INITIAL READING PRACTICES IN OPEN EDUCATION ENVIRONMENTS IN THE MIDPRAIRIE STATES

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THE MIDPRAIRIE STATES

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According to Helen Keller, "The best educated human being is one who understands most about the life in which he is placed." The writer believes that life assumes validity and significance when one commits his life to a Higher Being. The writer hopes that she may grow in love and help to construct a better world.

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CHAPTER I

PRESENTATION OF PROBLEM

Introduction

"During the past few years beginning reading instruction has received more attention than any other facet of the school curriculum" (Heilman, 1972). In light of the amount of emphasis in classroom practices and research, teaching children to read is one of the most important functions of the elementary school. Improving the quality of reading instruction has long been one of the major concerns of educators in elementary schools. The concept, however, of what constitutes satisfactory reading instruction is constantly changing. The history of reading instruction reveals that concepts and methods of teaching reading have changed along with the varying philosophies (Tinker and McCullough, 1962). Reading ability considered adequate a few years ago would be considered inadequate today. Stauffer states:

> The maturing citizen as well as the maturing reader is acquiring attitudes that encourage growth and responsibility rather than merely seeking a level. Learning to read is not only accomplished throughout school but also throughout life (1969, p. 212).

As the concept of the reading process has broadened and the emphasis in instruction has changed during the last few years, teaching methods have been modified and changed also. Changes in methods are of special interest to those concerned with the teaching of reading.

Because individuals differ in their reading needs and because these needs change under the impact of social, technical, communicational, educational, and environmental developments, the scope of reading must be expanded to include all.

Movement Toward Open Education

In 1970 Silberman, Fortune magazine editor and former Columbia University professor, released Crisis in the Classroom, reporting the results of a three and one-half year, $300,000 Carnegie study of the American school system. The author condemns the United States educational system. Silberman attacks traditional schools for

> . . . preoccupation with order and control, the slavish adherence to the time table and lesson plan, the obsession with routine qua routine, the absence of noise and movement, the joylessness and repression, the universality of formal lecture or teacher-dominated 'discussion' in which the teacher instructs the entire class as a unit, the emphasis on the verbal and the deemphasis on the concrete, the inability of students to work on their own, the dichotomy between work and play (1970, p. 270).

Several other writers, Herndon (1965), Holt (1967), Kozol (1967), and Kohl (1967), are frankly and openly critical of education as it exists in a majority of classrooms. They are causing educators to examine the schools and to consider changes that are fundamental and realistic for the times.

Arthur Combs (1973), Director of the Center for Humanistic Education at the University of Florida, states, "The trouble with education today is not its lack of efficiency, but its lack of humanity. Learning is not a mechanical process, but a human process" (p. 39). Combs indicates that educators must make an effort to humanize learning.

Other educators concerned with the failure of the schools maintain that the structure and content of educational experience need to be changed if schools are to succeed. While no particular approach to education may be appropriate for all children, possibly a range of educational models should be provided for children. One of these alternatives has been characterized as open education (Bussis and Chittenden, 1970). A contemporary model of open education is the British Infant School for children ages five, six, and seven (Spodek, 1970). Sobl and Tejirian (1973) suggest that open education is the current manifestation of a return to the humanistic tradition as referred to by Combs.

Open education has received the support of leading educators such as Ewald Nyquist, New York State Commissioner of Education, and Harvey Scribner, Chancellor of the New York City Public Schools. Silberman asserts that there is hope for the system in the open-informal classroom.

> Schools can be humane and still educate well. They can be genuinely concerned with gaiety and joy and individual growth and fulfillment without sacrificing concern for intellectual discipline and development. They can be simultaneously child centered and subject--or knowledge--centered. They can stress esthetic and moral education without weakening the three R's. They can do all these things if--but only if--their structures, content, and objectives are transformed (1970, p. 208).

The movement in the direction of open education or the open-informal classroom has been developing in the United States alongside a movement toward independent, free schools. Both movements have a few general themes in common. One theme involves a rejection of traditional-formal academically-oriented education, and another is the

adoption of various elements of humanism (Katz, 1972; Pilcher, 1972; Schuchat, 1972).

A major responsibility of every school is to educate, but in doing so it should not diminish or do injury to the child's personal view of himself as a learner. There is evidence, however, that this is what happens in our schools, perhaps as a result of rigid adherence to formal school curricula, standardized materials, and competitive grading practices. Educators communicate the child's inadequacies to him in subtle ways, creating destructive conditions. Since many British Infant Schools have a number of safeguards against many of the fabrics which Americans have built into their system of formal education, "there is more potential for a positive image in the informal classroom. It /informal classroom/ can achieve the academic education of children and not destroy their confidence in the process" (Manolakes, 1972, p. 14).

Jacobs believes that the school needs to give deliberate attention to humanism (1972, p. 464). Every child knows that he is expected to learn to read. He discovers that much of his success in school is dependent upon his ability to read. As soon as he begins to read, he begins learning something new about himself and others. The child will either learn to read by successful reading or he will learn to fail by failing to read. The child has the right to read if the school is doing its job. "The right to read implies . . . the rightness of the reading environment, the rightness of the teaching, the rightness of the evaluations made of his progress" for keeping the child feeling that he can learn to read and that he would like to read better (Jacobs, 1972, p. 465).

Since American teachers of reading are primarily concerned with the child's right to read, they are searching for more answers to questions about good beginning reading instruction. They believe there is much to be learned from some of the British schools that are trying to achieve a reconciliation between the curriculum and the human being (Rogers, 1971). Many English primary schools are committed to the idea that children should live more richly now. Elementary education in these English schools is not preparation for life; education is life. The curriculum of such schools emerges through the mutual interests and explorations of children and their teachers working together in an open and uninhibited flexible environment.

There are several educational reasons for encouraging open-informal methods (Katz, 1972). The strongest support deals with the assumption that classroom activities derived from spontaneous, natural interests of the students will probably result in more positive attitudes toward school and learning than will classroom activities which are predetermined. Another reason for support of open education is that open-informal methods "promise the co-occurring achievements of academic, intellectual, and personal growth in children" (Katz, 1972, p. 10). These achievements are seen as highly desirable by a growing proportion of educators in early childhood education. Another reason for supporting open education is that open-informal education makes provision for both general and individual environments of students, providing for greater continuity and generalizability between classroom and outside-classroom experiences (1972, p. 9).

In considering the implementation of open-education practices, educators "must look at the question of educational validity . . . ."

(Manolakes, 1972, p. 11). It is the purpose of this study to help provide additional understanding and insight into primary reading instruction practices in open-educational environments.

Need for the Study

Research on beginning reading has not been conclusive; much of it has been too fragmented to be of real value. There has been much interest in the area of beginning reading, as noted by Weintraub (1971),

> How children learn to read has been a topic of high interest to reading researchers since the very beginning of published research. The intense research focus on this aspect of reading may be due in part to the importance and drama attached to learning to read (p. 490).

There is a need to refine and extend existing knowledge of reading instruction in open-education environments--particularly in the area of initial reading practices. Roland Barth (1971) states that educators need satisfactory answers to such important questions as, "What happens to children in open classrooms?" (p. 99). Although formal research on open education has been neither steady nor cumulative, there is evidence that children in open classroom settings do have different experiences than children in traditional settings.

Open education is a different type of organizational pattern--one that differs in goals, classroom climate, grouping patterns, attitudes toward children, and the philosophy of the teachers. Judith Evans (1972) conducted an experimental study involving U. S. traditional classrooms, U. S. open classrooms, and British open classrooms. She systematically matched children between the ages of five and eight on learning activities. The study revealed that British students had more language experience work than U. S. traditional students; that

U. S. traditional students had more oral and silent reading than U. S. open or British open students; and that U. S. traditional students were involved in more reading activities than either U. S. open or British open students.

Before research can be of benefit in improving initial reading instruction, more information is needed about the way reading is taught in terms of approaches, materials, and skills in the open-informal setting. Rathbone (1972) admonishes:

> . . . we must gather all the 'informal' evidence we can on how teachers and schools change as they move toward less formal ways of dealing with children . . . . We need testimony of practitioners who have attempted the conversion of ongoing established elementary schools, as well as accounts of what happens when new schools are started (pp. 544, 545).

Although educators do not know exactly how a child learns to read, they do know that "when teachers understand the psychological and environment factors involved, practice improves in the classroom" (Johnson and Tamburrini, 1972, p. 9). Research on initial reading instruction in open education environments would provide insight into these factors and, in time, could contribute to the improvement of beginning reading instruction.

Since the activities of children are different in the open classroom, researchers need accounts of how the organizational structure affects reading instruction. The information obtained from this survey will lay the foundation for other descriptive or experimental studies. Therefore, this study should prove very beneficial as a preliminary study for further research by administrators, curriculum consultants, reading specialists, and classroom teachers in building and expanding knowledge about beginning reading practices in open classrooms.

Statement and the Purpose of the Problem

Because of the lack of research and inconclusive nature of findings regarding beginning reading practices of teachers in open-education environments, there is a need to gather base-line data in this setting. The purpose of this study is to identify and describe initial reading practices of teachers in selected open-education schools in the mid-prairie states--specifically in Oklahoma, Kansas, and Nebraska. The problem to be dealt with is: What kind of initial reading practices predominantly exist in open-education environments?

Questions

To facilitate the analysis of the problem, the investigation has considered three major questions:

(1) What initial reading approaches are being utilized by teachers in open-education environments?

(2) What types of materials are available for initial reading instruction in open-education environments?

(3) What reading skills are being taught in initial reading instruction in open-education environments?

Definition of Terms

Problems of Definition

In spite of the current interest in open education, there are problems of definition. The formulation of an operational definition has been resisted by workers in the field who fear the development of orthodoxies, doctrines, and rigidities. On the problem of definition,

Spodek (1970) indicates that we have talked around the concept of open education and provided some examples, but we have not defined it. He continues, stating that openness, like freedom, cannot be defined absolutely. This comment reflects the common assertion that specificity must, in and of itself, betray the spirit of openness and informality.

Another source of definition difficulty arises from the fact that the major data base from which a definition can be extrapolated consists of personal testimony which is difficult to conceptualize (Silberman, 1970; Featherstone, 1971). Barth and Rathbone (1969) have suggested that open education is a method or way of thinking about children's learning and knowledge. The available data imply, but do not prove, that there are reliable relationships between ways of thinking, assumptions about learning, classroom events, and educational outcomes.

Open education is sometimes discussed in terms of observable characteristics, but this procedure is not without its problems, also. While classroom observation rating scales, such as one developed by Judith Evans (1971), can be validly used to differentiate British and American open classrooms from American traditional classrooms, some attributes of the open classroom cannot be discerned from direct observation at any point in time. They require a knowledge of the history or genesis of the event observed.

Finally, another difficulty in formulating an operational definition is the "centrality of the theme of the quality of relationships and consequent classroom climate to the openness of the classroom" (Katz, 1972, p. 4, 51). The qualities of the teacher-child and child-child relationships are strongly emphasized in the preliminary research

of Bussis and Chittenden (1970) and Walberg and Thomas (1971). The qualities of relationships attributed to open classrooms include respect, honesty, trust, and humaneness. The extent to which any two observers would agree that these qualities are present in a given classroom is not known.

Operational Definitions

The following definitions are given to clarify the terms that are relevant for this study:

Open Education. This term refers to a type of school organizational structure which is characterized by eight dimensions, as defined by Walberg and Thomas (1972). These eight themes include the following: (1) provisioning for learning - flexibility in the organization of instruction and materials; (2) humaneness - teachers having characteristics such as respect for children, openness, and warmth; (3) diagnosis of learning events - less attention to goals, such as examination scores, and more attention to the thinking process of the child; (4) instruction - much individual attention rather than solely total class instruction, encouragement of children's initiative and choice, interdisciplinary emphasis; (5) evaluation of diagnostic information - based on individual goals rather than comparing the child to standardized achievement norms; (6) seeking opportunities for professional growth - extensive use of community, colleagues, and advisors; (7) self-perception of the teacher - a sensitive, adaptable, continual learner who sees himself as a resource for helping children reach their own potentials; and (8) assumptions - ideas about children and the learning process, such as children's innate curiosity and trust in children's

ability to make decisions. These eight themes served as the basis for construction of the Openness Instrument, devised by the researcher, which indicates varying degrees of openness exhibited in school environments. (See Appendix B for instrument.) The following terms were used interchangeably with open education: open-informal classroom, open classroom, informal education, informal school, informal classroom, British Infant School, progressive schools, and open-corridor program.

Initial Reading Instruction. This term refers to readiness and beginning reading practices. It includes approaches, materials, and skills used in the initial teaching of reading to five, six, and seven year olds.

Assumptions of the Study

The investigator made the following assumptions:

(a) Open education calls for less formal reading programs than traditional education because open education is an informal approach to learning.

(b) The instrument on openness indicates varying degrees of openness and can be used to identify those schools which are participating in open education, according to the established criteria.

Limitations of the Study

Certain limitations are inherent in the study. These include:

(a) Open education is difficult to define because the approach is based on contingency and uniqueness, and each child, teacher,

and event being characterized sui generis. The feeling and behavior of the teacher cannot be easily categorized because he responds sensitively and reflectively to each child at precise moments (Walberg and Thomas, 1972).

(b) The use of questionnaires as source of data collection was a restriction because the validity of responses depended upon the willingness of respondents to cooperate, the motivating interest of the respondents, and the ability of the investigator to communicate in the questionnaires.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Introduction

A review of literature will be presented in this chapter to provide the necessary background information for a study concerning initial reading instruction in open-education environments. This chapter has a two-fold purpose. The first purpose of this chapter is to examine the language arts in informal schools. The language arts, which encompasses reading, will be discussed in terms of its advantages, disadvantages, research findings, and initial reading instruction. Initial reading instruction will be viewed according to these areas: 1) interests, experiences, and language, 2) reading readiness, 3) approaches, 4) materials, and 5) skills. The second purpose of this chapter is to examine reading practices in the open classroom.

Language Arts in Informal Schools

Because the informal-classroom concept has potent implications for a reading program as well as other areas of the language arts, there are many questions about its implementation and its ultimate effect upon the reading achievement of young people. For this reason, both advantages and disadvantages in language arts learnings in informal schools should be considered.

Advantages

Southgate (1973), an avid supporter of the British informal primary schools, has observed several advantages related to learning the language arts in informal situations. First, children are continually involved in meaningful discussions about their various activities, objects, ideas, and problems of interest. The natural outcome of such environments will be language enrichment, the basis for reading and writing. Second, the desire to communicate in writing quickly follows spoken communication. The child may ask the teacher to label a picture he has painted or a model he has made. There is a definite increase in children's free written work. Third, there is a strong motivation to learn to read. The child sees what pleasure adults and older children obtain from reading a wide variety of available books. Fourth, as functional needs for wanting to read are added to the recreational reasons, the child is motivated further to understand notices attached to exhibits, pictures, and objects. Fifth, in situations where books are an important part of the environment, children acquire the habit of sustained silent reading at an early age. They read both for pleasure and information. Finally, it is more probable that children will use the skills of reading and writing outside school and when they leave school since reading and writing are self-directed, spontaneous activities.

The open classroom movement may make a contribution to reading if it encompasses the ideas that:

> 1. Freedom to learn to read is coupled with responsibility to learn to read. How free can a child be if he can't read? How free is he, if in the fourth grade he must receive remedial help? How free is he if in high school he finds his

progress blocked because he can't read his textual materials? How free is he, if as a young adult, he can't get or hold a job?

2. In a friendly, nonthreatening reading atmosphere, the teacher assumes his role as a teacher, fully cognizant of the responsibility he has to a child, his parents, and to society.

3. Children must have access to a well stocked and professionally managed library where they can use their skills and competencies to satisfy their need for entertainment and information. Where is the gain in producing a skillful non-reader?

4. There should be an opportunity to exercise options to engage in such varied activities related to both reading interests and needs as activity centers, audiovisual aids, games and puzzles, creative writings, dramatization, puppetry, related art and music, and group practice.

5. The time set aside for reading should be the most exciting time of the day . . . .

6. Sufficient paraprofessional assistance should be available so that the teacher can use her professional skills to advantage.

7. Instruction should be personalized so that differences in learning rates and styles, needs and interests are recognized and respected.

8. Pupils should be treated as people who have their good days and bad, failures and successes, can be anxious and composed or hostile and respectful . . . .

9. There should be an inspired teacher at the helm who, because reading is important in his life, senses the need to help children and young people see its importance in theirs (Artley, 1973, p. 23).

Disadvantages

Southgate (1973) has observed certain disadvantages related to the language arts learnings in progressive, informal schools. Six of these disadvantages were cited. First, some teachers may believe that no direct teaching is needed since the children will be motivated to learn to read. The child who does not show a desire to read may be left too long. Second, many teachers lack the expertise and organizational abilities needed to effectively structure the learning situations for children to make adequate progress in developing reading skills. Third,

the more informal environment requires some form of record keeping of children's progress. Fourth, there is a danger that reading instruction may not be given high priority in the curriculum and that it can become almost nonexistent. Fifth, to be successful in topic work and environmental studies, a wide range of books must be available at every level. Finally, emphasis on free expression in written work may cause teachers to overlook the need to teach the mechanics of writing.

Dr. A. Sterl Artley (1973), Professor of Education at the University of Missouri, sees little future in the informal classroom, as an alternative which provides a viable and effective reading program if it functions on the assumptions that:

> 1. Children are so innately curious and self-motivated to read that the teacher's role is a completely passive one.
> 2. The desirable reading environment is one where you 'surround the child with books and love and get out of his way.'
> 3. A child's internal motivation and his sense of direction and need can replace a teacher's planned sequence of instructional objectives.
> 4. A teacher need not be accountable to parents and society for a learner's progress (p. 7, 23).

Research Findings

Research in the area of open education has been limited. However, there are at least three ways one may judge open classroom effectiveness. One means of evaluation is the subjective assessment of practitioners. Such persons will cite children measuring the volume of a room in non-standard measure, or present paintings and poems of students, or talk of marked improvement in student behavior and attitudes as evidence that informal education is successful. Another means of evaluation is consideration of statistical evidence of subject matter

competency. Matched samples of students in formal and informal settings yield data on cognitive achievement. A third method of evaluation involves research on affective changes in students. The studies which follow present empirical data which fall within categories two and three.

Available research on informal and formal schools fails to designate which type of school is more effective in promoting mastery of the language arts. Gardner (1950), one of the earliest researchers to compare the findings of informal and formal British Infant Schools, found that ten-year-olds educated in informal infant schools tended to be superior to children from formal infant schools in reading, English, composition, and writing poetry. They were very superior in listening comprehension and in writing an original story. Gardner's findings were substantiated by Warburton's (1964) results of testing fourteen-year-olds. Warburton reported that children in more progressive schools learn to read with comprehension, regardless of their level of ability. The main effect of progressiveness appears to lie in preventing backwardness in reading.

Three second-grade classes in the open-corridor program in New York City were tested with the Metropolitan Achievement Test in the spring of 1970. All three classes surpassed the national norm of 2.7, averaging 3.35. Of the 73 children tested, 47 were reading on or above grade level--24 of these a year or more above.

> Broken down ethnically, the scores show that of 38 black or bilingual . . . . children, 17 tested on or above level . . . . By comparison, of 33 black and bilingual second graders not in the /open corridor/ program, only four were reading on grade" (Schneir and Schneir, 1971, p. 96).

Life magazine reports that "evidence gathered so far by the Educational Testing Service in Princeton, N. J. . . . indicates that children in open classrooms do as well on conventional tests as children in traditional classrooms" (*Life*, 1971, p. 146).

In contrast to Gardner (1950), Warburton (1964), Schneir and Schneir (1971), and Morris (1959), reports that good reading achievement is related to the formal approach to reading and with phonics as an initial method. The subjects in the Morris (1959) study were children ages 7 to 11. Chall's (1967) conclusions support the findings of Morris as do those of a recent British report on this subject. Cane and Smithers (1971) evaluating data from 12 infant schools in deprived areas, found that ". . . initial reading success does not prove to be associated with what are sometimes loosely considered to be 'progressive' methods . . . ." (p. 19). They conclude that schools unsuccessful in teaching reading were characterized by a lack of systematic instruction. There was considerable neglect of phonics, few set periods of reading instruction, and a delay in beginning to teach reading until children displayed spontaneous interest in it. Conversely, successful schools were characterized by organized reading instruction from the start and by early phonic instruction. The most successful school of all did not conform to this general pattern. Activity methods and creativity were combined with a certain amount of teacher direction, especially in organizing the learning of phonics.

Research conducted in England led to similar conclusions as studies in this country. The Plowden Report (Central Advisory Council for Education, 1967), a comprehensive discussion of the rationale and practices of modern British primary schools, points out that reading

scores have risen steadily since World War II. Tests administered to 11-year-old children by the Department of Education and Science show that these children were reading at a level 17 months above that of 11-year-olds in 1948. Although many factors might explain improvement, it seems reasonable to conclude that informal education at least did not impair children's ability to read.

An investigation by Dorothy E. M. Gardner, covering the period 1951 to 1963, compared children in matched pairs of formal and informal infant and junior schools. Five achievement tests and nine attitude tests were used. Results favored the informal schools showing

> . . . clear superiority in six of the fourteen categories . . . spoken and written English, drawing and painting, 'listening and remembering,' 'neatness, care and skill,' 'ingenuity,' and the breadth and depth of children's out-of-school interests (Gardner, 1970, p. 260).

Some superiority was demonstrated in six other categories (Silberman, 1970, p. 260).

Reviewing the major studies on progressive education in the United States, Wallen and Travers (1970) found

> . . . no important differences in terms of subject-matter mastery and a superiority of the progressive students in terms of the characteristics which the 'progressive school' seeks to develop (p. 261).

Although the quantity of evidence is not overwhelming, its quality is impressive. Students in open classrooms should do as well as their traditional school counterparts in academic achievement, as well as displaying much healthier attitudes toward peers, school, and learning (Katz, 1972).

Since the findings of Gardner, Warburton, and Schneir and Schneir are diametrically opposed to those of Morris and Cane and Smithers,

they are impossible to reconcile. All researchers are respected and their experiments do not contain obvious defects. More research will need to be conducted in order to determine whether informal or more formal schools are more effective in promoting mastery of language skills. Overall, however, research cited reveals that both progressive and informal methods are successful. If this is true, the case for open education is strong.

Initial Reading Instruction

Significant reforms in education have emerged in the British primary schools, and these developments are having profound effects on the thinking and practices of American teachers and parents, and on the lives of American children. One report stated that at least one-third of all British primary schools are participating in open or informal education (Central Advisory Council for Education, 1967). The movement toward open education is widespread and is still growing. A more recent report indicates that more than 70 percent of all British primary schools have now adopted open or informal education (Metropolitan Toronto School Board, Ontario, 1972). The formal role of the classroom teacher has disappeared

> . . . because it imposes a single pattern of learning on a whole group of children . . . , because it ignores the extent to which children teach each other, and because in many workday schools other method are working better (Featherstone, 1967, p. 20).

Since hard-core research on initial reading instruction in open-education environments is limited in the literature, the writer will attempt to describe some of the beginning reading practices which exist in informal settings. Hertzburg (1971) presents several guidelines for

developing openness in beginning reading. The teacher must view reading as part of the total language arts instead of a subject. He must help children find ways to enjoy reading. He should read aloud to them. The teacher must find ways to enhance individual reading interests and encourage wide reading through self-selection and a variety of books. Small, flexible groups should be formed on the basis of interest as well as need. Individual reading conferences should be held. The appropriate reading technique should be matched to the child's instructional need.

According to Murrow and Murrow (1971), the teacher has a three-fold task in teaching reading:

> First, she must establish the atmosphere and materials in the classroom which are conducive to the development of language and individual expression in a variety of forms. Second, she must have planned schemes of reading with which she is comfortable and which are suited to her children. Third, the reading demands that she makes on the children must relate to their particular levels of development. This is a tremendous task (p. 43).

Rosemary Williams (1972), a former head of a British infant school, provides a very clear explanation of how children learn to read in an open classroom under the guidance of a teacher sensitive to their individual interests and powers. In referring to the two-fold responsibility of a good school in helping a child toward literacy, Williams states that the first is connected with the fostering of certain basic attitudes, and the school with the teaching of a skill. If either of these responsibilities is neglected, a child's opportunity to develop reading habits that will stay with him for the rest of his life may well be impaired.

Many writers such as Fryer (1970), Smith (1971), and Jacobs (1972) favor the relaxed, secure atmosphere of the informal classroom. One of the reasons a workshop form of classroom organization was adopted was to provide opportunity and time for talking with children (Smith, 1971).

Hertzburg (1971) specifically states that

> An adult attitude toward reading that stresses relaxation and that honors the individuality of the child is characteristic of the entire open education day . . . . Without pushing, the teacher guides the child through countless readiness experiences and then, through utilization of a variety of techniques helps him grow in skills appreciation, and enjoyment. Throughout the child's primary school experiences there is a stress on love of reading and a strong belief in the child's ability to pace himself and find his way to mastery (p. 100).

Interests, experiences, and language. "There is no magical formula for teaching children to read," stated Fryer (1970), Headmistress in a British infant school. Goddard (1958) sums up how a child is led to read through his serious pursuit of first-hand experience:

> In approaching reading through interest the natural sequence is: first, that the child has something he wants to say, second that we write it down for him, and last, that he reads it, and wants to read it because it tells of something that is of real interest to him (p. 12).

Teachers foster language in general, particularly reading and writing, in relation to the child's specific interests and levels of development (Brown and Precious, 1969; Johnson and Tamburrini, 1972). In a rural infant school in England, Weston School, one of the most important language aspects of language development occurred in the home corner where children listened to a tape or radio broadcast, a story read by the teacher, or participated in a program that had poetry, a story, and/or music (Smith, 1971).

Goddard (1958) stresses the importance of the child's experiences and language as a "preparation for learning to read." She continues,

> The child will not be successful in learning to read words that describe things outside his experience. For this reason we seek to extend and supplement the experience of the child from the less fortunate home (p. 20).

Teachers must be sensitive enough to follow the child's real interests. It is important to note that the child's tasks will be self-chosen. Goddard (1958) cites the following interest activities: play with water, play with sand, play with clay, creating with junk materials, building with bricks, painting, domestic play, learning about living and growing things, and looking at books. Thus, "reading becomes an interest of natural involvement . . . ." since activity flows from one interaction to another. The finished product of one child becomes the catalyst for another's involvement (Cook and Mack, 1971, pp. 37, 59).

While the child is talking excitedly about an experience, the teacher notes phrases he uses and writes them down. As the child expresses ideas in drawing, the teacher extends this by adding a phrase to the drawing. The child talks on the tape recorder and the teacher writes this out.

> Spoken language comes to be associated with writing in many ways. Reading and writing begin to have meaning and a purpose through writing letters, captions and notices and right from the beginning language is seen as a means of communicating feeling as well as fact . . . . Reading and writing in these early stages develop together. The child reads what he has written and usually at this age writes so that it will be read (Brown and Precious, 1969, pp. 60, 61).

Working with a variety of materials in the environment

> . . . increases verbalization, increases vocabulary, and strengthens the concepts underlying good reading comprehension. When children experiment with manipulative

> materials, there are no right or wrong answers; only observation. Children have a positive feeling of success when they build something or make something work. This feeling of success leads to a desire to share, to verbalize about the project without fear of being labeled wrong or a failure (Hassett and Weisberg, 1972, p. 70).

Readiness. Teachers are very aware of when a child shows interest in learning to read and the readiness factor is appreciated. Teachers become expert in recognizing signs of reading readiness in order to provide the greatest opportunities for success (Brown and Precious, 1969; Fryers, 1970; Johnson and Tamburrini, 1972).

Initial reading readiness experiences include much discussion with the child of his painting or his drawing. Under the child's picture, the teacher wrote what the child said on a separate paper or on separate cards. Soon the child was given a word and told to find the rest of the words on his sheet from written signs around the room. Children asked other children for separate words. Word lists were common to all the children after the initial reading period (Weber, 1971).

Approaches. There is no single approach used in the teaching of reading (Brown and Precious, 1960; Southgate and Roberts, 1970; Cane and Smithers, 1971). The teacher decides which is the best approach for the child on the basis of his own beliefs about reading and the needs of the children at each stage of learning to read (Southgate and Roberts, 1970). Thompson (1970) refers to several methods as options: look and say, reading in context, phonics, i.t.a., reading through interest, reading through activity, Breakthrough to Literacy, and the Language Master.

Thompson (1970) discusses three ways of getting a child started to read. They include building up a sight vocabulary, repeating words in a wall caption, and reading simple captions from a book.

Featherstone (1967) describes a relaxed approach to beginning reading in an infant school in Leicestershire, England.

> At first it is hard to say just how they do learn reading, since there are no separate subjects. . . . children learn from each other. They hang around the library corner long before they can read, handling the books, looking at pictures, trying to find words they do know, listening and watching as the teacher hears other children's reading. It is common to see nonreaders studying people as they read, and then imitating them, monkey doing what monkey sees. Nobody makes fun of their grave parodies and for good reasons (p. 19).

Reading was introduced in 12 infant schools in deprived areas in a variety of ways. Three of the schools made a firm start with all children on entry. One school used flash cards instead of books. Five others used a more gradual start in which all children were given the opportunity and stimuli for reading but those who were not ready were not pressured into reading. The remaining four schools allowed a longer period for preparation. One school provided little reading instruction of any kind in the first year and no books were used. The teacher worked with small groups interested in learning to read. Another of these four schools based its reading instruction entirely on children's interests and the presence of other activities (Cane and Smithers, 1971).

Materials. In the Plowden Report (Central Advisory Council for Education, 1967), there is a summary of the kinds of methods and materials that are used to fit each child's age, interest, and ability. These include memorizing the look of words and phrases, looking at

pictures to gain understanding of a word, use of context clues, phonics, range of reading approaches, books of rhymes, and stories they have learned by heart. The Plowden Report mentions the "move away from categories of books." It notes that the divisions between textbooks, supplementary books, and library books are disappearing and there are "simply books--to be used as and when they are needed" (p. 215).

An abundance of little books could be found in the informal infant school. Many of the books were made by the child and served as his first reading books. Writing went on all the time, along with reading. Some of the children seemed to learn to read by writing. In this way productions were a part of reading. Their own books of experiences were developed first and along with later books. Completed books were shared and read by others and eventually became permanent additions to the class libraries (Smith, 1971; Weber, 1971).

The activity-based curriculum was characterized by an adequate supply of suitable books. One English rural, informal school was reported to have about 3,000 books covering a wide range of topics (Smith, 1971). These books were of fiction and nonfiction and of all ability levels. There were picture books, books made by children on specific topics, myths, legends, fairy tales, folk tales, a well illustrated encyclopedia, picture dictionaries, poetry books, books on topics of perential interest, and stories about historical figures (Fryer, 1970).

Jacobs (1972), in referring to the right type of humanistic reading environment, visualizes children as writers of experience charts, anecdotes, first-hand accounts, stories, poems, and informative materials. The right reading environment will allow for self-selection

or student selection with teacher guidance (Cook and Mack, 1971) and will have many types of materials:

> . . . fiction, poetry, pictures, picture books, encyclopedia, dictionaries, pamphlets, newspapers, charts, and interesting self-testing practice materials (Jacobs, 1972, p. 465).

The desirable environment contains materials that serve as a springboard to creative activities involving dramatization, painting, music, dance, and puppetry.

There is some disagreement among open-education writers concerning graded readers and textbooks. Featherstone (1967) states that these materials are not present in good infant schools, while Weber (1971) indicates that series readers could be found in almost all schools. Both authors did, however, refer to a great variety of available books.

Skills. Since schools are judged on how well they teach the traditional three R's, it is interesting to note the different emphasis which the English primary schools place on these central skills. They broaden the three general skill areas to include communication and expression in its many forms. Expressions in art may lead to writing that turns into reading (Manolakes, 1972). Children are led to achieve the basic skills through their interests. They learn the skill because they need it in the course of their activities (Rogers, 1971).

The approach used by the English primary schools is a systematic and diagnostic skills approach. In a rich environment of many possible activities, the teacher guides the learning and application of these skills. The system of family grouping exposes five-year-olds to six and seven-year-olds and gives the teacher three years to develop and enhance each student's skills. While the teacher observes and guides formal aspects of these skills, the child experiences many informal

skill contacts through daily activities (Manolakes, 1972). Integral to a description of informal education is incidental teaching which "resulted in far more reading than ever happens when reliance is mainly on formal teaching of reading" (Weber, 1971, p. 132).

Phonics skills were taught both directly and incidentally, depending on the individual school. A child learned some phonics in connection with reading and writing he had done. Some time might be spent on the sound of a word that a child requested. As the child created word lists, phonics was usually absorbed incidentally--beginnings, endings, word-blending, and blends. Some attention might be given to word families (Featherstone, 1967; Weber, 1971). As the child neared age seven, he was given more direct instruction in phonics, never is isolation, but along with all other methods, and perhaps in all schools (Weber, 1971).

Reading Practices in the Open Classroom

One of the most current studies on reading practices in the open classroom is reported by Roberta Weiner (1973), Professor of Education at Adelphi University in New York. Weiner first determined which schools in Long Island, New York, had one or more open classrooms--some 60 percent in two large suburban counties. The investigator constructed a _Teacher Questionnaire on the Open Classroom_ which included questions on classroom organization, reading programs, teachers' attitudes toward open education, and preparation for teaching in an open classroom. Questionnaires were distributed to more than 500 teachers. Weiner and an impartial judge visited 20 randomly selected open classrooms to validate the questionnaire responses and observe

reading instruction and other classroom practices. Almost half the teachers (280) responded to the questionnaire.

Analysis of the results of the investigation revealed some interesting data:

(1) Groupings: Sixty percent of the open classroom teachers grouped for instruction while 40 percent did not. Sixty-three percent grouped temporarily for specific skill instruction.

(2) Basal readers: Half of the teachers used the basal reader. Only 25 percent used the basal as the major approach. Eighty-two percent used basals in conjunction with other reading materials.

(3) Programmed materials: Seventy-eight percent of the teachers used programmed materials. Multilevel self-instructional reading kits were cited frequently.

(4) Individualized reading: Sixty-eight percent of the teachers described their programs as individualized with many positive results, such as enhancement of children's self-images, greater variety of discussion, stimulation and participation of poor readers, lack of frustration and elimination of pressure to conform to peer groups, enrichment and remediation built into the program, and regular conferences.

(5) Integration of curriculum: Seventy-nine percent of the teachers integrated reading with the language arts, 41 percent with science, and 57 percent with social studies.

(6) Selection of materials: Fifty-seven percent of the teachers indicated that materials were selected by the students with

teacher guidance. Reading materials were student-selected in 32 percent of the sample.

(7) Workbooks: Seventy-three percent of the teachers used workbooks while 27 percent did not.

(8) Scheduling: Sixty-six percent of the teachers scheduled a specific period for reading instruction.

Weiner concluded that the structure of the open classroom has been changed and that the reading program has been altered to meet the needs of this new open environment. One of the greatest changes appears in types of instructional groupings. The traditional three fixed reading groups has been replaced by small, flexible temporary groups for specific skill instruction. A variety of reading approaches will be used, according to the needs of the students. The reading program appears to be teacher-directed for skill instruction with reading materials individualized and selected by students. Instructional programs appear to be fairly structured since 90 percent of the teachers provided direction and structure and 66 percent set time aside for reading instruction. Weiner concluded that American open classroom teachers have developed their own educational style which is characterized by a necessary direction and structure as well as allowance of alternatives for development of student talents and interests.

Summary

There are both advantages and disadvantages in learning the language arts in informal school settings. The advantages include language enrichment for a reading-writing basis, an increase in free written work, a strong motivation to learn to read, further motivation to read

for functional purposes, the acquired habit of sustained silent reading, and the use of reading and writing skills outside of school as well as inside. Among the disadvantages are a lack of directed teaching for the unmotivated child, lack of expertise in structuring a good reading situation, much detailed record keeping, low priority given to reading instruction, lack of wide variety of books on all levels, and failure to teach the mechanics of writing because of emphasis on free expression in written work.

The open classroom movement may contribute positively or negatively to the reading program. It depends on the assumptions on which the program functions as previously discussed. Research on informal and formal schools fails to designate which type of school is more effective in promoting the language arts. However, research does support progressive and informal methods in relationship to an overall learning program.

The literature on informal beginning reading instruction refers to a relaxed, workshop type of environment with many opportunities for language development. The teacher leads the child to read through his interests and self-chosen, first-hand experiences with many media. The teacher is aware of the levels of reading readiness and provides many situations for readiness development.

No single approach is used in teaching reading. The approach is based on the teacher's beliefs about reading and the needs of the children. It should be noted that all informal schools use the language of the child in writing and reading stories of interest. Children start to read through building a sight vocabulary, repeating wall captions, and reading simple captions from a book. Among the approaches

referred to in the literature are the look-say approach, reading through interest, reading through activity, stories learned by heart, i.t.a., with the aid of books of rhymes, use of context clues, and phonics.

A profusion of materials exists in the informal classroom. The materials are of all types and ability levels. Student-made booklets are used widely as one of the main sources for reading material. Many reference and resource materials are also available.

Children are led to achieve reading skills through their interests in many informal activities. The teacher does, however, guide the formal aspects of the skills. Phonics skills are taught both directly and incidentally.

Recent research in the American open classroom reveals that teachers in the United States have developed their own unique educational styles. The instructional reading programs appear to be quite structured, but at the same time, providing for alternatives for students in which their talents and interests can best be developed.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Procedure for Data Collection

The _Openness Instrument_, a cover letter, a form for teachers' names, and a stamped, self-addressed envelope were mailed to 103 principals in the population on February 14, 1974. (See Appendices A and C, respectively, for cover letter to principals and form for teachers' names.) Names and addresses of schools were secured from the _Oklahoma Educational Directory_ (1973-74) and the curriculum divisions of the education departments in Kansas and Nebraska. The principals were asked to respond and return the completed instrument on openness, along with the names of the kindergarten, first, and second-grade teachers, directly to the researcher. A follow-up letter with another copy of the instrument on openness and a form for teachers' names was mailed to schools which had not responded on March 20, 1974. (See Appendix D for follow-up letter to principals.)

Approximately three weeks after the _Openness Instrument_ had been sent to the principals, March 8, 1974, a cover letter and the _Reading Practices Questionnaire_ (_K-2_) were mailed to teachers of schools which rated as being 80 percent or above on the _Openness Instrument_. (See Appendix E for letter to teachers.) On March 22, 1974, follow-up post cards were mailed to teachers who had failed to respond. (See Appendix G for follow-up post card.)

In order to identify respondents, a code was written on the return envelope to the researcher. The <u>Openness Instrument</u> had the following codes: 0-1 to 0-53 for Oklahoma, K-1 to K-34 for Kansas, and N-1 to N-16 for Nebraska. The codes for the <u>Reading Practices Questionnaire (K-2)</u> were as follows: 0-100 to 0-370 for Oklahoma, K-100 to K-202 for Kansas, and N-100 to N-195 for Nebraska.

Processing of the actual data began May 7, 1974. Ninety-two principals, out of a total of 103, responded to the <u>Openness Instrument</u>. This was an 89 percent return. Of the 92 principals, 44 (48 percent) qualified as "open" schools according to the established criteria of 80 percent on the <u>Openness Instrument</u>. The 269 teachers from the 44 open schools received the <u>Reading Practices Questionnaire (K-2)</u>; 210 (78 percent) of the teachers returned the questionnaires.

Subjects

Inspection of demographic data revealed some interesting characteristics about the 210 subjects in the survey. Included in the final population were 269 kindergarten, first-grade, and second-grade teachers. Responding to the <u>Reading Practices Questionnaire (K-2)</u> were 210 teachers, 65 from Nebraska, 30 from Kansas, and 115 from Oklahoma. There were 207 females and three males, ranging in age from 21 to 60. Forty-eight percent of the total population were between the ages of 26 and 45, 28 percent were between 21 and 25, and 24 percent were between 46 and 60. It was interesting to note that 49 percent of the teachers from the Nebraska segment were between the ages of 21 and 25.

The majority of the teachers in the total population, 71 percent, held a bachelor's degree, 9 percent held graduate hours beyond the

bachelor level, 18 percent held a master's degree, and only one percent had work beyond the master's level. Fifty-five percent of the kindergarten, first-grade, and second-grade teachers had less than five years of teaching experience, 22 percent had from 6 to 15 years, 12 percent had from 16 to 25 years, and 10 percent had from 26 to 45 years of experience. Years of teaching in an open classroom setting ranged from no experience, which constituted 23 percent of the teachers, to as much as 9 or more years of experience, which involved only one percent of the population. Twenty percent of the teachers had at least one year's experience in the open classroom; 30 percent had two year's experience; 19 percent had three year's experience; 9.5 percent had four year's experience; 3.8 percent had five year's experience; 1.9 percent had six year's experience; and one-half of one percent had eight year's experience.

Analysis of teaching levels revealed that some of the teachers teach more than one grade. Approximately 28.6 percent of the teachers indicated they teach kindergarten. Other teachers indicated that they teach first and second grades, some 50 percent in first and 42 percent in second. Twelve percent stated that they teach some other level than kindergarten, first, or second.

The teachers varied in the number of reading courses taken, from no courses, 11 percent, to nine or more courses, 4 percent. Approximately 42 percent of the teachers had taken from two to three reading courses.

Specific training for teaching in an open classroom included courses and workshops with 20 percent of the teachers having courses and 64 percent having workshops. Forty-five percent of the teachers

had consultant services available and 25 percent had some other type of services to assist them in learning more about the open classroom. Workshops and consultant services were utilized most often by the teachers.

The organizational patterns of the open schools were primarily open space and team teaching. Thirty percent of the open schools were nongraded, 10 percent followed other patterns, and 30 percent were self-contained classrooms.

Development of the Instruments

Openness Instrument

The development of the Openness Instrument, a questionnaire, proceeded through two stages. First, research and literature related to definitions of open education were explored. The work of Walberg and Thomas (1972) served as the basis for the development of the instrument. Fourteen items were devised by the researcher from the eight dimensions identified by Walberg and Thomas as potential indices of open education. The eight themes included provisioning for learning, diagnosis, instruction, evaluation, humaneness, seeking opportunities to promote growth, assumptions, and self-perception of the teacher. The Openness Instrument was constructed in the same proportion as the Classroom Observation Rating Scale, devised by Judith Evans (1971). One-half of the items were drawn from the provisioning for learning category, and half were selected from the remaining seven dimensions. The instrument was designed to indicate varying degrees of openness on a scale from one to four--from least open to most open. The respondent

circled one of four categories: 1) not being considered, 2) in planning stage, 3) initiated, and 4) well established. Individual scores were tallied. A principal had to obtain 80 percent of the possible responses in order (for his school) to be considered "open" for the study. (See Appendix B for instrument.)

The second state involved the selection of a jury to critically examine and evaluate the Openness Instrument. It was important to know whether the constructed instrument was valid in content and if it would receive the answers intended. Location of weakness needed to be discovered before sending the instrument to the population. Letters about the study were sent to the prospective jurors. (See Appendix H for letter.) A jury was selected which was composed of nine persons. The jury consisted of teachers and personnel from Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma, and others who demonstrate expertise in the area of open education. (See Appendix J for list of jury members.)

Reading Practices Questionnaire (K-2)

Before much progress can be made in solving problems, descriptions of phenomena are needed. Investigators ask the question:

> What exists--what is the present status of these phenomena? Determining the nature of prevailing conditions, practices, and attitudes--seeking accurate descriptions of activities, objects, processes, and persons--is their objective. But descriptive research is not confined to routine fact gathering. Predicting and identifying relationships among and between variables is the goal of competent investigators (Van Dalen, 1966, p. 203).

According to this definition of descriptive research, a survey of initial reading practices in open-education environments would be classified as descriptive research. The data is systematically gathered

and the aspects of the present situation are analyzed. This method gathers data from the selected population at a particular time.

With a population of 269 teachers in the public schools of Oklahome, Kansas, and Nebraska, it appeared impractical to interview each individually. The researcher needed a method of collecting data from the schools quickly and at a relatively low cost. The questionnaire method seemed most appropriate for the needs of the study.

In order to carefully structure and administer the questionnaire effectively, the writer relied on several researchers for suggestions: Rummel (1964), Hillway (1969), and Good (1963; 1972). Consideration was given to the objectives, past experiences, literature, and previous questionnaires in constructing the instrument.

The next stage of developing the instrument involved the selection of a jury of experts in the field of reading who were asked to evaluate the Reading Practices Questionnaire (K-2) in terms of its content validity. Good and Scrates (1954) say that "it is essential that criticism of qualified persons be secured before the final form of the questionnaire is prepared and mailed out" (p. 622). The jury technique involves the pooled judgments of a number of experts and is frequently used for validation of a questionnaire (Sax, 1968). A jury was selected which was composed of 12 qualified persons in the field of reading--teachers, professors, and other professionals. (See Appendix K for list of jury members.) Each jury member was mailed a letter requesting his assistance in evaluating the questionnaire.

A pilot study was then conducted with the questionnaire, utilizing kindergarten, first-grade, and second-grade teachers. The questionnaire

was read for clarity. The average time for completing the questionnaire was about 12 minutes.

The preliminary draft of the questionnaire was revised, to incorporate the suggestions of both the jury and pilot-study teachers, before the instrument was mailed to the 269 selected teachers. (See Appendix F for _Reading Practices Questionnaire_ (_K-2_).)

Several materials related to the questionnaire were developed to expedite the collection of data. These related materials were a cover letter to the teacher completing the _Reading Practices Questionnaire_ (_K-2_) and a follow-up post card. Samples of these materials have been placed in Appendices E and G, respectively.

Treatment of Data

Data were analyzed in terms of:

(1) The number of responses to the _Openness Instrument_, i.e., what percentage of schools in Kansas, Oklahoma, and Nebraska has open classrooms? An established criteria of at least 80 percent was used for identification of open classrooms. The frequency of usage, along with the percentage, was tabulated utilizing facilities of the Oklahoma State Computer Center.

(2) The number of responses to the _Reading Practices Questionnaire_ (_K-2_) and the percentage of response to each item. The frequency and percentage of the use of various beginning reading practices was also tabulated using the facilities of the Oklahoma State University Computer Center. Programming and key punch services were provided. Questions related to a specific topic in the questionnaire were analyzed

according to some of the demographic characteristics. The results of the tabulation are reported in Chapter IV.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

Introduction

The findings of this study concerning initial reading practices in open classrooms of Oklahoma, Kansas, and Nebraska, are presented in this chapter. The findings were derived from the analysis of the _Openness Instrument_ and the _Reading Practices Questionnaire_ (_K-2_).

First, the findings pertaining to the _Openness Instrument_ will be described. Second, the findings related to the _Reading Practices Questionnaire_ (_K-2_) will be described. The responses will be discussed according to the three major divisions of the questionnaire--reading approaches, reading materials, and reading skills. Third, a presentation of four reading approaches will follow. The approaches will be discussed in relationship to four teaching levels. Fourth, selected responses will be described according to the various organizational patterns of the schools. Fifth, this chapter will include a section on the integration of reading in the curriculum and the teaching of reading as a separate subject at each of four teaching levels. Finally, the chapter will conclude with a discussion on the use of standardized tests and individually prescribed diagnosis in the open classroom.

Findings Related to the Openness Instrument

The Openness Instrument was mailed to 103 elementary school principals in Oklahoma, Kansas, and Nebraska, who were identified by the state departments of education as possible "open-concept" schools. The school principal was asked to complete the survey and return it to the researcher. Ninety-two principals responded (89 percent). Fifty-two percent of the respondents did not have open classrooms; 48 percent of the respondents had one or more open classrooms in their schools.

Table I indicates the results of all the respondents to the Openness Instrument. The survey findings were analyzed in two ways: 1) on a question-by-question basis, indicating the total number of replies to each category of each question, as well as a percentage representation and 2) according to an established criteria of 80 percent in relationship to an overall response to the 14 items. The four areas of choice included: 1) not being considered, 2) in planning stage, 3) initiated, and 4) well established.

Table I refers to the responses of all responding principals. Of the 92 schools, 44 (48 percent) qualified as "open" schools, according to the established criteria of 80 percent. The respondents indicated that these 14 items were well established for the majority of the items. That the most "open" schools were selected from this survey allows the researcher to have more confidence in the findings of the Reading Practices Questionnaire (K-2) which was designed to identify and describe reading practices in classrooms which are, in actuality, "open."

TABLE I

RESPONSES TO OPENNESS INSTRUMENT: BASED ON ALL RESPONDING PRINCIPALS

Number distributed: 103
Number returned: 92
Percent of responses: 89.0

Items		not being considered	in planning stage	initiated	well established	no response
1. Children work with many diverse manipulative materials.	N	0	7	20	62	3
	%	0.0	7.6	21.7	74.4	3.3
2. Classrooms include materials developed by children and teachers and common materials (such as rock, sand, water, pets, plants, etc.).	N	1	8	35	45	3
	%	1.1	8.7	38.0	48.9	3.3
3. Teachers often modify the content and arrangement of the classroom based upon diagnosis and evaluation of the children's needs, interests, and use of materials and space.	N	0	5	26	60	1
	%	0.0	5.4	28.3	65.2	1.1
4. Children are allowed to move freely about the room without asking permission.	N	7	3	18	61	3
	%	7.6	3.3	19.6	66.3	3.3
5. Many different activities go on simultaneously in the classroom.	N	0	5	22	64	1
	%	0.0	5.4	23.9	69.6	1.1
6. Informal talking between children and exchanging of information and ideas is encouraged.	N	1	3	18	65	5
	%	1.1	3.7	19.6	70.7	5.4
7. Children work individually and in small groups largely determined by their own choices, and guided by the teacher according to needs.	N	2	11	37	37	5
	%	2.1	12.0	40.2	40.2	5.4

TABLE I (Continued)

Item		not being considered	in planning stage	initiated	well established	no response
8. Teachers' record-keeping consists of individual notes and progress reports chronicling each child's development.	N %	1 1.1	14 15.2	29 31.5	46 50.0	2 2.2
9. To obtain diagnostic information, teachers attentively observe the specific work or concern of each child and ask immediate, experienced-based questions.	N %	2 2.2	10 10.9	34 40.0	43 46.7	3 3.3
10. Teachers utilize learning approaches which encourage children's initative and choice and allow for maximum integration of curriculum subjects	N %	1 1.1	14 15.2	32 34.8	43 46.7	2 2.2
11. Teachers build an attitude of respect and trust among children and exhibit openness in their relationships with children.	N %	0 0.0	3 3.3	20 21.7	68 73.9	1 1.1
12. Colleagues, supporting advisors, community members and other adults and adolescents are urged to active participation in the classroom (or curriculum).	N %	0 0.0	13 14.1	24 26.1	52 56.5	3 3.3
13. Children's innate curiousity and self-perpetuating exploratory behavior form the basis for the learning in school; children have the opportunity to pursue interests.	N %	2 2.2	14 15.2	42 45.7	29 31.5	5 5.4
14. Teachers are adaptable, continual learners who see themselves as resources for helping children reach their own potential	N %	0 0.0	4 4.4	21 22.8	64 69.6	3 3.3

Findings Related to the *Reading Practices Questionnaire* (*K-2*)

Two hundred and sixty-nine questionnaires were mailed to the kindergarten, first-grade, and second-grade teachers in the 44 open schools which were classified as "open" on the basis of the previously reported survey of principals. The questionnaires were mailed in February, 1974. The number of returns from individual open classroom teachers in Oklahoma, Kansas, and Nebraska, as of May 7, 1974, totaled 210 (78 percent). This total constituted the basis for the questionnaire tallies which are indicated in Table II.

The questionnaire findings were analyzed on a question-by-question basis indicating percentage representation for five categories of usage: 1) Always (A), 2) Often (Of), 3) Occasionally (Occ), 4) Never (N), and 5) No Response (NR). For the purpose of discussion, the percentages for "Always" and "Often" were combined. References to specific questions were placed in parentheses at the end of each sentence or paragraph in which they were discussed.

Initial Reading Approaches

Numerous features of a variety of reading approaches were utilized in beginning reading instruction. The percentage of usage of the approaches is presented in Table II. Included are questions 1-26.

Examination of questions 3, 10, and 14 of Table II indicated that the language experience approach was used quite extensively. Sixty-seven percent of the teachers indicated that children were led to read through pursuit of first-hand experiences. The child dictates his

TABLE II

PERCENTAGE OF QUESTIONNAIRE RESPONSES CONCERNING FEATURES OF VARIOUS READING APPROACHES

Questions	*A	*Of	*Occ	*N	*NR
	Percent of Total Response				
1. Children start reading by building up a sight vocabulary through experiences and associating pictures with words.	36.6	42.9	16.7	3.8	0.0
2. Children start reading by developing sound-symbol relationships.	55.7	35.7	5.2	2.4	0.9
3. Children are led to read through pursuit of first-hand experiences.	27.6	39.1	28.6	3.8	0.9
4. Children confer regularly with the teacher about materials they have read and their progress.	40.5	32.9	18.6	5.7	2.9
5. Reading instruction is integrated into all areas of the curriculum.	57.6	29.1	11.0	0.5	1.9
6. Reading is taught in a specified or scheduled period as a separate subject.	57.6	19.5	10.5	9.1	3.3
7. Small, flexible, but temporary groups are formed on the basis of need for specific skill instruction.	63.8	21.9	10.5	2.4	1.4
8. Small groups are formed on the basis of common interests.	8.6	30.9	42.4	15.2	2.9
9. Language development, particularly reading and writing, is fostered through activities at interest centers.	36.7	36.2	20.9	4.8	1.4
10. Each child dictates his experience story which he later reads.	17.1	29.1	45.2	5.7	2.9

TABLE II (Continued)

Questions	*A	*Of	*Occ	*N	*NR
	Percent of Total Response				
11. Reading and writing skills are developed together, reinforcing each other in the early stages.	50.5	34.3	10.9	2.9	1.4
12. Reading readiness experience includes much discussion of the child's activities, such as his paintings or drawings.	42.4	36.7	16.7	2.4	1.9
13. Children willingly serve as helpers for each other, assisting in specific areas that need development or reinforcement.	38.6	44.3	15.2	0.5	1.4
14. Almost everything is labeled, described, or analyzed, including interesting pictures, exhibits, and activities.	27.1	42.4	25.2	3.3	1.9
15. Children start reading by blending together the separate sounds of letters to form wholly-pronounced words.	37.1	39.5	12.4	8.6	2.4
16. One of the ways reading readiness is assessed is through the use of standardized tests, such as the Metropolitan Readiness Test.	35.7	27.1	20.0	14.3	2.9
17. Children are taught to read by first looking at the whole word and then attempting to break it down into parts through the use of word attack skills.	31.4	35.2	20.0	10.5	2.9
18. Individual reading interests and wide reading are encouraged through self-selection of such materials as books, stories written by other children, and magazines.	51.4	32.9	11.4	2.4	1.9

TABLE II (Continued)

Questions	*A	*Of	*Occ	*N	*NR
	Percent of Total Response				
19. Children are given opportunities to browse through books before they can read, handling them, looking at pictures, and trying to find words they know.	80.5	15.7	1.4	0.5	1.9
20. Children have the opportunity to select books and to share their reading experiences with other children.	64.3	26.7	7.1	0.5	1.4
21. Children choose reading as one of their free activities.	29.1	56.7	9.5	0.9	3.8
22. Children are allowed to work individually at various activities.	47.6	44.3	5.2	0.0	2.9
23. Children are allowed to work in groups at various activities.	45.2	45.7	5.7	0.0	3.3
24. Reading instruction is based on curriculum guides or textbooks.	36.2	29.1	17.6	12.4	4.8
25. Individually prescribed, diagnosed instruction characterizes reading instruction.	31.9	35.2	20.9	5.7	6.2
26. Reading is taught through basic patterns in spelling (consonant-vowel-consonant patterns(such as hat, fat, mat, and sat.	14.8	47.1	28.1	4.8	5.2

*A-Always, *Of-Often, *Occ-Occasionally, *N-Never, *NR-No Response

experience story in 46 percent of the cases; things are labeled in 69 percent of the classrooms.

Elements of the individualized reading approach were utilized even more than elements of the language experience approach. Conferences were held very often in 74 percent of the classrooms. Small, flexible, temporary groups were formed on the basis of need for specific skill instruction in 86 percent of the classrooms. Eighty-four percent of the classroom teachers encouraged individual reading interests and wide reading through self-selection of a variety of materials, such as stories written by other children, books, and magazines. Children had an opportunity, 91 percent of the time, to select books and share their readings (4, 7, 18, 20).

An analytic-phonic approach (17), such as the approach in the basal reader, was used quite extensively (66 percent of the teachers). In contrast, a synthetic-phonic approach (12, 15), which emphasized phonics at first, was utilized by 92 percent and 77 percent of the teachers, respectively.

Sixty-two percent of the teachers indicated that they used the linguistic approach in beginning reading instruction. It was used occasionally by 28 percent of the teachers and never used by 5 percent (26).

Use of a very formal approach to teaching reading was used by 65 percent of the teachers. Twelve percent of those responding never based instruction on curriculum guides or texts (24).

An interdisciplinary approach to reading instruction was utilized by 87 percent of the teachers (5). Seventy-eight percent of the teachers taught reading in a specified or scheduled period as a separate subject (6).

Reading readiness approaches involve much discussion of the child's activities and many opportunities to browse through books to try to find known words (12, 19). Discussion of activities was part of beginning instruction, according to 80 percent of the teachers; opportunities to handle books was incorporated into instruction according to 97 percent of the teachers.

Children very frequently worked in groups for specific skill instruction and at various activities--86 percent and 91 percent, respectively (7, 23). Small groups were formed, on the basis of common interests, by 40 percent of the teachers (8). Children also worked individually at various activities, according to a response of 92 percent (22). Of their free, individual activities, children chose reading in 86 percent of the classrooms (21).

Reading ability is assessed through both standardized tests and individual diagnosis, 63 and 67 percent, respectively. Both means of assessment were used by 20 percent of the teachers occasionally (16, 25).

Reading Materials

Many types of reading materials were used in the open classrooms in the survey. The percentage of usage of various reading materials (and aspects related to these materials) is presented in Table III. This table includes questions 27-41.

Identical texts were utilized by teachers in 67 percent of the situations and books were categorized according to textbooks, basal readers, supplementary and library books in 59 percent of the cases (27, 29). These formal materials were used more often than self-authored books which constituted 40 percent (30).

TABLE III

PERCENTAGE OF QUESTIONNAIRE RESPONSES CONCERNING READING MATERIALS AND THEIR VARIOUS ASPECTS

Questions	*A	*Of	*Occ	*N	*NR
	Percent of Total Response				
27. Identical texts and materials are supplied in sets so that each child may have his own.	41.4	25.7	8.1	17.1	7.6
28. There is an abundance and variety of available manipulative materials.	58.1	30.9	7.1	0.9	2.9
29. Books are categorized according to textbooks, basal readers, supplementary books and library books.	40.0	18.6	15.2	19.5	6.7
30. Children use 'books' which are self-authored and written by their classmates as part of their first reading books and reference materials.	17.1	23.3	33.3	22.9	3.3
31. Books are available on a wide range of topics.	76.2	17.1	3.3	0.5	2.9
32. Books are available on a wide range of difficulty levels.	72.9	16.7	4.3	1.4	4.8
33. Experience charts are used.	31.4	28.1	33.3	2.9	4.3
34. Initial Teaching Alphabet (i.t.a.) materials are used.	7.1	9.1	10.9	66.7	6.2
35. Records of plant and animal life are kept by the children or the teacher.	7.6	20.9	45.7	21.9	4.3
36. Workbooks are used in conjunction with basal texts.	44.8	21.4	14.8	15.7	3.3

TABLE III (Continued)

Questions	*A	*Of	*Occ	*N	*NR
	Percent of Total Response				
37. Reading kits such as the Peabody Language Development Kits are used.	11.4	24.3	31.4	30.0	2.9
38. Specific materials, specially prepared, are used for individually selected information and skills development.	30.0	43.8	14.3	7.1	4.8
39. Children use programmed materials, working at their own rates.	17.1	30.5	22.4	25.2	4.8
40. Children are free to include content area books, such as science and social studies books, in their free reading time.	58.6	20.5	10.5	5.2	5.2
41. Reading materials serve as springboards to creative activities including dramatization, painting, music, and puppetry.	32.9	44.8	18.6	0.9	2.9

*A-Always, *Of-Often, *Occ-Occasionally, *N-Never, *NR-No Response

There was an abundance and variety of available manipulative material. These materials were available 89 percent of the time (28).

Books were available on a wide range of topics in 93 percent of the classrooms (31); books were available on a wide range of difficulty levels in 90 percent of classes (32). Children were free to include content area books in free reading in 90 percent of the cases (40).

Initial Teaching Alphabet (i.t.a.) materials were used extensively in only 16 percent of the classrooms. Sixty-seven percent of the teachers never utilized these materials (34).

Workbooks, which coincide with the basal reader, were used quite often in 66 percent of the classrooms (36). Specially prepared materials, emphasizing individual skill development, were used in 74 percent of the settings (38).

Reading kits were used by 35 percent of the teachers; 30 percent never utilized kits (37). Programmed materials were used by 48 percent of the teachers; 25 percent never utilized them (39).

Reading materials serve as springboards to creative activities, according to a 78 percent response of the teachers. These materials encourage interest in many areas of the curriculum (41).

Reading Skills

Many word attack, comprehension, and self-directed skills were utilized by teachers in open classrooms (Otto and Askov, 1972). The percentage of usage of the reading skills is presented in Table IV. Questions 42-60 are included in the table.

Questions 42-50 refer to utilization of various word attack skills. The two word-attack skills used most in beginning reading instruction

TABLE IV

PERCENTAGE OF QUESTIONNAIRE RESPONSES CONCERNING WORD ATTACK, COMPREHENSION, AND SELF-DIRECTED READING SKILLS

Questions	*A	*Of	*Occ	*N	*NR
WORD ATTACK SKILLS	Percent of Total Response				
42. Listening for rhyming elements.	62.9	26.7	6.2	.5	3.8
43. Noticing likeness and differences in pictures, letters, numbers, and words.	71.4	19.1	5.2	.9	3.3
44. Distinguishing colors.	59.5	20.9	11.4	4.3	3.8
45. Listening for initial consonant sounds.	79.1	16.2	0.9	1.4	2.4
46. Building a sight vocabulary.	59.1	25.7	9.5	1.9	3.8
47. Following left-to-right sequence.	85.2	10.0	0.9	1.4	2.4
48. Using phonics analysis skills.	65.7	21.4	6.7	3.8	2.9
49. Using structural analysis skills.	42.4	31.9	14.3	6.7	4.8
50. Using context clues.	55.7	30.0	10.9	0.9	2.4
COMPREHENSION SKILLS					
51. Selecting main idea.	53.3	32.4	9.1	0.9	4.3
52. Determining outcomes.	48.1	39.1	8.1	0.9	3.8
53. Determining sequence.	54.8	36.2	4.3	0.9	3.8
54. Determining cause-effect relationship.	39.5	40.9	13.3	1.9	4.3
55. Drawing conclusions.	50.0	35.7	8.6	1.4	4.3

TABLE IV (Continued)

Questions	*A	*Of	*Occ	*N	*NR
SELF-DIRECTED READING SKILLS	Percent of Total Response				
56. Applying knowledge of sequence within a book, such as use of the index and table of contents.	33.3	35.2	14.3	11.4	5.7
57. Showing initiative in selecting picture books.	39.1	45.2	8.1	3.8	3.8
58. Applying work habits independently.	61.9	29.1	4.3	0.9	3.8
59. Selecting free reading materials independently.	65.7	23.8	4.3	1.4	4.8
60. Participating in recreational reading.	53.8	34.3	6.7	0.9	4.3

*A-Always, *Of-Often, *Occ-Occasionally, *N-Never, *NR-No Response

were listening for initial consonant sounds and following left-to-right sequence (45, 47). Teachers taught these skills in 95 percent of the open classrooms. The next highest frequency was listening for rhyming elements and noticing likenesses and differences (42, 43), followed by phonics analysis (48), context clues (50), sight vocabulary (46), distinguishing colors (44), and structural analysis (49).

Questions 51-55 related to the use of comprehension skills. From the highest percent of usage to the lowest were the following skills: 1) determining sequence--91 percent (53), 2) determining outcomes--87 percent (52), 3) drawing conclusions--86 percent (55), 4) selecting main ideas--85 percent (51), and 5) determining cause-effect relationships--81 percent (54).

Self-directed reading skills involved questions 56-60. These were as follows, from the highest percent of usage to the lowest: 1) applying work habits independently--91 percent (58), 2) selecting free reading materials independently--90 percent (59), 3) participating in recreational reading--88 percent (60), 4) showing initiative in selecting picture books--84 percent (54), and 5) applying knowledge of sequence with a book, such as the use of index and table of contents--68 percent (56).

Elements of the Four Reading Approaches

While there are more than 100 different reading approaches, according to Aukerman (1971), elements of four approaches were selected for a closer review--the synthetic-phonic approach, the analytic-phonic approach, the language experience approach, and the individualized reading approach. Questions representative of these approaches were

examined; their percentage of usage in the open classroom at four different levels will be discussed.

Synthetic-Phonic Approach and the Analytic-Phonic Approach

The synthetic-phonic approach refers to blending together the separate sounds of letters to form wholly-pronounced words. In contrast, use of the analytic-phonic approach enables the child to see the whole word and to use word analysis skills to break it down structurally or phonetically (Aukerman, 1971).

Table V focuses on elements of these two approaches as they are used at various grade levels in the open classrooms. Questions 2 and 15, which are representative of the synthetic-phonic approach, are combined to yield a single percentage of usage. Question 17 is representative of the analytic-phonic approach.

At all four levels, kindergarten, first, second, and the "other" category, the synthetic-phonic approach was used more frequently than the analytic-phonic approach. The synthetic-phonic approach was utilized most often at the first level (88 percent) and the "other" level (88 percent); it was used 87 percent at the second level. Teachers at the kindergarten level utilized the approach in 87 percent of their teaching situations. In contrast, the analytic-phonic approach was used 73 percent at the second level, 69 percent at the first level, 64 percent at the "other" level, and 43 percent at the kindergarten level.

TABLE V

PERCENTAGE OF QUESTIONNAIRE RESPONSES CONCERNING THE SYNTHETIC-PHONIC APPROACH** AND THE ANALYTIC-PHONIC APPROACH***

Grade Level	Questions	No. / Percent	*A	*Of	*Occ	*N	*NR
Kindergarten	2 and 15	N	61	36	15	6	2
		%	58.0	30.0	12.5	5.0	1.7
	17	N	14	12	20	12	2
		%	23.3	20.0	33.0	20.0	3.3
First	2 and 15	N	111	79	12	11	2
		%	51.1	36.7	5.6	5.1	.9
	17	N	42	37	22	12	1
		%	36.8	32.3	19.3	10.5	.9
Second	2 and 15	N	86	75	15	5	2
		%	46.4	41.0	8.2	2.7	1.1
	17	N	30	35	14	6	3
		%	34.1	38.5	15.9	6.8	3.4
Other	2 and 15	N	30	15	3	4	0
		%	58.8	28.8	5.8	7.7	0.0
	17	N	7	10	6	3	0
		%	24.6	38.5	23.1	11.9	0.0

*A-Always, *Of-Often, *Occ-Occasionally, *N-Never, *NR-No Response

**Questions 2 and 15 represent the synthetic-phonic approach.
***Question 17 represents the analytic-phonic approach.

Language Experience Approach

The language experience approach is considered by many reading authorities to be an informal reading approach as opposed to commercially prepared approaches. Table VI represents the percentage of usage of the language experience approach as it exists at four different levels in the open classroom. Since response to questions 3, 10, 14, and 33 are representative of this approach, they were combined by the researcher in order to provide an overall picture of the extent of usage of this approach.

TABLE VI

PERCENTAGE OF FOUR COMBINED QUESTIONNAIRE RESPONSES CONCERNING THE LANGUAGE EXPERIENCE APPROACH

Grade Level	Questions	No. / Percent	*A	*Of	*Occ	*N	*NR
Kindergarten	3, 10, 14, 33	N %	66 27.5	85 35.4	72 30.0	11 4.6	6. 2.5
First	3, 10, 14, 33	N %	115 27.1	147 34.7	141 33.3	14 3.3	7 1.7
Second	3, 10, 14, 33	N %	69 19.6	141 40.1	122 34.7	11 3.1	9 2.6
Other	3, 10, 14, 33	N %	27 26.0	36 34.6	37 35.6	2 1.9	2 1.9

*A-Always, *Of-Often, *Occ-Occasionally, *N-Never, *NR-No Response

Table VI reveals that the language experience approach was used quite often and to a similar extent at the kindergarten, first, second, and "other" levels--all levels were in the 60 percents. It was used, to the greatest extent, at the kindergarten and first-grade levels--63 percent and 62 percent, respectively. It was utilized 61 percent at the "other" level and 60 percent at the second-grade level. Five percent of the kindergarten teachers indicated that they never utilized the language experience approach in beginning reading instruction.

Individualized Reading Approach

Like the language experience approach, the individualized reading approach is another informal approach. Examples of the extent to which aspects of this approach were utilized are demonstrated in Table VII. Questions 4 and 7, which pertain to use of conferences and small, temporary skill groups, respectively, reflect the utilization of the individualized approach.

Small, temporary skill groups are utilized more as an element of the individualized reading approach than are conferences, although both are used quite widely (4, 7). Small, temporary skill groups are formed most often at the "other" level (96 percent), next at the second level (92 percent), followed closely at the first level (91 percent), and least at the kindergarten level (78 percent) (7). Conferences are utilized quite often by 82 percent of the teachers at the first and second levels, 69 percent at the "other" level, and 53 percent at the kindergarten level (4). Fifteen percent of the kindergarten teachers indicated that they never made use of the individualized approach.

TABLE VII

PERCENTAGE OF QUESTIONNAIRE RESPONSES TO VARIOUS FEATURES OF INDIVIDUALIZED READING: QUESTION 4 (CONFERENCES) AND QUESTION 7 (SMALL, TEMPORARY SKILL GROUPS)

Grade Level	No. %	Q 4	*A	*Of	*Occ	*N	*NR	Q 7	*A	*Of	*Occ	*N	*NR
Kindergarten	N	Question 4	14	18	15	9	4	Question 7	35	12	10	2	1
	%		23.3	30.0	25.0	15.0	6.7		58.3	20.0	16.7	3.3	1.7
First	N		48	37	17	4	0		73	23	8	2	0
	%		47.2	34.9	16.0	3.7	0.0		68.9	21.7	7.5	1.9	0.0
Second	N		38	35	11	3	1		62	18	5	1	2
	%		43.1	39.1	12.5	3.4	1.1		70.5	20.5	5.7	1.1	2.3
Other	N		14	4	8	0	0		21	4	1	0	0
	%		53.8	15.4	30.8	0.0	0.0		80.8	15.4	3.8	0.0	0.0

*A-Always, *Of-Often, *Occ-Occasionally, *N-Never, *NR-No Response
Q-Question

Responses According to School Organizational Patterns

Four responses were analyzed according to various school organizational patterns--questions 4, 5, 6, and 25. Table VIII includes information related to school organizational patterns and the percentage of response. Responses to question 4, in Table VIII, indicate the following percentage of usage of conferences was extensive in the various types of school organization: 1) "other" (95 percent),

2) self-contained and nongraded (92 percent each), and 3) open space and team teaching (86 percent each).

Reading was integrated quite often (89 percent) into all areas of the curriculum in the open space settings (5). (See Table VIII.) Both team teaching and nongraded environments rated 63 percent; the "other" pattern or organization rated 50 percent. No attempt at integrating reading was made in the "other" category (30 percent) or in the self-contained classroom (16 percent).

Reading was taught very often as a separate subject. The teachers responded as follows: 1) nongraded (94 percent), 2) open space and team teaching (90 percent each), 3) self-contained (77 percent), and 4) "other" category (75 percent). Examination of question 25, concerning the frequency of usage of individually, prescribed diagnosed instruction, reveals the following information: 1) nongraded (81 percent), 2) team teaching (75 percent), 3) open space (69 percent), 4) self-contained (66 percent), and 5) "other" category (65 percent).

Integration of Reading and Reading as a Separate Subject

The integration of reading into all areas of the curriculum implies a movement toward more informal, meaningful teaching procedures. On the other hand, reading taught as a separate subject exhibits more use of formal teaching techniques.

Questions 5 and 6, which are opposites, reveal some interesting data. They are included in Table IX.

Teacher responses indicated that reading was quite often integrated into the curriculum and that it was taught as a separate

TABLE VIII

FOUR QUESTIONNAIRE RESPONSES--ACCORDING TO TYPE OF SCHOOL ORGANIZATIONAL PATTERN

Pattern of Organization	No. / Percent	*A	*Of	*Occ	*N	*NR	Question (Q)
Self-contained	N %	43 67.2	16 25.0	5 7.8	0 0.0	0 0.0	Q.4: Children confer regularly with teachers about materials they have read and their progress.
Open Space	N %	68 55.7	36 29.5	15 12.3	1 0.8	2 1.6	
Team Teaching	N %	65 53.7	39 32.1	14 11.6	1 0.8	2 1.7	
Nongraded	N %	38 61.3	19 30.6	4 6.5	0 0.0	1 1.6	
Other	N %	17 85.0	2 10.0	0 0.0	0 0.0	1 5.0	
Self-contained	N %	28 43.7	12 18.7	14 21.9	10 15.6	0 0.0	Q.5: Reading instruction is integrated into all areas of the curriculum.
Open Space	N %	85 69.7	23 18.8	5 4.1	5 4.1	4 3.3	
Team Teaching	N %	79 65.3	24 19.0	6 4.9	6 4.9	6 4.9	
Nongraded	N %	43 69.2	9 14.5	4 6.5	3 4.8	3 4.8	
Other	N %	6 30.0	4 20.0	2 10.0	6 30.0	2 10.0	

TABLE VIII (Continued)

Pattern of Organization	No. / Percent	*A	*Of	*Occ	*N	*NR	Question (Q)
Self-contained	N %	30 46.8	19 29.7	12 18.7	2 3.1	1 1.6	Q.6: Reading is taught in a specified or scheduled period as a separate subject.
Open Space	N %	91 74.6	18 14.8	9 7.4	4 3.3	0 0.0	
Team Teaching	N %	88 72.7	21 17.3	7 5.8	4 3.3	1 0.8	
Nongraded	N %	50 80.6	8 12.8	2 3.2	0 0.0	2 3.2	
Other	N %	8 40.0	7 35.0	4 20.0	0 0.0	1 5.0	
Self-contained	N %	21 32.8	21 32.8	9 14.1	8 12.5	5 7.8	Q.25: Individually prescribed, diagnosed instruction characterizes reading instruction.
Open Space	N %	42 34.4	43 35.2	28 22.9	4 3.3	5 4.1	
Team Teaching	N %	43 35.5	47 38.8	20 16.5	5 4.1	6 4.9	
Nongraded	N %	27 43.5	23 37.1	8 12.9	3 4.8	1 1.6	
Other	N %	5 25.0	8 40.0	3 15.0	3 15.0	1 5.0	

*A-Always, *Of-Often, *Occ-Occasionally, *N-Never, *NR-No Response

subject in a scheduled period. At the kindergarten level, reading was integrated 88 percent; it was taught as a separate subject 62 percent. At the first grade level reading was integrated 88 percent; it was taught as a separate subject to a similar degree, 89 percent. Reading was both integrated and taught as a separate subject at the first-grade level by 85 percent of the teachers responding to both questions 5 and 6. In the "other" cateogry of organization, reading was integrated 81 percent and taught as a separate subject 88 percent. Twenty percent of the kindergarten teachers indicated that they never taught reading in a specified period as a separate subject.

TABLE IX

PERCENTAGE OF QUESTIONNAIRE RESPONSES CONCERNING THE TEACHING OF READING: QUESTION 5 (INTEGRATED INTO CURRICULUM) AND QUESTION 6 (SEPARATE SUBJECT)

Grade Level	No. %	Q 5	*A	*Of	*Occ	*N	*NR	Q 6	*A	*Of	*Occ	*N	*NR
Kindergarten	N	Question 5	33	20	6	1	0	Question 6	25	12	10	12	1
	%		55.0	33.3	10.0	1.7	0.0		41.7	20.0	16.7	20.0	1.7
First	N		68	25	13	0	0		69	25	7	4	1
	%		64.2	23.6	12.3	0.0	0.0		65.1	23.6	6.6	3.6	0.9
Second	N		41	33	10	0	4		54	20	8	2	4
	%		46.6	37.5	11.4	0.0	4.5		61.7	22.7	9.1	2.3	4.5
Other	N		10	11	5	0	0		19	4	2	0	1
	%		38.5	42.3	19.2	0.0	0.0		73.1	15.4	7.7	0.0	3.8

*A-Always, *Of-Often, *Occ-Occasionally, *N-Never, *NR-No Response
Q-Question

Standardized Tests and Individually Prescribed Diagnosis

There is some controversy concerning the value of standardized tests in assessing the reading needs of students. There is a trend in the direction of more inclusion of individually, prescribed diagnosis. The more open schools are becoming involved in individual diagnosis (Walberg and Thomas, 1972).

Questions 16 and 25, in Table X, indicate that teachers in kindergarten, first, second, and "other" category levels, utilize standardized tests in assessing reading readiness with some degree of regularity (60 percent range). They individually prescribe and diagnose student reading needs to a similar degree in first grade (68 percent), to a lesser degree in kindergarten (51 percent), and to a greater extent in the second and the "other" category (82 percent and 89 percent, respectively).

Summary

The results of the obtained data were presented in this chapter. Results from the questionnaires were presented in tabulated form and a discussion of this data was given.

Data were classified according to the questions proposed in Chapter I and other related themes. They were collected into frequency distributions and presented in the analysis of the findings of the study. The summary of the study, the conclusions drawn, and the recommendations for further research are presented in Chapter V.

TABLE X

PERCENTAGE OF QUESTIONNAIRE RESPONSES CONCERNING EVALUATION: QUESTION 16 (ASSESSMENT THROUGH STANDARDIZED TESTS) AND QUESTION 25 (INDIVIDUALLY PRESCRIBED DIAGNOSIS)

Grade Level	No. %	Q 16	*A	*Of	*Occ	*N	*NR	Q 25	*A	*Of	*Occ	*N	*NR
Kindergarten	N	Question 16	23	13	8	16	0	Question 25	17	14	19	4	6
	%		38.3	21.7	13.3	26.7	0.0		28.3	23.3	31.7	6.7	10.0
First	N		42	28	22	12	2		38	34	20	6	8
	%		39.6	26.4	20.8	11.3	1.9		35.9	32.1	18.9	5.7	7.6
Second	N		33	26	17	8	4		34	38	11	4	1
	%		37.5	29.5	19.2	9.1	4.5		38.6	43.1	12.5	4.5	1.1
Other	N		12	4	8	2	0		14	9	2	0	1
	%		46.2	15.4	30.8	7.7	0.0		53.8	34.5	7.7	0.0	3.8

*A-Always, *Of-Often, *Occ-Occasionally, *N-Never, *NR-No Response
Q-Question

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

General Summary of the Investigation

The purpose of this study was to identify and describe initial reading practices in selected open-education schools in three of the midprairie states--Oklahoma, Kansas, and Nebraska. The investigation attempted to identify and describe the types of reading approaches, materials, and reading skills used in initial reading instruction in open classrooms.

A review of research and literature served as a basis for construction of the _Openness Instrument_ and the _Reading Practices Questionnaire (K-2)_. Two sets of experts, one on open education and one on reading, along with experienced professionals, kindergarten, first-grade, and second-grade teachers, comprised the two juries. A pilot study was conducted with kindergarten, first-grade, and second-grade teachers. The questionnaire was revised according to suggestions from the jurors and the pilot-study members.

The _Openness Instrument_, cover letter, and a form for teachers' names were mailed to 103 school principals in Oklahoma, Kansas, and Nebraska. These schools had been identified by the curriculum divisions of the state departments of education in the three states as possible "open-concept" schools. A follow-up letter, containing the same

materials as the first contact, was mailed. The percentage of response was 89.0 (92 responses). Of the 92 responding principals, 48 percent (44 responses) were designated as "open" schools, according to the established criteria of 80 percent on the Openness Instrument. Responses to the instrument were also analyzed according to frequency and percentage of response to each category. Two hundred and sixty-nine kindergarten, first-grade, and second-grade teachers comprised the population from the 44 designated schools. Of the 269 teachers mailed questionnaires, 210 responded (78 percent). For each question on the questionnaire, the number and percentage of responses was determined. Data were discussed in terms of the three questions composed at the outset of the study--aspects of reading approaches, reading materials, and reading skills. Other themes, subdivisions of these three areas, were presented and discussed as results.

Conclusions

Although only 48 percent of the principals who responded to the Openness Instrument qualified as "open" for the study, the entire group of 92 principals who initially responded, were characterized by some favorable aspects of openness. Five of these characteristics, which were established the most firmly included: 1) a greater display of respect and trust among children and more openness in all relationships; 2) encouragement of informal talking between children; 3) many different activities going on simultaneously in the classroom; 4) teachers are adaptable, continual learners, serving more as resource persons for helping children reach their own potential, and 5) children are allowed to move freely about the room without permission.

Based on the analysis of the data, the following conclusions were reached regarding what initial reading approaches, materials, and skills, are utilized in open-education environments.

Conclusions about Initial Reading Approaches

Open classroom teachers were characterized by using aspects of various reading approaches to initial reading instruction. These various reading approaches are classified as formal and/or informal.

Formal Approaches. Aspects of a formal approach to reading are evidenced by 65 percent of the open classroom teachers in that they base instruction on curriculum guides or texts. Formal approaches, such as the synthetic-phonic approach and the analytic-phonic approach, were used quite extensively. The synthetic-phonic approach, which emphasized phonics first, was utilized more often than the analytic-phonic approach, such as the approach in the basal reader. This practice differs from descriptions of reading programs in the literature, as described in the Harvard-Carnegie study. This study revealed that the basal reader approach is still used more often than other approaches in "traditional" classrooms (Austin and Morrison, 1963, p. 21).

Linguistic Approach. Teachers are using a linguistic approach quite often (66 percent). The linguistic approach has been widely accepted. Surrounded by an aura of scientific terms, the recent arrival of linguistics has provided teachers with renewed hope about teaching reading (Aukerman, 1971).

Informal Approach. Teachers appear to be moving toward the inclusion of more informal reading approaches, such as the language

experience approach and the individualized reading approach, than was described in the Harvard-Carnegie study. Only one school system employed the language experience approach and only one was totally committed to individualized reading (Austin and Morrison, 1973, p. 21). The language experience approach was used by kindergarten, first-grade, and second-grade teachers in the 60 percent range. Teachers utilized this approach at the kindergarten and first-grade level, 63 and 62 percent, respectively. At the "other" level this approach was used by 61 percent of the teachers; at the second-grade level this approach was used by 60 percent of the teachers. Elements of the individualized reading approach, such as small, temporary skill groups and conferences, were utilized quite extensively at the four levels included in the study with the small groups being used more often than conferences. Small, temporary groups were formed more often in the "other" category which implies a combination of kindergarten with some first, second or another level. This was followed closely in use by the second and first levels. Schools with all types of organizational patterns used the conference. The "other" category was the highest in usage (95 percent) followed by a 92 percent usage by both self-contained classes and nongraded schools. This was followed by an 86 percent usage by both the open space-type school and the nongraded school.

<u>Interdisciplinary Approach</u>. The fact that reading was integrated into the curriculum demonstrates that a new practice is used in teaching reading (Austin and Morrison, 1963, p. 73). An interdisciplinary approach to reading instruction was used quite extensively by 87 percent of the teachers in kindergarten, first-grade, second-grade, and other combinations of these grades. At the kindergarten level, reading

was integrated into the curriculum to a much greater extent than it was taught as a separate subject. Twenty percent of the kindergarten teachers indicated that they never teach reading separately. At the first, second, and "other" category levels, the extent to which reading is integrated and also taught as a separate subject is about the same.

Reading was integrated most often in the open-space school setting. Next it was integrated most often in nongraded schools and in schools with team teaching. Reading was integrated, to a lesser degree, in the self-contained classroom and "other" organizational patterns; teachers in the self-contained classrooms and the "other" category never attempted to integrate reading, 16 percent and 30 percent, respectively. In contrast to the integration of reading into the curriculum, the nongraded schools, open space schools, and schools with team teaching had teachers who, very frequently, taught reading as a separate subject. Again, teachers in the self-contained classroom and "other" organizational pattern, taught reading as a separate subject to a lesser degree than in the other patterns.

To the extent that these responses are accurate, the researcher concludes that reading is being taught all the time, either in an integrated fashion or as a separate subject. Reading is taught more in schools that are nongraded or open space or that have team teaching and less in self-contained and "other" patterns of school organization.

Reading Readiness Approaches. Reading readiness approaches were characterized by much discussion of the child's activities. They include many opportunities for him to browse through books.

Grouping. Children work extensively in groups at various activities (91 percent) almost as much as they work individually (92 percent).

Eighty-six percent of the teachers used the groups on a temporary basis for teaching specific skills; 40 percent let children form groups on the basis of common interests. These techniques are a sharp departure from the three-groups (high, medium, and low) which occur in "traditional" classrooms. It is also important to note that reading instruction evolves, to a much greater extent, from the child's individual activities than the descriptions suggested several years ago (Austin and Morrison, 1963, p. 76).

Assessment. Reading needs were assessed through standardized tests by 63 percent of the teachers. Individual students received diagnostic, prescriptive services by 67 percent of the teachers. This description is very different from past accounts of assessment in "traditional" classes in that standardized tests were predominately relied on to measure the reading progress of children (Austin and Morrison, 1963, p. 162).

Conclusions about Initial Reading Materials

Open classroom teachers utilized many types of reading materials in beginning reading instruction. Manipulative materials were included in the available resources.

Identical Texts. Use of identical texts and the formal categorization of books characterized teachers more often than did the use of self-authored books. This description sounds similar to that of one given over ten years ago in that classrooms had an abundance of textbooks and basal series. The fact, however, that 40 percent of the teachers indicated that children wrote their own books is a marked increase to what has occurred in the past (Austin and Morrison, 1963, p. 54).

Workbooks. Workbooks, accompanying basal readers, were used by 66 percent of the teachers. Sixteen percent of the teachers indicated that they never used workbooks. That 16 percent indicated that they never used workbooks is significant in that teachers are beginning to break away from them.

Specially Prepared Materials. Seventy-four percent of the teachers design individual materials for specific areas of concern, such as skill development. The researcher concludes that teachers are involved in more preparation of materials for individual students, as opposed to reliance on workbooks (Austin and Morrison, 1963, p. 56).

Abundance of Materials. It is evident that there was an abundance and variety of manipulative materials (89 percent). Books were available on a wide range of difficulty levels (90 percent) and on a wide range of topics (93 percent). Content area books were available according to 80 percent of the teachers. Initial Teaching Alphabet (i.t.a.) materials were used quite often by 16 percent of the teachers; 67 percent never utilized these materials. Reading kits were used by 35 percent of the teachers. Programmed materials were used more often than reading kits--48 percent. Informal materials such as experience charts and records of plant and animal life were used by teachers 59 percent and 29 percent, respectively. Experience charts were used somewhat more than formal commercial materials, such as reading kits.

Materials that Stimulate Creative Activities. Reading materials served as springboards to creative activities, such as dramatization, painting, music, and puppetry, according to a 78 percent response of the teachers. The language arts are evidently a vital part of the open classroom, as are art and music activities.

Conclusions about Initial Reading Skills

Initial reading skills, based on Wisconsin Design and encompassing word attack, comprehension, and self-directed reading skills, were used quite extensively in initial reading instruction in the open classroom. As a whole, the percentage of usage of word attack skills was slightly higher than either that of the comprehension group or the self-directed group.

Word Attack Skills. The two word attack skills used by 95 percent of the teachers were listening for initial consonant sounds and following left-to-right sequence. Listening for rhyming elements and noticing differences in pictures, letters, numbers, and words were skills used by 90 percent of the teachers. (See Table IV.) Next, phonics analysis skills occurred in frequency of usage, followed by context clues, sight vocabulary, distinguishing colors, and structural analysis skills.

Comprehension Skills. The extent to which the teachers used the five comprehension skills with initial reading instruction was comparable. The skill of determining the sequence was utilized the most by teachers. Next teachers used the skills, determining outcomes, drawing conclusions, selecting the main idea, and determining cause-effect relationship.

Self-Directed Reading Skills. Learning to apply work habits independently was included as instruction by 91 percent of the teachers; selecting free reading materials independently was used by 90 percent of the teachers. Eighty-eight percent emphasized participation in recreational reading. Reference skills was an area of less emphasis

(68 percent). The teachers stressed independent work habits, independence in selecting reading materials, and involvement in recreational reading.

Suggestions for Further Research

There are a number of areas requiring further research which developed from this inquiry into initial reading practices in open education environments. The following questions, from which hypotheses may be formulated, appear to require further investigation:

(1) Should this study be conducted in classrooms which teachers define as "traditional" in order to describe initial reading practices in that setting?

(2) Should this study be conducted in classrooms which teachers define as "traditional" in order to determine the extent of differences, if any, between open and traditional beginning reading experiences?

(3) Is there a relationship between initial reading practices in open classrooms and "traditional" classrooms?

(4) What types of school organizational patterns constitute open classrooms?

(5) Are the various types of school organizational patterns, which exist in open education, equally as effective, or does one type enhance initial reading instruction, with regard to reading achievement, to a greater degree than another?

(6) Is academic achievement in beginning reading lessened, enhanced, or unaffected when open classroom children are compared with children taught in "traditional" classrooms?

(7) Do open classroom reading practices lend themselves to standardized evaluation procedures or must new techniques be devised to ascertain the cognitive as well as the affective results of reading instruction in the open classroom?

(8) Will an on-site observation, which includes check-list ratings, validate the Openness Instrument and the Reading Practices Questionnaire (K-2)?

(9) What types of reading practices exist in the intermediate grades of open classrooms?

Concluding Remarks

At first glance, initial reading instruction in open education environments may appear to be the same as other beginning reading programs (Austin and Morrison, 1963, p. 21). An investigation comparing initial reading instruction in the open classroom with instruction in the "traditional" classroom would determine if there really is a difference in the two programs. For the purpose of this survey, examination of the findings does reveal that there has been a considerable shift from traditional reading programs.

Teachers (in the open classroom) appear to be eclectic as far as beginning reading is concerned. Many different approaches and materials were utilized, depending on assessment of the child's reading needs through both standardized tests and individual diagnosis. Elements of the linguistic approach were often used by two-thirds of the teachers. Aspects of the Initial Teaching Alphabet (i.t.a.), programmed reading, and reading kits were used, but not on a wide scale. Formal approaches, like the synthetic-phonic approach and analytic-

phonic approach, were utilized less than in the past. The synthetic-phonic approach was utilized more than the analytic-phonic approach, which is still used by two-thirds of the teachers. Teachers were incorporating more informal approaches into the curriculum, including elements of both individualized reading and the language experience approach--small groups formed for specific skill instruction, or on the basis of common interest, and experience charts.

Beginning reading was taught, all the time, both in an interdisciplinary fashion and as a separate subject in the open classroom. Reading instruction was characterized by much discussion of the activities of the child, many experiences with books, more individually-designed materials for skill development and less dependence on workbooks, and an abundance of manipulative materials and books on varying topics and levels of difficulty. Word attack skills were stressed slightly more than comprehension and self-directed skills.

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APPENDIX A

LETTER TO PRINCIPALS

Oklahoma State University
Gundersen 104
Stillwater, Oklahoma 74074
February 14, 1974

Dear Principal:

This instrument is part of a three-state study concerned with identifying and describing the types of initial reading practices which predominantly exist in open education environments in the Midprairie states.

This research study is receiving endorsement by Sally Augustine, Early Childhood Education Specialist, and Sarah Webb, Reading Specialist, both from the Oklahoma State Department of Education. It is being conducted under the direction of Bernard R. Belden, Professor, Curriculum and Instruction Department, Oklahoma State University.

On the basis of information from the State Department of Education and other reliable sources, your school has been selected to receive the instrument on varying degrees of openness. As the principal, you are in a position to contribute important information which will aid in determining the degree of openness that can be seen in your school environment.

Please send the names of the teachers in your schools who would traditionally be teaching in kindergarten, first, and second grades. This information will assist us in contacting your teachers who will be asked to complete questionnaires on initial reading practices.

Will you please give a few minutes of your valuable time to respond to the enclosed form and return it in the stamped-addressed envelope at your earliest convenience? All returns will be treated as confidential and will be coded so that schools can be contacted further about participating in the study.

Your cooperation in this project will be appreciated.

Sincerely,

(Miss) Janette Staton
Curriculum and Instruction Department

Bernard R. Belden
Professor
Curriculum and Instruction Department

Enclosure

Oklahoma State University
Gundersen 104
Stillwater, Oklahoma 74074
February 14, 1974

Dear Principal:

This instrument is part of a three-state study concerned with identifying and describing the types of initial reading practices which predominantly exist in open education environments in the Midprairie states.

According to Charles E. Nicholson, Director of Curriculum, Kansas State Department of Education, your school is reported as having the open school concept.

On the basis of information from the Kansas State Department of Education, your school has been selected to receive the instrument on varying degrees of openness. As the principal, you are in a position to contribute important information which will aid in determining the degree of openness that can be seen in your school environment.

Please send the names of the teachers in your schools who would traditionally be teaching in kindergarten, first, and second grades. This information will assist us in contacting your teachers who will be asked to complete questionnaires on initial reading practices.

Will you please give a few minutes of your valuable time to respond to the enclosed form and return it in the stamped-addressed envelope at your earliest convenience? All returns will be treated as confidential and will be coded so that schools can be contacted further about participating in the study.

Your cooperation in this project will be appreciated.

Sincerely,

(Miss) Janette Staton
Curriculum and Instruction Department

Bernard R. Belden
Professor
Curriculum and Instruction Department

Enclosure

Oklahoma State University
Gundersen 104
Stillwater, Oklahoma 74074
February 14, 1974

Dear Principal:

This instrument is part of a three-state study concerned with identifying and describing the types of initial reading practices which predominantly exist in open education environments in the Midprairie states.

According to Jerry Rutherford, Administrative Consultant, Nebraska School Management Services, your school system is listed as having buildings and organizations which can be considered to be open concept schools.

On the basis of information from the Nebraska State Department of Education, your school has been selected to receive the instrument on varying degrees of openness. As the principal, you are in a position to contribute important information which will aid in determining the degree of openness that can be seen in your school environment.

Please send the names of the teachers in your schools who would traditionally be teaching in kindergarten, first, and second grades. This information will assist us in contacting your teachers who will be asked to complete questionnaires on initial reading practices.

Will you please give a few minutes of your valuable time to respond to the enclosed form and return it in the stamped-addressed envelope at your earliest convenience? All returns will be treated as confidential and will be coded so that schools can be contacted further about participating in the study.

Your cooperation in this project will be appreciated.

Sincerely,

(Miss) Janette Staton
Curriculum and Instruction Department

Bernard R. Belden
Professor
Curriculum and Instruction Department

Enclosure

APPENDIX B

OPENNESS INSTRUMENT

Openness Instrument

Directions: There are many degrees of openness in school environments. From the four alternatives for each item, circle the number which best represents the degree of openness that can be evidenced in your school environment.

	not being considered	in planning stage	initiated	well established
1. Children work with many diverse manipulative materials.	1	2	3	4
2. Classrooms include materials developed by children and teachers and common materials (such as rocks, sand, water, pets, plants, etc.).	1	2	3	4
3. Teachers often modify the content and arrangement of the classroom based upon diagnosis and evaluation of the children's needs, interests, and use of materials and space.	1	2	3	4
4. Children are allowed to move freely about the room without asking permission.	1	2	3	4
5. Many different activities go on simultaneously in the classroom.	1	2	3	4
6. Informal talking between children and exchanging of information and ideas is encouraged.	1	2	3	4
7. Children work individually and in small groups largely determined by their own choices, and guided by the teacher according to needs.	1	2	3	4
8. Teachers' record-keeping consists of individual notes and progress reports chronicling each child's development.	1	2	3	4
9. To obtain diagnostic information, teachers attentively observe the specific work or concern of each child and ask immediate, experience-based questions.	1	2	3	4

	not being considered	in planning stage	initiated	well established
10. Teachers utilize learning approaches which encourage children's initiative and choice and allow for maximum integration of curriculum subjects.	1	2	3	4
11. Teachers build an attitude of respect and trust among children and exhibit openness in their relationships with children.	1	2	3	4
12. Colleagues, supporting advisors, community members and other adults and adolescents are urged to active participation in the classroom (or curriculum).	1	2	3	4
13. Children's innate curiousity and self-perpetuating exploratory behavior form the basis for the learning in school; children have the opportunity to pursue interests.	1	2	3	4
14. Teachers are adaptable, continual learners who see themselves as resources for helping children reach their own potential.	1	2	3	4

APPENDIX C

FORM FOR TEACHERS' NAMES

Directions: Please list the kindergarten, first, and second grade teachers in your school. Return with instrument on varying degrees of openness.

Name of School: __________ Address: __________

LIST OF TEACHERS (K, 1st, 2nd)

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.
6.
7.
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13.
14.
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19.
20.

APPENDIX D

FOLLOW-UP LETTER TO PRINCIPALS

Oklahoma State University
Gundersen 104
Stillwater, Oklahoma 74074
March 20, 1974

Dear Principal:

Several weeks ago a letter and an instrument on openness was mailed to you. You may have been too busy to respond at that time or you may have lost the letter.

Enclosed is the same instrument on openness and a form for listing your kindergarten, first, and second grade teachers. Will you please give a few minutes of your valuable time to respond to the forms and return them in the stamped-addressed envelope as soon as possible?

Your participation and cooperation in this research is greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

(Miss) Janette Staton
Curriculum and Instruction Department

APPENDIX E

LETTER TO TEACHERS

Oklahoma State University
Gundersen 104
Stillwater, Oklahoma
March 8, 1974

Dear Teacher:

You have been identified by your principal as a teacher who would be well qualified and willing to cooperate in a three-state study concerned with the present status of initial reading practices in open education settings. This research study is receiving endorsement by Sally Augustine, Early Childhood Education Specialist, and Sarah Webb, Reading Specialist, both from the Oklahoma State Department of Education. It is being conducted under the direction of Bernard R. Belden, Professor, Curriculum and Instruction Department, Oklahoma State University. It is hoped that the information gained from this research can contribute to our knowledge of initial reading practices in the open classroom and can eventually help improve instruction in beginning reading.

If you would be kind enough to assist us in this research, you are asked to fill out the enclosed questionnaire on initial reading practices. The average time for teachers trying out the instrument was about twelve minutes.

It will be appreciated if you will complete the instrument prior to March 22 and return it in the enclosed stamped, addressed envelope. Since returns will be treated as confidential, you are encouraged to answer all questions as honestly as possible. The questionnaires will be coded so that follow-up cards can be mailed. We will be pleased to send you a summary of the results if you desire.

Your assistance with this research is greatly appreciated. It is through the participation of individuals such as you that we gain greater knowledge and understanding of initial reading instruction as it is today.

Sincerely yours,

(Miss) Janette Staton
Curriculum and Instruction Department

Bernard R. Belden, Professor
Curriculum and Instruction Department

Enclosures: 2

APPENDIX F

READING PRACTICES QUESTIONNAIRE (K-2)

Reading Practices Questionnaire (K-2)

Directions: Please complete the information on this form and return it in the enclosed, stamped, addressed envelope.

1. Male_______Female_______

2. Age: 21-25_______26-45_______46-60_______

3. Highest degree held_______

4. Years of teaching experience (not counting this year)_______

5. Years of teaching experience in an open classroom setting______

6. Teaching level: K_______1st_______2nd_______Other_______

7. Number of reading courses you have had_______

8. What training have you had for teaching in an open classroom?
   Courses_______Workshop_______Consultant Services_______Other_______

9. Which of the following terms describe your school's organizational pattern?
   Self-contained_______Open Space_______Team Teaching_______
   Nongraded_______Other_______

Please respond to the questionnaire in these four ways, using the following directions:

1) ALWAYS - This is used regularly as a first-choice activity.
2) OFTEN - There are other things I do first, but I use this as an alternative or supplement.
3) OCCASIONALLY - This is used once in a while.
4) NEVER - (1) This is something I have not used, or (2) Not familiar with the concept expressed.

Directions: From the four alternatives for each item, circle the number which best represents the reading approaches used in your own classroom.

	Always	Often	Occasionally	Never
1. Children start reading by building up a sight vocabulary through experiences and associating pictures with words.	1	2	3	4
2. Children start reading by developing sound-symbol relationships.	1	2	3	4
3. Children are led to read through pursuit of first-hand experiences.	1	2	3	4

	Always	Often	Occasionally	Never
4. Children confer regularly with the teacher about materials they have read and their progress.	1	2	3	4
5. Reading instruction is integrated into all areas of the curriculum.	1	2	3	4
6. Reading is taught in a specified or scheduled period as a separate subject.	1	2	3	4
7. Small, flexible, but temporary groups are formed on the basis of need for specific skill instruction.	1	2	3	4
8. Small groups are formed on the basis of common interests.	1	2	3	4
9. Language development, particularly reading and writing, is fostered through activities at interest centers.	1	2	3	4
10. Each child dictates his experience story which he later reads.	1	2	3	4
11. Reading and writing skills are developed together, reinforcing each other in the early stages.	1	2	3	4
12. Reading readiness experience includes much discussion of the child's activities, such as his paintings or drawings.	1	2	3	4
13. Children willingly serve as helpers for each other, assisting in specific areas that need development or reinforcement.	1	2	3	4
14. Almost everything is labeled, described, or analyzed, including interesting pictures, exhibits, and activities.	1	2	3	4
15. Children start reading by blending together the separate sounds of letters to form wholly-pronounced words.	1	2	3	4
16. One of the ways reading readiness is assessed is through the use of standardized tests, such as the Metropolitan Readiness Test.	1	2	3	4

	Always	Often	Occasionally	Never
17. Children are taught to read by first looking at the whole word and then attempting to break it down into parts through the use of word attack skills.	1	2	3	4
18. Individual reading interests and wide reading are encouraged through self-selection of such materials as books, stories written by other children and magazines.	1	2	3	4
19. Children are given opportunities to browse through books before they can read, handling them, looking at pictures, and trying to find words they know.	1	2	3	4
20. Children have the opportunity to select books and to share their reading experiences with other children.	1	2	3	4
21. Children choose reading as one of their free activities.	1	2	3	4
22. Children are allowed to work individually at various activities.	1	2	3	4
23. Children are allowed to work in groups at various activities.	1	2	3	4
24. Reading instruction is based on curriculum guides or text books.	1	2	3	4
25. Individually prescribed, diagnosed instruction characterizes reading instruction.	1	2	3	4
26. Reading is taught through basic patterns in spelling (consonant-vowel-consonant patterns) such as hat, fat, mat, and sat.	1	2	3	4

Directions: From the four alternatives for each item, circle the number which best represents the use you make of reading materials in your own classroom.

	Always	Often	Occasionally	Never
27. Identical texts and materials are supplied in sets so that each child may have his own.	1	2	3	4
28. There is an abundance and variety of available manipulative materials.	1	2	3	4
29. Books are categorized according to textbooks, basal readers, supplementary books, and library books.	1	2	3	4
30. Children use 'books' which are self-authored and written by their classmates as part of their first reading books and reference materials.	1	2	3	4
31. Books are available on a wide range of topics.	1	2	3	4
32. Books are available on a wide range of difficulty levels.	1	2	3	4
33. Experience charts are used.	1	2	3	4
34. Initial Teaching Alphabet (i.t.a.) materials are used.	1	2	3	4
35. Records of plant and animal life are kept by the children or the teachers.	1	2	3	4
36. Workbooks are used in conjunction with basal texts.	1	2	3	4
37. Reading kits such as the Peabody Language Development Kits are used.	1	2	3	4
38. Specific materials, specially prepared, are used for individually selected information and skills development.	1	2	3	4
39. Children use programmed materials, working at their own rates.	1	2	3	4
40. Children are free to include content area books, such as science and social studies books, in their free reading time.	1	2	3	4
41. Reading materials serve as springboards to creative activities including dramatization, painting, music, and puppetry.	1	2	3	4

Directions: From the four alternatives for each item, circle the number which best indicates the extent to which you include these reading skills in beginning reading instruction.

	Always	Often	Occasionally	Never
WORD ATTACK SKILLS				
42. listening for rhyming elements	1	2	3	4
43. noticing likenesses and differences in pictures, letters, numbers, and words	1	2	3	4
44. distinguishing colors	1	2	3	4
45. listening for initial consonant sounds	1	2	3	4
46. building a sight vocabulary	1	2	3	4
47. following left-to-right sequence	1	2	3	4
48. using phonics analysis skills	1	2	3	4
49. using structural analysis skills	1	2	3	4
50. using context clues	1	2	3	4
COMPREHENSION SKILLS				
51. selecting main idea	1	2	3	4
52. determining outcomes	1	2	3	4
53. determining sequence	1	2	3	4
54. determining cause-effect relationship	1	2	3	4
55. drawing conclusions	1	2	3	4
SELF-DIRECTED READING SKILLS				
56. applying knowledge of sequence within a book, such as use of the index and table of contents	1	2	3	4
57. showing initiative in selecting picture books	1	2	3	4
58. applying work habits independently	1	2	3	4
59. selecting free reading materials independently	1	2	3	4
60. participating in recreational reading	1	2	3	4

APPENDIX G

FOLLOW-UP POSTCARD

OSU, Gundersen 104
Stillwater, Okla. 74074
March 22, 1974

Dear Teacher,

Recently, a letter with a questionnaire regarding initial reading practices in open classrooms was forwarded to you. It is important to have the questionnaire from you included in the study. Will you please complete the questionnaire and return it to me as soon as possible? Thank you.

Sincerely,

(Miss) Janette Staton
Curriculum and Instruction Dept.

APPENDIX H

LETTER TO JURORS ON *OPENNESS INSTRUMENT*

Oklahoma State University
Gundersen 104
Stillwater, Oklahoma 74074
January 9, 1974

Dear

My dissertation study is concerned with identifying and describing the types of initial reading practices which predominantly exist in open education environments in the midprairie states. In order to conduct the study, however, I need your assistance.

Fourteen statements dealing with the concept of open education have been compiled from the research of Walberg and Thomas. These statements have been grouped into four categories, each representing a different degree of openness. In my study the principal of the building will be asked to complete this form as it pertains to his particular school environment. This form will serve as an indicator of varying degrees of openness. A questionnaire on initial reading practices will be mailed to teachers in the most "open" settings in an attempt to describe reading approaches, materials, and skills.

You have been identified as a well-qualified person to serve on the jury to validate the items on this form. Would you respond to the enclosed form and evaluate it? Are the directions clear? Are the statements clear? Do the statements accurately represent the concept of open education? Will the respondent have difficulty deciding which category to use? Would a 70 percent circling of answers in columns three and four serve as an acceptable criteria for classifying a school as "open"? Will this form discriminate between traditional and open concept schools?

A stamped, addressed envelope is included for your convenience in returning the form to me as soon as possible. I hope you will feel free to add suggestions or criticisms.

Your cooperation and participation will be appreciated.

Sincerely,

(Miss) Janette Staton
Curriculum and Instruction Department

Bernard R. Belden
Professor
Curriculum and Instruction Department

APPENDIX I

LETTER TO JURORS ON *READING PRACTICES QUESTIONNAIRE (K-2)*

Oklahoma State University
Gundersen 104
Stillwater, Oklahoma 74074
February 11, 1974

Dear

This questionnaire is part of a three-state study concerned with identifying and describing the types of initial reading practices which predominantly exist in open education environments in the mid-prairie states. In order to conduct the study, however, I need your assistance.

An instrument, indicating degrees of openness, has been validated by a jury of competent, knowledgeable persons. The principal of the building will be asked to complete the form, indicating the degree of openness in his particular school. Teachers (K-2) in schools indicating a "high degree of openness" will be asked to complete a questionnaire on initial reading practices.

You have been identified as a well-qualified person to serve on the jury to validate the items on the questionnaire of initial reading practices. Would you respond to the enclosed form and evaluate it? Are the directions in each section clear? Are the statements clear? Will the respondent have difficulty deciding which category to use? Do the statements accurately represent "initial" reading approaches, reading materials, and reading skills as found in this setting? Do the items need to be grouped by topic under each heading or placed at random as they now appear?

A stamped, addressed envelope is included for your convenience in returning the form to me as soon as possible. I hope you will feel free to add suggestions or criticisms.

Your cooperation and participation will be appreciated.

Sincerely,

(Miss) Janette Staton
Curriculum and Instruction Department

Bernard R. Belden
Professor
Curriculum and Instruction Department

APPENDIX J

NAMES OF JURORS ON *OPENNESS INSTRUMENT*

Members of Jury on Openness Instrument

Members of the jury were as follows: William James, Director of the Follow Through Programs, Shawnee, Oklahoma; Sally Augustine; Director of Early Childhood Education at the State Department of Education, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma; Mavis Martin, Professor, Department of Elementary Education at the University of New Mexico, Albuquerque, New Mexico. At Oklahoma State University several members of the Curriculum and Instruction Department served as jury members: Donald Myers, Department Head; Idella Lohmann, Professor; Bernard Belden, Professor; Charles Smith, Assistant Professor; Linda Norton, former elementary teacher and currently doctoral candidate and graduate assistant. Nick Stinnett, Associate Professor of Family Relations and Child Development, at Oklahoma State University, also served on the jury.

APPENDIX K

NAMES OF JURORS ON *READING PRACTICES*

QUESTIONNAIRE (*K-2*)

Members of Jury on *Reading Practices Questionnaire* (K-2)

Members of the jury included the following: Rita Stuever, Professor at Northwestern State College, Alva, Oklahoma; Edith Haraughty, former elementary teacher, reading teacher, and currently Professor at Northeastern State University, Tahlequah, Oklahoma; Mavis Martin, Professor, Department of Elementary Education, University of New Mexico at Albuquerque, New Mexico; Donna Hicks, former first-grade teacher and graduate assistant at Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma; Melvie Ross, former elementary teacher and graduate assistant at Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma. Others judging the instrument were Sarah Webb, former elementary teacher and currently at the State Department of Education, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma; Edna Jungers, former elementary teacher and currently supervisor of elementary public schools, Stillwater, Oklahoma; Linda Cox, former elementary teacher and currently graduate assistant at Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma. Others at Oklahoma State University who judged the instrument were Bernard Belden, Professor, Idella Lohmann, Professor, Charles Smith, Assistant Professor, and Nick Stinnett, Associate Professor.

VITA

Janette Kay Staton

Candidate for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Thesis: INITIAL READING PRACTICES IN OPEN EDUCATION ENVIRONMENTS IN THE MIDPRAIRIE STATES

Major Field: Elementary Education

Biographical:

Personal Data: Born in Tulsa, Oklahoma, February 6, 1947, the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Lawrence Wade Staton.

Education: Attended public schools in Oklahoma; graduated from Vian High School, Vian, Oklahoma in May, 1965; received a Bachelor of Arts degree in Elementary Education from Harding College, Searcy, Arkansas, in June, 1969; received a Master of Science degree in Elementary Education from State College of Arkansas, Conway, Arkansas, in August, 1970; completed the requirements for the Doctor of Education degree at Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma, in July, 1974.

Professional Experience: Head Start Teacher, Carlile School, Vian, Oklahoma, summer, 1968; first-grade teacher, Lynn Lane Elementary School, Tulsa, Oklahoma, 1970-71; corrective reading teacher, Hamilton Junior High, Tulsa, Oklahoma, 1971-72; elementary corrective reading teacher, Houston Elementary School, summer, 1972; graduate assistant at Oklahoma State University, 1972-1974; Right to Read Supervisor, 1972-1973, summer, 1974; instructor in reading methods course and supervised student teachers, spring, 1974.

Professional Organizations: International Reading Association, Phi Delta Kappa.