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PROGRAM UPON READING ACHIEVEMENT  
IN FIRST GRADE.

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THE EFFECT OF A PARENT INFORMATION PROGRAM  
UPON READING ACHIEVEMENT IN FIRST GRADE

A DISSERTATION  
SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE FACULTY  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the  
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DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

BY  
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Norman, Oklahoma  
1965

THE EFFECT OF A PARENT INFORMATION PROGRAM  
UPON READING ACHIEVEMENT IN FIRST GRADE

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## DEDICATION

This research study involving parents of beginning readers is dedicated to my parents, Ralph and Mildred MacLaren, in appreciation of the immeasurable contribution they have made to the education of their children.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

For their wise and kindly guidance, the writer is deeply indebted to his major professor, Dr. William B. Ragan, who directed the writing of this research report, and to Dr. Omer J. Rupiper, who directed the statistical procedures of the study. Sincere appreciation is expressed to Dr. Mary C. Petty and Dr. Claude Kelley for their helpful advice and criticism during the period of graduate study and for serving on the dissertation committee. Special acknowledgement is given to Dr. Arthur W. Heilman, who, as friend and teacher, offered many valuable suggestions during the planning of the research project.

The assistance and cooperation of the first grade teachers and principals of Franklin, Columbian, and Hawthorne Elementary Schools, Mattoon, Illinois, are gratefully acknowledged. Finally, the writer recognizes the contributions of the many parents whose interest and cooperation were vital to the success of this study.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
LIST OF TABLES. . . . .	vi
 Chapter	
I. BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY. . . .	1
Justification and Need for the Study . . . .	4
The Problem . . . . .	10
Summary of Relevant Research . . . . .	11
II. PROCEDURES OF THE STUDY . . . . .	20
Selection of Subjects. . . . .	21
Instruments of Measure . . . . .	28
The Program for Parents. . . . .	31
III. PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA . . . . .	38
Hypotheses of the Study. . . . .	38
Analysis of Data . . . . .	39
Summary. . . . .	48
IV. SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS . . .	50
Summary. . . . .	50
Conclusions. . . . .	53
Recommendations. . . . .	54
BIBLIOGRAPHY. . . . .	56
APPENDICES. . . . .	61
A . . . . .	62
B . . . . .	65
C . . . . .	77

## LIST OF TABLES

Table		Page
1.	Enrollment in Six First Grade Classes Furnishing Subjects for the Study . . . . .	22
2.	Availability of Parents for Participation in the Information Program . . . . .	24
3.	Pupils Ineligible as Subjects for the Study . .	25
4.	Two-Part Analysis of Variance of the Scores of Matched Pairs of Subjects on the <u>Gates Primary Word Recognition Test</u> . . . . .	41
5.	Two-Part Analysis of Variance of the Scores of Matched Pairs of Subjects on the <u>Gates Primary Sentence Reading Test</u> . . . . .	41
6.	Two-Part Analysis of Variance of the Scores of Matched Pairs of Subjects on the <u>Gates Primary Paragraph Reading Test</u> . . . . .	42
7.	Two-Part Analysis' of Variance of the Total Reading Scores of Matched Pairs of Subjects on the <u>Gates Primary Reading Tests</u> . . . . .	43
8.	Three-Part Analysis of Variance of the Scores of Matched Pairs of Subjects on the <u>Gates Primary Word Recognition Test</u> . . . . .	46
9.	Three-Part Analysis of Variance of the Scores of Matched Pairs of Subjects on the <u>Gates Primary Sentence Reading Test</u> . . . . .	46
10.	Three-Part Analysis of Variance of the Scores of Matched Pairs of Subjects on the <u>Gates Primary Paragraph Reading Test</u> . . . . .	47

Table		Page
11.	Three-Part Analysis of Variance of the Total Reading Scores of Matched Pairs of Subjects on the <u>Gates Primary Reading Tests</u> . . . . .	48
12.	Intelligence Quotients and Raw Scores of the <u>Gates Primary Reading Test</u> for Experimental Subjects. . . . .	77
13.	Intelligence Quotients and Raw Scores of the <u>Gates Primary Reading Test</u> for Control Subjects . . . . .	79



THE EFFECT OF A PARENT INFORMATION PROGRAM  
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CHAPTER I

BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Criticisms of reading instruction during the past decade have caused parents and other citizens to become intensely interested in improving instruction in this important subject. Following a lengthy period of relative stability in approaches to the teaching of reading, several highly publicized attacks upon public school reading programs have commanded wide attention. Notable examples of critical statements are those by Flesch,<sup>1</sup> Terman and Walcutt,<sup>2</sup> Walcutt,<sup>3</sup> and Trace.<sup>4</sup>

The charge that their children are seriously

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<sup>1</sup>Rudolf Flesch, Why Johnny Can't Read (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1955).

<sup>2</sup>Sibyl Terman and Charles C. Walcutt, Reading: Chaos and Cure (New York: McGraw Hill, 1958).

<sup>3</sup>Charles C. Walcutt (ed.), Tomorrow's Illiterates (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1961).

<sup>4</sup>Arthur S. Trace, Jr., What Ivan Knows That Johnny Doesn't (New York: Random House, 1961).

deficient in reading skills is alarming to parents who, at the same time, are being impressed with the urgency of reading ability in an age of space and automation. That many of the charges are without foundation is of little comfort to anxious parents.<sup>5</sup> With serious doubt cast upon the effectiveness of reading instruction, the public is more vitally concerned than ever before with issues surrounding the teaching of reading in our schools.

There are no signs of abatement of parental interest in reading instruction at present. Concerned citizens continue to read and hear about fascinating new developments in the field. Research in this area is being conducted at an accelerated pace. Authorities are experimenting in an effort to determine the interrelationships among factors which influence learning to read, to discover effective means of measuring the success of new teaching techniques and materials, and to find ways of evaluating a variety of administrative plans for schools and classrooms. Recently, attention has been focused on the teaching of reading to pre-school age children with the result that traditional views on readiness are being challenged and subsequently revised.

The scope and depth of concern about reading are evident from the great volume of literature on the subject that has been published in professional journals and popular

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<sup>5</sup>Arthur I. Gates, "The Teaching of Reading--Objective Evidence Versus Opinion," Phi Delta Kappan, XLIII (February, 1962), pp. 197-205.

magazines. Numerous reports are directed to parents in an attempt to assess accurately the reading ability of today's children, to explain the rationale for current instructional approaches, and to interpret the role of parents in helping children learn to read. A great many articles are addressed to teachers to provide assistance in dealing with various kinds of parental involvement.

The revival of public interest in school problems in general and reading in particular is regarded in educational circles as both encouraging and desirable. Educators have long recognized that home background is a factor which influences learning. Most authorities share the view that interested, informed parents can contribute significantly to the scholastic achievement of their children. To structure the best possible home atmosphere for beginning readers, mothers and fathers need reliable information about the attitudes and practices which foster growth in reading. Confusion and uncertainty on the part of adults in the home can contribute to the development of reading problems in school.

Arthur I. Gates sees much wisdom in helping parent understand the modern reading program. Commenting on this point, he has stated:

Many of the modern methods and instructional materials used today in teaching reading have evolved from educational research. We know a great deal more than in past decades on how children grow, the effect of environment upon learning, and the importance of motivating factors. This "growing edge" is necessary, but it must be understood by the public, especially

by parents, if destructive criticism is to be avoided.

Parents who understand and accept a modern teaching program usually become a potent influence in helping the child to learn.<sup>6</sup>

Parents often are advised about reading instruction by means of magazine and newspaper articles, Parent-Teacher Association activities, and individual reporting conferences. Some schools furnish parents with pamphlets which interpret the objectives and methods of the reading program. Such approaches are believed to be of indirect benefit to beginning readers, but the extent of this influence is difficult to assess. It was the purpose of this study, therefore, to measure experimentally the degree to which supplying parents with accurate information about reading actually effects the reading ability of first grade pupils.

#### Justification and Need for the Study

The idea that the home environment of pupils is a vital factor in the learning process is amply supported in the literature of professional education. Communication and close cooperation between home and school are urged universally by educators, psychologists, and guidance workers. That the education of children is properly a cooperative enterprise involving both parents and teachers is implied by Ragan when he states:

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<sup>6</sup>Arthur I. Gates, Teaching Reading ("What Research Says to the Teacher," No. 1; Washington, D. C.: National Education Association, 1953), p. 29.

The work of the teacher is frequently hindered by parents who have ambitions for the child which do not correspond to his abilities or interests. This situation points up the need for a closer working relationship between teachers and parents in helping the child learn to face reality.<sup>7</sup>

Ragan further stresses the relationship of home background to school experiences by pointing out the following:

The idea that the whole child comes to school is generally accepted by teachers of young children. Most of them recognize that they cannot understand a child unless they know something about the home in which he is growing up. Teachers have developed many effective ways of working with parents in groups and as individuals.<sup>8</sup>

If attitudes and experiences originating in the home environment of children have important implications for the entire school curriculum, they appear to have particular significance for the reading program, especially at the beginning stages of instruction. Helen Robinson, an eminent authority in the reading field, states that the extent to which the school and parents cooperate is of greater importance than many of us have ever realized, and that the school is greatly handicapped without the support and cooperation of parents.<sup>9</sup>

Reading is a complicated symbolic process, and a child involved in this type of learning is extremely sensitive to

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<sup>7</sup>William B. Ragan, Modern Elementary Curriculum, Revised edition (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1960), p. 48.

<sup>8</sup>William B. Ragan, Teaching America's Children (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1961), p. 83.

<sup>9</sup>Helen M. Robinson, "Factors Affecting Success in Reading," Elementary School Journal, LV (January, 1955), p. 269.

feelings of emotional stress. There is little doubt that anxiety interferes with the acquisition of a complex skill such as reading.<sup>10</sup> Thus, children who are relatively free from feelings of stress, tension, and personal inadequacy have a better chance of gaining reading proficiency than youngsters who lack self-esteem and confidence. Bond and Tinker are among the reading experts who feel that self-concepts are greatly influenced by parental attitudes and that ego needs are closely tied to success in reading.

The child who is happy, has a well-integrated personality, and feels secure is more likely to make normal progress in his reading than the insecure child. Conditions in the home have an important effect upon a child's personality adjustment before he goes to school and during the school years.<sup>11</sup>

It is precisely in the area of emotional adjustment as it relates to success or failure in reading that reading specialists and psychologists have expressed great interest. In the past two decades, the relationship between emotional disturbances and reading ability has been the subject of wide investigation. The high incidence of personal maladjustment among cases of reading failure has lead most educators to the conclusion that emotional problems do impinge upon the process

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<sup>10</sup>Janet A. Taylor and Kenneth W. Spence, "The Relationship of Anxiety Level to Performance in Serial Learning," Journal of Experimental Psychology, XLIV (August, 1952), pp. 61-64.

<sup>11</sup>Guy L. Bond and Miles A. Tinker, Reading Difficulties, Their Diagnosis and Correction (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1957), p. 108.

of learning to read.<sup>12</sup> Aspects of the home situation which influence personal adjustment are therefore especially pertinent when conditions which foster reading growth are under consideration. Robinson's research on this topic leads her to the following conclusion:

The unusual significance is not only that organic and emotional problems of the child influence his learning to read but also that problems apparently remote from school exert considerable influence. They emphasize the importance of the home and of the social environment on the total adjustment of the child. They imply that a stable, wholesome home environment exerts a definite influence on the school progress of the child.<sup>13</sup>

In a journal article ten years later, Robinson comments again on the relationship between feelings of personal security and ability to learn. In her opinion, many children are "unable to apply their energies to learning because of the family relationships and the emotional climate of the home."<sup>14</sup> Jones lends support to Robinson's outlook when she relates:

The child is being influenced at home as well as at school. His attitude toward reading is being affected by the attitudes and habits of parents. His feelings of assurance may be molded in a large part outside of school.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>12</sup>Arthur W. Heilman, Principles and Practices of Teaching Reading (Columbus, Ohio: Charles E. Merrill Books, Inc., 1960), p. 324.

<sup>13</sup>Helen M. Robinson, Why Pupils Fail in Reading (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1946), p. 222.

<sup>14</sup>Robinson, Elementary School Journal, op. cit., pp. 267-68.

<sup>15</sup>Daisy M. Jones, "Parents and the Reading Program,"

The effect of home background upon psychological development and upon learning to read strongly suggests the need for furnishing adults with accurate information so that children can be guided properly in their efforts to read at home. At least one authority believes that parents are confused by the conflicting opinions expressed in the literature and that many articles on the topic are written by unqualified journalists.<sup>16</sup> The wisdom of conducting planned programs for parents of beginning readers is evident if there is merit in the following statements by Keckefoth and Heilman respectively.

Parents frequently express the desire in parent-teacher conferences to help their children in beginning reading. They sense that good attitudes toward reading can be cultivated at home. As parents and children read together at home, explore new fields, children become closer to the parents. Parents need help in guiding their children's reading.<sup>17</sup>

Rarely are parents able to see how the home and patterns of over-protection, psychological rejection, excessively high standards, perfectionism, or unfilled psychological needs stemming from the family configuration, are related to reading failures.<sup>18</sup>

The success of efforts on the part of schools to

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The Reading Teacher, VII (April, 1954), p. 194.

<sup>16</sup>Emmett A. Betts, "Parents and Teachers Want to Know About Reading," Education, LXXVIII (January, 1958), p. 291.

<sup>17</sup>Ethel H. Keckefoth, "Helping Parents Guide Children's Reading," Elementary English, XXIV (October, 1947), p. 372.

<sup>18</sup>Heilman, op. cit., p. 390.



conduct information programs for parents depends largely upon the willingness of adults to appropriate time and energy for such a purpose. There is considerable evidence to indicate that parents will respond favorably when opportunities are offered. The findings of a study by Pressnall attest to the active interest of parents in reading instruction. His survey of the parents of a large number of elementary school children reveals that parents are not only interested in how their children are being taught to read, but most of them have formed definite opinions about current practices.<sup>19</sup>

Stout and Langdon conducted a study of parent attitudes and concerns about their children's schools. They concluded that by and large parents are vitally interested in what their children are being taught and how the schools are teaching, but are often uncertain about what is expected of them. Parents frequently express the wish to be told specifically how they can help at home. Stout and Langdon indicate that schools should take the initiative in working with parents by pointing out, "The gulf between home and school seems to be one that only the school can bridge."<sup>20</sup>

Helen Robinson feels that "much more may be done than has previously been attempted in preventing the development of

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<sup>19</sup>Hugo E. Pressnall, "Parent's Opinions of Reading Instruction," Elementary English, XXXIII (January, 1956), pp. 29-33.

<sup>20</sup>Irving W. Stout and Grace Langdon, "What Parents Want to Know About Their Child's School," Nation's Schools, LX (August, 1957), pp. 45-48.

reading disability."<sup>21</sup> This study represents a preventative approach to beginning reading. It is an attempt to study experimentally the effect of early parental guidance as a preventative measure. The high interest of parents in reading instruction, the impact of parent reactions on children's success in reading, and the important role of emotional adjustment in the learning process combine to form a challenging front for research.

### The Problem

This study was based on the premise that parental attitudes and habits are important factors in the environment of beginning readers. It grew out of the conviction that parents want to know what their responsibilities are and how to deal with them.

This study was concerned with the following problem:  
What is the effect of a program of information for parents upon the reading achievement of first grade students?

The primary purpose of the study was to determine whether or not there is a statistically significant difference in reading achievement between a group of beginning readers whose parents have received guidance and a group of pupils whose parents have received no planned assistance. Variables between the two groups being compared were controlled so that

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<sup>21</sup> Robinson, Why Pupils Fail in Reading, op. cit., p. 235.

the influence of advising parents about reading could be measured. A secondary purpose of the study was to describe a feasible short-term program of information which can be administered by schools to parents of beginning readers.

### Summary of Relevant Research

This investigation of whether children's reading achievement is affected by the outcome of information sessions for parents is closely related to studies of home environment as it parallels, supplements, and reinforces the school experiences of children. Studies germane to the present project can be grouped as follows: (1) investigations of family patterns which relate to success in reading, (2) studies exploring interaction between emotions and the reading process, and (3) inquiries concerning the effectiveness of procedures for communicating with parents about reading.

This summary deals with categories one and two since findings from research in these areas serve to form a basis for the content of the experimental parent program and help to establish the feasibility of this study. It is evident from professional literature that studies dealing with these aspects of the reading question are numerous. However, no studies of the type in category three, comparable to the one described in this report, were reported in the literature that was surveyed. It is the writer's purpose in the following paragraphs to show how current research knowledge is

related to this study and to identify what appears to be a void in existing knowledge.

Many investigators have worked to clarify the relationship between the home experiences and reading behavior of children. Almy, in 1949, reported the results of an important study of how pre-school experiences affect performance in beginning reading. By interviewing 106 parents of first grade pupils, she obtained a description of the children's reading related activities prior to school attendance. A positive relationship was found between measured reading achievement and frequency of contact with reading material in the home. Pupils whose parents often read to them or those who had developed an interest in words and numbers through parental example tended to be better readers by the time they had completed the first grade. Likewise, meager pre-school experiences of children with reading and books were reflected by lower scores on tests of reading ability. Almy's findings provided evidence of the impact of family habits upon reading success and suggested practices which might enhance achievement to beginning reading.<sup>22</sup>

In 1952, Sheldon and Carrillo conducted a study designed to explore the relationship between certain characteristics of home environment and the reading ability of children.

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<sup>22</sup>Millie C. Almy, Children's Experiences Prior to First Grade and Success in Beginning Reading (New York: Bureau of Publications, Teachers College, Columbia University, 1949).

The reading levels of 521 elementary school children were determined by performance on the Progressive Reading Test. The reading test scores were compared with actual grade placement, and the pupils were classified as good, average, or poor readers. Information about home background was obtained from questionnaires answered by parents. The written responses of the parents of the 521 children were analyzed in order to identify the aspects of home situations which related positively with reading level. Results indicated that a positive relationship existed between reading success and the number of books found in the home. The investigators used size of home library as a measure of general interest in reading and concluded that children profit from the interests parents display in reading. Further evidence that reading ability increases when reading and study are valued at home can be noted from the positive relation found between the occupational and educational levels of parents and the reading proficiency of their children.<sup>23</sup>

There have been a number of recent studies which involved children who began to read at home before they started to school. Various investigators identified intellectual and personal qualities which appeared to be common characteristics among precocious readers. Certain studies focused attention

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<sup>23</sup>William D. Sheldon and Lawrence Carrillo, "Relation of Parents, Home, and Certain Developmental Characteristics to Children's Reading Ability," Elementary School Journal, LII (January, 1952), pp. 262-70.

upon the home environment of early readers in an effort to determine what family attitudes and procedures promote the early acquisition of reading skill. Durkin's research, reported in 1961, was representative of inquiries into this question. Forty-nine California children, 29 girls and 20 boys, who learned to read before starting school were included in the study. At the time these children entered first grade, they were already reading at grade levels ranging from 1.5 to 4.6. Durkin found common elements in the home environment of her early readers. All of the parents expressed a high regard for reading, read to their children frequently, and answered their children's questions about words and about reading.<sup>24</sup> These results furnished additional evidence that family patterns are relevant to reading success.

The significance of the representative studies cited above is that research provides evidence that parents can structure the home situation in ways which will help children progress in reading. Researchers further suggest that school personnel make a concerted effort to inform parents of such evidence and its relative importance. The present study will help to determine whether or not tangible benefits result from a planned information program for parents.

Research knowledge which clarifies the relationship between emotional adjustment and reading ability is highly

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<sup>24</sup>Dolores Durkin, "Children Who Read Before Grade One," The Reading Teacher, XIV (January, 1961), pp. 163-66.

relevant to the present study. The influence of home and family upon children's attitudes toward school, reading, and self is undeniably great. If these and other kinds of emotional involvement are factors in reading success, it seems imperative that parents be made aware of them.

At one time reading disability was attributed almost exclusively to faulty methodology on the part of teachers and to low intelligence or physical handicaps of pupils. However, subsequent investigations into the causes of reading difficulty revealed that many cases of reading impairment could not be traced to physical causes, intellectual deficiencies, or poor teaching.<sup>25</sup> Research carried on in remedial reading laboratories psychological clinics, and child guidance centers was centered upon emotional conflict as a factor in reading retardation. Numerous researchers found that a high percentage of disabled readers exhibited unfortunate patterns of emotional involvement. Several much-needed reviews of research were extremely valuable aids in interpreting the findings in this area.

A comprehensive review of research by Traxler and Townsend summarized the conclusions of a large number of studies of the emotional aspects of the reading process conducted during the period from 1945 to 1952. They found that in a great majority of the studies there was positive

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<sup>25</sup>Nila Banton Smith, "Looking Ahead in Teaching Reading," Journal of the National Educational Association, XLIV (October, 1955), p. 416.

correlation between reading ability and personal and social adjustment, but no cause and effect relationships were definitely established.<sup>26</sup>

Nila Banton Smith compiled an excellent summary of thirty research studies made prior to 1955 that dealt with interplay between personal adjustment and reading ability. She noted that while incidence varied somewhat from study to study, investigators were in agreement that a high percentage of retarded readers had concomitant emotional difficulties.<sup>27</sup> Smith contributed two worthwhile conclusions from research data which she stated as follows:

1. Research, consequently, reveals that there is a high incidence of emotional disturbances among children retarded in reading; and that emotional disturbances may cause reading difficulties, or vice-versa, both usually being the result of a constellation of causes.

2. Investigators are beginning to experiment with various types of therapy in working with emotionally disturbed readers. The results of such work with emotionally disturbed readers are favorable to reading improvement. This new aspect of the corrective program holds much promise for further research and application.<sup>28</sup>

The difficulty of perceiving precisely how emotions

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<sup>26</sup>Arthur E. Traxler and Agatha Townsend, Eight More Years of Research in Reading (New York: Educational Records Bureau, 1955), p. 7.

<sup>27</sup>Nila Banton Smith, "Research on Reading and the Emotions," School and Society, LXXXI (January, 1955), pp. 8-10.

<sup>28</sup>Arthur E. Traxler and Ann Jungeblut, Research in Reading During Another Four Years (New York: Educational Records Bureau, 1960), p. 10.



and reading are tied together was pointed out in another periodic summary of research. Traxler and Jungeblut reviewed studies conducted during the four year period from 1954 to 1958. Their interpretation of research data led them to the conclusion that reading and language difficulties "may be causes, concomitants, or results of personality factors."

The influence of home conditions upon the psychological development of children and the harmful effects of personal insecurity upon growth in reading emphasize the prominence of the parent role during the beginning phase of reading instruction. The results of Seigler and Gynther's 1960 investigation adds weight to the foregoing statement. This study establishes the fact that family conflict is more likely to be found in the home background of poor readers. According to responses to Leary's Interpersonal Check List, parents of poor readers tend to be significantly more critical and less complimentary in their descriptions of self, spouse, and children than do parents of good readers. The children experiencing difficulty with reading are described by their parents as being somewhat aggressive, distrustful, dependent, and self-effacing. These data tend to support the premise that unharmonious family relationships produce emotional patterns which interfere with the acquisition of reading skill.<sup>30</sup>

Although clearly defined experimental studies

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<sup>30</sup>Hazel G. Seigler and Malcolm G. Gynther, "Reading Ability of Children and Family Harmony," Journal of Developmental Reading, IV (Autumn, 1960), pp. 17-24.

measuring the effect of parent information programs have not been reported, a clinical report by Worth Osburn is noteworthy. In 1951, Osburn, working at the Education Clinic of the University of Washington, reported the results of his work with parents of emotionally disturbed readers. He found that much therapeutic value resulted when parent groups met for six weekly discussions prior to the remedial sessions for children. Although specific data are lacking, it was reported that remedial work in reading was more successful when the anxieties and fears of the parents were quieted. In his report, Osburn described in detail the unfortunate consequences which frequently result when a child's reading fails to fulfill the expectations of his parents. He strongly implied the need for explaining to parents the relationship between learning to read and such concepts as readiness for learning, individual differences, auditory and visual discrimination, physical health, and speech defects. Osburn observed that parents frequently resort to simple explanations for a child's failure in reading. They often decide that the teacher is poor or that the child is "dumb" or lazy. Rejection, punishment, and pressure typically follow.<sup>31</sup>

A number of tenable conclusions emerge from studies of home and family influence upon performance in reading during the early stages of instruction. The following

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<sup>31</sup>Worth J. Osburn, "Emotional Blocks in Reading," Elementary School Journal, LII (September, 1951), pp. 23-30.

conclusions can be stated with confidence since they are based upon evidence resulting from carefully conducted research.

1. Parents contribute to the reading success of their children when they help children develop an interest in reading activities both before and after school attendance begins.

2. Providing opportunities for children to have contact with stories and books, to develop concepts through varied experiences, and to acquire skill in language usage helps in building a foundation for formal instruction in reading.

3. Home environment is a potent influence upon the personal adjustment of children. Parents, through their own attitudes and habits, help determine the attitudes of children toward school, learning, and reading.

4. Emotional maladjustment can contribute to reading difficulties, and emotional reactions to pressure, threats, and excessive demands for performance are barriers to initial progress in reading.

While current research data supporting the above statements are substantial, studies designed to illuminate these facts for parents and to measure the resulting effects upon reading achievement have not been reported. This stands out as a void in research knowledge and is a weakness which the present study helps to overcome.

## CHAPTER II

### PROCEDURES OF THE STUDY

This study was designed to compare the reading achievement of two groups of first grade pupils. The parents of one group of children, designated as the experimental group, attended six weekly classes conducted during the first quarter of the 1961-62 school year. The parent sessions were devoted, generally, to a consideration of the influence of home environment during the period of initial reading instruction. A description of the content and materials for the parent classes is presented under a subsequent heading in this chapter. Parents of children in the control group did not attend these classes. All subjects received regular instruction in reading during the first grade since no plans were made to influence, expand, or modify classroom lessons by working directly with teachers. Participation in the parent program is the variable which distinguishes the experimental group from the control group. At the end of the school year, a standardized test of reading achievement was administered to both groups. The test results for the two groups were compared in order to determine whether working with these parents had a

significant effect upon the reading achievement of their children.

### Selection of Subjects

Subjects for the study were first grade pupils in three elementary schools in the Mattoon, Illinois, public school system. All pupils enrolled in these schools were English speaking Caucasian children. Three schools were chosen from the eight elementary schools in the Mattoon system which, in the opinion of school officials, fairly represented a cross section of the socio-economic strata of the community. In this way, a reasonably heterogeneous population was obtained and, at the same time, extreme imbalances in social and economic background were avoided. Thus, it is assumed that there was no difference between the experimental and control group in average socio-economic level.

There were two first grade classes in each of the three schools chosen, six beginning groups in all. Class size ranged from 24 to 31 students with a total enrollment of 162 pupils. From this population 72 subjects, 36 experimental and 36 control, were chosen according to criteria established for the selection of subjects. Table 1 shows the enrollment in the six first grade classes providing subjects for the study.

All six classes were organized as self-contained units, each under the direction of a regularly employed and

licensed teacher. It was the policy in each of the three schools to assign beginning students to classes on a random basis. No attempts were made by school officials to group first grade pupils homogeneously according to intelligence or maturity. The general approach to teaching reading was similar for all groups involved in the study. All teachers used the same basal reader series, and the supply of supplementary teaching materials was comparable for the three schools. Therefore, the amount and quality of reading instruction in the various classes were assumed to be approximately the same.

TABLE 1  
ENROLLMENT IN SIX FIRST GRADE CLASSES FURNISHING  
SUBJECTS FOR THE STUDY

Schools and Classes		Enrollment		
		Boys	Girls	Total
School A	Class 1	17	11	28
	Class 2	19	12	31
School B	Class 3	16	11	27
	Class 4	16	11	27
School C	Class 5	14	11	25
	Class 6	16	8	24
Total		98	64	162

Interest of parents in the experimental program was an important consideration in establishing the equality of

the groups being compared in this study. For this reason only children whose parents indicated a willingness to participate were selected as subjects for the study. Children whose parents were not interested or were unable to attend parent classes were excluded. Through this selection procedure, the interest expressed by parents of children placed in the control group was equal to that of parents whose children made up the experimental group. By holding the frequency of expressed interest constant, it is assumed that the experimental and control groups were comparable with respect to this variable.

A preliminary step in the formation of the two equated groups of 36 pupils each was to identify parents who wished to participate in the parent program. During the second week of school a letter, explaining the nature and purposes of the planned research study, was sent to the parents of all 162 pupils. It was stated in the letter that only a limited number from among those expressing a desire to attend would be enrolled in parent classes. The parents were asked to complete and return forms indicating their availability for participation.<sup>32</sup> Parents of 112 children, or 69.1 per cent of the total group, stated that at least one parent could and would attend in the event they were selected for the experimental program. Fifty pupils were eliminated as subjects

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<sup>32</sup>Copies of the letter to parents and the response form are included in Appendix A.

because their parents were not available for parent sessions. Positive parent response, according to classes, is presented in Table 2.

TABLE 2  
AVAILABILITY OF PARENTS FOR PARTICIPATION  
IN THE INFORMATION PROGRAM

Schools and Classes		Pupils with Parents Able to Attend		
		Boys	Girls	Total
School A	Class 1	11	9	20
	Class 2	14	7	21
School B	Class 3	11	8	19
	Class 4	12	6	18
School C	Class 5	9	8	17
	Class 6	10	7	17
Total		67	45	112

In order to control several additional factors which influence achievement in beginning reading, a number of other pupils were excluded as subjects prior to the formation of experimental and control groups. The following cases were considered ineligible.

1. Pupils who were known to have defects of vision or hearing serious enough to interfere with learning to read.
2. Children who were repeating first grade.
3. Students who had acquired reading ability before entering first grade.



4. Pupils for whom intelligence and reading readiness test data were incomplete or invalid.

Table 3 shows the number of ineligible students and the reasons for exclusion from the study.

TABLE 3  
PUPILS INELIGIBLE AS SUBJECTS FOR THE STUDY

Reason	Number Ineligible		
	Boys	Girls	Total
Parents unable to participate	31	19	50
First grade repeaters	5	2	7
Reading ability at beginning of year	5	3	8
Physical defects	1	0	1
Incomplete test data	3	0	3

#### Description of Sample

Restrictions in the number of parent classes which could be conducted made it necessary to limit the size of the experimental group to 36 subjects. The sex, intelligence quotient, and reading readiness test score for each of the eligible subjects provided the basic data for forming experimental and control groups. Pupils who scored below 50 on the Lee-Clark Reading Readiness Test were not used as subjects. A raw score of 50 on this test is the median for entering first grade pupils. No delay in reading instruction is recommended for pupils with scores at or above the test

median.<sup>33</sup> Pupils with intelligence quotients below 90, as measured by the Kuhlmann-Anderson Test, were likewise excluded from the final sample. This sampling procedure was followed because the scattered distribution of intelligence scores below 90 made precise matching of experimental and control subjects impossible.

The remaining 90 subjects were matched according to intelligence and sex, and 36 pairs were selected at random. One of each pair was randomly assigned to the experimental group and the other to the control group. This method made it possible to obtain two groups which were approximately equal with respect to variables which influence achievement in beginning reading.<sup>34</sup>

The range of intelligence scores was from 93 to 123 for the experimental group, and the range for the control group was from 91 to 122. The mean intelligence score was 107.58 for experimental subjects and 107.61 for control subjects. Standard deviations for intelligence data were 7.20 and 6.93 for the experimental and control groups respectively. The coefficient of correlation for intelligence quotients between the two groups was .98, indicating that the groups were

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<sup>33</sup>J. Murry Lee and Willis W. Clark, Manual for the Lee-Clark Reading Readiness Test, 1951 revision (Monterey, California: California Test Bureau, 1951), p. 12.

<sup>34</sup>Allen L. Edwards, Experimental Design in Psychological Research (New York: Rinehart and Company, Inc., 1950), pp. 265-66.

highly equated with respect to measured intellectual ability.

The description of the final sample is summarized below.

1. All subjects were entering first grade pupils.
2. All subjects were English speaking Caucasian children.
3. The chronological age range for subjects was from five years, eleven months to six years, nine months.
4. All subjects were ready for formal instruction in reading according to reading readiness test scores.
5. Intelligence quotients for subjects were within the range 91 to 123.
6. The experimental and control groups each contained twenty male and sixteen female subjects.
7. The parents of all subjects in the sample indicated a willingness to participate in the experimental parent information program.

#### Collection of Data

The chronological age and sex of each pupil were available from records in the various schools. This information was recorded and employed in equating the experimental and control groups. During the first month of school, after the pupil had become sufficiently oriented to school and to his teacher, the Kuhlmann-Anderson Test and the Lee-Clark Reading Readiness Test were administered to measure the intelligence and readiness for instruction in reading. These standardized group tests were selected because they are widely used instruments for educational testing and because cost and

testing time are not prohibitive. The tests were administered by the regular classroom teachers; scoring and recording of test results were carried out by the investigator. Test results subsequently were made available to the teachers to use for instructional purposes.

In addition to the standardized tests of mental ability and reading readiness, an informal sight word test was used to identify children who had learned to read to some extent before entering the first grade. Pupils who displayed ability to recognize any of the basic sight words on the test were designated as having reading ability and were not selected as subjects for the study.

At the end of the year standardized reading tests were given to measure achievement in reading during the first grade. The tests provided a comprehensive evaluation of ability to recognize words and comprehend sentences and paragraphs. The data obtained were used to make a post-experimental comparison of the reading achievement of the experimental and control groups.

### Instruments of Measure

Several instruments were used in the collection of data on intelligence, reading readiness, and reading ability. Measuring instruments utilized in this study include the following:

1. The Kuhlmann-Anderson Test, Booklet A, was used

to determine intellectual ability. Booklet A is a group test recommended for use during the early months of first grade. The test consists of 10 sub-tests, each of which yields a mental age equivalent. The median mental age obtained for each child is used to compute the intelligence quotient. Total testing time is about 45 minutes and can be accomplished during a single testing period.

The reliability coefficient calculated by the split-halves method and corrected by the Spearman-Brown formula was  $r = .96$  for the test scores of 100 first grade pupils selected at random. Additional evidence of high reliability is furnished by data demonstrating consistency of results under conditions of repeated testing. This test is described as a highly valid instrument for measuring the general mental development that is needed for success in school studies. The capacity of the test to discriminate between small increments of mental development is cited as primary evidence of validity.<sup>35</sup>

2. The Lee-Clark Reading Readiness Test, 1951 Revision, was used as a measure of readiness for formal reading instruction. It is designed to predict ability to learn to read. The test includes four sub-tests which assess ability to make visual discriminations, ability to follow directions, vocabulary knowledge, and concept development. Over-all

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<sup>35</sup>F. Kuhlmann and Rose G. Anderson, Handbook for the Kuhlmann-Anderson Tests, Sixth edition (Baltimore: Personnel Press, Inc., 1952), pp. 9-23.

performance on the test is expressed by a grade placement equivalent derived from total raw score on 64 test items. The test requires approximately 25 minutes to administer.

Reliability was determined for 170 beginning first grade pupils by the split-halves method. Results ranged from  $r = .83$  to  $r = .94$  for the various sub-tests. Studies of the relationship between results of this test and subsequent measures of reading achievement for the same pupils have found correlations ranging from  $r = .43$  to  $r = .67$ , indicating the validity of the test as an instrument for predicting success in first grade reading development.<sup>36</sup>

3. A modified form of the Dolch Basic Sight Word Test was used to identify pupils who had learned to read before entering first grade. This is an informal test of ability to recognize printed words. It is administered individually to each child.

4. The Gates Primary Reading Tests, 1958 edition, Form 1, were utilized at the end of the school year to measure reading achievement. The Gates tests are group silent reading tests which measure three basic reading skills. The primary tests are of three types: (1) Word Recognition, (2) Sentence Reading, and (3) Paragraph Reading. The raw score on each test is translatable into reading grade, reading age, and percentile rank. Testing time is approximately 80 minutes and requires three sittings to be held either the same day or

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<sup>36</sup>Lee and Clark, op. cit., pp. 3-4.

on successive days.

The alternate-form method was employed in determining test reliability. Reliability coefficients, based on the performance of 258 first grade pupils on two alternate forms of the primary tests, ranged from  $r = .86$  to  $r = .89$ . The validity of the tests as measures of reading achievement seems to be well established according to numerous reports of correlational and other types of investigations.<sup>37</sup>

### The Program for Parents

The parents of experimental subjects were enrolled in one night class each week for a period of six weeks during the first two months of the school year. The parent sessions, planned and conducted by the investigator, were devoted to topics related to the teaching and learning of reading in the first grade.

### Attendance

The parents of the 36 subjects were divided into two groups. One parent group was scheduled for Tuesday evening meetings, while the other group attended duplicate classes on Thursday nights. Parents who found it necessary to be absent on scheduled nights were permitted to attend the alternate meetings in order to make up missed classes. These flexible

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<sup>37</sup>Arthur I. Gates, Supplement to the Manuals for the Gates Reading Tests, 1958 revision (New York: Bureau of Publications, Teachers College, Columbia University, 1958), pp. 1-5.

arrangements helped to keep attendance at a high level during the program.

When the parents of experimental subjects were contacted for scheduling, invitations were extended to both parents of each subject. Although some fathers enrolled, the parents attending were predominantly mothers. Fathers of 18 subjects were present for some meetings; for two subjects, fathers were the only parents in attendance. Attendance of all parents were recorded, but the separate attendance of mothers and fathers of each subject was not considered in counting frequency of participation. If an experimental subject was represented at each meeting by at least one parent, attendance was considered complete. In the following summary of attendance, the term "parents" refers to either mother or father, or to both parents.

<u>Classes attended</u>	<u>Parents present</u>
All six classes	22
Five classes only	7
Four classes only	5
Three classes only	1
Two classes only	1

Twenty-two parents attended all six meetings; seven others were present five times. Over-all attendance was 89 per cent. This excellent record of participation seemed to reflect the high interest of parents in the reading program and made a completion of the study feasible.



## Objectives

Six lessons were prepared and presented to the parents of experimental subjects. The lesson plans for all six sessions are presented in Appendix B. The purpose of the program was to help parents develop a better understanding of such topics as the nature of the reading process, children as beginning readers, and the role of parents during the early stages of reading instruction. The lessons were structured around the following objectives:

1. To illustrate to parents that reading is a complex symbolic process which children must master if they are to deal successfully with academic tasks.
2. To show the extent of differences among first grade pupils in mental ability, emotional maturity, background experience, language development, and reading achievement.
3. To point out the importance of readiness for beginning reading in terms of visual discrimination, listening ability, concept development, speaking skills, and physical health.
4. To demonstrate how beginning reading is taught in school and to explain the rationale for instructional approaches.
5. To show how children's attitudes toward school and learning are related to emotional adjustment and to success in reading.
6. To help parents gain insights into how their

attitudes and reactions influence the behavior and emotional development of children.

7. To consider specific questions concerning the home affairs of children who are learning to read.

### Instructional Materials

A variety of materials and procedures were used during the parent program. Part of each session was devoted to presentation of material followed by group discussion or a question and answer period. Several excellent booklets, written by leading authorities, were furnished as reading material for parents. In addition, class members were given a bibliography listing titles, publishers, and cost of several other valuable references for parents of beginning readers. Instructional approaches included the use of sound films dealing with the school reading program and the development of emotional maturity in children.

### Readings for Parents

The pamphlets utilized during the program were prepared especially for parents of beginning readers and dealt with topics which paralleled the content of the weekly lessons. These materials were furnished free to all parents involved in the program and were retained by them as sources for future reference. The readings are described below.

1. A Briefing for Parents: Your Child and Reading. Washington, D. C.: National Education Association.

A 14 page reprint of a journal article with

statements for parents by six eminent reading experts. Main topics discussed are the reading process, reading readiness experiments, teaching methods, types of reading, and reading problems.

2. Robison, Eleanor G. A Letter to Parents. ("Contributions in Reading," No. 8) Boston: Ginn and Company, 1957.

A four page bulletin for parents of beginning readers giving an overview of early reading instruction. The concept of reading readiness is explained and valuable suggestions for parents are included.

3. When Parents Ask About Reading. Chicago: Scott, Foresman and Company, 1961.

A seven page pamphlet furnishing answers to questions about reading frequently asked by parents. Approaches and materials used in modern reading programs are described and the place of phonics in reading instruction is clarified.

4. Hewitt, Ruth B. and Hewitt, Clyde E. Help Your Child Be Ready for Reading. ("Monographs for Elementary Teachers," No. 97) Evanston, Illinois: Row, Peterson and Company, 1960.

A six page monograph pointing out what parents can do to prepare children for reading both before and after school entrance. Recommendations are made for frequent and pleasurable contact with books and stories, wide experiential background, varied language experience, and stable emotional environment.

5. Casey, Sally L. Ways You Can Help Your Child with Reading. Evanston, Illinois: Row, Peterson and Company,

1960.

A 27 page booklet giving many practical suggestions for parents to follow when helping first grade students informally with reading.

6. McKee, Paul. A Primer for Parents: How Your Child Learns to Read. New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1957.

A 32 page booklet which helps parents understand the complexity of the tasks facing children who are engaged in learning to read. By using a special alphabet, the author makes it possible for adults to experience reading instruction from the viewpoint of children.

### Films

Four educational films were selected and used to introduce, explain or summarize pertinent topics. Brief descriptions of the films used in the program are given below.

1. Why Can't Jimmy Read? Syracuse University.

A 15 minute sound film describing the causes and clinical correction of a fourth grade boy's reading problems. The importance of preventing reading difficulties from developing is stressed.

2. Gregory Learns to Read. Wayne University.

A 28 minute sound film illustrating how children are introduced to reading in a modern classroom. The various skills involved in reading are outlined and instructional approaches explained.

3. Meeting Emotional Needs in Childhood. New York University.

A 33 minute sound film showing how parents and teachers can help children toward satisfactory social and emotional development. Emphasis is on development of independence responsibility, and self-confidence in children.

4. The Impressionable Years. United World Films

A 30 minute sound film explaining the advantages of introducing young children to the local library. The library is described as a source of knowledge, pleasure, and experience for children who will soon learn to read.

## CHAPTER III

### PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

This study was conducted to determine whether or not achievement in beginning reading is significantly influenced when parents are furnished with information about the process of learning to read. The experiment was designed specifically to make a year-end comparison of the reading achievement of 36 first grade pupils whose parents participated in an experimental information program and the reading achievement of a like number of pupils serving as control subjects.

The basic data used to make the statistical evaluation of reading achievement were raw scores on the Gates Primary Reading Tests. These tests provided four post-experimental measures of reading ability for each subject. The reading skills surveyed were (1) word recognition, (2) sentence reading, (3) paragraph reading, and (4) total reading achievement. The raw score data for experimental and control subjects are presented in Appendix C.

#### Hypotheses of the Study

Four hypotheses relating to the main problem of the

study were formulated and tested. The hypotheses are stated below.

1. There is no statistically significant mean difference in word recognition ability between first grade pupils whose parents participated in the experimental parent program and pupils whose parents did not attend information sessions.

2. There is no statistically significant mean difference in sentence reading ability between first grade pupils whose parents participated in the experimental parent program and pupils whose parents did not attend information sessions.

3. There is no statistically significant mean difference in paragraph reading ability between first grade pupils whose parents participated in the experimental parent program and pupils whose parents did not attend information sessions.

4. There is no statistically significant mean difference in total reading achievement between first grade pupils whose parents participated in the experimental parent program and pupils whose parents did not attend information sessions.

#### Analysis of Data

The statistical treatment used to compare the performance of experimental subjects with that of control

subjects was an analysis of variance. Initially, a two-part analysis of variance was computed for the difference between the raw scores of experimental and control subjects on each measure of reading ability. The purpose of this treatment was to test the assumption that the subjects in the two groups comprised a sample from a common population. Subsequently, a three-part analysis of variance was computed in order to take into consideration the degree of correlation between each set of test scores for the two groups. In this study, the required level of statistical significance for differences in achievement was set at the .05 level of probability.

The two-part analysis of variance of the word recognition test scores for the experimental and control groups may be found in Table 4. The F value was derived from a comparison of the variation due to the experimental condition with the variation existing within the groups. The obtained F ratio was derived from a comparison of the variation due to the experimental condition with the variation existing within the groups. The obtained F ratio was 2.33. For 1 and 70 degrees of freedom, an F value of 3.98 is required for significance. This finding supports the premise that the two groups were selected from a common population. It also indicates that when correlation between the sets of test scores was not taken into account, the difference between the groups was not statistically significant. Hypothesis 1, which stated that no significant difference in word recognition ability could be



attributed to the experimental condition of the study, was tentatively accepted.

TABLE 4  
TWO-PART ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE OF THE SCORES OF  
MATCHED PAIRS OF SUBJECTS ON THE GATES  
PRIMARY WORD RECOGNITION TEST

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F
Between groups	136.12	1	136.12	2.33*
Within groups	<u>4085.75</u>	<u>70</u>	58.37	
Total	4221.88	71		

\* Not significant at the .05 level.

Table 5 presents the two-part analysis of variance of the difference between groups on the sentence reading test.

TABLE 5  
TWO-PART ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE OF THE SCORES OF  
MATCHED PAIRS OF SUBJECTS ON THE GATES  
PRIMARY SENTENCE READING TEST

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F
Between groups	72.00	1	72.00	1.27*
Within groups	<u>3955.50</u>	<u>70</u>	56.51	
Total	4027.50	71		

\* Not significant at the .05 level.

An F value of 3.98 is required for significance at the .05 level. The ratio of between group variation to within group variation was 1.27. The analysis reveals that when the correlation factor was ignored, there was no significant difference between the experimental and control groups with respect to sentence reading test scores. Therefore, the hypothesis of no difference between groups, as stated in hypothesis 2, was tentatively accepted.

An examination of the data given in Table 6 reveals that the difference between the two groups in paragraph reading test scores was not significant according to the two-part analysis of variance. The obtained F value was 1.40 and the required value is 3.98. On the basis of these data, tentative acceptance of hypothesis 3 was justified.

TABLE 6  
TWO-PART ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE OF THE SCORES OF  
MATCHED PAIRS OF SUBJECTS ON THE GATES  
PRIMARY PARAGRAPH READING TEST

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F
Between groups	20.06	1	20.06	1.40*
Within groups	<u>1006.38</u>	<u>70</u>	14.38	
Total	1026.44	71		

\*Not significant at the .05 level.

Hypothesis 4 stated that there is no statistically significant difference between the experimental and control

groups in total reading achievement. The analysis of variance testing this hypothesis is given in Table 7. It is evident from these data that the difference between groups was not of the magnitude needed for significance. The F ratio was 2.02 which fails to reach the value required for statistical significance at the .05 level. If there were true differences, the statistical test failed to detect them. Hypothesis 4, which stated that no difference exists between groups in total reading achievement, was tentatively accepted on the basis of this analysis.

TABLE 7

TWO-PART ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE OF THE TOTAL READING  
SCORES OF MATCHED PAIRS OF SUBJECTS ON THE  
GATES PRIMARY READING TESTS

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F
Between groups	606.68	1	606.68	2.02*
Within groups	<u>21,028.32</u>	<u>70</u>	300.40	
Total	21,635.00	71		

\*Not significant at the .05 level.

The foregoing two-part analysis of variance indicates that when the variation between groups attributable to the experimental condition was compared with the variation within groups and tested for statistical significance, tentative acceptance of the hypotheses of no differences between groups was justified. If genuine differences existed between the

groups, the two-part analysis did not show them. Since with each measure of reading performance the mean square between groups was not significantly greater than the mean square within groups, it is plausible that the two groups of subjects represent a sample from a common population. With this necessary condition established, the method of assigning subjects to the experimental and control groups was considered.

The subjects were matched according to level of intelligence. Since it is well known that reading achievement correlates to a substantial degree with intellectual ability, the fact of correlation between the test scores of the two groups was considered in further analysis. The coefficients of correlation between the sets of reading test scores for the experimental and control groups are given below.

<u>Measure of Reading Achievement</u>	<u>Coefficient of Correlation</u>
Word recognition	.37*
Sentence reading	.70**
Paragraph reading	.61**
Total reading	.72**

\*Significant at the .05 level.

\*\*Significant at the .01 level.

An analysis of the difference between sets of correlated means calls for a statistical treatment which takes into account the amount of intercorrelation between sets of test scores.<sup>38</sup> A test of greater efficiency is more sensitive to a genuine difference in performance. The test of increased

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<sup>38</sup>Edwards, op. cit., p. 267.

power was provided by computing the variation in mean performance of subjects of matching levels of initial ability. By this method, it was possible to determine to what extent variation between pairs of subjects matched on the basis of intelligence contributed to variance within groups. A three-part analysis of variance was computed for each set of test scores to further test the four hypotheses of the study.

Table 8 summarizes the three-part analysis of variance for the word recognition test data. Variation between pairs of matched subjects was isolated from the within group variance previously calculated and compared with the remaining residual variance within groups. The resulting *F* ratios were 3.68 for the difference due to the experimental condition and 2.15 for the mean difference between pairs of subjects. Neither value is significant at the .05 level of significance. The more sensitive test provided by the three-part analysis of variance failed to show a significant difference between the groups on the test of word recognition ability. Hypothesis 1, which stated that no difference exists between the experimental and control groups in word recognition ability, was accepted.

A three-part analysis of variance was computed for the sentence reading test results. It can be observed from Table 9 that the error term was reduced substantially when variance between pairs of subjects was statistically isolated. The *F* value was 4.49 for the experimental variable.

TABLE 8

THREE-PART ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE OF THE SCORES OF  
MATCHED PAIRS OF SUBJECTS ON THE GATES  
PRIMARY WORD RECOGNITION TEST

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F
Between groups	136.12	1	136.12	3.68*
Between pairs	2789.38	35	79.70	2.15*
Residual	<u>1296.37</u>	<u>35</u>		
Total	4221.87	71		

\*Not significant at the .05 level.

For 1 and 35 degrees of freedom, a value of 4.12 is needed for significance at the .05 level of probability. There appeared to be a true difference between groups in sentence reading test performance which the previous analysis did not reveal.

TABLE 9

THREE-PART ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE OF THE SCORES OF  
MATCHED PAIRS OF SUBJECTS ON THE GATES  
PRIMARY SENTENCE READING TEST

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F
Between groups	72.00	1	72.00	4.49*
Between pairs	3355.50	35	95.87	5.59*
Residual	<u>600.00</u>	<u>35</u>	17.14	
Total	4027.50	71		

\*Significant at the .05 level.

The difference between subjects of various levels of intelligence was also significant at the .05 level since the F ratio was 5.59. Hypothesis 3, which stated that there is no difference between the experimental and control groups in the sentence reading ability, was rejected.

Table 10 presents the three-part analysis of variance for paragraph reading test scores. The F ratio for the difference between groups was 4.18 which reaches the value required for statistical significance at the .05 level. For the difference between subjects the F ratio was 4.99 which also is significant. The tentability of the hypothesis of no difference between groups on the test of paragraph reading was decreased. Hypothesis 3 was rejected on the basis of this analysis.

TABLE 10  
THREE-PART ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE OF THE SCORES OF  
MATCHED PAIRS OF SUBJECTS ON THE GATES  
PRIMARY PARAGRAPH READING TEST

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F
Between groups	20.06	1	20.06	4.18*
Between pairs	838.44	35	23.96	4.99*
Residual	<u>167.94</u>	<u>35</u>	4.80	
Total	1026.94	71		

\* Significant at the .05 level.

Hypothesis 4 stated that there is no difference between groups on total reading test performance. The analysis of variance presented in Table 11 reveals that the difference existing between groups was significant at the .05 level when compared with unknown variance. The required value for statistical significance is 4.12. The F ratio for difference between groups was 5.21. The F ratio for difference between subjects matched according to initial ability was 4.16 which is also significant. The hypothesis of no difference between experimental and control groups in total reading performance, was rejected.

TABLE 11

THREE-PART ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE OF THE TOTAL READING  
SCORES OF MATCHED PAIRS OF SUBJECTS ON THE  
GATES PRIMARY READING TESTS

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F
Between groups	606.68	1	606.68	5.21*
Between pairs	16,951.50	35	484.33	4.16*
Residual	<u>4,076.82</u>	<u>35</u>	116.48	
Total	21,635.00	71		

\*Significant at the .05 level.

Summary

An analysis of variance was the statistical treatment applied to the reading test data. The differences in mean



performance between the experimental and control groups on four measures of reading ability were tested for significance by computing F ratios. Initially a two-part analysis of variance was computed for each set of test scores to test the hypothesis that experimental and control subjects were selected from a common population. The results indicated that this hypothesis could be regarded as tenable. Subsequently, a three-part analysis of variance was computed for the same data in order to take into account the degree of correlation which existed between sets of test scores.

The statistical analysis of the word recognition test scores revealed that there was no statistically significant mean difference between the experimental and control groups. The null hypothesis of no difference between groups in word recognition ability was therefore accepted. However, differences significant at the .05 level were found favoring the experimental group in sentence reading and paragraph reading test results. The null hypotheses which stated that no differences existed between groups in sentence reading ability and in paragraph reading ability were therefore rejected. The total reading test score for each subject was the sum of scores for the three sub-tests. Since the differences between groups favored the experimental subjects on each sub-test, a difference, significant at the .05 level, was found which favored the experimental group in total reading performance. The null hypothesis of no difference between groups in total reading achievement was therefore rejected.

## CHAPTER IV

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### Summary

This study was designed to investigate the effect upon reading achievement of furnishing parents of first grade pupils with information concerning the process of learning to read. The subjects for the study were selected from six beginning classes in three Mattoon, Illinois, elementary schools. All pupils enrolled in these classes were English speaking Caucasian children. The schools provided a population which represented a normal cross-section of the socioeconomic levels of the community.

At the beginning of the school year, the parents of 162 first grade pupils were contacted to determine their availability for participation in study groups devoted to helping parents understand how they can help children succeed in reading. Only those children whose parents indicated a desire to enroll in parent classes were selected as subjects for the investigation. None of the subjects involved in the study had physical disabilities serious enough to interfere with learning to read. According to the results of the

Lee-Clark Reading Readiness Test, all subjects had attained a sufficient level of readiness for formal instruction in reading, but none had acquired reading ability before entering first grade.

Seventy-two pupils who met the criteria for selection as subjects were chosen as the final sample for the research project. Thirty-six pupils were designated as experimental subjects, and the other 36 pupils served as control subjects. Each experimental subject was matched with a control subject on the basis of sex and mental ability. The subjects selected for this investigation possessed average or above intellectual ability. The Kuhlman-Anderson Test was administered to measure intelligence. Each group was comprised of 20 boys and 16 girls. All subjects received regular instruction in reading during the period of the study. The procedures of the study in no way modified the instructional program in reading for the various classes. The amount and quality of reading instruction were approximately equal for experimental and control subjects since a common approach to the teaching of reading was used in all six classrooms.

The parents of pupils placed in the experimental group were enrolled in classes which were held once each week for six consecutive weeks during the first two months of the school year. The purpose of the program was to point out attitudes and habits which help children get a good start in learning to read. Topics for the parent lessons included the

nature of the reading process, reading readiness, emotional aspects of reading, individual differences among children, and instructional methods. Parents of control subjects received no special guidance other than that normally provided by the classroom teachers.

At the end of the school year, the Gates Primary Reading Tests were administered to measure the reading achievement of experimental and control subjects. These tests measured ability to recognize words and ability to comprehend sentences and paragraphs. The three tests together furnished an expression of total reading achievement. The reading test data were analyzed statistically to determine whether or not there were any significant differences in reading achievement between the experimental and control groups.

The primary statistical treatment employed to evaluate the test data obtained for this study was an analysis of variance. The findings which resulted from the evaluation are summarized below. Each statement corresponds in number to a hypothesis in the study.

1. There was no significant difference in the word recognition ability of first grade pupils whose parents participated in the parent information program as compared with that of pupils whose parents did not attend information sessions.

2. The sentence reading ability of first grade

pupils whose parents participated in the parent program was significantly superior to that of pupils whose parents did not attend information sessions.

3. The paragraph reading ability of first grade pupils whose parents participated in the parent program was significantly superior to that of pupils whose parents did not attend information sessions.

4. The total reading achievement of first grade pupils whose parents participated in the experimental parent program was significantly superior to that of pupils whose parents did not attend information sessions.

### Conclusions

On the basis of the results obtained in this investigation of the effect of an experimental parent information program upon the reading achievement of first grade pupils, certain conclusions were warranted:

1. Informing parents about factors involved in learning to read appears to positively influence the reading development of first grade pupils with average or above average intellectual ability.

2. The positive effects of informing parents about the process of learning to read seems to be greater in the area of reading comprehension abilities than upon the development of word recognition skills.

3. A majority of parents of beginning readers are

highly responsive to efforts on the part of schools to show adults how they can help their children get a good start in learning to read.

### Recommendations

The findings of this study represent a limited contribution to knowledge concerning the teaching and learning of reading. They help to substantiate much of what is currently known and believed about the relationship between home environment and reading behavior. While the differences in reading ability attributable to the parent program were not great, the results suggest that working more closely with parents during the time when children are learning to read will have a positive effect upon reading ability. Further efforts are needed to explore the broad area of this investigation. However, in the light of the findings of the present study, it seems justifiable to recommend the following:

1. The resources available to elementary schools should be assessed to determine whether or not it is feasible to conduct organized study groups for the parents of first grade pupils.

2. Where it is not practical to plan and conduct systematic information programs, materials which explain and interpret essential concepts concerning the school reading program should be prepared and distributed to parents of beginning readers.

3. The merits and means of informing parents of pre-school and kindergarten children about the relationship of early experiences to future success in reading should be considered.

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## APPENDICES

## APPENDIX A

### LETTER TO PARENTS

COMMUNITY UNIT SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 2

September 25, 1961

Dear Parents,

The purpose of this letter is to explain to parents of first grade students a research study planned for Mattoon this fall. The proposed study is concerned with your child's LEARNING TO READ. Teachers everywhere are convinced that parents can and do play an important part in helping their children get a good start in reading. It is believed, however, that chances of success in beginning reading can be increased if reliable information on this topic is made available to parents.

Mr. Fred MacLaren, an elementary teacher in the Laboratory School, Eastern Illinois University, is organizing a study group for parents of beginning readers. The parent classes will meet one evening each week for six weeks to consider what parents can do to make learning to read easier for their children. It is hoped that this may reduce the number of boys and girls who develop reading problems. This program will be made available WITHOUT COST. All materials will be furnished free; the only investment will be your time and interest.

Mr. MacLaren will make a year-end comparison of the reading skill of a group of children whose parents attend the program with the reading ability of a like group of children whose parents do not attend. Before parents can be contacted to meet for the program, it is necessary to find out who can and will attend. Your responses on the enclosed sheet will indicate whether you would find it possible to attend the six weekly meetings this fall.

On the basis of your responses a limited number of parents will be contacted to attend the study groups. It will be possible to include the parents of approximately forty children this fall. Those who are enrolled will meet weekly on either (not both) Tuesday or Thursday nights. While you will be asked to meet on the same night each week, a missed class could be made up on the alternate night that week in an emergency. The first classes are scheduled for Tuesday, October 10, and Thursday, October 12, from 7:30 to 9:00 in the evening. The meetings will be held in a centrally located school in Mattoon.

It must be emphasized that the success of this research project depends upon 100% attendance. For this reason, please think carefully before you indicate your willingness to participate. A prompt reply will be greatly appreciated and will help to get the study underway on schedule.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Sincerely yours,

---

Principal

## PARENT RESPONSE FORM

\*TO BE RETURNED TO SCHOOL TOMORROW

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

PHONE \_\_\_\_\_

Please check the statements which indicate your response to the accompanying letter and return this sheet to school with your child tomorrow.

1. Interested and do find it possible to attend.

\_\_\_\_\_ Both parents

\_\_\_\_\_ Mother only

\_\_\_\_\_ Father only

2. \_\_\_\_\_ Prefer to attend the Tuesday night classes from 7:30 to 9:00 P.M., October 10, 17, 24, 31, and November 7, 14.

\_\_\_\_\_ Prefer to attend the Thursday night classes from 7:30 to 9:00 P.M., October 12, 19, 26, and November 2, 9, 16.

3. \_\_\_\_\_ We regret that we find it impossible to enroll in the parent groups at this time.



## APPENDIX B

### LESSON PLANS FOR PARENT CLASSES

#### LESSON 1

TOPIC: THE PROCESS OF LEARNING TO READ

#### Objectives

1. To explain the nature of the research project and the goals of the parent lessons.
2. To point out how important it is for children to get a good start in learning to read.
3. To illustrate that for children learning to read is a difficult and complex task.
4. To show the merits of a preventative approach to help children avoid reading problems.

#### Outline of Content

- I. Introduction and orientation.
  - A. Nature of the planned research study.
  - B. Purposes of the parent program.
- II. The importance of reading ability in today's culture.
  - A. Demand for reading skill in modern living.
  - B. Relationship of reading ability to scholastic achievement.

III. How reading appears to beginning readers.

- A. Analysis of the physical act of reading.
- B. Learning to recognize and identify word symbols.
- C. Interpretation of the meaning of words and sentences.

IV. The importance of preventing reading difficulties.

- A. Consequences of failure in reading.
- B. Problems involved when remedial instruction is necessary.

Materials

1. Reading for parents: McKee, Paul. A Primer for Parents: How Your Child Learns to Read. New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1957.
2. Film: Why Can't Jimmy Read? Syracuse University.

## LESSON 2

## TOPIC: READINESS FOR READING

Objectives

1. To clarify the concept of readiness for learning with emphasis on reading readiness.
2. To point out that the teaching of reading is based upon what research reveals about child growth, development, and learning.
3. To identify the attitudes, abilities, and experiences that constitute readiness for reading.
4. To describe the readiness stage of reading instruction in first grade.

Outline of Content

- I. Readiness as a condition for efficient learning.
  - A. Importance of success in the early stages of learning.
  - B. Impact of failure and pressure on future learning.
- II. Factors which influence readiness for reading.
  - A. Relationship of intelligence to reading ability.
  - B. Role of physical factors in the reading process.
  - C. Importance of developing facility with language.
  - D. Relationship of emotional and social maturity to learning.
  - E. Background experiences as preparation for reading.
- III. How teachers evaluate reading readiness status.
  - A. Use of standardized tests of intelligence and readiness.
  - B. Informal procedures for evaluation.
  - C. Observation of behavior and conferences with parents.
  - D. Physical examinations and health records.

IV. The reading readiness program in first grade.

- A. Kinds of activities and experiences which promote readiness.
- B. Types of materials used to prepare children for reading.

Materials

1. Reading for parents: Hewitt, Ruth B. and Hewitt, Clyde E. Help Your Child Be Ready for Reading. ("Monographs for Elementary Teachers," No. 97.) Evanston, Illinois: Row, Peterson and Company, 1960.
2. Sample copies of Lee-Clark Reading Readiness Test.
3. Examples of readiness booklets, charts, and games.

## LESSON 3

TOPIC: INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCES AMONG FIRST GRADE STUDENTSObjectives

1. To explain that children of comparable chronological age differ with respect to a number of traits.
2. To help parents realize and accept the reality of individual differences among children.
3. To explain that each child's growth pattern is unique.
4. To point out the significance of expecting a universal level of achievement in reading when children differ in ability to attain that level.

Outline of Content

- I. Ways in which first grade children differ.
  - A. Chronological age as a criterion for school entrance.
  - B. Variations in physical growth and maturation.
  - C. Diversity of personality traits among children.
  - D. Difference in academic ability.
  - E. Diversity of informational and experiential backgrounds.
  - F. Differences in reading achievement in first grade.
- II. The measurement and range of individual differences.
  - A. Research findings from child study and research.
  - B. Formal instruments for measuring traits.
  - C. Informal observations by teachers and parents.
- III. Providing for individual differences in the school program.
  - A. Efforts to provide individual instruction.
  - B. Grouping for instruction in the classroom.

Materials

1. Reading for parents: Robison, Eleanor G. A Letter to Parents. ("Contributions in Reading," No. 8.) Boston: Ginn and Company, 1957.
2. Bibliography of additional references for parents.

## LESSON 4

TOPIC: READING INSTRUCTION IN FIRST GRADE

Objectives

1. To develop the concept that formal instruction in reading requires the skill of professionally trained teachers.
2. To show that reading is a developmental process involving many specific habits and skills taught in carefully organized sequence.
3. To explain the rationale behind the basal reader approach to teaching reading.
4. To clarify the issues surrounding the teaching of phonics.

Outline of Content

- I. Sequential development of word recognition skills.
  - A. Building an initial sight reading vocabulary.
  - B. Teaching phonic analysis, structural analysis, and use of context.
  - C. Rationale of the basal reader approach to teaching reading.
  - D. Phonic methods compared to the sight word method.
- II. Development of the skills of comprehension.
  - A. Importance of meaning in the reading process.
  - B. Developing concepts and providing background experiences.
  - C. Teaching word meanings and use of punctuation.
  - D. Skills needed for effective oral and silent reading.
- III. Materials for teaching beginning reading.
  - A. Basal reader materials for first graders.
  - B. Experience charts and word games.
  - C. Supplementary reading materials.

Materials

1. Reading for parents: A Briefing for Parents: Your Child and Reading. Washington, D. C.: National Education Association.
2. Film: Gregory Learns to Read. Wayne University.
3. Sample basal readers, experience charts, word games, scope and sequence charts, and trade books.



## LESSON 5

TOPIC: EMOTIONS AND READINGObjectives

1. To point out that the basic psychological needs of children must be satisfied before energy can be applied to learning.
2. To show the effects of success and failure in reading upon personal adjustment.
3. To explain how emotional involvement and learning to read may become associated.
4. To emphasize that the reactions of adults to children's performance has a great impact on reading behavior and emotional adjustment.

Outline of Content

- I. The relationship between reading behavior and emotions.
  - A. Reading failure as a cause of personal maladjustment.
  - B. How psychological problems may interfere with learning to read.
- II. Meeting the psychological needs of children.
  - A. Need for acceptance, security, status, and self-esteem.
  - B. The influence of parent attitudes upon the attitudes of children.
  - C. How success in beginning reading affects children's attitudes toward self, school, and reading.

III. Possible consequences of coercion and pressure from home and school.

- A. Ego involvement of parents in children's learning to read.
- B. The high value society places on reading ability.
- C. Aggression and withdrawal as reactions to threats, punishment and excessive competition.
- D. Attention-getting actions and defensive behavior.
- E. The unfortunate emphasis on high achievement as a condition for acceptance.

Materials

1. Reading for parents: When Parents Ask About Reading. Chicago: Scott, Foresman and Company, 1961.
2. Film: Meeting Emotional Needs in Childhood. New York University.

## LESSON 6

TOPIC: THE ROLE OF PARENTS OF BEGINNING READERSObjectives

1. To develop the concept that helping children who are learning to read is the responsibility of parents as well as teachers.
2. To suggest to parents some attitudes, habits, and practices which characterize a wholesome home environment for beginning readers.
3. To answer specific questions concerning beginning readers and early reading instruction at home and at school.

Outline of Content

- I. Experiences and concepts as a background for reading.
  - A. Building interest in reading through frequent contact with books, stories, and pictures.
  - B. Development of intellectual curiosity through trips, hobbies, and other first-hand observations.
  - C. Activities to develop listening and speaking ability.
- II. Emotional climate in the home.
  - A. Influence of parent's attitudes upon the attitudes of children.
  - B. Encouraging self-direction, independence, and maturity while providing security.
  - C. Avoiding pressure, competition, and unfair comparisons.
  - D. Emphasis on praise, recognition, and encouragement.
- III. Home-school relationships.
  - A. Importance of active parent interest in children's school affairs.
  - B. Periodic personal conferences with teachers.
  - C. Providing informal help with reading while leaving formal instruction to teachers.

Materials

1. Reading for parents: Casey, Sally L. Ways You Can Help Your Child With Reading. Evanston, Illinois: Row, Peterson and Company, 1960.
2. Film: The Impressionable Years. United World Films.

# APPENDIX C

## TABLE 12

INTELLIGENCE QUOTIENTS AND RAW SCORES OF THE GATES PRIMARY  
READING TEST FOR EXPERIMENTAL SUBJECTS

Subject Number	I. Q. Scores	Gates Primary Reading Tests			
		Word Recognition	Sentence Reading	Paragraph Reading	Total Reading
1	93	22	19	14	55
2	96	28	28	18	74
3	97	32	18	14	64
4	97	29	24	16	69
5	98	26	19	18	63
6	100	28	23	17	68
7	100	29	27	19	75
8	100	32	23	16	71
9	101	35	24	18	77
10	103	23	17	16	56
11	104	25	23	15	63
12	104	32	23	14	69
13	105	32	31	17	80
14	106	37	23	16	76
15	106	24	34	19	77
16	106	37	25	20	82
17	108	36	26	18	80
18	108	30	34	23	87
19	108	34	35	24	93
20	108	35	21	16	72
21	109	30	27	24	81
22	109	31	25	16	72

TABLE 12--Continued

Subject Number	I. Q. Scores	Gates Primary Reading Tests			
		Word Recognition	Sentence Reading	Paragraph Reading	Total Reading
25	112	26	26	14	66
26	112	44	38	25	107
27	113	31	27	19	77
28	114	36	34	20	90
29	114	44	42	21	107
30	114	41	38	19	98
31	115	44	45	26	115
32	118	36	28	23	87
33	118	26	28	24	78
34	118	48	38	26	112
35	119	47	43	24	114
36	123	47	41	23	111
Range	93-123	22-48	17-45	14-26	55-116
Mean	107.58	34.25	29.58	19.30	83.13
S. D.	7.20	7.03	7.72	3.59	16.45

TABLE 13

INTELLIGENCE QUOTIENTS AND RAW SCORES OF THE GATES PRIMARY  
READING TEST FOR CONTROL SUBJECTS

Subject Number	I. Q. Scores	Gates Primary Reading Tests			
		Word Recognition	Sentence Reading	Paragraph Reading	Total Reading
1	91	15	15	12	42
2	95	31	23	13	67
3	99	27	28	17	72
4	99	30	15	12	57
5	100	29	22	18	69
6	100	35	13	17	65
7	100	18	22	15	55
8	103	20	22	15	57
9	103	37	28	19	84
10	104	25	16	16	57
11	104	36	24	17	77
12	104	16	24	13	53
13	104	27	27	12	66
14	104	42	33	19	94
15	105	29	27	16	72
16	105	33	27	16	76
17	106	32	26	19	77
18	108	40	33	24	97
19	108	47	37	23	107
20	108	18	25	20	63
21	107	32	29	22	83
22	108	20	17	14	51
23	109	35	36	18	89
24	110	33	23	22	78

TABLE 13--Continued

Subject Number	I. Q. Scores	Gates Primary Reading Tests			
		Word Recognition	Sentence Reading	Paragraph Reading	Total Reading
23	110	39	42	24	105
24	110	33	31	15	79
25	111	39	37	19	95
26	112	45	36	20	101
27	112	37	33	20	90
28	113	40	34	23	97
29	114	32	33	18	83
30	116	31	28	15	74
31	114	34	40	21	95
32	115	38	37	21	96
33	117	44	32	24	100
34	119	42	39	23	104
35	119	31	34	26	91
36	122	38	33	22	93
<hr/>					
Range	91-122	15-47	13-40	12-25	42-107
Mean	107.61	31.50	27.58	18.25	77.33
S. D.	6.93	8.00	7.09	3.88	16.90