Survey of reading-study skills stressed by English teachers at New Berlin High School

Suzanne Helen Jund

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A SURVEY OF READING-STUDY SKILLS
STRESSED BY ENGLISH TEACHERS AT
NEW BERLIN HIGH SCHOOL

by

Suzanne Helen Jund

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SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
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This research paper has been approved for the Graduate Committee of the Cardinal Stritch College by

Sister Marie Clotilde
(Adviser)

Date February 17, 1971
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CHAPTER I
THE PROBLEM

Introduction

Educators agree that a high school is a place to learn, and that a teacher is a person dedicated to the idea that the secondary school exists to help students acquire the power to learn for themselves. This power to learn independently demands the ability to read and comprehend historical, scientific, literary, and mathematical books. Indeed, up to 80 per cent of what the high school student learns requires the ability to read.¹ It is also evident that few students are mature readers upon entering high school;² in fact, research shows that 25 per cent of the students in high school today lack the reading skills needed to understand their textbooks.³


Statement of the Problem

This study was undertaken in order to ascertain those reading study skills stressed by ninth and tenth grade English teachers. It was hoped that the evaluation of the information obtained in this study would reveal the strengths and weaknesses in the area of reading skills instruction within the English program.

Specific Objectives

In addition to providing a tool for the evaluation of reading skills instruction within the English classroom it was hoped that this study would: first, make the teachers more aware of the various reading study skills required in their classrooms; second, demonstrate the need for a reading study skills section within the English curriculum; and finally, prove to be the nucleus of a reading study skills program in all content areas.

Scope and Limitations of the Study

A questionnaire, the source of data for this research study, was developed by this author. Ninth and tenth grade English teachers at New Berlin High School were asked to complete the questionnaire. Since students in ninth and tenth grade English classes are classified by ability into three homogeneous groups in each grade, teachers were asked to complete one questionnaire for each grade and/or ability group in their teaching schedules. Teachers of English in grades eleven and
twelve were not included in the survey because their classes are elective, nongraded, and heterogeneously grouped.
CHAPTER II
SURVEY OF RELATED LITERATURE

Introduction

In this chapter the author will attempt to 1) describe the status of reading instruction in today's secondary schools, 2) develop a working definition of reading-study skills, 3) describe those skills most generally accepted as necessary for success in English classes, 4) describe the English teacher's role in providing adequate instruction in those reading-study skills related to English, and 5) summarize the major findings of the survey of related literature.

Status of Reading Instruction in the High School

Even a cursory survey of educational journals reveals that there has been an abundance of opinion printed to support the contention that the teaching of reading-study skills is a proper function of the secondary schools. Michaels, for example, stated that high school teachers have two equally important teaching responsibilities--transmitting content and improving the student's ability to learn the content independently.¹

This implies that high school teachers must determine specific reading difficulties in their subject areas and improve the level of the student's reading performance.\(^1\) Add to this Durr's strong admonition, "There is so much for my students to learn, I can't afford NOT to teach reading."\(^2\) Yet today many high school teachers consider themselves content area specialists and "profess no competence or interest in teaching reading"\(^3\) even as it relates to their own subject matter. It is true that Title I and Title III projects have poured federal moneys into high school reading clinics; it is also obvious that publishing companies are producing kits, workbooks, audio-visual and other materials designed to teach reading within the content subjects. Nevertheless, "significant changes in high school reading from 1941-1965 are more difficult to find than most of us would like to believe."\(^4\)

What accounts for this evident lack of progress? Some critics of modern educational practices conclude that high school teachers are simply not interested in contributing their efforts toward building an all-school reading program and recommend, at

\(^1\)Ibid., p. 17.


the same time, that specialists be brought in to do this job.\textsuperscript{1} This kind of faulty logic has helped to perpetuate the notion that a reading specialist can organize and conduct a meaningful reading program without support from the high school faculty and administration. On the contrary, a reading specialist needs the support of the total faculty. In addition, a teacher who faces pupils who do not read well must become interested in helping them. There are misconceptions and problems, but as Collins states, "Once the subject matter teacher recognizes that he has been teaching much reading unconsciously and that a conscious effort on his part will not only improve student ability to read the words but also will improve student comprehension of the content, he becomes a loyal supporter of a school-wide reading program."\textsuperscript{2}

How is it possible for the development of reading-study skills programs in high schools to progress so slowly when teachers are becoming interested in helping their students read better? Herber says, "In working with secondary school faculties we have found it necessary to clarify errors in their thinking about reading instruction, remind them of principles of instruction which they may have accepted in theory but not in


\textsuperscript{2}Douglas M. Collins, "Are We Really Improving Reading in the Content Fields?" in Current Issues in Reading, ed. by J. Allen Figurel (Newark, Delaware: International Reading Association, 1969), p. 35.
practice, and explore methods and materials by which they can teach students in their own classes how to read what they are required to read.¹

It is not difficult to understand why content area teachers find it difficult to implement a program of reading-study skills instruction in their classes. First, colleges and universities do not provide courses in basic reading principles for prospective teachers; hence, content teachers continue to be ill-equipped to help their students develop competence in reading. Content area teachers have not been trained to teach reading skills; therefore, the idea persists that it is better not to teach the skills at all. Second, until recently appropriate skill-building materials were not available. Now that the materials are available, they are usually stored in the reading room and used exclusively by the reading teacher. Third, content teachers claim that courses of study are so heavy that there is no time to teach reading. Content teachers think reading specialists want them to take time away from the study of their curriculum and use it to teach reading. When the content area teacher is shown that "his task is to help his students read successfully the specific assignments that he gives in the text,"² he will discover that it is not necessary to sacrifice content


²Ibid., p. 69.
for reading-study skills instruction.

Definition of Reading-Study Skills

Because there continues to be confusion of terminology, this author has undertaken to establish a definition of reading-study skills. In her series of workbooks, Be A Better Reader, Nila Banton Smith makes a distinction between "basic common reading skills" and "common study skills." The basic common reading skills are: comprehension, word recognition, and reading rate. Of course, each of these major reading skills is a complex of many sub-skills. On the other hand, study skills are defined as "those skills needed by students when studying in the various subject fields."\(^1\) Into this last category Smith has placed such skills as the ability to select and evaluate, organize, recall what has been read, locate information, and follow directions.\(^2\)

Herber relates study skills to the reading and thinking skills required for successful study. He classifies study skills into three main areas of competency: receptive area, reflective area, and expressive area.\(^3\) In the RECEPTIVE area of skills development, fundamental skills like identification of main ideas


\(^2\)Ibid., p. T15.

and significant details as well as basic word recognition skills are learned. Then since "the heart of the process of study is the reaction to the details obtained through reading," the REFLECTIVE skills of inference, interpretation, association, assumption, drawing conclusions, and prediction and synthesizing facts or details are skills categorized in this area. Finally, skills in the EXPRESSIVE area are those which help the student to organize the knowledge gained in the other areas and to put such knowledge to use. It is evident that Herber's interpretation of the term study skills is more inclusive than Smith's. To minimize confusion and because the development of study skills presupposes a knowledge of basic reading skills, this current study will combine the two concepts and refer to reading-study skills as that complex of skills needed by a student to meet the demands of courses in the content fields. It is significant to note that this author does not claim to present a comprehensive list of reading-study skills--only those skills which relate to reading and study in the English class have been included. Three complete listings of reading-study skills relating to the study of English are presented in Appendix I.

Reading-Study Skills in the English Classroom
There are as many ways to classify the reading-study

2Ibid., p. 4.
3See Appendix I pp. 33-38.
skills as there are reading experts. For the sake of simplicity, reading-study skills will be considered under three main headings: vocabulary skills; comprehension skills; and reference, study, and rate skills.

**Vocabulary Skills**

"Each high school subject carries its own special vocabulary with it."¹ Many high school students have difficulty pronouncing and understanding new words; hence, vocabulary deficiencies become a most serious obstacle to better reading achievement.

The vocabulary load in textbooks becomes extremely heavy in these grades. Not only are the new words much more numerous than formerly, but they usually consist of several syllables, and affixes are used with great abandon. All of this means that the average high school needs to continue the use of all word attack techniques: picture clues, context clues, phonics, structural analysis, and use of the dictionary.²

Vocabulary skills, therefore, must be an essential part of any program of reading-study skills. Since learning must have a purpose, a most crucial aspect of a vocabulary development program is that it must be a continuous and systematic approach, and it must be relevant.³

Though studying lists of unrelated words is useless and the look-it-up-in-the-dictionary routine of vocabulary study is tedious and boring, one approach "to vocabulary development that

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is effective for many words is the word analysis or structural approach. "¹ This structural approach has two important advantages: first, this method allows the student to discover words independently; and second, the knowledge of prefixes, suffixes, and roots makes the student aware of word parts and enables him to determine the meaning of words he has never seen.² Research has shown that the study of the 15 prefixes and 14 suffixes most commonly used in English will enable a student to learn 82 per cent of all words which have affixes.³

If there is a single most significant reason for emphasizing vocabulary skills in the high school, it must be that a good vocabulary facilitates learning. A student who does not understand terms is severely limited in the area of conceptual learning. Simmons summed up the importance of vocabulary development this way, "The ability to read is, and always will be, crucial to students' success; comprehension is of utmost importance among reading abilities; and there can be no sound comprehension without the prior acquisition of precise and versatile skill in word recognition."⁴


²Ibid., p. 3.


Comprehension Skills

In its broadest sense comprehension in reading means understanding what is read. Comprehension, in other words, implies three abilities: first, the ability to find and understand thought relationships in long and short selections; second, the ability to set specific purposes in reading; and third, the ability to make full use of previous learning in attacking new material.¹ Literal comprehension is WHAT is said but the study of literature also requires the reader to know HOW it is being said. Thus, the comprehension of literature demands the ability to read the lines, to read between the lines, and to read beyond the lines. This type of total comprehension demands that the student know how to analyze, synthesize, and extend meanings.²

Knowing what is said is not enough; high school students, even those of average or below average ability, must be taught basic critical comprehension skills as well as those inferential reading skills which enable the student to formulate concepts. The term "critical" reading refers to that kind of reading which involves "the emotional and intellectual interaction between the reader and the author."³ Inferential reading refers to the

¹Olive S. Niles, "Comprehension Skills," The Reading Teacher, XVII (September, 1963), pp. 2-4.


ability to note significant relationships as they relate to the connotative language of literature. Many experts, in discussing comprehension, present a listing of the various comprehension sub-skills. Moulton and Thomas regard comprehension as a "plural" ability which embraces the following 16 component skills:

1) finding the main idea
2) grasping directly stated details
3) understanding the organization of ideas
4) grasping the sequence of events or steps
5) following directions
6) making inferences
7) grasping ideas implied but not directly stated
8) distinguishing between fact and opinion
9) recognizing emotional reactions, motives, and personal traits of characters
10) sensing relationships of time, place, cause/effect
11) anticipating outcomes
12) recognizing the author's tone, mood, and intent
13) understanding and making comparisons and contrasts
14) interpreting figurative language
15) drawing conclusions and making generalizations
16) evaluating and criticizing what is read.¹

An examination of the above list reveals that several of those skills mentioned draw upon many other skills; for example, the ability to make inferences presupposes the ability to note details, follow the sequence of events, comprehend the main idea, and form generalizations. The ability to anticipate outcomes necessitates the power to grasp the sequence of events, recognize emotional reactions and motives, and note the author's tone, mood, and intent. When this author set out to classify the various comprehension skills, three categories were included: general

skills—the most basic skills; critical reading skills—those requiring the ability to 'read between the lines' and form judgements; finally, interpretive reading skills—those demanding the ability to 'read beyond the lines' and to respond to the printed word.

Reference, Study and Rate Skills

High school teachers tend to overestimate their students' abilities to use reference materials, vary their reading rates, and to study. "The truth is that most students, even some very able ones, are not ready to study alone by the time they enter secondary school."¹ Taken together reference, study, and rate skills enable the pupil to become an efficient reader. For example, perceiving ideas in an organized form (an outline) makes critical analysis easier. Awareness of organizational patterns can affect accurate initial comprehension, efficient recall, and the ability to read critically, and it should, therefore, "be a major goal of reading instruction to show students how to develop this awareness."² If for no other reason, the realities of life in a democratic society demand that students learn to read efficiently and independently. A pupil who can use reference tools, organizational skills, and flexible reading techniques to satisfy


his need to learn will be a more efficient student and reader.

Role of the English Teacher as a Teacher of Reading-Study Skills

"To the English teacher has fallen the task of teaching whatever reading is taught in our secondary schools."¹ This assumption on the part of the other teachers in the school that the English teacher can and will teach the necessary skills is, of course, unfounded. In reality, many English teachers are not prepared to teach reading-study skills, even in relation to the reading of literature. In 1965 Squire reported the results of the National Study of High School English Programs. The section dealing with reading instructional practices in English classrooms is significant since it reveals how English teachers perceive their roles. When teachers in the "best" high school English departments around the country were asked to comment on the importance of reading instruction in the high school, they either denied any responsibility for teaching reading at all or claimed they taught reading skills whenever they taught literature. Squire reports that department chairmen, on the other hand, claimed that only three to four per cent of instructional time in grade ten was devoted to reading and even less time was allotted to it in grades eleven and twelve.² "Our high school English programs


thus devote overwhelming attention to the study of literature rather than to the skills involved in reading such literature.\textsuperscript{1} These are the facts—if high school pupils need help in improving and extending reading-study skills; if a haphazard approach to such instruction has proved inadequate; and if teachers must contribute to the reading growth of their students, then it is time to implement a program of reading-study skills instruction in all content areas including English.\textsuperscript{2}

\textbf{Summary}

A survey of the literature related to reading-study skills in the high school revealed the following information:

1) Though there is an abundance of expert opinion on the nature and scope of reading-study skills instruction in the secondary schools, there is little recent research in this area.

2) Squire's research, the National Study of High School English Programs, in 1965 revealed that English teachers do not teach their students how to read literature. Students are expected to learn through practice.

3) Experts in reading have gathered adequate proof that reading-study skills must be taught in the high school yet progress toward this goal is slow.

4) Content area teachers, including English teachers,

\textsuperscript{1}Squire, "Reading in American High Schools Today," p. 470.

\textsuperscript{2}Karlin, "Nature and Scope of Developmental Reading," p. 53.
are ill-prepared to teach those skills necessary for success in their classrooms.

5) The reading-study skills--vocabulary, comprehension, reference, rate, and study skills--should be considered an interrelated complex of skills and sub-skills.
CHAPTER III
PROCEDURE

Introduction

"Teachers of subject matter at all grade levels are facing some of the severest challenges that education has encountered in this nation's history."¹ These challenges assume serious proportions when 25 to 40 per cent of the students are unable to read their textbooks. It seems evident that English teachers are being asked to assume leadership in attempting to solve this problem. Since the challenge can be met only by adequate attention to reading-study skills within the curriculum and in each classroom, a thorough study of the current status of such instruction was undertaken in this study. This chapter describes the procedure used by the author to ascertain this information.

Plan of Research

Because this paper was designed to examine the reading needs within the English department of a single local high school, the plan of research consisted of seven steps:

1) determine a broad area to be investigated

2) examine theses and recent research papers to determine current trends
3) survey current literature and research
4) prepare a questionnaire
5) administer the survey and tally results
6) explain results of survey to respondees
7) analyze data and draw conclusions

The Questionnaire

The basic format and the wording of the directions of the current questionnaire replicate those on a survey devised by Sister Josetta Boeing.¹ The individual items on the survey itself are a compilation of the vocabulary, comprehension, reference, rate, and study skills delineated by various authorities.

The Sample

A total of eight English teachers were queried in this survey. Only ninth and tenth grade English teachers were asked to respond to the survey because students in these grades in the participating school are grouped by "ability" into three tracks. The program of studies is traditional in design, that is, it emphasizes literature, composition, and grammar.

CHAPTER IV

INTERPRETATION OF DATA

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter was to present the facts as determined by the responses of ninth and tenth grade English teachers to a survey. Although all those teachers who were asked to participate did respond, the total number of respondees is small. The data, therefore, have not been translated into percentages. In all cases the data will be noted in terms of the actual number of responses given to individual items.

Initially, this author had planned to analyze the data in terms of the skills needed and used at each ability-group level. The actual tally of items revealed, however, that the respondees made no such differentiation of skills among their superior, average, and slow learning pupils. Hence, the results of the survey were presented without regard to ability-grouping levels. In addition, respondees were asked to complete one survey for every grade and/or ability group in their teaching schedule. Some teachers, therefore, completed as many as three survey forms while others completed only one.

For the sake of clarity and ease of interpretation, Table 1 and all succeeding tables will be presented at the
beginning of their respective sections.

Responses to Part I: Vocabulary Skills

The distribution of responses to Part I: Vocabulary Skills is listed in Table 1.

**TABLE 1**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VOCABULARY SKILLS</th>
<th>Responses*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Using context clues</td>
<td>9 7 8 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using phonetic/structural clues</td>
<td>9 1 3 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using syllabication principles</td>
<td>9 2 5 6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Responses in Column I indicate SKILLS NEEDED, in Column II ACTUAL INSTRUCTION given, Column III SPECIFIC PRACTICE, and in Column IV SKILLS MASTERED.

"If the secondary school could presume, optimistically, that pupils entering junior high school had mastered the primary decoding skills, and could use context and other comprehension skills to unlock meaning, the reading component in the secondary school would still have to include provision for developing more sophisticated vocabulary..."¹ skills. English teachers responding to the current survey considered vocabulary development a needed skill; yet, in some instances, there was little actual instruction and limited opportunity to practice the skills.

The use of context clues appeared to be the most widely practiced type of vocabulary development. On the other hand, there seemed to be only limited actual instruction or opportunity to practice the use of phonetic and structural analysis and syllabication principles.

Responses to Part II: Comprehension Skills

A total of 25 items was listed in the comprehension skills section of the survey. The 25 items were further divided into three sub-sections: general skills, critical reading skills, and interpretive reading skills. The tally indicated that teachers who completed this survey are most consistently aware of comprehension skills.

General Skills

A summary of the responses in this section is presented in Table 2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RESPONSES TO PART II: GENERAL SKILLS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GENERAL SKILLS</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finding the main idea.................</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finding supporting details...........</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relating main and supporting ideas...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding sequence of events.....</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding author's organization..</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Following written directions.........</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Responses in Column I indicate SKILLS NEEDED, in Column II ACTUAL INSTRUCTION given, Column III SPECIFIC PRACTICE, and in Column IV SKILLS MASTERED.
Of the six items in the General Skills sub-section, the first three—finding the main idea, finding supporting details, and relating main and supporting ideas—seemed to be most significant to the respondees. Understanding the sequence of events and following written directions are needed skills, yet according to the tally about half of the respondees indicated that they gave actual instruction or specific opportunity to practice the skills.

Critical Reading Skills

A summary of responses concerning critical reading skills is presented in Table 3.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CRITICAL READING SKILLS</th>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>I</th>
<th>II</th>
<th>III</th>
<th>IV</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Distinguishing fact and opinion</td>
<td></td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noting cause/effect relationship</td>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drawing inferences</td>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognizing author’s purpose</td>
<td></td>
<td>9</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drawing conclusions</td>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anticipating events/outcomes</td>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Responses in Column I indicate SKILLS NEEDED, in Column II ACTUAL INSTRUCTION given, Column III SPECIFIC PRACTICE, and in Column IV SKILLS MASTERED.

Critical reading, like comprehension in general, is not a constant. There are many levels or degrees of critical reading
"which the skillful reader adapts in accordance with his own purpose in reading the material."¹

In the current survey there were six critical reading skills considered. If these six skills were ranked according to NEED as indicated by the tallies, the most needed skill would be the ability to note cause and effect relationships which received 10 tallies. The ability to recognize the author's purpose and the ability to distinguish fact and opinion were next with nine tallies. Anticipating events and outcomes received eight tallies, while drawing conclusions received seven and drawing inferences received six.

In the critical reading section the NEED, the ACTUAL INSTRUCTION, and the SPECIFIC PRACTICE were closely related. Respondees who marked the NEED column also tended to mark the ACTUAL INSTRUCTION and SPECIFIC PRACTICE columns. Few respondees considered these skills mastered, hence, there were few responses tallied in the SKILLS MASTERED column.

**Interpretive Reading Skills**

Of the 13 items in the critical reading skills subsection only one—noting effects of rhythm and rhyme—was considered relatively less "needed" than the others as indicated in Table 4.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INTERPRETIVE READING SKILLS</th>
<th>*Responses</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developing insight into feeling.......................</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding plot....................................</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding character...............................</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noting influence of setting on plot and character.....</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visualizing character/setting..........................</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noting point of view..................................</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noting use of flashback and other time patterns......</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noting foreshadowing clues............................</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using denotative/connotative language..................</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noting symbols/figures of speech......................</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noting humor, satire, irony............................</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noting author's use of tone/mood........................</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noting effects of rhythm/rhyme........................</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Responses in Column I indicate SKILLS NEEDED, in Column II ACTUAL INSTRUCTION given, Column III SPECIFIC PRACTICE, and in Column IV SKILLS MASTERED.

Like the responses in the previous group, those in the SKILLS NEEDED column of the interpretive reading skills sub-section coincide rather closely with those in the ACTUAL INSTRUCTION and SPECIFIC PRACTICE columns. This is important because it means that, for the most part, the skills which are needed are also being taught and practiced. One item, understanding plot, was
considered MASTERED by seven respondees. On the other hand, the more creative reasoning and reading skills involving an understanding of point of view, flashback, foreshadowing, denotative and connotative language, symbols, humor, tone, and so on, though necessary, were not considered mastered skills.

Interpretive or creative reading skills involve the two-fold process of judgement and evaluation of the material. "This interaction of the mind with the reading matter provides for integration which can result in a change in the individual's feelings, attitudes, and behavior."1 A high school teacher can, to a certain extent, determine the quality of the reading experience. Through the use of interpretive reading skills, the student learns to comprehend both literal and inferred meanings and to react imaginatively to the content.

Responses to Part III: Reference, Study, Rate Skills

Responses to the items in Part III exhibited the widest diversity. Unlike the responses in Part II Comprehension Skills, these items show little relationship between tallies in the SKILLS NEEDED column and those in the ACTUAL INSTRUCTION or SPECIFIC PRACTICE columns.

Reference Skills

Responses to the Reference Skills section of Part III

1Massey and Moore, Helping High School Students to Read Better, p. 45.
are presented in Table 5.

TABLE 5
RESPONSES TO PART III: REFERENCE SKILLS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>REFERENCE SKILLS</th>
<th><em>Responses</em></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using the encyclopedia..............</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using the card catalogue.............</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using glossary and dictionary.........</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature.........................</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Responses in Column I indicate SKILLS NEEDED, in Column II ACTUAL INSTRUCTION given, Column III SPECIFIC PRACTICE, and in Column IV SKILLS MASTERED.

The use of the card catalogue and a glossary and dictionary were more necessary, according to the tally, than the use of an encyclopedia and the Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature.

Summary and Organization Skills

While the ability to take notes was the most needed skill noted in this sub-section, the ability to classify was considered the least needed as shown in Table 6. Also evident in Table 6 was the presence of skills needed and practiced, but seldom taught as in the case of outlining, prose summary writing, note-taking and report writing. This is, perhaps, the most paradoxical set of circumstances revealed in the current study. For although the various comprehension skills are the most taught and practiced; the teaching and using of the pro-
ductive synthesizing skills needed to express such understandings--for example, classifying, outlining, and organizing information from different sources--are largely ignored. The responses to the Summary and Organization Skills section of Part III are presented in Table 6.

**TABLE 6**

RESPONSES TO PART III: SUMMARY AND ORGANIZATION SKILLS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SUMMARY AND ORGANIZATION SKILLS</th>
<th>I</th>
<th>II</th>
<th>III</th>
<th>IV</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Outlining</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing prose summary</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classifying</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taking notes</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing reports</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizing information from different sources</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Responses in Column I indicate SKILLS NEEDED, in Column II ACTUAL INSTRUCTION given, Column III SPECIFIC PRACTICE, and in Column IV SKILLS MASTERED.

Flexible Reading Skills

The flexible reader is the kind of efficient reader who can "move with a kind of relentless concentration through a veritable mountain of material at speeds which to the plodding reader seem fantastic. In effect, the disciplined reader tunes out distractions and, almost like a machine, cuts through a pile of materials."¹ The speed of reading should be variable

that is, the efficient reader skims, scans, stops, or reads intensively as his interests and the relevance or significance of the material changes.\(^1\) The responses recorded in Table 7 show that not all those who recognize the need for flexibility in reading are providing the actual instruction needed to attain this goal.

**TABLE 7**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FLEXIBLE READING SKILLS</th>
<th>*Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skimming to get general ideas</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scanning to answer questions</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading intensively for details</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading rapidly</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Responses in Column I indicate SKILLS NEEDED, in Column II ACTUAL INSTRUCTION given, Column III SPECIFIC PRACTICE, and in Column IV SKILLS MASTERED.

**Summary**

The data presented in this chapter were collected by means of a survey of ninth and tenth grade English teachers in a single suburban high school. All those teachers who were asked to participate did complete the survey. The 42 item survey was discussed according to each major division of the survey.

\(^1\)Gunn, "Speed Reading: Con-Challenger," p. 84.
CHAPTER V
SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Findings of the Survey

In order to help the high school student develop to his maximum capacity, he must develop "the skills of perceiving relationships between facts, of assimilating information from widely diverse sources, and of weighing the merits of various forms of literature."\(^1\) And while it has been shown that a student whose "reading instruction was terminated at the end of elementary school was no better reader at the end of senior high school than he was when he entered high school,"\(^2\) it has also been demonstrated that wide reading alone does not necessarily result in reading improvement.

The findings of the current study reveal that the reading of literature in its various forms remains the main concern of these English teachers. It is also evident that the teaching of those skills needed to read the required literature is, to a great extent, ignored. The following is a list of the specific findings of this study:

\(^1\)Massey and Moore, *Helping High School Students to Read Better*, pp. 5-6.

\(^2\)Ibid., p. 6.
First, teachers who completed this survey showed no consistent response patterns in relation to the reading-study skills of their homogeneously-grouped pupils. Hence, the teaching of reading skills appears to be incidental and unrelated to the differing ability levels of their students.

Second, for all but five items, the reading-study skills on the survey were more NEEDED than TAUGHT or PRACTICED. In several instances this difference was dramatic.

Third, in all cases the SKILLS MASTERED column received fewer tallies than the SKILLS NEEDED column. Yet in some instances, especially in Part III Reference, Study, and Rate Skills, there was only limited evidence of ACTUAL INSTRUCTION or SPECIFIC PRACTICE.

Fourth, comprehension skills, especially those related to the understanding of narrative-fiction were among the most NEEDED, TAUGHT, PRACTICED, and MASTERED skills on the list according to the frequency of responses.

Conclusions and Implications

To paraphrase Gunn, to know that high school students need instruction in reading-study skills is not enough; to know this and to know how to provide such instruction is still not enough. To see the need, to know how to provide for it, and then to DO it--this is the goal of reading instruction in today's high school. With this goal in mind the following is a list of conclusions and implications relating to the status of Gunn, "About Reading and the Teacher of English?" p. 383.
of reading instruction in the ninth and tenth grade English classes of one local high school:

First, teachers are unrealistic about the diversity of reading needs and abilities exhibited by their students. Although students are arranged homogeneously, there is little evidence that this grouping affects the teacher's expectations.

Second, teachers are not cognizant of their obligation to teach and practice those skills which they deem necessary for success in their classes.

Third, without minimizing the importance of comprehension skills, English teachers should become more aware of the need to teach and practice vocabulary skills and study skills in the daily lessons.

Fourth, a well-defined and sequential program of reading-study skills ought to become a part of the English curriculum.
APPENDIX I

Reading Skills and Habits Needed
in the Language Arts¹

A. Utilize sources to locate materials.
   1. Indexes
   2. Tables of contents
   3. Glossaries
   4. Card catalogues
   5. Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature
   6. General references
   7. Newspapers, magazines, pamphlets
   8. Tables, maps, graphs, charts
   9. Dictionaries/word guides

B. Adjust reading speed to the type and difficulty of the materials and to the reading purpose.
   1. Gaining a general appraisal of the material.
   2. Skimming the contents of the material.
   3. Reading for memorization of general concepts and/or details.
   4. Reading carefully and critically.

C. Comprehend written material.
   1. Understanding word meanings.
   2. Determine general significance of the context of sentences and paragraphs, chapters, lines of poetry, and complete plays.
   3. Recognizing important details.
      a. Isolated facts.
      b. Evidence to buttress main ideas.
      c. Answers to specific questions.
   4. Noting and understanding use of transitional words, phrases, and clauses as bridges to join ideas.
   5. Realizing the author's purpose in writing.

D. Evaluate the material intelligently.
   1. Determining the competency of the author and reliability and relevancy of the content.
   2. Comparing new concepts gained in reading with previously held concepts.

3. Analyzing the significance of the date of publication.
4. Adopting the mood which the author wants to create.
5. Judging the validity of character portrayal.

E. Apply concepts gained from the reading material to confronting situations.
   1. Solving problems.
   2. Taking part in a discussion.
   3. Doing additional reading to get more adequate information.
   4. Observing and analyzing life situations and comparing them to material read.
   5. Stimulating imagination and thought.

F. Present written material orally.

G. Understand the importance of reading and ways to satisfy intellectual curiosity through reading.

H. Make accurate self-evaluations of progress in reading in the language arts.
   1. Realizing the importance of self-evaluation.
   2. Using a self-evaluation check list periodically.
Checklist of Study Skills

Selection and Evaluation Skills

a. Recognize the significance of the content
b. Recognize important details
c. Identify unrelated details
d. Find the main idea of a paragraph
e. Find the main idea of larger selections
f. Locate topic sentences
g. Locate answers to specific questions
h. Develop independent purposes for reading
i. Realize the author's purpose
j. Determine the accuracy and relevancy of information

Organization Skills

a. Take notes
b. Determine relationship between paragraphs
c. Follow time sequences
d. Outline single paragraphs
e. Outline sections of a chapter
f. Outline an entire chapter
g. Summarize single paragraph
h. Summarize larger units of material

Locational Skills

a. Find information through a table of contents
b. Locate information through the index
c. Use a library card catalogue to locate materials
d. Use the Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature to locate sources of information
e. Use an almanac to obtain data
f. Understand and use various appendixes
g. Use glossaries
h. Use encyclopedias to locate information

Skill in Following Directions

a. See the relation between the purposes and the directions
b. Follow one-step directions
c. Follow steps in sequence

---

Specialized Skills

a. Understand the significance of pictorial aids
b. Read and interpret graphs
c. Read and interpret tables
d. Read and interpret charts
e. Read and interpret maps
f. Read and interpret cartoons
g. Read and interpret diagrams
h. Read and interpret pictures
Reading Skills Checklist

Skills of Word Attack

1. Visual clues (use of pictures, charts, diagrams, etc.)
2. Context (or meaning in the sentence)
3. Configuration (the general appearance of the word as an aid to quick recognition and identification of the word)
4. Structural analysis (knowledge of root words, prefixes, suffixes, inflectional endings, syllabication)
5. Phonetic analysis (process of associating appropriate sounds with the printed letter forms)
6. The dictionary (for meaning, pronunciation, finding a better word, spelling, and sometime word derivations)

Comprehension Skills

1. Reading to get general significance (main idea or ideas)
2. Noting details
3. Making judgements (reading critically)
4. Comparing and contrasting
5. Making inferences and drawing conclusions
6. Evaluating (fact-fiction; fact-propaganda)

Study Skills

1. Adapting skills to materials
2. Following directions
3. Notetaking and outlining
4. Summarizing
5. Skimming
6. Reading to remember

Locational Skills

1. Using dictionary, reference books, etc.
2. Using table of contents, indexes, glossary
4. Using maps, atlas, charts, graphs
5. Using illustrations, symbols, abbreviations
6. Using footnotes, bibliographies
7. Appraising subject; estimating sources

---

Appreciation Skills

1. Visualizing enriching imagery
2. Recognizing the author's intent and mood
3. Appreciating literary style, figures of speech
4. Understanding semantics (science of word meanings)
5. Understanding approaches to poetry, drama, the novel, the essay, and other literary forms
APPENDIX II

Survey of Reading Study Skills
In the English Classroom

Directions: Check in column I the reading skills which you think a student needs to function successfully in your English class. In column II check those skills in which you have given your students actual instruction. In column III check those skills in which you have given your students specific opportunity to practice. In column IV check those skills that you take for granted the students have mastered and are using. You may check in more than one column.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>I</th>
<th>II</th>
<th>III</th>
<th>IV</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Part I VOCABULARY SKILLS</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. Using context clues</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Using phonetic/structural clues</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>C. Using syllabication principles</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Part II COMPREHENSION SKILLS</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. General Skills</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Finding the main idea</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Finding supporting details</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Relating main and supporting ideas</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
4. Understanding sequence of events

5. Understanding author's organization

6. Following written directions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>B. Critical Reading Skills</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Distinguishing fact and opinion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Noting cause/effect relationship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Drawing inferences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Recognizing author's purpose</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Drawing conclusions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Anticipating events/outcomes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>C. Interpretive Reading Skills</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Developing insight into feelings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Understanding plot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Understanding character</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Noting influence of setting on plot and character</td>
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<td>9. Using denotative and connotative language</td>
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<td>10. Noting symbols/figures of speech</td>
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<tr>
<td>11. Noting humor, satire, irony</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Noting author's use of tone/mood</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
13. Noting effects of rhythm/rhyme

Part III REFERENCE, STUDY, RATE SKILLS

A. Reference Skills
1. Using the encyclopedia
2. Using the card catalogue
3. Using glossary and dictionary

B. Summary and Organization Skills
1. Outlining
2. Writing prose summary
3. Classifying
4. Taking notes
5. Writing notes
6. Organizing information from different sources

C. Flexible Reading Skills
1. Skimming to get general ideas
2. Scanning to answer questions
3. Reading intensively for details
4. Reading rapidly
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