
October 1974

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Recommended Citation

Cramer, Ronald and Cafone, Harold (1974) "Main Ideas and Important Details," *Michigan Reading Journal*. Vol. 8 : Iss. 3 , Article 7.

Available at: <https://scholarworks.gvsu.edu/mrj/vol8/iss3/7>

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Main Ideas and Important Details

by Ronald Cramer and Harold Cafone

Readers of this column might well be interested in a publication of Educational Products Information Exchange (EPIE), 463 West Street, New York, New York, entitled *Selecting and Evaluating Beginning Reading Materials - A How-To Handbook* (number 62/62). This report was developed under the direction of David Elliot and offers an interesting exercise for groups of teachers, administrators, and others who find themselves called upon to purchase materials for beginning reading. Such a group would attempt to make their choice by going through the following steps:

1. Read a brief annotated historical review of the improvement of reading from 1955 to 1974. Try to relate the information to their school's past and current attempts at dealing with the language arts component of their curriculum.
2. Compare their approach to materials selection and reading curriculum with a framework of instructional design that includes (a) goals and objectives of instruction (b) content and learning activities to be presented (c) methods to be used (d) utilization of assessment techniques.
3. Identify what appears to be the faculty view on reading instruction. (Here the handbook offers a checklist to help with that identification).
4. Read a discussion of reading materials and identify the implications of what they have discovered in the first three steps above for the selection and use of materials for read-

ing instruction. (Here a set of guidelines for materials analysis is provided).

The process described above offers a valuable procedure for what is a most important area of decision-making in any school system.

Another EPIE Report: Number 64, might well be considered a companion volume to the handbook already described. This volume reports an analysis of 76 commercial programs, kits and other materials. It is an interesting and useful product, but the process described previously will no doubt be more useful and important. Both of these books can be obtained from EPIE at a cost of \$40.

The field of education has long been afflicted, as has been psychology, with the problems of labels. Remember "strephosymbolia"? Does "Choreiform Syndrome" strike a responsive note? Currently, the writers of this column hear "perceptual cripple" a great deal. Perhaps that will account for the attention that will no doubt be given to M. Frostig's (coauthored with P. Maslow) book, *Learning Problems in the Classroom*, published by Grune and Stratton, New York: 1973.

There are problems with this book. For example, the reader gets the feeling he is reading a series of summaries that oftentime seem unrelated to what has just past and what is about to come. The first section includes a chapter on causation, another on applications of neurophysiological research, and a third on teaching the economically disadvantaged child. It's not difficult to understand why these are simply labeled "Part I". There are other shortcomings in this book, but they may be overcome by an overall emphasis which is important. This is

summarized in the foreword to the book in the following quote:

"In a rather specific way, this particular book signifies a shift in strategy and approach that has been taking place in the last decade. Originally many of these investigators focused on the training of specific mental functions and concentrated on such issues as visual perception problems, or attentional difficulties. There now is emerging a broader perspective of the child with learning problems. Instead of a specific deficit and the design of specific exercises to deal with that deficit, the child and his total developmental status are being reviewed. His overall motivation and social environment are reviewed and included in the planning."

If all of this sounds familiar, it may be that you've been reading books such as Strang's *Diagnostic Teaching of Reading*. We welcome, once again, the

notion of the "whole child". If you have already purchased the book, note carefully the change in philosophy.

The International Reading Association is currently offering three new items for its membership. *Measuring Reading Performance*, edited by Blanton and others is issue-oriented with six papers on current testing topics. Among these topics are criterion-referenced tests, and reading tests for the disadvantage. *Creative Reading for Gifted Learners*, edited by M. Labuda includes articles on the rationale for concern in this area, materials and resources, and suggestions for meeting unique needs. The third volume of interest is the *Reading Research Quarterly's* (Volume IX) annual summary of investigations relating to reading. Once again, the majority of studies reported are in the areas of the physiology and psychology of reading and in the teaching of reading.

1975 MRA CONFERENCE
APRIL 13, 14, and 15
Grand Rapids, Michigan

THEME: Models of Teaching Reading

Major Speakers:

Dr. Bruce Joyce
Visiting Professor, Stanford Center for Research and Development in Teaching; Professor, Teachers College, Columbia University

Dr. Harold Shane
University Professor of Education, Indiana University

Dr. Doris Johnson
Professor, Northwestern University

Ms. Charlotte Brooks
American University, Washington D.C.

REMINDER

Pay annual Membership Dues by
December 31, 1974

Manuscripts, materials for review, and other potential contents for *The MRA Journal* may be sent to Diana Umstattd, Editor, Saginaw Board of Education, 550 Millard St., Saginaw, 48607. Deadline for consideration in Winter Issue, is January 10, 1975.