THE EFFECTS OF EXPOSURE TO PRINT ON INDIVIDUAL'S PAST AND PRESENT DESIRES TO READ, WORDS PER MINUTE READ, AND READING COMPREHENSION

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Submitted to the faculty of Lycoming College in partial fulfillment of the requirements for Departmental Honors in Psychology

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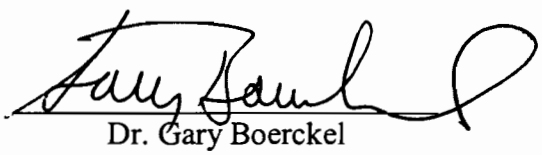

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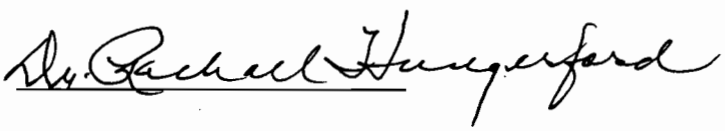

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THE EFFECTS OF EXPOSURE TO PRINT ON PAST AND PRESENT DESIRE TO READ, WORDS PER MINUTE READ, AND PAST AND READING COMPREHENSION

by

Lianne Nolte

Research Study

Submitted in Fulfillment

of the Requirements for Psychology

Departmental Honors

LYCOMING COLLEGE

(April 28, 2000)

Abstract

This study is a replication of a past study which examined the effects of having been exposed to print as a child on individual's reading ability, comprehension, and past and present desire to read. Thirty participants were placed into two groups based on their level of exposure to print. Group I (15) consisted of participants that were read to once a day or more, and Group II (15) consisted of participants who were read to once a week, once a month or other. As predicted, results showed that individuals who were read to once a day or more had a significantly higher past and present desires to read, and read significantly more words per minute than Group II participants. No significant differences were found in the comprehension ability between the two groups.

The Effects of Exposure to Print on Individual's Past And Present Desire to Read, Words Per Minute and Comprehension

Exposure to print may be one of the most significant and crucial experiences that affect a child's reading development. Specifically, reading aloud to young children is a major contributor to language development and success in school (DeBaryshe, 1995;Cipielewski & Stanovich, 1992; Morrow, O'Connor & Smith, 1990). Over many years, research has examined the effects of exposure to print in great detail, exploring the long-term effects, parental beliefs and attitudes and school influences. Outcomes such as greater independent desire to read, increased levels of comprehension, enhanced oral and written language abilities and success in school have all been attributed to exposure to print. In order to gain a sense of why these desirable effects occur it is necessary to examine the vast research that has be conducted on this topic.

Research on Exposure to Print

Scarborough and Dobrich (1994) examined the efficiency of young children reading abilities, specifically preschoolers. Through reviewing research from 1960 to 1993, which hypothesized the connection of development of reading and language skills to exposure to reading materials, Scarborough and Dobrich concluded that the literature does provide evidence for this association. Lonigan (1995) argued a more optimistic look toward his review of Scarborough and Dobrich. He explained that the studies in question should be interpreted with caution and the effects may be underestimated by the combination of equally weighing poor and good studies. His paper moved on to explain

that even minimal exposure to reading materials can have long-term effects on a child's reading ability.

The research of Cipielewski and Stanovich (1992) provided further evidence for advocating a more prominent role of reading activity in the current models of reading development, as well as the general theories of cognitive development. The experiment investigated whether differences in exposure to print, assessed by recognition checklist measures, could predict differences in growth of third and fifth grader's reading ability over a two-year period. In five out of their six analyses, Cipieleweski and Stanovich concluded that the extent to which an individual is exposed to print could facilitate reading ability and comprehension. Other research has also recognized the role of print exposure on reading ability. Cunningham and Stanovich (1997) examined early reading acquisition and its relation to reading experience and ability through a ten-year longitudinal study. Similar to Cipieleweski and Stanovich's results, it was concluded that those individuals who began reading earlier attained better reading habits for the future, enjoyed reading and had better comprehension of the reading material.

Morrow, O'Connor and Smith (1990) narrowed their research on exposure to print by examining the effects of reading aloud on children's interest in books and their initiation of independent reading. By illustrating the effects of a storybook reading program (which consisted of story retelling, quiet book reading, teacher directed literature and activities and a recreational reading period) they found that at-risk urban students, who were actively involved in the development of their reading process, excelled in story retellings, comprehension tests, and attempts to read favorite stories.

Similar results were found in Senechal, LeFevre, Thomas and Daley (1998) which examined the effects storybook exposure on both oral and written language. The findings were consistent with the hypothesis that storybook exposure may enhance oral-language skills. However, they failed to support that storybook exposure significantly effects written language without necessary teaching. Finally, Otto and Johnson in 1994 examined the effects of shared storybook experiences, at home and school, on children. The outcomes illustrated enhanced interest in reading, listening skills and increased vocabulary as a result of the shared book reading.

Research has also provided other outcomes of exposure to literature. DeBaryshe (1995) depicted three ways in which exposure to reading materials enhances children's enjoyment of reading and reading skills. Primarily, when a child is enthusiastic about reading they are more likely to elicit frequent reading from adults. Second, self-directed learning may emerge through the independent exploration of books. And lastly, a highly motivated child may derive greater benefits from adult instruction. With the help of these research studies, the positive outcomes and benefits to exposure to print can be validated.

Effects of Paternal Beliefs and Attitudes on Children's Reading Development

Along with research concerning exposure to print, other factors play a key role in the development of the reading process. According to Wigfield and Ashers (1984), home influences in conjunction with school influences effect reading ability and development. Influences such as parental achievement, aspirations, expectations and values play a major role in children's reading development. Research has demonstrated a strong

relationship between the availability of reading materials and parental provisions and involvement of the provided materials with children's reading development. From a social and motivational perspective, parental involvement with children in reading provides an opportunity to connect literature to life experiences and enhance those special times spent with parents. From a cognitive perspective, parents who read to their children increase their child's reading relevant skills, such as enhanced abilities in vocabulary recognition and comprehension (Wigfield & Ashers, 1984).

DeBaryshe and Binder (1994) examined the development of an instrument for measuring parental beliefs about reading aloud to young children. Using the Parental Reading Belief Inventory, results showed belief scores were positively and significantly associated with parent's modeling of reading, the variety and frequency of children's exposure to books and with children's interest in reading and with parent's reading-aloud strategies. DeBaryshe and Binder suggested that if parent's beliefs of reading were congruent with the beliefs of current approaches to language development, it increased the likelihood that children would succeed in reading at home and school. Similar results were also found in DeBaryshe (1995). Through an examination of mother's education, income, and own personal beliefs and reading habits, it was concluded that mothers whose beliefs were again congruent with current knowledge of reading provided their children with a broader and more frequent reading experiences. The study also found the presence of a direct statistical effect of maternal beliefs on child interest in reading.

Other studies have also received similar results. Mercy and Steelman (1982) researched the role of parent/school involvement on the impact of children's educational

outcomes. Following the steps of previous research, they found a positive relationship between these two variables. Zeilman and Waterman (1998) also examined the effects of parental interaction with children's reading ability. Results of their study provide more conclusive evidence that parental participation does have an effect of children's motivation and success in school. Reading ability was also attributed to parent's involvement in students homework and learning tactics.

Effects of School Influences on Children's Reading Development

While parents' involvement in their children's reading development plays a prominent role, school influences can not be disregarded. Teacher student relationships are crucial to the development of the reading process (Wigfield & Ashers, 1984). Teachers interactions with students, including their expectations, influences a student's own perceptions of their reading development, achievement and motivation. A study conducted by Sweet, Guthrie, and Ng (1998) examined the role of teacher's perceptions on students reading motivation. The results concluded that teachers generally perceive high achievers to be more intrinsically motivated to read. The results provide further evidence that the view teachers have influences children's beliefs and ideas concerning reading. The overall finding in this study suggests that, teachers appear to believe that students who become their own agents in their literacy development seem to grow more rapidly in their development of reading and the reading process. These conclusions correspond to additional research, Mercy and Steelman (1982) of teacher involvement and children's literacy development.

With the abundance of research aimed at determining the effects of exposure to print on children's reading ability, various interventions have been established to implement the useful information from research in home and school. One method titled "Fifteen minutes a day": A method of improving reading skills, was introduced in Scandinavian countries but originated in England. Through the first stage of this method parents of the students are asked to read aloud to their children using amusing, exciting or serious books for 15 minutes a day. During the second stage the children begin to read books to their parents, deemed appropriate by the teacher, along with the continuation of parents shared book reading with children. Teachers and parents may also keep a diary to correspond about the aspects of the child's reading progress (Gronholm, 1990). The goal of this intervention is to increase the exposure to print yielding improved reading ability and motivation to read in young children. Other methods have also been implemented that combine the efforts of parents and teachers in reading to children. One study focused on the parent-child interaction and reading issues. Although each of the mothers used various approaches to reading with their children, each was successful in increasing the pleasure of reading for the child and moving their child up to the appropriate grade level (McClain & Stahl, 1995).

Present Study

Exposure to print plays a prominent role in the development of language acquisition, reading processes, and habits of young readers. Parental attitudes and beliefs as well as actions also can be accountable for the development of young readers. Lastly,

researchers have explored the connection between school and home beliefs, and the effects on children's desires and beliefs of reading. This present study attempts to research and examine other factors concerning exposure to print that perhaps play a role in the development of reading, such as desire to read and individuals' words per minute. While other studies have examined only children's reading abilities, this study wishes to examine the level of past and present desire to read in relation to the level of exposure to print participants had as children. It is hypothesized that individuals who were read to once a day or more will have a higher desire to read both as a child and in the present, attain higher words per minute and have a better ability to comprehend the reading material than those individuals who were read to once a week, once a month or other.

Method

Participants

Thirty participants were drawn from a sample of Freshman, Sophomores, Juniors and Seniors attending a small liberal arts college in Pennsylvania. The ages of participants ranged from 19 to 23 years old. Although gender was not considered in this study, there was approximately and equal amount of male and female participants.

Based on participants' answers to question three of the survey (see Table 1.1), which asked the amount of time they were read to as a child, they were placed in two groups. Group I consisted of participants who were read to once a day or more, while Group II consisted of participants that were read to once a week once a month or other.

All participants claimed to have been read to as a child either by teachers, parents, or other relatives.

Apparatus

The experiment was conducted in a psychology laboratory. Participants performed the study individually and in 10-minute intervals. Three tools were used to gather data, a survey, a short reading, which was taken from the book Whole Language, Whole Learners by Laura Robb, and a comprehension test which consisted of ten true and false questions from the reading (Table 1.4). The questions were taken from the first seven paragraphs of the text. Only these paragraphs were used because it was the average amount of reading that participants had completed in the previous study.

The survey, which can bee seen in Table 1.1, consisted of questions related to the participant's history of being exposed to print by parents and teachers. Participants were also ask to rate their past and present desire to read on a scale from one to five, one being no desire, and the latter great. The present desire was broken down into specific types of reading materials, such as textbooks, pleasure materials, newspapers, magazines and other. These five types of materials were then averaged to receive a total combined present desire rating.

The reading was a short nonfiction story at the beginning of a chapter in the book by Laura Robb. This particular story was chosen for its ease of reading, the likelihood that participants had not had the opportunity of having read it, and its lack of dryness. The purpose of the reading was to obtain participants words per minute. The first two pages of the story are located in Table 1.3.

Procedure

The participants completed the experiment during one of their psychology classes. Once they arrived in the psychology laboratory, they were instructed by the experimenter to sit at a desk, near the font of the room, and to sign a consent form. After completion, participants were then told they would complete a survey and read a short story for approximately one minute. The identity of the comprehension test was kept from the participants in order to eliminate any variables that may confound the results of words read per minute.

In order to keep the identity of participants anonymous, numbers were placed at the top right hand corner of surveys, readings, and comprehension tests. Using this technique also allowed the experimenter to accurately keep track of participants' data. Participants then received the survey to complete. They were instructed to answer the questions as honestly as possible, and were encourage to ask questions related to the survey if confusion arose.

Upon completion of the survey, participants were handed the reading. An instruction sheet was stapled over the reading and can be seen in Table 1.2. For each participant, the experimenter read the instructions aloud. Before participants were told to begin, they were asked if they hand a full understanding of the task. Once ready, the experimenter began timing the participants for one minute. While participants were reading, the experimenter kept the door closed to the laboratory to ensure fewer distractions coming from other parts of the building. After the one minute timed reading, participants were instructed to stop and to underline the last word that they had read.

Following the reading, participants were given the comprehension tests. They were instructed to answer as many questions as possible. Once completed, the tests were handed in and participants were debriefed.

In order to calculate the past desire to read, the answer to question five was used. This question was based on a likert scale ranging from one to five. The scale was as follows: one being no desire, two a poor desire, three a fair desire, four a good desire, and five a great desire. Based on participants' answer to question six of the survey, present desire was calculated by averaging the five types of reading materials to obtain a mean desire score. The means and standard deviations of past and present desire to read are located in Table 1.5 and 1.6.

Once past and present desire to read scores were found, the words per minute were calculated. By using a key, which had the number of words at the end of each paragraph, the participants' words per minute were collected. The mean and standard deviations for participant's wpm for Group I and Group II can also be seen in Table 1.7 . The last variable, comprehension was calculated by assessing the number of questions participants answered correctly, and the number of questions they attempted. A percentage was created for each participant and can be seen in Table 1.8.

Results

Results from this study showed that there was a significant difference between Groups I and II in the number of words per minute that were read. This was supported by analyses t (28) = 4.07, $p < .05$. Results also showed a significant difference between

Groups I and II in their desire to read in the present, t (28) = 2.42, $p < .05$. Lastly, the results showed a significant difference between Group I and II in past desire to read, t (28) = 6.696, $p < .05$. Results also showed that there was an interaction between past and present desire in Groups I and II, f (1, 28) = 15.48, $p < .05$. This suggests there was a different influence for participants' desire before and after depending on whether participants were read to as a child. No significant differences were found between the two groups in comprehension.

Discussion

Results from this study support the hypothesis that individuals who were read to once a day or more would have both a higher past and present desire to read and have a greater ability to read more words per minute. However, the results failed to support the hypothesis that individuals who were exposed to print more often as children would have greater comprehension than those individuals who were not.

It can be concluded that children who are exposed to print at a greater level will form greater desires to read both, as children, and as adults. Therefore, it can be suggested that with a constant stream of exposure to print, children can attain a higher desire to read. This desire not only flourishes in childhood, but also seems to carry on into adulthood. Other research that has examined the relationship of exposure to print and reading ability, such as Cipielewski and Stanovich (1992) and Cunningham and Stanovich (1997), also support these conclusions.

Another interesting finding was the interaction which took place, between past and present desires to read, between the two groups. What these results suggest is that participants in Group I had a different influence in their desire to read before and their desire after. The mean score for past desire were 4.73, while the mean present desire score were 3.83. Here, participants showed a small decrease in their present desire to read. While participants in Group II showed a significantly lower past desire to read, mean score 2.53, their present desire, mean score 3.22, increased.

What conclusions can be made from these findings? First, it must be noted that each group had different influences shaping their desire to read. Group I participants had significantly more reading exposure than Group II participants. Perhaps, the individuals in Group I responded to the exposure to print through an increased desire of reading. Because many participants noted on their surveys that their parents and other relatives read to them, these experiences may have been construed as enjoyable. These findings are congruent with the results of Wigfield and Ashers, (1984). Connecting their experiences to reading increased Group I participants past desire to read. For participants in Group II, their desire was hindered because their experiences were limited. Another interpretation may be that Group I participants had more accessibility to reading materials. With this option, participants had more opportunities to be exposed to print on a regular basis, therefore enhancing their desire to read. Participants who did not have this opportunity, for greater accessibility to print, could not increase their desire without the materials to enhance it.

However, the decrease in Group I participants and the increase in participants of Group II present desire to read also needs explanation. Perhaps because of the lack of exposure to print, individuals of Group II had a greater ability to enhance their desire to read as they matured. School influences may have significantly increased the exposure of print to these individuals. Because of this, those individuals finally received enough exposure to print, increasing their present desire. For individuals in Group I, who's desire was greater to begin with, school influences only added to the exposure they had already received. Perhaps, too much of a good thing decreased their present desire.

Another conclusion, which can be generated from these results, concerns the significant difference between Group I and II on the scores from the words per minute task. Results show that Group I participants read significantly more words per minute than Group II participants. From these results it can be concluded that individuals who have had a greater exposure to print can read significantly faster than those individuals who had less exposure to print. It also suggests that for those individuals, who have greater experience with print exposure as children, a faster reading ability can be created in adulthood.

The statistical analyses were not the only helpful device used in this study. The survey also became an important source of information. Questions generated, such as "What types of material were you read to as a child?", "What types of material would you read to your children?" and "What types of material do you read now?", offered an insightful glance into participants experiences with print exposure. Participants' answers to many questions generated similar responses. When participants answered the

question, "What types of material were you read to as a child?", answers across both groups were unanimous; picture books. However, Group I also reported having newspapers, short children's novels, magazines and poems read to them as well. This distinction between the two groups may have had an effect on the participants desire to read. If individuals were exposed not only to a greater level of print as children, but also a wider variety of materials, their desire to read may have been influenced by more diverse types of print they came in contact with as children.

Groups I and II also generated similar responses to the question "What types of materials do you read now?" Answers ranged from, textbooks (which is common for this sample of college students), newspapers, magazines, and novels. These responses seem to have no relevance to individuals desire to read. However, it should be mentioned that those individuals who do have a higher desire to read commented that they read more frequently and for pleasure. These individuals would be located in Group I.

The next question that was examined was "What types of material would you read to your children?" Again, Groups I and II generated similar responses. Participants in both groups expressed the necessity to read to their children and generally responded to the question with the desire to read their children picture books. Group I, however, generated more original and specific answers to this question, such as reading their children the dictionary, poems, books they enjoyed as children, and encyclopedias. Group II reported generally more vague responses such as school and picture books. The last question that was examined was "Who read to you?". The results showed that Group I participants answered with a greater variety of individuals, such as parents, teachers,

siblings, grandparents and baby sitters. Participants in Group II recalled parents, teachers and grandparents. Perhaps, Group II participants recalled less individuals who read to them because of their lack of exposure to print. Hence, those individuals who were read to more often had more people from their past to recall.

Another aspect that has yet to be examined is the comprehension test results. Although these results did not come out significant, as was suggested from past research (Cunningham & Stanovich, 1997, & Wigfield & Ashers, 1984), there were interesting findings within the test itself. Participants were instructed to try to answer all ten questions. However, upon examination of the tests it was noted that many individuals skipped questions. Results concluded that Group I participants attempted more questions, and for those that were skipped responded by writing that they did not get that far in the reading. All questions from the test were taken from the first seven paragraphs of the story, and all but two participants had read further than these paragraphs. Group II participants answered fewer questions and wrote more frequently that they did not get that far in the reading. Although no statistical analyses were conducted on these aspects, it was interesting to find differences between the two groups. One conclusion that can be suggested is that Group II participants answered fewer questions because they had lower confidence levels in their comprehension ability. Fearing that they may answer a question wrong, they decided to not answer it at all.

The overall success of this study brings further evidence that exposure to print affects ability and desire to read both as children and adults. However, a number of confounding variables were recorded during the study. Lack of memory during

childhood years was a variable that may have influenced the results. Participants expressed the difficulty in remembering who had read to them, what they were read to and how often.

Another issue that must be discussed is the concept of individual differences. According to Spiro and Meyers, (1984), individuals differ in the reading ability both in comprehension and decoding processes. These individual differences have many causes and can effect a study. Differences due to mental abilities, specific reading skills, personality, motivation and environmental influences are all types of individual differences that can not be controlled by the experimenter. In theory it is important to limit these individual differences, however, limiting these differences is difficult. Although these variables were not measured in this study, they may have influenced the results. In order to prevent further research from becoming tainted, learning disabilities, reading levels, and personality can be measured and examined to eliminate the confounds these variables can produce.

These results have provided further evidence to the field of psychology that exposure to print does effect the reading process. Practical applications of these results can also be useful to both parents and teachers. For parents, these results show a strong relationship between children's desire, reading ability and the amount of exposure of print they received. Many times parents feel that once their children are enrolled in school, the need for their continuation in the involvement of their children's reading process is not as strong. However, this is not the case. Through research by Zeilman and Waterman (1998), the impact that parents have on their children's reading ability and

motivation is shown to be extremely important. Parents also need to be aware of their own reading habits; they too can affect a child's motivation to read. For teachers, these results show a strong correlation between ability and desire to read when exposed to print on a regular basis. Unfortunately, many children do not receive much print exposure before school. Therefore, it is up to teachers to increase the amount and variety of literature in the classroom. By incorporating reading in daily class activities, teachers could see improvement in reading skills and students' desire to read.

Further research on the effects of exposure to print are essential in understanding the role it plays in ability and desire to read. By creating a study that incorporates a larger and more diverse sample of participants, further conclusions can be made on the effects of exposure to print. A future study which examines the relationship of parents who were read to as children, how they perceive reading and their interactions with their own children on reading, could provide further evidence of the power that print has on reading ability and desire.

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Table 1.1

Survey

Please answer these questions as honestly as possible

1. Were you read to as a child?

   Yes No

2. Who read to you?

   parents teachers siblings other (please specify)

3. How often were you read to?

   once a day or more once a week once a month other (specify)

4. What types of material were you read? (feel free to circle more than one)

   picture books newspaper adult books other (specify)

5. How would you rate your desire to read as a child?

   no desire poor fair good great

6. How would you rate your desire to read now?

Textbooks:	no desire	poor	fair	good	great
Pleasure materials:	no desire	poor	fair	good	great
Newspapers:	no desire	poor	fair	good	great
Magazines:	no desire	poor	fair	good	great
Other (specify):	no desire	poor	fair	good	great

7. What kinds of material do you read now? (feel free to circle more than one)

   textbooks newspaper novels magazines other (specify)

8. Hypothetically speaking, if you had children would you read to them?

   Yes No

9. What would you read to them?

10. What year are you?

    Freshman Sophomore Junior Senior

Table 1.2

Instructions

Your task is to read this short non-fiction story. You will be timed. Please read this story as if you were reading any type of material that you would find enjoyable. **DO NOT** try to finish the entire story. When I tell you that the time is up, **UNDERLINE** the last that word you read.

PLEASE WAIT TO TURN PAGE

Table 1.3

BEGINNINGS

On July 26, 1963, Lloyd accepts the teaching position at Shenandoah Conservatory of Music. A month later, we drive across the George Washington Bridge, headed for Winchester, Virginia.

I wrote that short entry in my journal after I watched the New York skyline disappear from the back window of our green Chevrolet.

I did not want to leave. New York was my home. Friends and family lived there. I wrote copy for a mail-order company and created their magazine advertisements. I enjoyed my work.

But Winchester, a small southern town, had no need for a New York copywriter. My background in English literature, French, and music did not fit any of the want ads I read in the local paper.

"Call some of the area school boards," my husband urged. "Maybe you can teach."

"But I haven't had one education class. They'd never even interview me."

"That's your best qualification—no education classes," he replied. "You're an insatiable reader. You write. That's what the kids should do." Inwardly, I scoffed at his proposal. School starts in two weeks, I thought. There won't be any openings there. Besides, I had never considered elementary or high school teaching as a career option. I ignored his suggestion.

Several days later, filled with envy, I watched my husband drive off to his new job. That afternoon I called the county school board and spoke to the superintendent's secretary. "As a matter of fact, we do have an opening—one of our sixth-grade teachers has taken a year's leave due to illness."

A whirlwind of interviews followed—the superintendent, the instructional director, and finally the principal. The application forms, references. The job was offered, and I accepted.

My inner voice chastened me like a mother scolding an incorrigible child. Come on, Laura. No education classes. No experience. No children of your own. What do you know about sixth graders? About how they learn? About organizing a classroom? Although I liked children, my contact with kids could be described as limited: occasional baby-sitting in high school, two summers assisting with preschool children's play groups at a bungalow colony in the Catskill Mountains, and five

piano students during four years of college. I journeyed back in time, rummaging through grade school years, searching for useful images and memories. Two frames consistently reappeared: the daily race to complete workbook pages and snatch time to read library books; and frequent punishments for misbehaving, which meant writing my own words after dutifully copying the teacher's words from the blackboard. Or even worse, not writing about the assigned topic.

Table 1.3

My husband believed I could do a terrific job in the classroom. But what did he know, something inside me challenged. "Think like a voice teacher," he counseled. "I have to know how I learn music, how I produce beautiful sounds, in order to coach students. But all the knowledge I share with them means nothing unless they sing. Just let the kids read and write." The words *let the kids read and write* brought a flash of memory of my passion for library books and writing. But with only two days plus a weekend to prepare a classroom for thirty-three boys and girls, I temporarily shelved thinking for action and drove the ten miles to the red brick country school to inspect the room and building. Spacious and sunny with a wall of windows, the room contained thirty-five weathered, nailed-to-the-floor student desks, a wooden table that served as a teacher's desk, a wall of empty bookshelves, a blackboard, an abundance of spiders and crickets on the windowsills, plus half a dozen wasps—all experts at nosediving and circling the new teacher.

I washed. I scrubbed. I covered pock-marked cork bulletin boards with bright colored paper. My share of books consisted of sixth-grade readers and mathematics and social studies textbooks—each with an accompanying workbook. That's all. Tight budgets meant no paper, no paints, no crayons, no real books.

The principal assured me that all students would bring their own pencils and notebooks. "You'll be fine," he said. Would I? I wondered. Thirty-three students ranging from twelve to fifteen. The kids would be mine all day, except when I wasn't on lunch or recess duty.

Assigning seats, collecting lunch money, giving out books, getting to know the children, a schoolwide gathering, and extra-long recesses, I figured, would fill the first day. But what about the other one hundred and seventy-nine days?

Real books and crayons, pencils and paper—that's all I needed to help these kids learn. These words played and replayed in my mind. But I had none of these. The basal reading program contained enough material for one story and several workbook pages per week—boring stories, trivial illustrations, and a guidebook complete with a teacher's script for each selection and a myriad of mindless activities. Since the fourth-grade teacher also served as the school librarian, trips to her classroom, which doubled as the library, would be infrequent. Books. Paper. I needed these for children to become readers, writers.

Three weeks after school started, a telephone call to my mother and father, who were driving to Virginia for a visit, brought cartons of books from my childhood—books to fill empty shelves. I adopted a practice then that continues today: Once a month, my husband and I used our library cards to each check out a dozen books from the local library. Displayed on a special shelf, these books could be read only in school. Letters to magazines and organizations, explaining my needs, brought a windfall of free books and multiple copies of magazines into the classroom.

A local printer donated two overflowing cartons of paper, promising more. And thick rolls of newsprint were mine for the asking—

Table 1.4

Comprehension test

Please circle your answer.

1. The author of the story moves from New York to Virginia. T / F
2. The author's education was in history. T / F
3. The story takes place in the 1980's. T / F
4. The author had never considered the idea of teaching as a profession. T / F
5. The author flew to Virginia from New York. T / F
6. The author's occupation in New York was as a copywriter. T / F
7. The author had a feeling she would get hired because of her experience with children. T / F
8. The author was also educated in music. T / F
9. The author wanted to stay in New York. T / F
10. The author enjoyed her occupation in New York. T / F

Table 1.5

Means and standard deviations for past desire to read for Groups I and II.

Group I	Group II
4.73	2.53
.59	1.13

Table 1.6

Means and standard deviations for present desire to read for Groups I and II

Group I	Group II
3.83	3.22
.69	.69

Table 1.7

Means and standard deviations for words per minute for Groups I and II.

Group I	Group II
284.06	209.87
54.40	45.09

Table 1.8

Means and standard deviations for comprehension scores for Groups I and II.

Group I	Group II
75.02%	70.54%
15.39	16.58