THE DEVELOPMENTAL APPROPRIATENESS OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS FOR KINDERGARTEN

THESIS

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By

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The developmental appropriateness of the English-language arts essential elements for kindergarten children in the State of Texas was evaluated by surveying the opinions of thirty-six kindergarten teachers in one school district. A questionnaire was developed using the essential elements so that respondents could record a yes or no opinion and supply additional comments on each essential element. Ninety-seven percent of the teachers responded. The results indicated rates of agreement for developmental appropriateness by the teachers surveyed to be 100% for language, 95% for listening, 94% for speaking and reading and 81% for writing.
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Background

Public education in the State of Texas is undergoing extensive reform because of legislative action. One of the most notable changes in the last decade has been curriculum reform mandated by House Bill 246, enacted in 1981 by the 67th Legislature. This legislation established twelve subject areas to constitute a well-balanced curriculum for kindergarten through grade twelve, and required the State Board of Education to develop, by grade level, essential elements for each subject area (Brumley 1984, xi, 2).

Implementation of the requirements of House Bill 246 was to be in a timely manner, beginning with the 1981-1982 school year "to the extent possible" (Texas Education Agency 1988, 194). However, rules for putting the new curriculum into effect were not adopted by the State Board of Education until March 1984, with implementation according to the rules scheduled for the 1984-1985 school year (Brumley 1984, 3).

Inasmuch as the essential elements have been in place since the 1981-1982 school year and have been fully implemented since the 1984-1985 school year, their
appropriateness needs to be evaluated. Because the language arts are crucial to all good school programs for the young child (Yawkey et al. 1981), the language arts essential elements for kindergarten were chosen for this study.

**Purpose**

The purpose of this inquiry was to evaluate the developmental appropriateness of the Texas Education Agency (1987, 11-13) approved English-language arts essential elements for kindergarten children by studying the attitudes of a selected group of kindergarten teachers.

**Research Question**

To what extent do kindergarten teachers agree or disagree with the developmental appropriateness of the English-language arts essential elements for kindergarten?

**Definition of Teams**

For the purpose of this study, the following terms were defined:

- **Kindergarten**, in the State of Texas, is the grade level prior to the first grade for children who are at least five years old by the beginning of September of the current school year.

- **Essential elements** are the components of each subject area established by the State Board of Education in
accordance with House Bill 246 (Brumley 1984, 2).

*Developmentally appropriate* means both age appropriate for the typical development of children served and individually appropriate for each child served (Bredekamp 1986, 1).

*English language arts* are the communication skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing (Leeper, Witherspoon, and Day 1984, 100; Lundsteen and Tarrow 1981, 263; Mangieri, Staley, and Wilhide 1984, 3; Schickendanz et al. 1983, 181).
CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This review of literature begins with a discussion of the language arts. Then each language-art component is surveyed from two perspectives, the first reflecting current attitudes, and the second containing the Texas Education Agency (1987, 11-13) essential elements and supporting statements from the literature. The exact wording of the essential elements is found on the questionnaire in the appendices.

Using the definition most often found in the literature, language arts is defined in Chapter I as having four components--listening, speaking, reading and writing. Texas adds a fifth component--language (Texas Education Agency 1987, 13). In the literature, what Texas calls language is included in the other four language arts. Consequently, in this review, the section on language has been selected from the literature on listening, speaking, reading and writing.

In describing the language arts, Mangieri, Staley, and Wilhide (1984, 3) state that the four components are either receptive, with a message being received, or expressive with a message being sent. Reading and listening are receptive, and speaking and writing are expressive. For communication
to take place, there must be participation of at least two persons, one to send a message by speaking or writing, and one to receive a message by listening or reading.

Many authorities believe the language arts are so interrelated that they are difficult to separate, and that they are best taught integrated, or in combination with one another (Burns and Broman 1983, 6; Fox and Allen 1983, 114, 160; Mangieri, Staley, and Wilhide 1984, 3; Schickendanz et al. 1983, 181). A method of integrating the language arts is the whole-language approach (Goodman 1986, Hoskisson 1979, Jewell and Zintz 1986). In the whole-language method, language is kept whole and children are involved in using it functionally and purposefully to meet their own needs (Goodman 1986, 7).

A method of instruction similar to whole-language that is favored by many for teaching young children is the language-experience approach (Burns and Broman 1983, 359; Leeper, Witherspoon, and Day 1984, 230; Lundsteen and Tarrow 1981, 298; Stewig 1982, 15-16). The language-experience approach capitalizes on children's interests, experiences and oral language facilities in teaching the language arts (Nessel and Jones 1981, 1).

Both the whole-language and language-experience approaches are discussed in detail in this chapter in the section on reading. Although this review has examined
each of the language arts separately, in the section on reading, the whole-language and language-experience type approaches will, by their nature, include information on the other language arts.

Listening

Listening is the primary language skill and the first language skill to appear in infants. Through listening, children gain vocabulary, sentence patterns and imitatively acquired enunciation and inflection (Leeper, Witherspoon, and Day 1984, 215). Gold (1981, 319) feels that increased attention should be given to listening instruction in the classroom since listening skills establish the basis for achievement in speaking, reading and writing.

Several authorities categorize listening in three basic types, informational or attentive, appreciative, and analytical (Burns and Broman 1983, 8; Leeper, Witherspoon, and Day 1984, 214; Mangieri, Staley, and Wilhide 1984, 18; Schickendanz, et al. 1983, 226). Children are engaged in informational or attentive listening when attending to directions or announcements, noting the main idea, remembering facts or anticipating what comes next. They are listening appreciatively when enjoying a story, song or poem. Finally, children listen analytically when analyzing what is heard in terms of their own experience (Leeper, Witherspoon, and Day, 1984, 215).
Listening can also be categorized by being divided into four skills (Yawkey et al. 1981, 74-79). The first skill is auditory perception which consists of the subskills of auditory awareness, discrimination and memory. Auditory awareness focuses attention on listening for sounds as opposed to hearing sounds in the background. Auditory discrimination is noting whether sounds are the same or different, and auditory memory involves the ability to repeat sounds. The second skill is the ability to follow directions. The third skill, which Yawkey et al. consider to be a key one, is the ability to derive word meanings from context. The last skill is auditory comprehension which ranges from the very simple ability to retell a story to the more complex task of story interpretation.

In discussing listening skills, Burns and Broman (1983, 87) say that listening is not an end in itself, but a tool through which children learn to follow directions, let others talk, interrupt less frequently and improve their own oral language. Furthermore, listening is not simply a language arts tool, but a skill essential to every part of the curriculum.

Listening skills in kindergarteners can be improved in several ways (Ramsey and Bayless 1980, 196). First of all, because children imitate listening behavior, there needs to
be a balance between listening and talking by the teacher. Repetitious instructions which encourage lazy listening should be avoided. In addition, activities and topics of interest such as story reading, poetry reading, rhymes, puppetry, records and tapes, and dramatic activities enhance listening skills. Equally important is a classroom environment in which listening and speaking are prized by the children and the teacher. Several authors agree that the teacher serves as a model for the development of listening skills (Burns and Broman 1983, 87; Leeper, Witherspoon, and Day 1984, 217; Lundsteen and Tarrow 1981, 281; Ramsey and Bayless 1980, 196; Yawkey et al. 1981, 74).

The four Texas Education Agency (1987, 11) essential elements for listening in kindergarten relate to developing skill in attending to, responding to and analyzing oral communications. Children are to have opportunities to focus uninterrupted attention on a speaker, appreciate sound devices of poetic language, listen for instructions and information, and respond artistically to storytelling.

The writings of Burns and Broman (1983, 87) support the essential element for focusing attention on a speaker without interrupting. They indicate that listening is a tool through which children learn to interrupt less frequently. Gold (1981, 329) adds that setting the purpose for listening is an essential step in teaching children to
attend. In addition, noise and distractions need to be kept at a minimum for effective listening to take place.

Another essential element for listening, appreciating the sound of poetic language, is supported by Lundsteen and Tarrow (1981, 287) who state that many children will listen to a reading session when hearing the sound and rhythm of repetitions and alliteration. Likewise, listening to rhymes, poetry or jingles is indicated to be an important element in teaching listening skills by others (Burns and Broman 1983, 90; Leeper, Witherspoon, and Day 1984, 218; Mangieri, Staley, and Wilhide 1984, 28; Yawkey et al. 1981, 75).

The essential element for listening to instructions and to receive important information is supported by several authors (Burns and Broman 1983, 87; Leeper, Witherspoon, and Day 1984, 215; Mangieri, Staley, and Wilhide 1984, 28; Petty and Jensen 1980, 193; Yawkey et al. 1981, 74). Furthermore, Gold (1981, 319) feels that an effective way to teach children to select important information to attend to is to keep teacher talk at a minimum.

Leeper, Witherspoon, and Day (1984, 414) support the essential element that children respond to storytelling by drawing and painting. They state that children often use art to illustrate stories. Holdaway (1979, 73) adds that art activities are an effective expression of meanings
from a shared-story experience, whereas Petty and Jensen (1980, 147) indicate that children may express their enjoyment of literature by illustrating it.

**Speaking**

Speaking, the most commonly used mode of communication, is the first expressive language a child learns, and is for many children, the mode in which they feel most secure (Stewig 1982, 95). Lundsteen and Tarrow (1981, 303) emphasize the importance of the child's oral language base by stating that children are unlikely ever to read and write better than they can speak and listen. In addition, Honig (1982, 57) feels that exposure to a language-rich environment permits the young child to use language well for a wide variety of purposes. Seefeldt (1985, 14) states that, in kindergartens of high quality, opportunities for listening and speaking continually take place.

Opportunities to speak, free from being rejected by what is said and how it is said, is an important element in encouraging oral language development in kindergarten. "Language skills will flourish in classrooms when children feel comfortable and are assured their contributions are welcome" (Mangieri, Staley, and Wilhide 1984, 35). Put another way, "Children soon learn to stop talking when whatever they say seems to be wrong" (Durkin 1980, 117).
Similarly, Ramsey and Bayless (1980, 201, 202) say "when speech development is the goal, silence is not golden," and "the ability and desire to participate verbally should be the right of every child in kindergarten."

In addition, Yawkey et al. (1981, 127) believe that, in order to encourage fluency, teachers must allow freedom for children to respond from their own experiences and in their own language. Lundsteen and Tarrow (1981, 303) agree that it is important for teachers to accept the language children bring to school.

Another important aspect of teaching speaking is the teacher's listening and speaking behavior. Several authors indicate the teacher should listen attentively and show genuine interest and acceptance of children's spoken language (Leeper, Witherspoon, and Day 1984, 212; Ramsey and Bayless 1980, 301; Stewig 1982, 96). In addition, the teacher needs to be a positive role model for children who are developing speech (Rudolph and Cohen 1984, 69). Similarly, "The most important influence on the development of good speech is having good adult models to listen to" (Schickendanz et al. 1983, 220).

Four Texas Education Agency (1987, 12) essential elements for speaking relate to developing fluency in using oral language to communicate effectively. The agency feels kindergarten children need opportunities to engage in
creative drama, express their feelings and ideas, speak clearly and at an appropriate rate and communicate one-to-one and in small groups.

Creative dramatics is defined as "the playing out of ideas, experiences, and stories with improvised dialogue and action" (Ramsey and Bayless 1980, 154). Several authors agree that creative drama is an effective means of encouraging oral language development or speaking (Leeper, Witherspoon, and Day 1984, 255; Petty and Jensen 1980, 308; Schickendanz et al. 1983, 171; Stewig 1982, 24).

Furthermore, Burns and Broman (1983, 92) emphasize an important factor that makes creative drama so valuable in language development. They state that "children love to dramatize and often become quite adept at playing roles and making up dialogue as they act out a familiar story."

Closely related to creative drama is "acting out" which means showing others what happened by demonstrating the events rather than reporting them (Yawkey et al. 1981, 136). Also closely related is "dramatic play" which is defined as role playing by children (Spodek 1985, 53).

The essential element for speaking that encourages self-expression is supported by several authors. Yawkey et al. (1981, 128) feel that it is important that the teacher be accepting and supportive of children's feelings and responses, and that children be encouraged to share
reactions and feelings about things happening in and out of school. Petty and Jensen (1980, 300) agree by saying children must have freedom of expression of their ideas and feelings, and need to receive encouragement for that expression.

The expression of feelings in words is believed to be more difficult for children than expression of ideas (Rudolph and Cohen 1984). For this reason, Lundsteen and Tarrow (1981, 275) suggest assisting children with a supply of words that express feelings. A result of children learning to express feelings verbally instead of physically is a strengthened self-concept (Stewig, 1982, 97).

In addition to being able to express their thoughts, young children need to develop skill in organizing their thoughts (Schickendanz et al. 1983, 189). A method the teacher can use to help children develop this skill is facilitating conversation (Burns and Broman 1983, 91).

All opportunities for children to speak in the kindergarten classroom need to provide opportunities for the essential element for speaking clearly and at an appropriate rate. For this purpose, a goal for teachers is to help children develop the ability to speak distinctly, in a pleasant voice and with good control (Leeper, Witherspoon, and Day 1984, 213). Petty and Jensen (1980, 74) also emphasize the importance of effective
enunciation and voice control in the early language program.

Providing children opportunities to speak in one-to-one or in small groups is supported by several authorities (Burns and Broman 1983, 91; Leeper, Witherspoon, and Day 1984, 211-212; Stewig 1982, 96). Furthermore, Spodek (1985, 53) states that individual or small group settings are usually more appropriate for language learning for the young child than are total class settings. Leeper, Witherspoon, and Day (1984, 252) are in agreement.

The other two Texas Education Agency (1987, 12) essential elements for speaking pertain to speaking for a variety of purposes. Kindergarten children need opportunities to relate personal experiences and to present poems chorally.

Accordingly, Ramsey and Bayless (1980, 202) state that when children express ideas and share experiences, a healthy personality and feeling of belonging to the group result. In addition, they feel appropriate speech as well as the ability and desire to participate verbally should be the right of every kindergarten child.

Others feel that "share and tell" can be an important method of providing children opportunities to relate personal experiences (Burns and Broman 1983, 91; Spodek 1985, 55; Stewig 1982, 98; Yawkey et al. 1981, 135). By
sharing, the child is able to express himself and organize his thought processes (Leeper, Witherspoon, and Day 1984, 251). Through group sharing, children learn to speak distinctly and clearly, speak in front of a group, tell an incident in sequence, listen politely, take turns speaking, and speak in complete sentences (Leeper, Witherspoon, and Day 1984, 251).

Equally as important as relating personal experiences to gain skills in speaking for a variety of purposes is choral speaking. Choral speaking and choral reading are two terms used interchangeably that refer to saying a piece of poetry as a group (Stewig 1982, 119). Choral speaking is appropriate for children of all ages, and teaches them to listen and to remember, and to interpret words and word patterns. Choral speaking also provides an opportunity to modulate the voice which is an important first step in developing good speaking habits (Petty and Jensen 1980, 319-320).

Another favorable aspect of choral reading is that it can help children who are otherwise hesitant or afraid to speak up, be able to participate in the oral language of the classroom (Ramsey and Bayless, 1980, 202). "As children become comfortable in group recitations, they can be encouraged to contribute individually" (Mangieri, Staley, and Wilhide 1984, 37).
Reading

Reading in the kindergarten has become a debated issue for teachers, administrators and parents. Opinions range from a "hands-off," no instruction position to that of a highly structured, intense, beginning reading program for everyone in kindergarten (Sucher 1980, v).

Two authors report that there is not even agreement on a definition of reading. Ollila (1980, 3) states that definitions of reading fall into one of two emphases. In the code emphasis, reading is defined as an act of decoding printed words into spoken words. In the meaning emphasis, comprehension is stressed as the major component of reading. Similarly, Jensen and Hanson (1980, 61, 62) state that reading definitions fall into one of two orientations. In the skill orientation, reading is related to alphabetic writing as tokens of speech forms. In the ideational orientation, content and meaning are emphasized.

Using either the meaning emphasis or ideational orientation, Mason and Au (1986, 2) define reading as constructing meaning from text, and Schickendanz et al. 1983, 202) as interacting with the printed word to obtain meaning.

Even more complex than a definition of reading, is the method of teaching beginning reading. Auckerman (1984) lists 165 methods of teaching beginning reading, divided
into six general categories. The first category is phonetic approaches in which reading is taught through decoding, the code being the relationship of letters to the sounds they represent. Second is the coded symbol-sound approaches. In this category, one symbol has been devised to represent one, and only one of the forty-four or forty-five sounds of our language. Phonetic symbols such as the macron and breve over vowels, signifying whether they have the long or short sound, or the strike through of a letter, signifying that it is silent, are used in the coding.

The third category is whole-word approaches. In this approach, materials containing whole-words and simple sentences are presented to children to read prior to skills such as phonics, syllablication and rules. Aukerman includes basal readers, language-experience, whole-word, whole-word lists and individualized reading in this category. However, he points out that language-experience could also be included in the category of natural-reading.

The fourth category, natural-reading approaches, is based on the premise that if a child learns to associate spoken words with meaningful objects, individuals and actions in a natural way, that the same natural type of associative learning can be used to learn to read. Aukerman divides this category into learn-to-read-by-reading approaches and early-reading strategies for infants
and preschoolers. The holistic or whole-language approach is included in the latter.

The fifth category of beginning reading methods is management systems for beginning reading. These systems are based on behavioral objectives, managing the reader, the reading process, the testing and the prescriptions for learning each skill.

Aukerman's sixth category is the total language arts and eclectic approaches. In the total language arts approach, the instruction of all the language arts is done from a global endeavor. The eclectic approaches are those that have selected some of the good features of several methods, using them as a package in teaching beginning reading. Some approaches that could have been in this category, were classified differently by the author who assessed their strengths as lying in other directions.

Two of the methods of teaching beginning reading mentioned are particularly important for kindergarten. The first is the holistic reading, or whole-language approach (Aukerman 1984, 452-453). This approach suggests that reading is a multifaceted "natural" process involving more than just learning-to-read-by-reading. All systems work together, beginning with daily reading to children, the focus always on meaning. Children also read daily. At first they may just read pictures or perhaps simple stories
previously read to them. In addition, children write everyday, beginning with dictating to the teacher and progressing to copying a story in their own printing, then to composing, using whole-words they know that have been written on cards for them. Talk, stories, poems, rhymes, songs and nonsense are important in the whole-language approach. Children already know the meanings, the words are written down, and so the written words and phrases are united with what the children already know.

There are several aspects of the whole-language approach that are important. First, the child learns specific words that are especially useful because they always have the same meaning. Examples are stop, come and go. In addition, grammatical relationships and word order serve as clues as the child has learned them aurally. Next, the meaning of words is in the past experiences of the readers. Also, letter symbols and punctuation marks are part of the system, and phonics is an integral part and should not be taught separately (Aukerman, 1984).

Sinatra (1984) conducted a study investigating the feasibility of presenting a holistic, functional language arts program to primary grade children. The results of his study indicate that a holistic curriculum with direct emphasis on reading and writing for meaning is effective for kindergarten. Students whose teachers had direct
training in holistic language-oriented approaches gained more points on written compositions and reading comprehension exercises than did students from other groups.

The second method of teaching beginning reading that is of importance to kindergarten is the language-experience approach. Stewig (1982, 158) feels this approach is particularly effective because it emphasizes the meaning a child brings to the page in addition to the meaning the child extracts from the page. Children learn to read as they talk, listen and write (Leeper, Witherspoon, and Day 1984, 230). In addition, the language-experience approach motivates students to want to read, and demonstrates the connection between spoken and written language (Mallon and Berglund 1984). The rationale of the language-experience approach is:

What I can think about, I can talk about. What I can say I can write. What I can write I can read. I can read what I can write and what other people write for me to read. (Burns and Broman 1983, 193)

The advantages of this approach are that children's language and experiences are the basis for reading, it is flexible and adaptable to the needs of individual children, and it can be used along with most reading programs (Jensen and Hanson 1980). Burns and Broman (1984, 359-360) add that it is based on active involvement of children, provides for divergent needs of children, avoids ability
grouping, materials used are inexpensive, it has strong motivational or remedial applications, and learning to read is viewed as a part of the process of language development, with the close relationship of reading, writing, listening and speaking recognized.

Mason and Au (1986, 49-50) suggest three steps for the language-experience approach in kindergarten, suitable for either large or small groups, or individual children. The first step is oral language, or having children express their thoughts. Second is writing or recording the children's ideas on an experience-chart, with the third step being reading and working with the chart.

There is some question as to whether reading should be taught in kindergarten. Ballenger (1983) feels that the experiences, which are critical aspects of skills fundamental to the reading process, such as talking about pictures, experimenting with concepts such as large, small, over and under, and telling of stories in sequence, are fundamental to the kindergarten. In fact, experimenting, discovering, trying out, restructuring, speaking and listening are built on the developmental process of kindergarten children. If this age child is held to long periods of controlled activities and the regimentation of teaching formal skills of reading, the joy of being five is eliminated.
Seefeldt (1985) agrees with Ballenger. She states that learning to read in the kindergarten is an informal process, directed toward each child's maturity level, readiness, interest, and past experiences.

Similarly, Davis (1980) feels that a challenging curriculum that nurtures each child's uniqueness and current stage of development is important in providing experiences needed as the background for reading. In such an environment, the child will be more likely to experience reading as a joy and a source of personal achievement.

Ramsey and Bayless (1980, 213) respond to the question, should reading be taught in kindergarten by saying:

No, if we are referring to memorization, dittoed sheets, word drills, routine exercises on workbook pages, uniform expectations, a premium on quiet--and the expectation that every child complete all exercises on the page or at all levels of commercial materials. Yes, if we are creating an interest and awareness in words and in books, if we are creating personalized materials, building a background of experiences, and responding to questions about words--if there is "wanting to read."

In addition, Rudolph and Cohen (1984, 305) take a position against the formal teaching of reading in kindergarten. Because the range for reading readiness is between the ages of five and seven, with readiness for most children being closer to age seven than five, they feel for most children, formal reading instruction is premature and
therefore risky. One way to steer away from the "early reading" label is to use the language-experience approach (Durkin 1980, 85). To sum up, the purpose of the reading program in kindergarten is to encourage positive attitudes toward reading (Ramsey and Bayless 1980, 108).

The Texas Education Agency (1987, 12) lists three essential elements for writing under using word attack skills to decode written language. Children need opportunities to discriminate sounds for letters of the alphabet, to discriminate visual shapes, forms and letters and to understand the direction of conventional print.

Spodek (1985, 74, 75, 79) supports the essential element relating to sound-symbol correspondence to a degree. He states that in English, by mastering a set of twenty-six symbols and their multiple sound relationships, one can read anything. He adds that, unfortunately, mastery of the sound-symbol relationships is complicated by the fact that one sound can be represented by more than one letter, and that letters or combinations of letters can represent many sounds. In spite of the complications, a high degree of regularity exists between sound symbols and visual symbols. Spodek does point out that, for the beginning reader who has to move from the written symbol to the spoken symbol, there is no meaning in the written word if it is not in that child's vocabulary. In addition,
Spodek states that the language-experience approach teaches the letter-sound association as the need arises in the context of the child's experience rather than from lessons designed specifically for that end.

Schickendanz (1983, 239) agrees that letter-sound associations should be taught in context. She states that it is not feasible to start the reading process with letter-sound associations when teaching children who have not had extensive experiences with print, because young children have difficulty conceptualizing spoken language as a series of distinct sounds. Letter-sound associations make sense only when included in a broad language arts program in which children are meaningfully engaged in reading and writing.

Still others agree. Children can learn phonics informally when needed as they are learning to read and write through other approaches. Skills for unlocking the sound-letter code should be learned when identifying words in meaningful context. In other words, a little phonics can be a useful tool for children (Lundsteen and Tarrow, 1981, 302). Similarly, the practice of drilling letters and sounds before children learn what reading and learning to read are all about, ignores the relationship of reading to the other language arts, with some children not knowing what the sounding of letters is all about (Leeper,
Witherspoon, and Day 1984, 230). Then, from a different perspective, the letters in a word may give enough clues for a child to identify that word if it occurs in meaningful context and is part of the speaking or listening vocabulary of the child (Baumann and Johnson 1984, 4). Groff (1984, 387) feels that the teaching of letter names is appropriate if done in conjunction with instruction in phonics, and that if letter name knowledge and phonics knowledge are highly correlated, it makes sense to teach them simultaneously.

Several researchers support the essential element for discriminating visual shapes, forms and letters. Two important goals for beginning reading instruction are to teach children to discriminate visually among letters and words and to teach children the names of letters (Durkin 1980, 97; Mason 1981, 15, 20). Mason (1981, 21) stated that kindergarten teachers need to provide for the development of visual discrimination by involving children in matching and categorizing activities. Still other authors agreed on the importance of visual discrimination in reading (Mangieri, Staley, and Wilhide 1984, 22; Petty and Jensen 1980, 211; Ramsey and Bayless 1980, 82; Spodek 1985, 85).

Understanding the direction of conventional print is an essential element for reading agreed upon by many
researchers. Schickendanz et al. (1983, 203) state that children must know that print is arranged from left to right and from top to bottom on a page. Others agree (Durkin 1980, 97; Mason 1981, 28; Petty and Jensen 1980, 211, 255; Ramsey and Bayless 1980, 218; Spodek 1985, 76; Wiseman 1984, 342).

Two essential elements for reading have to do with developing vocabulary to understand written material. Children need opportunities to use appropriate vocabulary and complete sentences in relating experiences, and to supply missing words in context (Texas Education Agency 1987, 12).

Burns and Broman (1983, 366) feel that a child's experiential background is important in learning to read. Other authors believe that, besides having many experiences, children need opportunities to talk about those experiences (Fox and Allen 1983, 183; Petty and Jensen 1980, 214; Schickendanz et al. 1983, 202). In addition, young children need to develop skills in formulating fully grammatical sentences. These skills develop as children share conversations. Correct pronunciation is also learned as children hear words and have opportunities to say them (Schickendanz et al. 1983, 189). Furthermore, accepting dictation from children on their experiences in the language-experience approach is important in reading instruction (Fox and Allen 1983,
The essential element for supplying missing words in oral context relates to the use of context clues in reading. Schickendanz et al. (1983, 202) states that fluent readers do not depend solely on their ability to read individual words. They anticipate many words, not reading them by sight or by sound. Such anticipation of words, sometimes referred to as the use of context clues, can be very helpful in reading as by providing the fastest route to an unknown word (Mason 1981, 15; Petty and Jensen 1980, 223; Schickendanz et al. 1983, 108).

The next five essential elements for reading are in the category of using comprehension skills to gain meaning from whatever is read. Children need opportunities to respond to storytelling or oral reading by telling what they have heard is about, recalling details, arranging events in order, distinguishing from real and make-believe and retelling the story (Texas Education Agency 1982, 12).

Several authors agree that being able to tell what a story a child has heard is about, is an important reading comprehension skill (Burns and Broman 1983, 366; Mason 1981, 27; Petty and Jensen 1980, 229). Another comprehension skill is the ability to listen and recall details from a passage or story read by the teacher. Teacher storytelling and story reading, followed by questions about the main
ideas and significant details, is recommended to promote comprehension (Burns and Broman 1983, 359). Petty and Jensen (1980, 229) also listed selecting important details as a valuable component of the reading comprehension program.

Another essential element for reading comprehension is the ability to retell a story in sequential order. Burns and Broman (1983, 97) say that one of the reading related skills to be acquired in kindergarten is the ability to relate story events in their proper sequence after having heard the story. Mason (1982, 36, 27) agrees.

Distinguishing between real and make-believe is another essential element for reading comprehension. Many children's books have an element of imagination and fantasy. Appropriate fantasy for young children is when the fantasy is within the bounds of real sense. Fantasy that creates an entirely new world where nothing is familiar can be very unsettling for children still unsure about the difference between fantasy and reality (Rudolph and Cohen 1984, 251, 252).

The last essential element for reading comprehension is the ability to retell a story. Petty and Jensen (1980, 230) state that children need to be asked to paraphrase, or retell in their own words what they have read. In order to paraphrase, children must grasp the meaning of what is
read, and also be able to see the relationship of the parts of the story to the whole. In addition, Stewig (1982, 110) feels that retelling a story in a child's own words is a useful stimulus to oral language. Rudolph and Cohen (1984) add that children may want to retell a story, and in retelling it, see how practice brings improvement in their comprehension.

The Texas Education Agency (1987, 12) lists one essential element under applying reading skills to a variety of practical situations. Children need to have opportunities to follow oral directions. This skill is felt to be important in the overall language program (Burns and Broman 1983, 97; Yawkey et al. 1981, 77). Yawkey et al. (1981, 76) caution teachers to be careful with the choice of words in giving directions so that the child understands what is expected. Teaching children to follow a set of directions in sequence is a method of teaching them to remember the sequence of events in a story. Also, when children can follow three-step directions, they can learn to work in small groups without direct supervision of the teacher, thus preparing them for reading group activities later on (Mason 1981, 36). A method of helping children learn to follow directions from spoken cues is playing games such as "Simon says" or "follow-the-leader" (Rudolph and Cohen 1984, 308).
The last five essential elements for reading have to do with developing literary appreciation skills to provide personal enjoyment. Children need opportunities to appreciate poetic devices, respond to different forms of literature, become acquainted with our literary heritage, select books for themselves and follow a story line in books read aloud to them (Texas Education Agency 1987, 12).

Two important reading related skills to be learned in kindergarten are selecting alliterative words and identifying rhyming words in jingles or poems. Songs, fingerplays and Mother Goose rhymes provide sources of rhyming and alliterative words (Mason 1981, 11, 37). In addition, word sounds can be the basis of much fun for kindergarten children because they enjoy alliteration and rhyming (Spodek 1985, 86). Rudolph and Cohen (1984, 265) feel that the fascination poetry has to all young children is due to the physical appeal of rhythm. Petty and Jensen (1980, 231) add that poetry should always be read aloud, allowing the rhyme and rhythm to be savored and enjoyed. In addition to poetry, jump-roping rhymes have universal appeal to children due to the playful nonsense, rhythm and humor (Rudolph and Cohen 1984, 308).

Opportunities to respond to various forms of literature are important in the reading program. Books, stories, nursery rhymes, poetry and other forms of
literature chosen with the interests of children in mind will be enjoyed by them, especially if children are allowed to respond. Open-ended questions such as "What were you thinking as you listened to the story?" are a good way to encourage meaningful responses (Stewig 1981, 99). Petty and Jensen (1980, 147-148) feel that children like to share literature that they enjoy. Some ways of sharing are illustrating the story by painting, drawing, or cutting pictures from magazines; retelling the story; or enacting a scene from the story. Other ways are music, cooking, movement, dance, mime and puppetry.

The essential element for providing children opportunities to become acquainted with a variety of selections, characters and themes of our literary heritage can be accomplished through the classroom library. Spodek (1985, 89) states that books should be carefully selected for the classroom library with a relatively small number in the room at any one time. The selection should constantly change during the year. The importance of books in the classroom library is affirmed by Mangieri, Staley, and Wilhide (1984, 47); however, they feel the library should contain many books that appeal to children, to include songbooks, informational books, poetry, a dictionary, wordless books and pictures. Fox and Allen (1983, 183) add that teachers need to read aloud to children everyday from
quality children's books, and should keep a wide variety of books in the classroom, arranged so that children will have the time and space to explore them.

The opportunity for children to select books for their individual needs and interests is important. Hickman (1980) tells us that children are more likely to read books they are interested in. Many authorities feel that the way to provide books of interest to children is to keep a wide variety of readily accessible books in the classroom library (Baumann and Johnson 1984, 111; Fox and Allen 1983, 183; Petty and Jensen 1980, 213; Mangieri, Staley, and Wilhide 1984, 47; Stewig 1982, 153).

The essential element for children having opportunities to follow the story line in stories read aloud is supported by Schickendanz et al. (1983, 205-206). The importance of learning the story line in favorite books is a child's emerging awareness of the relationship between speech and print. The experience of hearing several books read many times enables children to realize such things as each book has its own story, pictures and print are related, pictures provide clues to what the printed words say, it is the print and not the pictures that tell the story, and specific words are used to tell each story. In fact, hearing familiar books repeated may eventually lead to the insight that reading a book requires looking at the print.
Writing

Writing, like speaking, is an expressive form of communication; however, unlike speaking, writing is permanent. It can be used to communicate a message at a time other than its creation (Schickendanz et al. 1983, 190-191).

Young children are fascinated with writing. In a kindergarten where the ideas and communication skills of all children are valued, writing will grow naturally (Ramsey and Bayless 1980, 203, 205). In fact, writing is a skill that will flourish only if children have the freedom to experiment with the written word (McDonell and Osborn, 1980, 310).

The writing of children can be divided into two types. In one type, it is the child's creativity that is important, and in the other, it is the mechanics and form (Stewig 1982, 169). In the language-experience approach, creative writing can be used to help children develop mechanically correct writing (Nessel and Jones 1981, 89).

To encourage writing, the kindergarten classroom should be a print-rich environment in which books, personal letters, signs, charts, newspapers and magazines are displayed and are readily accessible to and used by both children and teacher (Burns and Broman 1983, 188). In fact, children's writing flourishes in an environment rich
with print where children write as they need to, and when writing is for a particular purpose (Mangieri, Staley, and Wilhide 1984, 37).

Mason and Au (1986, 41) state that reading and writing are closely related and at times inseparable, especially for young children. In referring to reading and writing, Baumann and Johnson (1984, 99) feel that integrating these skills with children's interests, play and experiences forms the basis for literacy. Similarly, Klein and Schickendanz (1980, 749) report that children will not learn to read and write if print and the tools for creating it are not in the environment. The language-experience approach and the whole-language approach, both of which are reviewed in this chapter in the section on reading, are totally integrated methods of teaching the language arts.

One of the Texas Education Agency (1987, 12) essential elements for writing calls for children to have opportunities to recognize that everyone has experiences to write about. The language-experience approach uses experiences as the basis of instruction. Nessel and Jones (1981, 112) feel that, in kindergarten, the examination of the stimulus, or interesting experience, should be the focal point of the language-experience activity. Vocabulary can be expanded and children can learn new concepts as they discuss something that is tasted, smelled,
squeezed, or compared with other objects. As children see their own words written on the chart to be read and reread, language development and an awareness of the function of reading and writing can both be accomplished.

Burns and Broman (1983, 188) feel that learning experiences should be planned for children where a need to write can be seen, such as writing about a field trip, reporting on a topic of interest, or writing notes to parents or friends. Children should be encouraged to write as much as possible, and reporting about experiences in and out of school may help them become writers (Spodek 1985, 67). In fact, the interests and experiences of children are their motivation to write (Baumann and Johnson 1984, Another Texas Education Agency (1987, 12) essential element is writing for a variety of purposes, modes and audiences—the student shall be provided opportunities to realize writing can entertain and inform. Yawkey et al. (1981, 139) listed several purposes and audiences for writing such as letters to people in and out of school, notes and explanations to other children, letters and reports to parents, personal journals and self-expression. On the other hand, Leeper, Witherspoon, and Day (1984, 233) state more generally that the purposes of writing are to communicate or to express an idea, whereas Durkin (1980, 104) feels the purpose of writing is to preserve
information, thoughts and feelings. Graves and Calkins (1980a, 208) indicate that when children become aware of their audience in writing, they begin to write to perform, thus to entertain.

The next three Texas Education Agency (1987, 13) essential elements for writing relate to applying the conventions of writing to produce effective communications. Children are to have opportunities to recognize that conventions of writing help communicate to an audience; recognize the nature of sound-symbol correspondence; and recognize the conventions of writing such as spaces between words, words and marks on pages other than letters.

As children gain more experience with their own writing and the writing of others, more conventions of print are mastered, such as beginning to use uppercase letters only at the beginning of sentences and for proper nouns, and beginning to insert punctuation marks (Schickendanz et al. 1983, 199). Pflaum (1983, 197) suggests that instruction and talk about punctuation begin with the fact that it marks writing where intonation marks speech. According to Graves and Calkins (1980b, 569-570), print is a silent language, but children want their writing to speak out. Very young children often attempt to put expression into their writing by darkening syllables or capitalizing some words for emphasis.
The language-experience approach supports the essential element for writing that requires children to have opportunities to recognize the nature of sound-symbol correspondence. Burns and Broman (1983, 193) feel that children learn sound-symbol correspondence in a meaningful way though language-experience. Spodek (1984, 223-224) concurs, pointing out that phonics instruction can begin in a meaningful way with children's dictation printed by the teacher on experience charts. In addition, in learning how writing and speech relate, children must discover which unit of speech is represented by what symbol. After much exploration and exposure to print, they discover that letters represent single sounds, not syllables or words (Schickendanz 1986, 86-87). Dyson agrees, saying that eventually children learn that letters provide cues for reading and that sounds in words are determined by letters. In contrast, Durkin (1980, 173) suggests that phonics instruction begin with printing instruction, using beginning sounds, and Lundsteen and Tarrow (1981, 264) report that one way children learn phonics is by writing their own invented spellings.

The last essential element for writing is recognizing conventions such as spaces between words, word order, and marks on pages besides letters. The language-experience approach is a way to present this skill. Fox and Allen
(1983, 173-174) explain that, as the teacher takes dictation from children, they see print appear, beginning at the top, moving left to right, then left to right again and again to the bottom of the page. Children also see spaces between words and punctuation marks to show intonation and meanings.

**Language**

The Texas Education Agency (1987, 13) essential element for language states that, in developing skill in using grammar for effective communication, students need opportunities to use oral language in a variety of ways. Several researchers agree that children learn the grammar of language by using language. Gonzales (1980, 671) states that spontaneous talk or free discussions of children provide the opportunities for them to speak and to try new grammatical constructions. Honig (1982, 57) agrees, saying that exposure to a language-rich interaction environment gives the child the opportunity to construct language rules and to use language well. In addition, to encourage development of grammar, Leeper, Witherspoon, and Day (1984, 211-212) suggest many opportunities for verbal interactions. In contrast, Yawkey et al. (1981, 138) suggest many writing experiences for many purposes to encourage learning correct grammar. Finally, Lundsteen and
Tarrow (1981, 303) state, quite simply, that children learn language by using it.
CHAPTER III

PROCEDURES FOR THE STUDY

Design of the Instrument

The opinions of kindergarten teachers on the developmental appropriateness of the language arts essential elements for their grade level were needed for this study. An instrument in the form of a questionnaire (Appendix A) was designed to collect the teachers' impressions. The wording of the essential elements on the questionnaire was taken from State Board of Education Rules for Curriculum (Texas Education Agency 1987, 11-13). Space was provided for teachers to respond to the appropriateness of each item with a yes or no opinion and to add comments as well.

Selection of Subjects

Kindergarten teachers from a public school district in the metroplex area of Northeast Texas were selected to participate in this study. There were twelve elementary schools in the district, and the kindergarten teachers from those twelve schools meet as a grade level, voluntarily after school, several times a year to share ideas and concerns.
Distribution of Instruments

First, written permission was secured from the superintendent to conduct the study within his school district, utilizing both the informal kindergarten grade level meeting and inter-campus mail for distribution of the instruments. Then a packet, containing the questionnaire, a letter of explanation and a pre-addressed, stamped return envelope, was given to each teacher present at the February meeting. Teachers who were absent received the same packet through inter-campus mail the next day. All teachers were assured their identities would be protected. The instruments were coded for collection purposes only.

Collection of Instruments

A follow-up letter was sent to every teacher ten days after the initial distribution of the questionnaire, thanking them for their participation in the study and reminding them to return the questionnaire if they had not already done so. The questionnaires were returned through the mail in the envelopes that had been provided.

Analysis of the Data

The opinions recorded on the questionnaires were reported in tabular form for each of the language arts categories, both by number and percentage of yes and no responses for each essential element. Comments added by
teachers were recorded separately. The mean rates of agreement of teachers on the developmental appropriateness of each language arts category was also reported in tabular form.
CHAPTER IV

REPORTING AND DISCUSSING THE DATA

Report of the Data

Thirty-five of the thirty-six questionnaires that were distributed to kindergarten teachers were returned, for a response rate of 97%, well exceeding the desired 85%. The opinions of the teachers are listed in tables, showing both the number and percentage of yes, no and undecided responses. Where the respondent answered with a question mark, gave no answer, or checked between the yes and no spaces on the questionnaire, the answer is tabulated as undecided. Comments added by the teachers are reported in the discussion of the data. Only those comments that are pertinent to the study are included. In addition, the mean rates of agreement on the overall appropriateness of the essential elements for each category of language arts are also reported in tabular form.

Discussion of the Data

Listening

As shown in Table 1, the rate of agreement of teachers on the essential elements for listening is 97% or above, with the exception of listening to appreciate sound devices
of rhythm, rhyme, alliteration and onomatopoeia which is 86%. Of the five respondents who either disagree with or are uncertain of the appropriateness of listening to appreciate rhythm, rhyme, alliteration and onomatopoeia, four added comments clarifying their answers. One feels

TABLE 1

OPINIONS ON APPROPRIATENESS OF LISTENING ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS (In Whole Percentages)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Essential Element</th>
<th>Developmentally Appropriate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oral communications, attending to responding to, analyzing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listen to instructions and for important information</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus attention on a speaker without interrupting</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respond to storytelling by drawing or painting</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appreciate sound devices of rhythm, rhyme, alliteration and onomatopoeia</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

appreciation is too general a term; and three feel rhythm and rhyme are appropriate, but alliteration and onomatopoeia are not. In addition, one of the thirty-four who agree with this essential element, states that appreciation is not measurable, but that rhythm and rhyme are vital aspects of the kindergarten curriculum. There
were no comments added for the three essential elements having an agreement rate of 97% or above.

Speaking

As shown in Table 2, the rate of agreement of the teachers on the appropriateness of the essential elements for developing fluency in using oral language to communicate effectively is 94% or above. The only comment added in this category was from one of the two teachers who feel speaking clearly and at an appropriate rate is not

TABLE 2
OPINIONS ON APPROPRIATENESS OF SPEAKING ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS (In Whole Percentages)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Essential Element</th>
<th>Developmentally Appropriate</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using oral language to communicate effectively</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engage in creative dramatic activities</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use variety of words to express feelings and ideas</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speak clearly and at an appropriate rate</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communicate effectively in one-to-one and small groups</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speaking to accomplish a variety of purposes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relate events from personal experience</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Present poems chorally</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
relevant for kindergarten children. She added "this varies with region or state."

The rate of agreement of teachers on speaking to accomplish a variety of purposes is 100% for relating events from personal experience, but only 83% for presenting poems chorally. Three of the respondents who disagree that presenting poems chorally is appropriate also added comments. Two of the three feel that fingerplays are appropriate. The third notes the difficulty of presenting poems for children of kindergarten age, and the feeling of failure experienced by children who are unable to perform as well as others. In addition, four teachers who are in agreement, clarified their answers by stating that only fingerplays, nursery rhymes and very short poems are appropriate.

Reading

Table 3 shows the teachers' rates of agreement on the developmental appropriateness of the essential elements for reading. For decoding written language, the rate is 91% or above. One of the three respondents who disagrees with the statement that students should be provided opportunities to discriminate sound for each letter of the alphabet feels that a few consonant sounds are appropriate, but not all sounds of the alphabet. There were no other comments in this category.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Essential Element</th>
<th>Developmentally Appropriate</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decoding written language</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discriminate visual shapes, forms and letters</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discriminate sound for each letter of alphabet</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understand the direction of conventional print</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developing vocabulary to understand written material</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relate experiences with appropriate vocabulary and in complete sentences</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supply missing words in oral context</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using comprehension skills to gain meaning</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tell what the story is about</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recall important facts and details</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arrange events in sequential order</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distinguish between real and make-</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retell a story</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applying reading skills, follow oral directions</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using literary appreciation skills for personal enjoyment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Follow simple story line in stories read aloud</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appreciate repetition, rhyme, rhythm and alliteration</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respond to various forms of literature</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Select books for individual needs and interests</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Become acquainted with literary heritage</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The teachers' rate of agreement on the appropriateness of the essential elements for developing vocabulary to understand written material is 91% or above. One respondent noted that some adults are unable to relate experiences with appropriate vocabulary in complete sentences.

The agreement rate of teachers on the essential elements for using comprehension skills to gain meaning is 97% or above. No comments were added.

Only 89% of the teachers surveyed agree that children need opportunities to follow oral directions. No apropos comments were made.

The rates of agreement on the appropriateness of the essential elements for developing literary appreciation skills range from a high of 97% to a low of 83%. No relevant comments were made for these elements.

Writing

Table 4 shows the rate of agreement of the teachers surveyed on the essential elements for writing. The area of highest agreement is the recognition that everyone has experiences to write about. Both recognizing that writing can entertain and inform and the nature of sound-symbol correspondence, have rates of agreement of only 83%; however no comments were added by the teachers.

Recognizing the conventions of writing, spaces between words, word order, and marks on pages other than letters of
the alphabet have the lowest agreement rate of any language art essential element, 69%. The only comment was from one respondent who said that spaces between words are appropriate, but that word order and marks on a page require reading which is not appropriate.

TABLE 4
OPINIONS ON APPROPRIATENESS OF WRITING ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS (In Whole Percentages)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Essential Element</th>
<th>Developmentally Appropriate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using a variety of techniques to select topics Everyone has experiences to write about</td>
<td>32  91 3  9 -- --</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developing writing skills for a variety of purposes Writing can entertain and inform</td>
<td>29  83 6  17 -- --</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applying conventions of writing to produce communications Recognize nature of sound-symbol correspondence</td>
<td>29  83 4  11 2  6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognize conventions are used to help communicate to an audience</td>
<td>28  80 6  17 1  3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognize conventions, spaces between words, order, marks other than letters</td>
<td>24  69 10  29 1  3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Language

The teachers' rate of agreement on the essential element for developing skill in using grammar by being
provided opportunities to use oral language in a variety of ways is 100%. No comments were added.

TABLE 5

OPINIONS ON APPROPRIATENESS OF LANGUAGE ESSENTIAL ELEMENT (In Whole Percentages)

| Essential Element                                                                 | Yes | %  | No | %  | Undecided |%
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Developing skill in using the grammar of English for effective oral and written communication</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use oral language in a variety of situations</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6 shows the mean rates of agreement of opinions on the developmental appropriateness of each of the components of the language arts for kindergarten. The

TABLE 6

MEAN RATE OF AGREEMENT (In Whole Percentages)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language Art</th>
<th>N of Elements</th>
<th>Mean (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Language</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listening</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speaking</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
highest rate of agreement for any of the components of 
language arts was 100% for language. Listening, speaking 
and reading had mean rates of 95, 94 and 94%, respectively. 
There was a decrease to 81% in the mean rate of agreement 
for the essential elements for writing.

Two of the respondents offered very germane comments 
at the end of the questionnaire which warrant inclusion in 
this discussion. The first stated:

I believe that all of these essential elements are 
developmentally appropriate for kindergarten 
children who are chronologically five years old 
and developmentally five years old at the same 
time. Many children come to kindergarten who are 
not developmentally five years old. This makes it 
difficult for these essential elements to be 
mastered.

The second respondent said:

I feel that many of the language arts essential 
elements are vital parts of an appropriate 
kindergarten curriculum, but I do not feel that 
testing five-year olds for mastery of all the 
elements is necessary. The elements should 
exist in the curriculum in a natural manner 
such as story time or center time, not presented 
in formal lessons. Writing for kindergarteners 
should be during periods of "normal writing 
activity" such as an office center, thank-you 
notes to class visitors (which might be a 
picture and a signature), or a computer area. 
Formal teaching of the formation of letters, 
and drill on letter formation is very 
inappropriate. I do not disagree with the 
elements themselves as much as I question the 
manner in which they are being implemented 
and recorded.
CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, FINDINGS, CONCLUSION, IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATION

Summary

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the developmental appropriateness of the English-language arts essential elements for kindergarten (Texas Education Agency 1987, 11-13) by surveying the opinions of the kindergarten teachers in a school district in Northeast Texas.

A questionnaire was designed from the essential elements which allowed for a yes or no response and comments for each of the elements. The questionnaires were distributed to the teachers in February of 1987, and were returned by mail. Opinions from the returned questionnaires were tabulated and reported, and comments were reported in the discussion of the data. Mean rates of agreement for each of the language arts categories were also computed and reported.

Findings

Of the thirty-five kindergarten teachers who responded to the survey, the percentages of agreement on the developmental appropriateness of the language arts
essential elements were 100% for language, 95% for listening, 94% for speaking and reading and 81% for writing.

Although the population of teachers in this study feel that the essential elements are developmentally appropriate, the comments added to the questionnaires indicate that confusion exists among teachers as to the interpretation of the wording of some of the elements.

Conclusion

Based upon the responses of the kindergarten teachers in the school district surveyed, the English-language arts essential elements for kindergarten are developmentally appropriate. The review of related literature supports the teachers' opinions by showing that these essential elements can be implemented in developmentally appropriate ways.

Implications

Several implications can be drawn based upon this research study and the review of related literature. It is recommended that:

1. The Texas Education Agency re-evaluate the kindergarten essential elements for writing.

2. The Texas Education agency word all of the essential elements in a clear and concise manner so as to avoid confusion.
3. The Texas Education Agency communicate their expectations for implementation of the essential elements for kindergarten to school districts.

4. Early-childhood professional organizations continue providing education on developmentally appropriate practice to their members and the public.

5. Kindergarten teachers continue to insist upon developmentally appropriate practice in their classrooms and be prepared to defend its criticism.

6. Kindergarten teachers resist the use of workbooks and seat work that keep children from having the rich experiences needed in kindergarten.

7. Colleges of education teach prospective kindergarten teachers methods of implementing the essential elements in developmentally appropriate ways.

**Recommendation**

After a thorough analysis of the research conducted in this study and a review of the related literature, it is recommended that a study be made of the way the Texas Education Agency (1987, 11-13) language arts essential elements for kindergarten children are written and how teachers interpret the statement of each element.
APPENDIX A

QUESTIONNAIRE
QUESTIONNAIRE ON THE DEVELOPMENTAL APPROPRIATENESS OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS FOR KINDERGARTEN

The English language arts essential elements for kindergarten are listed below. For each element, please mark yes if you believe it is developmentally appropriate, or no if you believe it is developmentally inappropriate. Add any comments you feel will clarify your position.

1. Listening. Developing skill in attending to, responding to, and analyzing oral communications. The student shall be provided opportunities to:

   A. focus attention on a speaker without interrupting;
      Comments__________________________________________  __  __

   B. listen to appreciate sound devices of rhythm, rhyme, alliteration, and onomatopoeia;
      Comments__________________________________________  __  __

   C. listen carefully to instructions and important information; and
      Comments__________________________________________  __  __

   D. respond to storytelling by drawing or painting.
      Comments__________________________________________  __  __

2. Speaking.

   A. Developing fluency in using oral language to communicate effectively. The student shall be provided opportunities to:
i. engage in creative dramatic activities and nonverbal communication;

Comments__________________________

ii. use a variety of words to express feelings and ideas;

Comments__________________________

iii. speak clearly and at an appropriate rate; and

Comments__________________________

iv. communicate effectively in one-to-one and small group situations.

Comments__________________________

B. Speaking to accomplish a variety of purposes: informing, expressing, persuading, entertaining. The student shall be provided opportunities to:

i. relate events from personal experience; and

Comments__________________________

ii. present poems chorally.

Comments__________________________
3. Reading.

A. Using word attack skills to decode written language. The student shall be provided opportunities to:

i. discriminate sound for each letter of the alphabet; __ __

Comments ______________________________________________________

ii. discriminate visual shapes, forms and letters; and __ __

Comments ______________________________________________________

iii. understand the direction of conventional print. __ __

Comments ______________________________________________________

B. Developing vocabulary to understand written material. The student shall be provided opportunities to:

i. relate experiences with appropriate vocabulary in complete sentences; and __ __

Comments ______________________________________________________

ii. supply missing words in oral context. __ __

Comments ______________________________________________________

C. Using comprehension skills to gain meaning from whatever is read. The
student shall be provided opportunities to respond to storytelling or oral reading by:

i. telling what the story is about;  
   Comments__________________________

ii. recalling important facts and details;  
    Comments__________________________

iii. arranging the events in sequential order;  
    Comments__________________________

iv. distinguishing between real and make-believe; and  
    Comments__________________________

v. retelling a story.  
   Comments__________________________

D. Applying reading skills to a variety of practical situations. The student shall be provided opportunities to follow oral directions.  
   Comments__________________________
E. Developing literary appreciation skills to provide personal enjoyment. The student shall be provided opportunities to:

i. appreciate repetition, rhyme, rhythm, and alliteration;  
Comments__________________________  

ii. respond to various forms of literature;  
Comments__________________________  

iii. become acquainted with a variety of selections, characters, and themes of our literary heritage;  
Comments__________________________  

iv. select books for individual needs and interests; and  
Comments__________________________  

v. follow simple story line in stories read aloud.  
Comments__________________________  

4. Writing.

A. Using a variety of techniques to select topics and to generate material to write about those topics. The student shall be provided opportunities
to recognize that everyone has experiences to write about.

Comments

B. Developing skills in writing effectively for a variety of purposes, modes and audiences. The student shall be provided opportunities to recognize that writing can entertain and inform.

Comments

C. Applying the conventions of writing to produce effective communications. The student shall be provided opportunities to:
   i. recognize that conventions are used to help communicate to an audience;

Comments

   ii. recognize the nature of sound-symbol correspondence; and

Comments

   iii. recognize the conventions of writing—spaces between words, word order, and marks on pages other than letters of alphabet.

Comments
5. Language. Developing skill in using the grammar of English for effective oral and written communication. The student shall be provided opportunities to use oral language in a variety of situations.

Comments: _______________________________
APPENDIX B

LETTERS
104 Wild Oak Drive  
Lake Dallas, Texas  75065  
(817) 497-2707  
January 29, 1987

Dr.  
Superintendent  
Independent School District

P. O. Box  
Texas

Dear Dr.  

I am currently writing my master's thesis entitled "The English Language Arts Essential Elements for Kindergarten: Are They Developmentally Appropriate?" During the early planning stages last September, our Language Arts Coordinator asked you whether or not I would be permitted to distribute a questionnaire to the kindergarten teachers in our district at one of the grade level meetings. You indicated to her that I had permission to gather my data.

Now that the questionnaire is ready to distribute, I need your written permission to do so. I have enclosed a copy of the questionnaire as well as the letter that will accompany it. My plans are to give one set to each teacher who is present at the kindergarten grade level meeting on February 3rd. I will send one to each teacher who is absent through inter-campus mail. I will provide a pre-addressed stamped envelope with each questionnaire. Participation will be voluntary and responses will be anonymous and confidential.

If my plans for distribution of the questionnaire meet with your approval, I would appreciate your indication below. Please return the signed copy of this letter to me.

I am very excited about my research and look forward to sharing the results with my colleagues next year. Thank you for your help.

Sincerely yours,

Susan R. Anderson

Approved:  
Superintendent  
Independent School District  
2-2-87  
Date
Dear Kindergarten Teacher,

The attached questionnaire is a vital part of my master's thesis entitled "The English Language Arts Essential Elements for Kindergarten: Are They Developmentally Appropriate?" The purpose of my study is to find out how kindergarten teachers view the appropriateness of the language arts essential elements for kindergarten.

Your participation in my research is strictly voluntary; however, I urge you to participate because the more responses I receive, the more valid my study will be. Your response will be anonymous and confidential.

A pre-addressed, stamped envelope is provided for returning the completed questionnaire. Please return it by February 16th.

Thank-you in advance for your very important contribution to my master's program.

Sincerely yours,

Susan R. Anderson
Dear Kindergarten Teacher,

Thank you for your acceptance of my Questionnaire on the Developmental Appropriateness of the English Language Arts Essential Elements for Kindergarten. If you have already returned your copy, please accept my sincere thanks for your important contribution to my research.

If you have not yet returned your copy, I would appreciate your doing so as soon as possible. I will be happy to send you another questionnaire if you have misplaced your copy.

Sincerely yours,

Susan R. Anderson
REFERENCE LIST


