

AN EXAMINATION OF THE READING ACHIEVEMENT  
IN GRADES ONE THROUGH FOUR OF  
STUDENTS WHO HAVE BEEN IN  
TRANSITIONAL FIRST GRADE

by

REBECCA ANN SWEARINGEN

Bachelor of Science in Elementary Education  
Oklahoma State University  
Stillwater, Oklahoma  
1980

Master of Science  
Oklahoma State University  
Stillwater, Oklahoma  
1986

Submitted to the Faculty of the  
Graduate College of the  
Oklahoma State University  
in partial fulfillment of  
the requirements for  
the Degree of  
DOCTOR OF EDUCATION  
July, 1988

AN EXAMINATION OF THE READING ACHIEVEMENT  
IN GRADES ONE THROUGH FOUR OF  
STUDENTS WHO HAVE BEEN IN  
TRANSITIONAL FIRST GRADE

Thesis Approved:

David D. Ray  
Thesis Adviser

Kathryn Castle

Margaret McInt

Bernard R. Belden

Ronald R. Gamble

Norman N. Durham  
Dean of the Graduate College

C O P Y R I G H T

by

Rebecca Ann Swearingen

July, 1988

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author wishes to express appreciation to her major advisor, Dr. Darrel D. Ray, for the guidance and support which he has provided throughout this study. Appreciation is also expressed to the other members of her committee, Dr. Bernard Belden, Dr. Kathryn Castle, Dr. Rondal Gamble, and Dr. Margaret Scott.

Diane Allen and Dorothy Douglas have provided the moral support and friendship without which this study could never have been written. Thanks is expressed also to Dr. Martha Combs for being the sounding board for the ideas in this study and for providing many ideas for future study in relation to transitional students.

Finally, thanks goes to my parents for the patience and support which they have provided during the course of my graduate studies. Special acknowledgement goes to my grandfather, A. M. Calloway, who provided the original inspiration for pursuing education as a career.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter		Page
I.	PRESENTATION OF THE PROBLEM . . . . .	1
	Introduction . . . . .	1
	Statement of the Problem . . . . .	3
	Hypotheses . . . . .	4
	Definition of Terms . . . . .	5
	Limitations of the Study . . . . .	5
	Assumptions . . . . .	5
II.	REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE . . . . .	6
	Introduction . . . . .	6
	Review of the Literature . . . . .	6
	Summary . . . . .	16
III.	DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY . . . . .	18
	Description of the Population . . . . .	18
	Procedure . . . . .	19
	Statistical Design . . . . .	21
	Description of the SRA Achievement Test . . . . .	22
	Summary . . . . .	23
IV.	FINDING OF THE STUDY . . . . .	24
	Introduction . . . . .	24
	First Grade Results . . . . .	24
	Second Grade Results . . . . .	27
	Third Grade Results . . . . .	30
	Fourth Grade Results . . . . .	32
	Summary . . . . .	35
V.	SUMMARY, OBSERVATIONS, DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS . . . . .	40
	Summary . . . . .	40
	Observations and Discussion . . . . .	41
	Conclusion . . . . .	43
	Recommendations . . . . .	44

BIBLIOGRAPHY . . . . .	46
APPENDIX A -- PERMISSION LETTERS . . . . .	50
APPENDIX B -- RAW DATA FOR STUDENTS . . . . .	53

LIST OF TABLES AND FIGURES

Table

1.	Matched Pairs of Students . . . . .	20
2.	Statistical Information on Raw Score by Grade . . . . .	25
3.	Analyses of Variance - Grade One . . . . .	26
4.	Analyses of Variance - Grade Two . . . . .	28
5.	Analyses of Variance - Grade Three . . . . .	31
6.	Analyses of Variance - Grade Four . . . . .	33

Figure

1.	Graph of Total Reading Means . . . . .	37
2.	Graph of Comprehension Means . . . . .	38
3.	Graph of Vocabulary Means . . . . .	39

## CHAPTER I

### PRESENTATION OF THE PROBLEM

Grade retention has an extensive history in American education. At the turn of the century it was estimated that fifty percent of students had experienced failure in the elementary years (Coefield & Blommers, 1956). As the century progressed, failures decreased until in 1950 it was reported that only 6.6% of 8 year-olds were enrolled below their peers. The percentage decreased until 1976, when it was reported that only 3.8% of the nation's 8 years-olds were below their peers. A new trend, however, began in the late 1970's. In 1978 the percentage of 8 year-olds who were below their peers in school had increased to 17.2%. In 1981 Atlanta reported that 18% of the first graders in their system were not promoted to second grade (Medway, 1985).

Two questions frequently asked about retention are: What purpose does it serve, and what can be done to prevent a further increase in the number of school failures? Jackson (1975) identifies two major purposes



for school retention: "to remedy inadequate academic progress and to aid in the development of students who are judged to be emotionally immature (p. 614)."

Research studies have not supported the theory that retention serves either of these purposes (Kamii & Weikart, 1963; Dobbs & Neville, 1967; Reinherz & Griffin, 1970; Holmes, 1983; Holmes & Matthews, 1984; Sandoval & Fitzgerald, 1985; Safer, 1986).

A solution that has been offered for the problem of kindergarten students who are not progressing academically or are judged developmentally immature has been placement in a transitional first-grade program. A transitional program provides an extra year between kindergarten and first-grade for the child to progress academically and to mature. Leinhardt (1980) states :

This system bears a resemblance to retaining a student in the same grade for a second year; however, in the case of a transition room, the student does not repeat the same instruction received in kindergarten (p. 55).

The same question is being asked about transitional classrooms, though, that has been asked about retention for many years. Does it serve the purpose it was meant to serve? The effects reported on overall achievement are not consistent (Leinhardt, 1980; May & Welch, 1984; & Sandoval & Fitzgerald,

1985). There is very little research to date on the effects of transitional room placement on reading achievement.

One question about transitional placement that has yet to be answered, is: Does placement in a transitional program significantly enhance later reading achievement?

#### Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this study was to examine the effect on reading achievement in the first four grades of placement in transitional first-grade. Specifically, the study attempted to answer the following questions:

1. Is there a difference between the reading achievement level of children who have been in a transitional first grade and children who have not been in transitional first grade?
2. Is there a difference between the comprehension level of children who have been in transitional first grade and children who have not been in transitional?
3. Is there a difference between the vocabulary level of children who have been in transitional first grade and children who have not been in transitional?

### Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were tested at the .05 level of significance. Each is stated in the null form:

1. There is no difference between the reading comprehension level as measured by an end-of-year standardized achievement test of a child who has been in a transitional first grade and a child who has not been in transitional first grade.
2. There is no significant difference between the vocabulary level as measured by an end-of-year standardized achievement test of a child who has been in a transitional first grade and a child who has not been in transitional first grade.
3. There is no significant difference between the total reading level as measured by an end-of-year standardized achievement test of a child who has been in a transitional first grade and a child who has not been in transitional first grade.

Each of the hypotheses will be tested in grades one through four.

### Definition of Terms

Transitional first-grade refers to a grade step between kindergarten and first-grade.

### Limitations of the Study

This study was limited to students in one school in Oklahoma who received parental permission to participate in this study.

The results of this study can only be generalized to students who are similar to those students in this study.

### Assumptions

It is assumed that a student's performance on a standardized reading test represents his actual reading level.

It is assumed that matching students on first grade percentile rank resulted in equivalent groups.

CHAPTER II  
REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

A search of the literature revealed that while there have been a great many studies done on the effect of grade retention, very little research has been done on the effect of placement in a transitional classroom. Of the research which examines transitional placement, all but one study deals with both retention and transitional. For that reason this review will deal with both aspects of the literature together.

Arthur (1936) studied the effect on achievement of 60 non-repeating first-graders. Eighteen of the subjects spent two years in grade 1; however, they did not repeat the previous materials but continued from the point they had left off the previous year. Thirteen of the students were admitted into a primary class at the age of 5 in which they did first grade work. At the end of the year they were promoted to grade one. The twenty-nine remaining students were retainees in the traditional sense. They repeated the work which they had previously done in grade one.

At the end of the year it was found that retained students of the same mental age as promoted students

achieved 99.3% what the promoted students did. Arthur concludes, "it appears that the average repeater of the group studied learned no more in two years than did the average non-repeater of the same mental age in one year."

Kamii and Weikart (1963) studied the effects on the achievement of 31 seventh graders who were retained once in elementary school. Reading achievement was measured with the Iowa Every Pupils Test of Basic Skills, which was administered at the end of the sixth grade year. Sixty-six percent of the students were found to be reading at less than the sixth grade level as compared to 16 percent of the control group. The difference between the two groups was found to be statistically significant. Kamii and Weikart concluded that there is no significant long-term benefit of retention.

Chansky studied the effect on the achievement of 33 students who were retained in grade one. He compared the achievement of these 33 students with 30 students who were low achievers, but were promoted. The retained group consisted of 26 boys and seven girls, while the promoted consisted of 23 boys and seven girls. The California Achievement Test was administered to the students at the end of grade one

and grade equivalents were determined for vocabulary, reading comprehension, arithmetic fundamentals, and arithmetic reasoning.

On the pretest the promoted students had higher achievement than the students who had been retained. At the end of the seventh month of the retained year retests were administered to the students. It was found that both the promoted and retained students made improvements in their achievement. The promoted groups, however, made significantly greater improvement in vocabulary and reading comprehension than did the retained students.

The effect of nonpromotion on the achievement of 30 first graders was studied by Dobbs and Neville (1967). In their study thirty pairs of students were matched on race, sex, SES, type of classroom assignment, age, mental ability, and reading achievement. It was found that the mean gain in reading achievement for the promoted students for a school year was .62 as compared with .32 for the retained group. Reading grade level means on the Metropolitan Achievement Test at the end of the first year were 1.43 for the retained students and 1.46 for those promoted. At the end of the second the retained mean was 1.78 and the promoted mean was 2.08, and at the end of the third year the

retained mean was 2.44, while the promoted mean was 2.80. Dobbs and Neville conclude that the results of their study "indicated that nonpromotion was actually a disadvantage to achievement (p. 474)."

Scott and Ames (1969) examined the effect of non-promotion on academic achievement. The population for their study consisted of twenty-seven students. Five had been retained in kindergarten, fourteen were first grade repeaters, three repeated third grade, one repeated fifth grade, and one sixth grade. Only children who had been retained on the basis of maturity were considered for this study. Students' final grades from the year before they repeated were compared with their grades in the middle of the repeat year. All subjects had higher marks at the middle of the repeat year than they had previously had. Scott and Ames conclude that for students who are repeating a grade solely on the basis of maturity there may be an improvement in grades.

Reinherz and Griffin (1970) studied the effect of nonpromotion on academic achievement and progress of 57 boys who had been retained in one of the first three grades. Using data from the boys cumulative folders an evaluation was made of the academic, interpersonal, and emotional adjustment of the boys before and after



retention. Academic achievement was measured using grade point total, current reading level from a standardized reading test, and whether the child earned a "bona fide" promotion. Academic progress was measured by looking at the improvement of grades and standardized reading scores, and from comments about the child's improvement made by the teacher. Thirty-six of the boys had satisfactory achievement at the end of the repeated year. The 21 remaining students had "poor" or "fair" achievement. Thirty of the students made "much" progress, while 19 made "little" or "some" progress. A significant association was found between the grade at which a child had been retained and "satisfactory" achievement. Of the students who had been retained in first grade 84 percent made "satisfactory" achievement in the year of retention. This is compared to the 50 percent of the second and third graders who made "fair" or "poor" achievement.

Leinhardt (1980) studied the effect on beginning reading of placing an at risk first-grader in a transition classroom in which the student receives individualized reading instruction using the New Reading System (NRS) as opposed to placing children who are eligible for transitional programs in a regular first grade, receiving either regular basal instruction

or the New Reading System. The New Reading System was designed as an individualized code-emphasis approach to the teaching of beginning reading. Thirty-two transition eligible students were compared to 44 students who were placed in transitional classrooms. It was found that of the transition eligible those students who were taught using the NRS performed better than students who had been taught using the basal. Transition eligible students using NRS also performed better than students who were placed in the transition program and taught using NRS. However, there were no significant differences found between the transition eligible students in the basal and the transition students using the NRS. Leinhardt concluded that while the students did gain maturationally, it was at the expense of achievement.

A meta-analysis of eight research studies on retention was performed by Holmes (1983). In this study he performed three separate analyses to determine the effect of retention on reading, arithmetic, and language arts achievement. In this analysis, Holmes found that in the seven studies which measured reading achievement, retained pairs were an average .46 standard deviations lower on reading achievement than promoted students. The difference between students who

had been in school an equal amount of time was found to be even greater than this average with the retained students being an average .64 standard deviations lower than students who had entered school at the same time. The retained students were an average .38 standard deviations below students who were in the same grade. Holmes concludes,

If, as is often the purported case today, retention of pupils is accomplished with the intention of improving academic achievement in the basic skills of these pupils, the research does not seem to support this practice (p. 4).

Holmes and Matthews (1984) performed a meta-analysis of 44 research studies which looked at the effects of retention on, among other things, achievement. Of these 44 studies, 31 looked specifically at achievement. Students who had been retained were found to be .44 standard deviations below promoted students in overall academic achievement. In reading achievement, they were found to be .48 standard deviations below. Holmes and Matthews also looked at what effect the grade of retention had on achievement and found that students who had been retained in Grade 1 were .29 standard deviations below students who had been promoted. Holmes and Matthews state:

Because the cumulative research evidence consistently points to negative effect of

nonpromotion, the burden of proof legitimately falls on proponents of retention plans to show there is compelling logic indicating success of their plans when so many other plans have failed (p. 232).

May and Welch (1984) looked at the effect of developmental placement and early retention on the standardized achievement test score of 62 students. In this study children were screened for developmental immaturity using the Gessell Screening Test. Students who were found to be developmentally immature were recommended for three school years prior to second grade. Students whose parents chose to allow them to be in the developmental program were coded BAY (for Buy-A-Year), whereas students whose parents did not wish their children to "buy-a-year" were coded OP (over-placed). There was a final control group of students coded TR for traditional.

At the end of the kindergarten and first grade years the Gessell Developmental Test was administered to all students. A significant difference was found between the groups at the end of both grades. The traditional students at the end of kindergarten and first grade were found to score higher than the OP group, while the OP group was found to score higher than the BAY group.

At the end of third grade all students were administered the New York State Pupil Evaluation

Program test in reading and mathematics. The TR students scored significantly higher than the BAY group on the reading PEP test. There was no significant difference found between the OP and BAY groups or the TR and OP groups. On the full scale battery scaled score of the Stanford Achievement Test which was administered at the end of second, fourth and sixth grades, the TR children scored significantly higher than both the OP and BAY groups. However, there was no significant difference between the OP and BAY groups. May and Welch conclude that there were no "demonstrable positive benefits" to developmental placement.

In 1985, Sandoval and Fitzgerald examined the long-term effects of nonpromotion and placement in junior first grade on 62 high school students. Students' academic performance was computed using students' grades in their first semester Freshman English and Freshman Math classes. Grades were converted to a scale ranging from 0 to 11. The students who had been placed in the junior first grade were found to have higher grades in the Freshman English class than the students who had been retained and the control group of non-repeaters. The control group, however, did have higher average grades than the students who had been retained. None of these

differences, though, were statistically significant. The same pattern of grades was found in the Freshman Math class.

Academic progress was measured by computing a ratio based on the number of high school units received to units attempted. The students who had been in junior first grade had a higher ratio (.94) than the control group and the repeaters. The repeaters had a significantly lower ratio (.81) than either the control group (.93) or the junior first grade participants. Time of retention was also found to have a significant effect on later school achievement, with students who were retained earlier having higher achievement than those retained later. Sandoval and Fitzgerald conclude that placement in junior first grade or early retention had a positive effect on later school performance.

Safer (1986) looked at the student records of 200 junior high school students to determine the effects of retention. Ninety-three of these students who had been suspended more than once were matched by sex and age with 107 junior high school students. While Safer was mainly concerned with the social outcomes of retention, he also looked at the correlation between elementary school retention and junior high school achievement. He

found that retention in elementary school is significantly associated with low academic achievement.

#### Summary

While there has been extensive research done on the effects of retention in grade, the effects of placement in a transitional program have not been extensively studied. The review of the literature on retention revealed that of the studies that have been done since 1970 all show that retention does not have positive long-term benefits (Reinherz & Griffin, 1970; Holmes, 1983; Holmes & Matthews, 1984; Sandoval & Fitzgerald, 1985; Safer, 1986).

Of the few studies that have been done on the effects of transitional placement, however, the findings show differing effects. Sandoval & Fitzgerald (1985), however, found that placement in a transitional program not only had a positive effect on student achievement, but that it increased achievement beyond the level of the non-retained student. Leinhardt (1980) and May & Welch (1984) found that placement in a transitional program had no positive effect on the subsequent achievement of the child.

There seems to be some consensus on the effects of retention on subsequent achievement. However, of the

three transitional studies, one shows that there are long term benefits to transitional placement, while two show that transitional programs have no long-term benefits.



## CHAPTER III

### DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

#### Description of the Population

The population for this study consists of students who had been placed in a transitional program and students who were in the same grade as the transitional students. The participants were chosen from one school system in Oklahoma.

The students in this study began kindergarten in the 1979-80, 1980-81, and 1981-82 school years. The students were identified for transitional placement on the basis of kindergarten achievement. All transitional students in Owasso Public Schools were served in the same elementary school at that time. At the time these students were in transitional first-grade, there were between 13 and 15 students enrolled in the transitional first-grade class of Owasso Public Schools.

The students in this study are of differing ages. Those students who were enrolled are one year older than the students who had not been in transitional first-grade.

### Procedure

Permission slips were sent home with all the students in the sixth and seventh grades (Appendix A). Upon return of the permission slips, the researcher examined the permanent records of the students. Students who had transferred into Owasso Public Schools or had been placed in special programs were not included in the population for this study.

Upon determining the population for the study, the records were examined for the following information: in first grade, the percentile ranks for total reading and raw scores for the comprehension, and vocabulary subtests; in second grade and third grade, raw scores for the letter sound, listening comprehension, and vocabulary subtests; and in fourth grade, the raw scores for the comprehension and vocabulary subtests. Information concerning fifth grade achievement was not available. The sex of the student was also recorded.

Following the data collection, students were matched on their first grade total reading percentile ranks (Table 1). If there was not a perfect match the student was matched with a student who had a percentile rank which was one point above or below. This resulted in a very slight difference (.069) in the means between the two groups, as well as a slight difference (.008)

Table 1

Matched Pairs of Students Based on First Grade  
Total Reading Percentile Ranks

Transitional Student Percentile Rank	Non-Transitional Student Percentile Rank
13	13
23	24
25	25
31	30
33	33
40	39
45	46
46	46
52	52
63	63
67	67
69	68
71	71
71	71
71	71
76	76
78	78
84	84
86	86
86	86
88	88
93	93
93	93
96	96
96	96
97	97
97	97
98	98
99	99

 $\bar{X}=68.483$ 
 $\bar{X}=68.552$

in the standard deviations. The final population consisted of 29 non-transitional students and 29 transitional students. The data collected for these students is presented in Appendix B.

### Statistical Design

In order to determine if there was a difference between the means of the two groups, a one-way between subjects analysis of variance was computed for each of the hypotheses for grades one through four. The independent variable was group (transitional or non-transitional) and the dependent variables were the raw scores from the achievement test. If the difference between the groups was found to be significant, the strength of the relationship was determined by computing eta squared ( $\eta^2$ ).

The analysis in the first grade consisted of one-way analyses of variance which were computed for comprehension and vocabulary only. The variance for the total reading was not computed because the students had been matched on their first-grade percentiles.

The analysis for the second and third grades consisted of analyses of variance on raw score, comprehension and vocabulary. The total score for the total reading was determined by adding the raw scores

of the letter and sounds, listening comprehension, comprehension, and vocabulary subtests.

The analysis in the fourth grade consisted of one-way analyses of variance computed for total reading, comprehension, and vocabulary. The score for total reading was determined by adding the raw scores of the comprehension and vocabulary subtests.

#### Description of the SRA Achievement Test

The SRA Achievement Tests were administered to the student at the end of each academic year. The levels which were administered at each level were as follows: Grade 1-Level A, Grade 2-Level B, Grade 3-Level C, and Grade 4-Level D. The tests were machine scored.

The subtests which are considered individually in this study are comprehension and vocabulary. The total reading raw score was determined by adding the raw scores of the subtests which are considered in the reading percentile rank. The vocabulary subtests is a test of the child's word recognition skills.

The reliability of the SRA Achievement is very high. Within-grade internal consistency reliability for total reading for all forms fall in the mid .90's. Subtests reliabilities are in the .80, except for Listening Comprehension which ranges from .60-.81, and

Letters and Sounds, which ranges from upper .70 to low .80. (Mayo, 1985).

#### Summary

Students for this study were in the sixth and seventh grade at Owasso Public Schools. Parental permission forms were sent to all the students in the sixth and seventh grades. From the group of students who returned permission forms, 29 transitional students were identified and matched on first grade percentile ranks on their achievement tests with 29 non-transitional students.

After matching, the students total reading raw scores in second, third and fourth were compared using the one-way analysis of variance. The raw scores on comprehension and vocabulary were also compared in grades one through four using a one-way analysis of variance.

## CHAPTER IV

### FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

Raw score data for the subjects was analyzed using a one-way between subjects analysis of variance. The independent variable was transitional or non-transitional placement and the dependent variables were the scores on the achievement test.

Table 2 presents the statistical information about the scores from the achievement test. Included are the minimum score, the maximum score, the mean, and standard deviation.

#### First Grade Results

The Anova tables for the first grade comprehension and vocabulary subtests is presented in Table 3. Due to the fact that the seventh grade students in the sample did not have the first grade comprehension and vocabulary subtest raw scores reported, there are only 35 subjects considered.

The means for the two groups on comprehension were 15.250 for the non-transitional group and 15.773 for the transitional group. Analysis of the variance performed on these data indicated that there were not

Table 2

Statistical Information on Raw Score By Grade

## First Grade

	Transitional		Non-transitional	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Comprehension	15.733	5.612	15.250	6.812
Vocabulary	20.133	3.563	19.600	5.093

## Second Grade

	Transitional		Non-transitional	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Total Reading	72.931	13.962	81.138	7.049
Comprehension	18.241	5.767	21.379	2.513
Vocabulary	20.759	3.786	22.103	2.437

## Third Grade

	Transitional		Non-transitional	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Total Reading	72.552	9.661	78.172	7.021
Comprehension	19.276	4.208	20.517	4.983
Vocabulary	21.483	3.522	22.828	2.536

## Fourth Grade

	Transitional		Non-transitional	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Total Reading	39.929	8.654	44.621	8.209
Comprehension	18.286	4.905	21.377	4.287
Vocabulary	21.643	5.286	23.276	5.277



Table 3

Analyses of Variance - Grade One

## Comprehension

N=35

Transitional  $\bar{X}$ =15.733      Non-Transitional  $\bar{X}$ =15.250

	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean-Square	F	P
Between	2.002	1	2.002	0.050	.825
Within	1322.683	33	40.081		

## Vocabulary

N=35

Transitional  $\bar{X}$ =20.133      Non-Transitional  $\bar{X}$ =19.600

	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean-Square	F	P
Between	2.438	1	2.438	0.120	.731
Within	670.533	33	20.319		

significant differences in the means,  $F(1,33)=0.050$ ,  $p>.05$ . Therefore the null hypothesis was not rejected. The two groups did not produce significant differences in the raw scores on the first grade comprehension subtest.

The means for the two groups on the vocabulary subtest were 19.600 for the non-transitional group and 20.133 for the transitional group. Analysis of the variance performed on these data indicated that there were not significant differences in the means,  $F(1,33)=0.060$ ,  $p > .05$ . The null hypothesis was not rejected. The two groups did not produce different scores on the vocabulary subtest.

#### Second Grade Results

The Anova tables for the second grade total reading, comprehension and vocabulary subtest are presented in Table 4. The total reading raw score was computed by adding the raw scores from the Letters and Sounds, Listening Comprehension, Comprehension, and Vocabulary subtests.

The means for the two groups on total reading were 81.138 for the non-transitional group and 72.931 for the transitional group. Analysis of the variance performed on these data indicated that there were

Table 4

Analyses of Variance - Grade Two

## Total Reading

N=58

Transitional  $\bar{X}$  = 72.931      Non-Transitional  $\bar{X}$  = 81.138

	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean-Squares	F	P
Between	976.621	1	976.621	7.985	.007*
Within	6849.310	56	122.309		

## Comprehension

N=58

Transitional  $\bar{X}$  = 18.241      Non-Transitional  $\bar{X}$  = 21.379

	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean-Squares	F	P
Between	142.776	1	142.776	7.215	.009*
Within	1108.138	56	19.788		

## Vocabulary

N=58

Transitional  $\bar{X}$  = 20.759      Non-Transitional  $\bar{X}$  = 22.103

	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean-Squares	F	P
Between	26.224	1	26.224	2.006	.162
Within	732.000	56	13.071		

\* = significant at the .05 level

significant differences in the means,  $F(1,56)=7.985$ ,  $p < .05$ . The null hypothesis was rejected. The two groups did produce significant differences in the raw scores for second grade total reading. Since the null hypothesis was rejected a measure of the strength was computed ( $\eta^2$ ). The proportion of the variance accounted for by the group was .125. Approximately 13% of the variance in the second grade total reading was accounted for by placement in a transitional program.

The means for the two groups on comprehension were 21.379 for the non-transitional group and 18.241 for the transitional group. Analysis of the variance performed on these data indicated that there were significant differences in the means,  $F(1,56)=13.273$ ,  $p < .05$ . The null hypothesis was rejected. Since the null hypothesis was rejected a measure of the strength was computed ( $\eta^2$ ). The proportion of the variance accounted for by the group placement was .114. Approximately 11% of the variance in the second grade comprehension subtest raw score was accounted for by placement in a transitional program.

The means for the two groups on the second grade vocabulary subtest were 22.103 for the non-transitional groups and 20.759 for the transitional group. Analysis of the variance performed on these data indicated that

there were no significant differences in the means,  $F(1,56)=2.006, p > .05$ . Therefore the null hypothesis was not rejected. The two groups did not produce significant differences in the raw scores on the vocabulary subtest.

### Third Grade Results

The Anova tables for the third grade total reading, comprehension and vocabulary subtests are presented in Table-5. The total reading raw scores was computed by adding the raw scores from the Letters and Sounds, Listening Comprehension, Comprehension, and Vocabulary subtests.

The means for the two groups on third grade total reading were 78.172 for the non-transitional group and 72.552 for the transitional group. Analysis of the variance performed on these data indicated that there were significant differences in the means,  $F(1,56)=6.424, p < .05$ . The null hypothesis was rejected. The two groups did produce significant difference in the raw scores for third grade total reading. Since the null hypothesis was rejected a measure of the strength of the association was computed ( $\eta^2$ ). The proportion of the variance accounted for by group placement was .103. Approximately 10% of the

Table 5

Analyses of Variance - Grade Three

## Total Reading

N=57

Transitional  $\bar{X}$  = 72.552      Non-Transitional  $\bar{X}$  = 78.172

	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean-Squares	F	P
Between	458.086	1	458.086	6.424	.014*
Within	3993.310	56	71.309		

## Comprehension

N=57

Transitional  $\bar{X}$  = 19.276      Non-Transitional  $\bar{X}$  = 20.517

	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean-Squares	F	P
Between	46.632	1	46.632	3.209	.079
Within	813.655	56	14.530		

## Vocabulary

N=57

Transitional  $\bar{X}$  = 21.483      Non-Transitional  $\bar{X}$  = 22.828

	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean-Squares	F	P
Between	26.224	1	26.224	2.785	.101
Within	527.379	56	9.417		

\* = significant at the .05 level

variance in the third grade total reading raw scores can be accounted for by group.

The means for the two groups on third grade comprehension were 20.517 for the non-transitional group and 19.276 for the transitional group. Analysis of the variance performed on these data indicated that there were no significant differences in the means for the two groups,  $F(1,56)=3.209$ ,  $p > .05$ . Therefore the null hypothesis was not rejected. The two groups did not produce significant differences in the raw scores on the third grade comprehension subtest.

The means for the two groups on the third grade vocabulary subtest were 22.828 for the non-transitional group and 21.483 for the transitional group. Analysis of the variance performed on these data indicated that there were not significant differences in the means for the two groups,  $F(1,56)=2.785$ ,  $p > .05$ . Therefore the null hypothesis was not rejected. The two groups did not produce significant differences in the raw scores on the third grade vocabulary subtest.

#### Fourth Grade Results

The Anova tables for the fourth grade total reading, comprehension and vocabulary subtests are presented in Table 6. The total reading raw score was

Table 6

Analyses of Variance - Fourth Grade

## Total Reading

N=58

Transitional  $\bar{X}$  = 39.929      Non-Transitional  $\bar{X}$  = 44.621

	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean-Square	F	P
Between	313.631	1	313.631	4.413	.040*
Within	3908.685	55	71.067		

## Comprehension

N=58

Transitional  $\bar{X}$  = 18.286      Non-Transitional  $\bar{X}$  = 21.377

	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean-Square	F	P
Between	133.313	1	133.313	6.298	.015*
Within	1164.266	55	21.168		

## Vocabulary

N=58

Transitional  $\bar{X}$  = 21.643      Non-Transitional  $\bar{X}$  = 23.276

	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean-Square	F	P
Between	37.989	1	37.989	1.362	.248
Within	1534.222	55	27.895		

\* = significant at the .05 level



computed by adding the raw scores from the comprehension and vocabulary subtests.

The means for the two groups on fourth grade total reading were 44.621 for the non-transitional group and 39.929 for the transitioanl group. Analysis of the variance for these data indicated that there were significant differences in the means for the two groups,  $F(1,57)$ ,  $p < .05$ . The null hypothesis was rejected. The two groups did produce significant differences in the raw scores for fourth grade total reading. Since the null hypothesis was rejected a measure of the strength of association was computed ( $\eta^2$ ). The proportion of the variance accounted for by group placement was .074. Approximately 7% of the variance in fourth grade total reading can be accounted for by group placement.

The means for the fourth grade comprehension raw scores were 21.345 for the transitional group and 18.286 for the transitional group. Analysis of the variance performed on these data indicated that there were significant differences in the means for the two groups,  $F(1,55)=6.298$ ,  $p < .05$ . The null hypothesis was rejected. The two groups did produce significant differences in the raw scores for fourth grade comprehension. Since the null hypothesis was rejected

a measure of the strength of the association was computed ( $\eta^2$ ). The proportion of the variance accounted for by group was .103. Approximately 10% of the variance in fourth grade comprehension raw scores can be accounted for by group placement.

The means for the two groups on the fourth grade vocabulary subtest were 23.276 for the non-transitional group and 21.643 for the transitional group. Analysis of the variance performed on these data indicated that there were not significant differences in the means for the two groups,  $F(1,55)=1.362$ ,  $p > .05$ . Therefore the null hypothesis was not rejected. The two groups did not produce significant differences in the raw scores on the fourth grade vocabulary subtest.

#### Summary

Data were analyzed using a one-way analysis of variance with an alpha level of .05. In grade one only the comprehension and vocabulary subtest were analyzed. At the second and third grade levels total reading (letters and sounds + listening comprehension + comprehension + vocabulary), comprehension and vocabulary were analyzed, and at fourth grade total reading (comprehension + vocabulary), comprehension and vocabulary were analyzed.

The results for total reading in grades two, three

and four are presented in Figure 1. The total reading scores for both groups appear to decline in the fourth grade. This apparent decline is due to the fact that only comprehension and vocabulary are added together to determine the fourth grade total reading score. This was because only the comprehension and vocabulary subtests are administered in grade four.

For each of the three grades (second, third, and fourth) the differences between the groups in total reading is significant. It must be noted, however, that the difference is less significant with each year.

The results for the comprehension subtest in grades one, two, three and four are presented in Figure 2. Significant differences were found in the means for comprehension in grades two and four.

The results for the vocabulary subtest in grades one, two, three and four are presented in Figure 3. There were no significant differences found in the means for the vocabulary subtest.

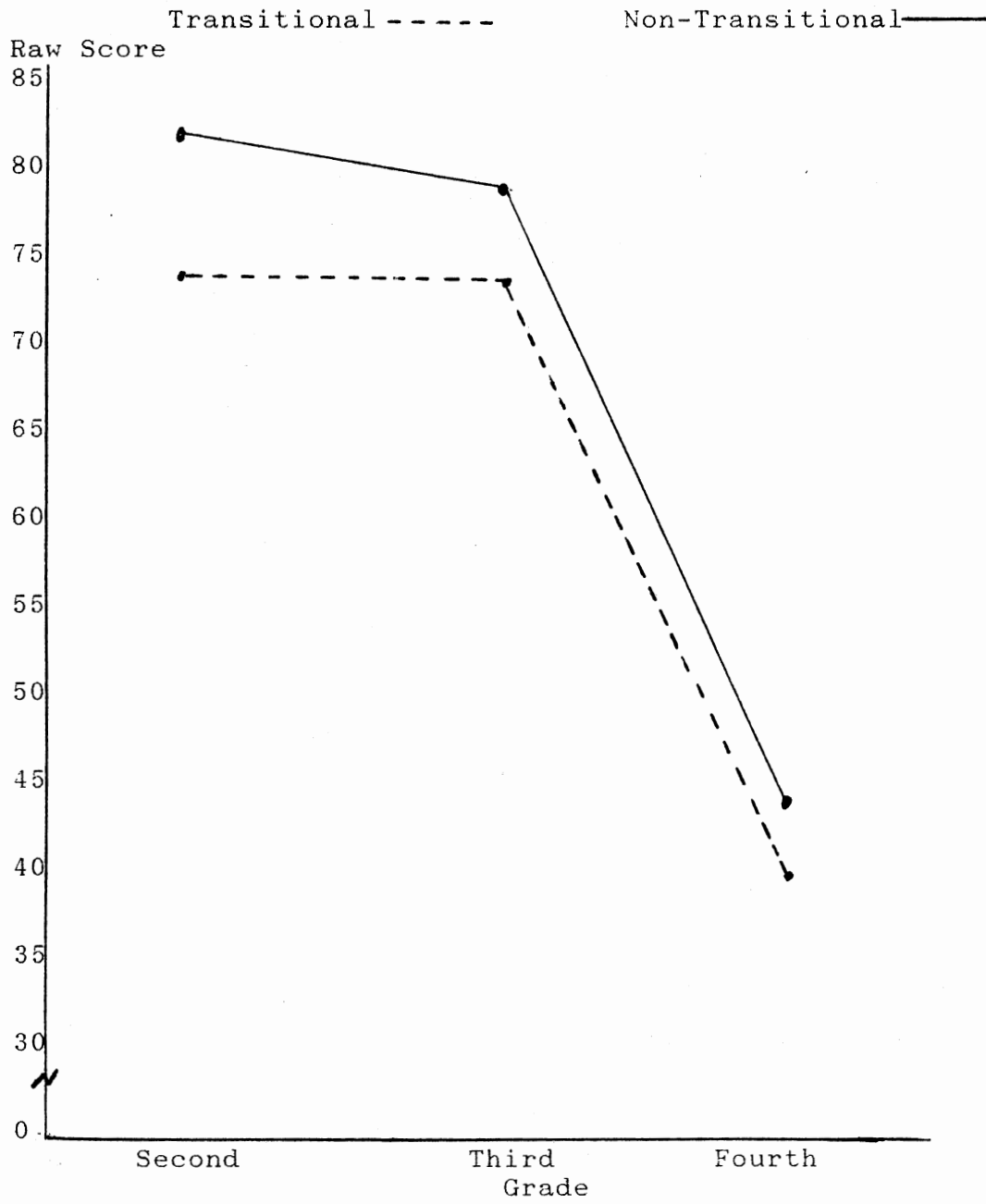


Figure 1. Graph of Total Reading Raw Scores

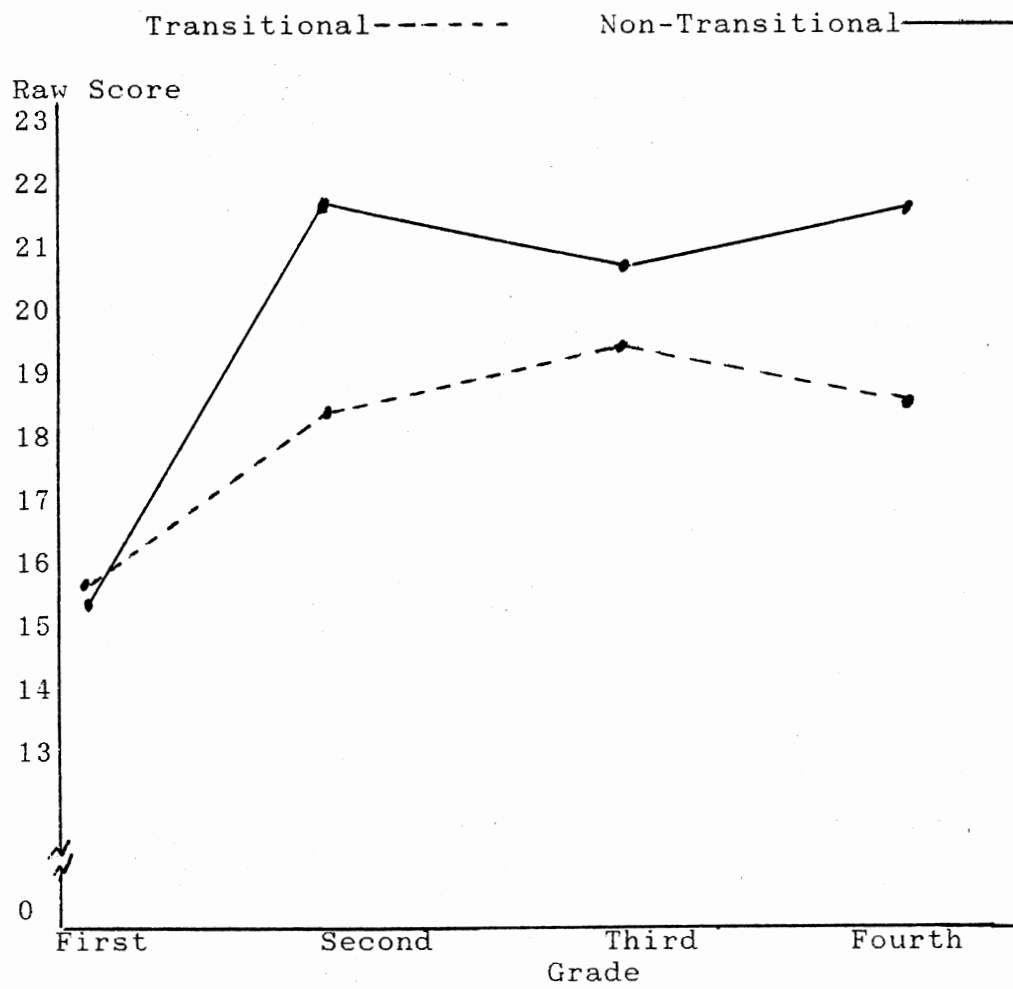


Figure 2. Graph for Comprehension Raw Scores.

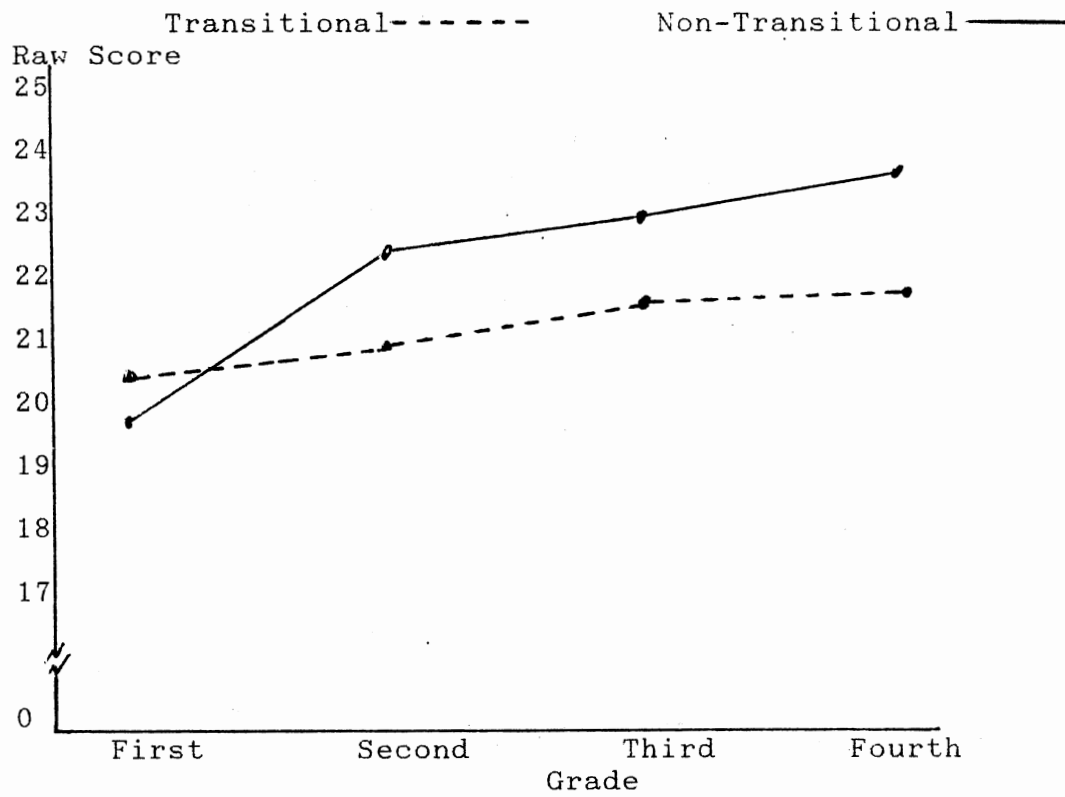


Figure 3. Graph for Vocabulary Raw Scores

## CHAPTER V

### SUMMARY, OBSERVATIONS, DISCUSSION

#### AND RECOMMENDATIONS

##### Summary

Transitional programs are designed to provide students who are not progressing academically in kindergarten or are judged to be developmentally immature an extra year in which to progress. A question which must be asked is whether indeed this extra year does significantly enhance the students later achievement. This study was designed to provide data on the achievement of the transitional student as he progresses through elementary school.

The subjects for this study were sixth and seventh grade students in Owasso Public Schools. A total of 29 transitional students and 29 non-transitional students were matched on the total reading percentile ranks on the first grade achievement test. These 58 students were the population of this study.

In order to trace the transitional student's achievement, the permanent records were examined and the achievement test scores from grades one through

four were recorded. These scores were compared with students who had not been placed in transitional first grade using a one-way analysis of variance.

### Observations and Discussion

From the data which were collected, presented in Chapter IV, certain conclusions were drawn. Although the findings of this study are not generalizable beyond the groups that were studied, the findings might generate further study of transitional classrooms.

Observation 1. The total reading score for the transitional students at each of the three grades (two, three and four) were significantly different from those of the non-transitional students (Figure 1). While this difference was significant at all three grades, the degree of difference decreased with each of the three grades.

Discussion. The question which must be asked is: Was the low academic achievement the result of developmental immaturity? While the students in Owasso Public Schools were placed in pre-primary because of academic deficiencies in kindergarten, these results seem to suggest that the academic deficiencies might possibly be the result of developmental immaturity. As the child progressed through school, the



developmental differences would tend to decrease, therefore the differences in achievement level might also decrease.

Observation 2. There were significant differences between the two groups in comprehension at two grade levels (two and four), but no significant difference between the two groups in vocabulary (Figures 2 & 3).

Discussion. What must be considered in order to explain these results is: What was the focus of the reading instruction which these children received? The differences in the two groups in comprehension, but not in vocabulary, might be explained by the fact that reading instruction of students who are perceived as disabled quite often concentrates on the word identification skills of the student and not the comprehension skills. Therefore, the emphasis in reading instruction for the students who have been in transitional programs might explain the apparent discrepancy between vocabulary skills and comprehension skills.

Observation 3 The mean raw scores for comprehension and vocabulary at the first grade level were higher for the transitional group than for the non-transitional group (Table 3).

Discussion These results might possibly be

explained by the fact that the transitional students had two years of readiness, whereas the non-transitional students had one year. This extra year of readiness type activities prepared the students for the type of materials which would be encountered in the first grade.

Observation 4 The comprehension raw score was significantly higher for the non-transitional students in grades two and four, but not grade three (Figure 2).

Discussion The focus of the reading instruction which the students received must be considered here. Was comprehension stressed more in the third grade year than in previous years?

#### Conclusion

The question which was the focus of this study was: Does transitional first-grade have long-term benefits for students? The results of this study raise more questions about transitional than they answer.

If these students were simply developmentally immature when placed in transitional first, rather than academically deficient, then the results seem to indicate that the transitional student "catches up" to the non-transitional student. This can only be confirmed by following these students through to the

end of high school.

As a result of this study, however, the implementation of a transitional program should be questioned seriously. Further study using an experimental design and random sampling should be carried out before a definitive answer to the question of long-term benefits can be obtained.

#### Recommendations

The following recommendations for further study in the area of transitional programs are made by the researcher:

1. True experimental studies need to be carried out in which students are identified in first grade as qualifying for transitional programs. Random assignments need to be made and the students' progress through school followed.

2. A descriptive study of the transitional classroom should be carried out, comparing the transitional classroom to kindergarten and first-grade classrooms in a school system. Long-term observations in the classroom should be made of the transitional classroom, kindergartens, and first-grades in the same school system.

3. A large scale study of the placement practices

for transitional programs should be done to determine if there is any standard for placement in these classrooms.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Arthur, Grace (1936). A study of the achievement of sixty grade I repeaters as compared with that of non-repeaters of the same mental age. Journal of Experimental Education, 5, 203-205.
- Chansky, Norman M. (1964). Progress of promoted and repeating grade I failures. Journal of Experimental Education, 32, 225-237.
- Coefield, William H., and Blommers, Paul (1956). Effects of non-promotion on educational achievement in the elementary school. Journal of Educational Psychology, 47, 235-250.
- Dobbs, Virginia, and Neville, Donald (1967). The effect of nonpromotion on the achievement of groups matched from retained first graders and promoted second graders. Journal of Educational Psychology, 60, 472-475.
- Holmes, C. Thomas (1983). The fourth R: Retention. Journal of Research and Development in Education, 17, 1-6.
- Holmes, C. T. and Matthews, K. M. (1984). The effects of nonpromotion on elementary and junior high school pupils: A meta-analysis. Review of

Educational Research, 54, 225-236.

Jackson, Gregg B. (1975). The research evidence on the effects of grade retention. Review of Educational Research, 45, 613-635.

Kamii, Constance K., and Weikart, David P. (1963).

Marks, achievement, and intelligence of seventh graders who were retained (nonpromoted) once in elementary school. Journal of Educational Psychology, 56, 452-459.

Leinhardt, Gaea (1980). Transition rooms: promoting maturation or reducing education? Journal of Educational Psychology, 72, 55-61.

May, Deborah C., and Welch, Edward L. (1984). The effects of developmental placement and early retention on children's later scores on standardized tests. Psychology in the Schools, 21, 381-385.

Mayo, S. T. (1985). Review of the SRA Achievement Series. In J. V. Buros, (ed.), The Ninth Mental Measurements Yearbook, (pp. 1428-1430). Lincoln, NB: The University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

Medway, Frederic J. (1985). To promote or not to promote? Principal, 64, 22-25.

Reinherz, Helen, and Griffin, Carol (1970). The second time around: Achievement and progress of boys who repeated one of the first three grades. School

Counselor, 17, 213-218.

Safer, Daniel J. (1986). Nonpromotion correlates and outcomes at different grade levels. Journal of Learning Disabilities, 19, 500-503.

Sandoval, Jonathon (1984). First-grade promotional practices: Implications for the school psychologist's role: A symposium. Psychology in the Schools, 21, 457-462.

Sandoval, Jonathon, and Fitzgerald, Phyllis (1985). A high school follow-up of children who were nonpromoted or attended a junior first grade. Psychology in the Schools, 22, 164-170.

Scott, Betty A. and Ames, Louise B. (1969). Improved academic, personal, and social adjustment in selected primary-school repeaters. Elementary School Journal, 69, 431-439.

**APPENDIXES**



APPENDIX A  
PERMISSION LETTERS



*Owasso, Oklahoma 74055*

Dear Parents:

Rebecca Swearingen, a doctoral student at Oklahoma State University, has been invited by Owasso Public School to collect data for her dissertation. The study deals with reading growth through the first five years of school. Please take this opportunity to allow your child to be participant in this important study. The information provided by this research will assist Owasso Public Schools in making future instructional decisions.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "John Porterfield".

John Porterfield  
Assistant Superintendent



*Oklahoma State University*

DEPARTMENT OF CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION  
COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

STILLWATER, OKLAHOMA 74078-0146  
GUNDERSEN HALL 302  
(405) 624-7125

May 3, 1988

Dear Parent,

I am a doctoral student in Reading Education, Curriculum and Instruction, at Oklahoma State University and am currently in the process of collecting data for my dissertation. In order to study trends in growth patterns for elementary age students I need to examine the reading achievement records of the Owasso Public Schools for the past seven years. Since I want this study to be comprehensive I need parental permission to look at as many student's achievement records as possible. Names of students will not be used in the research report. The results of the study will be shared with Owasso Public School.

If you are willing for your child to be a participant in this study please sign this permission slip and return to your child's first-hour teacher by Friday, May 6.

Thank you,

Rebecca Swearingen

\_\_\_\_\_

Yes, my child may be a participant in this study.

No, my child may not be a participant in this study.

\_\_\_\_\_

Student's Name

\_\_\_\_\_

Parent's Signature

Student's current grade \_\_\_\_\_

If you have already signed and returned a permission slip, thank you for your cooperation.



Celebrating the Past Preparing for the Future

**APPENDIX B**  
**RAW DATA FOR STUDENTS**

## Data for First Grade-Non-transitional

Subject	Sex	Percentile <u>Rank</u>	Comprehension	Vocabulary
1	F	46	13	19
2	F	67	15	21
3	F	33	8	16
4	F	97	24	24
5	F	31	9	14
6	F	13	6	6
7	F	23	6	15
8	F	69	17	20
9	F	93	24	23
10	F	76	17	24
11	F	78	-	-
12	F	45	9	20
13	F	84	23	23
14	F	88	-	-
15	F	71	-	-
16	M	71	19	23
17	M	52	11	21
18	M	99	24	25
19	M	25	7	13
20	M	86	21	21
21	M	40	8	14
22	M	93	-	-
23	M	98	-	-
24	M	63	-	-
25	M	71	-	-
26	M	97	-	-
27	M	96	-	-
28	M	63	-	-
29	M	86	21	25

## Data for First Grade-Transitional

Subject	Sex	Percentile <u>Rank</u>	Comprehension	Vocabulary
30	F	30	10	17
31	F	67	12	21
32	F	86	23	23
33	F	76	20	23
34	F	39	-	-
35	F	98	-	-
36	F	96	-	-
37	F	25	-	-
38	F	96	-	-
39	F	97	-	-
40	F	63	19	20
41	F	99	-	-
42	M	24	7	12
43	M	71	22	22
44	M	93	20	25
45	M	93	23	25
46	M	33	7	17
47	M	86	20	21
48	M	46	14	17
49	M	46	12	20
50	M	52	12	17
51	M	71	-	-
52	M	68	-	-
53	M	78	-	-
54	M	13	-	-
55	M	97	-	-
56	M	84	-	-
57	M	88	-	-
58	M	71	15	22

## Data for Second Grade-Non-transitional

Subject	Total Reading	Comprehension	Vocabulary
1	81	21	21
2	75	21	21
3	85	23	22
4	75	23	21
5	88	24	23
6	83	22	19
7	91	24	24
8	87	23	24
9	91	23	25
10	87	24	21
11	78	22	23
12	74	17	24
13	80	22	25
14	84	23	25
15	76	20	22
16	88	21	24
17	90	23	24
18	87	23	25
19	88	23	24
20	74	24	10
21	70	18	13
22	89	23	25
23	72	19	20
24	74	15	23
25	71	17	22
26	75	18	22
27	78	20	24
28	72	19	20
29	90	22	25

## Data for Second Grade-Transitional

Subject	Total Reading	Comprehension	Vocabulary
30	71	19	22
31	83	21	22
32	88	23	24
33	89	24	24
34	63	12	19
35	73	18	23
36	77	23	20
37	51	6	21
38	67	19	22
39	73	16	24
40	87	22	24
41	79	22	24
42	46	8	11
43	83	22	24
44	88	23	22
45	71	24	21
46	70	13	17
47	88	24	22
48	92	24	25
49	89	20	24
50	90	23	24
51	59	18	13
52	72	21	23
53	59	13	18
54	49	4	18
55	53	12	12
56	59	19	17
57	62	13	20
58	84	23	22



## Data for Third Grade - Non-transitional

Subject	Total Reading	Comprehension	Vocabulary
1	72	24	21
2	81	23	24
3	77	22	22
4	86	24	25
5	78	21	23
6	67	17	19
7	78	23	23
8	78	22	23
9	81	23	24
10	74	22	23
11	72	22	21
12	61	7	14
13	86	23	24
14	77	19	25
15	86	22	25
16	80	22	25
17	83	22	23
18	85	23	25
19	71	20	23
20	79	22	24
21	63	17	19
22	86	22	25
23	83	23	24
24	70	18	19
25	78	19	24
26	80	19	21
27	88	23	25
28	83	23	24
29	84	24	25

## Data for Third Grade - Transitional

Subject	Total Reading	Comprehension	Vocabulary
30	69	20	19
31	65	13	19
32	73	19	21
33	84	22	22
34	59	14	20
35	79	20	25
36	74	20	20
37	66	20	20
38	76	20	21
39	80	20	24
40	69	20	20
41	78	21	25
42	64	16	13
43	73	18	23
44	65	16	19
45	86	24	24
46	80	18	19
47	78	23	24
48	83	23	25
49	79	23	22
50	76	21	25
51	64	18	22
52	86	22	24
53	70	17	21
54	39	4	12
55	67	19	19
56	69	20	20
57	74	19	20
58	79	19	25

## Data for Fourth Grade - Non-transitional

Subject	Total Reading	Comprehension	Vocabulary
1	34	15	19
2	51	24	27
3	41	23	18
4	51	24	27
5	50	25	25
6	37	17	20
7	27	22	5
8	37	18	19
9	51	25	26
10	50	25	25
11	48	23	25
12	18	5	13
13	53	24	29
14	46	20	26
15	47	25	22
16	42	18	24
17	40	18	22
18	52	24	28
19	45	22	23
20	52	24	28
21	43	20	23
22	51	24	27
23	50	24	26
24	38	22	16
25	46	22	24
26	43	16	27
27	50	23	27
28	50	24	26
29	51	23	28

## Data for Fourth Grade - Transitional

Subject	Total Reading	Comprehension	Vocabulary
30	36	20	16
31	26	13	13
32	37	16	21
33	49	23	26
34	33	17	16
35	46	19	27
36	49	25	24
37	30	15	15
38	43	17	26
39	48	22	26
40	38	17	21
41	29	6	23
42	48	22	26
43	43	20	23
44	43	23	20
45	54	25	29
46	-	-	-
47	44	20	24
48	47	17	30
49	47	25	22
50	42	18	24
51	35	18	17
52	42	18	24
53	40	20	20
54	16	9	7
55	29	15	14
56	49	25	24
57	33	9	24
58	42	18	24

VITA

Rebecca Ann Swearingen  
Candidate for the Degree of  
Doctor of Education

Thesis: AN EXAMINATION OF THE READING ACHIEVEMENT IN GRADES  
ONE THROUGH FOUR OF STUDENTS WHO HAVE BEEN IN  
TRANSITIONAL FIRST GRADE

Major Field: Curriculum and Instruction

Biographical:

Personal Data: Born in Tulsa, Oklahoma, July 19, 1957,  
the daughter of Bruce V. and Janelle Swearingen.

Education: Graduated from Booker T. Washington High  
School, Tulsa, Oklahoma, in May 1975; received  
Bachelor of Science degree from Oklahoma State  
University, Stillwater, Oklahoma, in May 1980;  
received Master of Science degree from Oklahoma  
State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma, in July,  
1986; completed the requirements for the Doctor of  
Education degree at Oklahoma State University,  
Stillwater, Oklahoma, in July, 1988.

Professional Experience: Taught elementary school for  
grades one through six at Anderson Elementary  
School, in Osage County, Oklahoma, 1980-1986;  
served as graduate assistant and reading  
clinician, Department of Curriculum and  
Instruction, Oklahoma State University, 1986-1988.