

Significant Books

Reviewer:

Dora Sikes Skipper

Language Skills in Elementary Education. Paul S. Anderson. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1964. 447 p.

As stated by the author, "this book is directed towards helping beginning teachers acquire essential skills." He points out that the ability to use language is one of the basic abilities needed in life. Throughout the text emphasis is placed upon the application of language arts information so that the beginning teacher will not only know *how* to teach in this field, but will also understand *why* certain procedures are more effective than others. Thus, the teacher is provided aid in selecting from the many and varied techniques and devices presented as specific activities are planned for a given group or individual. This concept is extended in the discussion of the place of the language arts in the curriculum and the relationship of language and the culture.

The first section dealing with the history of language develops an excellent background for the study of teaching the language arts. As the basic principles of child growth and development are presented, the language skills to be developed at different maturity levels and suitable activities for children are listed. The planning necessary for the teaching of these skills is discussed in detail; however, the interrelationship of the various phases of the language arts and the ex-

ension of these skills and understandings in functional situations are not as clearly defined and illustrated.

The research and the theoretical base upon which practical applications can be built are presented and illustrated in separate chapters for each phase of the language arts. The skills of speaking, listening, handwriting, phonics, spelling, reading, written composition including creative writing, grammar usage including punctuation, and rediscovering children's literature are well presented and adequately treated. The tenth and last chapter is devoted to evaluating and interpreting the language arts program. The suggested experiences for the prospective teacher and the very comprehensive bibliography of recent books, pamphlets, periodical articles and curriculum guides or courses of study listed for each chapter are carefully selected so as to provide adequate reference for a wide variety of topics and problems.

The importance of the teacher is emphasized in each phase of the language arts. For example, the effect of the voice qualities of the classroom teacher is discussed in the chapter on speaking and listening. In the chapter on rediscovering children's literature, assistance is given for the teacher to become an effective storyteller.

The material is so comprehensive that the use of double columns on the pages

devoted to theory and concepts is justified. Balance and variety in format are provided through the use of the full page for the illustrations, the charts showing activities of the two or three groups of children at work during the same period, outlines of daily lesson plans, sample weekly plans, checklists and evaluation sheets.

The basic organization of the text in regard to selection of topics for development within each chapter pinpoints with clarity the major problems for study in language arts. The style of writing is simple and direct. There are a wealth of activities for developing each area of the language arts; many of these activities seem to take up more space than their importance would justify. The failure to use a variety of typography to emphasize major points under discussion weakens the presentation. At times, the interspersing of activities within the development of the theory of the topic distracts the reader and the continuity of ideas is lost.

The content for the curriculum in each phase of the language arts is presented in a variety of forms; for example, the concepts and the learning activities for developing the concepts are listed for courtesy while listening skills are presented in terms of levels of listening for different purposes. The extensive discussion of the development of handwriting will no doubt be of interest to the prospective teacher; suggestions are given for working with the left-handed child. The section on phonics leads from the history of phonics to the sequence of learning in phonics commonly found in the kindergarten through grade six. In spelling, much emphasis is placed upon errors and causes. Directions for games to motivate children are given for phonics and spelling.

Dr. Anderson has made a significant contribution to the Language Arts field through this book which can serve as a text or as a ready reference for teachers who are looking for new ideas and techniques. However, some of the procedures discussed may leave the teacher with a feeling that a pattern for teaching each phase is given rather than the suggestion of varied approaches in terms of purposes. There is little material on recent trends in teaching such as individualized instruction, team teaching, and large group instruction. The beginning teacher may wish to have additional material on the development of a unified program as outlined in the first chapter.

All teachers will find much helpful, theoretical and practical material in this book.

—Reviewed by DORA SIKES SKIPPER,
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The Catalyst—O'Hanlon

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The relationship of the teacher to the catalyst is an interesting one. A few of the 25 teachers in this study had no catalysts identified in their classes, while other teachers had catalysts in almost every class. Whether this was the result of the teacher's actions in discouraging or encouraging catalyst-type actions or just the nature of the groups of students which those teachers had is not known. There was, however, evidence from statements made by teachers that some teachers feel quite negative toward catalysts. This is probably a result of the questioning and aggressive nature of the latter which the teacher may interpret as posing a threat to his leadership. Actual-

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