

SHOULD STUDENTS LEARN TO READ BEFORE THEY READ TO LEARN? A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE.

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Abstract

This article examines the roots of whole language from 1897 to 1982 along with criticism and support for it along the way. It then discusses whole language in theory and practice, and presents support for teaching phonemic awareness and phonetic analysis, systematically, in the early grades. The premise of this paper is that one must learn to read before s/he can read to learn, contrary to what many whole-language supporters suggest. Most of the whole-language concepts are seen as workable and sound, even desirable, except for its virtual exclusion of the direct instruction of phonemic awareness and phonics in the early grades.

The major premises of whole language are really impossible to argue with. Surround a child with interesting stories and opportunities for language. Make all communications meaningful ones, and give students reasons for communicating. The universe is full of interesting things. Give the students the opportunities to learn these things and provide them with the means to do so.

So what's the problem?

The problem is that in a whole-language classroom, students are encouraged to read to learn about interesting things in authentic, real world texts taken from real life. But many of them don't know how to read. The dichotomy is between learning to read and reading to learn. Students must learn to read before they can read to learn.

This issue didn't begin with the reading wars of recent years, or with Rudolph Flesch (1952) and *Why Johnny Can't Read*, or with Russell Stouffer's (1961) "Breaking the basal lockstep." There has been an ebb and flow since at least 1897 between providing students with interesting experiences to read and write about, and providing them with the mechanics to do so. Every time a new name for the ideas of whole language appeared, the popularity increased, and the activities and experiences of the technique took over, at the expense of the mechanics of learning to read.

Let's take a look at Flora Cooke (1900, 1901) in 1897. She took her class to a farm, wrote a summary of the experience at the board with the help of the students, getting all the students' ideas on the board first, and then editing it as dramatically as possible. The

students would discuss subsequent events like this, write a story with the teacher, and record it individually at their desks. The teacher would then use these stories for future lessons, and frequently collect the group's stories and bind them into a book. Edmond Burke Huey (1908) referred to this method as the "natural" (p.330) method of teaching reading. These ideas blossomed with the "activity movement" of the 1920's.

In 1920, the *Nineteenth Yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education* (NSSE) described the activity method in practice. In chapter one, a county fair is the experience which the children are to write and read about. They build animal stalls. They sell pretend ice cones which they made. They draw the aeroplane. They write an experience story about the fair at the blackboard, read it together, and print it on heavy cardboard to read again in the future. This, of course, is an archetypal language-experience story. The authors believed that exercises based on actual experience have the advantage of drawing on a familiar oral vocabulary at a variety of levels. At the same time, the students will recognize the sentences that they wrote, with the help of the teacher, and in this way pass readily from oral speech to reading.

In the October 1929 issue of *Educational Method*, Julia E. Dickson and Mary E. McLean detailed their curriculum in "An integrated activity program try-out in a first grade of the public schools." Together, the children wrote plans on the blackboard with the teacher for a marionette show. Then they constructed a theatre, painted scenes, made the puppets, wrote invitations, and gave the show for the kindergarten class. Other events during the year (including a group letter to Colonel Lindbergh) were approached in this way, and were all recorded and collected in an Activity Primer. We must take note that in this second illustration of the activity method, there seems to be less writing and reading than in the first.

In her 1934 edition of *American Reading Instruction*, Nila Banton Smith stated that "the newer philosophies and psychologies are calling for a more functional teaching of reading, a type of instruction in which reading is taught largely as it enters into or flows out of children's interests and activities" (p.256), and predicted that the basals would eventually disappear.

It is not long before the activity seems to take over completely. If we look in a 1930 Bulletin of the U.S. Office of Education, we see the activity program defined as one which offers opportunities to children to engage in worth-while, satisfying experiences while carrying out their most worthy and most challenging purposes. These activity programs are to provide an environment in which children continually act purposefully in meaningful situations. The bulletin's description declares that these happy experiences will best prepare them for living successfully after they leave school. The bulletin goes on to describe specifics of an activity program. In chapter one of this bulletin, *Essentials of an Activity Program*, one must look very carefully to find the words "reading" or "writing." No description is made of the experience chart, although plenty of "experiences" are listed. Buried on page 39 is a three-sentence reference to an experience story. Writing the story itself seems just to be an incidental afterthought to a larger, integrated curriculum of meaningful "experiences" at this California school.

Clarence Stone, in “The current-experience method in beginning reading” (1936), describes the theory behind the experience method (as it was called by that time) as follows: “In an integrated activity program, learning to read takes place largely in a natural, incidental way as reading is needed in relation to project activities which furnish enjoyable and profitable experiences and pleasant and interesting associations.” (p.105). Note the use of “incidental.” He follows this by stating “there is abundant evidence in research studies today that the current methods of teaching beginning reading are producing non-readers and seriously retarded readers...(p.105).”

Perhaps it is only natural that after such a wide swing in the favor of purposeful learning experiences, immersing students in environments conducive to learning, and providing them with meaningful learning activities, there would be a swing in the opposite direction. J. Murray Lee (1938) conducted a survey of first-grade reading programs in California. His findings raised several questions concerning the effect of the reading program on the learning of reading. These results suggested that pupils in classrooms doing a great deal of activity work did not learn to read as well students in programs that emphasized a learning to read program involving the systematic instruction of the mechanics of reading. In his study, he found that the more activity a school reported in its curriculum, the lower its students’ reading achievement scores were.

Leading educators were becoming highly critical of the activity movement in general. The Thirty-third yearbook of the NSSE served as a vehicle for much of this criticism, leveled at the activity movement by a group of educators who called themselves “essentialists.”

William C. Bagley (1938) in “An essentialist’s platform for the advancement of American education,” pinned the blame for lagging achievement scores on the activity movement’s failure to concentrate on basic skills. While admitting that activities have a place in the curriculum, he deplored “the tendency to make them a substitute for systematic and sequential learning to go even further and regard activity as a sufficient end in itself irrespective of whether or not anything is learned...(p.246).”

In 1967, N.B. Smith amended her 1934 position. “Coincidentally with the discovery that so many of our youth could not read, together with the results of research, we find a general tightening up of informal procedures for teaching reading, and a renewed emphasis on systematic reading instruction. An examination of titles of articles in the Education Index (208) indicates that in the last years of this period there was a sharp decrease and finally an omission of articles having to do with reading taught only in connection with projects, units of work, and the activity program. Furthermore, an examination of all 1948-1949 courses of study in reading which were available to the writer advocated systematic instruction with the use of basal readers (p.270).” Contrary to her 1934 prediction, basal readers, systematic and sequential, did not disappear after all.

The activity method did not die with the activity movement. It was hereafter referred to as the experience method, and still used and studied. Scholars examined Lee's 1938 data and found them to be less than persuasive. More thorough studies by Wrightstone, Rechetnik, and Loftus (1938), Wrightstone, Rechetnik, McCall and Loftus (1939), Jersil, Thorndike, Coldman and Loftus (1940) and others were showing results which were much more equivocal, and even in favor of activity schools in some factors.

Though the popularity of the experience method waned, it continued to be used and studied even in the face of criticism by the essentialists. Many of the suggestions for practices and programs in the period that followed have to be seen as the rudimentary beginnings of the whole-language movement, in particular those of Boney (1939), Hildreth (1940), Gans (1941), Lamoreaux & Lee (1943) and Burrows (1952).

The experience method shifted back from an emphasis on activity to an emphasis on making the transition from oral speech to print, resembling the "natural method" of Miss Cooke, wherein the oral language of the children is stimulated and developed, and then written down to be read by the children. Boney (1939) made a strong case for "Teaching children to read as they learned to talk." One has to wonder if this statement inspired the frequently heard statement that, according to the whole-language philosophy, children learn to read just as they learned to talk. Boney suggested that reading can be taught naturally without controlled vocabulary lists.

Hildreth (1940) recommended a variation of the experience method for a class of remedial readers. A trip to the zoo by the class was described in this book. The children first talked about the zoo, discussed the animals they would like to see, and wrote, with the help of the teacher, a list of those animals. The children attempted to find them when they went to the zoo, comparing their lists with the names on the cages. When they returned, they discussed the trip, made a scrapbook, and wrote letters to other classes about it. Hildreth called it practice in "valuable natural language expression (p.24)."

Roma Gans' 1941 "Guiding children's reading through experience" stressed that language growth is an important part of reading readiness, and suggested that experience be utilized to stimulate growth in language. She suggested group trips around the school and in the community, with attention being called to words not in their previous experience. She recommended the early use of name cards for the children and labels for things in the classroom, and the writing down of daily memoranda on the chalkboard. Finally, she suggested that the teacher record incidents and stories, and compose letters on the blackboard with the class.

In "Learning to read through experience," Lamoreaux and Lee (1943) stressed using word labels, playing word games, and otherwise developing the oral language and background knowledge of the children through their experiences and discussion. The first reading activity they suggested involved a group discussion by the children of something they all had in common. The teacher then copied what they said, and the class read it chorally from the board. The teacher then wrote it on cardboard for them to read

later. Class trips were discussed before and afterwards, and written about on an experience chart.

In “They all want to write” (1952), Alvina Burrows et al emphasized developing oral language as part of learning to write. Students would first discuss or report on something. The group would then dictate a story to be written down by the teacher. The teacher would then dictate a story to be written by the group. The teacher would then begin writing stories and letters with individual students. Yetta Goodman (1989) references the last two articles above in her “Roots of the whole-language movement.”

During this period, which saw the virtual disappearance of the experience method, scholarship was much less critical of, and even favorable to, this sort of approach. Wrightstone (1944) referred to his own studies as well as those of Jersild (1939) and others as favoring the effects of various activity programs on children. Wrightstone concluded that the activity program of the New York schools in particular was more effective in developing children’s attitudes, interests, ability to think and ability to work on their own initiative.

Between the early 1950’s and 1959, interest in the experience method was apparently at low ebb. Hildreth, (1965) in her excellent and thorough review “Experience-related reading for school beginners,” cites no American research or publication on this method between 1952 and 1961, when interest in this approach reawakened.

In 1959, Ivah Green’s “All words belong to first graders” described her own approach to teaching writing and reading. In it, she uses experience charts and group-authored stories for reading and writing lessons. She suggests that the child should be encouraged to use his or her own language.

Russell G. Stauffer’s (1961) “Breaking the basal reader lock step” suggests that teachers “circumvent the use of pre-primers, and sometimes primers, by using experience stories or charts (p.269).” He describes the use of the experience chart, and suggests that the strength of this approach is that it creates good attitudes toward reading and capitalizes on children’s oral language ability. “Through this approach, children learn to read in much the same way that they learn to talk, by using immediate, personal experience (p.269).” It should be pointed out that Stauffer’s primary complaint is the use of the stilted language that was found in the basals of the day. He also recommended that students be permitted to read the books that they chose to read and be directed to the world of text opportunities that exist outside of the school textbooks.

Stauffer does not attack the use of phonics or other word identification techniques. In fact, he says that “the modified basal-reader approach recommended here uses both basal readers and self-selections. All children need instruction in both *group-type directed reading activities* and individual-type activities (p.275).” (Italics are my own.) It is these group-type directed reading activities, direct, teacher-directed instruction, that whole language advocates would eliminate.

All of these ideas, from Flora Cooke to Russell Stauffer, are perfectly consistent with the ideas of Edmond Burke Huey. Reading is a natural process. Reading text grows out of and develops with a student's natural language-experiences. Teachers should provide students with opportunities for purposeful writing. They should provide them with opportunities and motivation to read to learn interesting things about the world. Teachers should surround children with meaningful and interesting text. Reading is not so much word pronouncing as it is thought getting. These ideas are also at the heart of the Whole language movement.

The ideas of the activity movement, the experience method, the language-experience approach – all these ideas are predecessors of whole language, which Ken Goodman describes as a grass-roots movement. Goodman (1992) says he did not found Whole language. It found him.

Kenneth Goodman began to rethink many of the givens of reading instruction at the time, beginning with his "A communicative theory of the reading curriculum" (1963). Ken and Yetta Goodman's Miscue Analysis appeared in "Cues and miscues in reading, a linguistic study" (1965) and ideas surrounding the whole language concepts began to develop. Goodman (1989) states, "Out of Goodman's Miscue Analysis came a transactional, psycholinguistic theory of the reading process (K. Goodman, 1984, p.212)."

The Goodmans concluded that reading is a holistic process, not one that is based on decoding single words. It is much more important for a student to understand the larger context than to understand individual words. "Early in our miscue research, we concluded that a story is easier to read than a page, a page easier to read than a paragraph, a paragraph easier than a sentence, a sentence easier than a word, and a word easier than a letter. Our research continues to support this conclusion and we believe it to be true...." They also concluded that instruction in how to decode them would not help them learn to read, that "we can teach children letter names and the sounds letters represent and we can teach them words in isolation from the context of language, but we know that these methods do not lead children to read." (Goodman&Goodman, 1981, p.438).

Some of the goals of the whole-language theorists are to surround the students with a language-rich environment, to provide many opportunities for communicating either in speech or in writing, to show the relationship between speech and writing, to encourage reading and writing to learn and to communicate, to provide learning opportunities within and without the four walls of the classroom, and to encourage language development and growth *without actually teaching students how to read* (my emphasis). "That is, all the systems of language – semantics, syntax, and grapho-phonemics (call it phonics if you must) – are maintained by pragmatics (language in natural use) and must not be torn apart if language is to be learned naturally. Pragmatics includes the situational context in which language is used as well as the learner's prior knowledge activated in that situational context (Watson, 1989, p.133)." The basic elements of how to read are *absorbed* within a natural context.

"Language acquisition (both oral and written) is seen as natural - - not in the sense of innate or inevitable unfolding, but in the sense that when language (oral or written) is an

integral part of functioning of a community and is used around and with neophytes, it is learned '*incidentally*' (my emphasis) (Altwerger et al, 1987, p.145)."

"Little use is made of materials written specifically to teach reading and writing. Instead, whole language relies on literature, on other print used for appropriate purposes (e.g. cake-mix directions used for really making a cake, rather than for finding short vowels), and on writing for varied purposes." (Altwerger et al, 1987, p.145)"

Weaver (1990) defines whole language as follows: "1. Children are expected to learn to read and write as they learned to talk, that is, gradually, naturally, without a great deal of direct instruction, and with encouragement rather the discouragement of constant correction." "2. Learning is emphasized more than teaching." "3. Children read and write every day, but only with true purpose and an audience." "4. Reading, writing and oral language are integrated." "5. There is no division between first 'learning to read' and later 'reading to learn.' (p. 6)."

It is with this latter statement, and the virtual exclusion of direct instruction, that I must take exception.

A systematic and direct instruction of phonics must be a part of any language and literacy program. Such a program can be integrated into a language rich environment, with purposeful reading, authentic text, meaningful communication opportunities, experience charts, opportunities to read about interesting things, experiences based on those things, and opportunities to write about those experiences. The central caveat that I would make is that the *instruction* of reading and writing must be central to this and any curriculum. Phonetics, syllabication, symbol-sound relationships, unusual spellings – these are not learned incidentally. Prediction, using the context and providing reading opportunities are simply not enough – these tactics emphasize *learning* (as whole-language theorists would concede), but they neglect *instruction*. Without the systematic instruction of phonics and other word identification strategies, students are expected to read to learn before they learn to read. This is not to throw aside or neglect other cue systems that a reader should use, such as using the context, using syntax and applying structural analysis, seeing how some words can be analogous to other words – all the many avenues for understanding must be used. But I do not believe that readers should or even can read as if an unknown word were not even on the page.

The words of Flesch (1955), in his scathing attack on Huey and Gates, might just as well be aimed at whole language purists. He paraphrases Huey as saying that reading must be "free of what is on the page (p.53)." He also targets Arthur Gates as "filled with the fervent belief that systematic instruction is a pure unadulterated evil that must be destroyed (p.53)." Flesch has the most contempt for "intrinsic" or "incidental" phonics. "But let's give children phonics in such a way that they hardly notice it; let's make it unobtrusive; let's sneak it in casually, while the children are paying attention to something else. Let's not teach them systematically that the letter /m/ says mmmm and the letter /s/ says ssss; let's teach the sound of /m/ while they are reading about a monkey and the sound of /s/ when they get to the word sit (pp.53-54)"

This does sound suspiciously like the way phonics are to be taught, or should we say *not* to be taught, in the whole-language classroom. Not systematically but incidentally. He also denounces seven ways to recognize new words *before using phonic principles*, three of which are whole language tactics: similarity to known words, recognition of familiar parts in longer words, and use of context clues. Flesch does not recommend that these tactics should *not* be used, but only that they should be used alongside phonic analysis of a word.

In an example word-attack scenario, a student sounds out a word; if it is not in his/her lexicon, he tries the context; if there are no semantic or syntactic cues in the context, he might look at structural clues within a word or similarity to other words. This is not to say that a reader is told “first step A, then step B, then step C.” These are all important tactics for a reader to use. Readers might be *taught* these tactics separately and directly, but they are not discrete, and the instructor must provide opportunities for these tactics to be applied in a natural context as soon as they are taught. The readers when just beginning to read might use phonic analysis first and then try all the other possibilities. But as the reader develops, all these elements work simultaneously. Critics of phonics instruction are concerned about students who perseverate, who continue to “sound it out” and who have no other strategies to fall back on. This is a legitimate concern. However readers must be *able* to sound out words for the many situations when it *is* the only tactic necessary or possible to recognize a particular word, and when other cue systems would not provide enough information for a reader to understand a word, the phrase it is in, or the entire sentence.

Stanovich (1986, 1994) declares that phonemic awareness is the most potent predictor of success in learning to read, even more so than tests of general intelligence, reading readiness, and listening comprehension. Adams (1990) maintains that the lack of phonemic awareness is the most powerful determinant of failure to learn to read, and also a core and causal factor distinguishing normal from disabled readers.

National Institute of Child, Health, and Human Development (NICHD) studies conducted a series of studies directed by G. Reid Lyon. They found the three major areas of difficulty predisposing a child to reading difficulties to be a lack of reading awareness; difficulty with lexical access (rapid naming); and deficits in phonological memory. The NICHD studies recommended the following interventions for students lacking in phonemic awareness: “Explicit work to help children understand the sound structure of the language at the phonemic level; intensive and explicit work in sound/symbol associations, ranging from thirty minutes a day, five days a week to one hour at a time in a 1:1 tutorial; explicit application to connected text with controlled vocabulary (Diamond & Mandel, 1996, p.8).”

These NICHD studies indicated that intervention in phonemic awareness must begin early. Can students be trained in phonemic awareness? The National Reading Panel (Teaching children to read, 2000) reported a meta-analysis on 96 comparisons of treatment and controls. Findings showed that teaching children to manipulate phonemes

in words to be effective across the board, directly causing improvement in reading and spelling as well as in phonemic awareness (Jenkins & O'Connor, 2001).

A distinction must be made between phonemic awareness and phonetic understanding. The former refers to the ability to hear sounds in words, to hear blends, rhymes and so on, and to hear segmentations in words. Phonetics refers to a system of sound-symbol relationships, and phonics refers to instruction in phonetics, in the ability to decode words from symbol to sound. Accepting that phonemic awareness predicts reading comprehension, and that it can be taught, does it follow that phonics instruction will enhance reading comprehension?

Again, the National Reading Panel (Teaching children to read, 2000) did a meta-analysis involving 66 comparisons between treatment and controls. The meta-analysis showed that systematic phonics instruction produced significant benefits for kindergarten through sixth grade students. Echoing the NICHD studies on phonemic awareness, these studies in general showed that the earlier the phonics instruction, the more significant the effect would be on reading comprehension over time.

Lyon (1998, p.16) says that the “scientific evidence that refutes the idea that learning to read is a natural process is of such magnitude that Stanovich (1994) wrote

“That direct instruction in alphabetic coding facilitates early reading acquisition is one of the most well established conclusions in all of behavioral science...The idea that learning to read is just like learning to speak is accepted by no responsible linguist, psychologist, or cognitive scientist in the research community (pp.285-286).”

Lyon (2004) states that even though many students can do phonemic tasks, they are still lacking in their word identification skills. He concludes that it takes more than phonemic awareness to teach a student to read, that “it takes phonics.... Phonics is absolutely essential, non-negotiable.”

Recent studies directly comparing whole language, the integrated approach, phonics instruction and combinations of the former have been equivocal at best, and dubious at worst. There is the question of fidelity: how much whole language do we have and how much phonics? How good are the instructors? How similar is one phonics program being compared to other phonics programs in other studies? How similar is one whole language program to another? Jones (1995) examined 10 studies claimed by Stephens (1991) to be comparative. He found that “only eight truly compared what their authors label ‘whole language’ with ‘skill based’ instruction. Of the latter 8 papers, only three compared outcomes of instruction in any way (Jones, 1995, p.5).” His examination showed that the studies found little or no advantage for whole language, with the number of subjects only totaling 200. Furthermore, the studies were short term, only looking at outcomes of instruction for one year.

In fact, the research literature suggests that students achieve much better over time when they are directly and systematically taught phonemic awareness (Ball & Blachman, 1991; Bradley; 1988; Lerner, 1990; Liberman & Liberman, 1990; Stahl & Murray, 1994, 1994; Williams, 1991) and then phonics (Chall, 1991; Lyon & Moats, 1997; Moats 1998; National Reading Panel, 2000).

In the final analysis, perhaps it boils down to this. Students must learn to read before they can read to learn. Motivate them, provide them with opportunities to learn, immerse them in a language-rich environment, read to them, engender in them a love of learning and of reading, show them that reading is just another way of communication, yes. But keep in mind that those who can already read will read and get better at it, and that those who can't read will not, and will fall further and further behind their peers. The students who do not simply "pick it up" (as Delores Durkin did) must be *taught* how to read, directly and systematically.

Stanovich (1994) suggests the direct instruction of phonics. What is direct instruction? The term direct instruction became discredited because of its association with DISTAR (Direct Instruction of Arithmetic and Reading - see Kameenui, Simmons, Clark, & Dickson, 1997), a method of teaching modeled after behaviorist theory. Direct instruction today is simply another way of providing a very systematic method of scaffolding.

In direct instruction, sometimes called explicit teaching (see Tierney, R.J. & Readence, J.E., 2005, pp. 280-281) or direct teaching to avoid associations with DISTAR, the teacher first explains something new (let's say the sound of /n/). The teacher then models how it is said (for higher order procedures the teacher might think aloud), then gives appropriate examples. The class says the sound as the instructor points to it, asks the class for examples. Individual students then come to the board and point to the letter and say the sound. Immediately after this the teacher provides opportunity for application of the new skill or strategy in the form of a reading that includes the new letter/sound/skill.

An example might be to teach two or three sound/symbol associations such as /n/, /p/, and /a/, and then reading a story to the students about a cat taking a nap. The teacher might have the students clap whenever that particular sound occurs. Individual students might then read sentences independently to the class. Finally, the class might silently read a story with regular spelling and controlled vocabulary, and then talk about it and give instances of where the new letter was used to begin a word.

Direct instruction is really a kind of scaffolding, and is an example of what Pearson & Gallagher (1983) refer to as a "gradual release of responsibility" model (p.732). First the teacher has complete control over what is being taught, as when s/he is saying the sound of the word and giving examples of words that start with that sound and writing them at the board. Then the teacher might have the class say the name of the letter and its sound chorally (Becker, 1977). Then the teacher might ask students for examples of words that begin with that sound. Then the teacher might ask students to come to the board and point to that letter and say the sound. Then the teacher would have students read a story

that has multiple instances of the letter/sound taught that day. Basically, the steps are modeling, guided practice with immediate feedback, and independent practice (Rosenshine, 1984). For those students who did not learn with the group sufficiently for independent practice, it is the teacher's job to "identify the essential skills, find out what skills students lack, and teach those skills directly (Carnine, Silbert, & Kameenui, 1990. p.3)."

The direct or explicit instruction of phonics can fit right alongside experience stories, word banks, word walls, a print-rich environment, meaningful communications such as writing letters to parents, authentic text, invented spelling and the like. Phonics can be taught in context without stilted text and worksheets. In fact, all of these should work alongside each other in a balanced reading program.

There is no reason that a systematic and direct instruction of phonics *can't* be taught within a whole-language environment. Holistically, most of the whole-language ideas are sound, some of them even irrefutable. It is in the details that they flounder. Is it true that children learn phonics best only after they can already read? Research tells us otherwise (Lieberman & Lieberman, 1990). Is it true that what a reader should *not* do is to sound out the unknown word first and then use other cue systems? Is it true that focusing on single words will divert the reader's attention from meaning? Is it true that the things a reader *should* do include to skip the unknown word, put in another word and complete the sentences (say "Moses"), use prior information, read ahead, re-read, or put in another word that makes sense? (See Oklahoma State Department of Education's "Reading Learner Outcomes", 1992). Actually, this does *not* make sense, especially if, as Gough et al (1981) maintain, content words can be predicted from surrounding context only 10 to 20 percent of the time. Using the context plays a central role in whole-language word identification. (NB - consider the statements of Goodman & Goodman (1989) above.)

To set the record straight, whole-language supporters would agree that readers should use all cue systems, including phonics. However, they do not espouse systematically teaching phonic analysis to the entire group. In whole language, individual instruction in phonics or sight words is given on an as-needed basis.

It is time for the reading wars to end, if they've not already ended. Learning to read is a part of reading to learn, an essential part, a prelude. *Both* need to be emphasized in a complete reading curriculum. An integrated approach to teaching reading should include the *systematic* teaching of phonics and other word attack strategies, not in isolation but in a larger literary context. We need not throw out the baby with the bath water. A holistic approach to teaching reading within a language-rich environment is wonderful as long as it does not neglect the teaching of phonemic awareness and phonics in the early grades.

History has shown us that an over-emphasis on meaningful experiences and incidental learning at the expense of direct instruction in the mechanics of reading has had disastrous consequences. In 1988, the state of California mandated whole-language instruction throughout the state. In 1992, California's Department of Public Instruction found their fourth graders near the bottom of all states participating in the NAEP tests. California's overall reading scores were just above Mississippi nationally (National

Assessment of Educational Progress,1994). A 2002 National Assessment of Educational Progress report noted that reading achievement of twelfth grade student had declined over the previous five years, with 33 percent of senior boys and 20 percent of senior girls reading below the basic level (Caruba, 2004).

Will history repeat itself? Unless attention is given to intensive instruction in learning to read at the earliest levels, with direct and systematic instruction of phonemic awareness and phonics, along with an integrated approach to reading instruction, this is certainly possible, particularly if we consider the history of the predecessors of whole language over the last century. Without instruction in learning to read, students will not be able to read to learn. Reading to learn should be the centerpiece of most, if not all, education, a *sine qua non*. One hopes that it too will not disappear.

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