

PART ORIENTATION I

This is a textbook for teachers in training and a handbook for use on the job. It treats curriculum and methods of language arts and reading for both elementary school and secondary school. We hope it will serve in many ways and at different times in its owner's training and career.

We have described developmental differences by students' capacities, experiences, and interests rather than by age or grade. Given the tremendous range of variation within any single classroom between primary school and senior high school, we judged that breakdowns not only by grades but even by grade blocs would be impractical. Consequently, parts of some chapters in Part Three may not apply directly to the growth stage of your students.

But most of the arrangements and activities recommended in this book apply equally to secondary and to elementary school, though sometimes it may not appear so because one associates things like group work and drama and games and integrated subjects with younger children. If these have characterized elementary more than secondary, that has not been because any of them are inherently childish. It is, rather, that having the same 25 or 30 students all day makes doing these much easier than having 150 students a day in batches for 45 minutes each. In teaching the whole child, the elementary teacher can work with language across all the subjects and in multiple ways, but the secondary teacher is ordinarily supposed to teach a *subject* and to "cover" it in a self-contained way.

For these reasons the approach we recommend proceeds more easily in the lower grades, before specialization of subjects fractionates the day—and the life of the student. If our way of trying to help you sounds at times as if we are talking only about elementary classrooms, please understand how this is not so. It's just that as language arts teachers in junior and senior high do arrange to offset the handicap of shorter, specialized, and depersonalized classes, their classrooms start in some ways to resemble those of elementary school, where the tenderer age *forces* the institution to respect more the individual, interactive, and integrative nature of learning.

RELATION TO CURRENT TRENDS

When the first edition of this book appeared in 1968 with its companion volume of theory, *Teaching the Universe of Discourse*, both were regarded as radical and experimental. Since then the mainstream of language teaching has shifted in their direction so that the recommendations made then and now in this book seem to partake of current trends.

Its integration of the language arts has become commonplace. Its emphasis on small-group process has come into classrooms under such names as "cooperative learning" or "collaborative learning." Its insistence that learning units be whole, authentic speech acts or texts, not exercises with particles, now goes under the name of "whole language." Its efforts to array the total repertory of types of reading and writing, even across other subject areas, corresponds to today's "writing across the curriculum" and "reading in the content areas." It also urged teachers to drop textbooks, especially basal readers, in favor of real literature, as now frequently proposed in the form of a "literature-centered" curriculum. In recommending that students choose and interpret texts for themselves, discuss them in small groups, and extend them through drama and creative writing, it has fostered "reader response" and "response to literature."

Its phasing of writing into compositional stages done in workshop fashion has become almost standard practice in the National Writing Project and in many classrooms, where the "process approach" combines with "writing response groups" and "peer editing." Portfolios and blanket assessment of writing are likewise increasingly accepted and are currently being advocated for assessment of reading and mathematics as well. The "conferencing" now common between young writers and teachers naturally arises when the classroom is decentralized, as we advocated, and the teacher sprung free to work one to one. Nongrading and heterogeneous grouping have made great gains on the basis of practical experience and no longer seem extraordinary, as when this book first recommended them.

Finally, though always practiced by some independent teachers, student-centering itself is now coming into its own. "Student ownership," "student empowerment," and "active learning" have become terms to conjure with. What this book has referred to as students building their own knowledge structures is currently referred to by such phrases as "making meaning." Most of these positive trends in curriculum and methods have evolved in reaction to the failures of canned, teacher-centered activities and from the gradual recognition that building on each learner's personal bents works best. Nurturing the whole person not only befits the goals of personal and social development, it turns out to be the best way to foster "critical and creative thinking," which people learn only in the measure that they can make decisions about what they do from day to day. For students, this means learning to choose and sequence for themselves their learning activities and materials.

Precisely because professional thinking more nearly resembles now the views presented in earlier editions of this book, we co-authors are able to forego in this edition some of the explanation and justification previously required. We welcome this opportunity to shorten a work that by its very integrative nature ran to an unusual length. Besides a comprehensive view, moreover, this book has always aimed to provide plenty of practical how-to detail for the teacher on the job. This double role as both a classroom resource book and a methods-course textbook also made for a bulky work.

RELATED RESOURCES

For this fourth edition we have tried to solve the problem of length not only by eliminating some explanation but also by moving some material to other works. Many of the writing samples have been shifted into *Active Voice: A Writing Program Across the Curriculum*, now also revised. The long final chapter is forthcoming from Boynton/Cook as *Detecting Growth in Language*. Whereas previously we described a brief audio-visual presentation of English sound-spellings, which we recommended as a classroom resource for emergent literacy, we're now offering a one-hour videotape of letter animation titled *Sound Out* that fulfills this description and may be obtained for use in both schools and methods courses.

In condensing this book we have left further theory and further exemplification to other books. *Teaching the Universe of Discourse* and *Coming on Center: Essays in English Education* elaborate many of the ideas and activities. Samples of student and professional writing are essential to array the full repertory of writing and reading that students may engage in, but their inclusion in a comprehensive methods text and handbook becomes unwieldy. As explained further on page 263, for this repertory we hope teachers will consult *Active Voices I-IV* a series of anthologies of student writing, and *Points of View: An Anthology of Short Stories* and *Points of Departure: An Anthology of Nonfiction*.

We regard all these works as supplementing each other and forming collectively a pool of resources from which educators may select.¹

¹ All the works cited here are available from Boynton/Cook except for *Points of View* and *Points of Departure* (which are published by Penguin USA/New American Library, Mentor series) and *Sound Out*. For information on *Sound Out* contact James Moffett, 4107 Triangle Road, Mariposa, CA 95338.