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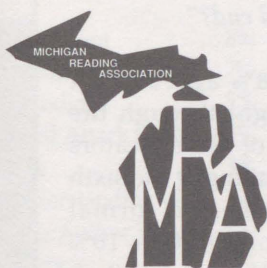
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# Survey of Information Levels and Attitudes Toward the Teaching of Reading and Writing

by Glenowyn Jones

## FOREWORD

The teaching of reading has always been an acknowledged priority in the K-12 public schools. Indeed, teaching children to employ the written word has often been viewed as the "primary" task in the early elementary grades. To accomplish the task, much of the time was spent on teaching decoding skills.

Research and observation of our practices has pointed to the need for rethinking our approaches and strategies: literature has moved into the basal reader or in many classrooms replaced the basal. Whole language is replacing segmented approaches, and "literacy has become a national concern."

In Michigan, the State Board of Education has brought to educators a new definition of reading. We are moving toward new ways to teach and to assess student achievement. The Genesee Intermediate School District has conducted this survey to measure the awareness and understanding of these changes among out colleagues and co-workers.

The results of this effort will assist the Genesee Intermediate School District and local districts to plan for appropriate inservice, programs, and consultant support in reading and writing as reflected by the opinions of the 355 diverse respondents.

## METHODOLOGY OF THE SURVEY

This opinion survey of educators in GISD was conducted during the month of October. The survey was conducted by the staff of GISD with the help of the area reading teachers.

The survey sample was drawn from the list of educators in the Genesee Intermediate School District using the Report Generator. The sample size was 355, and was representative of all 21 local districts.

The questionnaire was developed by Glenowyn Jones, Reading Consultant, Genesee Intermediate School District, with extensive input from Susan Stuber, Director of Marketing, Media and Public Relations. Area reading teachers also made contributions.

Interviewing was done by volunteers, local reading teachers, Flint Area Reading Association members and staff members. They were trained by Mrs. Jones.

The survey data was tabulated through the computer facilities of the Genesee Intermediate School District. The results were analyzed and interpreted by Susan Stuber, Director of Marketing, Media and Public Relations, Rachel Moreno, Associate Superintendent and Mrs. Jones, Consultant for Reading and Language Arts who prepared the report.

Survey results are reported for two major subgroups. The first subgroup is



teachers in the elementary schools. This group made up 44% of the total sample. The second subgroup is composed of teachers in secondary schools (7-12). Forty percent of the total sample are in this group. Five percent of the sample were administrators. The remaining 11% represented members of the support staff, such as librarians and social workers.

## SURVEY INFORMATION

### LITERACY LEVELS

Since there is a national concern about the literacy level of citizens, it seemed appropriate to ask educators the grade level which denotes literacy. **Two out of ten (18%)** of all educators indicated that if adults are reading on **sixth grade level** they would be considered literate and **two out of ten (17%)** thought **eighth grade** was the literacy level. There was little difference between elementary and secondary teachers in their thinking. The answers ranged from **4th grade or below (18%)** to **12th grade (6%)**.

	ALL	ELE	SEC	ADM
Below grade 4	4%			
4th grade	13%	15%	11%	12%
5th grade	11%	13%	10%	
6th grade	18%	19%	20%	12%
7th grade	15%	14%	14%	6%
8th grade	17%	14%	16%	41%
9th grade	10%	8%	11%	6%
10th grade	8%	8%	9%	18%
11th grade	1%		2%	
12th grade	6%	8%	6%	6%
Above grade 12	1%	1%		

Traditionally, teaching reading h stopped in sixth grade. To see if educators agree or disagree with this, respondents were asked:

*"At what grade level do you think that*

*teaching reading should end?"*

Almost **half or 48%** agreed that reading should be **taught through the 12th grade**. Only **11%** of the educators would stop teaching reading at the sixth grade while **21%** would end formal reading at grade 8 and another **10%** would end formal reading in grade 9.

	ALL	ELE	SEC	ADM
6th grade	11%	11%	13%	6%
7th grade	4%	4%	4%	6%
8th grade	21%	23%	18%	24%
9th grade	10%	9%	12%	18%
10th grade	4%	4%	3%	12%
11th grade	1%	1%	2%	
12th grade	48%	47%	49%	35%

### DEFINITION OF READING

Since everyone in this sampling is an educator and since reading is necessary for all academic areas, the respondents were asked:

*"Since we all read, you must have definition as to what is reading. How would you define reading? How many elements of reading can you name?"*

**Sixty-seven percent** of the elementary teachers and **75%** of the secondary teachers named the **ability to comprehend** as reading. Only **12%** considered reading as thinking. **Twenty-nine percent** or 3 out of ten persons surveyed considered **phonics** (decoding) as reading.

	ALL	ELE	SEC	ADM
Comprehension	70%	67%	75%	58%
Phonics	24%	30%	16%	16%
Ability to Read				
Words	24%	24%	25%	21%
Prior Knowledge	14%	18%	6%	21%
Getting Meaning	14%	15%	10%	11%
Thinking	12%	12%	11%	16%
Context	10%	8%	9%	11%



Enjoyment	8%			
Interaction	7%	3%	4%	21%
Decoding	5%			
Word Attack Skills	5%			
Text	4%	3%	1%	16%
Understanding What the Author Says	4%	3%	2%	11%
Fluency	3%	4%	21%	5%
Other	25%	24%	27%	37%
Spelling	4%			
Sight Words	4%			
Processing Written Word	4%			

(Totals exceed 100% due to multiple responses. Those responses which are not broken into subgroups are a part of "other".)

A follow-up question was asked to see if area educators knew the state's definition of reading.

*"The State Board of Education adopted a new definition of reading in 1982. This definition states that there are certain factors that influence how well students understand what they read. Can you name any of these factors?"*

When the educators were asked about this definition **only 39%** said they **knew it**. When looking at the two major groups, **half of the elementary teachers** (53%) knew the definition as **compared to 22% of the secondary teachers**. Those that said that they knew the definition were asked if they could remember any of the components of the definition. **Nine percent** of those who had answered yes **gave answers** such as **phonics, nouns, verbs and sentence structure**. However, **one hundred percent** of this same group knew that **prior knowledge** was an important part of the definition.

	ALL	ELE	SEC	ADM
Knew at least one element	39%	53%	22%	46%
Said they knew but were incorrect	9%	6%	10%	8%
Did not know	53%	41%	68%	46%
Elements named:				
Prior Knowledge	100%	100%	100%	100%
Constructing meaning	39%	38%	50%	5%
Context	27%	25%	36%	5%
Difficulty with vocabulary	21%	19%	36%	5%
What they know about topic	20%	7%	4%	
Interactive model	18%	16%	11%	
Reason for reading text	14%	13%	14%	
Text	10%	9%	18%	5%
Difficulty with content	9%	9%	7%	11%
Phonics	7%			
Interest in topic	5%			

### INSERVICE IN READING

Since the state reading objectives and the MEAP reading test is based on the New Definition of reading, it seemed logical to ask the next question, which was:

*"Over the past year, have you had any inservice on the new definition of reading?"*

**Fifty-seven percent** of all of the educators surveyed indicated that they had not received any inservice. When this number was broken down, **42%** of the **elementary teachers** and **74%** of the **secondary teachers** had **not had** any **inservice** on the new definition of reading.

	ALL	ELE	SEC	ADM
Yes	43%	58%	26%	37%
No	57%	42%	74%	63%



Educators were then asked if they had received **inservice** on the **MEAP reading test** and/or **how to interpret the test scores**. **Sixty-four percent** of all educators **had not had any inservice** on administering or interpreting the tests.

	ALL	ELE	SEC	ADM
Yes	36%	40%	28%	53%
No	64%	60%	72%	47%

### RESPONSIBILITY FOR TEACHING READING

Educators were asked to think about students in the middle school, junior high school and high school. The following question was asked:

*"If students have not learned to read by this time, who's responsible for teaching them to read?"*

**Thirty-five percent** of all educators believe it is the **responsibility** of the **classroom teacher** and **27%** felt the **extra help** should be given by **reading teachers**. **Thirty percent** of the secondary teachers believe that students should have extra help if they have not learned to read. Most educators believe that someone in the school should be responsible even though most could not name a person beyond the classroom teacher. **Ten percent** thought it was the **responsibility** of the **parents** to teach the child. **One percent** said it was up to the **student to teach himself**.

	ALL	ELE	SEC	ADM
Classroom teacher	35%	38%	30%	42%
Reading teacher/ Chapter I	27%	28%	26%	16%
LD or special ed	13%	8%	18%	16%
English teacher	12%	13%	11%	11%
Everyone	11%			
Parents	10%			

Parents/teachers	7%			
School	7%			
All teachers	4%			
Homeroom teacher	3%	3%	4%	0%
Aides	3%	1%	5%	11%
School District	1%			
Student	1%			
Tutoring	1%			
Other	51%	52%	51%	53%

(The responses do not add up to 100 due to multiple answers. Those responses which are not broken down into subgroups were given as a apart of "other".)

### PREFERRED READING STRATEGIES

There are many methods that teachers use to help students to better understand what they read. Over the past eight years research has been taking place to determine how best to help children learn. These strategies or methods help to implement the new definition of reading. To see if teachers were using any of the new methods, educators were asked:

*"What are some of the methods that you use to help children to read?"*

Mapping the material is the most frequently used of the newer strategies which helps to implement the definition. This method is being used by two out of every ten elementary teachers (19%), and one out of every ten (12%) at the secondary level.

The teachers listed having students **read aloud** as the **avored strategy** (31%) for helping children to understand the material. **Fifty-eight percent** gave other methods such as **defining words, flash cards, and reading to answer questions**. There were **14%** who **could not give a method** that they used to help the students to better understand the material.



One hundred thirty-nine different answers (58%) were given and listed under "other". Of that group, 106 showed less than 1% and are not listed here. Some of the methods which did not make the list were "give purpose for reading," "teach at slower pace" and "give verbal quizzes."

	ALL	ELE	SEC	ADM
Reading aloud	32%	39%	29%	21%
Mapping	15%	19%	12%	21%
Think-alouds	11%	12%	9%	10%
Story grammar	10%	12%	8%	5%
Present new vocabulary	9%			
SQ3R	8%	10%	6%	
Story frames	7%	10%	6%	5%
K-W-L	7%	9%	4%	
Read Textbook	7%	11%	8%	5%
Read/Question	6%			
Prior knowledge	6%			
Discuss	6%			
Phonics	5%			
Reciprocal teaching	5%	4%	3%	
DRTA	4%	5%	1%	
Material on interest level	3%			
Define Words	3%			
Probably passages	3%	3%	3%	
Modeling	2%			
Cooperative learning	2%			
Context clues	2%			
Patterning	2%			
Interpreting	2%			
Read with Partner	2%			
Do plays	2%			
Relate to other things	2%			
Read it to them	2%			
Study sight words	2%			
Predicting	2%			
Write	2%			
Visualize	1%			
Do basal reading	1%			
Summarize	1%			
Read it silently	1%			
Reread	1%			
Preview the lesson	1%			

Repetition	1%			
Read for pleasure	1%			
Read the pictures	1%			
Outlining	1%			
Language Experience	1%			
Do group reading	1%			
Give study guides	1%			
Play games	1%			
Do Flash cards	1%			
Drill	1%			
Use computer	1%			
USSR	1%	3%		
Couldn't name any methods	14%	7%	21%	21%
Other	58%	60%	58%	58%

(The percentages do not equal 100% due to multiple answers. Those responses which are not broken down by subgroup, were given as a part of "other".)

Much of the **emphasis for evaluating children's reading** is on **maintaining portfolios** of their work rather than relying on formal tests, such as end of the unit tests or standardized tests. Because of this, the educators were asked:

*"Are you knowledgeable about using portfolios as an evaluating technique?"*

Over **half of the responses** (57%) said that they **did not know** about using **portfolios**. Many who did know about them, used them in other ways rather than in reading.

	ALL	ELE	SEC	ADM
Yes	43%	44%	37%	63%
No	57%	56%	63%	37%

The educators were asked:

*"Do you believe teaching reading has high priority in your school district?"*



	ALL	ELE	SEC	ADM
Yes	85%	90%	80%	89%
No	15%	10%	19%	10%

Eighty-five percent of the educators believe that teaching reading is a priority. However, 1% said that reading was a priority in the elementary school but not in the secondary school.

### KNOWLEDGE OF WRITING

The teachers' attention was then directed toward writing and writing process.

*"Do you believe that teachers other than those in the Language Arts Department should teach their students how to write in their content area?"*

The response was an overwhelming "yes".

	ALL	ELE	SEC	ADM
Yes	96%	99%	90%	100%
No	4%	1%	10%	0%

Because the Department of Education has been developing a MEAP test in the area of writing, the following question was asked.

*"Are you aware that the State Department of education is planning a MEAP test in the area of writing to be administered in the spring of 1991?"*

It is interesting that only four out of ten elementary teachers (36%) and only three out of ten secondary teachers (27%) know about the test when seven out of ten of the administrators (67%) were informed of its impending use.

	ALL	ELE	SEC	ADM
Yes	35%	36%	27%	67%
No	65%	63%	72%	33%

Because this test is to determine if

students can use the writing process, the next question was:

*"Do you know the components of the writing process to teach to your students?"*

Sixty-two percent of the educators did not know any component of the writing process to teach to their students.

	ALL	ELE	SEC	ADM
Yes	38%	47%	29%	28%
No	62%	53%	72%	72%

Those who said that they know the writing process (38%) were asked to:

List any of the components of the writing process.

	ALL	ELE	SEC	ADM
Drafting/writing	75%	78%	76%	16%
Gathering information	71%	75%	63%	21%
Editing/proof-reading	71%	71%	71%	21%
Publishing/sharing	52%	58%	41%	10%

(The percentages add to more than 100% due to the fact that multiple answers were given.)

Since this group could name at least one component of the writing process, they were asked:

*"Do you encourage your students to use the writing process when writing in your subject area?"*

It was surprising that even though they knew the writing process, fourteen percent of them did not encourage their students to use it when writing.

	ALL	ELE	SEC	ADM
Yes	86%	88%	84%	80%
No	14%	12%	16%	20%



Then the teachers were asked:

***"Would you attend a workshop on teaching the writing process?"***

Eight out of ten (80%) replied that they were willing to attend.

	ALL	ELE	SEC	ADM
Yes	80%	86%	84%	72%
No	23%	14%	23%	28%

### OBSERVATIONS

According to the information provided by the State Department of Education, 70% of the reading done in the work place is at 10-12 grade level. The literacy level has risen to 9-10th grade level. If we discontinue teaching reading at grade six, even our best students may not be considered literate.

Research has also told us that most students do not automatically transfer reading skills from the basal reader to content material since content reading requires different reading strategies. If schools are to produce students who can find work in the job market, they must teach students that reading is thinking, predicting and problem solving. The students need to understand that different genre' requires different ways of reading.

Fewer than half of the educators (39%) knew the state's definition of reading which is the basis for the MEAP reading test. Of this group, 100% knew that prior knowledge was a component of the definition. However, only 6% of the educators indicated that they used prior knowledge in helping the students to better understand the written word. It is possible that teachers have not internalized the definition to the point that they are able to use it in their work.

More emphasis needs to be placed on providing all teachers with inservice

in the areas of reading and writing. The administrators need to be included in this so that they have a better understanding of the reading process.

Educators believe that it is the schools' responsibility to teach students to read regardless of the grade level. They also believe that every teacher is responsible for teaching students the writing process and are willing to attend inservice to help them learn more about both reading and writing.

### COMPOSITION OF THE SURVEY SAMPLE

Elementary	156
Middle School/Junior High	56
High School	86
Special Education	14
Elementary Administration	13
Secondary Administration	6
Reading Teacher	8
Social Worker	3
Adult Literacy	2
Psychologist	2
Preschool	1
Librarian	1
College	1
Other	7

To further assist in the demographics of the group, the teachers were asked:

***"In what content areas do you have responsibility? List as many as apply."***

Many of the elementary teachers teach in self-contained rooms which accounts for the larger numbers in the basic subject areas.

Mathematics	156
Social studies	143
English	142
Reading	142
Science	134
Language arts	133
Fine arts	39
Vocational Education	23
Physical Education	18
Counselor	12
Special education	11
Other	51