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Secondary Reading

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Secondary Reading

An increased demand for higher levels of literacy in today's society has focused the nation's attention on education. This attention has prompted communities to take a close look at their educational institutions and their academic curricula. Evaluation of the typical secondary reading curriculum has created several concerns. 1) Reading strategies are often taught in isolation and seldom related to content materials. 2) Very little comprehension instruction beyond the literal level occurs in reading classes. 3) When reading courses are offered on the secondary level, they are usually at the remedial level. 4) Secondary reading is seldom given a very high priority in most districts.

Research indicates that reading is a complex process that requires interaction between the reader, instructional text, and context of instruction. Text structure becomes increasingly complex as a student continues through school. Many students lack the learning strategies necessary to complete tasks that require integration of language processes and high level thinking skills. Reading instruction is a necessary component of the secondary curriculum so that students receive instruction in the learning strategies needed to become independent learners.

A secondary reading program designed to provide students with the strategies necessary to be independent learners in a complex technical society:

1. emphasizes the connection between cognitive process and content comprehension by approaching reading instruction as learning instruction
2. emphasizes the importance of an interactive teaching model as a basis for achieving interaction between the student, instructional text, and context of instruction

3. emphasizes the importance of integrating all language processes in content instruction
4. strives to establish a literate environment where students find pleasure in reading for information and enjoyment
5. demonstrates that reading/learning instruction has a priority in the district by funding a budget that provides for an adequate number of trained personnel, ongoing staff development, and a procedure for both formal and informal assessment.

Recommendations

Based on current research and the concerns of secondary educators about the level of literacy achieved by students, the Michigan Reading Association has identified the following characteristics of a quality secondary reading program.

I. The school district ensures that its reading philosophy, goals, and objectives address the needs of secondary students as well as elementary students. Its philosophy is guided by a concern to guarantee all students an opportunity to achieve the higher level of literacy demanded in today's technologically advanced society. Students are trained as independent learners who can enter the job market prepared with the learning skills necessary to succeed in the ever-changing demands of the modern work world. Students are also provided reading instruction that helps them formulate a sense of their individual identities and an appreciation for their culture. Their reading experience promotes the decision-making skills needed to function effectively both socially and politically in the democratic society in which they live.

II. Students are offered reading/learning instruction throughout their secondary education. In addition to remedial classes, development and advanced courses are available to students who need further instruction in higher-level learning strategies and thinking skills. Since learning to read is a lifelong process, students are provided continuous instruction suited to their development level and the difficulty of instructional text.

III. Content courses incorporate reading/learning instruction. Although primary emphasis is given to content instruction, all teachers incorporate reading/learning process instruction into their lessons because research shows that greater comprehension, longer retention, and clearer integration of content occurs when teachers utilize their knowledge of the reading process while planning instruction.

IV. Instructional strategies utilize an interactive teaching model so that students become actively involved with the text they are studying and the environment in which the instruction occurs. A variety of real text, including examples of both expository and narrative, are provided during instructional activities.

V. Reading skills are integrated with other language processes. Reading, writing, speaking, and listening are utilized to reinforce the learning processes inherent in all content instruction and comprehension.

VI. In order to maintain an effective secondary reading program, the district makes a commitment to employ reading professionals, prepared to fulfill the guidelines described in the 1988 *Standards in Reading* adopted by the Michigan Reading Association. The district's program provides the variety of services required to implement successfully the goals and objectives established by its reading philosophy. If needed, the district employs a reading coordinator who oversees the district's reading program, a reading consultant who trains content teachers, and reading teachers who provide

supplemental, specialized reading instruction for students who need more reading/learning instruction than can be included in content classes.

VII. In addition to maintaining a staff of well-trained reading professionals, the district commits resources to a thorough, ongoing staff development plan that encourages teachers to pursue methods for helping students learn and implement effective reading/learning strategies. Content teachers are trained in strategies that help students process complex reading material and apply it to their instructional context. Content teachers are prepared to help students activate prior knowledge; use metacognitive skills; provide adequate schema for organization; focus student attention before, during, and after reading; use purpose-setting as a guide to learning; and integrate all language processes.

VIII. The district provides an environment that fosters a positive attitude toward reading and has as its goal the creation of lifelong readers. District personnel promote reading as a pleasurable activity that extends personal knowledge and provides a basis for effective decision-making.

IX. The district has an assessment plan that is consistent with the goals of an interactive model for reading instruction. It includes both formal and ongoing informal assessment, using individual student learning programs, and it is also used as formative evaluation for the district's reading program.

X. The district makes a commitment to secondary reading instruction and demonstrates its priority by establishing a secondary reading budget.

Instituting reading/learning instruction across the curriculum in the secondary program is a crucial step toward creating the literate, independent learner on which society is built.

Drafted by members of the Michigan Secondary Reading Interest Council

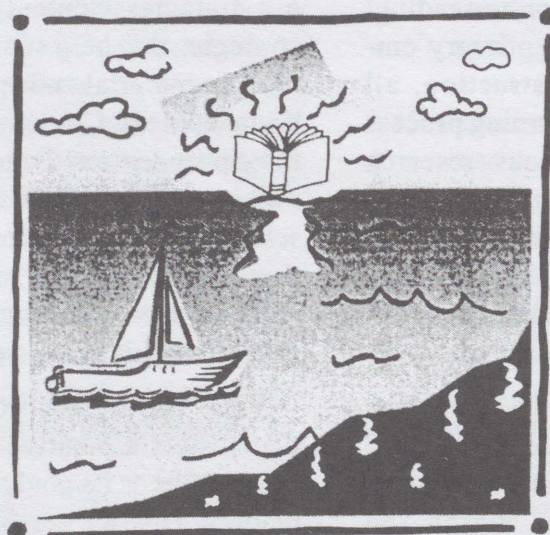
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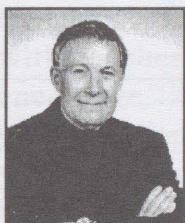
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Larry Dane Brimner pursued his childhood love of reading to a career as an educator and author. His works include such award-winners as *BMX Freestyle*, *Max and Felix*, *Snowboarding*, *Cat on Wheels* and the *Official M&M Book of the Millennium*.



Carol Crane, a children's literature expert, will present a talk on the latest trends in children's publishing and how to integrate new books into the classroom. She also recently completed *S is for Sunshine: A Florida Alphabet*.



Dr. Roger Farr, a former IRA president, has taught kindergarten through graduate school and been honored with numerous awards. He has written several assessments and is a senior author of *Harcourt Language*, *Signatures* and *Treasury of Literature*.



Shelley Gill has written more than a dozen best-selling books based on her experiences living in Alaska and the Pacific Northwest. Her works include *Kiana's Iditarod*, *Swimmer*, *Thunderfeet* and *Alaska's Three Bears*.



Bernard Most is the much-loved author-illustrator of many children's wordplay books and books about dinosaurs. His award-winning books include *My Very Own Octopus*, *If the Dinosaurs Came Back* and *Dinosaur Cousins?*

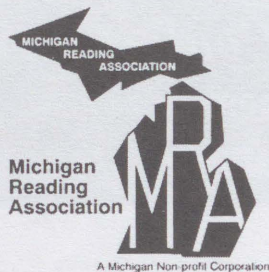


James Ransome & Lesa Cline-Ransome recently collaborated on the highly praised *Satchel Paige*. James Ransome also won the Coretta Scott King Award for illustrating *The Creation* and King Honor Award for *Uncle Jed's Barbershop*.

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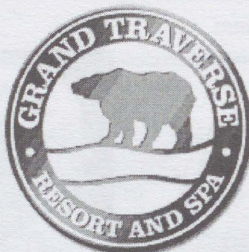
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