



Classroom Demonstrations

by Yetta M. Goodman

Learning Through Interviews

Personal interviews with students, parents or community members provide information that can be used to discover: (1) what individuals believe reading and writing to be and how it affects their lives; (2) what kinds of materials people have in their homes that provide a literate environment for members of the family; (3) what kinds of literacy experiences people engage in daily and occasionally; (4) what attitudes parents and community members have about the role of literacy in their lives and how they believe this impacts their children; (5) how children and adults respond to reading and writing experiences; (6) ways in which people define themselves and their families as literate; and so on.

Interviewing individuals or family groups about literacy can be done by students, by teachers and researchers. In every case the kinds of questions that are used depend on the purposes for wanting to know the information. Interviews for evaluation purposes should provide information about what students and their families know about written language and the importance of this to their educational experiences.

Very young children might simply want to find out what kinds of things their parents read and write on their jobs. Middle grade students might want to find out what kinds of reading and writing their grandparents used to participate in to compare to the experiences they and their parents have with literacy today. Teachers may want to discover what kinds of literacy events their students and their parents do every day and researchers will have a wide range of purposes for establishing an interview about literacy with members of a community.

The interviewers need to participate in serious discussions and simulations about ways to conduct interviews that take into considerations ethical issues as well as issues concerned with the best kinds of questions to use, how to conduct the interviews and what problems might arise during interview settings. Helping questioners understand the role of their questions is an important first step in such a discussion. Interviewers must be helped to respect the people they are questioning. It is important to explain to those being questioned the real purposes of such experiences. ("We're trying to find out what people in this school community read and write in their own homes. Sometimes people don't consider that what they are reading and writing regularly to get through the day is as important as what people read and write in school. All reading and writing impacts how we learn to read and write, so we are trying to find out what people read and write most and why they do so.")

It is also important for interviewers to realize that the questions that they ask are not always understandable to others. Simulating interviews with others in small groups will be helpful.

When bilingual or multilingual people are being interviewed, it is helpful to have a proficient speaker of the other language(s) participate in the interview. Not all questions in one language translate easily into another. Good questioners watch who they are interviewing carefully to see whether they are being understood. If not, they adjust their questions accordingly. Also if they begin to realize that the

person they are questioning is uncomfortable it is best to culminate the interview and plan for another time.

It is most helpful during interviews to take notes and make audio recordings of the interviews. In addition, if possible a second person can be a quiet observer taking notes to gain a more complete picture of the interview setting. This is, of course, explained honestly to the people being interviewed. If the persons being interviewed seem the least bit uncomfortable, it is helpful to tell them how the information will be used and that the notes and audio recording will be given to them to listen to and change before the information is used.

The following interview forms indicate questions that teachers, students and researchers have used with different groups. These should be carefully scrutinized and changed as necessary, taking into consideration what is known about the individuals or the group that will be questioned.

Adapted from *Print Awareness in Preschool Children: The Development of Literacy in Preschool Children*, Y. M. Goodman, B. Altwerger, and A. Marek (Occasional Paper no. 4, Program in Language and Literacy, College of Education, University of Arizona, Tucson, 1989).

BURKE READING INTERVIEW

"... She reads easy books and then spends twice as long writing a book report... She seems to love this part the best."

The Burke Reading Interview was devised by Carolyn L. Burke and is used to gain insight into a reader's beliefs about the reading process. Responses to this series of open-ended questions reveal:

- how the student copes with difficult material
- what qualities typify a "good" reader, according to the student
- what reading strategies the student would recommend to others
- personal strengths and weaknesses, as reported by the student.

It is important to discover, for example, that a student believes that sounding out words is the most useful strategy when faced with an unknown word. The student described above by fifth grade teacher Mary Kitagawa may believe that writing the book report is the most important part of reading a book. This kind of information, in conjunction with corroborating observations, can be used to design appropriate strategy lessons and other reading experiences for each student. Some questions can be modified and asked periodically in order to detect changes in the student's understanding of the reading process.

Guidelines for Burke Reading Interview

The interview should be conducted in an informal setting, relatively free of interruption. Notations of the student's responses can be made in an anecdotal record or in other suitable form.

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. When you are reading and you come to something you don't know, what do you do? Do you ever do anything else?
2. Do you think that (ask teacher's name) is a good reader? Who is a good reader that you know?

3. What makes him/her a good reader?
4. Do you think that she/he ever comes to something she/he doesn't know when she/he is reading?
5. IF YES: When she/he does come to something she/he doesn't know, what do you think she/he does about it?
IF NO: Suppose she/he does come to something she/he doesn't know. Pretend: what do you think she/he does about it?
6. If you knew that someone was having difficulty reading, how would you help them?
7. What would your teacher do to help that person?
8. How did you learn to read? What did (they/you) do to help you learn?
9. What would you like to do better as a reader?
10. Do you think that you are a good reader?

READING INTEREST INVENTORIES

Reading interest inventories serve the obvious purpose of attempting to uncover what a student may find interesting to read. But for evaluation purposes, they also provide insight into students' attitudes, values, and knowledge as reflected in their experiences with reading material. Trends in choices of reading material may also be evaluated and shared with parents as a way of encouraging reading at home. The information gathered from all students can help in the selection of materials and the development of curricula for an individual student or an entire classroom.

Guidelines for Reading Interest Inventories

All the questions on the following inventory focus on reading. The questions involve reading habits, favorite books, other reading material, use of free time, and nonreading interests and activities. The questions used should depend on what the teacher wants to know about the reading experiences of the students, and whether the student is at primary, intermediate, or secondary level. The inventory could be completed at school or sent home for the parent and student to do together.

QUESTIONS RELATED TO BOOKS

1. What is the name of your favorite book that someone has read aloud to you?
2. What is the name of your favorite book or story that you have read for yourself?
3. What kind of stories and books do you like to hear read aloud to you?
4. What is the title of a book you have read recently that you like the best?
5. What is the title of the best book you have ever read?
6. What are the names of some of your favorite authors?
7. What is the worst book you remember reading? Why didn't you like it?
8. How much do you like to read?
very much / quite a lot / not very much / not at all
9. Do you like to talk to others about books you read?
10. What do you do when you decide you don't like the book you're reading?
11. Of the following kinds of books, which ones would you like to read? Have you ever read any? How often?

football stories	mystery stories
baseball stories	career stories
basketball stories	science fiction
adventure stories	nature stories
animal stories	scientific experiments
historical novels	poetry

- teenagers' problems biographies and auto-biographies of famous people
 - westerns do-it-yourself manuals
12. What kind of people do you like to read about?
 13. How do you like books to end?
 14. Why do you read books?
 15. Has reading a book ever helped you feel better about a problem you had or about something you didn't understand?

QUESTIONS RELATED TO READING SUPPORT AT HOME AND READING MATERIALS OTHER THAN BOOKS

1. What are the names of some of the books you have at home?
2. What are the names of your two favorite television programs?
3. What is the name of your favorite comic book?
4. What part of the newspaper do you like to read the best? How do you read each?
5. What magazines do you read regularly?

QUESTIONS RELATED TO LIBRARY USE

1. Have you ever been to the library with a member of your family? Do you go by yourself? How often?
2. Do you have a library card?
3. How many books have you checked out from the library during the last month?

OBSERVING LANGUAGE USE IN PROGRESS

1. Does the student share his or her writing, or does he or she read with others?

2. What happens when the student produces, sees, or hears a miscue?
3. Does the student use outlines or other graphic representations?
4. Does the student use resources such as books, charts, signs, dictionaries, or other people to spell words or get ideas?
5. Is the student engrossed in the language event or easily distracted?

(The following questions focus especially on younger children)

6. Does the student draw before writing?
7. Does the student have a concept of words (i.e., printed units bounded by space), sentence, story, etc.?
8. Does the student understand directionality?
9. Is the student audibly sounding out letters or words?
10. How does the student use the space on the paper?

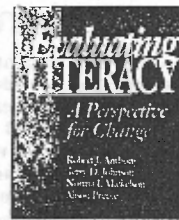
OBSERVING SIGNS OF LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT

1. Do miscues reveal signs of growth, i.e., movement toward convention, synonym substitutions, etc.?
2. Does the student ask about conventions, or is the student overly concerned with conventions?
3. Does the student revise or self-correct during language use?
4. What type of changes does the student make when revising or self-correcting?

→ See: Dahl, p. 50; Goodman, pp. 107, 139, 140, 141, 147; Kitagawa, p. 93; Tucker, pp. 102, 150.

Book Note

Evaluating Literacy: A Perspective for Change



Robert J. Anthony, Terry Johnson, Norma Mickelson, and Alison Preece
1991
Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann

For school faculties attempting to adopt a system of evaluation that

embraces current views of literacy development and student-centered learning, this book will serve as an invaluable guide. Well-organized and succinct, the authors provide readers with both the theory underlying authentic assessment and the practical wherewithal needed to put theory into practice. Chapters One and Two outline the basic principles underlying authentic assessment and shatter the myths surrounding traditional evaluative measures. Chapters Three and Four present an alternative model of assessment. Chapter Five addresses the role of parents, and the remaining chapters tackle the nuts and bolts of making it all work in the classroom, as does a helpful section on "issues that won't go away" (standardized tests and report cards) and what to do about them. The authors succeed in their aim to present "evaluation strategies that can be easily and successfully implemented."

LBB



Developmental Moments

by Kathryn F. Whitmore

Assessing the Strengths of Readers

Second-grade Nick is reading a story about how ducks stay dry in water. One line says, "She rubs her bill in the oil and spreads it over her feathers." As he reads, Nick substitutes the word *burrow* for *bill*, but when he gets to *oil*, he goes back and reads, "She rubs her beak . . ." Nick pauses, looks at the word closely, says, "Oh, *bill*," then proceeds with the rest of the story. Afterward, he and his teacher discuss the story. Nick says, "At first I had trouble with the word, *bill*. *Burrow* didn't make sense. Then I thought it was *beak* but *beak* wouldn't have 's' so I tried *bill*, and I remembered knowing duck beaks are called bills."

Evaluation

During miscue analysis, Nick read for his teacher and retold what he had read. Nick's miscues, or unexpected responses, show his focus on making sense of the text. He changes *burrow* to *beak* when he realizes *burrow* doesn't make sense. He also pays attention to the syntax and the graphophonemic systems, though, as he appropriately substitutes nouns for nouns and as he realizes that *beak* doesn't contain the letters of the word he is reading. Finally, he uses his prior knowledge about ducks to confirm the semantic relationships present in the text. Nick demonstrates his strength as a reader.

Nick is doing precisely what we hope young readers will do: He is relying on semantics to ensure his understanding of the text; he is using all other cuing systems to confirm his prediction; and he is self-correcting as he reads, integrating all cuing systems in the process of making sense of the text. Nick is also highly capable of verbaliz-

ing what he does as he reads, demonstrating his awareness of the strategies he uses while reading.

Curriculum

Nick can be made even more metalinguistically aware of his reading by talking with his teacher at length about the miscues he makes. Through a process called retrospective miscue analysis, Nick and his teacher can identify his strengths as a reader and build upon them. Nick can also share his reading process with others: his peers, his parents, and administrators, or visitors in the school who are interested in understanding how reading works. As Nick continues to develop as a reader, he can self-evaluate his reading and make plans for his continued reading success.

→ See: Whitmore, pp. 95, 142, 144, 145, 165, 180.



It Shouldn't Happen to Kids
Reading Rebel

To amuse themselves in class, our sons have always had a book ready to read during those times when "there is nothing else to do." One day Aaron had become irritated with an explanation his teacher gave "for the fifth time." He took out his book and began to read. This angered the teacher and she asked him if he would prefer to listen to her explanation or sit in the hall and read his book. He chose the latter. Seeing Aaron in the hall was an unusual sight, so students from other classes were shocked to see him sitting there. In response to their queries, Aaron simply explained that he was there because he had been setting a bad example for his peers. He had been reading a book.

—Katherine E. Worley is a freelance consultant on children's literature in Clovis, NM.



The Funny Side
Antiquated Fiction

While sharing with my grade twos *Perfect the Pig*, by Susan Jeschke, I overheard one of the children say to his friend, "The teacher is reading us a really old story. Look, the pictures are all in black and white."

—Beverly DeCarlo Beauvais, Quebec, Canada

Book Note

Research on Whole Language: Support for a New Curriculum

Diane Stephens
1990
Katonah, NY: Richard C. Owen

A review of the research on whole language, this book organizes the studies conducted on whole language classrooms and helps educators sift through competing ideas about literacy. Its purpose is to encourage the development of understanding about whole language that will make a difference in the lives of children. The first section of the book explores the roots of whole language, discusses the philosophical basis for whole language, and describes the parameters for the research that has been included in the volume.

The bulk of the book is an annotated list of research, most of which has been conducted since 1985, that is divided into sections dealing with case studies and classroom studies.