AN EVALUATION OF THE LANGUAGE ARTS PROGRAM

IN THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS OF

DENISON, TEXAS

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

During the fall of 1944, in an effort to meet the challenge of a more efficient elementary school curriculum, a new plan of organization was adopted by the teachers of the Denison elementary schools. It was believed that an overcrowded program consisting of too many separate subjects and too many unrelated activities hindered effective instruction in the elementary school. In an effort to remedy the unsatisfactory situation, the "broad fields" plan of curriculum was adopted, with emphasis on the language arts.

Statement of the Problem

Through working with the Language Arts Program of the Denison elementary schools, the results of the curriculum organization stimulated interest that led to this study. The problem set forth for this study is the evaluation of the Language Arts Program of the elementary schools of Denison, Texas.

Purpose of the Study

The Language Arts Program, based upon centers of interest, has been in operation for four years in the Denison Elementary Schools, and there has developed a need for an
evaluation of the program. The purpose of this study is to
determine the weak points and the strong points of the
Language Arts Program and to make recommendations for im-
provement.

Sources of Data

Data for this study were secured in three ways, namely:
(1) results from achievement tests, (2) teacher-appraisal of
the Language Arts Program, and (3) letters from teachers who
have worked with the program.

Limitations

This study is limited to an investigation made of the
five elementary schools of Denison, Texas. The teacher-
appraisal reports and the letters came from teachers of the
various schools, but all test scores are from one school,
the Sam Houston Elementary School.

Background and Environmental Factors

As the purpose of the Language Arts Program is to help
each child meet as effectively as possible life situations
involving the use of language, its subject matter must be
drawn from all fields of experience of children, and should
be related to their personal and social needs. A study of
this type, therefore, would not be complete without a survey
of the general background of the community; that is, the
environment of the pupils.
Denison is located in the northern part of Grayson County, Texas, near the Oklahoma border. It has a population of about twenty thousand, and it is one of the principal retail and wholesale markets in the northern part of Texas. It is a railroad center, and railroad shop repair and construction work constitute the largest industry in the city; however, there are other industries, such as the manufacturing of cotton goods, tractors, power saws and earth-boring machinery, food products, creosoted products, and other industries. Lake Texoma, which is nearby, attracts many tourists.

Denison has some transient population, although the population is, for the most part, American stock, with a scattering of foreign-born laborers. The population is centered around the five elementary schools. These schools are: Raynal, Lamar, Peabody, Sam Houston, and Central. The enrollment of the elementary schools varied from an average of fifteen hundred and forty-four for the school term of 1943-1944 to an average of fifteen hundred and eighty-six for the 1946-1947 school term. Of this number, about twenty per cent were children from the rural sections.

The city has an excellent public library and several parks and playgrounds. There are active Boy Scout and Camp Fire Girl organizations, with members from all sections of the town.
As this study concerns all the elementary school pupils, and as the conditions described in the preceding paragraphs exist, it may be concluded that Denison is ideal for a study of this type.

Method of Treating the Data

This study is limited to a comparative investigation of the Language Arts Program as shown by the results of the Stanford Achievement Tests. These tests were given over a period of four years, two years before and two years after the present Language Arts Program was set up. Results for science and social science were included, as many of the centers of interest were based upon these studies.

The teacher-appraisal, which was in the form of a questionnaire, was based upon the criteria as given in the Handbook for Self-Appraisal and Improvement of Elementary Schools.¹ The questions were objective in nature, as they could be answered by "yes" or "no." The answers given show, in the opinion of the teachers, the strong and weak points of the Language Arts Program.

The teachers of the Denison Elementary Schools were asked to write letters giving their opinion of the Language Arts Program. The letters used in this study bring out some interesting points in regard to the program.

Related Studies

In 1940 Ruth Harrell made a comparative study of the progress in the reading interests of pupils who were taught by the traditional method in language arts and those who were taught functional language. The participants in the experiment included ninety-nine members of the sixth grade in a junior high school of Hillsboro, Texas. The two groups were matched comparably in mentality by means of mental maturity tests.

Systematized organization and presentation of subject matter, discipline, homework, extra school periods, drills, and other elements of traditional value were characteristics of the procedure used by the group following the traditional methods. On the other hand, the functional method group had no definite schedule of class work. Pupil-initiated discipline, student planning, creative work, cooperation, and appropriate units of work centered around mutual interests were characteristic of the procedure in this group.

It was concluded that, in comparison with the traditional method, the functional method resulted in superior free expression on the part of the pupils, and that parents and teachers noticed an improvement in the reading interests and social adjustment of pupils in the functional group.

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In 1941 Maude Ann Williams made a study of how language arts were used as a foundation in the fifth-grade curriculum of the Stonewall Jackson Elementary School, Denton, Texas, and how such subjects as music, speech, art, spelling, reading and arithmetic were integrated with language arts.\(^3\)

This was an experiment to test the value of an integrated curriculum to find out if it provided for the development of functional knowledges, skills, attitudes, and appreciations by which real and meaningful problems could be solved.

The integrated curriculum provided for individual differences in interests, abilities, needs and made individual growth possible; pupils gained skills in fundamentals that compared favorably with skills learned by teaching subjects in isolation; individual thinking and planning were provided; the children showed growth in real-life situations; the children were more democratic in their method of working with the group; and the children were happy as they carried out the work.

The preceding studies are similar to the present problem in that the integrated curriculum was given a trial and

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found to be satisfactory. The results are of interest because the experiments were carried on in schools within this area of Texas.
CHAPTER II

ANALYSIS OF THE LANGUAGE ARTS PROGRAM

Purpose and Procedure of the Language Arts Program in Denison, Texas

Introduction.—The Language Arts Program is so interdependent on the other fields of learning that it has been organized around centers of interest selected from various fields in order that the child may be given a constantly expanding interpretation of his world. These centers of interest, based on the basal readers and other available teaching materials, were selected and set up in group meetings by the elementary teachers. Each teacher submitted plans and suggestions for developing these interest centers and helped to collect the needed materials. Throughout the year the teachers met in various committees and study groups to make contributions to the course of study.

The program was built upon the plan of using the same centers for health, science, social studies, and language arts. By using this method, the teacher can arrange his work so that there will be sufficient time for study, drill, research, and free activities.

Purpose of the Language Arts Program.—The purpose of the Language Arts Program, as set up by the Denison teachers,
was to help each child to meet as effectively as possible life situations involving the use of language. These situations involve obtaining and expressing ideas.\footnote{Denison Independent School District, Tentative Course of Study in Language Arts, Bulletin Number 1, p. 2.}

**Objectives of the Language Arts Program.**--The Denison teachers set up specific objectives for the Language Arts Program. These objectives were to help the pupils to be able:

1. To read the printed page with understanding and appreciation.

2. To express themselves orally so as to speak clearly and effectively.

3. To express themselves in writing so as to convey meaning legibly, correctly, and effectively.

4. To listen to spoken language with understanding and appreciation.\footnote{Ibid.}

**Point of view.**--In formulating the Language Arts Program, the Denison teachers took a definite point of view, as shown in the following excerpt from the Tentative Course of Study in Language Arts:

Children cannot participate in the many and varied school activities without using language arts skills. For that reason, it is difficult to isolate the language arts program from the rest of the child's school experience. Teachers should be aware of the needs of the
children and should give appropriate attention to these needs whenever and wherever they may arise.

However, if instruction in the language arts is left entirely to "incidental teaching" the program would be far from satisfactory. By the very reason of their many demands for use by the child, the language arts assume a most important place in our instructional program. We believe that there is a very definite need for careful instruction and practice.

One reason for grouping the school subjects into broad fields was to find more time during the school day which might be devoted to the language arts. The things to keep in mind are that (1) the language arts permeate every activity within the school, and that (2) there must be time devoted to specific instruction and practice.

By organizing the language arts around centers of interest the necessary instruction to help the child to become proficient can be offered in a functional way. The arrangement helps the teacher to advance the children's growth in language skills in the natural settings in which those skills are used.

In developing these centers of interest, the teachers are urged to use their own initiative and originality in planning the work. Detailed instructions for units were purposely avoided so that the individual teacher might feel free to carry on the type of instruction that best suits her particular situation. Any procedures or activities herein included are to be considered merely as suggestions.

Reading instruction in the primary grades, where children are learning to read rather than reading to learn, should follow the program as set up by the state-adopted basal readers. Centers of interest should be developed using the material found in these readers.

In the second grade, where the majority of the pupils will be reviewing first grade reading material, centers of interest should be developed using first grade reading matter that is new to the students. At no time should the child repeat the identical reading material that he had the year before. 3

Organisation of the Language Arts Program.--The teachers of Denison formulated a definite plan of organization for the

3 Ibid., pp. 2-3.
content of the language arts, based upon the development of
the child as a whole.

Since the child is a growing individual who suc-
cessively passes through many different levels of de-
velopment and who is in an environment that constantly
changes, it is important that tasks and demands be
graded to his general developmental level.

We recognize the fact that children in any group
represent a wide range of levels, and that even an
individual child is at different levels of readiness
for various types of experience and learning. Furth-
more, development is gradual and continuous, and not a
series of jumps from level to level. Boundary lines
between levels are just as artificial as are boundary
lines between subjects.

However, for want of a better means of presentation,
or classification, of subject matter, the content of
this course of study has been organized on the basis of
children’s language activities assumed to be desirable
at the respective grade levels. Because a child happens
to be in the fifth grade does not mean that his pro-
ficiency in the language arts, or any of the school
subjects, has to meet the expectations for fifth grade
pupils. It may be that of a third grade child. Or it
may be that he is capable of using skills as listed on
a higher level.

To confront a child with tasks for which he is not
ready, with the implication that he should succeed,
gives him a feeling of failure. Instead, we should
guide him into those learning situations that he can
attack effectively and with sufficient success to yield
satisfaction, encouragement, and growth.

In setting standards for skills and behavior the
teacher must be very careful not to project adult stan-
dards onto the child or standards appropriate for older
children onto younger children. At any level of de-
velopment, it is desirable to keep standards somewhat,
but not too far, above the child’s actual accomplishment.
We want him to move forward but not to become discouraged
and disheartened in the process.

This shifting balance between standards and ac-
complishments is difficult to maintain, especially when
the teacher has in her room a group of children who vary
widely in their abilities and backgrounds. But the more
successful teacher is the one who is able to adapt group
techniques to individual needs and is adaptable enough
to modify and change her program of instruction to meet
such needs.
To adjust the content and methods used in teaching the language arts to the majority, experiences, interests, and needs of particular pupils is a challenging opportunity for teachers at all levels. ¹

Centers of Interest

In order to illustrate more clearly the development of a center of interest, it is advisable to give a sample development of a center of interest at this point.

Safety.—In the teaching of safety, there are definite purposes to be kept in mind for the pupil and the teacher. Some of the purposes for the pupil are:

1. To appreciate the way in which our city is made safe by policemen and firemen.

2. To develop habits of carefulness and obedience to safety rules at home, at school, at play, or on the streets.

3. To develop habits of orderliness and carefulness in the use of playthings, tools, and common articles of equipment in the home and in the school.

4. To develop an understanding of good practices of fire prevention.

Some of the purposes for the teacher are:

1. To guide the children in the realization of the pupil purposes.

2. To provide opportunities for real experiences and practice in the language art skills.

¹Ibid., pp. 5-8.
There are many ways of initiating pupil participation in the interest center. Some of the ways that may be used are:

1. Discuss a poster which illustrates the practice of safety in coming to school.

2. Take the class for a walk around the block near the school. Notice all safety signs.

3. Plan a visit to the police and the fire stations.

4. Read and discuss stories about safety.

5. Have a fire drill and discuss the rules for a fire drill.

6. Have a policeman or a fireman talk to the class.

After the pupils develop a center of interest, there are many activities that may be carried out. Only a few will be mentioned here.

1. Visit the fire station and the police station.

2. Find out what the fireman and the policeman do during their day's work.

3. Write to parents asking permission to visit the fire and the police station.

4. Invite a policeman or a fireman to visit the class.

5. Discuss how children can help the fireman and the policeman.

6. Make safety posters, charts, and booklets.

7. Write stories, poems, and plays on safety.
8. Organize a safety club and appoint a safety patrol for the class.

If such a plan were followed, there would be many possibilities arising for language arts experiences. Some of these possibilities are: conversation; discussion; reporting; story-telling; making announcements and giving directions; keeping records; writing stories, poems, and plays; dramatization; reading; word study; and letter writing.

By using such a plan, the subjects to be covered by the centers of interest are almost limitless, and the children will receive an integrated language arts program based upon their experiences, by which means the objectives of the Language Arts Program will be reached.

Importance of the Language Arts Program

In building the Language Arts Program, the Denison teachers recognized the importance of this part of the curriculum. They attempted to carry out the plans advocated by many of the leading educational writers of the present generation, realizing that if the language program fails, the entire school program will fail.

McKee makes clear the importance of the language arts program in the following statement:

So far as the writer knows, the importance of learning to use the English language effectively is not an educational issue. Every teacher and probably every
parent knows that it is imperative for boys and girls
to learn to read adequately, to understand the language
that they hear, and to talk and write with clearness,
extactness, and correctness. Boys and girls themselves
know that they must do these things well in order to
realize many of their own purposes.

To stimulate and teach children to use the English
language effectively, the elementary school should
place in its curriculum a language arts program which
includes two main divisions. Division I, pertaining
to the "receiving" or "impression" side of language,
will include instruction in reading and listening.
Division II, pertaining to the "broadcasting" or "ex-
pression" side of language, will include instruction
in oral and written composition, spelling, and hand-
writing. 5

The Denison teachers were conscious of the fact that
language is important in the school life of the child and in
life outside the school. Many opportunities were given to
use the language tools. McKee makes clear the importance of
language when he says:

We need to realize that our schools are and will
continue to be fundamentally language schools—to say
nothing of the importance of effective language in life
outside the school. The great bulk of instruction
takes place through the medium of language—through
the pupil's reading or through his listening to others
talk. All discussions and most testing take place by
means of language; they involve the pupil's talking
or writing. It is imperative, therefore, that the
pupil understand adequately the meaning of the language
which he reads and hears, and that he learn to say and
write what he means clearly, exactly, and correctly.
If a school's program in language fails, the bottom
drops out of that school's entire offering (including
social studies, science, and art), and the school be-
comes, as many schools have done, a monument to verbal-
ism and loose thinking. 6

5 Paul McKee, "The Nature and Scope of the Language Arts
Program," The National Elementary Principal, Twentieth Year-
book of the Department of Elementary School Principals,
National Education Association, p. 235.

6 Ibid., p. 255.
The interests of the child were not forgotten in building the program. There were ample opportunities to study those things that are of interest to the child. Witty and Kopel have expressed the new approach in the elementary school as follows:

There are hopeful signs that a new era in education is dawning. The language-arts program in many schools reflects a desirable trend. In these curricula, language arts are regarded as related means of communication. Speech, writing, and reading are viewed as instrumentalities having vital, functional significance, and children’s needs and interests are considered the primary determinants of curricular content. Believing that sturdy growth in every human characteristic is continuous, teachers are attempting to see that language patterns develop from grade to grade in related sequences. Thus, the vocabulary of the first silent-reading activity uses and expands the language skills employed by children in communicating orally. No longer does the modern teacher conceive of the child’s objectives as being first, to learn to read and, later, to read to learn. Instead, great care is taken to ensure that throughout the entire school program new learning acquisitions answer the child’s problems, serve his needs, and intensify and extend his interests.

The effect of these efforts is to alter the entire atmosphere of the school. The child, following a worthy interest with its many ramifications or seeking a solution to a personal problem, displays an attitude very different from that which attends his attempts to solve an exercise or to obtain the answer in a workbook. In the latter endeavor, his dissatisfaction becomes apparent in many forms. Occasionally he engages in superfluous and excessive physical activity. He may squirm, make grimaces, or in other ways reveal restlessness or discomfort. The greatest losses are found, however, in impaired efficiency, and in the development of undesirable attitudes and wasteful habits. This situation will be changed, the modern teacher realizes, through the judicious use of incentive and motive. The integrating and coordinating values of self-directed, purposeful endeavor are often evident in curricula based on activities or interests. The use of motive and interest has one conspicuous value; it engenders intense effort, and consequently produces more efficient work. If it be
granted that intensity of effort brings about really desirable changes in an individual, teachers will improve instruction by striving continuously to ascertain and employ children's interests.7

In setting up the program, an honest attempt was made to understand the child as a whole, realizing that each child is a separate individual. Margaret White expresses such an attitude:

The language arts program, as does any worthwhile program which can justify its existence in our schools, makes an honest attempt to understand the child and his growth—physical, mental, and emotional—at the various levels; to know his interests, needs, maturity, and abilities, and then to furnish materials, activities, and methods which will meet those needs and interests at each maturity level.

There is no separate subject matter for the language arts. Language is a form of social behavior, and the social behavior of millions of people is being molded by the spoken word which reaches them. The ability to think and the ability to express one’s self are mutually dependent, and both abilities are, in turn, dependent upon rich and vital experiences. The language arts program, then, is organized around large socially significant units which require the use of all the functional language abilities needed by the child. He should be able to listen, to think, to cooperate, to make decisions, to evaluate information, to choose, to share, and to express himself clearly and forcefully.

The foundation of the language arts program is the acceptance of the fact that no two children are exactly alike. The recognition of individuality and of the vast individual differences among children makes the planning of materials and methods to be used with them more difficult, but much more interesting and gratifying. Too often one thinks only of mental differences. Physical, emotional, moral, and social differences must also be considered.8

7Paul Witty and David Kopel, Reading and the Educative Process, pp. 302-303.

The teachers, in working out a functional Language Arts Program, realized that experience is the best of all schools, and tried to give the child an experience program, based upon life situations. Lee and Lee say of this changing viewpoint:

The change from the formal, stilted classroom to the informal living situation of the modern room naturally provides a situation in which the child has much more of an opportunity to express himself. Assigned compositions have given away to the child's writing something he has a need to write. His writing has a purpose; it is to be used for something; it is to meet a need of his own. When children are given the opportunity to talk about something that is of interest to them, they respond freely. It is only in such situations that language development may be determined.

A realization that effective expression, either oral or written, is best developed in relation to all of the activities of the child has resulted in changes in classroom practices. Expression itself has no subject-matter. It is a technique. As a technique it is best developed in connection with the material with which it is to be used.9

In formulating the program, the Denison elementary teachers took a broad view of the curriculum. They tried to consider the whole child and all the children.

In speaking of the broader curriculum view, Henry J. Otto says:

It is said that at one time the curriculum of the elementary school consisted of the "three R's." Later the content subjects, the fine arts, the practical arts, and science were added. Still later other subjects were introduced. Even though the curriculum was broadened a great deal by the addition of many new

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subjects, the emphasis continued to be on the learning of subject-matter. The gradual crystallization of the subject-matter emphasis led many teachers to view the curriculum as a series of subjects to be learned. This narrow view still predominates in American schools. Fortunately a much broader view is emerging. To discover in a realistic way that the child brings his whole family and all his previous life experiences with him when he comes to school and much of what he learns in school is selected by him in terms of that background gave educators an entirely different notion of the child's total curriculum and the relations of the school curriculum to the child's total curriculum. The word "curriculum" assimilated new meanings.

The whole child began to appear in teachers' eyes, not only the child's previous background as a conditioner of participation and learning and behavior in school, but also the organism as a whole, reacting in each situation. If the organism as a whole is engaged continuously in maintaining a dynamic equilibrium between itself and its environment, then physiological, or social, or emotional needs are conditioners of school performance as well as psychological factors.

Children's health, nutrition, bodily comfort, and family affairs must be given due consideration even if one is interested only in teaching a few spelling words. Curriculum is thus beginning to mean "helping children to grow and develop in desirable directions in a democracy," rather than teaching a list of subjects.

Equally significant enlargements of views about the curriculum grew out of the genuine realization that learning comes from experience and that all experiences have their educative counterparts. The very nature of the relations between teacher and pupils, between pupils and pupils, and the general life of the school compose significant experiences out of which children are getting certain kinds of educational values. The administrative practices of the school, children's contacts with school nurse, physician, dentist, and casual visitor, are obvious aspects of the child's school curriculum.

To give children an education which will assist them to effective participation in our culture requires realistic contact with that culture. The many intimate, obvious, and inescapable interrelations between the school and its culture were additional factors which have led to a much broader view of the curriculum. One's notion of the elementary school curriculum can no longer be confined to the teaching of a selected list of subjects.
It would seem only natural that a broader view of the curriculum should be accompanied by a changing emphasis in teaching. The experience of the race as represented by subject-matter still has an important contribution to make to growing children but its place and uses in the curriculum have changed; it is no longer considered the only or the major objective in teaching. Other values are deemed equally important. Better understanding of children is resulting in less verbalism and greater emphasis upon the acquisition of understandings and contacts with reality through projects of various kinds, excursions, and a reorganization of subject-matter. Acquisition of reading skills is supplemented by reading for meanings and enjoyment. Functional application of knowledge is now a much greater concern of both teacher and pupil. Recognition of the creative abilities of pupils is resulting in much more opportunity for children to express themselves creatively. Successful participation in social relations is calling for more attention to the kinds of activities through which children can acquire self-control, poise, techniques, and understandings in group situations. All of these factors which are demanding the attention of teachers and time in the schedule are resulting in considerable changes in teaching emphasis. The accumulating research shows that attention to these added values is not causing a reduction in the children's subject-matter achievement.10

The teachers recognized the importance of selecting or suggesting topics which are closely related to the natural interests and experiences of the child. That such selection is important is recognized in the report of the curriculum commission of the National Council of Teachers of English.

Experience is the best of all schools. Certainly no one learns so thoroughly, and few learn so rapidly, in any other. And experience need not be a dear school, if it is competently organized and is conducted by a

10 Henry J. Otto, Elementary School Organization and Administration, pp. 94-96.
capable teacher who illuminates each situation in prospect and in retrospect. School and college curriculums should consist of experiences. The school of experience is the only one which will develop the flexibility and power of self-direction requisite for successful living in our age of swift industrial, social, and economic change. To inculcate authoritarian beliefs, fixed rules of conduct, unreasoned and therefore stubborn attitudes, is to set our youth in futile and fatal conflict with the forces of modern life. By meeting situations, modifying conditions and adapting themselves to the unchangeable, our boys and girls will learn to live in a dynamic and evolving world. Today, more than ever, the curriculum should consist of experiences.11

The Language Arts Program provides many opportunities for the child to find out things for himself and to acquire various skills. Blain finds that

The general trend is to so organize the life of children in school that they experience many things which are vital, worthwhile, and gripping. These experiences are made more worthwhile by exploring them as deeply as children are able. For this exploration the content of many fields of knowledge and skills of many kinds are needed. This type of organization is similar to that in life.12

The program is intended for all the children regardless of their educational status in order to prepare them to live in a changing society. Ample opportunity is given to carry out experiences that will use all the tools of communication. Ruggett and Millard make clear the importance of communication.

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12 Winifred E. Bain, Parents Look at Modern Education, p. 113.
The language arts are a dynamic, vital area of human experience. Communication was one of the tools by which man lifted himself from the lower animals, and it is one of the means by which he retains his dominance.

There can be no defense for any teaching of language arts which does not contribute directly to better communication. Grammar, spelling, penmanship, and composition which do not assist the child to express himself more clearly, forcibly, and intelligibly cannot logically be defended.

Functional expression in connection with actual experiences best teaches the use of language as a tool. In life one expresses himself as he has needs and desires. This should be the goal of language teaching in school.

Language teaching should not, however, be entirely opportunistic, although some of it can be. Definite goals need to be set for each year of school life in order that nothing shall be neglected. Achievement, though, need not be limited to such goals if the needs and desires of individuals or the group extend further. With the goals of the year in mind, the teacher should provide stimulating experiences, either by direct or by vicarious means, which will encourage written or spoken communication by the children under her guidance.

Expression should be encouraged but not forced. No one ever learned to speak well or write well unless he had the desire to do so. The teacher serves not as a tasksetter and drillmaster but as a stimulating, encouraging, and guiding force.

Grammar, spelling, penmanship, and composition are of value only as they contribute to the basic goal of better communication. In themselves they have no value.

Drill is not to be neglected as need is shown in connection with actual situations. It should always, though, be entirely functional and highly motivated.

The teaching of language is carried on during every part of the school day, in connection with every area of instruction and every situation, but a definite period devoted to definite training in communication is also needed as a broad experience. This is necessary to make certain that goals are achieved and to give practice in needed skills.

The language arts should be taught as a whole, and not piecemeal by having a definite period for grammar, composition, spelling, and penmanship. In life, communication is a whole and not a series of cut-up pieces. Drill may take place, however, in the various phases and needs and interests that are shown.
Above all, the language arts need to be based on real experiences. No one ever wrote well or spoke well on a topic about which he knew nothing or for which he had no interest or emotion.\textsuperscript{13}

The Language Arts Program is planned to encourage new ideas, new worthwhile group projects, and new group action or participation which will benefit the child and the school; a program in which the child's suggestion is welcomed, discussed, developed, and acted upon. Through such a plan creative learning can be developed and democratic living is encouraged. Lee and Lee bring out this point in a vivid manner.

To express in oral language a child's own thoughts and feelings is the simplest and most universal means of creative activity. It has been said that, if we wish to encourage creative thinking, listen to what a child is saying. Too often the teacher considers her job to be one of telling only, when listening may be much more valuable. We should listen to the children when they express their personal ideas and feelings about things. We should evaluate what is said, help the group to evaluate it, and see that the child is given recognition for ideas that are worthwhile. If this is done, the child soon learns to have confidence in his own thinking, which in turn makes further creative thinking more probable. In fact, more than anything else, the essence of creative learning depends upon the confidence, conscious or unconscious, which the child has in his own thoughts. This is tremendously influenced by the attitude of adults toward the things he says. If his imagination, his personal feelings, his interpretations of the things he sees and hears are squelched when they vary from the conventional, if he is continually met with "that isn't what the book says," or "we don't believe that way," he soon will learn to doubt and discredit his own thinking. If, instead, he

\textsuperscript{13} Albert J. Bridget and Cecil V. Millard, Growth and Learning in the Elementary School, pp. 170-171.
is led on to evaluate and develop his own ideas, making corrections where he sees they do not check with reality, his powers of creative thinking are developed. Creative thinking then is the kernel, the sine qua non of creative learning.  

This background of writings will make clear the trend of thought that was followed in building the Language Arts Program for the Denison Elementary Schools. The importance of language arts has not been overlooked and the whole program works toward the goal of preparing the whole child to live in a dynamic society.

CHAPTER III

EVALUATION OF THE LANGUAGE ARTS PROGRAM

Before any attempt was made to evaluate the program, it was thought best to make a comparison of the intelligence quotients of the groups used in this study. The Kuhlman-Anderson Tests were given to the students of the Sam Houston Elementary School, as this group seemed to be representative of all the elementary schools of Denison.

As shown in Table 1, the results from the Kuhlman-Anderson Tests indicate a slight variation in the high and low intelligence quotients, but the median intelligence quotients are fairly consistent. These results would indicate that the grades used in this study were of about the same intellectual ability.

As explained in Chapter I, three methods were used in evaluating the program, namely: (1) results from achievement tests, (2) teacher-appraisal of the language arts program, and (3) letters from teachers who have worked with the program.

Evaluation on the Basis of Achievement Test Results

The first method dealt with the results of the Stanford Achievement Tests. All tests were given during the month of March, from 1944 to 1947, inclusive, and the
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>1944</th>
<th>1945</th>
<th>1946</th>
<th>1947</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>124</td>
</tr>
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<td>3</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>115</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>137</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>118</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
results of science and social studies were included, as many of the centers of interest were based upon these subjects.

In Table 2 a comparison is considered of the median scores for two years before and two years after the present program was put into effect.

The scores from the Stanford Achievement Tests show that the pupils of the Denison elementary schools have made a steady growth. In only the fifth grade was there a loss in the average median score. The loss was registered in the social studies. The third grade did not show a loss or a gain in spelling. In the total score averages, the second grade showed a gain of two points; the third grade a gain of five points; the fourth grade a gain of four points; the fifth grade a gain of six points; the sixth grade a gain of seven points; the seventh grade a gain of six points; and the eighth grade a gain of six points. The highest gain made was eleven points in literature in the fifth grade.

Teacher-Appraisal of Language Arts Program

The teacher-appraisal of the Language Arts Program was in the form of a questionnaire, based upon the criteria as given in the Handbook for Self-Appraisal and Improvement of Elementary Schools, Try-Out Edition.

Questionnaires were sent to all the classroom teachers of the Denison elementary schools, and all questionnaires were returned.
TABLE 2

MEDIAN SCORES OF STANFORD ACHIEVEMENT TESTS OF CHILDREN IN THE SAM HOUSTON SCHOOL
FOR TWO YEARS BEFORE AND TWO YEARS AFTER INSTITUTION OF LANGUAGE ARTS PROGRAM

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Grade 2</th>
<th></th>
<th>Grade 3</th>
<th></th>
<th>Grade 4</th>
<th></th>
<th>Grade 5</th>
<th></th>
<th>Grade 6</th>
<th></th>
<th>Grade 7</th>
<th></th>
<th>Grade 8</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Before</td>
<td>After</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Before</td>
<td>After</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Before</td>
<td>After</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Before</td>
<td>After</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Score Av.</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paragraph Meaning</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Word Meaning</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Reading</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>54</td>
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<tr>
<td>Spelling</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>40</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language Usage</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>63</td>
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<tr>
<td>Literature</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Studies 1</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Studies 2</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Social St.</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elementary Science</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3 summarizes the results from the questionnaire. The results of the teacher-appraisal of the Language Arts Program show that, in the opinion of the teachers, the Language Arts Program does meet the criteria for evaluation in all respects but two. Question number thirty-three, "Are the pupils guided in making their own cumulative lists which are kept from year to year?" was answered in the negative as the pupils make their cumulative lists from week to week but not from year to year. On question thirty-eight, "Is writing as a skill taught only until the mechanics have been acquired?" there was an even division of opinion. However, all of the teachers did not check all of the questions. For example, the upper grade teachers did not answer question eighteen, "Is formal reading, with first-grade children, delayed until such time as they indicate readiness for such work?" since this question did not apply to all grades. Questions twenty-two, "Is the librarian alert to topics being studied in each class?", twenty-three, "Does the librarian send needed materials to the classroom?", and twenty-four, "Does the librarian assist pupils, as they come to the library, to find additional information on topics being studied?" were not answered one hundred per cent since some of the schools do not have school librarians.
### TABLE 3

TEACHER-APPRaisal OF THE LANGUAGE ARTS PROGRAM

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Does the language arts field take its place as part of the integrative curriculum of the school?</td>
<td>50</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Do the demands made upon children by the program, as a whole, call forth their language skills and creative powers of expression in thought and in communication?</td>
<td>50</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Are social situations developed that require the use of the tools of language and further develop these skills?</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Are language skills taught as the need arises in the accomplishment of the goals of the program as a whole?</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Are the development of meaningful concepts and the extension of vocabulary major objectives of the elementary school program?</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Is language treated not as having content but rather as recognizing that life, in school and out, is the basis of the language program?</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Is language a part of the whole program of the school?</td>
<td>50</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Is much attention given to the building of meaningful concepts, particularly with the beginning school children, whose vocabulary development is vital to the development of reading readiness?</td>
<td>48</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Do the children carry on purposeful language activities which are needed in meeting social situations, such as writing letters, news items, and announcements?</td>
<td>50</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Are the necessary language skills taught as their need becomes apparent to the children?</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Are levels of growth recognized and the language program developed in terms of these levels?</td>
<td>49</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Are the children encouraged in free expression and creative writing?</td>
<td>49</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Does reading instruction permeate the entire school program?</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Do flexible working groups come together to help each other and to share the information that has been secured?</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Is reading taught in formal class periods only until the mechanics have been acquired?</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Are ample provisions made for independent, recreational silent reading which may be shared through reports or may be shared according to the desires of the pupils?</td>
<td>50</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Is opportunity given for oral reading of appropriate materials to an appreciative audience?</td>
<td>49</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. Is formal reading, with first-grade children, delayed until such time as they indicate readiness for such work?</td>
<td>26</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. Are physical, intellectual, social and emotional factors taken into account before giving a child actual instruction in reading?</td>
<td>41</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. Is reading utilized in many of the social situations in the school?</td>
<td>49</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. Do the children make use of reading materials in school libraries, room libraries and public libraries?</td>
<td>50</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. Is the librarian alert to topics being studied in each class?</td>
<td>36</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. Does the librarian send needed materials to the classroom?</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24. Does the librarian assist pupils, as they come to the library, to find additional information on topics being studied?</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25. Are standardized tests that measure the various reading skills administered in order that the reading needs of each pupil may be dealt with effectively?</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26. Do the teacher and the librarian guide children in reading materials that are suited to their levels of ability?</td>
<td>50</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27. Is literature related to the large units in all fields where feasible?</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28. Are poetry and other standard literature studied largely for enjoyment?</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29. Is time set aside for the teacher to read to the children?</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30. Do you have reading material to carry on the program?</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31. Do the children engage in choral speaking?</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32. In spelling is the state list used as a guide, reference to which is made as needed?</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33. Are the pupils guided in making their own cumulative lists which are kept from year to year?</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### TABLE 3—Continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>34. Before a letter or story is written, are words needed suggested by the children and is some attention given to these?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35. Is emphasis placed on varied, interesting, effective methods of individual study?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36. Do the children develop pride in correct papers?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37. Is the first emphasis always on the content of the paper?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38. Is writing as a skill taught only until the mechanics have been acquired?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39. In writing, is attention given to self-improvement within the limits of growth and development?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **Evaluation Based on Teacher Opinion**

To carry the evaluation further, the teachers were asked to write letters giving their opinions of the program. These letters are referred to as letters A, B, C, et cetera.

The first letter was written by a teacher with over twenty years' teaching experience in the first grade.

**Letter A**

The program makes our work with the children more effective and more pleasant.

In any school program the importance of the teacher cannot be overlooked, as the next letter suggests.
Letter B

The Language Arts Program is graded to the general development level of the child. He is guided into learning situations which he can accomplish with pride. Teachers at all levels must be alert and energetic, studying the child's needs as an individual.

Some of the teachers have to teach combination rooms, such as first and second grades. The next letter is from a first and second grade teacher.

Letter C

The Language Arts Program, divided into few and broad fields with correlated activities, provides better for two grades in one room than does a program of many separate subjects with unrelated activities. Inter-weaving of subjects induces activity. When a class has completed a center of interest, it has something to show for its studies. With little further effort, an exhibit or program can be arranged. Language arts skills learned through application are much more likely to be remembered and practiced than those learned formally.

The next letter, by an eighth grade teacher, brings out some facts of interest.

Letter D

Our Language Arts Program has greatly accelerated student interest. Motivation is simplified; monotony is nil! More individual contributions to classes are evident.

The program gives the teacher an opportunity to work with the children in a democratic way, as indicated by the following letter.
LETTER E

Children learn the worth-whileness of their time and energy and thereby it improves their democratic way of life. Children attain the feeling of security, which is very important in the way of life.

In my opinion the Language Arts Program gives possibilities in every phase of life, if presented by the teacher in a democratic way.

The next letter is from a teacher of thirty years' teaching experience, twenty of which have been in the Denison Elementary Schools.

LETTER F

The Denison Elementary teachers have given the Language Arts Program a thorough test and the results are satisfactory.

It gives us a close working relationship among the vital subjects of our school course of study.

One of the greatest things that the school can give to the child is the feeling of security, as the next letter points out.

LETTER G

The program is very effective. It stimulates the child to express himself more freely. It makes the child feel more secure.

The teachers have expressed satisfaction with the Language Arts Program. They have given the program a thorough test and have found that it meets the objectives of the Language Arts Program. By using the center of interest method, the teachers feel that they can give the child an integrated program in a democratic way.
CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions

The conclusions of the study may be summarized as follows:

1. The children of the Denison Elementary Schools have made a steady growth in the language arts.

2. The results of the median scores of the Stanford Achievement Tests indicate that the pupils made gains of from one to eleven points in all grades, except the fifth, where there was a slight loss in the social studies, and in third grade spelling in which there was neither a gain nor a loss.

3. The teacher-appraisal reports show that, in the opinion of the teachers, the program does meet the criteria for evaluation in all respects but two. A majority of the teachers answered the question, "Are the pupils guided in making their own cumulative lists which are kept from year to year?" in the negative, while there was an even division of opinion on the question, "Is writing as a skill taught only until the mechanics have been acquired?"

4. By their letters, the teachers expressed satisfaction with the Language Arts Program as they can give the child an
integrated program based upon experiences in a democratic way.

5. The interest shown in the program by the teachers indicate that the work is worthwhile and beneficial to both the teachers and the pupils.

6. The program meets the objectives of a good language arts program as the child is able (1) to speak, (2) to write, (3) to listen, and (4) to read.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are made:

1. A comparison should be made of similar studies conducted in other elementary schools of like size.

2. The Language Arts Program, based upon centers of interest, should be continued.

3. The teachers should continue the study of integrated programs.

4. The program should be expanded to include other areas of instruction.

5. Inasmuch as evidence was found favoring the present Language Arts Program, further studies should be made in an evaluation of the program.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


