, Fairport teachers are well prepared to face the numerous challenges that reading instruction can present. Current practices clearly reflect sound research that's been conducted on reading instruction through the years. Teacher knowledge of the literature on reading practices enables Fairport educators to implement sound instruction in reading at all levels in grades kindergarten through five. The teachers' experience and high level of professionalism allow for continuous growth in the overall reading program. The diversity in utilized practices helps to create a very well-rounded reading program across the district, thus enabling students to achieve success in reading.
CHAPTER V

Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to identify the principles and practices currently implemented in providing reading instruction in kindergarten through grade five in the Fairport Central School District. From this study, it was learned that the Houghton Mifflin Literary Reader, that was adopted about ten years ago by the district, still plays a large role in the overall reading program in Fairport. Furthermore, there are a variety of practices and procedures used both between and within the four elementary buildings regarding reading instruction. In general, methods chosen are unique to the teacher's style and strengths, the student's individual needs, and the teacher's training in reading instruction. Overall, Fairport offers the students in kindergarten through fifth grade a diverse range of reading services and expertise to enable them to become successful readers.

Implications for Schools

As the learning standards in New York State continue to rise, it is imperative that school districts adequately prepare students to be successful readers to enable them to meet such standards. School districts may need to work together in structuring schools and reading
programs for success in order for all of our children to benefit and learn.

In completing the data collection and the interviews, it was very noticeable that Fairport has an extremely strong reading program for each student in grades K-5. This included both the regular reading classroom as well as the remedial reading classroom. It may be beneficial to other districts considering changes in their current reading programs to come and visit and/or meet with Fairport teachers to experience for themselves what a sound program Fairport currently has in place for teaching reading. The wide variety of professional tools and techniques that are used could easily become a model for a new or existing reading program to incorporate. All of the teachers that were interviewed were eager to answer questions and further the learning of their colleague, which says a lot about their level of professionalism. Many supplied the interviewer with numerous handouts, book titles and examples to further clarify their teaching methods.

Implications for the District

Despite the high caliber program that exists for reading K-5 in Fairport, there continues to be room for growth. First of all, as there is currently no written district-wide reading philosophy, it is recommended that Fairport formalizes their exceptional reading
program by creating a strong written statement of philosophy. Such a philosophy might include the wide array of practices that encompass reading instruction in the Fairport schools. This includes an emphasis on early intervention, sound reading instruction that incorporates reading, writing, listening and speaking, success for all students, team teaching, daily reading, and school-wide programs currently underway. Teachers and administrators from the four elementary buildings are encouraged to then personalize this philosophy to their individual buildings.

In terms of materials, many teachers continue to use the Houghton Mifflin Literary Reader that was adopted by the district about ten years ago. As many teachers reported that they currently use Houghton Mifflin series' that are dated late 1980's through early 1990's, it may be useful to the district to look at updating what is available to teachers and students to include more recent titles. Also, accelerated readers used on the computer seemed to be another area that could use some additional resources. If this is not a tool that the district is in favor of, then it is suggested to incorporate some other computer resources for reading teachers to use with students. This may involve providing training to staff on how to utilize the software and programs, yet will enable students to be adequately prepared in this growing age of technology.
Several teachers reported that although Fairport offers a wide variety of inservice courses that are globally related to reading, there are very few offered that directly relate to reading. Increasing the menu of inservice programs offered to include sessions on reading techniques, strategies, the district's reading philosophy, reading and the learning standards, reading testing, storytelling, etc. would certainly meet this need. Utilizing the vast array of available experience within the district is an excellent starting point. In other words, many of the veteran staff members are highly qualified to teach such inservice classes, so seeking their expertise as well as any outside resources is recommended.

There are also many facets of Fairport's current reading program that should continue to be practiced. For instance, many of the teachers are experienced and have a high level of professionalism. It is recommended to continue to hire teachers of this esteemed caliber in the Fairport schools. Furthermore, the mentor program that is available for all new teachers should persist in order to allow the new teachers to tap into the resources of the veteran staff. This is another way to ensure that all students receive the instruction that they deserve.

Continuing to provide veteran teachers with opportunities for learning such as inservice programs on current terminology/jargon is useful as well. The administration should continue to support the
teachers' reading programs as they reportedly have done in the past. Schools should also persist in providing a wide variety of models for reading, including community members, families, administration, and other school staff members.

Overall, the reading program currently offered in the Fairport schools is well-rounded and based on many sound principles. With the addition of the above-mentioned items, it will continue to grow and develop. By creating a written district philosophy, providing training and inservice programs for teachers, and continuing the already high level of support for teachers, Fairport will allow all students to continue to be successful readers.

**Reflections on the Survey**

In looking at the 116 surveys, it became clear that some items could have been set up a little bit differently to elicit more accurate responses. First of all, knowing that the district adopted the Houghton Mifflin Literary Reader, this title could have been listed as an example in the section regarding basals. Secondly, in the statement on the survey reading, "In terms of basals, I use: (choose one)," it was assumed that each teacher used a basal in some capacity. There should be another choice listed stating no basal used. Furthermore, in the supplemental materials section, it became obvious that there was some
confusion as to what some of the listed items were. The survey should have included specific examples to avoid ambiguity. On the assessment section, it would have been nice to have found out exactly what tests the teachers used.

In addition, on the back of the survey, under the label "Other strategies," it might have helped some of the teachers to have a separate descriptor page for items such as the Neurological Impress Method as some people knew these items under different labels. Finally, in the last section on teaming, partnerships, and involvement in reading, it might have helped to give a few examples of other specialists such as speech/language therapist, nurse, or psychologist.

Implications for Research

This study definitely allowed for a hearty answer to the research question as to what principles and practices are currently being implemented in reading instruction K-5 in the Fairport Central Schools, yet there are a wide range of related topics that have yet to be explored. For example, learning styles and multiple intelligence theory are two immense areas in education that could be linked to reading in numerous ways, but were not a key focus in this study. Although catering reading programs to individual student need's was mentioned, details on learning style and intelligence were not fully explored.
Furthermore, this study included regular education teachers and remedial reading teachers, but excluded special education teachers. Including special education may provide more insights surrounding reading in Fairport.

The reading survey asked teachers to report on how often they involve parents/guardians in the reading process, yet more specific details on the home-school connection were not fully explored. For example, are parents given reading surveys on their child(ren)? How often are suggestions on reading given and utilized? As the home-school connection is significant in educating children, it would be interesting to more fully explore this area.

To maintain confidentiality, individual student scores and files were not looked at in this study. However, it would be interesting to look at student scores as a whole on reading tests to analyze patterns or trends that may occur. Comparisons by building and grade level may be another avenue to explore. Finally, since reading is not taught in a vacuum, it would be intriguing to conduct similar studies in Fairport in the other discipline areas such as math, science, social studies, and English and then make comparisons of the data.
References


70


Appendix A

December 10, 1997

Dear (building principal):

I am currently completing my masters degree in The Reading Teacher Program at SUNY Brockport, and I'm interested in finding out what is done regarding reading instruction in the Fairport Schools, grades K-5. I am planning to gather information from all four of the elementary buildings using both a written survey and teacher interviews. Will you allow me to: a.) distribute surveys to all K-5 classroom teachers and reading teachers in your building and b.) interview some of these same teachers regarding reading instruction?

If you have any questions or concerns regarding my request, please feel free to contact me at Minerva DeLand School at 421-2030. The best times to contact me are between 9:30 and 10:30 a.m. or after 2:10 p.m. Thank you for your prompt reply and support.

Sincerely,

Sheila M. Spiesz
Appendix B
January 9, 1998

Dear Colleague:

My name is Sheila Spiesz and I am a special education teacher at Minerva DeLand School. I am completing my masters degree at SUNY Brockport in The Reading Teacher Program by writing a thesis. My thesis will explore what is done regarding reading instruction K-5 in the Fairport Schools.

I need your help to complete my program. I would appreciate it if you could take a few minutes out of your busy schedule to fill out the enclosed survey. The surveys will remain anonymous, so please answer as honestly as you can. In order for me to analyze the gathered data, please be sure to include your grade level. Please feel free to add comments for any portion of the survey.

Please complete this survey and return it in the enclosed envelope through district mail by January 21, 1998. If you have any questions or concerns, feel free to contact me. Thank you in advance for assisting me in completing my graduate studies. Enjoy the rest of your school year!

Sincerely,

Sheila M. Spiesz
Sheila M. Spiesz

Reading Survey
Please attach any forms, checklists, materials that further explain how you teach reading.

Grade(s) taught:
Check one: ___ Classroom Teacher ___ Remedial/Accelerated Reading Teacher

Years of teaching experience:

Philosophy of Reading/Materials Used
Check one that is most indicative of your reading classroom in Fairport.

- I don't use basals.
- I'm free to use alternatives to basals.
- Some basal use is required, but I may supplement.
- Basals are required with little or no flexibility in how I use them.

Which one best reflects your philosophical views on reading?
- I believe in a literature-based approach in which trade books would be used exclusively.
- I believe in a literature-based approach in which trade books would be used with basals.
- I believe in a skill-based approach in which basals would be used exclusively.

In terms of basals, I use: (choose one)

- compliance - follow basal guides, skill lessons, and workbooks
- flexibility - use basal as a source for ideas, a starting point
- individualization - supplement, modify, and select to fit

Predominant Basal(s) used: (include publisher and copyright date) OR write not applicable

Circle one letter per item as follows in terms of reading class:

O = Often use   S = Sometimes use   N = Never use

Supplemental Materials

O S N 1.) trade books
O S N 2.) audiovisual materials (videos, films, tapes, etc.)
O S N 3.) computer assisted instruction
O S N 4.) computer games
O S N 5.) accelerated readers
O S N 6.) other basal series
O S N 7.) books by levels and/or steps
O S N 8.) interdisciplinary materials
O S N 9.) teacher-made materials
O S N 10.) reading logs/journals

Other: ________________________________
Key: O = Often use  S = Sometimes use  N = Never use

Assessments/Groupings

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<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>standardized reading tests</td>
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<td>2.</td>
<td>reading attitudes/interest surveys</td>
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<td>3.</td>
<td>reading series itself, and progress through it</td>
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<td>4.</td>
<td>formal and informal observations</td>
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<td>5.</td>
<td>record of books read</td>
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<td>6.</td>
<td>portfolios</td>
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<td>7.</td>
<td>skill sheets</td>
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<td>8.</td>
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How do you group students for reading instruction? (Check all that apply.)

- ___ homogeneous grouping
- ___ heterogeneous grouping
- ___ by test scores
- ___ by ability
- ___ by achievement
- ___ by interest
- ___ by friendship
- ___ by project/research topic
- ___ pupil pairs
- ___ large groups
- ___ small groups
- ___ other

Strategies - Using above key, place an O, S, or N in front of each item reflecting your choice.

When helping hesitant reader, how often do you:

- 1.) wait - given time, child works it out successfully
  - 2.) if child supplies wrong word:
    - a. let carry on and at end of sentence/paragraph ask if it makes sense
    - b. ask reader to reread sentence
    - c. ask reader to reread and you supply word
    - d. you reread the sentence, pausing for child to supply the word
  - 3.) if child remains silent:
    - a. ask reader to guess word, using rest of text, picture, or anything else that might help
    - b. draw child's attention to parts of the word
    - c. reread sentence up to problem word—may help child to hear fluently read part so he/she can supply meaning

Other strategies:

- 1.) Phonics Drills
- 2.) Cloze Procedure
- 3.) Prediction
- 4.) Sequencing
- 5.) Informal Reading Inventories
- 6.) Echoic Reading
- 7.) Neurological Impress Method
- 8.) Repeated Reading
- 9.) Simultaneous Reading
- 10.) Teacher Read Alouds
- 11.) Sustained Silent Reading

Teaming/Partnerships/Involvement in Reading (Use O, S, or N key)

- 1.) With other teachers
- 2.) With school librarian
- 3.) With parents/guardians
- 4.) With other specialists
- 5.) With community resources
- 6.) With administration
Appendix D
January 20, 1998

Dear Colleague:

Just a brief reminder to complete the survey regarding reading instruction that I sent to you. If you have already completed it and returned it to me, thank you very much for your effort and timeliness. If you haven't yet done so, please take a moment to fill it in. Thanks again for assisting me in my graduate studies. Have a peaceful holiday season!

Sincerely,

Sheila M. Spiesz