ABSTRACT
        An analysis of the literature helps bring greater
clarity to educators concerning the theory and practice of
literature-based instruction. There are two common threads in all the
interpretations of literature-based instruction: (1) the use of
literature as the primary material for reading instruction; and (2)
the elimination of the structural support and practices of basal
reading systems. Information which provides a theoretical base for
literature-based reading instruction focuses largely on the whole
language philosophy, psycholinguistics, and cognitive psychology.
Children become literate, according to the advocates, by being
immersed in a literate environment and by being encouraged and
supported in encounters with literacy. Studies can be identified to
support the trend toward instruction with whole texts and purposeful
reading. Proponents of the literature-based instruction movement
value whole stories and an emphasis on meaning. Reports indicate that
the use of children's literature in the teaching of reading has a
positive effect on student's achievement and attitudes toward
reading. There is a need for more research on literature-based
reading programs and implementation strategies. There appears to be a
label, "literature-based instruction," which provides an umbrella for
a myriad of practices. As models are developed, implemented and
evaluated, studies should be undertaken so that teachers can receive
guidance in using literature to develop proficient readers.
(Seventy-one references are attached.) (MG)

LITERATURE BASED READING INSTRUCTION:

A WHOLE LANGUAGE PERSPECTIVE

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This paper reviews the literature relative to literature-based
reading instruction. A whole language/psycholinguistic foundation
for literature-based reading instruction is presented and
organizing strategies for instruction are discussed.

LITERATURE-BASED READING INSTRUCTION:

A WHOLE LANGUAGE PERSPECTIVE

Literature-based reading instruction involves the
use of literature as opposed to textbooks in the
teaching of reading. Proponents of literature based
reading instruction suggest that reading programs
utilize various combinations of teacher and student
interactions along with the selection and use of
literature in a manner that will allow students to
develop as thoughtful, proficient readers (Hancock and
Hill, 1987; Hiebert and Colt, 1989; Tunnell and Jacobs,
1989; Zarillo, 1989). Literature based reading
instruction is currently the topic of much discussion
in the field of education. This paper presents an
analysis of the literature in the area of literature-
based reading instruction. The study seeks to bring
greater clarity to educators concerning the theory and
practice of literature-based reading instruction.

The movement toward literature based reading
instruction has been promoted by educators with a whole
language perspective toward literacy development
(Altwerger, Edelsky and Flores, 1987; Goodman, 1986;
Newman, 1985; Smith, 1971). The whole language
philosophy is based on the assumption that instruction
should keep language whole and involve children in
using it purposefully and functionally. Kenneth
Goodman, (1986), a leading advocate of this philosophy,
states that teachers should put aside the carefully
sequenced basal readers and encourage students to read
for information, for enjoyment, and to cope with the
world around them.

Research and literature with a holistic
perspective of the reading process began to emerge
during the 1960's and 1970's. Prior to that time, as
research by Guthrie (1980) shows, reading was
conceptualized primarily as an accumulation of discrete
skills and was thought to begin with knowledge of
individual words. Most research in reading was
directed toward word recognition.

Within the context of the whole language
perspective toward reading and literacy, however, there

is considerable interest in the psycholinguistic
experiences of learners. Reading is seen as a natural
process which is part of the process of language
development as a whole; it is viewed as beginning with
the reader's experience and predictions about meaning.
Instead of focusing on skill development and the
understanding of exact textual meaning, comprehending
passages and relating textual information to personal
experience and prior knowledge are primary objectives.
Goodman (1973, p. 31) describes reading as a
psycholinguistic guessing game in which readers "select
the fewest, most productive cues necessary to produce
guesses which are right the first time." He emphasizes
that readers bring to the reading act their accumulated
experiences, l juage development, and thought in order
to anticipate meanings in printed material. Other
researchers support Goodman's analysis of reading
(Levin and Kaplan, 1970; Smith 1971; Cooper and
Petrosky, 1976).

Along with psycholinguistic understandings, models
of reading with a holistic perspective have strong
foundations in cognitive psychology. Proponents of
cognitivist theory believe that language development is

dependent on cognition. They propose that children develop knowledge of the world generally and then map this knowledge onto language systems. Thinking is a necessary prerequisite to and concomitant for reading at any level and for any purpose. Any teaching aimed at intellectual development will simultaneously promote language development. Cognitivists argue that children develop language through their activities. The early language of children as well as their development overall is related to actions, objects, and events they have experienced in their environments (Piaget and Inhelder, 1969).

Researchers who have studied the cognitive processes of readers state that in the act of reading, readers are able to understand story structure, draw inferences from passages, and utilize their own background knowledge with text material in searching for meaning. They propose that true reading begins with the reader's search for knowledge and meaning. Individual words on a page are recognized only to facilitate understanding (Ryan and Semmuel, 1979; Raven and Salver, 1970; Stauffer, 1971).

Smith (1988) sheds further light on this position

when he explains that children learn to read as they
learn to speak, by generating and testing hypotheses
about reading materials and getting appropriate
feedback. In addition, he points out that although
reading cannot be taught, children can be given
opportunities to learn to read. First they need to
have people read to them, and then they need the chance
to read for themselves with assistance as needed.
Teaching a sequential set of subskills to be integrated
into the reading process is quite different from merely
establishing conditions that will allow students to
learn to read.

Ideas from cognitive psychology and linguistics
lay the underpinnings for the whole language view of
reading. The literature suggests that reading and
reading instruction should be informal, natural and, to
a large extent, controlled by the desires, needs, and
motives of the learner. Instead of beginning with
fragments of language, such as letters and sounds,
complete forms of written language such as stories,
poems, and signs should be used in the development of
literacy. Children should be invited to experiment and
to do the best they can in reading. They should be

encouraged to determine for themselves whether or not

what they read makes sense.

Studies of Good Readers

Advocates of literature based reading instruction
believe that the methods of reading instruction used in
the classroom should be those which help children to
adopt the reading behaviors of good readers (Lamme,
1989). Studies and observations have identified some
of the characteristics of good readers. They seem to
support a literature based approach to reading.

Hickman (1977) studied the reading behavior of two
"extraordinarily literate people in attempting to
answer the question. "What do fluent readers do?" Her
answer was that fluent readers read books and passages
of their own choosing for their own purposes with a
critical eye. Fluent readers, she concluded, do not
read simply to be reading, but for a reason.
Rasiniki's (1988) observations support Hickman's
findings. Interest, purpose and choice are important
in the behavior of good readers. "By observing
children doing things that emanate from their own
interests," Rasiniki states "we can get a glimpse of
the power and potential that is hidden within each

child" (p. 397).

An ethnographic study revealed that first graders
in high and low reading groups have different concepts
about reading (Bondy, 1985). According to the study,
children in high reading groups think reading is a way
of learning, a private pleasure, and social activity.
In contrast, children in the low reading groups think
reading is saying words correctly, doing school work,
and a source of status.

Reading instruction with a holistic perspective
also draws on research related to readers who learned
to read at home without school instruction. Durkin's
1961 study is perhaps the most authoritative study of
this type. It concluded that children are able to
learn to read without deliberate assistance from
adults. Durkin studied 49 natural readers and reported
that these children acquired reading abilities through
experiences with whole texts provided by strong reading
models. Clark (1976) and Thorndike (1973) give strong
support to Durkin's conclusions.

Hoskisson (1979) suggests that natural readers
solve the problem of learning to read as they construct
their knowledge of written language. Hearing written

language is essential to testing personal hypothesis about written language. Parents and other caregivers set the stage for natural reading development when they read to young children and when they provide children with a rich literary environment.

Overall, the literature indicates that children who have learned to read before going to school or those who rapidly learn to read once they begin school, have been read to from earliest childhood. These children have knowledge of how extended written language functions. They have developed a sense of story structure and can follow plots and character development. They know that they can obtain information and enjoyment from reading (Newman, 1985; Goodman, 1986). In terms of technique, good readers read for meaning and self-correct when they make a mistake that does not make sense. Also, they reread favorite books and thereby develop fluency (Lamme, 1989).

Advocates of literature based reading instruction believe that the strategies teachers use in teaching reading should be similar to those used in literate homes. The school should provide a series of daily

activities involving books and expose children to a
variety of literature and other reading materials.
Teacher's should read to children every day so that
children will develop a love for books as well as
important concepts about reading. Learning to read
naturally begins when parents read to young children
and let them handle books, and that process should be
continued or initiated with teachers reading aloud and
including books naturally in the classroom.

From the perspective of literature based
instruction proponents, all children in school should
be involved in reading and literature. Children should
be read stories and encouraged to select their favorite
ones for rereading. Their participation in reading
activities should be encouraged and nurtured. The
focus of a reading program should be to help children
figure out for themselves how written language works
(Newman, 1985). Hoskisson (1979) suggests that no
formal hierarchy of reading skills should be imposed on
children since only a child can determine what can be
assimilated and accommodated within his or her own
personal cognitive structure. Smith (p. 179) maintains
further that reading can never be separated from the

purposes, prior knowledge and feelings of the person
engaged in the activity or from the nature of the text
being read. Children learn continuously through
engagements in reading that make sense to them.

Criticism of Basal Readers

Definitions of literature based reading
instruction point out that real books and literature
should be used in reading instruction. The use of
literature is consistent with holistic understandings
which maintain that instruction should not begin with
fragmented language or language constructed for
instructional purposes. Instruction should employ
complete forms of language such as stories, poems and
informational material. Though basal readers are the
most widely used resource material in the United States
for teaching reading, their use is not considered
consistent with the whole language perspective toward
reading development.

One major problem cited is that the basal reading
guides, which most teachers use, often have lessons
that emphasize isolated aspects of language and lead
learners to put value on fragments of language such as
letter-sound correspondence. Further, guides tend to

discourage students from taking risks by introducing
arbitrary sequences of skills (Goodman, 1986).
Advocates of literature based reading instruction also
believe that basal readers often create artificial
language passages and mar the use of literature by
gearing it to skill development.

Newman (1985) has pointed to assumptions which she
maintains underlie basal reading programs, assumptions
which conflict with what is understood from a
psycholinguistic viewpoint about how language develops.
One assumption is that the vocabulary and syntax of
beginning reading material must be rigorously
controlled and simplified. This practice, she argues
is questionable because while that what children say
may seem simple, their language environment is complex.
Children hear a full range of words and syntactic
structures and from this language environment select
and reconstruct those elements which they need to
communicate meaning. Therefore, to be substantive, the
language available to children should be whole both in
meaning and in structure.

A second assumption is that accuracy in
identifying words is important. Attention given to

vocabulary words and word identification skills imply
that unless students identify all the words in reading
passage correctly, they will not be able to understand
the material. This emphasis can lead many teachers to
insist upon accurate word identification without
helping children to focus sufficiently on meaning.
Moreover, close attention to the surface features of
words and word parts according to Newman, is at odds
with what is understood holistically about children's
intuitions concerning how language functions.

Research lends some support to the criticism of
basals. There are studies which indicate that children
who are exposed only to basal reading programs tend to
have negative ideas of what reading is all about.
Cairney (1988) reported that children's perceptions of
the purpose of basal reading activities indicate a
focus on materials and procedures rather than on
meaning. Many of the perceptions of children studied
seem based upon dysfunctional notions about literacy.
They did not see meaning as important when reading
basal readers nor did they find basal reading material
intrinsically interesting. It was found also that the
children placed great emphasis upon decoding,

vocabulary, and accuracy. Cairney's study supports the observation of Johns and Ellis (1976) that only a few children in their study felt reading is concerned with a search for meaning. Sixty-four percent of the answers in response to the questions "What is reading?" were concerned with classroom procedures or educational value; twenty-five percent reflected a word recognition, decoding emphasis; eleven percent indicated a meaning emphasis.

Eckhoff (1983) found that children who read only the abbreviated language of basal readers tended to write short choppy sentences. Children who saw more natural, syntactically mature language in their reading materials wrote more sophisticated sentences. This study is significant since reading and writing are mutually reinforcing processes in language learning.

The authors of Becoming a Nation of Readers (1985) directed their criticisms of basal teaching toward two frequently accompanying practices: ability grouping and the lack of independent reading time. In his review of the research on ability grouping in basal reading settings, Unsworth (1984) concluded that homogenecus grouping is not effective for improving

reading achievement levels. The disparity between good and poor readers increases as students spend time in reading groups that remain inflexible from year to year. Hiebert's (1983) review of studies showed differences in the teaching of high and low reading groups. Low ability groups spend more time on decoding tasks and oral reading than do high reading groups. Teachers spend more time dealing with behavior management with low achieving reading. Teachers also communicate to these students the negative status of the reading group. Becoming a Nation of Readers encouraged educators to find alternatives to ability grouping.

The absence of independent reading is another concern often associated with basal reading programs. After the basal reading activities, often there is little time remaining for independent and individualized reading. The 1984 National Assessment of Educational Progress revealed that only 10 percent of fourth grade students had read a novel for school (Lapointe, 1986). Goodlad (1984) found that reliance on basal and other commercial materials led to a predominance of skill-related lessons. He concluded

that the state of reading instruction in the classes
observed was dismal. Apart from the practice of oral
round robin reading "reading occupied about 6 percent
of class time at the elementary level." (p. 106). It
appears that in many basal reading programs, reading
books from the library seems often to be viewed as an
activity to be done only after all other assignments
are completed or during special periods such as
Sustained Silent Reading.

By and large, basal programs are structured
programs requiring the intervention of teachers using
sequenced instruction. The teachers control the
learning, to a large extent, by direct instruction,
skills exercises, and comprehension questions. There
is growing interest in alternative approaches to basal
reading instruction because some educators see
limitations in isolating sounds, letters, and words
from the language system for skills practice. There is
also concern about the vocabulary and syntax control of
basal programs which tends to cause a loss of style.
Such rigidity, it is maintained make language less
natural and less predictable. Holistic literature-
based instruction is based on the idea that at all

levels of instruction more complete forms of
written language should be used and that the primary
focus of instruction should be on helping students to
construct meaning from their encounters with print.

The Value of Literature in Reading Instruction

Generally, children's books have greater richness
of vocabulary, sentence structure, and literary form
than basal readers. They also have more plot
complications, more character development, and conflict
than basals. Holistic literature-based classrooms
should be rich in a variety of books and print. In
these classrooms, there should be little use of
materials written specifically to teach reading
(Edelsky and Flores, P. 145; Koeller, 1981). As
Fielding, Wilson and Anderson (1984) note, natural
texts support reading as a meaning related activity.

Basals have relied on readability formulas to edit
or choose the content of reading texts. Studies by
Eldredge and Butterfield (1984, 1986) concluded that it
is unnecessary to rely on formulas. According to their
research, in which second grade children chose reading
material from a classroom library, sixty-two percent of
'he books chosen had average readability scores above

the fourth grade level. Yet, the children read,
enjoyed, and comprehended the books without apparent
difficulty. Consistent with Eldredge and Butterfield's
work, Newman (1985) points out that readers must reply
on prior knowledge in order to make sense of print.

All children have a wealth of knowledge gleaned
from experiences. This knowledge is an essential
resource for reading and learning to read. The
materials chosen for reading should be written in the
kind of language children have come to expect of books.
With these materials children are able to use what they
know about language, story structure, and content to
understand print and construct meaning.

Proponents of literature-based reading instruction
point to the meaningful and challenging activities
provided for children in their programs. They claim
that in such programs children spend a great deal of
time reading. Moreover, rather than struggling with
the skills tasks of the basal programs, children write
stories, act in plays, discuss books, and use artistic
media to respond to literature (Glazer, 1981: Huck,
Helpler and Hickman, 1987; Durkin 1978-79; Goodman,
1986).

Children's trade books should be the cornerstone
of a reading program, holistic literacy proponents
argue. There is much value in exposing children to the
natural language writers of children's books use. Such
language is not characterized by the rigidly
controlled vocabularies and simplified syntax found in
basal readers. The illustrations provide support for
the text. Moreover, stories from children's literature
have something relevant to say about children's lives.
As Lukens (1990) states real literature for any age is
words chosen with skill and artistry to give the
readers pleasure and to help them understand themselves
and others" (p. 10).

It is important that teachers be knowledgeable of
strategies for teaching reading with a literature base.
A number of patterns or strategies has been reported
(Zarrillo, 1988, 1989; Hiebert and Colt, 1989). Not
all approaches with literature of necessity imply a
holistic approach to reading instruction. Teachers who
wish to implement a literature based reading program in
a whole language, psycholinguistic mode will need to
select strategies and activities which allow children
opportunities to develop as readers who are concerned

with constructing meaning from written texts and who
can accommodate and relate written information to their
own prior knowledge.

Zarrillo (1989) reported three main approaches for
implementing a literature based reading program. These
include (1) individualized reading with self-selection
and self-pacing, (2) literature units, and (3) core
books. His findings are based on an analysis of
classroom practices by teachers who identified their
reading programs as literature based. Each of these
organizing approaches has been described in the
literature.

The essential characteristics of the
individualized reading approached include: (1) self-
selection of materials by students for their own
instruction, (2) self-pacing by students as they read
materials, (3) individual conferences between the
student and the teachers, and (4) groups assigned for
reasons other than ability or proficiency in reading.
It is to be noted, however, that there are many
variations of the individualized reading approach, all
of which are not literature based. A complete
discussion of the individualized reading approach is

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given by Veatch (1959, 1978).

Coody and Nelson (1982), Glazer (1981), Glazer and Williams (1979), Huck and Hickman (1976), and Moss (1984) have defined the literature unit orientation. The unit is considered to be a small set of books related by some literary element such as style, a theme, or setting. The entire class or special group reads or listens to the literature in a literature unit. Students participate in a variety of response activities related to the readings. These may include discussion, writing, drama and artistic expression. Self-selection can be a feature of this approach if students choose materials included in the unit.

Core literature refers to selections which have been identified as important for close reading and intensive consideration in the classroom. The literature should be viewed not only as significant in content, but also as a stimulus for writing and discussion (Alexander, 1987). Teachers may use a variety of sources for teaching ideas for core books. However, as Zarrillo (1989) points out teachers who are most effective use core books as springboards for independent reading and writing; others may simply

substitute core books for textbooks.

The three orientations to literature based reading instruction discussed above should not be viewed as mutually exclusive. Teachers have developed programs that have features of each orientation. Strickland and Cullinam (1986), Hill (1983), and Hancock and Hill (1987) have described classrooms which employ combinations of individualized reading, literature units, and core literature.

Hiebert and Colt (1989) report the following three distinct patterns of literature based reading instruction: (1) teacher-led instruction with teacher selected literature (2) teacher and student-led interaction with teacher and student selection of literature, (3) independent application and student selected literature. These researchers assert that when teachers focus only on independent reading of student selected material, they fail to consider the guidance that students require for becoming expert readers. On the other hand, a focus on teacher-led instruction fails to develop the independent reading strategies needed for lifelong learning. Thus, a total reading program should consist of various combinations

of teacher and student interaction and selection of
literature so that children develop as thoughtful
proficient readers.

Discussion

Literature based reading instruction means
different things to different people. This is evident
in the varied definitions and practices discussed in
the literature. There are, however, two common threads
in all the interpretations: (1) the use of literature
as the primary material for reading instruction, and
(2) the elimination of the structural support and
practices of basal reading systems.

Information which provides a theoretical base for
literature based reading instruction focuses largely on
the whole language philosophy, psycholinguistics, and
cognitive psychology. The ideas present are logical
and substantive. Children become literate, according
to advocates, by being immersed in a literate
environment and by being encouraged and supported in
encounters with literacy. As an integral aspect of
literacy, reading ability develops as children are
supported in meaningful engagement with print and whole
texts, and as they are nurtured in an environment that

values literacy. Studies can be identified to support
the trend towards instruction with whole texts and
purposeful reading.

The literature centered movement is critical of
basal reading and the subskills emphases often fostered
by basal programs. Proponents of the literature based
instruction movement value whole stories and an
emphasis on meaning. Accordingly, activities such as
readalongs, assisted reading, and shared book
experiences are primary methods of having students
learn to read. However, it is necessary to ask if the
research which supports skills instruction can be
ignored. For example, there is strong support for
early intensive instruction in phonic analysis to help
students develop independence in decoding (Calfee and
Drum, 1986; Trachenburg, 1990). Further, it is
necessary to question if it is possible to combine a
selected use of skills instruction in a complementary
manner with a literature based approach. There is
evidence that some educators are endorsing such
attempts when experience and teacher judgement indicate
that particular students might benefit from such
instruction. (Trachenberg, 1990; Samuels, 1988;

Winagrade and Greenlee, 1986; Heymsfed, 1989).

Overall, there is a growing emphasis on using
literature for reading instruction. Reports seem to
indicate that the use of children's literature in the
teaching of reading has a positive effect on students'
achievement and attitudes toward reading. The majority
of the published articles on literature based reading
programs are anecdotal reports of ~lass and school
programs. These are interesting and inspire educators
to focus more on literature in the classroom.
Educators are further encouraged by the rationale for a
literature based reading program which is rooted in
holistic philosophy. As pointed out by Zarrillo
(1988), however, the reports on literature based
reading instruction for the most part, lack
adequate research designs, background information on
students, and detailed descriptions of curriculum and
teaching methodology.

Literature based reading instruction offers great
promise for instruction in reading. However, there is
need for more research on literature based reading
programs and how they can be implemented. At this
point, there appears to be a label "literature based

reading instruction" which provides an umbrella for a
myriad of practices. As models are developed,
implemented and evaluated, studies should be made so
that teachers can receive guidance in using literature
to develop proficient readers.

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