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TEST MAKERS AND TEST TAKERS

by Vicki Salesky

This project was undertaken with six fourth grade students who were in a remedial reading class. The students met with their teacher thirty minutes each day. The project was done over a period of three days.

On the first day the students were involved in a discussion about how multiple choice tests are made; how test makers put choices in tests that are confusing; and some rules to keep in mind when taking tests. The discussion included the following examples:

1. This is a



- a. tree
- b. mushroom
- c. umbrella
- d. lollipop
- e. three

“What is the above picture?”

The children responded orally and their responses were listed as shown. The response “three” was added to the list of choices after the teacher asked what word(s) might look like the word “tree”.

2. Green is a

- a. color
- b. crayon
- c. dog
- d. grass
- e. house

3. Atlanta is how far from Alpena?

- a. 45 miles
- b. 54 miles
- c. 145 miles
- d. 60 miles

The class session closed with the development of rules to follow when taking tests. Their rules included:

- 1. Be very careful when looking at words.
- 2. Read the question and answers twice.
- 3. Be aware of tricks.

4. Think before you answer.

5. Check your work.

The second day involved having the students read a short story which was written on the board. After the reading, the students worked as a group to write questions which they thought would be difficult and would trick fellow students. The questions were to be answered without referring back to the story.

The students became very excited as they wrote the questions and tried various ways to challenge the test takers. They were quite original in their observations of the total test taking process.

When the students had an opportunity to make tests alone, they became very secretive. They did not want to give clues to anyone who would be taking their tests. They could hardly wait to give their tests and check the responses. Each child wanted to see if he had tricked anyone. While they were taking the tests that other children had made, they were very cautious not to fall into the traps of the writers.

Upon examining the tests which the students had made, it was apparent that these children were aware of the closeness of some words in spelling and of others in meaning. The students who had groaned on the day they were told they were going to learn to take tests had gained a great deal of confidence by the third day of this project. That confidence was a very encouraging trait to see in those poorer readers. Perhaps they will no longer be intimidated by just hearing the word “test”.

Mrs. Vicki Salesky directed this project while she was a reading teacher in the Alpena Area. At the present time she is a librarian in the Vassar High School, Vassar, Michigan.