

TEACHERS' TARGETS FOR READING INSTRUCTION
AND WHAT THESE SUGGEST

THESIS

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

by

Sharon L. Rakoski
State University of New York
College at Brockport
Brockport, New York

May 1993

SUBMITTED BY:

Sharon L. Rakoski

APPROVED BY:

Susan Y. Repp 4/1/93
Project/Thesis Advisor Date

Ruth E. Smith 4/2/93
Second Faculty Reader Date

Patricia E. Baker 4/5/93
Chairman, Graduate Policies Committee Date

Director, Graduate Studies

ABSTRACT

Teacher's belief systems and philosophies are formulated through professional development, reading current theory and daily interaction with children and materials. Researchers agree that teachers need an understanding of their belief systems in order to match these beliefs with effective instruction. This study examined teachers' belief systems as well as their targets or goals for reading instruction.

A Likert-type survey was created and answered by approximately 40 randomly selected faculty members from a rural western New York school district, representing a wide range of experience levels in grades K through 6. Teachers were also given the opportunity to freely respond by stating their own articulated goals for reading instruction. The objective was to answer the following questions:

What are teacher targets for reading instruction? Do these targets fit into known or unknown categories? What do these targets suggest?

Analysis of the data found that teachers' targets for reading instruction as articulated in a free response

format include academic goals (those that are measurable by traditional testing techniques) as well as aesthetic goals (life-long goals difficult to measure using traditional methods). Teachers see their role both as an instructor of skills and as a facilitator to learn a love of reading.

In addition, the survey results show that more teachers hold to a whole language approach to reading instruction than to a skills-based or phonics approach to reading instruction.

Finally, from all research read and from studying these two instruments carefully, it seems apparent that teachers need to develop ways to blend the three approaches to reading instruction and take the necessary time to develop a philosophy, reflect on that philosophy often and develop instruction based on their own goals and philosophy of how children learn best.

Chapter IV

Analysis of the Data

Purpose	21
Analysis of the Data	21
Summary of the Chapter	31

Chapter V

Conclusions and Implications

Purpose	34
Conclusions	34
Implications for Education and Classroom Practice	36
Implications for Research	38
Summary of the Chapter	38

References	39
------------	----

Appendix A - Survey

Table of Contents

	<u>Page</u>
Chapter I	
Statement of the Problem	1
Purpose	1
Question to be Answered	1
Need for the Study	1
Definition of Terms	3
Limitations of the Study	4
Summary of the Chapter	5
 Chapter II	
Review of the Literature	6
Teacher Beliefs	6
Reading Targets	10
Summary of the Chapter	17
 Chapter III	
Design of the Study	
Purpose	18
Questions to be Answered	18
Design of the Study	18
Subjects	18
Materials	19
Procedure	19
Summary of the Chapter	20

List of Tables

Page

Table 1 - Response Analysis by Number of Responses	24
Table 2 - Response Analysis by Percentage	25
Table 3 - Response Analysis of Phonics Oriented Statements	26
Table 4 - Response Analysis of Skill Oriented Statements	28
Table 5 - Response Analysis of Whole Language Oriented Statements	30
Graph 1 - Summary of Results by Question Orientation	33

Chapter I

Statement of the Problem

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to determine what teachers believe are important targets for their readers. These targets and beliefs were then to be analyzed to determine trends, patterns and motivation for instruction.

Questions to be Answered

What are teacher targets for reading instruction in their classrooms? Do they fit into categories known or unknown? What do these targets suggest?

Need for the Study

Because of a proliferation of research on the best way to teach reading, educators should constantly be examining how children learn, how literacy is best developed, what current research suggests, and most importantly, if their teaching practices reflect their

theory and belief (Frager, 1985; Mills and Clyde, 1991).

All the research reviewed contended that teachers need a firm understanding of what they believe in order to match these beliefs with their teaching methods. Routman (1991) suggests that once beliefs and attitudes are in place, concern about skills, strategies and activities will fall into proper perspective. Further, Routman (1991) suggests that after putting theory together with practice, a philosophy or belief system develops based on reading research, going to workshops and interacting with colleagues. These beliefs change constantly as new information is received and processed. Indeed, beliefs are dynamic and can change from daily interaction with students and teachers in classrooms and as observations are made.

Researchers (Goodman, 1986; Graves, 1989; Harste, Woodward and Burke 1984; Holdaway, 1986 and Routman, 1991) agree that teachers need an understanding of their belief systems in order to match these beliefs with effective instruction. Frager points out:

[R]esearch indicates that teachers may improve their reading instruction more by reconsidering the fundamentals and the consistency of their own (emphasis added) concepts about reading than by continually embracing whatever is "new" or "current" or presented by the "experts" without reflection

on the underlying beliefs about reading (p. 158).

Thus, teachers' reading goals or targets should be examined and looked at closely to find patterns, understandings and motivations.

Nevertheless, little or no research exists at the present on this topic. The research that does exist is confined to the three known approaches to reading. Theoretical orientation could extend beyond these three traditional categories. Teachers value systems may be at work.

Definition of Terms

Targets - those goals teachers feel are important to their reading program and to all their readers.

Phonics Approach - the use of one cueing system to break the "code" of reading. Essentially an emphasis on decoding skills (Adams, 1990).

Skills Approach - direct instruction of discrete skills taught separately and then integrated through drill and practice (Klesius, Griffith & Zielonka, 1991).

Whole Language Approach - an emphasis on meaning in which strategies are used to determine word pronunciations and meanings in connected text. This method goes beyond just the teaching of reading to a way of looking at how children learn best and under what conditions (Klesius, Griffith & Zielonka, 1991; Reutzel and Hollingworth, 1988). Reading, then, is treated as a holistic process beginning with the reader's background experiences in which he/she composes meaning of text based on predictions (Rutherford, 1989).

Limitations of the Study

The subjects chosen for this study were all teachers from the same school district. While teachers develop a philosophy based on their personal theory of teaching and learning, they may be influenced by perceived district policy or other vocal colleagues. Their answers to either instrument administered in this study may be clouded by these influences.

In addition, no actual classroom observations were made by the researcher to determine if teachers' responses to the instruments were indeed their true theoretical orientation.

Summary

This chapter looked at the need to examine teachers' beliefs and goals for reading instruction. Research indicates that reading instruction may improve if teachers take time to examine their beliefs and then formulate instruction from these beliefs.

Chapter II

Review of the Literature

Teacher Beliefs

Each and every day classroom teachers make hundreds of decisions. These decisions can and do affect each child's academic life (Mills and Clyde, 1991). In addition, these decisions are made based on a personal philosophy of learning and teaching. These decisions, therefore, are not random or accidental. Rather, our theoretical orientation toward any learning situation will greatly influence our practice. Mills and Clyde (1991) point out:

...[W]hether or not a teacher is conscious of it, her "practice" is firmly rooted in her beliefs about learning, and reflects a personal theory of what she believes effective teaching is all about (p. 54).

Rupley and Logan (1985) found that:

Teachers' beliefs or theoretical orientations toward reading have been shown to influence their decisions and judgements about how reading is taught (p. 145).

This is especially noteworthy for reading teachers. Frager (1985) states:

Evidence from educational research is beginning to clearly show that the way a teacher views the reading act determines the instructional methods he or she will use, and consequently, the reading behaviors that are achieved (p. 158).

He goes on further in this paragraph to say:

This research indicates that teachers may improve their reading instruction more by reconsidering the fundamentals and the consistency of their own concepts about reading than by continually embracing whatever is "new" or "current"... (p. 158).

Further, Harste and Burke (1980) have also concluded that all teaching and teacher decisions are theory-driven. Indeed, research conducted by Harste, Woodward and Burke in 1984 led them to conclude that "...language teaching and language learning are rooted in belief" (p. ix).

Teachers' personal belief systems then, should cause them to create a philosophy. This philosophy drives the curriculum and influences every aspect of classroom life (Routman, 1991). During reading instruction, belief systems are hard at work. If one believes it is important for a reader to bring meaning to print, instructional practices will match that belief. If one believes it is important that children learn consonant and vowel sounds before they are able

to read, the instructional program will accordingly be influenced (Kinzer, 1988).

Mills and Clyde's 1991 study used research by Stephens and Clyde (1985) which:

...[C]oncluded that teachers' choices of materials, the nature of assignments they made, and their educational focus were consistent with their views of how children learn to read (p. 54).

They further go onto state:

The researchers concluded that belief systems played a significant role in shaping curricular experiences. Whether explicit or implicit, teachers' beliefs become actualized in practice (p.154).

Harste, Woodward and Burke (1984) argue that "theory is fundamentally a set of beliefs" (p. ix). They also believe that "unexamined theory is thought at rest" (p. ix). Teachers may not be aware of their philosophies, but they are ever-present and are fundamentally driving their curriculum (Harste, Woodward & Burke, 1984; Kinzer, 1988; Levande, 1987; Mills & Clyde, 1991). This is the reason why two teachers using the same materials can have programs that look and feel quite different from one another.

Teacher targets, which are the goals that teachers feel are important to their reading program, and belief systems work simultaneously and influence one another

daily. Many teachers have a well-defined belief system which can be articulated and reflected upon on a daily basis. For others it is not so explicit. Many teachers have allowed pre-packaged basal programs to do the thinking for them. Indeed, the manuals that come with these basals imply that it is too time-consuming to think through the reading process, to begin to formulate a philosophy of reading and to discover targets for instruction. They argue that it is efficient to let someone else do the thinking and theorizing for them (Shannon, 1989).

Shannon writes:

...[P]ublishers attempt to make all the important decisions concerning goals, content, sequence, and even the language of literacy lessons, leaving teachers with control over only the pace with which they follow directions as they lead their students through the basal materials (p. 627).

Teachers who operate from a sound understanding of their own belief system will develop classrooms where children can and will learn (Frager, 1985; Harste, Woodward and Burke, 1984; Mills & Clyde, 1991; Shannon, 1989). But what are teachers thinking? What is their orientation?

Reading Targets

Teaching children to read! What is most important and how is it best achieved? These questions have been asked for decades. The debate continues on even today (Klesius, Griffith & Zielonka, 1991). Each standpoint has its own theoretical perspective based on research, beliefs and understandings. The three most popular approaches are the skills approach, the phonics approach, and the whole language approach (DeFord, 1979; Klesius, Griffith & Zielonka, 1991; Levande, 1989). Each approach has an emphasis on a different aspect of how reading best develops.

The phonics approach teaches sound-symbol correspondence first (Spaai and Ellerman, 1990).

Spaai, et al. write:

Learning to decode, that is, learning to associate sounds with letters or letter clusters and then to combine the separate sounds into a continuous sound pattern that constitutes a single word is considered to be an essential ingredient of learning to read (p. 205).

Learning to decode then is the key to breaking the reading code. Graphemes and phonemes are most important.

Rudolph Flesch (1981), a synthetic phonics advocate, defined reading as "...getting meaning from certain combinations of letters" (p. 9). Adams (1980) advocates a sequence of instructional activities which include:

- thorough overlearning of letter names and isolated phonemes or vice versa,
- thorough overlearning of frequently occurring spelling patterns, and
- thorough overlearning of the sequenced order of letters within words.

While research has shown the need for phonics as an essential cueing system (Shapiro and Riley, 1989; Trachtenburg, 1990), programs with this emphasis may produce children who believe reading "...to be a ritual of attempting to pronounce words - a ritual devoid of meaning" (p. 70).

However, Spaai and Ellerman (1991) found:

Decoding seems to be beneficial for beginning readers for at least two reasons. First, decoding skills may provide some independence for beginners because they enable identification of unfamiliar printed words without help... Second, the procedure for analyzing printed words into subunits of pronunciation may facilitate the acquisition of knowledge about visual-orthographic structure of words (p. 204).

The debate continues. Shapiro and Riley (1989) believe that:

Teachers should be familiar with the characteristics of readers who are proficient so that they may determine which areas of difficulty their problem readers are encountering (p. 67).

If teachers are familiar with the reading process and all its component parts, then they will be able to instruct as needed, be it phonics or another area of emphasis based on need (Farrar, 1986).

The skills approach is based on behaviorist theory and is dominated by the basal reading series (Klesius, Griffith & Zielonka, 1991; Shannon, 1984 and 1989). This approach, also known as the traditional skills approach, emphasizes discrete skills, product over process, skill exercises and controlled vocabulary. Skills are integrated through drill and practice as well as worksheets and workbooks (Farrar, 1986; Murphy, 1991).

In 1984 Shannon found that:

Reading instruction is segmented into separate skills which are arranged hierarchically according to difficulty, [that] teachers engage in a teach/test/reteach/retest instructional cycle, and [that] students are given unlimited time to learn one skill before progressing to the next skill in the hierarchy (p. 484).

This results in so called mastery learning.
Further, Kinzer's (1988) research agreed and found
that:

Mastery of specific skills
explanations reflects the view that
reading can be broken down into a
number of specific skills that are
sequentially taught...(p. 360).

In 1989 Shannon wrote that skills-based advocates
"believe that the tight sequencing of standardized
skills is of primary importance in student learning to
be literate" (p. 626).

Indeed, Taylor, Frye and Gaetz (1990) found:

[T]hat elementary students spend
from 30 to 70% of reading class
time on seatwork activities, many
of which involve completing skill
sheets or workbook pages related to
the skills component of a basal
reader program (p. 167).

They further state that:

[C]ontemporary programs place a
heavy emphasis on skill instruction
and practice. Numerous word
recognition and comprehension
skills are taught or retaught,
practiced, and tested at each
reading level (p. 168).

In a comparison study of the skills approach and
the whole language approach from 1991, Klesius,
Griffith and Zielonka included the following table (p.
48):

<u>Traditional Skills Approach</u>	<u>Whole Language Approach</u>
Instruction of discrete skills	Instruction in use of strategies for reading

Language broken down into bite size pieces (letters and words)	Language kept whole in connected text
Initial emphasis on decoding	Emphasis is always on gaining meaning
Emphasis on product	Emphasis on process
Growth is quantitatively measurable	Growth is observable
Practice focuses on skill exercises	Practice involves relevant uses of language
Instruction for the language arts is separate	Instruction for the language arts is integrated
Direct instruction of phoneme-grapheme correspondence	Self-discovery of the alphabetic principle through writing and exposure to print
Comprehension is text-driven	Comprehension involves interaction between reader and text
Reading material consists of basal selections with controlled vocabulary	Reading material consists primarily of literature with a natural flow and interesting language
Content of subjects is taught separately	Content of subjects is integrated
Initial exposure to instructional reading material is through child reading text	Initial exposure to instructional reading material is through teacher reading text to child

According to Klesius, Griffith and Zielonka's (1990) research, they conclude that:

[w]e are now beginning to see a shift from an emphasis on skills,

in which decoding and comprehension skills are identified and taught in isolation, to an emphasis on meaning, in which strategies are used to determine word pronunciations and meanings in connected text (p. 47).

This new emphasis is called the whole language approach, based on a socio-psycholinguistic theory, which holds that learning to read and write are language processes (Cambourne, 1988; Goodman, 1986) and that children learn the meaning of print through authentic purposes for using language (Goodman, 1986; Harste, Woodward and Burke, 1984; Routman, 1991).

Rutherford (1989) writes:

Instead of viewing reading as a set of text-based skills and levels, reading is treated as a holistic process that begins with the reader's experiences and predictions about meaning. An integral part of this philosophy is that the child's primary focus in the reading process is gaining meaning from text (p. 17).

It stresses the use of strategies for attaining meaning from connected text whereby predictions are evaluated through constant interaction with text (Goodman, 1986; Klesius, Griffith & Zielonka, 1991; Smith, 1985). Being aware of reading strategies improves comprehension (Builder, 1986; Kletzien, 1991; Paris and Myers, 1981) and enables readers to correct for meaning--the most important aspect of the reading

process (Cambourne, 1988; Klesius, Griffith & Zielonka, 1991; Kletzien, 1991).

In her discussion on literacy and ideology, Auerbach (1992) states that "whole language...emphasize[s] literacy as the construction of meaning rather than as the mechanical acquisition of skills" (p. 78).

This view of literacy places children and their needs at the heart of schooling. Indeed, Reutzel and Hollingsworth (1988) state that children must be "respected and trusted as competent learners who have learned much prior to formal teaching" (p. 407).

Studies show that children acquire literacy through a series of successive approximations from whole to part (Cambourne, 1988; Goodman, 1986). Through immersion in a print-rich environment, children become familiar with meaningful printed material (Bright, 1990; Reutzel and Hollingsworth, 1988). Cheek (1989) found that with the whole language approach:

the primary focus is to emphasize a higher order of communication and meaning at the higher levels of thinking or at the top, and then to work on the lower-level skills and units of communication as necessary at the bottom. In other words, meaning begins with the reader and moves down to lower levels of processing as the task requires (p. 18).

As Reutzel and Hollingsworth point out:

Process is most important...Whole to part learning is emphasized...Language is learned through immersion...Classrooms foster cooperation and collaboration...Teachers give children voices... (p. 413-4).

Meaning and connections are the overall emphasis. As Harste, Woodward and Burke (1984) have said, "learning should be an invitation not an assignment" (p. 415).

Summary

This chapter examined the need for teachers to have a theoretical orientation. Teaching begins with theory and instructional practices follow. It also examined the three known approaches to the teaching of reading. The phonics approach, traditional skills approach, and the whole language approach each emphasize a different aspect of the reading process. All are grounded in a belief system and have research to support their tenets.

The research in this chapter seems to indicate a "blending" of approaches for most positive results.

Chapter III

Design of the Study

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to determine what teachers believe are important targets for their readers. These targets and beliefs were examined to determine trends, patterns and motivation for instruction.

Questions to be Answered

What are teacher targets for reading instruction in their classrooms? Do they fit into categories known or unknown? What to these targets suggest?

Design of the Study

Subjects

The subjects for this study were approximately 40 randomly selected faculty members from a rural western New York school district. The grades represented offer a wide range of experience levels in grades K through 6.

Materials

Teachers were asked to fill out a researcher-created survey (See Appendix A) which delineates several teacher targets. They had an opportunity to add additional targets if they felt it was necessary. The survey contained a Likert-style response enabling teachers a choice ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree to each of the targets along a continuum. In addition, teachers had an opportunity to freely respond to the following statement:

Please think about your goals and/or objectives for reading instruction. In the space below please list those goals and/or objectives.

This was included to ensure the reliability of the survey as well as to give teachers an opportunity to do some thinking of their own.

Procedure

The researcher delivered the instruments personally to each randomly chosen faculty member. Her purpose was stated. Directions and implications were explained to each respondent. They were informed of a pick-up date. On the designated day, all surveys were collected. Two other experienced district personnel worked with the researcher to compare the surveys and ensure their reliability, and to look for trends and patterns. Categories were determined. Both a

qualitative and quantitative analysis were conducted to determine what the findings suggested for reading teachers.

Summary

Two instruments allowing teachers an opportunity to articulate beliefs and motivation for instruction in reading were collected. The subjects were chosen randomly from a rural western New York school district and represented a wide range of experience levels in grades K through 6.

The instruments were analyzed by the researchers and two other experienced district personnel to determine patterns and trends in reading instruction.

Chapter IV

Analysis of the Data

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to determine what teachers believe are important targets for their readers. These targets and beliefs were examined to determine trends, patterns and motivation for instruction.

Analysis of the Data

Eighty-five percent of the surveys distributed were returned. All respondents answered all questions and some, but not all, commented with written targets and goals. Teacher-written targets fell into two categories: aesthetic and academic. For the purpose of this study aesthetic goals are life-long goals which teachers felt were important and are difficult to measure using traditional methods of testing. Academic goals are teacher-taught skills and strategies which can be measured using traditional methods of testing.

The following aesthetic goals were reported:

- To increase an interest in reading
- To learn a love of reading
- To become critical readers
- To enjoy reading

- To create a relaxed and comfortable reading environment
- To give choices in materials
- To increase reading independence
- To willingly read daily for pleasure
- To promote feelings of being a reader
- To create an atmosphere which encourages communication of ideas and opinions
- To create positive attitudes to choose to read
- To value literature above all else
- To feel comfortable with books
- To instill a desire to share all books
- To develop higher level thinking skills

Teachers reported a hope that these targets would be reached and admitted it was hard to know whether these were being met on a daily or yearly basis.

Academic goals included the following:

- To recognize authors
- To read to learn
- To learn to respond to literature
- To discover setting, plot, theme, main characters of stories
- To analyze genre
- To teach strategies

- To connect reading and writing
- To develop mini-lessons on grammar
- To read for knowledge
- To read for meaning
- To increase sight vocabulary
- To write about reading
- To read in content areas competently
- To read for research purposes
- To use all cueing systems
- To balance the reading program
- To read for different purposes
- To model strategies
- To organize ideas
- To teach comprehending strategies
- To self-monitor
- To improve word attack skills

These targets or goals can be measured through testing of some kind. Indeed, standardized tests, degrees of reading power tests, records of reading behavior and miscue analysis could all be used by teachers in individual classrooms to measure the above list.

To ascertain a belief system, all statements on the survey were written so that a respondent should agree except for statements 23 and 32. Tables 1 and 2 both show a response analysis. One is by number of

responses to any particular statement; the other by percentage of answers to each statement.

TABLE 1

RESPONSE ANALYSIS
BY NUMBER OF RESPONSES

QUESTION NUMBER	SA			SD	TOTAL	
1	0	1	6	8	19	
2	5	12	13	3	1	
3	29	2	2	1	0	
4	12	13	8	1	0	
5	16	13	5	0	0	
6	4	6	12	6	6	
7	5	8	13	8	0	
8	13	11	7	3	0	
9	1	4	9	9	11	
10	10	17	6	1	0	
11	4	9	13	8	0	
12	17	14	2	1	0	
13	1	2	5	8	18	
14	2	4	14	9	5	
15	24	8	1	0	1	
16	4	5	13	9	3	
17	23	8	3	0	0	
18	1	2	3	9	19	
19	26	6	1	0	1	
20	6	11	11	3	3	
21	24	7	3	0	0	
22	2	14	6	9	3	
23	0	2	4	18	10	
24	2	6	14	8	4	
25	27	4	1	2	0	
26	4	8	2	10	10	
27	13	16	2	2	1	
28	23	11	0	0	0	
29	27	6	0	1	0	
30	5	11	8	7	3	
31	27	3	1	3	0	
32	9	10	10	5	0	
33	18	9	7	0	0	
34	5	11	15	1	2	
35	26	6	2	0	0	
36	22	6	4	2	0	
37	2	3	1	12	16	
38	6	5	9	8	6	
39	2	4	9	9	10	
40	18	7	6	1	2	
41	16	7	7	4	0	
42	22	7	4	1	0	
43	1	3	13	9	8	
44	4	4	9	12	5	
45	19	12	3	0	0	
TOTALS	527	338	287	211	167	1530
AVERAGES	11.71	7.51	6.38	4.69	3.71	34

RESPONSE ANALYSIS
BY PERCENTAGE

QUESTION NUMBER	SA				SD	TOTAL
1	0%	3%	18%	24%	56%	100%
2	15%	35%	38%	9%	3%	100%
3	85%	6%	6%	3%	0%	100%
4	35%	8%	24%	3%	0%	100%
5	47%	8%	15%	0%	0%	100%
6	12%	18%	35%	18%	18%	100%
7	15%	24%	38%	24%	0%	100%
8	38%	32%	21%	9%	0%	100%
9	3%	12%	26%	26%	32%	100%
10	29%	50%	18%	3%	0%	100%
11	12%	26%	38%	24%	0%	100%
12	50%	41%	6%	3%	0%	100%
13	3%	6%	15%	24%	53%	100%
14	6%	12%	41%	26%	15%	100%
15	71%	24%	33%	0%	33%	100%
16	12%	15%	38%	26%	9%	100%
17	68%	24%	9%	0%	0%	100%
18	68%	6%	9%	26%	56%	100%
19	76%	18%	33%	0%	33%	100%
20	18%	32%	3%	9%	0%	100%
21	71%	21%	3%	0%	0%	100%
22	6%	41%	18%	26%	9%	100%
23	0%	6%	12%	53%	29%	100%
24	6%	18%	41%	24%	12%	100%
25	79%	12%	33%	6%	29%	100%
26	12%	24%	6%	29%	29%	100%
27	38%	47%	6%	6%	33%	100%
28	68%	32%	0%	0%	0%	100%
29	79%	18%	0%	33%	0%	100%
30	15%	32%	24%	21%	9%	100%
31	79%	9%	33%	9%	0%	100%
32	26%	29%	29%	15%	0%	100%
33	53%	26%	21%	33%	0%	100%
34	15%	32%	44%	0%	6%	100%
35	76%	18%	6%	0%	0%	100%
36	65%	18%	12%	6%	0%	100%
37	6%	9%	33%	35%	47%	100%
38	18%	15%	26%	24%	18%	100%
39	6%	12%	26%	26%	29%	100%
40	53%	21%	18%	33%	6%	100%
41	47%	21%	21%	12%	0%	100%
42	65%	21%	12%	33%	0%	100%
43	3%	9%	38%	26%	24%	100%
44	12%	12%	26%	35%	15%	100%
45	56%	35%	9%	0%	0%	100%
TOTALS	1550%	994%	844%	621%	491%	4500%
AVERAGES	34%	22%	19%	14%	11%	100%

This data was further broken down by orientation of statements. Table 3 represents all the phonics-oriented statements.

TABLE 3

RESPONSE ANALYSIS OF PHONICS ORIENTED STATEMENTS

BY NUMBER OF RESPONSES

QUESTION NUMBER	SA				SD	TOTAL
1	0	1	6	8	19	34
11	4	9	13	8	0	34
24	2	6	14	8	4	34
26	4	8	2	10	10	34
30	5	11	8	7	3	34
34	5	11	15	1	2	34
39	2	4	9	9	10	34
TOTALS	22	50	67	51	48	238
AVERAGES	3.14	7.14	9.57	7.29	6.86	34.00

BY PERCENTAGE

QUESTION NUMBER	SA				SD	TOTAL
1	0%	3%	18%	24%	56%	100%
11	12%	26%	38%	24%	0%	100%
24	6%	18%	41%	24%	12%	100%
26	12%	24%	6%	29%	29%	100%
30	15%	32%	24%	21%	9%	100%
34	15%	32%	44%	3%	6%	100%
39	6%	12%	26%	26%	29%	100%
TOTALS	65%	147%	197%	150%	141%	700%
AVERAGES	9%	21%	28%	21%	20%	100%

It is clear from these data that a majority of the subjects surveyed disagree with the isolation of phonics skills. However, they still believe it is somewhat important for children to sound out the parts of words (#11) and to be able to identify long and short vowels (#24) even though research has shown this to be an unnecessary part of learning to read (Cambourne, 1986; Smith, 1985). In addition they believe that children should know the letters of the alphabet before they can learn to read (#30) and many concur that phonetic analysis is the most important form of word analysis that readers use (#39). This is interesting since 85% of these same teachers agreed that children should guess what a word is based upon meaning and then go on. It is interesting to note that many teachers chose response 3, a neutral response, to many phonics-oriented statements.

Skill-oriented statements (Table 4, Page 28) had fewer responses strongly one way or the other.

RESPONSE ANALYSIS OF SKILLS ORIENTED STATEMENTS

BY NUMBER OF RESPONSES

QUESTION NUMBER	SA				SD	TOTAL
2	5	12	13	3	1	34
5	16	13	5	0	0	34
6	4	6	12	6	6	34
7	5	8	13	8	0	34
9	1	4	9	9	11	34
13	1	2	5	8	18	34
14	2	4	14	9	5	34
16	4	5	13	9	3	34
18	1	2	3	9	19	34
20	6	11	11	3	3	34
22	2	14	6	9	3	34
23	0	2	4	18	10	34
32	9	10	10	5	0	34
37	2	3	1	12	16	34
38	6	5	9	8	6	34
43	1	3	13	9	8	34
44	4	4	9	12	5	34
TOTALS	69	108	150	137	114	578
AVERAGES	4.06	6.35	8.82	8.06	6.71	34

BY PERCENTAGE

QUESTION NUMBER	SA				SD	TOTAL
2	15%	35%	38%	9%	3%	100%
5	47%	38%	15%	0%	0%	100%
6	12%	18%	35%	18%	18%	100%
7	15%	24%	38%	24%	0%	100%
9	3%	12%	26%	26%	32%	100%
13	3%	6%	15%	24%	53%	100%
14	6%	12%	41%	26%	15%	100%
16	12%	15%	38%	26%	9%	100%
18	3%	6%	9%	26%	56%	100%
20	18%	32%	32%	9%	9%	100%
22	6%	41%	18%	26%	9%	100%
23	0%	6%	12%	53%	29%	100%
32	26%	29%	29%	15%	0%	100%
37	6%	9%	3%	35%	47%	100%
38	18%	15%	26%	24%	18%	100%
43	3%	9%	38%	26%	24%	100%
44	12%	12%	26%	35%	15%	100%
TOTALS	203%	318%	441%	403%	335%	1700%
AVERAGES	12%	19%	26%	24%	20%	100%

Most answers tended to be in the middle three columns. Overall again, as with phonics statements, most would only commit themselves to the neutral response 3 on a majority of these. Teachers do feel (47%) that instructional time should be spent on identifying plot, setting and main character (#5) and disagree with stopping children as soon as a reading error is made (#18) or grouping children by ability (#13). They also disagree with controlling text through consistent spelling patterns (#37).

Whole language-oriented statements (Table 5, Page 30) were more often strongly agreed with than any other statement type.

RESPONSE ANALYSIS OF WHOLE LANGUAGE ORIENTED STATEMENTS

BY NUMBER OF RESPONSES

QUESTION NUMBER	SA				SD	TOTAL
3	29	2	2	1	0	34
4	12	13	8	1	0	34
8	13	11	7	3	0	34
10	10	17	6	1	0	34
12	17	14	2	1	0	34
15	24	8	1	0	1	34
17	23	8	3	0	0	34
19	26	6	1	0	1	34
21	24	7	3	0	0	34
25	27	4	1	2	0	34
27	13	16	2	2	1	34
28	23	11	0	0	0	34
29	27	6	0	1	0	34
31	27	3	1	3	0	34
33	18	9	7	0	0	34
35	26	6	2	0	0	34
36	22	6	4	2	0	34
40	18	7	6	1	2	34
41	16	7	7	4	0	34
42	22	7	4	1	0	34
45	19	12	3	0	0	34
TOTALS	436	180	70	23	5	714
AVERAGES	20.76	8.57	3.33	1.10	0.24	34

BY PERCENTAGE

QUESTION NUMBER	SA				SD	TOTAL
3	85%	6%	6%	3%	0%	100%
4	35%	38%	24%	3%	0%	100%
8	38%	32%	21%	9%	0%	100%
10	29%	50%	18%	3%	0%	100%
12	50%	41%	6%	3%	0%	100%
15	71%	24%	3%	0%	3%	100%
17	68%	24%	9%	0%	0%	100%
19	76%	18%	3%	0%	3%	100%
21	71%	21%	9%	0%	0%	100%
25	79%	12%	3%	6%	0%	100%
27	38%	47%	6%	0%	3%	100%
28	68%	32%	0%	0%	0%	100%
29	79%	18%	0%	3%	0%	100%
31	79%	9%	3%	9%	0%	100%
33	53%	26%	21%	0%	0%	100%
35	76%	18%	6%	0%	0%	100%
36	65%	18%	12%	6%	0%	100%
40	53%	21%	18%	3%	6%	100%
41	47%	21%	21%	12%	0%	100%
42	65%	21%	12%	3%	0%	100%
45	56%	35%	9%	0%	0%	100%
TOTALS	1282%	529%	206%	68%	15%	2100%
AVERAGES	61%	25%	10%	3%	1%	100%

Teachers hold that reading instruction should help children enjoy reading overall (#3); that reading for meaning is the most important aspect of reading (#33); that children should become aware of their own reading strengths and weaknesses (#12); that extended independent reading time is important (#15); that background experiences are an important component of reading instruction (#17); that children should read for its own sake (#29); that quality literature should be part of a reading program (#35); and that children should receive individual reading help when necessary (#36). Interestingly, however, only 38% of respondents believe that materials for early reading should be written in natural language (#8).

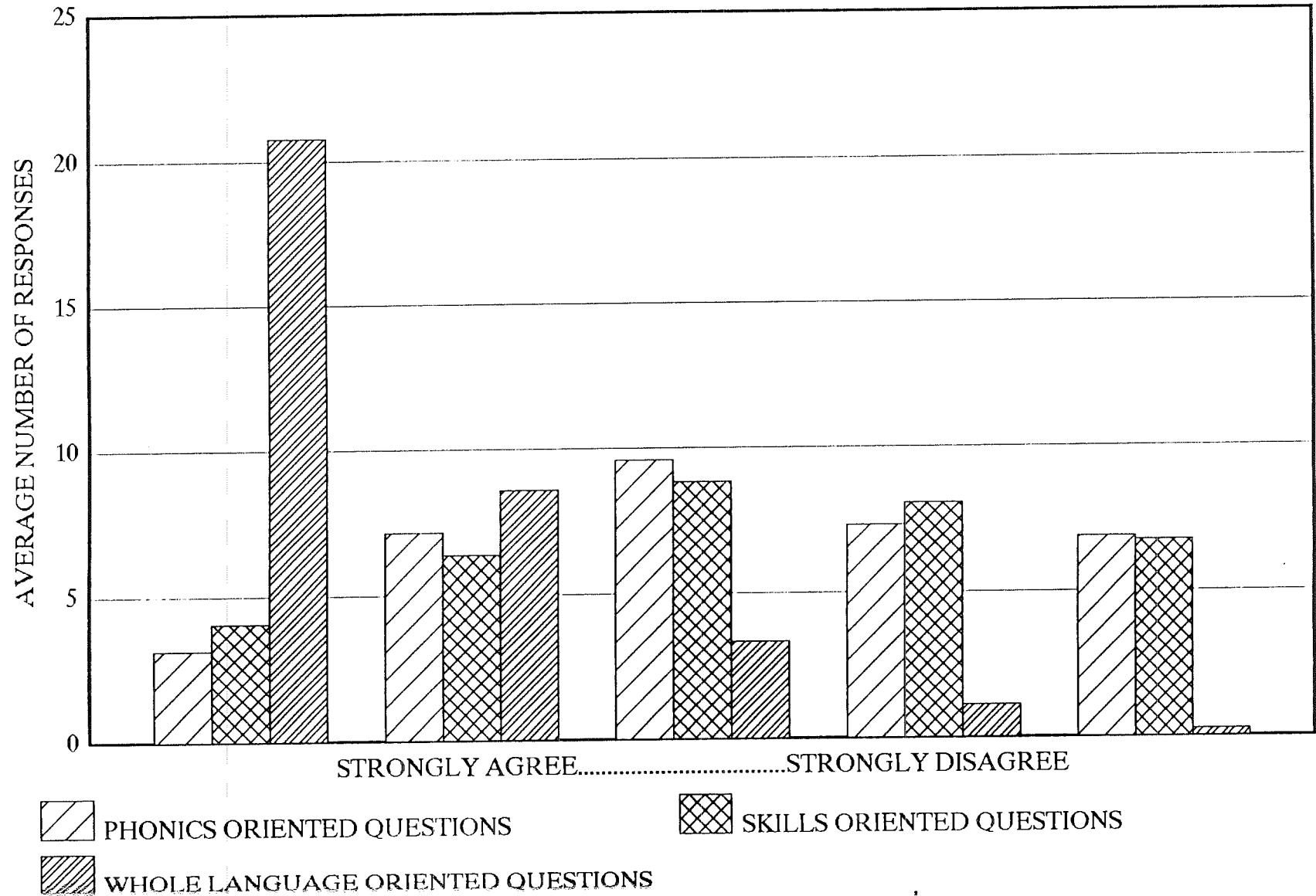
Summary

Overall, the subjects of this study hold to a whole language philosophy based on analysis of this data (See Graph 1 after this summary). More phonics and skills-oriented statements were answered in a neutral way (response 3) than whole language statements. This could indicate a hesitation to agree with a reading philosophy not advocated by their

district as a whole or that teachers are simply unsure how all orientations can fit together during reading instruction. Free response statements fell into two categories: aesthetic and academic. Teachers see their role both as an instructor and as a facilitator to learn a love of reading.

SUMMARY OF RESULTS

BY QUESTION ORIENTATION



Chapter V

Conclusions and Implications

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to determine what teachers believe are important targets for their readers. These targets were examined to determine trends, patterns and implications for instruction.

Conclusions

Most teachers in the district surveyed seem to believe in a whole language philosophy. This conclusion seems especially strong in light of Graph 1, Page 33. It clearly indicates more statements of a whole language orientation were strongly agreed with than any other.

The particular district studied is an advocate of whole language practices. Staff development opportunities abound in this district and teachers are strongly encouraged to attend both in-district staff development as well as outside workshops pertaining to whole language strategies. An informal network of teachers who hold the same philosophy provide a means to share ideas and give support as needed as well.

In addition, the aesthetic goals noted by the respondents seem to indicate that teachers are very interested that children's literacy be taken seriously

with life-long goals for becoming readers and writers for many purposes a primary goal. This is a whole language belief (Harste, Woodward and Burke, 1984; Klesius, Griffith and Zielonka, 1991).

At the same time these teachers are aware that some skill instruction is necessary to promote competent readers and writers. However, it seems more are reluctant to say so perhaps due to the district's overwhelming support of whole language tenets and their mistaken belief that skill instruction should be left out of their programs. While some teachers noted on their free-response format that word analysis and growth in sight vocabulary are targets for their classrooms of readers, their survey results did not indicate the same. It can be concluded that teachers are more reluctant to admit to the teaching of skills and that when asked to define their goals for reading, they immediately refer back to a more traditional way of thinking. This might be due to the fact that they have not taken the time to re-establish a true belief system. As noted early in the study, teachers' belief systems determine the instructional methods used (Frager, 1985). They may be agreeing with whole language oriented statements, but if their penned goals are skill-based, it would seem likely they still teach

skills in isolation, or at best, try to basalize quality children's literature.

It should also be noted that perhaps teachers are hesitant to agree with a philosophy that is not advocated by their district or that they have not been able to incorporate ways to effectively teach skills using whole language strategies where process is more important than product and where children grow at their own developmental rate (Cambourne, 1988). If these same teachers have not taken advantage of staff development offerings, they may not be sure what to believe since their traditional schooling taught them one way and a new paradigm is upon them. They might feel compelled to answer one way while still holding on to traditional beliefs.

Implications for Education and Classroom Practice

Teachers should take advantage of all opportunities to expand their professional knowledge. Most researchers agree that what a teacher believes will have a direct impact on how he or she develops instruction (Kinzer, 1988; Mills and Clyde, 1985; Routman, 1991). Therefore, it is clear that new knowledge and understandings will improve instructional practices.

From all research read and from studying these two instruments, it seem apparent that teachers need to develop ways to blend the three approaches to instruction (Builder, 1986). Phonetic analysis is an important component of the reading process. Graphophonetic strategies improve reading and are one of the needed cueing systems. Further, children need to learn how language is put together, how an author crafts his or her story, and indeed, all the myriad other aspects of becoming literate. However, neither of these instructional practices should be at the expense of learning that print contains meaning, an important component of the reading process and a whole language belief.

In addition, it is important that teachers bear in mind that children develop at different rates and that everyone cannot know all the letters of the alphabet at the end of June of kindergarten year. Each child brings with him or her a variety of experiences as well as a learning style that cannot be discounted. The process of becoming a literate individual is more important than the products being produced. Each child creates meaning in his or her own way and should be respected for his or her individuality.

Further investigation into teachers beliefs is suggested. Perhaps similar studies could be conducted between two districts (ones who share a philosophy and ones who do not) and results compared.

In addition, a study which compared teacher actual practices in the classroom during reading instruction with the same teacher's philosophy could be far-reaching. It would be able to measure if what teachers say agrees with what they do daily in their classrooms. One of the limitations of this present study was that no formal observations were made, and therefore, practices could not be compared with philosophies.

Summary

Teachers surveyed admit to a belief in whole language philosophies based on targets agreed to. Some discrepancies did materialize from the data perhaps because teachers are reluctant to change or feel compelled to agree with district-held philosophies.

Staff development opportunities seem a likely way for teachers to keep abreast of new ways to approach reading instruction. Teachers want to believe one philosophy, yet are hesitant to let go of old methods.

More study, especially in the area of formal classroom observation, is necessary. Perhaps it will help teachers see that philosophies have a direct impact on their students' lives through instruction.

REFERENCES

- Adams, M. (1990). Beginning to read: Thinking and learning about print. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Auerbach, E. (1992). Literacy and ideology. Annual Review of Applied Linguistics 12, 71-85.
- Bright, R. (1990). Teacher as researcher: Traditional and whole language approaches. Canadian Journal of English Language Arts 12, (3) 48-55.
- Cambourne B. (1988). The whole story. Auckland, New Zealand: Ashton Scholastic.
- Builder, P. (1986). Catering for a range of learners. Australian Journal of Reading 9, (4) 209-217.
- Cheek, E. (1989). Skills-based vs. holistic philosophies: The debate among teacher educators in reading. Teacher Education Quarterly 16, (1) 15-20.
- DeFord, D. (1979). A validation study of an instrument to determine teachers' theoretical orientation to reading instruction. Dissertation Abstracts International 40, 459.
- Farrar, M. (1986). Four conceptions of literacy. Reading Psychology 7, 43-55.
- Flesch, R. (1981). Why johnny still can't read. New York: Harper and Row.
- Frager, A. (1985). Three faces of reading. The Clearing House 59, 158-161.
- Goodman, K. (1986). What's whole in whole language. Portsmouth NH: Heinemann.
- Harste, J.C. and Burke, C.L. (1980). Examining instructional assumptions: The child as informant. Theory Into Practice 19, (3) 170-178.
- Harste, J.C., Woodward, V.A., Burke, C.L. (1984). Language stories and literacy lessons. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Kinzer, C. (1988). Instructional frameworks and instructional choices: Comparisons between preservice

and inservice teachers. Journal of Reading 20, (4) 357-371.

Klesius, J., Griffith, P., Zielonka, P. (1991). A whole language and traditional instruction comparison: Overall effectiveness and development of the alphabetic principle. Reading Research and Instruction 30, (2) 47-61.

Kletzien, S. (1991). Strategy use by good and poor comprehenders reading expository text of differing levels. Reading Research Quarterly 26, (1) 67-85.

Levande D. (1989). Theoretical orientation to reading and classroom practice. Reading Improvement 26, 274-280.

Mills, H. and Clyde, J. (1991). Children's success as readers and writers: It's the teacher's beliefs that make the difference. Young Children 46, 54-59.

Murphy S. (1991). The code, connectionism and basals. Language Arts 68, 199-204.

Paris, S., Myers, M. (1981). Comprehension monitoring, memory and study strategies of good and poor readers. Journal of Reading Behavior 13, 5-22.

Reutzel, D.R., Hollingsworth, P.M. (1988). Whole language and the practitioner. Academic Therapy 23 (4), 405-416.

Routman, R. (1991) Invitations. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Rupley, W., Logan, J. (1985). Elementary teacher's beliefs about reading and knowledge of reading content: Relationships to decisions about reading outcomes. Reading Psychology 6, 145-156.

Rutherford, T. (1989). Whole language strategies and understandings. Reading Research and Instruction 28, (3) 87-98.

Shannon, P. (1984). Mastery learning in reading and the control of teachers and students. Language Arts 61, (5) 484-493.

Shannon, P. (1989). The struggle for control of literacy lessons. Language Arts 66, (6) 625-633.

- Shapiro, J. and Riley, J. (1989). Ending the great debate in reading instruction. Reading Horizons 30, (1) 67-78.
- Smith, F. (1985). Reading without nonsense. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Spaai, G. and Ellerman, H. (1991). Effects of segmented and whole word feedback on learning to read single words. Journal of Educational Research 84, (4) 204-213.
- Taylor, B., Frye, B., Gaetz, T. (1990). Reducing the number of reading skill activities in the elementary classroom. Journal of Reading Behavior 22, (2) 167-180.
- Trachtenburg, P. (1990). Using children's literature to enhance phonics instruction. The Reading Teacher 43, (9) 648-654.

APPENDIX A

DIRECTIONS: PLEASE THINK ABOUT YOUR GOALS AND/OR OBJECTIVES FOR READING INSTRUCTION IN THE CLASSROOM OVER THE COURSE OF THE YEAR. IN THE SPACE BELOW PLEASE LIST THOSE GOALS AND/OR OBJECTIVES.

- | | | | | | |
|--|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| 10. CHILDREN SHOULD READ FOR A VARIETY OF PURPOSES AS OUTLINED BY THE TEACHER. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> |
| | SA | | | | SD |
| 11. WHEN CHILDREN DO NOT KNOW A WORD THEY SHOULD BE ABLE TO SOUND OUT ITS PARTS. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> |
| | SA | | | | SD |
| 12. IT IS IMPORTANT FOR CHILDREN TO HAVE AN AWARENESS OF THEIR OWN READING STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> |
| | SA | | | | SD |
| 13. IT IS NECESSARY FOR EFFECTIVE READING INSTRUCTION TO HAVE HOMOGENEOUS READING GROUPS BASED ON ABILITY AND KNOWLEDGE. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> |
| | SA | | | | SD |
| 14. THE USE OF A GLOSSARY OR DICTIONARY IS NECESSARY IN DETERMINING THE MEANING AND PRONUNCIATION OF NEW WORDS. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> |
| | SA | | | | SD |
| 15. IT IS IMPORTANT TO GIVE CHILDREN EXTENDED INDEPENDENT READING TIME. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> |
| | SA | | | | SD |
| 16. REVERSALS (E.G., SAYING "SAW" FOR "WAS") ARE SIGNIFICANT PROBLEMS IN THE TEACHING OF READING. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> |
| | SA | | | | SD |
| 17. CHILDREN SHOULD RELATE INFORMATION FROM STORIES TO WHAT IS ALREADY KNOWN. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> |
| | SA | | | | SD |
| 18. IT IS GOOD PRACTICE TO CORRECT A CHILD AS SOON AS AN ORAL READING MISTAKE IS MADE. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> |
| | SA | | | | SD |
| 19. IT IS GOOD PRACTICE TO ALLOW CHILDREN TIME TO SHARE AND DISCUSS OPINIONS ABOUT BOOKS. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> |
| | SA | | | | SD |
| 20. IT IS IMPORTANT FOR A WORD TO BE REPEATED A NUMBER OF TIMES AFTER IT HAS BEEN INTRODUCED TO ENSURE THAT IS WILL BECOME PART OF SIGHT VOCABULARY. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> |
| | SA | | | | SD |
| 21. CHILDREN SHOULD HAVE OPPORTUNITIES TO REFLECT ON AND RESPOND TO READING MATERIALS IN THEIR OWN WAYS. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> |
| | SA | | | | SD |

- | | | | | | |
|---|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| 34. ABILITY TO CHUNK MULTISYLLABIC WORDS SHOULD BE DEVELOPED IN READING INSTRUCTION. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> |
| | SA | | | | SD |
| 35. QUALITY CHILDREN'S LITERATURE SHOULD BE THE FOUNDATION OF THE READING PROGRAM. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> |
| | SA | | | | SD |
| 36. TEACHERS MUST ESTABLISH A READING PROGRAM THAT CATERS TO INDIVIDUAL NEEDS. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> |
| | SA | | | | SD |
| 37. CONTROLLING TEXT THROUGH CONSISTENT SPELLING PATTERNS IS A MEANS BY WHICH CHILDREN CAN BEST LEARN TO READ. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> |
| | SA | | | | SD |
| 38. FORMAL INSTRUCTION IN READING IS NECESSARY TO ENSURE THE ADEQUATE DEVELOPMENT OF ALL SKILLS USED IN READING. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> |
| | SA | | | | SD |
| 39. PHONETIC ANALYSIS IS THE MOST IMPORTANT FORM OF ANALYSIS USED WHEN MEETING NEW WORDS. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> |
| | SA | | | | SD |
| 40. IT IS ESSENTIAL THAT CHILDREN BE ABLE TO MONITOR THEIR OWN READING WHEN THERE IS LOSS OF MEANING. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> |
| | SA | | | | SD |
| 41. CHILDREN'S INITIAL ENCOUNTERS WITH PRINT SHOULD FOCUS ON MEANING, NOT UPON EXACT GRAPHIC REPRESENTATION. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> |
| | SA | | | | SD |
| 42. IT IS GOOD PRACTICE FOR CHILDREN TO USE PICTURES TO AID COMPREHENSION. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> |
| | SA | | | | SD |
| 43. IT IS NECESSARY TO INTRODUCE NEW WORDS BEFORE CHILDREN ENCOUNTER THEM IN TEXT. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> |
| | SA | | | | SD |
| 44. IT IS ESSENTIAL THAT CHILDREN BE ABLE TO IDENTIFY PARTS OF WORDS (i.e., SUFFIXES, PREFIXES, VOWEL DIPHTHONGS, VOWEL PAIRS, DIGRAPHS). | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> |
| | SA | | | | SD |
| 45. PREDICTING STRATEGIES SHOULD BECOME PART OF A READER'S REPERTOIRE OF STRATEGIES. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> |
| | SA | | | | SD |

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS YOU FEEL ARE
IMPORTANT _____

ADDITIONAL
COMMENTS: _____
