

Tennessee

Reading Teacher

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Children's Rights in Learning to Read

- 1. Children have a right to appropriate early reading instruction based on their individual needs.*
- 2. Children have a right to reading instruction that builds both skill and the desire to read increasingly complex materials.*
- 3. Children have a right to well-prepared teachers who keep their skills up to date through effective professional development.*
- 4. Children have a right to access a wide variety of books and other reading material in classroom, school, and community libraries.*
- 5. Children have the right to reading assessment that identifies their strengths as well as their needs and involves them in making decisions about their own learning.*
- 6. Children who are struggling as learners have a right to receive supplemental instruction from professionals specifically prepared to teach reading.*
- 7. Children have a right to reading instruction that involves parents and communities in their academic lives.*
- 8. Children have a right to reading instruction that makes skilled use of their first language skill.*
- 9. Children have the right to equal access to technology used for the improvement of reading instruction.*
- 10. Children have a right to classrooms that optimize learning opportunities.*

*— International Reading Association
January, 2000*

Tennessee Reading Teacher

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Making a Difference Means Making It Different: Honoring Children's Rights to Excellent Reading Instruction.

A Position Statement of the International Reading Association
Adopted by the Board of Directors March 2000

Most children can, and do, learn to read and write. But too many children read and write poorly. When schools fail to teach any child to read and write, they fail all of us. We must ensure that all children receive the excellent instruction and support they need to learn to read and write. In this document, the International Reading Association reviews the challenges schools face and outlines support children need to become competent readers and writers.

Today's teachers are under great pressure to improve student performance and meet quantifiable standards of achievement. At the same time, schools face serious challenges brought on by changes in our societies: stress on families and family support systems is increasing. The school-age population of the world is growing more diverse. Teacher shortages threaten as the demand for high quality teachers grows. Meanwhile, poverty remains a persistent feature of the global economic system.

In the face of these complex challenges, there can be no single, simple solution to the problem of teaching all children to read proficiently. Policies that benefit some children while leaving the needs of others unaddressed fall short of the goal of helping all children to become competent readers and writers. Programs that center on one part of the literacy equation at the expense of others train readers who may be unable to understand or enjoy what they read. Instead of focusing narrowly on one aspect of the problem or one instructional strategy, educators and policymakers need to take a broader view.

The International Reading Association is convinced that efforts to improve children's reading and writing achievement must begin by recognizing the right of every child to receive the best possible reading instruction. From this basic right the Association has developed a set of 10 principles to serve as a guide for formulating educational policy and practice. They are presented here

in the belief that excellent reading instruction can and will make a difference in children's lives.

Honoring Children's Rights

Most children learn to read and write in classrooms. Honoring children's rights to effective instruction requires a willingness to question whether today's classrooms are set up to meet their needs as readers and writers. The 10 principles outlined here provide a means for evaluating current policy and classroom practice, and a direction for change where it is necessary.

Children have the right to appropriate early reading instruction based on their individual needs.

No single method or single combination of methods can successfully teach children to read. Instead, each child must be helped to develop the skills and understandings he or she needs to become a reader. These include the following:

- a motivation to read
- appropriate active strategies to construct meaning from text
- sufficient background information and vocabulary to foster reading comprehension
- the ability to decode unfamiliar words
- the ability to read fluently, and
- an understanding of how speech sounds (phonemes) are connected to print

Because children learn differently, teachers must be familiar with a wide range of proven methods for helping children gain these skills. They also must have thorough knowledge of the children they teach, so they can provide the appropriate balance of methods needed for each child.

Because there is no clearly documented best, or only, way to teach reading, teachers and reading specialists

who are familiar with a wide range of methodologies and who are closest to the children must be the ones to make the decisions about what reading methods and materials to use. Furthermore, these professionals must have the flexibility to modify those methods when they determine that particular children are not learning. Each child must be provided with an appropriate combination of methods.

Children have the right to reading instruction that builds both the skill and the desire to read increasingly complex materials.

Children need well-developed repertoires of reading comprehension and study strategies, including the ability to

- question themselves about what they read
- synthesize information from various sources
- identify, understand, and remember key vocabulary
- recognize how a text is organized and use that organization as a tool for learning
- organize information in notes
- interpret diverse symbol systems in subjects such as biology and algebra
- search the Internet for information
- judge their own understanding, and
- evaluate authors' ideas and perspectives

However, helping children develop these advanced reading comprehension skills is insufficient if children are not motivated to read. Unfortunately, students' interest in reading—particularly that of struggling readers—tends to decline as they advance into the middle grades. Children deserve teachers who act on children's interests and who design meaningful inquiry projects to promote the desire to read.

Children have the right to well-prepared teachers who keep their skills up to date through effective professional development.

Teachers skilled in the wide range of methods for teaching reading must be at the core of all reform efforts directed at improving children's reading achievement.

They must

- understand reading and writing development
- continually assess individual children's progress and relate reading instruction to children's previous experiences

- know a variety of strategies for teaching reading, when to use each, and how to combine these into an effective instructional program
- know and use a variety of reading materials and texts for children to read
- use flexible grouping strategies to tailor instruction to individuals; and
- be good reading "coaches" (who give appropriate help strategically)

Preservice education must provide beginning teachers with a solid knowledge base and substantial classroom practice to ensure their basic competence.

In addition, all teachers, even the most experienced, need high quality professional development. They need to be aware of new information in the fields of child development, cognitive psychology, and literacy education. And they need time to integrate changes into their instruction.

Children have the right to access a wide variety of books and other reading material in classroom, school, and community libraries.

Children who read more, read better. Children who have access to varied sources of print materials in their classrooms, school libraries, town libraries and at home, and who are allowed to choose what they read, read more for pleasure and for information. Children who do a substantial amount of voluntary reading are positive about reading and are good readers.

To encourage children to read widely and willingly, school libraries must

- have the funding to purchase a sufficient number of new books per student each year
- contain about 20 books per child in school libraries and 7 per student in classroom libraries
- add two new books per student to school libraries, and one book per student to classroom libraries each year
- include picture books, fiction and nonfiction, magazines, poetry, and many other types of texts to match the interests of all the children

Children's access to books is so fundamental that it is often overlooked. In recent years, school and classroom libraries have deteriorated. Library collections that are now inadequate and outdated must be improved to meet children's needs.

Children have a right to reading assessment that identifies their strengths as well as their needs and involves them in making decisions about their own learning.

Using tests based on mandated standards to determine which students will graduate or which type of diploma students will receive is particularly detrimental to children from low-income homes or homes in which the dominant language is not spoken. For example, high-stakes national or statewide tests are being used this way in some U.S. states, despite the fact that the results rarely provide information that helps teachers decide which specific teaching/learning experiences will foster literacy development. The practice hurts those most in need of enriched educational opportunities. Children deserve classroom assessments that bridge the gap between what they know and are able to do and relevant curriculum standards. Effective assessments are crucial for students who are falling behind. They deserve assessments that map a path toward their continued literacy growth.

Children deserve classroom assessments that

- are regular extensions of instruction
- provide useful feedback based on clear, attainable, worthwhile standards
- exemplify quality performances illustrating the standards; and
- position students as partners with teachers in evaluating their progress and setting goals

Assessments must provide information for instructional decision making as well as for public accountability

Children who are struggling with reading have a right to receive intensive instruction from professionals specifically prepared to teach reading.

Children learn to read and write at different rates and in different ways. There are significant numbers of children who struggle with reading and writing. Many of these children need more and different kinds of instruction, and they have a right to instruction that is designed with their specific needs in mind. Reading specialists are specifically prepared to supervise and/or provide this instruction.

When readers struggle, reading specialists should be called upon:

- to provide tutoring in reading that is part of a comprehensive program involving subject-matter, teachers, parents, and the community

- to structure challenging and relevant instruction that allows students to succeed and become self-sufficient learners
- to assess students' reading and writing, and to enable students to control their own learning by assessing their own reading and writing;
- to support learners immediately when their progress slows
- to teach decoding, vocabulary, fluency, comprehension, and study strategies tailored to individual abilities
- to relate literacy practices to life management issues such as exploring careers, examining individual roles in society, setting goals, managing time and stress, and resolving conflicts
- to offer reading programs that recognize potentially limiting forces such as work schedules, family responsibilities, and peer pressure

No school can provide adequate reading and writing instruction for all children without the specific expertise in reading and writing offered by specialists.

Children have a right to reading instruction that involves parents and communities in their academic lives.

Growing in literacy means continually stretching. Consequently, children deserve support, not only from school, but also from their families, their communities, and their nation. This support can be delivered through the following means:

- Parents can engage their children in discussions about what they read, respond sincerely to what they write, and make lots of printed materials available.
- Libraries, religious groups, and after-school programs can provide space and volunteers to assist children with homework, to tutor children, and to initiate book discussion groups.
- Businesses can allow employees to become involved in mentoring programs that emphasize reading. They can work with school personnel and parents to provide needed resources.
- Policymakers can give attention and appropriate funding for reading and writing services in the upper grades as well as the early grades. (In most international comparisons, it is in the upper grades that U.S. children perform less well.)

-
- Government can support ongoing staff development, provide funds for reduced class sizes and for purchase of reading materials, and support literacy research across the grade levels, especially including the upper grades.

Ensuring that all children learn to read and write requires the cooperation of a wide group of stakeholders. It takes the whole community to teach all children to read and write.

Children have a right to reading instruction that makes meaningful use of their first language skills.

Initial literacy instruction should be provided in a child's native language whenever possible. Research shows that while initial literacy learning in a second language can be successful, it is riskier than starting with a child's first language—especially for those children affected by poverty, low levels of parental education, or poor schooling.

Policies on initial instruction should

- support the professional judgment of the teachers and administrators responsible for teaching students whose first language is not the dominant language
- encourage research and demonstration projects for second-language literacy learners
- not mandate particular instructional methodologies or strategies

The number of second-language literacy learners in schools is increasing rapidly and dramatically. Schools and communities must provide sufficient attention and resources to help these children learn to read and write and ultimately to do so in the dominant language.

Children have the right to equal access to the technology used for the improvement of reading instruction.

The growth of technology, including Internet access, is fundamentally transforming nearly every aspect of traditional literacy, creating not only new opportunities but also new challenges for teachers, students, parents, school districts, teacher educators, researchers, and governments. Lack of equity in access to technology increasingly is limiting literacy opportunities for many children. For example, recent data from the U.S. Department of Education indicate that the percentage of Internet connections is about one-third less for schools in

which minority enrollment exceeds 50 percent or where more than 71 percent of students are eligible for free or reduced-price lunches than for other schools (National Center for Education Statistics, 1999).

Children learning to read deserve to share equally in the benefits of new technology.

This will require

- equal access to technology that supports reading instruction
- teachers who have had sufficient staff development or initial preparation to use technology with confidence
- adequate funding for research about the interface between new technologies and literacy development

We must make a larger investment to expand the access of all children to technology. In addition, schools, teacher education institutions, professional development providers, and researchers at all levels must be encouraged and supported as they devote more energy and resources toward this goal.

U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. (1999). Internet access in public schools: 1994–1998. [Online]. Available: <<http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/binfo.asp?pubid1999017>> [1999, August 1].

Children have a right to classrooms that optimize learning opportunities.

Teachers and children cannot improve reading achievement without strong support from every stakeholder. In some schools, class sizes are large, materials are in short supply, teachers are teaching with inappropriate or no credentials, discipline is inadequate, and buildings are crumbling. Citizens who are serious about improving reading achievement must be held accountable for providing

- appropriate student-teacher ratios
- instructional materials
- certified teachers
- discipline supported by families and the community
- buildings in sound physical condition

If teachers and children are to be held to high standards in reading achievement, communities must be held to high levels of support.

A Picture is Worth ... Improving Reader's Self-Efficacy Through Self-Modeling

*By Tom Buggey, Paul Ayers, Chiquita Morris, Angela Wichlinski,
Mattie Decker, Amy Smith, and Brenda Vanderpool*

Visual self-modeling (VSM) is a relatively new, positive, and underused technique for modifying and training behaviors. In this article, there is a discussion of several applications of this technique with at-risk readers carried out by staff from the Restructuring for Inclusive School Environments (RISE) technical assistance project at the University of Memphis, along with an explanation of how to carry out the self-modeling technique. Examples of auditory self-modeling are presented; however, the focus of this article is video self-modeling.

Over the past several years, staff from the RISE Project have been involved in helping schools set up reading labs for their students with disabilities and those considered at-risk readers. Our experiences with readers who endure repeated failures and difficulties have taught us that building a sense of self-efficacy with reading is essential before these students can progress. This internal

This internal sense of self-efficacy, or inner control and power to bring about results in one's actions, is at the core of successful learning.

sense of self-efficacy, or inner control and power to bring about results in one's actions, is at the core of successful learning (Bandura, 1997; Clay, 1997). Students who associate failure with books will rarely

gain the love of reading that we want to instill in our students.

At the RISE Project, we have found that one of the best ways to create positive self-efficacy in reading is to allow students to hear and see themselves reading well – to implant images of success in the minds of struggling readers. In research conducted in the development of his social learning theory, Bandura (1997; 2001) demonstrated that the best models are those closest to the observer in all characteristics. It is a logical extension of this research to conclude that no model can be as closely related to the

observer, as when the observer and the model are the same individual. By establishing audio taping centers within reading labs and through the training of teachers to edit videotapes, we have established methodologies for allowing children to hear and view themselves reading fluently.

All of the reading labs established in RISE partner schools have a center containing a tape recorder. The centers have several functions, but there are two major uses related to the present topic. In the first, students can create their own rubric for success. For example, students can dictate the correct spelling of words into the tape player and then use this as a self-correcting tool for any subsequent work or assessments. By hearing themselves correctly performing the desired objective, the students not only gain the correct answer, but also gain a sense of self-efficacy. They know they can because they have direct evidence to that effect.

Students are also allowed to use the tape recorders to record stories and passages when they have excelled. Students can then play back these best exemplars of their reading. Teachers report that this application of self-modeling is highly motivational to the students and that student effort is increased in order to get the opportunity to record. As above, the students can then listen to themselves succeeding. In addition to the self-modeling, the tapes can be brought home so that parents too can hear the exceptional performance.

As powerful as the auditory self-modeling appears to be, it does not approach the effects we have seen through the use of video self-modeling (VSM). The research on VSM, across a wide range of student behaviors and skills, has indicated that positive results tend to occur almost immediately following intervention. Results also indicate that the learned behaviors generalize to other settings and are maintained over time (Buggey, 1999; Dowrick, 1983).

Staff of the RISE Project have carried out two research

studies on the effect VSM has on reading fluency (Decker 2003; Greenberg, Bugghey, & Bond 2002). In both of the studies, the participants were chosen because of reading achievement that was significantly below grade level. It

was found that students' attitudes toward reading improved significantly after intervention. It was also found that students' reading fluency improved and that a spike in fluency occurred almost immediately after viewing their videos. The rate of these gains in fluency was maintained over time. Two methods of recording fluent reading were used in these studies.

In the Decker (2003) study, echo reading was used. Each student participating in the study worked individually with one of the researchers. During the recording the researcher read one line and the student repeated the same line. The recording was done using a Sony digital camcorder and the resulting video was then uploaded to a computer. Using iMovie on a Macintosh computer, all evidence of the researcher's reading and student errors were erased so that each student appeared to be reading fluently on his or her own. The student was then allowed to view his or her tape when he or she first arrived at the reading lab.

The material selected for reading was slightly beyond the student's instructional level. iMovie is a free download from Apple and is very user-friendly. Editing videos becomes as easy as using a word processor. Digital effects can also be added easily. For the students' videos in this study, an introduction was added that labeled the behaviors (e.g. "Here's Nicky reading very nicely.") and included captions to that effect. At the end of the video, applause and the words "Great Job!" were added.

In the second study (Greenberg, Bugghey, & Bond 2002), students were taught to read a single passage from just beyond their instructional level using conventional methods such as vocabulary recognition, adult modeling, and training in inflection. Once mastery had been attained, students were asked to read while being filmed. Three samples of the readings were filmed for each student and the best example was used. In this way, no editing was needed. The camcorder was plugged directly into a VCR and the desired passage was recorded directly onto a VHS tape. The time required for the taping and editing was under 20 minutes. Students were shown their tapes in private between the time their bus arrived and the start of school so that undue attention would not be drawn to them. Following the first viewing of the tape by three

... students have constant access to an image of success and this is a powerful motivational factor.

students from different classes, two of the teachers independently sought out the researcher to ask what she had done. The students had volunteered to read orally for the first time that year. As in the first study, follow-up assessments in reading fluency showed a significant spike in reading fluency immediately after viewing the

tape.

The generalization and maintenance effects evident in virtually all studies using VSM seem to indicate that students have constant access to an image of success and this is a powerful motivational factor. We are reminded of the story of the Little Engine that Could. However, rather than the engine saying "I THINK I can", he is saying "I KNOW I can."

Children can easily fall into a failure cycle when they experience frustration learning to read. When they fall behind for reasons that may be related to developmental readiness, hearing problems, transience, or a host of other factors, the goal of being a good reader seems to move further and further from their grasp. At some point, students may surrender and become resolved to their fate.

Poor reading skills also inhibit student success in other subjects, thus adding to the feelings of powerlessness and frustration. This often results in inappropriate

behavior to compensate for their failure in academics. Providing students with positive images of success can be used to intervene in this process. Once the student's sense of self-efficacy is improved, other remedial methods will probably have a much greater impact.

... a spike in fluency occurred almost immediately after viewing their videos.

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Providing Books and Other Print Materials for Classroom School Libraries

A Position Statement of the International Reading Association
Adopted by the Board of Directors September 1999

The International Reading Association calls for an immediate increase in funding for books in classroom, school, and town libraries. The condition of these libraries has weakened over the last decade; there are fewer books per child, and the condition of the books and the staffing of the libraries have seriously deteriorated. We must reverse this trend because children who have access to books are more likely to read for enjoyment, and thus increase their reading skills and their desire to read to learn. The purpose of this position statement is to emphasize the importance of increased, dedicated funding for the purchase of quality literature of multiple genres. Libraries must purchase a sufficient number of new books per student and they must make a concentrated effort to replace older materials for each classroom and school library on an annual basis. Genres should include picture storybooks, novels, biography, fiction and nonfiction material, magazines, poetry, and a multitude of other types to suit the interests and range of reading abilities of all children.

Why is it important for children to have access to books?

A strong research base supports the importance of access to books. Children who are allowed to self-select to read and who have access to varied sources of print materials in their classrooms, school libraries, town libraries, and at home, read more and read more widely, both for pleasure and for information. Children who do a substantial amount of voluntary reading demonstrate positive attitudes toward reading, and these students tend to be the best readers (Calkins, 1996; Greaney, 1980; Krashen, 1994).

Frequent reading is related to the development of sophisticated language structures, higher levels of

comprehension, improved word analysis skills, and fluency. Significant amounts of voluntary reading are associated with greater interest and skill development (Irving, 1980). In one study, kindergarten children who demonstrated a voluntary interest in books were rated by their teachers as displaying high performance in all areas of school achievement. They also performed well on a standardized achievement test (Morrow, 1983). In other studies, classrooms were filled with large numbers of trade books, and teachers were asked to encourage free reading. Improvement in children's reading achievement, gains in vocabulary and comprehension, and increased reading were noted, and better attitudes toward reading were reported than were exhibited by children in comparison schools who did not participate in such programs (Elley & Mangubhai, 1983; Fielding, Wilson, & Anderson, 1986; Ingham, 1981).

What does "access to books" mean?

Access to books refers to the availability of quality literature in classroom, school, community, or home libraries. Children with adequate access to books have many books to select from on a daily basis, both in and out of school. Additionally, school libraries and classrooms must have an adequate amount of reading material for each child in order to create a fair balance between children who receive access to books outside of school and those who do not. Given that there are approximately 180 days in the school year, a child should be able to select within the classroom a new book to read each day. This averages to about seven books per student in each classroom library. School libraries should have a minimum of 20 books per child to enable children to take multiple books home at each visit. This figure also takes into consideration the needs of teachers to have access to

quality trade books for literature-based instruction. In addition, it is recommended that one new book per student should be added to every classroom library, and two new books per child should be added to the school library collection each year to allow for the addition of important new titles and for the elimination of books that are no longer timely. Books and other literary materials must be updated annually. Worn and out-of-date materials must be replaced with timely and enriching new works.

Access means not only availability of books, but also time for reading them (Krashen, 1996). Regular periods need to be set aside in school for independent reading. Providing access to books also includes supplying a quiet, comfortable place to read. Another important part of access is librarians and teachers who know both books and children and who can make good recommendations that match the interests of children with the content of books.

What happens when literature is not readily available for student use?

Children become fluent readers when they have opportunities to practice reading. Without appropriate access to books, children will be taught to read, but will not develop the habit of reading. If schools fail to provide children with an opportunity to practice skills in the meaningful context of literature, substantial numbers of children will choose not to read for pleasure or for information on their own (Holdaway, 1979). Additionally, research has found a relation between the amount of time that children read for fun on their own and reading achievement (Greany, 1980; National Assessment of Educational Progress, 1996; Taylor, Frye, & Maruyama, 1990). Children in classrooms without literature collections read 50% less than children in classrooms with such collections (Morrow, 1998).

How can public libraries promote children's access to books?

Public libraries are necessary partners for the provision of children's access to books. Libraries often provide their own programs for children and parents to enhance the joy of reading and easy, free access to books. In these efforts, they can and often do collaborate with schools. Ramos & Krashen (1998) carried out a study that demonstrated the value of using the public library to provide children more access to books. In this study, 104 children from homes that had few or no books visited their local libraries monthly. These children had limited access to print outside of the 30 minutes each week during

library visits. When visiting the public library, children were allowed to check out 10 books each. Some of these books were to increase the supply of literature in their classroom library, and some books were for taking to their homes. No assignments were made in regard to using these books; however, children read more, read with more ease, and were eager to return to the library. Surveys also indicated that children requested that their parents take them back to the library. This excitement creates a positive cycle in which wider reading helps increase reading ability and interest in books.

What are the implications for this position statement at the federal, state, district, and school levels?

Miller and Shontz (1993) found that schools that had up-to-date book collections in good condition often used advisory committees to study their current books status. Additionally, many of these schools received extra funding for online access, interactive video resources, and interlibrary loans. Others used more of their federal and gift monies for books, and a higher percentage of these schools belong to networks.

The American School Library Association has recommended that school libraries plan acquisition programs that are integrated with the instructional program of their school. Such a school program should decide what types of books are needed to help the school and the library achieve instructional goals. Librarians and teachers also need financial support from school budgets for book purchases and for school librarians to help with the use of the books (Guice, 1994).

Miller and Shontz (1993) suggest that the states, regional accrediting associations, and the National Center for Education Statistics research the deterioration of library collections to obtain more precise data. This would provide information to the states, the U.S. Department of Education, and Congress, and would encourage more financial support and programs to provide children access to print materials. State associations need to become aggressive on the issue of improving our libraries and should stress the contribution made by libraries to the quality of education for children (Miller & Shontz, 1993). Associations with vested interest in the education of children, such as the International Reading Association and the American Library Association, must continue to seek legislation from local and national government officials to provide adequate funding to keep classroom and school libraries current with quality literature.

Recommendations for Teachers, Librarians, and School Administrators

- Request appropriate numbers of books for classrooms, school libraries, and public libraries.
- Inform parents and policy makers of the importance of access to books.
- Remind state and local policy makers of the need to allot funding for books.

Recommendations for Researchers

- Survey homes in each community to determine children's access to books at home.
- Continue to study the benefits of access to books to document the issue and maintain its visibility among educators, policy makers, and the public.

It is easy to dismiss the issue addressed in this position statement. Providing access to books is not controversial, nor does it achieve the same high profile as other educational concerns that seem to be more pressing. However, among all the issues we face, few concern a more basic educational need: that our children have access to current, quality literature. We must never allow that need to go unaddressed.

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Author Study: Learning More About Reading Through Groups of Related Books

Why: Good readers read a lot. They know a great deal about books. They know how stories work and they may even recognize the author of a given text by its style and language. Strategies that promote these understandings promote proficient reading.

Who: Any elementary age students.

How To: Select authors who have published at least six to ten high quality books that are appropriate for the age and ability range of students you are teaching. The books should also deal with important issues in depth.

Procedures

1. Collect several copies of as many different texts by the author under study as you can find. Preview several of these texts with the children, discussing the titles, illustrations and possible story lines.
2. Have the group decide which story they want to hear read aloud first. Read the story selected at least twice. Talk about the author's way of telling a story, the words he or she chooses, the characters involved, etc. Look at the illustrations.
3. After reading the story and discussing it, have the children explore two or three other stories by the same author in small groups to find similarities (and possibly differences) between the initial story and these new books. Groups then share their findings.
4. style has been achieved, the children may try their hand at writing like this author. For example, the students might try to write a story like they think Robert Munsch would write a story.
5. In like manner, the students might study an illustrator's style and then attempt to draw and illustrate their own materials in a similar fashion. For example, they might use a variety of colored paper like Eric Carle uses in his illustrations.
6. Connections among books may lead to children creating web and story maps and to making connections with other authors, stories, and poems.

Then:

1. More books by the same author are read and shared in a similar manner.
2. The students learn more about the author and the various illustrators.
3. Students may choose to write a letter to the author asking him or her about certain story elements and/or expressing appreciation for the stories.
4. After an in depth understanding of the author's Several authors, whose work makes excellent author studies for grade 1-4 are Eric Carle, Tomie DePaola, Robert Munsch, Bill Peet, Steven Kellogg, Patricia Polacco, Verna Aardema, Vera B. Williams, Marc Brown, Russell and Lillian Hoban, Don Freeman, Eve Bunting, Ezra Jack Keats, Leo Lionni, William Steig, Don & Audrey Woods, Faith Ringgold, and Cynthia Rylant. Teachers might wish to encourage the children to choose from among three or four authors. They might decide to have one author study per month throughout the year so that every student becomes an expert on the work of 8 to 10 different authors' and illustrators.

An excellent first choice might be Robert Munsch. These books have great “kid” appeal. They are illustrated by only two or three different artists and there are at least ten different titles that a teacher might find suitable for such a study. This many related books will keep children reading and talking and writing and drawing and thinking and acting out stories (and so on) for several weeks.

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The Role and Qualifications of the Reading Coach in the United States

A Position Statement of the International Reading Association
Adopted by the Board of Directors May 2004

With the recent heavy focus on reading achievement at federal, state, and local levels in the United States, the role of the reading specialist has changed. Although reading specialists function in many roles, including remedial teacher, staff developer, supervisor, and mentor, the balance of their activities has shifted away from direct teaching and toward leadership and professional development roles. In fact, reading specialists working in exemplary schools, in addition to providing direct instruction to students, spend a great deal of their time serving as a resource to classroom teachers (Bean, Swan, & Knaub, 2003). Moreover, this change in role is consistent with the International Reading Association's (2000) position statement titled *Teaching All Children to Read: The Roles of the Reading Specialist*; that is, the reading specialist has three major roles: (1) instruction, (2) assessment, and (3) leadership. The leadership role includes working with classroom teachers to ensure that there is quality "first" teaching (Pipes, 2004).

With the changing roles have come a variety of new titles, such as reading coach and literacy coach, and there is considerable variability in the job descriptions for these coaches. Some coaches are volunteers with no specific training in reading, while others are school district employees with master's degrees and reading specialist certifications. In some schools, tutors who work with students are also called coaches. These individuals have a variety of levels of training, and they may work for companies (both profit and nonprofit) that supply supplemental services to students attending schools labeled by the state as "in need of improvement," based on the guidelines of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001.

At present, there is little consistency in the training, backgrounds, and skills required for such positions, and there is little consistency in the general competence of coaches, in part because there are no agreed upon definitions or standards for the roles. The Association

applauds the expansion of reading expertise available to students and teachers at the school building level. However, individuals designated as reading coaches, or literacy coaches, must be appropriately prepared and have the knowledge and skills necessary to be effective in the positions they hold.

Reading coaches frequently act as reading specialists when they provide leadership for school-, district-, and state-level reading programs. In the leadership role, they design, monitor, and assess reading achievement progress; they provide professional development and coaching for teachers and building personnel; they are responsible for improving reading achievement; and they may also supervise and evaluate staff.

These responsibilities are the responsibilities of reading specialists (see International Reading Association, 2000), and if reading professionals are serving in these roles (regardless of their titles), they must meet the standards for reading specialist/literacy coach as indicated in the Standards for Reading Professionals, Revised 2003 (International Reading Association, 2004).

However, in many cases, reading professionals employed in these new positions are specifically focused on coaching classroom teachers and supporting them in their daily work within a specific school building or buildings. These reading professionals do not supervise or evaluate teachers but rather collaborate with teachers to achieve specific professional development goals.

Ideally, these reading coaches would meet the standards for reading specialist/literacy coach in Standards for Reading Professionals, Revised 2003 and hold a reading specialist certificate. However, given the current emphasis on reading coaching, the immediate need for reading coaches whose responsibilities are limited to those described in this paragraph, and the fact that in some states reading specialist certification is not available, the Association acknowledges that school districts may select candidates who do not meet the standards or have

reading specialist certification but who have other qualifications that make them strong candidates for these positions. The goal in such situations should be to provide professional development opportunities, including participation in reading specialist master's degree programs, so that within three years the reading coaches meet the Association's standards. In the interim, school districts should hire as reading coaches individuals who meet the following minimum qualifications:

- Are excellent teachers of reading, preferably at the levels at which they are coaching
- Have in-depth knowledge of reading processes, acquisition, assessment, and instruction
- Have expertise in working with teachers to improve their practices
- Are excellent presenters and group leaders
- Have the experience or preparation that enables them to model, observe, and provide feedback about instruction for classroom teachers

Ordinarily, teachers cannot meet these minimum qualifications without having completed several years of outstanding teaching; substantial graduate-level coursework in reading; and coursework related to presentation, facilitation, and adult learning. Reading specialists should supervise reading coaches who do not have reading specialist certification.

Definition of Reading Coaching

In this position statement, we address reading coaching as a means of providing professional development for teachers in schools. Specifically, there is evidence that one-shot, workshop-oriented professional development efforts do not result in changes in classroom practices or in student learning. Coaching provides the additional support needed for teachers to implement various programs or practices (Nowak, 2003). Poglinco, Bach, Hovde, Rosenblum, Saunders, and Supovitz (2003) conducted an evaluation study of a coaching model that provides a good summary of what coaching does:

“Coaching provides ongoing consistent support for the implementation and instruction components. It is nonthreatening and supportive—not evaluative. It gives a sense of how good professional development is. It also affords the opportunity to see it work with students. (p. 42)”

Why Reading Coaches?

The rapid proliferation of reading coaches is one of the responses to increased attention to reading achievement

and the achievement gap in the United States. In recent years, reading has been the focus of both state and federal reading initiatives. Presidents Bill Clinton and George W. Bush and many state governors have spearheaded these initiatives. The Reading Excellence Act of 1998 under Clinton and the Reading First provisions of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 under Bush have allotted large amounts of federal dollars for professional development targeting improved reading instruction. In many cases, state education agencies have chosen to fund reading coaches as one component of their initiative. In several states, large appropriations for reading improvement also have included funding for reading coaches. The basic assumption is that increasing the expertise of reading professionals available to work with classroom teachers at the individual school level would allow these teachers to learn more about reading and reading instruction and thus improve reading instruction and student achievement.

What Do Reading Coaches Do?

A reading coach “supports teachers in their daily work” (Dole, 2004, p. 462). There are many activities that reading coaches engage in, from informal activities—such as conversing with colleagues—to more formal ones such as holding team meetings, modeling lessons, and visiting classrooms. It is critical that reading coaches understand that coaching may range from activities that help teachers develop or increase their knowledge about a specific issue to activities that focus on implementation issues. The Figure identifies various levels of activities, from those that are more informal and “low risk” (e.g., assisting with assessment) to those that require the reading coach to provide feedback about teachers’ classroom practices (e.g., classroom visits) and are more “high risk” (Bean, 2004a).

Descriptions of reading coaches usually draw from the work of Joyce and Showers (1996), who identify five kinds of professional development experiences: (1) theory, (2) demonstration, (3) practice, (4) feedback, and (5) in-class coaching. Although there is little research evidence related to reading coaches, there are many projects focused on reading coaching that provide program descriptions (see, e.g., Bean, 2004b; Lapp, Fisher, Flood, & Frey, 2003; Morgan, Saylor-Crowder, Stephens, Donnelly, Deford, & Hamel, 2003; Southern California Comprehensive Assistance Center, 2002; Sturtevant, 2003; Vogt & Shearer, 2003). There is a great deal of overlap in these descriptions, for example, the provision of demonstration teaching, observation, and feedback according to some professional development model such

as clinical supervision, peer coaching, or cognitive coaching. Although reading coaches engage in a full range of activities, it is the in-class coaching that distinguishes the role of the reading coach. Vogt and Shearer (2003) distinguish two levels of reading coaches: (1) the building level and (2) the school district level. South Carolina distinguishes between building-level coaches and regional coaches (Morgan et al., 2003). In general, the distinction is one between reading coaches who work directly with classroom teachers and reading coaches who coach other reading coaches. As stated previously, reading coaches who do not meet the Association's standards and who do not hold a reading specialist certificate should be working under the supervision of a reading professional who does meet those standards and holds a reading specialist certificate.

What Must Reading Coaches Know and Be Able to Do?

Because the primary role of reading coaches is to provide support to classroom teachers for classroom reading instruction, it is essential that they be excellent classroom teachers themselves. Their successful teaching experiences should include teaching at the levels of the teachers they will coach. That means that elementary school reading coaches should have successful teaching experiences at both the primary and intermediate levels, middle school reading coaches should have successful teaching experiences at the middle school level, and high school reading coaches should have successful teaching experiences at the high school level. Ideally, the documentation of successful teaching should include positive outcomes for student achievement.

A second requirement is that reading coaches should have in-depth knowledge of reading processes, acquisition, assessment, and instruction. Reading coaches cannot be expected to help classroom teachers improve reading instruction and student reading achievement if the reading coaches lack knowledge of the range of effective instructional methods, materials, and practices that can be employed at the levels they coach. Reading coaches must be knowledgeable about reading acquisition and development so they can aid teachers in planning instruction that meets the needs of all the students in the teachers' classrooms, and reading coaches must be able to help teachers with classroom assessments that can indicate reliably what those needs might be.

This knowledge can be gained in many different ways, including completion of a master's degree in reading that leads to reading specialist certification; ongoing

professional development work; intensive, yearlong training for newly employed reading coaches in a school district; and/or enrollment in a reading specialist certification program.

A third requirement is that reading coaches have experience working with teachers to improve their practices. For example, reading coaches may have been involved in professional development experiences during which they participated in and/or led teacher study groups or teacher book clubs. In addition, reading coaches should be accustomed to reflecting on their own practices and making adaptations that improve instruction.

A fourth requirement is that reading coaches should be excellent presenters and be familiar with presenting to teacher groups in the contexts of schools and at professional conferences at the local, state, and even national levels. Reading coaches also should be skilled in leading teacher groups to facilitate reflection and change for their colleagues.

Finally, reading coaches must have experience or preparation that enables them to master the complexities of observing and modeling in classrooms and providing feedback to teachers. The technical skills necessary for these coaching tasks can and must be developed. Moreover, reading coaches must be sensitive to the need to develop open, trusting relationships with teachers in order to serve effectively in a coaching role.

The Association strongly recommends that only teachers who meet these five criteria act as reading coaches. This recommendation is based on evidence from Poglinco et al. (2003) that indicates great variability in the effectiveness of reading coaches depending on their background and training. These authors found that reading coaches were more or less effective based on their knowledge and skills, and that when reading coaches were not confident and knowledgeable, they had concerns about their roles. For example, one coach remarked,

"Our problem was that we weren't really clear on the big picture of it. Yes we got training on this and that, but to be trained on it today to roll it out tomorrow when you don't understand it yourself, is very difficult. (p. 18)"

A principal noted, "The literacy coaches are just one step ahead of the teachers. It diminishes their credibility and there is the danger of no follow-up" (p. 19). Even when reading coaches do meet the five criteria, they should be involved in ongoing professional development to strengthen their knowledge and skills, and thus their effectiveness as reading coaches. Moreover, if the reading coaches are to be successful in promoting changes in classroom practices, the expectations for the role of

reading coach need to be both clear and understood by the reading coaches and the school administrator, in addition to being supported by the school administrator.

Summary

Reading coaching is a powerful intervention with great potential; however, that potential will be unfulfilled if reading coaches do not have sufficient depth of knowledge and range of skills to perform adequately in the coaching role. Education reform is riddled with examples of potentially powerful interventions that disappoint reformers and fail the students they are intended to help. The Association appeals to the stakeholders involved in implementing reading coaching interventions to pay close attention to the hiring of reading coaches and commit themselves (a) to hiring only those individuals who have the knowledge and skills required and (b) to assuring that within three years these reading coaches meet the Association's standards and obtain reading specialist certification. It is better to delay implementing a reading coaching intervention than to push ahead with inadequately trained reading coaches. In all cases, a reading specialist who has the appropriate depth of knowledge and range of skills must supervise reading coaches who will, in turn, help develop reading expertise in classroom teachers.

Recommendations

U.S. policymakers

- Continue to fund reading interventions that focus on professional development of classroom teachers.
- Provide support for the development of reading coaches, and insist that those providing such preparation be adequately trained themselves.
- Mandate that all policy initiatives that support reading coaches must require that reading coaches meet the Association's standards for reading specialist/literacy coach (see International Reading Association, 2004).

State policymakers

- Use professional development funds to develop strong reading coaching interventions.
- Insist that reading coaches be well educated, with in-depth knowledge of reading and reading instruction and the range of skills necessary for effective reading coaching.

- Provide adequate supervision of and infrastructure for reading coaching interventions.

School boards

- Insist that reading coaching interventions are carefully conceptualized.
- Insist that the infrastructure to support reading coaching interventions is in place before beginning the intervention.
- Ensure that individuals hired as reading coaches have adequate initial qualifications and an ongoing program of professional development.

School district and building-level administrators

- Plan carefully before implementing a reading coaching intervention.
- Be sure that reading coaches are supervised and receive ongoing professional development.
- Provide principals with adequate training for understanding their relationships with the reading coaches.
- Support reading coaches as they, in turn, support classroom teachers in the daily work of reading instruction.

Reading specialists

- Insist that reading coaching interventions are supervised by certified reading specialists who meet the International Reading Association's standards for reading specialist/literacy coach.
- Provide reading coaches with ongoing professional development.
- Facilitate the interaction of school district administrators, principals, classroom teachers, reading coaches, students, and parents.

Reading coaches

- Recognize that the position of reading coach requires one to be a lifelong learner.
- Strive to fulfill the role of reading coach in a professional manner, with respect for the work of others in the school (administrators, teachers, etc.).
- Request support from administrators and teachers.
- Interact with other reading coaches as a means of reflecting on your experiences.

- Seek feedback from the educators with whom you work.

Classroom teachers

- Receive preparation that enables you to understand the role of the reading coach.
- Provide feedback to reading coaches in terms of how they have helped you and how they can improve their performance.
- Recognize that the role of the reading coach is to enable you to reflect on your work in a professional and nonthreatening manner.

It is the responsibility of every stakeholder to do whatever he or she can to ensure that reading instruction is sound and effective. Reading coaching and reading coaches are potentially powerful interventions that can improve reading instruction. Every stakeholder, together with the International Reading Association, must insist that these interventions are well planned, that personnel are well trained, and that the implementations include whatever is necessary for reading coaching and reading coaches to succeed.

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FIGURE
Coaching Activities (Levels of Intensity)

Level 1	Level 2	Level 3
<p>(informal; helps to develop relationships)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conversations with colleagues (identifying issues or needs, setting goals, problem solving) • Developing and providing materials for/with colleagues • Developing curriculum with colleagues • Participating in professional development activities with colleagues (conferences, workshops) • Leading or participating in Study Groups • Assisting with assessing students • Instructing students to learn about their strengths and needs 	<p>(more formal, somewhat more intense; begins to look at areas of need and focus)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Co-planning lessons • Holding team meetings (grade level, reading teachers) • Analyzing student work • Interpreting assessment data (helping teachers use results for instructional decision making) • Individual discussions with colleagues about teaching and learning • Making professional development presentations for teachers 	<p>(formal, more intense; may create some anxiety on part of teacher or coach)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Modeling and discussing lessons • Co-teaching lessons • Visiting classrooms and providing feedback to teachers • Analyzing videotape lessons of teachers • Doing lesson study with teachers <p>Reprinted with permission from Bean, R.M. (2004). Promoting effective literacy instruction: The challenge for literacy coaches. <i>The California Reader</i>, 37 (3), 58–63.</p>

Nonfiction in Focus

By Janice V. Kristo and Rosemary A. Bamford (2004). New York: Scholastic. 304 pp. paperback. ISBN: 0-439-36598-8. \$27.99. <www.scholastic.com>.

In recent years, interest in using nonfiction with elementary school-aged children has grown rapidly. Professional conferences feature more sessions on this topic, and publications, both as journal articles and as books, have increased. *Nonfiction in Focus* provides reasons for this expanding interest, gives pointers on how to identify and select nonfiction texts, and offers explicit suggestions for classroom use. The authors believe that there is a “groundswell” of interest and excitement in nonfiction for children, and state that nearly 60 percent of juvenile books now consist of nonfiction titles.

This book is intended for elementary classroom teachers who want to know more about using nonfiction in their classrooms. It is designed so that readers can easily focus on key points by simply reading material in the boxed figures and bulleted lists. Surrounding text provides further explanation if needed. Specific lessons, complete with student/teacher dialogue and aimed at different grade levels, demonstrate exactly how to implement lessons in reading and writing nonfiction.

The book opens with a foreword by Richard Vacca, who attributes the new emphasis on nonfiction literature partly to the standards-based movement which recognizes “the literature of fact” as an important component of the literacy curriculum. In the introduction the authors say their goal is to produce a resource that “supports students in becoming independent readers, writers, and inquirers over time” (p. 9). They accomplish this goal by showing the reader how to “model, explain, and demonstrate strategies for reading and writing nonfiction within a comprehensive literacy framework for grades K through 6” (p. 9).

The authors explain nonfiction by saying that it is the literature of fact, and they associate it with well-written, well-illustrated trade books on topics related to history, science, math, and the fine arts. They consider informational text to be a broader term that includes many kinds of expository text, including brochures, articles, newspapers, and selections from Web sites, in addition to books. They point out the differences between reading

fiction and nonfiction in Figure 1.1 and suggest pairing fiction with nonfiction to help students understand these differences. For example, use Bernard Waber’s *Lyle at Christmas* with Seymour Simon’s *Crocodiles & Alligators* and compare features of the two books.

Kristo and Bamford believe that students benefit from reading and writing nonfiction in a variety of ways. These include meeting the needs of students with a wide range of reading levels and interests, providing examples of writing in the content areas, opening the door to classroom research and inquiry, developing and expanding vocabulary, and influencing the growth and development of young readers and writers.

Chapter 2 introduces the theme of the book, which is its Comprehensive Framework organized by levels of scaffolding. It begins with highly scaffolded instruction and moves students toward independent reading and writing of nonfiction. The sequence of instructional strategies is (1) reading aloud with modeled writing, (2) shared reading with interactive writing and shared writing, (3) guided reading and writing, (4) student-led reading and writing “Discovery Circles,” (5) readers’ and writers’ workshops, and (6) extension activities on the students’ independent level. Part II of the book consists of chapters dealing with each of these strategies in depth. Many teachers are already familiar with these strategies, but this text shows how to apply them directly to reading and writing nonfiction.

Each chapter contains a number of figures that enable the reader to see key points at a glance. For example, Figure 3.6 gives types and features of nonfiction. In bulleted lists within boxes, it identifies types of nonfiction books (e.g., concept, photographic essay, life cycle, biography, and survey), access features (e.g., tables of contents, sidebars, appendices, glossaries, and indexes), visual information (e.g., design, labels and captions, tables, maps, time lines, and diagrams), and organizational structures (e.g., sequential, compare-contrast, cause-effect, and chronological).

Boxed information gives the reader quick access to useful information. For example, several of these boxes give examples of books that can be used as text sets for studying topics related to a theme. Examples of these text

sets include books about child labor (p. 160), bears (p. 167), immigration and diversity (p. 208), bats (p. 227), Martin Luther King, Jr. (p. 228), and birds (p. 233).

The authors recognize the close relationship between reading and writing and frequently show how writers can learn from quality models of nonfiction. In a section on modeling writing, the authors demonstrate how to craft nonfiction by using read alouds to identify characteristics of a feature. Two boxed features supplement the narrative. The first is on steps to carry out a read aloud for writing a nonfiction feature (p. 137), and the second is a list of nonfiction books with “leads that spark wonder” (p. 138). In addition, Figure 5.4 identifies a variety of types of leads that writers of nonfiction can use to capture the attention of readers.

Seven appendices provide relevant material in concise form. They include awards and annual lists of nonfiction literature, as well as a list of award-winning books that includes winners of the prestigious Orbis Pictus award for nonfiction. Three checklists deal with student assessment, curriculum design based on nonfiction, and teacher self-evaluation of instruction in nonfiction. A list of children’s magazines featuring nonfiction with Web sites for each is an excellent resource, and the final appendix presents words that signal information, important clues for helping students read nonfiction with

understanding. These include words and phrases that denote the passing of time (e.g., after, finally, next), compare-and-contrast writing (e.g., also, both, however, instead), and several other relationships. At the end of the book are lists of professional references and children’s books cited, as well as an index.

Overall, this book provides practical information for integrating nonfiction reading and writing in the classroom. It is well organized and easy to read. It uses familiar strategies and shows explicitly through sequential steps and actual lessons how to adapt them to nonfiction. The narrative is often broken with new headings, boxes, figures, photographs, and sample pages from nonfiction trade books, so the reader never becomes bored. Moreover, it addresses a hot topic in literacy today, so its message is timely.

Before selecting this book as a nonfiction resource, however, the reader might want to examine a number of other books on this topic to see which one is most useful. Others include two by the same authors, *Making Facts Come Alive: Choosing Quality Nonfiction K-8* and *Checking Out Nonfiction K-8: Good Choices for Best Learning*; Stephanie Harvey’s *Nonfiction Matters*; Linda Hoyt’s *Make It Real: Strategies for Success with Informational Texts*; Kletzien and Dreher’s *Informational Text in K-3 Classrooms*, an IRA publication; and others.

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By Karen I. Adams and Pamela Petty

The Man Who Walked Between the Towers

Author and illustrator Mordicai Gerstein takes top honors with his book, **The Man who Walked between the Towers**, named the 2003 Caldecott Medal winner. In this tribute to aerialist Philippe Petit, Gerstein provides readers with the step-by-step process by which Petit performed the amazing act of walking a tightrope between the two towers of the World Trade Center in Manhattan in 1974.

The story is simply and lyrically told as readers are captivated equally by the words and the images. The detailed ink and oil illustrations underscore the precision that Petit himself must have used in his own craft. Particularly notable are the illustrations of the events that took place under the cover of darkness as Petit and his friends subversively prepared the cable for his unauthorized walk between the towers. Gerstein uses double-page spreads to dramatize the vast expanse between the towering buildings. Equally effective are two fold-out pages that give readers alternately an aerial view and a street view of Petit walking, dancing, and performing other feats high above the city. Readers will note the second fold-out being eerily reminiscent of the same street view of the World Trade Center towers as those caught on tape during the tragic events of 9/11/01.

Significant in scope, **The Man who Walked between the Towers** matches the majesty of the towers with the remarkable story of how the human spirit allows people to defy laws, logic, and perhaps, even gravity. Gerstein's book will now permanently be listed among the Caldecott Medal Award winners just as the memory of the World Trade Center towers are permanently burned into our minds.

The Man who Walked between the Towers. Mordicai Gerstein. Brookfield, Connecticut: Roaring Brook Press, 2003.

Ella Sarah Gets Dressed

Caldecott Honor book **Ella Sarah Gets Dressed**, written and illustrated by Margaret Chodos-Irvine, celebrates the uniqueness of a diminutive trend-setter named Ella Sarah. Chodos-Irvine's charming illustrations are as clever as they are visually appealing. Reflecting the diversity of Ella Sarah's own taste in fashion design, the illustrations sport prints, plaids, polka-dots, and bold

stripes contrasting sharply with the stark white background of the alternate spreads where Ella Sarah reiterates her wishes.

The theme of this book leaves much to the individual interpretations of the readers. Is Ella Sarah rebelling against the appropriateness of dress suggested by her parents and her sister, or is she simply conforming to her peers' notion of style? It seems clear that the author wants the reader to see that the mother offers an outfit that matches hers, the father suggests an outfit that has a sports symbol on the front, and the older sister recommends that Ella Sarah would look much better in her hand-me-downs. The outfits from mom, dad, and sister each say, "Be like me." Readers immediately champion Ella Sarah's firm stance at being unique, and they feel validated when Ella Sarah wins the battle of wills, sporting her red hat that dips slightly below her right eye. The final twist appears when Ella Sarah opens the door and greets her friends, leaving readers to conclude that being "outside the box" is a fun place to be especially when your friends are there!

Ella Sarah gets Dressed. Margaret Chodos-Irvine, M. New York: Harcourt, 2003.

Don't Let the Pigeon Drive the Bus

Mo Willems finds a winning combination in his book **Don't Let the Pigeon Drive the Bus** by bringing together humor and an engaging creature – two elements that win over young readers immediately. The wide-eyed, innocent-looking pigeon on the book's cover is the same pigeon who takes on the persona of a precocious four-year old whose heart is set on a single desire. In this case, it is the pigeon's desire to drive the bus, which is in direct contrast to the bus driver's single request, "Don't let the pigeon drive the bus." Thus, the problem of the story is identified, and the struggle between the protagonist (pigeon) and the antagonist (the readers/listeners) is begun.

Perhaps the most delightful aspect of this Caldecott Honor book is the potential for using the book as an interactive read aloud, where very young children can chime in, "No! Don't let the pigeon drive the bus!" The images of the pigeon flailing around, pretending to drive, and acting out a range of emotions from innocent and honest to crafty and indignant provide pre-schoolers with many opportunities to play along. The final image of the pigeon looking longingly at a trailer-truck is all the prompt that most children will need to be able to imagine

what the pigeon has in mind as his next driving adventure.

An award-winning animator for Sesame Street, Willems knows what children like. The pleasant surprise in this book is that adults will also find themselves smiling, even when asked to read it again and again.

Don't let the Pigeon Drive the Bus! Mo Willems. New York: Hyperion Books, 2003.

What Do You Do With a Tail Like This?

This Caldecott Honor book is a brilliant blend of science and art. The husband and wife team of Steve Jenkins and Robin Paige co-authored and illustrated **What do you do with a Tail like This?** adding to their already impressive number of informational books. Asking the same question as their previous books asked about ears, eyes, mouths, noses, and feet, this book helps children not only learn about the senses, but also many little-known facts about interesting animals from around the world. In a perfect design for encouraging readers and listeners to make predictions, the book uses a question and answer format throughout, culminating in a four-page spread that details other important facts about the animals.

It takes reading the book and carefully studying the pictures several times to fully appreciate the intricate details and the complimentary placement of illustration and text. The gecko is walking on a ceiling made of words, the skunk is spraying a description of the function of his tail, and words that describe the pelican's mouth form the same shape as his scooped bill. It is also likely that children and adults will perceive the pages differently, with children enjoying bold, colorful images of exotic animals and sparse text, while adults are wondering how the illustrators conceived the illusion of fur using torn-paper collage as well as how they cleverly grouped the creatures to include insects, mammals, birds, and reptiles. Whether readers are young or not-so-young, this is an informational book that is delightful and informative from beginning to end.

What Do You Do with a Tail Like This? Steve Jenkins and Robin Page. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2003.

Heart to Heart New Poems Inspired by Twentieth-Century American Art

Named a 2002 American Library Association Michael L. Printz Award for Excellence in Young Adult Literature Honor Book, **Heart to Heart** provides a fascinating approach for presenting excellent art and quality poetry to adolescents. Drawing upon artists such as Jasper Johns, Jacob Lawrence, Andy Warhol, Roy Lichtenstein, Jackson Pollock, and Man Ray, Jan Greenberg invited poets to respond in one of four ways to an individual work of art. Some chose to write a story poem in response to an individual work. Others chose to write poems as though they were an object or a person within the artwork. Others responded to specific details in the work of art, and still others wrote about the artist's technique or style. The poetry varies from free verse to sonnet. The art itself ranges from photographs of famous people in action such as dancer Martha Graham to works by Alexander Calder, including a small mobile of wood, cloth, and rubber tubing contrasted with one of his immense outdoor steel pieces from Grand Rapids. Famous works include Grandma Moses' "Wash Day," Grant Wood's "American Gothic," Georgia O'Keeffe's "Poppy," and an overview of Faith Ringgold's award-winning "Tar Beach."

The amazing variety and creativity of **Heart to Heart** is indeed difficult to describe sufficiently. It is a wonderful way of introducing many young adolescents to excellent art and artists and the poetry that responds to these creations. Adolescents may want to mirror such poetic responses themselves as well as investigate further works by the artists featured in this book. Greenberg includes brief biographies of all whose works appear in this excellent collection, again adding to the reader's knowledge of these creative masters. There is truly something of value and interest for everyone!

Heart to Heart: New Poems Inspired by Twentieth-Century American Art. Edited by Jan Greenberg. New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 2001.

A Book of Coupons

A Book of Coupons has been named an American Library Association Notable Book as well as a Mildred L. Batchelder Honor Book in recognition for its status as an excellent translated work for older elementary readers. Author Susie Morgenstern is one of the most popular authors of children's books in France and has won a number of international awards, including the *Prix Totem*, the French equivalent of the Newberry Award. A world traveler, Morgenstern is originally from New Jersey, but has lived in France for over thirty years.

A Book of Coupons is a quick and very entertaining read focused on life's unexpected gifts as well as the benefits and challenges of non-conformity. A classroom of fifth graders is initially disappointed at the start of the school year with their new teacher, Monsieur Hubert No 1 whom they describe as "a fat old man who looked like those pictures of God, with messy hair and reading glasses perched on the end of his nose." And to complete their surprise, he places on the desk of each student an individually wrapped package of coupons. These are not ordinary coupons, but offer to each the opportunity for sleeping late, skipping a day of school, being late to school, failing to listen once in class, not going to the blackboard when called, getting out of trouble, making a lot of noise, dancing in class, giving the teacher a kiss on the cheek, as well as a "wild card" coupon. Monsieur No 1 continues with the theme of gifts, describing the dictionary as a "magical gift," presenting "in order, the meaning of every word." He encourages students to use new words three times to make the words theirs—"a present from me and the dictionary to you!" They next find that he has wrapped their school book copies of Dickens' *David Copperfield*, explaining that while these books are not technically theirs to keep, they will *become* theirs from the moment of reading. He explains, "my gift to you is the story, the characters, the words, the ideas, the style, the emotions. Once you have read the book, all these things will be yours for life." Later in the day, he provides them each with a toothbrush, toothpaste, and directions for use—to maintain the "precious jewels" of teeth they have been given.

A Book of Coupons is a continuing delight of gifts, disturbed only by Monsieur No 1's difficulties with the school's principal, Ms. Incarnation Perez, an unhappy and unloved woman who is concerned with the school's code of conduct and rules rather than gifts and joy. While the year is a wonderful one for these fifth graders, ultimately Monsieur No 1 is forced by Principal Perez to

retire. As he parts from his students, they have special coupons to give one another—coupons that continue the emphasis on recognizing and enjoying *all* of life's many priceless gifts. Young readers learn that the best things in life really are free, and that not using the gifts available to them only leads to regret and lack of fulfillment. At the book's conclusion are ten coupons for clipping that encourage the user to do such things as make noise, be quiet, take a bubble bath, give or receive a hug, and do a good deed. Teachers reading this book to fourth or fifth graders might also encourage their young listeners to design their own coupons and share them with others. **A Book of Coupons** is truly a book that deserves sharing over and over.

A Book of Coupons. Susie Morgenstern. Translated by Gill Rosner. Illustrated by Serge Bloch. New York: Puffin Books, 1999.

Secret Letters from 0 to 10

Another Morgenstern novel for early adolescents that has been translated from the original French-language version, **Secret Letters from 0 to 10** has been named an American Library Association Notable Book, a 1999 Mildred L. Batchelder Honor Book, a *Booklist* Editors' Choice Book, and an *American Bookseller* "Pick of the Lists." Ten-year old Earnest Morlaisse lives a very bland and eventless life with his grandmother in Paris, carrying out the same tasks each day—the same path to school, the same afternoon snack, the same reading of his grandmother's mystery letter in the afternoon, and the same "safe" meal for dinner. His pattern is broken abruptly with the advent of Victoria de Montardent and her thirteen brothers. She falls madly in love with Earnest, and her entire family takes over his introduction to the world—providing his first trip in a car, first visit to a grocery store, first movie theater experience, first phone call, first bite of chocolate, and many other firsts. In the midst of all these adventures, they also help him to learn to question the mysteries of his life, such as the undecipherable last letter from his grandfather on the battlegrounds of World War I and the actual whereabouts of his own father who disappeared on the day of Earnest's birth and his mother's death in childbirth. Not only do they help Earnest to question these mysteries, they also help to solve them. In a somewhat contrived manner, the de Montardent family also helps Earnest to discover a hidden object of great value in his very home.

All of the sudden changes in Earnest's life make for entertaining reading. Not a deep book, **Secret Letters from 0 to 10** includes some easily anticipated turns, but it is nevertheless enchantingly written and will be fun for very early adolescents.

Secret Letters from 0 to 10. Susie Morgenstern. New York: Penguin Books, 1998.

A Step from Heaven

A Step from Heaven, An Na's first book, is a wonderful beginning to what promises to be a strong career as an author of adolescent books. Winner of the 2002 Michael L. Printz Award for Excellence in Young Adult Literature and a 2001 National Book Award Finalist, **A Step from Heaven** was also named an American Library Association Notable Book and Best Book for Young Adults, an International Reading Association Young Adult Choice Book, and a *New York Times* and *Publishers Weekly* Best Book of the Year. The story is told as a first person account by Young Ju, beginning at age four when she learns that her family will be moving from Korea to America, which she understands to be heaven, since they travel by plane through the sky where God lives. America, however, while offering much to Young Ju, is certainly far from heaven for her family's stability. Her father, already an angry and abusive alcoholic, becomes increasingly violent, unable to hold a job and provide for his family, and is ultimately arrested when Young Ju phones 911, pleading for help as he tries to kill her mother.

Young Ju does, nevertheless, make a very positive adjustment to Southern California, and, by the novel's conclusion, is leaving for college on a full scholarship. She has established her identity as Korean American—blending and appreciating both cultures. She has learned about new foods and new ideas. She has a best friend who is a native Californian. She has also learned to deal with the reality of her family's problems, neither wallowing in guilt nor nursing anger. The adjustment and difficulties for Young Ju's younger brother Park Joon have been more difficult, and he squanders a number of years "hanging out" with friends rather than attending school. Not until the end does his life seem to have righted itself.

By the novel's conclusion, Young Ju has finally begun to understand her mother as more than a wife who has allowed her husband to brutalize her while working

tirelessly to support her family. She understands her mother's past as well as her father's weaknesses. In closing, she reflects on her aging mother's hands, which are worn and calloused by years of scrubbing, sewing, and cooking at jobs to sustain Young Ju and her brother. She realizes that her mother's "hands worked hard to make sure our hands would not resemble hers." **A Step from Heaven** is an amazingly well written book and one that will be cherished and re-read by adolescent girls. An Na is to be commended for her inaugural work, much deserving of the many awards it has received. The afterward includes responses by An Na to questions typically asked by her audience of readers and adds to the reader's enjoyment and understanding of this unique author.

A Step from Heaven. An Na. New York: Penguin Putnam, 2001.

The Body of Christopher Creed

An interesting book for older adolescents, **The Body of Christopher Creed** was named a Michael L. Printz Award for Excellence in Young Adult Literature Honor Book and an International Reading Association-Children's Book Council Children's Choice for 2001. From the mysterious title and the book's opening words, the reader is intrigued by just what has happened to Torey, the central character: "I had hoped that a new start away from Steepleton would make my junior year seem like a hundred years ago, rather than just one." Told from a first person perspective, Torey describes his new home at Rothborne, a boarding school with an interesting assortment of students. But the most intriguing aspects of the story emerge as we read his Internet letters to people he does not know and ultimately learn the story of Christopher Creed. Is Creed alive or dead—is there a body waiting somewhere to be found, or has he run far away to escape the high school kids whom he had admired but who had shunned him?

Plum-Ucci, in her first novel for adolescents, holds the reader's attention in this taut tale of adolescent angst and identity, small town life and old secrets disclosed, and the roller coaster thrill of eerie Indian burial grounds, hidden treasure, dead bodies, arrests, and beatings. **The Body of Christopher Creed** also includes a positive emphasis on family values and the importance of understanding the difference between gossip, appearances, and the actual worth of an individual. This is an interesting

book that will clearly hold the attention of adolescent readers.

The Body of Christopher Creed. Carol Plum-Ucci. New York: Hyperion, 2000.

My Heartbeat

My Heartbeat has been received with a great deal of praise for its effective and thought-provoking story of emotional conflict and discovery. It has been named a Michael L. Printz Award for Excellence in Young Adult Literature Honor Book and been recognized as an American Library Association Best Book for Young Adults, a *Publishers Weekly* Best Book of 2002, a *Booklist* “Pick of the List, and a *School Library Journal* Best Book of 2002. Fourteen-year old Ellen tells her story first hand, beginning with the vacation she spends at a summer house in Maine with her parents, her brother Link, and his best friend James. As the two boys anticipate their senior year in high school and prepare for college admission time, Ellen relishes her friendship with them both, never herself questioning the intensity of the special relationship between Link and James.

An older, more mature observer might have noticed hints of more than simple friendship between the two boys or questioned some of their interests—their bouts of arguing and jealousies, their humor which Ellen’s mother finds “campy,” and their great interest in foreign films and classic films from Hollywood’s Golden Age. Ellen does not. It is not until they all begin school in New York City in the fall, when she is for the first time attending the same private school as Link and James, that a school mate’s comment that “they’re like a couple, aren’t they?” makes her question their relationship. She finally asks her mother if she thinks they might be gay. Her mother indicates a lack of concern on her own part and suggests that if Ellen wants to know, then she should ask. And it is this direct asking that drastically changes the rest of the story.

Ellen’s role for the two boys had been sort of a safety net, ensuring that nothing would happen between them. For while James has indeed acted out his interest in men sexually, Link has not, nor does he intend to. Now Link feels compelled to choose a girlfriend from school, and Ellen and James become surprisingly involved. The whole story is one of individuals and families who do not want to discuss difficult truths in direct words, and in this

avoidance actually propel one another toward failure and disappointment. This is an intriguing and rather sad book to read, and it is most certainly one for more mature readers. Freymann-Weyr handles a very serious topic with a degree of openness, intensity, and depth not usually found in more simplistic considerations of sexuality and self-awareness. **My Heartbeat** is, indeed, a masterpiece but, again, one for mature readers.

My Heartbeat. Garret Freymann-Weyr. New York: Penguin, 2002.

Many Stones

Carolyn Coman, whose previous work *What Jamie Saw* was named a Newbery Honor book, has garnered a number of awards for another and very different book, **Many Stones**. Recognized as a Michael L. Printz Award for Excellence in Young Adult Literature Honor Book, a National Book Award Finalist, a *Los Angeles Times* Book Prize Finalist, an ALA Best Book for Young Adults, a *School Library Journal* Best Book of the Year, and a *Booklist* Editors’ Choice, **Many Stones** is an interesting study of father daughter relationships set in volatile post-Apartheid South Africa. Adolescent Berry Morgan is angry at life for many reasons—her parents’ divorce, her unfulfilling love life, and her older sister’s recent murder while a volunteer in South Africa. Berry travels with her father, from whom she has tried to estrange herself, to Cape Town for a memorial service at the school where her sister had worked. As a young person so filled with anger herself, Berry is shocked to learn about the on-going Truth and Reconciliation Commission hearings where victims and their families face their attackers who confess to murders and kidnapping, even describing how these atrocities occurred. She cannot imagine forgiving the person or persons who killed her sister, just as she cannot deal with offering forgiveness to her father who admits that he often disappoints those whom he is trying to please.

Many Stones is an interesting picture of the South Africa we often imagine, with visits to Kruger Game Park and the many elegant wineries, but it is also a portrait of the racism that continues for some in this newly redesigned nation. Berry deals with many conflicts in the midst of this easily read book. As in *What Jamie Saw* with its blunt portrayal of the impact of domestic violence on a young child, Coman pulls no punches in describing the

complexities of Berry's world. This is an excellent work for older adolescents, largely because of some aspects of the violence portrayed, the complexities of world politics that must be understood within the context of the story, and the sexual nature of Berry's relationship with her boyfriend.

Many Stones. Carolyn Coman. New York: Puffin Books, 2000.

Homeless Bird

A National Book Award winner, **Homeless Bird** has also been named an American Library Association Notable Book and Best Book for Young Adults, a *School Library Journal* Best Book, and an International Reading Association Notable Book for a Global Society. The author, Gloria Whelan, is already quite famous for her Island Trilogy about life in northern Michigan, and other works of historical fiction about Michigan. In **Homeless Bird**, she departs drastically from the northern Midwest to tell the story of thirteen-year old Koly, growing up in a poor family in India, who faces the misery of an arranged marriage to a terminally ill adolescent boy. His parents have tricked her family in an effort to obtain money to transport their son to the religious center of Varanasi in hopes of a miraculous cure. When these hopes fail, Koly is left a widow whose life can only be useful as she humbly serves her in-laws. Cultural rules mean that she can no longer return home to her own parents without bringing shame to them and making marriage difficult for her brothers. Whelan's descriptions of India, its landscape, people, and places, make readers

feel that they can actually see Koly and the world around her—seeing the colors, feeling the textures, and smelling the aromas. For such clarity of description alone, Whelan deserves the National Book Award.

Adolescents reading this contemporary tale will think, as many do when reading Suzanne Fisher Staples' award-winning *Shabanu*, that it is a work of historical fiction rather than a contemporary story. They will find Koly's life, absent of the free will and available choices to which they are accustomed, a rather shocking one; but it is nevertheless a very contemporary reality in this part of the world. Koly continues to persevere and, through somewhat surprising circumstances, she actually finds happiness and love by the novel's conclusion. She still will not be a person of wealth nor will she be a woman with a great many options available to her, but she will have the chance to live a life in which she is loved and valued by another. While some aspects of **Homeless Bird** may seem a bit contrived, pre-adolescent female readers will find it an engaging and satisfying story, and they will read eagerly to reach the conclusion as Koly surmounts her many challenges.

In **Homeless Bird**, readers can learn a great deal about another part of the world and the importance of binding cultural rules. It may help to have a map accessible for readers to trace Koly's journey as none is provided in the book. Whelan does provide, however, a glossary of Hindi words used in the story. This can be an important book for young readers to encounter and enjoy as they learn about the broader world.

Homeless Bird. Gloria Whelan. New York: Harper Collins, 2000.



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Literature Circles within a Basal Oriented Program

By Michele South

I love to incorporate literature circles in my classroom, but we all know that many of us are required to teach from our basal reading books. Therefore, I developed a variation of the typical literature circle concept to use with the basal: 1. I choose several stories from the basal that focus on similar areas of reading/language arts development, 2. I introduce these stories to the class, 3. We engage in a short discussion on each of the stories, 4. I encourage the students to select a first, second, and third choice from among these stories, 5. I assign my students to groups according to the choices they have made.

Whenever possible, I give them their first choice but that is not always feasible. Now I am ready to have reading circles using the basal textbook. Students read individually and respond with group members. Each group also has a special project to complete, such as a poster or a report, which focuses on their story. The students present their projects to the class, which allows everyone to learn about all of the stories. When we have silent reading time, I invite the students to silently read the other stories from the original group that are now of interest to them.

As mentioned above, the stories all focus on the development of similar reading/language arts competencies. Consequently, I can engage the whole class in study of the focus areas.

By combining basal reading books and reading circles, everyone is happy. I meet the requirements to teach from the text, and the children enjoy working on a team to accomplish a goal. Another plus is that my students get acquainted with how reading circles work, so when it is time to read novels, the class already knows what to do! A helpful resource is: Day, J.P., Spiegel, D.L., McLellan, & Brown, V.B. (2002) *Moving forward with literature circles*. New York: Scholastic.

Michele South teaches fourth grade students at Stone Elementary School in Crossville, Tennessee.

Dry Erase Boards for All of Our Students

By Wendy Conner, Melissa Kirkpatrick,
and Rebecca Reaves

Don't throw out your old socks! Stay tuned for further information.

You can make wonderful dry erase boards from common shower board. This is available from all building material vendors such as Lowe's and Home Depot.

We use our supply funds to purchase large sheets of shower board. When we explain that we want to make dry erase boards for our students, we find that store personnel gladly have them cut for us without charge. See the accompanying photograph.

There are a million uses for the boards. We do mathematics and reading/language arts activities, as well as a variety of others that occur as the school year progresses.

The newly marketed dry erase markers manufactured by Crayola work very well. They are low in odor and come in a variety of colors. However, all dry erase markers work well. You can even use regular washable markers; however, you will have to wash off the marks with warm water and a washcloth or wet paper towel.

You can designate a dry erase board for each student by printing the student's name on the board with a permanent marker such as a Sharpie. This gives the students a sense of ownership as well as providing a reference for us if we want to hold onto some work done on the board by the student. The students are used to writing on the boards by the end of the school year. At this time, we give the boards to the students so they can take them home. Consequently, this will likely become an activity they will voluntarily do at home. They can "play school" with siblings or friends using their own personal dry erase board.

This is why we started out by saying, "Don't throw out your old socks!" Your students can use recycled socks



taken from a variety of sources and put them to good use as erasers for their own personal dry erase boards.

Wendy Conner, and Rebecca Reaves teach in the primary grades at Nolachuckey Elementary School in Greene County, Tennessee. Melissa Kirkpatrick teaches at Baileyton Elementary School also in Greene County, Tennessee.

“In My Own Words” Books

By Nancy Morgan

As an eleventh grade U.S. History teacher, I have been able to implement the use of whole language in the classroom with a fair amount of ease. One activity that works well is “In My Own Words” books. Students write books in their own words to tell what they have learned about a historical person and/or event. This gives them the opportunity to use their writing skills.

The students then take their books to the fifth grade classroom to share with the children there. Fifth grade students study U.S. History, as do my eleventh graders, and are a wonderful audience. This activity encourages my students to practice their language skills. Since the fifth grade students are much younger, my students do not feel as much pressure as they might if they were sharing their written work with their peers. In addition, this gives me a wonderful way of assessing what they have learned and determining what gaps will have to be addressed. Further, the high school students are good role models for their younger counterparts at our school by fostering interest in reading and writing.

Nancy Morgan teaches history and economics in grades nine through twelve at Sunbright School in Sunbright, Tennessee.

Using Key Words to Solve Mathematics Problems

By Jenny Geesling

Most students have great difficulty with word problems when studying mathematics. One activity that I have found to be successful in fostering success in solving word problems is having the students copy the problem or having copies of the problems given to them.

I then provide the students with highlighters, usually blue and yellow. The students are encouraged to carefully read the problem and then using one of the highlighters, mark the words they determine are the key words that will help them solve the problem. Examples of “Key Words” are: *how many*, *how much more*, *how many will be shared equally?* ...

I then model with the class how I found the words that are essential for solving the problem. The students highlight these words with the other color, either blue or yellow. In the next step, I cheerfully invite the students to notice that the words they matched with mine are now green (blue and yellow highlighters produce green when used together). This helps the visual learners to physically see the key words. Many of the words selected by the students are the same as those chosen by me but this is not true for all students. On the other hand, over time, nearly all of my students begin to “see” the key words they need to solve word problems without any assistance from their teacher!

Jenny Geesling teaches classes in mathematics at Allons Elementary School in Monroe, Tennessee.

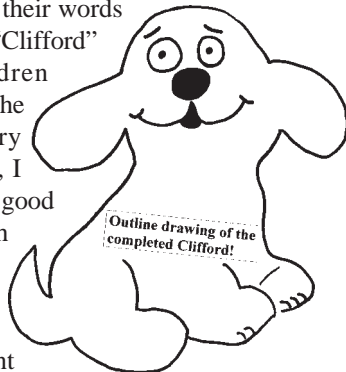
Clifford Helps Kindergarten Students Learn Sight Words

By Melissa Kirkpatrick

This is an idea I use in my kindergarten classroom and can be easily adapted for any of the primary grades. It involves adding enthusiasm and fun to learning to read sight words.

I was looking for a way to involve my students and have the children actually become excited about learning those often dreaded sight word lists. In order to do this, I decided I needed to closely appreciate the perspective of my students and create something that they would energetically and happily work toward.

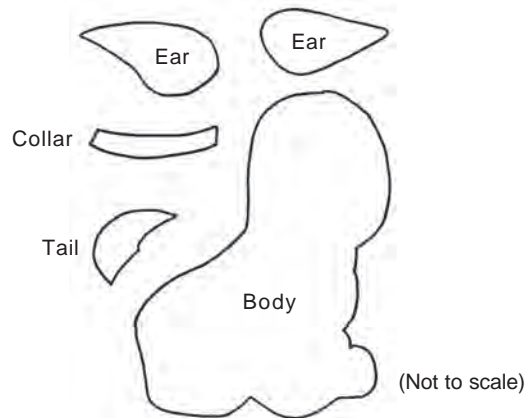
I used the six word lists from the basal program my system adopted. I decided that as the students were learning their words they would also build a "Clifford" dog. As with children everywhere, Clifford the Big Red Dog is very popular. Consequently, I asked for help from my good friend, Clifford! For each word list that a child learns, he or she earns a "piece" of Clifford. For example, after a student successfully reads List 1, I hot



glue an ear to their dog. When List 2 is successfully learned I attach another ear, and so forth. When all of the lists are mastered, each student may take home their completed Clifford dog.

The Cliffords under construction are displayed on a bulletin board (page 32). The students are always excited about making their own Clifford and taking him home. The directions are presented below. I hope your class has success with making Clifford who we can now also call "Clifford the Big Red Word Dog"!

Directions: Using the patterns below, make a Clifford body from red felt material. Trace each ear, and the tail from the red felt. Using black felt trace the collar. Using Ziplock bags store the ears, tails, and collars separately. For each body part use a small bottle of fabric paint and draw on Clifford's feet, mouth, and collar. I wrote each child's name on a label and put the label on the dog. For a variation, you could use the child's name and affix it onto the collar. Place your pieces in a basket near the bulletin board and watch your student's interest begin to



bloom. When the dog is built and the student is ready to take their dog home, I attach three pieces of magnetic strip onto the back. The students can display their project on their refrigerators or other metal surface at home.

An alternative approach that works well is to use red 60 lb. copy/cover paper or red construction paper can also be used for the eyes with white paper background. A dime is a good size for making the eyes. The nose and collar can be made from black construction paper. A dog bone nametag can also be made from construction paper and affixed to the collar. A picture of Amber's completed paper Clifford is presented below.

There are numerous variations relative to constructing the Cliffords. For example, Mastery of List 1 permits the student to add Clifford's left ear; mastery of List 2 is rewarded by adding Clifford's right ear; and so forth.

Materials: red felt, black felt, large "Wiggle Eyes," black pom poms (nose), black fabric paint, magnetic tape, word lists, and a hot glue gun. The materials for the paper Cliffords are mentioned above. The detail lines can be drawn with a washable black marker or black Sharpie.

There are many wonderful possibilities with the Clifford Word Wall. For example, second graders might have word lists developed from lists of the most common sight words. Have fun with your instructional assistant who is big and red and a really fun character. Of all the materials suggested above, the most important of all are enthusiasm, excitement, and praise!



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The Cliffords under construction displayed on a bulletin board.

