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Role and function of a reading committee

Bernadette Sachs

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THE ROLE AND FUNCTION
OF A
READING COMMITTEE

by
Sister Bernadette Sachs, O.S.B.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS .................................................. iii

CHAPTER

I. INTRODUCTION .................................................... 1
   Statement of the Problem
   Scope and Limitation of the Problem

II. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE ................................. 4
   The Need for a Reading Committee
   The Function of the Committee
   The Committee Organization
   The Results of the Committee

III. SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS .................. 27
   Summary
   Conclusions
   Recommendations

IV. DESIGN OF THE COMMITTEE ........................................ 32
   Planning the Committee
   Membership
   Explanation to the Teachers
   The Work of the Committee

APPENDIX ........................................................ 38

BIBLIOGRAPHY ..................................................... 53
CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In 1969 James E. Allen wrote,

Imagine, if you can, what your life would be like if you could not read, or if your reading skills were so meager as to limit you to the simplest of writings, and if for you the door to the whole world of knowledge and inspiration available through the printed word had never been opened.

The responsibility for the provision of educational opportunity, traditionally and legally, rests with the State, but the State cannot hold this responsibility alone. ¹

It lies with each individual in the State, in the city and in the school. It is in the light of this challenge that the writer pursues the role and function of a reading committee. It is with the belief that a committee can involve many people who are deeply concerned and who can thus provide the enthusiasm that is necessary to change the cry, "Give our children the right to read" to "We have given our children the right to read," that the writer makes a study of the reading committee.

It is in this frame of mind that the nation is striving to find the best way, the best plan to meet the

needs of each child. Educators have long tried to discover the best teacher preparation available, but it is now a united effort with all branches of government, business, education, and the general public standing hand in hand.

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this paper is to study the role and function of a reading committee and to set up such a committee for the Diocese of Birmingham in Alabama.

Scope and Limitation of the Problem

The problem will include a review of the literature written on the subject which is rather limited, therefore, the writer has used first hand information from persons who have helped to form a committee or in some way worked with the committee. Besides a review of the literature on the subject, it is the aim of the writer to set up a committee for the Diocese of Birmingham. The committee will serve approximately five thousand seven hundred students, one hundred ninety teachers and twenty-five elementary schools.

The Diocese of Birmingham in Alabama has for the last two years, from September, 1970 to May, 1972, had a reading committee which had as its sole duty the evaluation of textbooks. The committee was made up of volunteers who were interested in newer reading programs. This committee was completely supported by the Right Reverend William Houck, Superintendent of the Diocese and chaired by Sister Mary Stella Williams, Supervisor for the Diocese. As of
May, 1972, new textbooks were selected and adopted for use in the Diocese. Thus the original work of the committee was completed.

In the Diocese of Birmingham, as in many other Dioceses throughout the country, there is a very limited number of persons who have had training in the field of reading. The Diocese has no Reading Coordinator who would be able to give undivided time and talent to developing and maintaining the reading program. There is a central office staff who strongly supports the field of teaching. There are teachers, students, and parents who are willing to improve our school system. It is with a unity of staff purpose and action that this study is pursued.
CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The Need for a Reading Committee

Why do many educators find it necessary and beneficial to organize a reading committee for their school or school system? The basic reason for a reading committee is the growing concern of administrators and teachers to upgrade the reading program which is now in existence. According to Roy Newton, "One of the first steps in organizing a whole-school approach to reading may well be the setting up of a committee." ¹

Elizabeth Simpson says, ". . . the high school that wishes to improve its reading program should probably establish a Reading Improvement Committee." ²

A big need for a committee comes from the fact that representatives from many areas are able to share their knowledge concerning a certain problem or plan. This is much better than one person presenting a self made plan and


imposing it on the group. "The worst thing a superin-
tendent or principal can do in trying to set up a school reading program, authorities say, is to plan it himself and mobilize the staff to carry it out."3

Teachers work much better when they have had a part in the planning. According to Earle W. Wiltse,

There should be a comprehensive program of reading improvement in every school that involves all teachers at all levels and in all areas of the curriculum. This comprehensive approach to reading improvement requires leadership, motivation, cooperation, and planning. Nothing less than an all out attack would be sufficient. The total teaching staff can be involved in reading improvement by the following actions.

1. Appoint a reading coordinator with time to plan and organize.
2. Provide a budget for promotion of reading.
3. Maintain a program of in-service training for all teachers.
4. Organize reading strategy committees."4

Eileen Sargent reports the following:

In developing a comprehensive reading program the approach is three-fold.

1. Recognizing and identifying the needs.
2. Developing the program.

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3. Implementing the program.5

So as to facilitate this, the formation of a reading committee is advocated. In this way every member of the staff has an equal opportunity to build the program.

Roy Newton answers the question concerning the need for a reading committee in the following manner:

Despite concern voiced in many quarters that change in reading procedures is accomplished relatively slowly, we have made considerable progress in the last ten or fifteen years. A few years ago a school administrator often felt he had "solved" the reading problems in his school by the hiring of a remedial teacher. This teacher was expected to work almost entirely with all the problem readers leaving the other teachers to go about the business of teaching. This philosophy had the effect of placing reading instruction on a treadmill. The reading teacher had to work faster with larger groups, as more and more boys and girls were found to be in need of help. Emphasis was on correction rather than prevention.

Now schools are seeing that the professionally competent reading specialist is fully as important as are directors of curriculum and of instruction. The emphasis is shifting slowly but steadily from working with children to working with teachers-classroom teachers. Clinical work must be continued by highly trained technicians. However, the long term view, most productive in improving learning situations and hence involving preventive work, is in the area of improving instruction in the classroom.

Many school systems are taking advantage of the availability of ESEA funds to augment existing in-service programs.

Special attention should be devoted to first year and non-tenure teachers. As efforts are made to improve the quality and the amount of reading instruction in our teacher training colleges, we must coordinate preservice, and in-service experience. No matter how good we can make our preservice courses, an effective program demands the continuation of the professional training of teachers on an in-service basis. The reading committee appears to be a logical way of accomplishing this coordination in the area of reading instruction.\(^6\)

Often times there is a need for curriculum guides to be developed, this often falls to the reading committee. Leo Fay says, "In order to implement developmental reading courses the superintendent appointed committees to develop curriculum guides for Developmental (grades 7-12) and Remedial Reading (grades 3-12)."\(^7\)

**The Function of the Committee**

Robinson and Rauch state the following:

The function of the reading committee is to promote an ever progressing reading program. They go on to say, the major task of the committee should be to evaluate the reading program continually and to take necessary steps towards improving the program with the consultant taking a leadership role in making and implementing decisions.\(^8\)

At times the roles of the consultant and the committee are not well defined and problems may result. According to

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\(^7\) Leo Fay, Curriculum Guide in Reading Developmental Reading, Grades 1-8 (Indianapolis, Indiana: State Department of Public Instruction, 1966), p. 4 Microfische ED 011 495.

Dorothy Dietrich, the following is said:

The reading committee should be a policy-making body which develops a broad framework within which the consultant is able to function. Their tasks should include such things as an evaluation of district-wide reading scores, adequacy of materials, innovations needed and experiments to be strengthened.

One of the first responsibilities of the reading committee is to obtain information concerning the reading status within the school or school district. For this purpose many resources should be explored. Some of these include:

1. **Test Results.** By examining these areas, weaknesses and strengths can be determined.
2. **Records and Observations.** Facts and information concerning students who need remedial help; current teaching practices, either favorable or unfavorable; attitude of the teachers towards the improvement of reading; and areas of weakness which have been noted by the consultant will be of much value to the committee.
3. **Teacher Background.** The background which the teachers have in the area of reading courses taken or experience in the teaching of reading would be helpful to the committee so as to determine in-service needs. Questionnaires can be used to establish reading practices.
4. **Records.** A survey of available records concerning the development of each child as he has progressed through reading during his school years.
5. **Book Inventory.** A complete inventory of basal and supplementary materials available as well as workbooks, trade books, etc.
6. **Parent Reactions.** By means of P.T.A. programs the reactions of the community's attitude toward the reading program should be gained.
7. **Administration Reaction.** The ideas of administrators in regard to the Total Reading Program should be sought.9

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With the above information it will be possible for the committee to evaluate the entire reading program. A combination of factors will determine the directions in which the committee will probably decide to move. If the problem is one of a lack of materials which hinder teachers' performance, then this may be the first order of business; if teachers lack the background and experience in reading to use a sufficient supply of materials, the committee may want to consider in-service education; if the school is doing a good job teaching reading, but parents react adversely to the reading program, then the committee might wish to explore means of informing the community about the school's total reading program. Thus the first direction of the committee will depend upon the initial study of the reading program. The task may seem overwhelming, but one must realize that the task of a reading committee cannot be done in one year. Therefore, the committee should begin with the areas of the program which are the weakest or need the most attention.

The following was reported by a special report from Washington:

Before trying to set up any reading program the school should make a thorough survey of how well its pupils read and what skills they need to improve. The idea is to learn as much as possible about the youngsters' reading deficiencies and what is causing them so the program can be tailored to meet their specific needs.

The following is suggested:

1. Administer standardized reading achievement tests.
2. Compare the results of achievement tests with intelligence tests.
3. Ask teachers to make informal inventories of the reading skills of their pupils and to combine them
with their observations of the youngsters' performance to recommend which children need special help.

4. Give those youngsters who display reading deficiencies individual diagnostic tests to pinpoint skills in which they are weak. Pupils should also be tested for visual perception and auditory discrimination.

5. Carefully consider environmental factors which may affect the youngsters' ability.\(^{10}\)

While this survey of the school's needs may be time consuming and costly, experienced administrators say it is not only valuable in planning, but worth repeating each year. Besides helping to screen youngsters for various programs, the tests can assist specialists in choosing new materials in revising the curriculum, and in evaluating various techniques. Thus the reading committee, being the group who is studying the reading program will use the school survey to determine its function.

Roy Newton reports that he expects the committee to function in the following ways:

1. Emphasizes the whole-school nature of the reading program.
2. Increases the effectiveness of reading personnel.
3. Unites, or helps unite, a school faculty.
4. Presents a structured organization that is flexible, efficient, and workable.
5. Provides channels for the dissemination of ideas, practices, and techniques.
6. Educates through involvement.
7. Aids in-service work in all areas.
8. Systematizes efficient operation.

\(^{10}\) Reading Crisis: The Problems and Suggested Solutions, p. 20.
9. Facilitates working closely with college personnel.
10. Expedites doing what has to be done.  

Grace Boyd in reporting on the purpose of a reading committee says that a committee should perform the following functions:

1. To become familiar with recent professional literature and to encourage reading by teachers.
2. To gather and disseminate information about the reading program in all schools.
3. To inspire interest and enthusiasm for improving practices and to celebrate successes that are reported.
4. To encourage experimentation with materials and procedures by those who have worked out a well-organized plan.
5. To share in the evaluation of materials for teaching reading.
6. To assist in planning for changes in the reading program and for purchase of new materials.

Boyd continues:

The first activity of this reading committee was to survey recently published materials. An annotated bibliography was made available to all those who were interested. As the committee members began to report different information concerning new materials, a spark of enthusiasm ran through those teachers who were involved and many teachers were stimulated to think critically of their use of materials. As a result, interest in the individual needs of students became apparent.

11 J. Roy Newton, "The Rationale For a System Wide Reading Committee," p. 244.

Thorsten Carlson reports:

The reading survey committee was organized for the specific purpose of helping to define the job to be done. It is often very helpful to retain this group as a reading committee or a reading improvement committee. Such a committee gives power to the program and also serves as an in-service tool. In fact, in very small secondary schools or in schools where the budget cannot support a reading consultant, the reading committee plays a most significant role in trying to help solve problems, particularly by establishing sound in-service practice.

Carlson continues:

The major reasons for the existence of a reading committee are to evaluate the reading program and implement essential improvements when necessary or desirable.\textsuperscript{13}

Roy Newton states that the committee should consider such questions as:

1. Who should teach reading.
2. What students are involved.
3. How should the program fit into the academic pattern of the school.

He further states:

The group should evaluate present practices which would include general principles of child growth that apply to reading instruction, practices which are acceptable in their present form, changes which will lead to improved practices which are out of harmony.\textsuperscript{14}

In regard to the high school reading committee,

Elizabeth Simpson says:

The committee should begin with a study of the needs and abilities of the students enrolled in the school. This would include several steps.

1. \textit{Tests Results}. Reading and Mental.
2. \textit{Questionnaire}. To students asking about reading interest.


\textsuperscript{14}J. Roy Newton, \textit{Reading in Your School}, p. 12.
3. **Staff Meetings.** Locate staff members who are eager to contribute to better reading in the school.

4. **Question.** Ask teachers, librarians, etc. what they are already doing to improve reading.

5. **Recommendations.** The committee should bring specific ideas for an all out program to upgrade reading.  

According to Eileen Sargent there is a threefold approach to a comprehensive reading program:

1. Recognizing and identifying needs.
2. Developing the program.  
3. Implementing the program.

To expedite this approach, Sargent suggests the formation of a reading committee which would receive communication relative to the needs and wishes of teachers in every department regarding their knowledge of reading and their ability to incorporate the use of reading skills into the mastery of their specific content areas.

The consultant should provide the leadership, stimulation, resources and media from which the program can grow and develop. The members of the committee should be instructed in the basic fundamentals and in turn instruct other members of the school faculty.

The main function of the committee established by the Indiana State Board of Education was to develop curriculum guides for reading. These bulletins are for use by the teachers and offer helpful suggestions in tests and

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and measurement in reading, as well as suggested material for the reading laboratory. These features, complete with reference materials, enable the teacher to plan and execute a program designed to increase rate and comprehension within a short span of time. 17

The Board of Education of the City of New York suggests that a district curriculum committee may:

1. Interpret and recommend modifications of current curriculum bulletins in terms of local needs and conditions.
2. Serve as a clearing house for suggestions from school committees.
3. Plan workshops, exhibits, demonstrations, in-service for teachers and supervisors and occasionally courses for parents.
4. Assist school curriculum committees in the solution of local problems.
5. Recommend suitable materials of instruction. 18

In an interview with Mr. James Bigaj of Milwaukee, it was learned that the reading committee for the Public Schools in Milwaukee has as its function the appraisal of the reading program—to study the best way to unite the efforts being put forth and to come up with recommendations. 19

Sister Rita Marie Will of the Archdiocesan School Office in Milwaukee reported that the reading committee for

17 Leo Fay, op. cit., p. 4.
the Diocese has as its function the evaluation of the Archdiocesan reading program in order to meet the reading needs of each child now and as envisioned for the future. As of the present time, the committee has completed the following points:

1. A reading survey of present reading programs in the Archdiocese.
2. Compilation of goals and objectives of the total reading program based on the results of the survey.
3. Guidelines for evaluating new reading programs.
4. Adoption of seven reading series which may be used in the school system.²⁰

The committee has asked for comments and suggestions concerning the work completed and suggestions for the future in order to serve the teachers.

The work of the reading committee of the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis has been to formulate a statement of its philosophy of reading and within these guidelines to evaluate reading series and to adopt these for the Archdiocese. The committee has also evaluated materials that will help teachers enrich their work in reading. This committee welcomes suggestions from individual teachers as to how this committee could be of more help to the teachers in the area of reading.²¹


According to Earle W. Wiltse, a reading strategy committee should:

1. Prepare, pool and share bulletins.
2. Appraise the several elements in the reading program.
3. Plan filmstrips for class use.
4. Attend monthly meetings.
5. Write a study-habits manual.
6. Set goals for the year.
7. Evaluate progress and suggest improvements.
8. Expand library facilities.\(^{22}\)

The main role of the consultant should be to help teachers become better teachers of reading. It is most often necessary for the consultant to seek help in doing this. Nona Chern believes that much help can be received from the reading committee. She says:

It will probably be wise for the consultant to use the services of a reading committee, made up of good reading teachers from each school, assigned to help the new teachers with the reading program.

There are a few basic programs that the consultant can depend on almost every year, and with the help of the reading committee can give wide service and follow-up with good results.\(^{23}\)

The State of Minnesota has tried to answer the Right To Read challenge by planning Right to Read Programs in each and every school in the state. This has been done by and largely through the use of committees. The Minnesota plan has two basic dimensions:

\(^{22}\) Earle W. Wiltse, *op. cit.*, p. 198.

\(^{23}\) Nona Chern, "In-Service Education in Reading: The Realization of the Potential: Symposium III (Media, Pennsylvania: Rose Tree Media School District, 1968), Microfische ED 028 020.
1. To make direct technical assistance available to each public school district and to each private and parochial school administrative unit for a sustained period of time in order that a total reading program may be built which meets certain generally accepted criteria of excellence.

2. Identification of an individual within each school who will be designed as the director of reading.24

The Minnesota plan will be an exercise in building a reading program within the full connotative meaning of the word program combined with in-service education, and in developing reading leadership within each and every administrative unit.

The work of the committee seems to be varied according to the needs of each locale. What is necessary is a thorough study of the existing reading program and a plan to remedy any deficiencies.

The Committee Organization

Committee organization varies from committee to committee depending upon the needs to be met. Many variations are possible depending upon the size of the school system.

Nona Chern says:

The reading committee should be made up of teachers who are interested in and who are doing a good job in the teaching of reading. She further states that administrators should be included in membership.25


25 Nona Chern, op. cit., p. 5.
Eileen Sargent in speaking of a high school reading committee believes, "the weak teachers become strong as a result of working with the committee."  

H. Alan Robinson and Sidney J. Rauch state:

The committee should be composed of the reading consultant, a representative of the administration, a guidance counselor and teachers both in grade level and subject matter areas; other specialists, such as a nurse or a psychologist, might be drawn in as consultants.

Roy Newton reports the following:

The membership of the reading committee probably should include, at elementary level, a representative from each grade with additional members if more than one school is involved. The middle school where it exists, might have similar representation. At the secondary level the committee should involve someone from each subject area including the so-called "nonacademic" subjects. This may well be the chairman of the department, representation of a department is delegated to a teacher who is "sold" on the importance of reading. In addition, teachers of language arts at all grade levels might be invited to belong. Intermediate grades and middle schools having departmentalization will tend to reflect the organizational pattern suggested for the secondary school. To the above representation of classroom teachers should be added principals and supervisory personnel. Inclusion of the administration is vital to the success of the reading program. Reading related services such as the school psychologist, guidance counselor, school nurse, librarians, and audiovisual director should be added.

Newton states:

At times the reading committee may wish to include, for a specific meeting or series of meetings, lay people from the local community. Boys and girls, parents, and members of the medical profession have contributions to make.

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26Eileen Sargent, op. cit., p. 19.

Newton believes:

While the strength of such a committee lies in the breadth of its representation, equally obvious should be that its size is at the same time a possible cause of weakness. However, only rarely will the entire reading committee need to meet, as when contemplating the evaluation of a whole school reading program, or planning workshops, conferences, or in-service training programs. At other times a more effective organization is by a given grade; by primary, intermediate, junior, or senior high divisions; by supervisory and/or administrative personnel; or by departments.

The structure of the reading committee may be completed by the establishment of an advisory council which, itself, may serve as a planning committee. Important points to consider are those involving flexibility. Careful planning will avoid such pitfalls as unnecessary attendance at large meetings involving minutia of little concern to the majority of those in attendance. By careful planning, also, the reading committee will be able to focus attention relatively quickly upon those areas of the reading program which may be in need of immediate attention. 28

According to Elizabeth Simpson who speaks of the high school reading committee, the following is applicable:

The High School that wishes to improve its reading program should probably establish a Reading Improvement Committee. The committee should consist of the English teacher who is most interested in and best trained in the field of reading, a representative teacher from each of the subject areas, the school librarian, the reading specialist or coordinator, the school psychologist and the school principal. The committee should select a chairman and a secretary. These two will assume the most responsibility for its activities. 29


29 Elizabeth A. Simpson, op. cit., p. 52.
Newton states the following concerning the advisory council on reading:

The council should be made up of:

A. Administration
   1. Principals, assistant principals, supervisors

B. Community
   1. Board of Education representative, social agencies

C. Special (reading-related) services
   1. Curriculum coordinator, guidance director, librarian, psychologist, reading specialist, school doctor, school nurse, speech therapist, visual-aide director.

D. Teaching Staff
   1. Grade teachers, subject-department chairman.

Both the size of the school and the degree of involvement or interest of individuals will be deciding factors in the selection of the advisory council.30

Grace Boyd when reporting on an active reading committee says:

The committee was made up of representatives of all grades in each of the ten schools in the system. In addition, two principals are active, contributing members. A teacher of first grade and a reading consultant have served as cochairmen. A recorder has helped prepare a summary of each meeting which is sent to all committee members and principals.31

Mr. Bigaj of the Milwaukee Public School System reported the following concerning the committee for the city:

The committee consisted of a Board which consisted of five members. This board was advised by a committee made up of twenty-six members. These twenty-six were comprised of the following:

30 J. Roy Newton, Reading in Your School, p. 15.
31 Grace Boyd, op. cit., p. 188.
1. Representatives from the colleges in the area.
2. An Early Childhood Specialist.
3. A member of the Teachers Organization.
4. An elementary and high school principal.
5. Representatives from junior high, labor, business and industry.
6. A representative from the League of Women's Voters.
7. Parent Teachers Association representative.
8. A representative from Exceptional Education, Title I and others.
9. There were also two students from high school on the committee. 32

The above group was subdivided in order to work more efficiently.

There was also an advisory committee made up a reading coordinator, a reading consultant and an elementary curriculum specialist. The work of this advisory committee was primarily to act as liaison between the twenty-six man committee and the five man board.

Carlson says:

If a reading committee is to render effective service, each staff member must be a part of the whole communication system. That is, each committee member must represent a definite, small group of staff members. He must act as a liaison between the committee and his group. Then when decisions are made, the total faculty will have played a part in planning. The committee member can reach his "group" by holding brief meetings occasionally, by speaking to members of his "group" individually, or by asking them to react to some information he has brought to their attention. Unless the total faculty is very small (thirty-five or less), the procedure suggested above is more effective than total faculty meetings. 33


33 Thorsten R. Carlson, op. cit., p. 250.
Sister Rita Marie Will of the Catholic School Office of Milwaukee, Wisconsin, states the following:

The committee for the Diocese of Milwaukee is comprised of teachers who had a good background in the field of reading. These members were selected by the principals of the schools in which they taught.34

The organization of a committee is as varied as the function and need for the committee.

The Results of the Committee

Because of the variety in organization, needs and function of the committees it is evident that the results will be just as varied. However, the result of every committee should be an improvement in the reading program for the system or school.

The concept of a committee is not new. In 1954, Simpson suggested the formation of a high school committee for the improvement of reading. Later in 1960, Newton enlarged the committee to include the whole school. In 1965, Robinson and Rauch indicated that schools are finding the reading committee to be a businesslike way of going about a job that is long overdue.

Dietrich states the following concerning the results of the committee:

A reading committee organized to evaluate and guide a reading program within a district may have tremendous impact on the total school program. Its eventual outcome may be to change many areas of the curriculum. The committee can be of immeasurable help to the consultant, freeing him for more direct contact with teachers.

Dietrich continues:

A reading committee's success depends upon the sincerity of higher administrative officials who support it, of members of the committee who believe in its importance, of the reading consultants who work toward the accomplishment of the committee's decisions, as well as the teachers who cooperate by complying with the decisions of the committee. 35

The effectiveness of the committee depends a great deal on the support that it receives from the administration.

In regard to this, Carlson states:

There is little question that the work of the reading committee tends to be ineffective without the confidence and support of the schools leadership. The supportative administration can help such a committee engage in a vital role which is bound to affect curriculum development. Since reading is such an integral part of the total curriculum, the reading committee's work must soon become intertwined with other areas of the curriculum. 36

The result of the work of the South Pennsylvania School Reading Committee has been the compilation of a handbook which states:

The report stresses the needs of teachers of reading, regardless of the level at which they teach. It is hoped that it will point the way and provide the suggestions

35 Dorothy M. Dietrich, op.cit., p. 247.
36 Thorsten R. Carlson, op. cit., p. 251.
that will result in the development of a sound reading program throughout the school. 37

Roy Newton reports:

Teachers share enthusiasm and learn from each other. Information concerning better than average reading programs obtained through professional reading and by visitation, if translated into a dynamic program can be shared with others in turn.

The further in-service training possibilities inherent in the reading committee approach to the problem of reading are apparent.

A concern for wide reading will inevitably lead to changes in the testing program, instruction for the slow and able learner, with resultant strengthening of the curriculum; in an improved professional attitude toward the task of the teacher in school providing universal education. 38

H. A. Robinson and R. Udall report the following:

Individual school systems have it within their power to correct obvious failings, improve the schools total educational offering, and above all else, provide instruction that will help each student achieve to his maximum capacity. 39

The above could very well be done through a reading committee. Nona Chern advocates:

The reading committee should help with in-service. This should result in better reading practices being taught. Often teachers do not realize that they need help but would benefit by it. When the program is planned so that


38 J. Roy Newton, Reading in Your School, p. 16.

the teachers will use the knowledge they have gained in their classroom, then it will be successful.40

The Minnesota Right to Read Program has used committees to form its program. If the program is successful the result will be an answer to the Right to Read Challenge—that every person be able to read according to his ability.

So as to have good results, Wiltse says:

There should be a comprehensive program of reading improvement in every school that involves all teachers at all levels and in all areas of the curriculum. This comprehensive approach to reading improvement requires leadership, motivation, cooperation and planning. Nothing less than an all out attack would be sufficient.41

Elizabeth Simpson believes:

In order to get good results from the committee's work, in-service must begin where the teachers are, at the moment. An ever increasing consciousness of reading will result.42

The success of the reading committee is evident by this statement made by Leo Fay:

The Superintendent and the curriculum Division are indebted to the committee who prepared this curriculum guide for their sustained interest and effort in this production. This background of experience in the field of reading will be reflected in the success of every teacher who elects to use the material. Cooperation and the work of this one committee is illustrative of the high professional interests of teachers throughout every

40 Nona Chern, op. cit.
41 Earle W. Wiltse, op. cit., p. 200.
42 Elizabeth A. Simpson, op. cit., p. 53.
subject area. In public education in Indiana, this type of endeavor is one of our greatest strengths.43

In order to have good results in improving the reading program, as has been stressed before, teachers and administrators have to work together. The result of a reading committee working with the teachers and administrative staff should result in an excellent reading program which should reflect the following points.

1. Children are taught on levels at which they can read successfully.
2. The classroom is organized so the teacher may teach effectively.
3. A variety of materials and equipment is used.
4. Adequate attention is given to skill development.
5. The junior and senior high schools give systematic attention to teaching children to read better.
6. The subject-matter teacher teaches the special vocabulary and reading skill related to their subject.
7. Children not only learn the skills of reading but also learn to enjoy reading.
8. Attention is given to oral and silent reading from the beginning.
9. The teacher knows the skills of reading and how to teach these skills.
10. The teacher keeps records on a child's reading progress and passes these records on to the next teacher.
11. The program provides for children of extreme disability and for the superior reader.
12. Parents are kept informed about the reading program.44

43 Leo Fay, op. cit., p. 5
44 Ira E. Aaron, Byron Calloway and Arthur Olson, Conducting In-Service Programs in Reading (Newark, Delaware: International Reading Association, 1965), p. 22.
CHAPTER III

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

The reading committee for the elementary schools in the Diocese of Birmingham in Alabama was originally organized in September of 1970 for the sole purpose of the evaluation of Language Arts Textbooks with the intention of adopting new texts for the schools by the spring of 1972. The new texts would be adopted for use in the primary grades in 1972, the intermediate grades in 1973, and the junior high in 1974. With this decision made and the course to take planned, it was decided that a reading committee should be a permanent part of the school system. Due to research done on the subject it was found necessary to change from a voluntary committee membership to a selected membership with wide representation.

The function of the committee was to become one of resource for the Diocese. The committee would keep abreast of new methods and materials and keep the teachers informed. One of the first duties of the committee would be to evaluate the existing system wide reading program and make suggestions for its improvement.
It is hoped that the result of the reading committee will be an improvement in the entire reading program for the Diocese.

Conclusions

The need for a reading committee is quite evident. Educators are becoming more and more aware of the fact that the existing reading program needs to be upgraded. One logical way of doing this seems to be to form a reading committee.

According to Roy Newton, "One of the first steps in organizing a whole approach to reading may well be the setting up of a committee."¹

It is necessary to form a committee so as to get the backing of the entire staff. It was reported by an education report from Washington that, "The worst thing a superintendent or principal can do in trying to set up a school reading program, is to plan it himself and then mobilize the staff to carry it out."²

The committee will function as a reading improvement committee, with its first order of business being to evaluate the existing program. The findings of this evaluation should be of help in determining the way in which the committee will move.

¹J. Roy Newton, Reading in Your School, p. 12.
²Reading Crisis: The Problems and Suggested Solutions, p. 21.
According to Dorothy Dietrich, the following is said:

One of the first responsibilities of the reading committee is to obtain information concerning the reading status within the school or school district. For this purpose many resources should be explored. With test results etc., it will be possible for the committee to evaluate the entire reading program. A combination of factors will determine the directions in which the committee will probably decide to move. The committee should begin with the areas of the program which are the weakest or needs the most attention.3

The committee organization should be one of wide representation focusing on those teachers who are interested and those who have a good background of knowledge in the field.

Nona Chern says, "The reading committee should be made up of teachers who are interested in and who are doing a good job in the teaching of reading." She further states that "administrators should be included in the membership."4

Roy Newton reports, "The membership of the reading committee should include, at the elementary level, a representative from each grade with additional members if more than one school is involved." Newton also says, "The structure of the reading committee may be completed by the establishment of an advisory council which, itself, may serve as a planning committee." He also cautions, "that while the strength of such a committee lies in the breadth

3Dorothy M. Dietrich, op. cit., pp. 243-44.
4Nona Chern, op. cit., p. 5.
of its representation, equally obvious should be that its size is at the same time a possible cause of weakness.\textsuperscript{5}

The results of a reading committee may be as varied as all the other aspects of it, but its success depends on those who make up the committee and those who are served.

Dietrich says:

A reading committee's success depends upon the sincerity of higher administrative officials who support it, of members of the committee who believe in its importance, of the reading consultants who work toward the accomplishment of the committee's decisions, as well as the teachers who cooperate by complying with the decisions of the committee.\textsuperscript{6}

\textbf{Recommendations}

The writer suggests that the committee for the Diocese be made up of the following members:

1. A task force which would be made up of three persons who would serve as resource persons in the field of reading for the Diocese.

2. One member who would represent the primary level.

3. One member who would represent the intermediate level.

4. One member who would represent the junior high level.

\textsuperscript{5}J. Roy Newton, "The Rationale for a System Wide Reading Committee," p. 243.

\textsuperscript{6}Dorothy M. Dietrich, \textit{op. cit.}
5. One principal.
6. The Diocesan Supervisor.
7. The Diocesan Superintendent of Schools.

The members will be selected according to the desire to serve and knowledge of the field.

It is recommended that the committee function in the following manner.

I. Make a study of the reading status of the school.
II. Plan In-Service for the teachers.
III. Work out a plan for implementation of a levels Language Arts Program.
IV. Publish Monthly Newsletters.
V. Compile a list of goals and objectives for the total reading program.
CHAPTER IV

DESIGN OF THE COMMITTEE

Planning the Committee

In accordance with a statement made by the Office of Education in Washington which stated, "that the worst thing a superintendent or principal can do in trying to set up a school reading program, is to plan it himself and then mobilize the staff to carry it out." The Diocesan School Office has asked the writer to chair the reading committee for the school year 1972 - 1973 for the elementary schools in the Diocese of Birmingham in Alabama.

The writer, not knowing the role or function of such a committee, has made a detailed study of such a committee before planning and organizing her own. It is with the acquired information that the work was begun.

On Saturday, September 4, 1972, the writer met with Sister Mary Stella, the Diocesan Elementary School Supervisor to discuss plans for the reading committee. From this meeting, the following plan evolved.

---

1Reading Crisis: The Problems and Suggested Solutions p. 21.
Membership

The writer suggested that the committee be composed of the following members.

1. A task force which would be made up of three persons who would serve as resource persons in the field of reading for the Diocese.

2. One member who would represent the primary level.

3. One member who would represent the intermediate level.

4. One member who would represent the junior high level.

5. One principal.

6. The Diocesan Supervisor.

7. The Diocesan Superintendent of Schools.

So as to obtain the best possible membership on the task force, those three persons in the Diocese who have the best background in the field of reading and the other language arts were sought. With information from the files of the teachers it was found that four persons met the qualifications with two working towards a Masters Degree in Reading and two having a Masters Degree in Education with special emphasis in reading. Of the four, three accepted the offer to serve on the committee and one declined due to other commitments.
The remaining members of the committee should be persons who have a background in reading or who are excellent in the teaching of reading and the other language arts. So as to secure the best possible membership, a questionnaire was sent to each principal seeking suggestions of persons who would qualify for the position. After securing fourteen names, a questionnaire was sent to each person seeking information concerning their background in reading and their interest in participating. From the response of these fourteen, one representative for each of the following levels was secured: primary, intermediate, junior high, and one principal.

**Explanation to the Teachers**

An explanation of the committee was given to the teachers of the Diocese at a meeting in Huntsville, Alabama, on September 26, 1972, and in Birmingham, Alabama, on September 27, 1972.

At these meetings it was explained that during the past two years the membership of the committee had been completely voluntary and had as its sole objective the evaluation of textbooks for a new language arts program. With this task done, the new reading committee would be one of resource for the teachers. It was explained that because of being a resource committee the nature of securing membership had been changed. The method for selection was
related, along with the names of the persons who were selected to serve on the committee. It was explained that more information concerning the work of the committee would be sent to them as the committee developed. It was stressed that the purpose of the committee was to help the teachers and that the three resource persons would be more than happy to visit schools so as to be of service to them.

The Work of the Committee

The first meeting of the reading committee was held in Birmingham, Alabama, on November 15, 1972. At this time, definite plans were made. The agenda for this meeting included a discussion of ways in which the committee could carry out its function. The committee decided to work on the following:

I. Make a study of the reading status of the schools.
   A. An examination of test results which should indicate areas of weaknesses and strengths.
   B. Gain information concerning current teaching practices and attitudes of the teachers.
   C. Gain information concerning the background of experience and the education of the teachers.
D. Make an inventory of the materials being used for reading.
E. Seek parent reaction to reading in the schools.
F. Seek reaction of administrators in regard to reading.

II. To plan In-service for the teachers. In order to do this effectively, questionnaires will be sent to each teacher to determine her background, her methods and her need for improvement. From this information an In-service workshop will be planned during the month of January. The program will be divided into a section for primary, intermediate, and junior high.

III. The Diocese has just implemented a Levels Language Arts program in the primary division of our schools. Next year, 1973, the Levels program will include grades 4-5-6. It will be the work of the committee to work out a plan for implementing this program. We will also serve as resource persons for those schools experiencing difficulty with the program.

IV. Monthly Newsletters containing reports of recently published professional literature, new materials, and an annotated bibliography will be sent to each school.
V. A compilation of Goals and Objectives of the total reading program.

While the above topics seem to be as much as the committee will be able to do during the first year, it is our hope that we, as a committee, will be able to assist the administrators in achieving an excellent Total School Reading Program for our Diocese.
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<th>APPENDIX</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Letter 1</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Letter 2</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Questionnaires</strong></td>
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</table>
Dear Principal,

The Language Arts Committee for the Diocese is seeking your help in selecting members who have a background in reading, or who are excellent in the teaching of reading and the other Language Arts subjects.

Would you please submit a name or names of teachers who you feel would serve the committee well. After we receive your suggestions, we will choose one teacher in the Diocese from each of the following divisions: primary, intermediate, junior high, and one principal. We will then ask the teacher to accept this appointment.

The work of the committee for this school year will be explained at the September Teachers' Meeting.

Please detach the form below and return it to me as soon as possible.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Sister Bernadette Sachs, O.S.B.
Chairman

Catholic Schools
Diocese of Birmingham

I recommend the following person or persons to serve on the Language Arts Committee:

Primary ____________________________
Intermediate________________________
Junior High________________________
Principal__________________________

PLEASE RETURN TO: Principal's Signature

Sister Bernadette Sachs, O.S.B.
Post Office Box 1072, Cullman, Alabama 35055
Dear Fellow Teacher,

You have been suggested as a possible member of the Language Arts Committee. Since numerous suggestions have been given we are trying to locate the four persons who are the most anxious to serve and those who are the most qualified. Please answer the following questions and return by October 15.

1. Would you be willing to serve on the Language Arts Committee?
   Yes_______ No_______

2. Please list courses which you have taken in the Field of Reading or Language Arts on the Undergraduate Level.
   ____________________________
   ____________________________

3. Please list courses which you have taken in the Field of Reading or Language Arts on the Graduate Level.
   ____________________________
   ____________________________

4. Would you prefer to have meetings after school on a week day or on Saturdays?
   ____________________________

I am not sure as to how many meetings will need to be held during the year, but only necessary meetings will be held.

Thank you for your cooperation in this matter.

Sincerely,

Sister Bernadette Sachs
Chairman

Please Return to:
Sister Bernadette Sachs
P.O. Box 1072, Cullman, Alabama 35055
INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES IN BASAL READING CLASS

Teacher's Name ____________________  Grade(s) Teaching ____________________

__________________  City ____________________

School

Fill out one sheet of this type on each different reading class taught. Only departmental teachers would have more than one class.

Number of classes in reading that you teach: ____________

1. Check the pattern or patterns used with this class:

   Grouping within the self-contained classroom.

   Cross-class grouping for reading instruction.

   How many other teachers? _____

   Cross-grade grouping for reading instruction.

   What grades? ____________________

   Heterogenous class taught as a whole.

   Homogeneous class taught as a whole.

   Individualized reading (omit items 5 through 8 if only this plan is used.)

   Other (Describe) ____________________

2. How many children do you now have in this reading class?

3. How many groups do you now have in operation in this class?
   (If individualized reading used, put "None". If class is taught as a whole, put "1".)

   ____________________

42
4. For each group in the class give the following information. (If individualized reading is used with total class or a portion, describe on reverse side of this page.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group No. of Children</th>
<th>Basal Text Grade Level</th>
<th>Publisher of Text</th>
<th>Is companion workbook used?</th>
<th>If basal not used indicate material</th>
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5. How many children have you shifted to a higher group since school started? 

6. How many children have you shifted to a lower group since school started? 

7. During what week of school did you set up first group? 

8. During what week of school did you set up last group? 

9. What information did you use as a basis for forming your groups, or if individualized reading used, in selecting appropriate materials. Check following items which are appropriate:

- Informal reading inventories
- Intelligence test results
- Records from teachers
- Teacher-made tests
- Reading Readiness tests
- Teacher observation
- Other standardized reading tests
- Other: Please describe: 

10. Please name tests used to form groups: 

-
11. How many days per week on the average do you teach reading in this class?

12. How much time on the average do you spend each day you teach reading? (Indicate just for this class if you teach more than one section of reading.)

13. What time during the day is this class scheduled?
TEACHER BELIEFS AND PRACTICES IN THE TEACHING OF BASAL READING

Teacher's Name ____________________________ Grade (s) Teaching ____________________________

School ____________________________ City ____________________________

The statements below are frequently made about effective basal reading programs. Indicate by drawing a line around the appropriate number the extent to which your program (or background of preparation) shows each characteristic.

1 - Almost always 3 - Sometimes 5 - Undecided
2 - Most of the time 4 - Seldom or never 6 - Not desirable

1. Adequate time is taken to teach thoroughly the comprehension and word attack skills. 1 2 3 4 5 6

2. Children are taught in basal readers that are suited to their reading level. 1 2 3 4 5 6

3. The teacher is thoroughly familiar with the basal texts and guides being used. 1 2 3 4 5 6

4. The basal readers are kept at school and are placed in the children's hands only when they are needed for instructional purposes. 1 2 3 4 5 6

5. Children read silently before they read orally. 1 2 3 4 5 6

6. Basal reading materials are supplemented generously with recreational and informational reading materials. 1 2 3 4 5 6

7. Workbooks, when they are a part of the developmental reading program, are used only when they contribute to reading growth (not as busy work). 1 2 3 4 5 6

8. The classroom is organized so the teacher may teach effectively. 1 2 3 4 5 6
9. Children not only learn the skills of reading but also learn to enjoy reading.

10. The teacher knows the skills of reading and how to teach these skills.

11. The teacher keeps records on a child's reading progress and passes these records on to the next teacher.

12. Parents are kept informed about the reading program and are told the difficulty level (grade level) on which the child is reading in basal reading.
USE OF BASAL READERS AND RELATED MATERIAL

Teacher's Name ___________________________  Grade(s) Teaching ___________________________

City ___________________________

School ___________________________

1. Do you use basal readers in your reading program?
   Yes ________  No ________

2. For each publisher's books you use, either as basal or supplementary readers, enter the number of copies you have at the appropriate grade levels. (For instance, if you have 23 copies of second semester second grade Allyn and Bacon readers, you would enter 23 in the 22 column opposite Allyn and Bacon. This would be done for each publisher's materials you have if you have as many as one copy of the book.)

   Number Copies Each Difficulty Level

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<td>Scott, Foresman (Open Highway)</td>
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47
3. What materials other than basal readers do you use? Give names, publishers, and grade levels (difficulty levels).
EVALUATION OF PROGRAM, MATERIALS, EQUIPMENT, AND PRACTICES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher's Name</th>
<th>Grade(s) Teaching</th>
<th>City</th>
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Evaluate your reading program on each item listed below by drawing a line around the appropriate number on the three point rating scale.

1 - I am almost completely satisfied with this.
2 - This needs some improvement.
3 - This needs much improvement.

1. Pattern of organizing the classroom for reading instruction. 1 2 3
2. Materials available for use in the program. 1 2 3
3. Library books and other supplementary materials available. 1 2 3
4. Teacher knowledge of how to teach reading effectively 1 2 3
5. Time available for reading instruction. 1 2 3
6. Extent to which very poor readers are helped. 1 2 3
7. Extent to which average readers are helped. 1 2 3
8. Extent to which excellent readers are helped. 1 2 3
9. Extent to which comprehension skills are taught. 1 2 3
10. Extent to which word recognition skills are taught. 1 2 3
11. Extent to which children enjoy reading.  
12. Extent to which in-service help in reading is available.  
13. Extent to which parents are interested in reading program.  
14. Overall evaluation of the reading program.  
15. If you could have in-service help in reading, what area would you seek help in:

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# PRACTICES RELATED TO READING IN THE CONTENT AREAS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher's Name</th>
<th>Grade(s) Teaching</th>
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<tr>
<td>School</td>
<td>City</td>
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The twenty practices listed below often are recommended in teaching effectively the special reading skills in the various content areas. Indicate the extent to which this practice applies to your classes. Put the number indicating the appropriate response at the end of the statement.

1 - Almost always  
2 - Most of the time  
3 - Sometimes  
4 - Seldom or never

1. The text material used is suited in difficulty to the reading levels of students.  
2. Students are encouraged through assignments to read widely in related materials.  
3. At the beginning of the year, adequate time is taken to introduce the text and discuss how it may be read effectively.  
4. The teacher is aware of the special vocabulary and concepts introduced in the various units.  
5. Adequate attention is given to vocabulary and concept development.  
6. Provisions are made for checking on extent to which important vocabulary and concepts are learned, and re-teaching is done where needed.  
7. The teacher knows the special reading skills involved in the subject.  
8. The teacher teaches adequately the special reading skills in the subject.  
9. The course content is broader in scope than a single textbook.  
10. Assignments are made clearly and concisely.
11. Students are taught to use appropriate reference materials.

12. Adequate reference materials are available.

13. Plenty of related informational books and other materials are available for students who read below-grade level.

14. Plenty of related informational books and other materials are available for students who read above-grade level.

15. The teacher takes advantage of opportunities that may arise to encourage students to read recreational as well as informational reading matter.

16. The teacher helps poor readers develop adequate reading skills.

17. Readings from various texts are provided for those who cannot read the regular text.

18. Students are grouped within the classroom for differentiated instruction.

19. The teacher knows the reading level of the text(s) being used.

20. The teacher knows the reading ability of the students from standardized tests, other evaluative materials and/or cumulative records.
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BIBLIOGRAPHY

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