

1999

## A history of the development and implementation of a whole language curriculum in a rural Iowa middle school

Anthony M. Pieper  
*University of Northern Iowa*

*Let us know how access to this document benefits you*

Copyright ©1999 Anthony M. Pieper

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.uni.edu/grp>



Part of the [Curriculum and Instruction Commons](#), and the [Language and Literacy Education Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Pieper, Anthony M., "A history of the development and implementation of a whole language curriculum in a rural Iowa middle school" (1999). *Graduate Research Papers*. 1339.

<https://scholarworks.uni.edu/grp/1339>

This Open Access Graduate Research Paper is brought to you for free and open access by the Student Work at UNI ScholarWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in Graduate Research Papers by an authorized administrator of UNI ScholarWorks. For more information, please contact [scholarworks@uni.edu](mailto:scholarworks@uni.edu).

**Offensive Materials Statement:** Materials located in UNI ScholarWorks come from a broad range of sources and time periods. Some of these materials may contain offensive stereotypes, ideas, visuals, or language.

---

## A history of the development and implementation of a whole language curriculum in a rural Iowa middle school

### Abstract

The purpose of this project was to examine the history of a whole language curriculum which was developed and implemented for grades five and six in a rural Iowa middle school and to discuss any insights gained from the process. This project presents a description of the whole language curriculum and a rationale for its development. It also explains the purpose of a whole language curriculum and its importance to students, teachers, administrators, and parents.

The project describes the procedures used by the middle school in the development and implementation of the curriculum. The project concludes with a description of the strengths and weaknesses of the curriculum, the status of the curriculum today, and recommendations for other schools that wish to develop and implement a whole language curriculum.

**A HISTORY OF THE DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF A WHOLE  
LANGUAGE CURRICULUM IN A RURAL IOWA MIDDLE SCHOOL**

**A Graduate Project  
Submitted to the  
Division of  
Department of Curriculum and Instruction  
in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Arts in Education  
UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN IOWA**

**by**

**Anthony M. Pieper**

**March 31, 1999**

This Project by: Anthony M. Pieper

Titled: A History of the Development and Implementation of a Whole Language Curriculum in a Rural Iowa Middle School

Has been approved as meeting the research requirement for the Degree of Masters of Arts in Education.

April 6, 1999  
Date Approved

Rick Traw  
Graduate Faculty Reader

April 6, 1999  
Date Approved

Peggy Ishler  
Graduate Faculty Reader

4-7-99  
Date Approved

W. P. Callahan  
Head, Department of Curriculum and Instruction

### Abstract

The purpose of this project was to examine the history of a whole language curriculum which was developed and implemented for grades five and six in a rural Iowa middle school and to discuss any insights gained from the process. This project presents a description of the whole language curriculum and a rationale for its development. It also explains the purpose of a whole language curriculum and its importance to students, teachers, administrators, and parents. The project describes the procedures used by the middle school in the development and implementation of the curriculum. The project concludes with a description of the strengths and weaknesses of the curriculum, the status of the curriculum today, and recommendations for other schools that wish to develop and implement a whole language curriculum.

## Table of Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction .....	1
Rationale .....	3
Purpose .....	4
Relevant Terms .....	5
Chapter 2: Methodology .....	7
Review of Professional Literature .....	7
Procedures .....	19
Chapter 3: The Project .....	25
Starting the Workshops .....	25
Whole Class Reading .....	29
Thematic Web Unit .....	35
Assessing Student Progress .....	36
Chapter 4: Conclusions and Recommendations .....	38
References .....	44
Appendixes .....	47

## Chapter 1: Introduction

As a middle school reading teacher for The BCLUW Community School in central Iowa, I helped develop and implement an innovative new reading curriculum for grades five and six. A history of the development and implementation of this reading curriculum will provide an opportunity for other teachers to explore its components and will facilitate critical evaluation of reading programs currently being used in their schools.

The BCLUW Community School is a rural school district located 60 miles northeast of Des Moines, Iowa. This school district is comprised of five small communities: Beaman, Conrad, Liscomb, Union, and Whitten. Conrad, the largest community, has a population of approximately 964 residents. The other four communities range in population from approximately 137 to 448 residents. The BCLUW Community School has had an average of 700+ students enrolled from kindergarten through twelfth grade since the early 1980's. The elementary school, which serves kindergarten through grade four, and the high school, which serves grades nine through twelve, are located in Conrad. The middle school, which serves grades five through eight, is located in Union which is 11 miles west of Conrad.

The middle school has implemented a nine period school day with class periods being 42 minutes long. The fifth and sixth grade students have been somewhat self-contained. These students stay within two or three classrooms for math, reading, English, science, and social studies. The subjects are divided among two or three teachers per grade level. The seventh and eighth grade students, however, follow a traditional junior high format. The students go to a different classroom and teacher for each subject. In order to provide some experience with the junior high format for the fifth and sixth grade students, they follow a typical junior high rotation for special classes such as physical education, vocal music, band, art, computer, and library skills.

During the mid 1980's an effort was made by the middle school to emphasize the importance of reading instruction and to prepare fifth and sixth grade students for a more independent seventh and eighth grade program in which skills are de-emphasized and literature appreciation becomes the focus. The school allotted two 42 minute class periods of reading each day. One period was scheduled in the morning and the other was

scheduled in the afternoon. Fifth and sixth grade students were separated into three groups according to reading ability: those reading below grade level, at grade level, or above grade level. Students with exceptional reading difficulties were pulled out of the basic reading program and were placed in a remedial reading program or resource room with a specialized teacher.

The fifth and sixth grade reading program utilized a 1979 edition of a basal reading series from the Houghton Mifflin textbook publishing company. Teachers would begin reading instruction in the morning and continue instruction in the afternoon. This provided better coverage of skills found in the basal.

The Houghton Mifflin basal series contained carefully planned sequential lessons for word-attack skills, vocabulary development, comprehension improvement, and study skills. At each grade level the textbook was divided into six thematic units, or "magazines". Each magazine introduced new skills to the students using direct instruction from the teacher. Students were provided guided practice as well as independent practice of the skill before being tested on it. Students were expected to answer 80% of the test questions correctly before moving on. If some students did not meet the minimum requirement for proficiency, the students were retaught the skill and retested while the rest of the class was given enrichment work. Once all students had mastered a skill, they read a short selection from the textbook which provided an opportunity to use the skill in context. After the students read the selection, discussed it, and were checked for comprehension, new skills were introduced and taught. This cycle continued as students worked their way through the magazine. Lessons were built into each magazine which revisited previous skills learned and provided additional practice of those skills.

By 1988 the fifth and sixth grade reading teachers had become frustrated with this reading program. They were concerned that the teaching and testing of skills in the basal readers often took three or four days to complete while actual reading and discussing of literature was limited to a day or two per week. This emphasis on skill development left little time for teachers to engage students in literature appreciation or reading for pleasure and fun. The majority of students were not utilizing the library or reading outside of the classroom. Reading instruction seemed limited to paper and pencil tasks and the desire to



read in real-life situations had dwindled. To make matters worse, the reading selections found in the basal readers were either stories commissioned by Houghton Mifflin which contained one-dimensional characters placed in artificial conflicts or novel excerpts that had been adapted to remove challenging vocabulary and complex or mature themes. Students no longer viewed reading instruction as interesting or exciting but merely as a form of drudgery that had no connection to real life. As a result, the fifth and sixth grade reading teachers began looking for ways to rekindle the love of reading without losing skill instruction.

The teachers of the BCLUW middle school began reading in professional teaching publications and hearing in the media about a new trend in reading instruction that was gaining national attention. This new trend had been dubbed the “whole language” approach to literacy. They began a close investigation of whole language as a possible solution to their problem.

### Rationale

As the BCLUW teachers learned more about the whole language philosophy, they learned that it was based upon the premise that children acquire oral and written language through actual usage, not through practicing its separate components. Oral language is learned naturally when children are immersed in speech from infancy. Children will also learn written language when they are immersed in it at school. The whole language philosophy kept language learning intact. Reading, writing, talking, and listening were natural parts of every lesson. Skills were not taught in isolation.

The whole language philosophy was also child-centered. Language lessons were geared to meet individual interests and needs. The teacher acted as a facilitator, an observer who led the students to discover essential facts, concepts, and skills. The curriculum was flexible and was organized around broad themes within which children could explore their individual interests and make personal choices as to what they would read.

A whole language literacy program was literature based and context rich. Students gained literacy naturally as they read complete works of children’s literature in their original form. These texts were geared toward the differing developmental and intellectual levels of each individual. Quality works of literature were provided that would stimulate the

student's desire to read. Specific reading skills were taught within the context of this rewarding material so that children would have the ability to transfer the skills to real reading situations. Students were also encouraged to write in order to clarify their thoughts and practice the use of language. This allowed students to become authors themselves and to learn the conventions of writing.

Talking and activity was also encouraged. Students needed to talk and have verbal interaction with others to facilitate thinking, reading, and writing. They needed opportunities to use language while actively involved in structuring their own learning. The activities had specific objectives and followed a plan for reinforcing concepts. As students talked about what they were doing, the teacher listened and observed the learning that was taking place. There was also time for quiet purposeful reading, writing, and reflection built into the daily schedule.

Students in whole language classrooms felt that they were capable. The program focused on the student's strengths. Teaching and materials were accommodated to fit the students in order to better enable them to learn and to attain the requisite knowledge and background to acquire and expand their literacy. Teachers also used a variety of teaching methodologies judiciously to facilitate this learning. Large group, small group, and individual learning situations were consistently incorporated into the program to meet the learning styles of all students.

### Purpose

A whole language literacy program would promote individuality by insuring daily priority time for independent reading and writing. It would assist students in making connections between personal experience and written text. It would also encourage students to take control of their own learning by making decisions about selecting their own reading materials, their writing, and assessing their own progress.

A whole language literacy program would promote social interaction. It would develop a literary community within the classroom. It would extend that community beyond the classroom to include family and community members. It would be flexible and allow for varied grouping. It would also explore cultural differences.

A whole language literacy program would promote communication. It would create

opportunities to hear and talk about written language. It would recognize and build upon the complimentary processes of reading, writing, speaking, and listening.

A whole language literacy program would promote thinking. It would provide students with strategies to unlock and create meaning in a text. It would develop creative thinking skills. It would develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills. It would also ask students to apply thinking skills independently to a wide range of materials.

Finally, a whole language literacy program would promote enjoyment. It would develop an awareness within the students that reading, writing, speaking, and listening can enhance and extend personal interests. It would offer a wide variety of reading materials. It would encourage exploration of a wide range of audience and genre in writing. It would also provide frequent opportunities for students to use language for personal pleasure. The end-result would be life-long readers.

#### Relevant Terms

**book talk-** an opportunity for students to verbally summarize books they have recently read and share their reactions with the entire class.

**checkpoints-** questions developed by the teacher which require students to pause at specific places in a trade book being read by the class and to reflect on what they have read.

Students answer the questions in writing in their learning logs.

**learning log-** a personalized notebook in which students reflect on what they have been reading and connect it to their own personal experiences.

**million dollar words-** words chosen by the students from their reading that they find interesting, cannot pronounce, or do not understand.

**mini-lesson-** a short lesson introducing a skill to the students which will build strategies for reading and writing. References to the skill are tied directly to the trade book being read by the students in class.

**outside reading-** books chosen and read by students outside of the classroom.

**reading skills-** a daily 42 minute reading class for grades five and six at the BCLUW middle school that implements a traditional approach for the instruction of word-attack skills, vocabulary development, comprehension improvement, and study skills using a basal reading series.

- reading workshop-** a daily 42 minute reading class for grades five and six at the BCLUW middle school that implements a whole language approach for the instruction of reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills using entire works of quality children's literature.
- thematic web-** a group of trade books based on a central theme related to students' interests and experiences.
- related literature-** trade books related to a web theme or written by a featured author which are used as supplementary outside reading.
- trade book-** a book written and published specifically for children or adolescents and easily accessible through libraries, book stores, and book clubs.
- web book-** a trade book which is part of a thematic web and is read and discussed by a small group of students in a reading workshop class.
- whole class book-** a trade book read and discussed by all of the students in a reading workshop class.

## Chapter 2: Methodology

### Review of Professional Literature

An ongoing trend in reading and language arts for grades K-6 has been the implementation of whole language in many schools. However, some educators and parents are still confused about whole language. Is whole language a method or a practice? Is whole language only used in elementary schools? How are students grouped for instruction? What kind of learning environment is found in a whole language classroom? What materials are used? What kind of daily routines are established? Are skills taught and how? What is the role of the teacher? How is whole language assessed? Why has there been a backlash against whole language in the media of late? How does a school begin implementing a whole language program? These are all reasonable questions that must be considered.

Whole language is not a method or a practice. It is a philosophy. It is a set of beliefs that language is acquired through actual usage, not through practicing its separate parts (Altwerger, Edelsky, and Flores, 1987; Church, 1996; Cochran, 1989; Myers and Hilliard, 1997; Smith and Teepe, 1996; Toliver, 1990). Whole language instruction is based on the premise that babies are immersed in language from the moment they are born, and that they acquire oral language through actually using it. The assumption is that this natural method of acquiring oral language provides a model for learning to read and write (Altwerger et al.; Tunnell and Jacobs, 1989). Students will learn to read and write by engaging in meaningful, integrated language arts activities that require students to do more than fill in skill and drill worksheets (Myers and Hilliard, 1997; Pace, 1995; Slaughter, 1988). Students will come to enjoy reading and writing when teachers allow students to explore the underlying processes of language forms (Mosenthal, 1989; Myers and Hilliard). This participatory mode of learning will give the students a sense of empowerment over their own learning (Slaughter).

The whole language philosophy is especially well-suited for middle schools. Myers and Hilliard (1997) have concluded, "The idea of 'wholeness', which focuses on meeting not only the academic needs of the child, but also his or her psychological, developmental and emotional needs through curricular and extracurricular programs, has

long been common to middle school theory.” Pace (1995) has noted that true middle school curriculums include a learner-centered environment, an integrative curriculum, and utilize appropriate evaluation processes that emphasize learning goals. Whole language instruction meets those criteria and can be successfully implemented in middle schools.

Learning in a whole language classroom will be most productive when students are grouped heterogeneously. Atwell (1998) has found that instead of accommodating one ability level in a whole language classroom, heterogeneous classrooms expose students to a wide range of knowledge, abilities, attitudes, interests, and experiences. Atwell also determined that when surveyed, many students favored the classes in which they routinely collaborate with other students. In school students are looking for what matters in life, and as students get older and more mature, they realize that there are benefits to working collaboratively with all sorts of people (Pace, 1995). Therefore, large group, small group, and individual teaching/learning situations are integrated into whole language instruction (Myers and Hilliard, 1997). This variety of learning approaches accommodate the different learning styles found within a single classroom (Carbo, 1996). Students work cooperatively, not competitively, because learning is more likely to happen when students learn from and with other students (Atwell; Pace). Research has also concluded that the more students use a variety of learning modalities, the better they understand skills and concepts (Atwell; Cochran, 1989).

Beyond grouping considerations, a whole language teacher considers the physical environment of the classroom. The whole language classroom is a print-rich environment in which children must hear and use language in a meaningful manner (Atwell, 1998; Myers and Hilliard, 1997). Shapiro (1996) has noted that, “Teachers must provide a nurturing literacy environment that emulates the safe and supportive environment of the home.” Students are free to move around the room to find and use materials as needed. Atwell has concluded that when students are free to find and use the materials they need, they experience less fidgeting, less restlessness, and less boredom.

A whole language classroom contains a variety of reading and writing materials located throughout the room for student use (Altwerger et al., 1987; Pace, 1995; Toliver, 1990). Among the materials are trade books and other multi-leveled high-impact reading

material which will catch the interests of today's students (Burke-Hengen, 1995; Carbo, 1996; Myers and Hilliard, 1997). This literature should be easily accessible and written in natural language (Tunnell and Jacobs, 1989). Altwerger et al. (1987) have stated that language use always occurs in a real-life situation, and real-life situations are critical to meaning-making. Therefore, a truly integrated whole language curriculum utilizes reading materials organized around problems and issues (Pace). As Myers and Hilliard put it, "Find out what interests students and use that information to structure the curriculum." Research has shown that such literature-based reading programs have resulted in the promotion of reading growth, as well as improving students' perceptions of the reading progress (Shapiro, 1996).

A whole language teacher establishes a daily routine that necessitates the use of print (Toliver, 1990). The students are provided with the time and opportunity to practice language in context. Time is allotted daily for self-selected reading (Carbo, 1996; Cochran, 1989; Tunnell and Jacobs, 1989). Allowing students to select their own reading materials will foster a positive attitude towards reading (Tunnell and Jacobs). Allowing readers to select their own books will also have an impact on students' fluency, reading rate, comprehension, involvement, and appreciation for what they read (Atwell, 1998). Time is also allotted for oral reading. Cochran noted that reading aloud to the students daily for 10 to 20 minutes will make a dramatic difference in the students' future reading success. Oral reading helps students develop fluency while associating meaning and expression to the printed word. Daily reading aloud from enjoyable trade books can be the key that unlocks literacy growth for many students (Carbo; Myers and Hilliard, 1997; Tunnell and Jacobs).

In addition to reading, the daily routine in a whole language classroom provides students time to write for a variety of purposes and audiences (Altwerger et al. 1987; Myers and Hilliard, 1997; Tunnell and Jacobs, 1989). Strickland and Morrow (1990) suggest using the students' own experiences as a valuable resource of ideas to write about with emphasis on uniqueness of content over the mechanics of writing. Mosenthal (1989) agrees that it is essential to "empower" students by acknowledging the students' own experiences and interpretations and by fostering their natural language abilities. Daily journals provide a perfect forum for students to write about their experiences and points of

view, especially when they write about what they are reading in class (Cochran, 1989, Slaughter, 1988). Journals help foster students' ability to connect literature with their own lives and increase comprehension when the teacher encourages students to include personal reactions to, questions about, and reflections on what they have read (Fulps and Young, 1995). Atwell (1998) and Burke-Hengen (1995) also see many benefits to keeping daily journals in the whole language classroom. Journal writing gives students an opportunity to consider their thinking and spark new insights. The daily journal provides the teacher a means of responding to every reader by writing comments in their journals. This written exchange between the teacher and the students helps them look deeper into the content of the books they are reading and encourages them to reconsider and develop their thoughts about the text. Because daily journal writing does provide so many benefits, journals should be shared, praised, and valued by both the teacher and students as the important work of emerging readers and writers (Burke-Hengen; Strickland and Morrow). Indeed, research has shown that such a whole language approach to teaching can proficiently develop students' writing skills (Burke-Hengen; Shapiro, 1996).

As well as providing time to read and write, a whole language teacher sets aside time in the daily routine for verbal interaction. Myers and Hilliard (1997) have noted that, "Whole language calls for interaction among learners through reading, writing, speaking, and listening." Children need to talk to facilitate thinking, reading, and writing. Talking about literature with the teacher and peers is crucial to students' development as readers (Atwell 1998; Church, 1996).

During the daily routine, the whole language teacher also finds time for the formal instruction of language skills. This formal instruction places emphasis on making meaning or sense out of oral and written communication (Altwerger et al., 1987; Church, 1996; Myers and Hilliard, 1997; Toliver, 1990). Tunnell and Jacobs (1989) have concluded that good readers tend to define reading as making meaning out of the text, while poor readers view it as a process of converting symbol to sound. Poor readers will need help in acquiring meaning-making skills. Tunnell and Jacobs suggest that the quality children's literature found in most whole language classrooms provide teachers with a meaningful context for teaching specific reading skills. Carbo (1996) cautions, however, that direct



instruction should be presented in small doses and should not be presented in isolation. In addition, research has demonstrated that students bring with them knowledge about print and emerging abilities in both reading and writing (Burke-Hengen, 1995; Church; Shapiro, 1996). Therefore, formal skill instruction in the whole language classroom builds upon the students' prior knowledge and the language strengths of the learner. It helps the students integrate and become more flexible in their use of skills to comprehend the books they are reading (Burke-Hengen; Slaughter, 1988). Formal instruction is based on ongoing observation and evaluation of students. Thus, whole language provides a framework for learner-based instruction (Atwell, 1998; Carbo; Pace, 1995; Slaughter).

A valuable resource for determining which skills should be taught can be found in the scope and sequence charts located in basal reading textbooks (McCallum, 1988). The lessons found in basal textbooks often provide a wide range of reading related skills from diagnosis to decoding and literary appreciation. It has been noted that the most comprehensive reading instruction combines whole language with comprehension techniques found in basal readers (Cochran, 1989; Smith and Teepe, 1996; Slaughter, 1988). Carbo (1996) agrees stating, "It's generally not advisable to use a single approach to reading exclusively."

Besides formal instruction, the whole language teacher provides students with informal instruction as they need and request it throughout the daily routine (Toliver, 1990). Whole language teachers see students as individuals and teach to the needs and intentions of each (Atwell, 1998; Church, 1996; Smith and Teepe, 1996). The students' own needs and experiences will provide the motivation for participating in reading, writing, speaking, listening, and viewing activities. Skills can be taught in the context of language use as students indicate a need for them. The teacher and student work together to determine what can be assimilated and accommodated by the student (Tunnell and Jacobs, 1989). Language skills come to be viewed as whole processes, and the teacher focuses on how successfully the students use these processes (Altwerger et al., 1987; Carbo, 1996; Harp, 1988; Myers and Hilliard, 1997). The teacher conveys a sense that learning language is the responsibility of the students by getting them actively involved in structuring their own learning (Atwell; Burke-Hengen, 1995; Church; Routman, 1997;

Slaughter, 1988). Students are allowed to develop at their own rate and can be given longer periods of time to learn in order to work toward their own solutions (Mosenthal, 1989; Slaughter). Students are encouraged to take risks (Myers and Hilliard). As a result students will become decision makers and independent thinkers (Routman).

The role of the whole language teacher during the daily routine is that of a facilitator to guide the students' learning (Myers and Hilliard, 1997). Language use is demonstrated by the teacher. The teacher reads and writes with the students and serves as a model (Cochran, 1989; Myers and Hilliard; Tunnell and Jacobs, 1989). Atwell (1998) found that if the teacher can impart to the students an honest passion for language both spoken and written, then the students will trust that the processes they are learning have value and will love what they learn. Atwell also explains that the more one's teaching reflects personal tastes, knowledge, and passions, the richer and more personal the students' relationship with language become.

Assessment in the whole language classroom focuses on what learners can do and is process oriented rather than product oriented (Altwerger et al.; Harp, 1988). Whole language classrooms focus on the students' capabilities rather than deficiencies, and assessment is interwoven with and evolves from the daily routine (Pace, 1995). Children in whole language classrooms feel they are capable. Cutting (1992) believes balanced evaluation of students language skills should include observation of student progress, descriptive and documentary records of student achievement, self-evaluation by the student, student conferences with the teacher, opportunities for creating personal student responses, and portfolios of student work.

Despite the growing body of research that lends credence to the use of whole language in public schools, there has been a backlash in public perception of whole language. In particular, controversy rages over the use of whole language instead of phonics to teach reading instruction. Parents, politicians, policy makers, and the media have been bashing whole language while riding a wave of public sentiment to "turn back to basics". These attacks have taken hold during a generally conservative political period in the United States. Attacks on whole language instruction often portray it as a failure, the unfortunate consequence of a liberal agenda (Bialostok, 1997).

A major cause of the misconception of whole language has been the difficulty of schools to define exactly what whole language is and why schools use it (Myers and Hilliard, 1997). Routman (1997) has stated, "It has been the misinterpretation, poor application, and inadequate articulation of whole language, rather than its sound principles and practices, that is to blame." Many schools that experimented with whole language in the late 1980's and early 1990's cosmetically changed their reading programs by throwing out basal textbooks and buying trade books, but spent little time putting the research and theory behind whole language into practice. As a result, little true change occurred in these schools because teachers received spotty professional development, were allowed little time for collaboration and reflection, and did not consistently monitor how they taught or how their students were learning. Due to media attention of these lackluster results, much of the public has assumed that whole language has been just another passing fad.

The notion that whole language is a fad is encouraged by some researchers who claim there is a lack of quantitative, or experimental, research to support the claims of whole language advocates. Groff (1994) has even gone so far as to conclude, "In effect, experimental research has judged the major tenets of whole language to be erroneous."

Low test scores on standardized reading tests have also fueled the controversy. Low test scores are used by critics of whole language as a means of proving that our nations' schools need to get "hooked" on phonics. Critics often cite low test scores as proof that whole language has failed our students and drastic measures must be taken before our students are no longer able to compete in a global society. This kind of fear has been capitalized on by many politicians (Bialostok, 1997). In order to appease a growing constituency calling for educational reform, state legislators have been seeking teachers and researchers who will support the passing of laws requiring reading curriculums to include some form of explicit and systematic phonics instruction. They believe phonics teaching must be systematic and intense and that phonics knowledge must precede reading for meaning. Politicians are also legislating for phonics instruction that is highly sequential, organized, direct, and predictable (Carbo, 1996). They believe students need strong analytic reading styles and that whole language instruction is too disorganized and haphazard to produce analytical learners.

To address the charges that have been leveled against whole language, advocates of whole language learning have been striving to educate the public with a uniform definition of its principles. Most language educators now agree that students have holistic reading styles and learn better when activities are fun, make use of popular literature, emphasize hands-on learning, and create opportunities for peer interaction (Carbo, 1996). Most language educators believe that students should learn phonics and language arts skills *while* reading whole texts, not *beforehand* (Routman, 1997). It has been determined that learners often find that phonics instruction alone is confusing and boring (Carbo).

For those who maintain that whole language practices lack research to support its use in public schools, Shapiro (1996) points out that much of the research, both quantitative and qualitative, shows that when whole language is applied by good teachers, it is a viable instructional alternative and truly benefits the literacy skills development of students. One study (McDonald and Burris, 1995) has indicated "that instruction, student performance, teacher performance, student/teacher rapport, teacher/administrator rapport, creation of peer support groups, and long term benefits were affected in a positive way by the utilization of the 'whole language' philosophy which incorporated an integrated curriculum and literature-based reading approach." For those who complain that much of the research on whole language is qualitative, and therefore not easily replicated, Bialostok (1997) explains, "Teachers don't operate within tightly controlled laboratory-like environments . . . far removed from the teacher and student and the reality of classroom life." Indeed, qualitative research is often used to investigate certain kinds of educational problems and questions that do not lend themselves well to numerical analysis. This type of research involves intensive data collection over an extended period of time in a naturalistic setting. As Gay (1996) points out, "The rationale behind the use of qualitative inquiry is the research-based belief that behavior is significantly influenced by the environment in which it occurs. In other words, behavior occurs in a context, and a more complete understanding of the behavior requires understanding of the context in which it occurs."

Many researchers feel that quantitative research findings on whole language are misleading because they do not take into account the influence of whole language

classrooms on the performance of the students within them. Even critics of qualitative research concede qualitative means are necessary when special conditions prevent the use of controlled scientific inquiry (Groff, 1994). Therefore, meaningful research on whole language can be derived from qualitative methods and is of no less value than quantitative research.

As for the much publicized low scores on standardized reading tests, much of this controversy has been the result of incomplete reporting by the media. The media continues to interpret low test scores as a result of public schools' inability to teach decoding skills and the "basics" of reading. Yet, item analysis of test questions often reveal that students can decode and comprehend literally, they just have difficulty thinking about and constructing knowledge from the information that they read (Routman, 1997). It is generally assumed by standardized test writers that reading consists of separate skills (word-attack, vocabulary, sentence comprehension, passage comprehension) that can be tested separately. It is also assumed that these subtests, when judged together, accurately reflect the total act of reading because meaning resides in the printed text and should lead to single right answers (Edelsky, 1996). Edelsky believes that it is much more accurate to assess students' reading performance through means that reflect the reader's response. Reader response theory maintains that reading is a transaction between the cultural/historical knowledge of a student and the cues offered in the context of print which lead to meaning (Edelsky). Fulps and Young (1995) believe assessments that account for unique reader responses provide students with an opportunity to respond and interpret their reading personally as they use their background knowledge and acquired skills to construct meaning. Cutting (1992) suggests that providing opportunities for students to create their own personal responses to literature is just as valid as any test in assessing students' understanding of what they read.

Clearly, teachers must do more than teach students how to decode words. Phonics is just one of the cueing systems, along with the meaning and the structure of the text, that students use when they read (Routman, 1997). Therefore, teachers must also teach students how to read and write for meaning and how to think critically to solve problems. Research has shown that phonics instruction should be integrated into whole language

curriculums, not replace it.

The nature of whole language requires that teachers understand its principles and commit themselves to them. Teachers who have made the transition to whole language have internalized a body of knowledge and a belief system which has given them a sense of ownership which they will not easily abandon (Goodman, 1989; Pace, 1995). However, whole language is not something to be imposed upon teachers but should remain an option (Bialostok, 1997). Weaver (1992) has stated, "Because whole language is a belief system, it cannot simply be mandated within a school or school system." Smith and Teepe (1996) concur. Therefore, the whole language philosophy needs to be understood by administrators, teachers, parents, and students.

To understand the philosophy of whole language, the principal and teachers must work together as a team to research whole language learning. The team should find as much research as possible about whole language and should pay careful attention to those authors who have implemented whole language into actual classrooms (Routman, 1997; Smith and Teepe, 1996). As part of its research, the school should also send the whole language team to some good reading seminars and let them visit other schools that are using whole language (Carbo, 1996). Benefits and drawbacks of whole language will soon become apparent. It is imperative for the school to share current research findings about language learning with parents so that they can help the school determine if whole language is in the best interest of the students (Carbo; Routman). Schools wishing to implement whole language need to create a climate for change and a shared culture that reflects this philosophy. Above all, schools must cultivate respect for one another's needs and concerns within the school and community (Burke-Hengen, 1995). Those involved must be willing to "live" whole language (Weaver, 1992).

"Living" whole language will require educators to make a paradigm shift from the *transmission* of learning to the *transaction* of learning (Pace, 1995; Routman, 1997). The transmission paradigm used in many schools places the teacher in a role of dispensing curriculum while students passively practice skills and memorize facts. Whole language educators advocate a transactional paradigm in which teachers negotiate curriculum with students while they actively construct concepts and meaning. Change cannot take place

unless schools make significant modifications to long-held philosophies and practices.

For change to occur, a successful whole language program requires at least a year of planning (Burke-Hengen, 1995; Routman, 1997; Smith and Teepe, 1996). If the school is serious about whole language, it must develop a policy and statement of goals that support and encourage whole language learning (Routman; Smith and Teepe; Weaver, 1992). While teachers should agree on the program's goals, everyone must realize that implementation strategies will be diverse and will reflect teachers' individual styles. Administrators must allow teachers to proceed at their own pace and should encourage experimentation within the whole language structure, while demonstrating a respect for the teachers' judgments and allowing them to take risks (Bialostok, 1997; Routman; Smith and Teepe; Weaver). There must also be opportunities made for teachers to get continuing professional development in the teaching of phonics, spelling, and reading skills (Routman). This will increase the likelihood that teachers will develop the skills and resources to make the whole language program a success. Routman contends, "Whole language classrooms rely on highly knowledgeable teachers- not prescriptive manuals of how and what to teach."

When teachers agree on the program's goals, they will need time to develop instructional activities and obtain appropriate materials. The school will need a well-stocked school library, knowledgeable librarian, classroom libraries that include hundreds of books from a variety of sources, as well as a professional library for teachers, administrators, and parents (Carbo, 1996; Routman, 1997).

Once a curriculum has been prepared and materials have been gathered, teachers must be willing to model the kinds of change advocated by whole language proponents. Shapiro (1996) has found that, "Teachers must be seen to be active users of reading/writing skills and strategies." They must emphasize the fun of reading and express their enthusiasm for teaching (Carbo, 1996). Atwell (1998) agrees, "Students are more likely to learn in cooperation with knowledgeable teachers who are enthusiastic about sharing what they know."

Teachers and administrators together must help parents understand what the school is doing and why. Then they must enlist their support and involvement. Parents

should feel welcome in the school, and their feedback should be valued. Sending home a school newsletter can keep parents informed of school activities and can extend an invitation for parents to volunteer help and support of the whole language program. It can solicit their help in setting an example for family literacy at home (Burke-Hengen, 1995). The newsletter should explain that the traditional disciplines of phonics, spelling, and handwriting are still being taught as part of the whole language program (Routman, 1997). Articles should also be written and submitted by educators who want to make sure that the public receives accurate information about the school's whole language program. These articles should be written clearly and should avoid the use of professional jargon. In addition to sending out newsletters, the school should invite local reporters into the classrooms so that they can see firsthand how whole language benefits students. The school must do everything in its power to ensure that the media fairly and accurately represents what is going on inside the school (Routman).

After a whole language program has been implemented in a school, there must be some system for evaluating the program's progress. It is essential that the evaluation reflects the program's goals. Of course, standardized reading tests are one measure many schools will use, but standardized tests may not accurately reflect the goals of a school's whole language program. Routman (1997) found that "over attention to standardized testing gives the message that these tests alone show achievement." There are ways to determine the success of a whole language program beyond student achievement on standardized tests. Smith and Teepe (1996) suggest that administrators will need to schedule time once a week during the school day for teachers to discuss successes and failures. Smith and Teepe found that the principal can often evaluate a program's effectiveness by attending these weekly teachers' meetings and by visiting classrooms regularly. Such first hand observation will reveal the strengths and weakness of the program. Smith and Teepe also suggest that schools can measure and compare other forms of unobtrusive data such as monthly circulation reports from the school media center, parent comments, and anecdotal evidence of student behavior. All such information should be shared with the staff so that they can interpret the data and make adjustments to their teaching.



If a school is willing to follow the steps outlined above, the transition to whole language instruction should be a smooth one.

### Procedures

In early April of 1989, a fifth grade teacher from BCLUW and I visited the Iowa Reading Association's annual spring conference in Des Moines and attended a whole language seminar presented by two teachers from the West Des Moines Community School District. They spoke about their district's first through sixth grade reading curriculum entitled Beyond the Basal which was based on a whole language approach to reading instruction and not on a basal reading series. The West Des Moines reading curriculum was a comprehensive literacy program that based reading, writing, speaking, and listening activities on entire works of quality children's literature.

Excited by information learned at the seminar, the teachers from the BCLUW middle school tried to find other schools in Iowa using a whole language curriculum. However, the Beyond the Basal program was the only concrete model of a whole language reading curriculum in the state that the teachers of BCLUW could find. As a result, the BCLUW middle school principal contacted the language arts coordinator for the West Des Moines Community School District and arranged for the fifth grade teacher and myself to meet with the coordinator in late April to learn more about the program.

At that meeting, the West Des Moines' language arts coordinator provided the Beyond the Basal handbooks used by their fifth and sixth grade teachers for reading. The handbooks contained the philosophy and goals of the whole language program, the scope and sequence of language skills taught, a list of necessary trade books and materials, detailed units based on the trade books, and guidelines on how to implement the language activities within each unit. Time was spent with the coordinator discussing the handbooks and how the program was being implemented in West Des Moines. At the end of this meeting, the language arts coordinator invited BCLUW teachers to observe West Des Moines reading classes and see first-hand the Beyond the Basal program in action. A school visitation was arranged for early May.

The BCLUW middle school principal appointed the fifth grade teacher and myself to visit reading classrooms in West Des Moines. The entire day of the visitation was spent

observing several lower, middle, and upper elementary classes during reading instruction. Students were interviewed to determine how they felt about reading class and were asked to compare it to the way they had been taught before. Students were overwhelmingly enthusiastic and replied that they enjoyed reading class because they got to read “real” books instead of textbooks. They preferred the variety of individual, small group, and large group whole language activities to doing worksheets. The students felt they were good readers who were successful at school because the teacher cared about their learning. They no longer viewed reading as boring drudgery.

Teachers were interviewed and asked what they thought were the strengths of the program. They felt using trade books freed the teachers from the restrictions of the basal reader and provided students with a real context for learning language. They felt that the students were more interested in reading trade books with interesting characters, plots, and themes than reading “watered-down” basal stories. The teachers also felt that whole language writing and speaking activities provided a better measure of language assessment than the worksheets and multiple choice tests which accompanied the basal readers. Yet some West Des Moines teachers were concerned that the lack of worksheet-type activities would result in a reduction of scores on standardized tests which typically use a multiple choice format. These fears were unfounded when it was later determined that the West Des Moines students’ reading scores on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills experienced “no significant change during or after the transition to whole language” (Traw, 1996). Another concern some of the teachers shared was the great commitment of time which had been necessary to develop and implement whole language in their classrooms. In spite of these concerns, most of the reading teachers in the West Des Moines school district felt the benefits of whole language outweighed the disadvantages.

In mid-May, the fifth grade teacher and I presented a summary of our visitation and the Beyond the Basal program to the BCLUW middle school principal and reading teachers. The handbooks from West Des Moines were shown and summarized. Pros and cons of whole language were discussed. There was concern about the time commitment and the possibility of a decline in reading scores on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills if a whole language curriculum was adopted and the basal textbook completely dropped. In the end, it

was suggested that fifth and sixth grade teachers continue using the basal text skills approach for one 42 minute reading class each day and to try a whole language approach during the other 42 minute class period. During the traditional class period, the teachers would focus primarily on the teaching and testing of skills using the basal text. During the whole language class period, the teachers would use trade books and place emphasis on reading, writing, speaking, and listening activities that would encourage students to become life-long readers. Since there were three reading teachers at each grade level, students could still be grouped by ability for skill instruction yet be placed in one of three heterogeneous groups for whole language instruction. The ability grouped students would stay with the same teacher the entire school year but the heterogeneous groups would be taught by each one of the three reading teachers for 12 weeks. By teaching whole language in trimesters the students would rotate among the three teachers, thus allowing each teacher to prepare only one unit to be retaught three times. This solved the problem of a large time commitment on the part of the teacher. It was hoped that this might provide a more balanced reading program for the fifth and sixth grade students while exposing them to a variety of teaching methods and styles. The reading teachers and the principal unanimously decided to try implementing such a program the next fall. It was decided that the fifth and sixth grade reading teachers would continue to work together as a committee over the summer to adapt West Des Moines' Beyond the Basal program to meet BCLUW's needs. The goal would be to have a program that would be ready to start using at the beginning of the 1989-1990 school year.

For ease of reference, the committee decided that the class period which utilized the traditional approach would be called "reading skills", while the class utilizing the whole language approach would be referred to as "reading workshop". Copies were made of the Beyond the Basal handbooks for each fifth and sixth grade reading teacher and they were directed to have the handbooks read before the committee met again in June. The handbooks would familiarize each teacher with the entire program and would be used as a blueprint for developing BCLUW's whole language curriculum.

At our next meeting it was determined that each reading workshop teacher would be responsible for developing a twelve week unit comprised of one whole class book to be

read by the entire group of students in a section and four web books which shared a theme to be read by small groups later in the unit. Each teacher picked a whole class book and thematic web unit from the Beyond the Basal handbooks to match their interests, and whenever possible, classroom sets of trade books the middle school already owned were utilized. The fifth grade whole class books chosen were:

Bridge to Terabithia by Katherine Paterson

Dear Mr. Henshaw by Beverly Cleary

If I Were In Charge of the World by Judith Viorst

The thematic webs chosen for fifth grade were “Choices and Challenges”, “Funnybones”, and “Science Fiction”. The web books for the theme “Choices and Challenges” were:

Call It Courage by Armstrong Sperry

Indian in the Cupboard by Lynne Reid Banks

The Pet-Sitting Peril by Willo Davis Roberts

Snow Treasure by Marie McSwigan

The web books for the theme “Funnybones” were:

The Great Brain by John D. Fitzgerald

I Want to Go Home by Gordan Korman

Skinnybones by Barbara Park

The Winter Worm Business by Patricia Giff

The web books for the theme “Science Fiction” were:

Fat Men From Space by Daniel Manus Pinkwater

The Forgotten Door by Alexander Key

The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe by C.S. Lewis

The Secret of NIMH by Robert C. O'Brien

The sixth grade whole class books chosen were:

The Call of the Wild by Jack London

A Light in the Forest by Conrad Richter

Solitary Blue by Cynthia Voight

The thematic webs chosen for sixth grade were “Alone”, “Escape”, and “Wilderness”. The

web books for the theme "Alone" were:

The Door in the Wall by Marguerite De Angeli

Last Was Lloyd by Doris Smith

Swiss Family Robinson by Johann Wyss

Zia by Scott O'Dell

The web books for the theme "Escape" were:

The Alfred Summer by Jan Slepian

Escape From Warsaw by Ian Serraillier

Escape to Witch Mountain by Alexander Key

Trumpeter of Krakow by Eric Kelly

The web books for the theme "Wilderness" were:

Julie of the Wolves by Jean George

Lost in the Barrens by Farley Mowat

Rascal by Sterling North

Sign of the Beaver by Elizabeth Speare

Composite book lists were created to include a whole class book, web books, and the related literature for each thematic web. These lists were taken directly from Beyond the Basal, and titles were added from each individual's classroom collection. Books from classroom libraries were swapped among teachers to fill individual needs. The books not already owned by the school were then ordered. To meet this need for new materials, the school allotted \$2,000 out of its general fund to be spent on trade books for reading workshop. This amount was approximately double what the middle school was already spending on basal workbooks for reading skills. Whereas workbooks would be a yearly expense, it was hoped the trade books would have a shelf life of at least five years. After all materials had been purchased, the final dollar amount to initiate the reading workshop program fell just short of the \$2,000. Since initiating the program in 1989, the middle school has had to add new titles and replace books only once at a \$200 expense.

Copies of these book lists were sent to the school library and the public libraries in Beaman, Conrad, and Union. The head librarian of each library noted which books were in their collections and expressed a willingness to order copies of many books on the lists

that they did not own. These lists were then annotated as to the location of each book. Completed lists would be given to the students in the reading workshop sections at the beginning of each trimester. These lists would aid students in finding books that had already been checked out of the classroom or school library.

The reading workshop committee determined that students would be required to read books of their own choice outside of class. A variety of ways in which students could share books with the teachers and other students to get credit for what they had read was created. The committee also developed a plan that allowed students to use journals, or learning logs, to document their reactions to books read in class. Considerable time was then spent listing the skills from the scope and sequence charts of the Houghton Mifflin basal texts for fifth and sixth grades so that these list would provide an easy reference for planning short skill lessons, or mini-lessons, during reading workshop. Finally the committee determined that the students would be evaluated through anecdotal records of their behavior and class participation, their writings in the learning logs, their mastery of new vocabulary and language skills, the number of books read outside of class, and their ability to discuss literature intelligently. It was important to each of the fifth and sixth grade teachers to maintain a high degree of consistency in the way reading workshop would be taught and evaluated. The development of certain materials and methods that would be shared by all sections of reading workshop helped establish this consistency. The rest of the summer was spent by the teachers reading books for their individual units and planning the activities. By August, the teachers felt prepared to begin and decided clarifications could be further discussed through weekly meetings once school began, and revisions could be made when necessary.

### Chapter 3: The Project

As the middle school reading teachers at BCLUW spent the summer of 1989 preparing to teach reading workshop, it was determined that the reading workshop curriculum would follow a consistent and logical progression at both the fifth and sixth grade levels. Uniform procedures would be followed for starting the workshops, teaching the whole class and thematic web units, and assessing the students' progress.

#### Starting the Workshops

Each reading workshop teacher began the school year by having students complete a reading survey (Appendix A) taken from Atwell (1987). It was given to the students on the first day of school before any discussion was held about the reading workshop program. The students were told that the survey was not a test or an evaluation; therefore, they should respond as honestly and as openly as possible. One purpose of the survey was to provide the teachers with information about the students' reading habits and attitudes. The survey would be an important tool for the teacher to use in preparing mini-lessons for the class, individualizing instruction, facilitating discussions, grouping students, and making book recommendations. The second purpose of the survey was to help students self-evaluate how their attitudes and habits had changed during the school year as a result of reading workshop. To accomplish this purpose, the students would be instructed to complete the survey again in May. Then the first set of surveys would be returned to the students so that they could compare their responses. Thus, the initial surveys would be kept on file during the school year and would be passed to successive reading workshop teachers at the beginning of each trimester.

After the students completed the surveys, the teacher explained the purpose and rationale of reading workshop as outlined in chapter one. The students were given a copy of "Rules for Using Reading Workshop Time" (Appendix B) adapted from Atwell (1987). The rules were read and discussed by the teacher and class and would be used consistently by all workshop teachers. It was hoped consistent rules would provide for a smooth transition as students moved to a new workshop each trimester. Individual classroom rules already determined by the individual teachers were also discussed.

Next, the students were given gallon-sized reclosable freezer bags to store their

materials in. The students wrote their names on their bags with permanent black markers and were shown where the bags would be stored in the classroom. The students would not be permitted to take the bags out of the classroom unless makeup work needed to be completed at home. This would help reduce the possibility of books being lost and ensure that books, learning logs, pencils, handouts, and other materials would be in the classroom when needed. In addition, students were cautioned to take care of the bag to avoid a replacement fee.

The students then began assembling their learning logs. Each student had been instructed to bring a three-subject spiral notebook for this purpose. The students were told to glue their copy of "Rules for Using Reading Workshop Time" inside the front cover of their notebooks to be used as a reminder of these expectations.

A copy of "Books I Have Read" (Appendix C), a reading log sheet suggested by Atwell (1987), was distributed to the students, and they were asked to glue this copy inside the back cover of their notebooks. As described by Atwell, the students were told the purpose of this sheet:

This year you will be reading a lot. One thing readers often do is to keep track of their reading by making a list of the books and authors that they have read. Listing books will help you spot trends in your reading: what kinds of books you like at different points in your history as a fifth or sixth grader. Listing authors helps when you've particularly liked a book, because you have the author's name in your records and you can look for other good books by that author. Finally, it's interesting to see how long it takes to read certain books and whether the rate at which you read picks up through the year because your reading so much or finding more books you like.

Each time you finish a book outside of class, from now until June, record the title, author, type, number of pages, and date you finished the book on the "Books I Have Read" sheet. If you fill the sheet, there's a folder full of extra copies. All you need to do is ask the teacher for one. Staple the new sheet on top of the old one so that you can see the list of



books you've read, in order, as the year goes on. As books are added to the list, be sure to conference with the teacher about what you have read.

At the end of the term I'll ask you to go through your list and make recommendations to the teacher of favorite authors and titles. Over the summer the school may be able to buy copies of your recommended books to help restock the classroom library for next year's fifth and sixth graders.

The reading workshop committee had determined before the school year began that students would be required to read 600 pages of outside reading each trimester and would have to report to the teacher or class about the books they had read. This would be adjusted for students with special needs on an individual basis. The "Books I Have Read" list would be a simple way for the students to record their own progress in outside reading and would transfer ownership of the learning process to the students as well as assisting them in becoming active observers. Over the year, the students should be able to see patterns emerge in their own reading choices and development. The teacher would build time into the schedule each week to conference with the students about their lists. This systematic checking would help the teacher determine if the students were reading on their own and indicate patterns in subject matter, genres, book lengths, and authors. If an established pattern became apparent, the teacher would recommend other books to broaden the student's experience. The students' progress would also be recorded for evaluation purposes.

On the second day of school, the teacher shared with the students a variety of methods that could be used for reporting on outside reading. It was made clear to the students that no outside reading credit would be given until one type of report had been completed. These different methods promoted the use of writing, speaking, listening, and creativity.

The first option for reporting on outside reading would be a written book report. This method would furnish practice in writing. The students were given an instruction sheet developed by the middle school reading workshop committee on how to write an appropriate book report (Appendix D) which was glued on the page in their learning logs preceding the "Books I Have Read" list. The teacher read the instructions to the students

and modeled on the overhead how to write a good report by following these instructions. When a report was turned in, the teacher would read it and provide comments about what the student did well and what could be improved for future reports. If a report proved to be completely unsatisfactory, the student would be given an opportunity to rewrite it before being given credit. Students could turn in as many reports as they wished during the trimester.

A second option for reporting was an oral report, or "book talk". Book talks would provide an opportunity for students to practice speaking skills by verbally summarizing books they had recently read and sharing their reactions with the entire class. Book talks would be held every Friday for 20 or 25 minutes. A maximum of five students would be allowed to sign up for a book talk prior to each Friday. The students would be given three to five minutes each to share their summaries and reactions and would have to answer any questions about the book posed by other students. The students would be urged to prepare in advance. To aid students in preparing for a book talk, the teacher gave the students an outline (Appendix E) of questions adapted from Atwell (1987) to answer during a book talk. These outlines were glued on the first divider in the learning logs and were then read and discussed with the students. Next, the teacher demonstrated how to give a successful book talk by following the outline. Students were encouraged to give at least one book talk, but if this method of sharing was chosen too often, they would not be allowed to give more than three book talks per trimester. This would limit certain students from monopolizing this sharing time.

During book talks, the teacher would evaluate each student's presentation using a "Book Talk Evaluation" form (Appendix F) developed by the middle school reading workshop committee. This form listed nine areas in which the student would be rated on a scale of one to ten. A copy of this evaluation was glued on to the back of the first divider in each student's learning log. The teacher would use a different color of ink each time an individual student presented a book talk during the trimester and would list the date of that evaluation. After the book talk, the teacher would have a short conference with the student to discuss the strengths and weaknesses in the presentation. At the beginning of each successive trimester, a new rating sheet would be stapled over the previous one and

students would be allowed to give up to three more book talks during the next 12 weeks.

Finally, a third option for reporting on outside reading was introduced. Students would be allowed to develop a creative project related to a book and share that project with the teacher or other students. A list of 36 suggestions (Appendix G) developed by Atwell (1987) was given to the students and glued to the second divider of their learning logs. The list was then read to the students and discussed. Students would be provided with as many of the materials as needed for their projects upon request. After a project had been shared with the class, the teacher could require a conference with the student to determine that the entire book had been read or if the student's personal reaction to the book had not been made clear. Furthermore, students would be allowed to complete as many creative projects each trimester as they desired.

Thus, a simple, consistent, and predictable routine for outside reading was developed. It set the stage for active learning. Materials were designed by the reading workshop committee to be easily followed and were placed in certain parts of the learning logs to be easily found by all students and teachers. Once students learned how to use the different methods for reporting on outside reading and practiced them, the methods would be used throughout the school year. It was hoped that outside reading would help students develop reading habits that would continue the rest of their lives. The students would view themselves as readers and find themselves surrounded by others who were equally interested in reading. In essence, the classroom would become a literary community.

### Whole Class Reading

After the first few days of discussing expectations, modeling routines, assembling learning logs, and examining outside reading procedures, the teacher was ready to begin the whole class selection. Whole class reading would be the component of the reading workshop program during which all students would read the same book. Assisted reading would be available to special students through audio tapes and resource teachers working in the classroom as part of an inclusion program. The students would broaden their personal perspectives and become aware of others' point of view as they would read and react to the contents of a common text. Because the students were not grouped by ability for reading workshop, each student would feel the satisfaction of participating as an active member in a

community of learners. The students would gain confidence and self-respect from being part of a heterogeneous group and would learn from listening and participating in discussions and other activities related to the whole class book.

Each teacher planned to spend three or four weeks reading and working with the whole class selection. This selection would tie into an overall theme for the trimester. Each whole class unit would contain possible big ideas, prereading activities, checkpoints, follow-up activities, and a list of related books, stories and films.

The possible big ideas would be theme-related issues or concepts with which people of all ages could identify. During the prereading activities, the class could spend up to three days fully and carefully exploring these big ideas. They would be invited to share their understanding of the issues and concepts by relating personal experiences and offering opinions. Some activities would be structured for whole class discussion while others would be designed for small group interaction. The time devoted to the prereading activities and discussion of big ideas would be valuable in helping children focus their thinking.

Then the whole class books would be handed out to the students. That entire class period would be devoted to reading the first chapter or two with five to ten minutes left at the end for closure. This closure time would be spent discussing initial reactions, expectations, and any predictions the students might have about the rest of the book.

Checkpoints (Appendix H) for each whole class book used in the workshops were developed by the teachers. The checkpoints would be used after students had begun reading the book. Checkpoints would allow students time to pause and reflect on what they had read in the whole class book. Because students read at different paces, the teachers prepared the checkpoints in advance and handed out a list of the checkpoint page numbers and questions. Students were instructed to answer checkpoints in their learning logs as they were reached in their reading. Students would be allowed to read at their own pace and would not be required to stop reading when they reached a certain page.

When teachers wished to discuss the checkpoints with the class, they would wait until all students had reached it. The checkpoint question would then be displayed on the overhead or chalkboard and students would be given time to refer back to their learning

logs as a review. During discussion of the checkpoint, students would be reminded that if they were further ahead in the book than others, they were not to divulge any details that might ruin the story. It was also be the responsibility of the teachers to provide additional reading time or help when students fell behind the others and were having difficulty reaching the checkpoints in a timely manner.

Before the school year began, the reading workshop committee devised a daily routine that would be followed when reading whole class books. The first 20 minutes of the class period would be spent reading silently, working on vocabulary, and conferencing. While they were reading, the teachers would circulate among the students and spend a few minutes conferencing with individuals and making comments. Often it would only take seconds to talk with a student about the book, other times the teacher might spend a few minutes. During these mini-conferences, the teachers would ask open-ended questions, and comments would be non-judgmental. The teachers would demonstrate an active acceptance of what students said by reflecting or rephrasing, or by simply listening and nodding their heads. Students would feel secure and relaxed because the teachers' responses would say, "I think you have important things to say about the book, and I'm listening. What you have to say as a reader is important to me." As the teachers listened and responded, they would gain insights into the ways students learn and process information. The teachers would be able to expand their knowledge of the students' reading habits and tastes. Anecdotal notes reflecting these observations would provide information for future conferences with the students as well as a basis for reporting reading progress to parents.

In addition to reading and conferencing with the teacher during this time, students had been instructed to keep a list of "million dollar words" on a blank bookmark. These would be words chosen by the students from their reading that they found to be interesting, could not pronounce, or whose meaning they did not understand. Students would be required to add no less than one new word per day to their lists. During individual conferences the teacher would provide guidance in discovering the pronunciation of the word, its meaning, any multiple meanings, and how it fit into the context of the story. The teacher would encourage students to use context clues whenever possible to

learn about new words and to use the dictionary when necessary. Working with the million dollar words daily would increase the students' vocabularies as well as providing ample practice in word attack skills, use of context clues, and use of dictionaries.

After the first 20 minutes of class, the students would be given 10 minutes to reflect on their reading in their learning logs. The students would be given a question about the story to consider. Examples might include, "What changes are occurring in the main character and why? How did you feel when a certain event occurred and why? What did you like or not like about how the author described the setting and why?" Questions would be written on the overhead or chalkboard for the students to refer to as they write. Then the students would be instructed to open their learning logs to the appropriate section (a separate section of their notebooks would be used for each trimester), find the next blank page, and write the date and the page number reached when they finished reading their book at the top of the page. The students would then be told to write a full-page answer to the question. Requiring the students to write this much would force them to expand their thinking on paper. They would also be told to focus on personal responses that explore and build connections between the student and what had just been read. All opinions stated in the entries would need to be supported with details from the story or their personal experiences. The teacher would stress the importance of content and fluency over the mechanics of their writing.

The reading workshop committee determined that the teachers would respond to the students learning log entries with written comments. The teacher would function as an interested reader, responding to the students' ideas and offering suggestions that would help students develop the ability to write about what they know and help them gain control over their own writing processes. To make it practical to manage the number of logs needing responses, the reading workshop committee decided to reduce the number of journals checked each day. This would allow the teacher to respond in greater depth and to closely check the students' progress. The teachers assigned the students a number between one and five. Every day the teacher would collect one set (for example: all journals marked with a one) of learning logs instead of the entire group. This would also ensure that the teachers were reading each log at least once a week.

The last 12 minutes of each class period would be spent in sharing thoughts from their learning logs. This time could also be used to discuss checkpoints as a large group or having the students talk to a partner or small group about what they read and their reaction to it. This would give them time to clarify any new ideas brought up in their reading. Small group volunteers would be asked to summarize their discussions for the whole group. The teacher would draw the individual ideas together and always relate them back to the big ideas discussed at the beginning of the unit.

The basic routine of 20 minutes for reading, 10 minutes for reflection and response, and 12 minutes for sharing would be followed when reading the whole class book. However, teachers were free to deviate from this routine whenever necessary to provide short interjections that supplemented the students' learning. These short interjections were referred to as mini-lessons. Often the mini-lessons would be used to introduce, review, or reinforce a skill the students would use to build strategies for reading and writing. These skills were based on the scope and sequence charts found in the Houghton Mifflin Reading Program K-8 (1979) and were typed up by the reading workshop committee as reference lists to be used by the teachers when planning mini-lessons (Appendixes I and J). Skills would be checked off when taught and references to the skill would be tied directly to the whole class book. However, mini-lessons could also provide information about other things related to the whole class books as well. Possibilities included:

- highlighting the author
- reviewing monthly book club flyers
- finding sources of related books
- reading aloud from other works by the author
- discussing elements of the book
- discussing genre
- reading short stories or poems related to the book
- discussing conventions of publishing
- discussing the pictures in the book
- watching a T.V show about the author
- watching a movie based on the book

reading newspaper or magazine articles about the author

The mini-lessons would be approximately 15 minutes in length and would be founded in a meaningful context and would serve as purposeful learning.

Students who finished whole class books ahead of others were instructed to choose a book from the related literature shelf to read during class time. These students would be expected to follow the same routine and participate in the same activities as the rest of the class. When necessary, these students would have to refer to their learning logs to refresh their memories for a class discussion. At this point, the teacher would need to word learning log questions in a general enough form to accommodate both students in the whole class book and students reading the related literature. If the related literature book was not completed by the time the class is ready for follow-up activities, the students would complete this book outside of class and be given outside reading credit for it.

After the whole class book had been read, the workshop teacher would engage their students in several follow-up activities. These activities often required students to go back to the book and locate information which would clarify, substantiate, or expand their thinking. Follow-up activities included questions, writing and drama suggestions, and activities which focused on particular reading skills developed in the text of the story. Some activities were designed for small group investigation, with all groups dealing with the same questions or participating in the same activities. At other times, each group was involved in a different activity, but as they worked in their groups and shared their interpretations, they broadened their understanding and appreciation of the book.

As discussed by Danielson (1992), any time the teacher organized small groups for a specific purpose, predictable rules and routines were established. Each student in a group was given a role: leader, recorder, or participant. These roles were clearly defined so that all students would know their responsibilities within the group. Tasks were stated clearly and suggestions for completing the tasks were sometimes included. Reasonable time lines were established so that students would understand the necessity for staying on task. Once the purpose, procedures, and the time line were made clear, groups were able to proceed independently and the teacher was free to serve as a process facilitator.

At every stage of the whole class unit, the teacher constantly monitored the time



spent on each activity in order to maintain an even pace. The teacher made every effort to foster enthusiasm for reading, writing, speaking, and listening. That enthusiasm would continue into the thematic web unit.

### Thematic Web Unit

As with the whole class book, the web unit began with two or three days of introductory activities for the whole class. The students would have the opportunity to identify and discuss preconceived notions about the theme. The purpose of these activities was to introduce and focus the students on the theme's big ideas.

The teacher presented to the students short book talks about the four or five books in the web. The students would be able to choose one of the books to begin the unit. Because there were only seven copies of each web book, students were instructed to list their top three choices. The teacher used these lists to create the small groups for the thematic web. Each small group would read the same book. The teachers made every effort to give students their first choice. Sometimes, though, too many students wanted a particular book, and a second choice would be given. In some cases the teacher manipulated the groupings to match a book's difficulty to a student's reading ability.

When reading the web books, the students followed the same daily routine as with the whole class book. Daily student conferences, vocabulary, checkpoints, learning logs, and mini-lessons were all handled in the same manner. One critical difference was that during the last 12 minutes of class, student led small group discussions were held rather than meeting as a whole group. The teacher would circulate among the groups serving as a facilitator rather than a leader. The meetings were used to discuss checkpoints, personal reactions to the text, or clarify misunderstandings in their reading.

When students finished a web book, they were required to read another web book, a related book, or an author choice. Students continued working in their small groups until all had finished the web book and the group disbanded. When all groups had completed their book, follow-up activities were used to close the web.

The remainder of the trimester was used for individual reading choices. Reading time was extended with ten minutes at the end of the period used for journaling in their learning logs. The teacher would focus on students' individual reading problems and

facilitate student progress.

### Assessing Student Progress

Evaluation of the students occurred daily but would ultimately result in a letter grade being given at the end of the trimester. The factors influencing this grade were explained to the students at the beginning of the year. Each student would set personal goals based on these factors and record them in writing in their learning log. The teacher would discuss the goals with each student and would make sure goals matched student needs and abilities. Throughout the trimester, the teacher would refer back to these goals when checking learning logs and hold spontaneous conferences with the students when necessary.

The first factor influencing the students' grade was behavior. Daily points were given for staying on task in the classroom and following the reading workshop rules. Anecdotal records of student behavior, types of questions asked, student comments, and interactions with other students were kept by the teacher to support points given. Second, students were given points for their learning log entries based on the depth of their responses, the ability to link events in the story with their lives, the ability to support opinions with details, and clarity of thought. Student ability, amount of time given to write, and the amount of writing accomplished was also considered. Third, students earned points when they added words to their million dollar words bookmarks and successfully determined their pronunciations and meanings. A fourth factor was class participation. Students demonstrated participation by showing personal involvement in class activities. Once again, the teacher would keep anecdotal records to determine the amount of student involvement in reading, writing, speaking, and listening activities conducted in the classroom. The final factor for determining a student's grade was outside reading. The students were given credit for the percentage of pages read and reported on out of the 600 page goal assigned at the beginning of the trimester.

To arrive at a final grade, the teacher would combine points given for on task behavior, class participation, journal writing, and vocabulary study. These points were then averaged and weighted as 80% of the overall grade. The percentage of pages read for outside reading were than weighted as 20% of the overall grade. During the sixth week and the last week of the trimester, the students met one at a time with the teacher to

conference about their grades. The teacher would share with the students how their grade was determined and why. If there were any disagreements, the students were allowed to make comments or ask questions until a consensus was reached with the teacher about the grade. Goals set by the students would be reviewed and a discussion would be held to determine how well the students were reaching those goals and what behaviors needed changing if necessary to better meet the goals. The teacher would then help the students set new reading goals which would be recorded in their learning logs.

This process of assessing the students was broad-based and utilized a variety of assessment measures. The measures were appropriate to the students' developmental levels and matched the goals of reading workshop. The students' assessment included both formal and informal measures and provided information about individual progress as well as data that could be generalized among students. Thus, assessment was an essential part of reading workshop through which both the students and the teachers gained a better understanding of their language learning.

#### Chapter 4: Conclusions and Recommendations

As outlined in the review of professional literature in chapter two, whole language experts have concluded that many factors are vital for the success of a whole language program. A physical classroom environment which is conducive to language learning must be developed, daily routines should be established, formal instruction should be carefully planned, and teachers must be prepared to provide informal instruction as needed. When the BCLUW middle school staff developed its whole language program for grades five and six in 1988, these factors guided the committee in its development of the program and continue to guide its implementation to this day. When examining the BCLUW middle school whole language program, it becomes clear that reading workshop, although not perfect, was implemented successfully in many ways.

The physical environments of the BCLUW whole language classrooms were conducive to language learning. A print rich environment was created in each classroom with books, magazines, newspapers, signs, posters, and bulletin boards laden with student writings. Students were encouraged and expected to respond to literature in oral and written form. Students continually talked and heard about literature in the form of large group and small group discussions. Teachers and students promoted literature each week in the form of book talks. Literature was read orally by both teacher and students. Students were expected to read daily from a variety of trade books both in class and out of class. The whole class and web books used during the thematic units, as well as the abundance of related literature found in the classroom libraries, provided the students with a variety of multi-levelled, high-interest reading materials to choose from.

A daily routine which necessitated the use of print was established by BCLUW's whole language committee. Each day the students were provided with the time and opportunity to practice language in functional, realistic settings. Time was allotted daily for teacher-selected and student-selected reading. During this reading time students enhanced their vocabularies by working with unfamiliar words found in their own reading and were then given time to practice using context clues and dictionary skills. Students were also expected to write daily in their learning logs in order to formulate ideas and opinions about their reading and to practice supporting their ideas and opinions with facts and details from

the stories as well as their own lives. Time was provided daily for students to express and discuss their ideas orally through partner, small group, and large group sharing. These allotted times followed a uniform pattern of teaching (mini-lessons), reading and recording vocabulary, writing in learning logs, and responding orally through small or large group discussion. Additional routine was provided in the methods used to record, report, and share the students' reading outside of class. This sense of routine allowed students to know expectations and provided the parameters within which the students meaningfully learned about and used language.

The formal instruction used by the whole language teachers at BCLUW placed emphasis on making meaning out of oral, written, and visual communication. The whole class and web books used in the thematic units provided the context for teaching specific language skills. The teachers carefully examined the scope and sequence of skills being taught through the basal reading series in the reading skills classes and correlated those skills with the formal instruction taking place in reading workshop. Students were continually reminded of the strategies being learned in the reading skills classroom and were given opportunities to apply those strategies in reading workshop. The skills used in reading workshop built upon the students' prior knowledge and their language strengths which helped students integrate and become more flexible in their use of skills. Reading, writing, talking, and listening activities became natural parts of every lesson. Formal assessment of isolated skills occurred in the reading skills class while assessment in the reading workshop focused on the application of these skills in context. As a result, BCLUW did not notice any decline in scores on The Iowa Test of Basic Skills, a standardized test given to all of the students at the middle school. The combination of basal instruction and whole language techniques employed by the BCLUW middle school allowed the majority of students to achieve a year's growth in language learning and to enjoy learning about language at the same time. Thus, BCLUW's whole language program was supported by parents and other members of the community who saw an increase in the number of books that students were reading and an enthusiasm for learning. Parents felt that the students were getting a solid education in "the basics" of language while learning to appreciate literature.

Beyond formal instruction, the BCLUW middle school teachers informally provided the students with information and instruction as needed and requested during reading workshop. Language lessons were geared to meet the interests and needs of the individual. Students were allowed to develop at their own rate, and their needs provided the impetus for reading, writing, speaking, listening, and viewing activities. The reading workshop teachers focused on helping students to successfully use these processes rather than dwelling on learning isolated skills whose meaning and value could not easily be determined out of context by the students.

The teachers at BCLUW became facilitators and guided the student's learning. Language was continually demonstrated by the teachers and the teachers served as models for student learning. The whole language instruction that took place at BCLUW strived to make the students feel capable as language learners and users.

However, the BCLUW middle school whole language program met with difficulty and frustration as well. Perhaps the biggest frustration was a lack of commitment to the philosophy of whole language by some of the teachers who were teaching reading workshop classes. Goodman (1989) and Pace (1995) have maintained that teachers who make the transition to whole language must internalize a body of knowledge and a belief system that reflect its philosophy. Unfortunately, this did not always occur at BCLUW. Out of necessity, the teachers who had been teaching the basal series twice a day prior to 1988 were asked to teach reading workshop when it was decided that a whole language approach would replace one of those class periods. Some of those teachers were so used to the regimented lessons found in the basal series that they they felt quite lost in the relatively "loose" environment of a whole language classroom. These same teachers also found it difficult to develop a student-centered classroom as suggested by Routman (1997) after years of being teacher-centered. As a result, those teachers adhered to the daily workshop routine of reading and writing but spent little time formally or informally teaching skills and rarely engaged students in speaking and listening activities. Even though students were doing a great deal more reading, there was really no sense of literary community in those classrooms. It became much easier to let the students do a lot of reading and little writing.

Because some of the teachers did not understand and commit to the principles of whole language, the reading workshop routines, expectations, requirements, and evaluations were not always consistent from classroom to classroom. These inconsistencies were not always apparent because the teachers had little time to consult with one another about what was actually taking place in their reading workshop classroom. Smith and Teepe (1996) noted that teachers must be provided time once a week to discuss successes and failures in a whole language program. However, the daily schedule at the middle school did not allow teachers time to meet during the school day, and personal conflicts, as well as coaching commitments, prevented the teachers from meeting outside of school time. When it was discovered that the reading workshop classes lacked cohesiveness, disagreements arose among staff members. Some felt the program was being sabotaged by teachers refusing to adhere to the structure intentionally built into reading workshop. Others felt that the successful strategies and methods used by some teachers were not being shared with the language department for everyone to try. There was also frustration among students who spent one trimester becoming acquainted with a certain teacher's method of instruction and then got moved to a new setting the next trimester. The lack of consistency led some parents to question the integrity of BCLUW's language arts program and the motives of its teachers. However, Weaver (1992) concluded that whole language implementation strategies will often be diverse and will reflect teachers' individual styles. The teachers at BCLUW might have come to this realization had they found time to attend weekly meetings to discuss small problems before they became larger ones.

Another difficulty was the amount of time necessary to implement a whole language program (Burke-Hengen, 1995; Routman, 1997; Smith and Teepe, 1996). Considerable time was spent initially planning the program, gathering and purchasing materials, devising schedules, reading new books, planning lessons, and creating assessment tools. Once classes began, more time was needed to spend working with individual students, documenting and evaluating student progress, revising and updating materials, and keeping abreast of new developments in language arts. The time commitment required of each teacher often proved to be daunting. This resulted in a few teachers asking for different teaching assignments because they felt inadequate teaching a

whole language program.

At the present time, the BCLUW school has overcome most of these difficulties and the program continues to thrive. Many of the teachers who initially developed the program are still teaching it today. Teachers who are no longer with the program have incorporated some whole language methods and strategies into their current instruction. New teachers being hired right out of college have had the benefit of learning more about the advantages and disadvantages of whole language while earning their degrees and feel better equipped to meet the challenges of reading workshop. Other new members of the team have brought with them experience in whole language from other school districts. Students, parents, and administrators continue to see the benefit of this program and staunchly support it. There seems to be no impetus or reason to do away with the program, and those connected with it are continually revising and updating it to keep the program fresh, vital, and aligned with current research.

It is recommended that if a school would like to design and implement its own whole language program, it should assemble a team of teachers and administrators who understand and are committed to the principles of whole language. This team should visit schools that have successful whole language programs and interview students, teachers, administrators, and parents to determine what is working and what could be improved. The team must spend time researching whole language and gathering data which will support a change in programs. After the field notes and research have been compiled, the team should report their findings to all faculty members who will participate in the program and spend time addressing their questions and concerns. If the faculty decides to implement whole language, it may be necessary for the team to present a proposal to the school board and wait for approval. Once approval has been granted, the whole language team can begin designing a program that will meet the needs of the students and school district. The team should be sure to get input from teachers, students, and parents during this initial planning. They should determine what materials will be necessary and seek administrative approval to cover the cost of these materials. Some creative thinking and well-organized fund raisers may be necessary to raise money.

Once a basic program has been developed, adequate time must be given teachers to



become familiar with the program and its materials. The teachers should also be given ample time to plan the units which will be taught within the program. The teachers should work cooperatively to devise routines that will be followed by everyone. The teachers should discuss and reach consensus on what skills will be taught and how they will be taught. They should determine how students will be evaluated and make sure that everyone is comfortable with these methods. Finally, teachers should be prepared to make revisions, and the school should be prepared to update materials as necessary.

The BCLUW middle school has reaped great rewards from its commitment to whole language and from the efforts made by teachers to design and implement a well-designed curriculum. Other schools have the potential for similar results.

## References

- Atwell, N. (1987). In the middle: Writing, reading, and learning with adolescents. Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook Publishers, Inc.
- Atwell, N. (1998). In the middle: New understandings about writing, reading, and learning (2nd ed.). Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook Publishers, Inc.
- Altwerger, B., Edelsky, C., & Flores, B.M. (1987). Whole language: What's new? The Reading Teacher, 40, 144-157.
- Bialostok, S. (1997). Offering the olive branch: the rhetoric of insincerity. Language Arts, 74, 618-629.
- Burke-Hengen, M. (1995). Making it our own: Whole language in the middle school. In Pace, G. (Ed.), Whole learning in the middle school: Evolution and transition. (pp. 47-73). Norwood, MA: Christopher-Gorden Publishers, Inc.
- Carbo, M. (1996). Whole language vs. phonics: The great debate. Principal, 75, 36-38.
- Church, S. M. (1996). The future of whole language: Reconstruction or self-destruction. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Cochran, J.M. (1989). The best of all worlds. Instructor, 98, 38-41.
- Cutting, B. (1992). Moving on in whole language: The complete guide for every teacher. Bothell, WA: The Wright Group.
- Danielson, K. (1992). Literature groups and literature logs: Responding to literature in a community of readers. Reading Horizons, 32, 372-382.
- Edelsky, C. (with Harmon, S.). (1996). With literacy and justice for all: Rethinking the social in language and education. Bristol, PA: Taylor & Francis Inc.
- Fulps, J.S., & Young, T.A. (1995). The what, why, when, and how of reading response journals. In De Carlo, J.E. (Ed.), Perspectives in whole language. (pp. 180-184). Needham Heights, MA: Allyn & Bacon.
- Gay, L.R. (1996). Educational research: Competencies for analysis and application. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc.
- Goodman, K.S. (1989, Spring). Do whole language teachers have to suffer?

Teachers Networking: The Whole Language Newsletter, 9, 1-2.

Groff, P. (1994). Rethinking whole language. Executive Educator, 16, 33-35.

Harp, B. (1988). When you do whole language instruction, how will you keep track of reading and writing skills? The Reading Teacher, 41, 160-161.

Houghton Mifflin Reading Program K-8 (3rd ed., Vols. K-L). (1979). Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Company.

McCallum, R.D. (1988). Don't throw the basals out with the bath water. The Reading Teacher, 41, 204-208.

McDonald, L.R., & Burris, A. (1995). Is the whole language philosophy working? Reading Improvement, 32, 127-128.

Mosenthal, P.B. (1989). The whole language approach: Teachers between a rock and a hard place. The Reading Teacher, 42, 628-629.

Myers, J.W., & Hilliard, R.D. (1997). Holistic language learning at the middle level: Our last, best chance. Childhood Education, 73, 286-289.

Pace, G. (1995). Whole learning and a holistic vision of the middle school: Principles that guide practice. In Pace, G. (Ed.), Whole learning in the middle school: Evolution and transition. (pp. 11-26). Norwood, MA: Christopher-Gorden Publishers, Inc.

Routman, R. (1997). Back to the basics of whole language. Educational Leadership, 54, 70-74.

Shapiro, J. (1996). Research perspectives on whole-language. In Froese, V. (Ed.), Whole-language: Practice and theory. (pp. 425-462). Needham Heights, MA: Allyn & Bacon.

Slaughter, H.B. (1988). Indirect and direct teaching in a whole language program. The Reading Teacher, 41, 30-34.

Smith, J.M., & Teepe, H.R. (1996). Implementing whole language programs. Principal, 76, 28-29.

Strickland, D.S., & Morrow, L.M. (1990). The daily journal: Using language experience strategies in an emergent literary curriculum. The Reading Teacher, 43, 422-

423.

Toliver, M. (1990). Try it, you'll like it: Whole language. The Reading Teacher, 43, 348-349.

Traw, R. (1996). Large-scale assessment of skills in a whole language curriculum: Two districts' experiences. The Journal of Educational Research, 89, 323-339.

Tunnell, M.O., & Jacobs, J.S. (1989). Using "real" books: Research findings on literature based reading instruction. The Reading Teacher, 42, 470-477.

Weaver, C. (1992). A whole language belief system and its implications for teacher and institutional change. In Weaver, C., & Henke, L. (Ed.), Supporting whole language: Stories of teacher and institutional change. (pp. 3-23). Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann Educational Books, Inc.

## Appendix A

## Reading Survey

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

1. If you had to guess....  
How many books would you say you owned? \_\_\_\_\_  
How many books would you say there are in your house? \_\_\_\_\_  
How many novels would you say you've read in the last 12  
months? \_\_\_\_\_
2. How did you learn to read? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. Why do people read? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. What does someone have to do in order to be a good reader? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. How does a teacher decide which students are good readers? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. What kind of books do you like to read? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
7. How do you decide which books you will read? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
8. Have you ever reread a book? \_\_\_\_\_ If so, can you name it/them  
here? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
9. Do you ever read novels at home for pleasure? \_\_\_\_\_ If so, how

often do you read at home for pleasure? \_\_\_\_\_

10. Who are your favorite authors? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

11. Do you like to have your teacher read to you? \_\_\_\_\_ If so, is there anything special you'd like to hear? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

12. In general, how do you feel about reading? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix B

### Rules for Using Reading Workshop Time

1. Students must have in their possession when the bell rings a book they intend to read during workshop time. Whole class books and web books will remain in the classroom. Other books read during this time must be brought in with the student. Students who finish a book during class will be given time to find another.
2. Students must read a book that tells a story, such as a novel or a biography, rather than books of list or facts. No credit will be given for reading magazines or newspapers during this time.
3. Students must sit in their own assigned seat unless otherwise directed by the teacher.
4. Students must read during the time provided for them. Students cannot do homework or read any material for another course. Reading workshop is not a study hall.
5. Students must be quiet during reading and writing time.
6. Students should wait until after class to use the bathroom or get a drink so as not to disturb others. In an emergency, students should quietly ask the teacher for permission to leave.
7. A student who is absent can make up time and receive credit for class time missed by reading at home, during study hall, or after school. A note from a parent or study hall teacher is required to show completion.





## Appendix D

## Written Book Reports

Book reports are to be written in the back of your learning log. Start writing your reports on the last page of your log and work your way forward. Write one report per page.

When you begin to write a report, list the book's title, underlined, and the author's name on the first line. Example:

*Island of the Blue Dolphins* by Scott O'Dell

Then you should drop down to the second line and begin writing. Your report should be five paragraphs long, so make sure you indent the first sentence of each.

The first paragraph should introduce the book. Where did you find this book? Why did you choose to read it? What type of book do you think it is?

The second paragraph should tell about the main characters. Who were the main characters? What were their ages? What were the characters' personal traits? What were the characters' strengths and weaknesses?

The third paragraph should describe the setting. Where did the story take place? When did the story take place?

The fourth paragraph should describe the conflict. What was the overall problem, choice or challenge the main characters had to face? Please don't summarize the entire story.

The fifth paragraph should describe your reaction to the book. Did you like the story? What were your reasons? Please give at least four reasons for your reaction.

## Appendix E

## Book Talk

1. What is the title of the book, and who is the author?
2. What type of book is this? (See below)
3. Where did you find this book?
4. When and where did the story take place?
5. Who were the main characters?
  - A. Age
  - B. Description
  - C. Personal traits, characteristics, weaknesses, strengths
6. Tell about a major choice or challenge in the story. What problem did the main character(s) have to face? (Don't tell how the problem was solved)
7. Tell about your feelings as you read the book. Why did you feel this way?
8. What did you like about this book? Dislike?
9. Can you tell anything about the author's style of writing?
10. Did you have any questions at the end that the author didn't answer?
11. To whom would you recommend the book? Why?

## Types of Books:

drama	mystery	western
comedy	science fiction	autobiography
horror	series	biography
romance	sport	biographical fiction
fantasy	adventure	historical
super-natural	wildlife	historical fiction

## Appendix F

## Book Talk Evaluation

Name of presenter \_\_\_\_\_

Your book talk will be rated on a scale of 1-10 (1=low, 10=high) in the areas listed below. A conference with the teacher will follow the book talk.

1. How well you show you read the book
 

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----
2. Use of interesting examples and opinions
 

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----
3. Confidence and voice projection
 

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----
4. How well the book talk flowed
 

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----
5. Eye contact with the audience
 

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----
6. Use of props
 

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----
7. Attitude
 

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----
8. Length (1-5 minutes)
 

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----
9. Response to audience questions
 

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----

## Appendix G

## Creative Projects for Book Reporting

Many of these projects can be shared with the class. Other projects may require a short conference with the teacher.

1. 10 events
  2. Roll movie/ narrated film strip
  3. Rap
  4. Tour guide
  5. Tape
  6. Act out exciting part
  7. Broadcast a book review
  8. Poem
  9. Show and tell
  10. Puppet show
  11. TV report
  12. Commercial
  13. Chalk talk
  14. Character study
  15. Different ending
  16. Test
  17. Letter to a friend
  18. Letter to a character
  19. Word hunt
  20. Crossword puzzle
  21. Stitchery
  22. Book review
  23. Book jacket
  24. T-shirt design
  25. Comic strip
  26. Poster
  27. Photo album
  28. Book mark
  29. Diorama
  30. Mural
  31. Book mobile
  32. Character hangings
  33. Clay sculpture
  34. Time line
  35. Character study
  36. Book ad
- (Ideas not on this list should be discussed with the teacher before starting)

## Appendix H

The Light in the Forest Checkpoints

Checkpoint 1. After chapter 1, ending on page 4

How did True Son become an Indian?

Checkpoint 2. After chapter 2, ending on page 9

Many of the captives, including True Son, are very ungrateful for being rescued.

They wished to return to their Indian homes. Explain.

Checkpoint 3. After chapter 4, ending on page 22

According to the Indians, why do white people act so foolish? Do you agree?

Checkpoint 4. After chapter 6, ending on page 36

Explain how Mr. and Mrs. Butler feel about their son's return. How would you feel?

Checkpoint 5. After chapter 8, ending on page 55

Do you agree with the old Negro basket maker that "white folks are never free"?

Checkpoint 6. After chapter 10, ending on page 69

Explain Harry Butler's feelings toward his son.

Checkpoint 7. After chapter 12, ending on page 92

Would you have enjoyed True Son's journey back to the Tuscarawas as much as he did? Explain.

Checkpoint 8. After chapter 14, ending on page 110

Why is True Son sent into the river? Why can't he carry out his purpose?

Checkpoint 9. End of book

Would you have changed the end of the book? Why or why not?

Appendix I  
Fifth Grade Skills List

Write down the date each time one of the skills below is taught in reading workshop

Drawing Conclusions \_\_\_\_\_

Predicting Outcomes \_\_\_\_\_

Noting Important Details \_\_\_\_\_

Noting Sequence \_\_\_\_\_

Getting the Main Idea \_\_\_\_\_

Using Context for Meaning \_\_\_\_\_

Fact and Opinion \_\_\_\_\_

Locating Information Quickly \_\_\_\_\_

Evaluating Author's Qualifications \_\_\_\_\_

Using Table of Contents \_\_\_\_\_

Clue Words Sequencing \_\_\_\_\_

Cause and Effect \_\_\_\_\_

Similes and Metaphors \_\_\_\_\_

Synonyms and Antonyms \_\_\_\_\_

Idioms \_\_\_\_\_

Compound Words \_\_\_\_\_

Prefixes \_\_\_\_\_

Suffixes \_\_\_\_\_

Using an Index \_\_\_\_\_

Personification \_\_\_\_\_

Reference Aids \_\_\_\_\_

Following Directions \_\_\_\_\_

Dictionary / Locating Words \_\_\_\_\_

Meanings of Multiple Entry Words \_\_\_\_\_

Punctuation: Commas \_\_\_\_\_ Dash \_\_\_\_\_

Ellipsis \_\_\_\_\_ Colon \_\_\_\_\_

Exclamation Marks \_\_\_\_\_ Quotation Marks \_\_\_\_\_

Appendix J  
Sixth Grade Skills List

Write down the date each time one of the skills below is taught in reading workshop

Drawing Conclusions \_\_\_\_\_

Predicting Outcomes \_\_\_\_\_

Main Idea \_\_\_\_\_

Sequencing Order of Events \_\_\_\_\_

Clue Words for Sequencing \_\_\_\_\_

Cause and Effect \_\_\_\_\_

Fact and Opinion \_\_\_\_\_

Similes and Metaphors \_\_\_\_\_

Context for Word Meaning \_\_\_\_\_

Personification \_\_\_\_\_

Locating Information Quickly \_\_\_\_\_

Evaluating Author's Qualifications \_\_\_\_\_

Using an Index \_\_\_\_\_

Using Table of Contents \_\_\_\_\_

Prefixes \_\_\_\_\_

Suffixes \_\_\_\_\_

Idioms \_\_\_\_\_

Propaganda \_\_\_\_\_

Dictionary for Word Meaning \_\_\_\_\_

Choosing Reference Aids \_\_\_\_\_

Punctuation: Commas \_\_\_\_\_ Dash \_\_\_\_\_

Ellipsis \_\_\_\_\_ Colon \_\_\_\_\_

Semicolon \_\_\_\_\_

Exclamation Marks \_\_\_\_\_

Quotation Marks \_\_\_\_\_