

inservice on secondary reading have trickled to a halt.

And what is happening in the classroom behind closed doors? What could be happening? What should be expected or demanded? Is content area reading a reality or a pipe dream?

In order to answer some of these questions Hesse and Bullock (1981) suggest "products of active reading" be taught and encouraged by content area teachers. These observable products of active reading were suggested because they would serve as proof that a student was processing the material in order to make meaning.

Wittrock's (1974) generative model of learning, which grew out of a decade of research on transfer of learning, gave rise to his Generative Model of Comprehension. This model posits that sentences are retrieval cues used to retrieve memories of earlier experiences. From these memories the reader generates or infers meaning from the text. The generated meanings represent comprehension of the meaning. In a series of studies (Marks, Doctorow, Wittrock, 1974; Wittrock, Marks, and Doctorow, 1975; Doctorow, Wittrock, and Marks, 1978) comparisons of predictions from generative models and other models were made. In the 1978 study, retention and comprehension were facilitated when students actively constructed meaning from the text. The constructed meaning was triggered when students were asked to generate summarizing sentences using high frequency vocabulary from the text that served as semantic retrieval cues. These cues facilitated recall of information relevant for the construction of meaning from the text.

Even though this experimental research on reading comprehension added future validation to the active reading behaviors advocated by Hesse and Bullock, there still was little information available on the kind and quality of pupil pursuits—reading or otherwise—in content area classrooms. Policy makers, administrators, reading specialists and content teachers still had no baseline data from which instruction decisions could be mandated or encouraged.

Slinger and Hesse (1981) developed and proposed the use of an observational scale that would allow researchers and practitioners to gather data on the kind and quantity of pupil reading pursuits in content area classrooms. Bullock, Slinger, and Hesse (1981) developed and proposed the use of an observational scale that would allow researchers and practitioners to gather data on the kind and quantity of pupil reading pursuits in content area classrooms. Bullock, Slinger, and Hesse (1981) reported on the data gathered in eighth grade language arts and social studies classrooms. While no judgements were made on the amount of time spent in active reading, passive reading, oblique reading, non-reading, and non-instructional pursuits, the percentage of time spent in active reading pursuits seemed small.

In order to better understand the earlier data and to test the usefulness of the Pupil Reading Pursuit Observational Scale, the study reported here was conducted.

Purpose of Study

The study had three purposes. First was to determine the kind and quantity of pupil reading and non-reading pursuits in high school reading and language arts classrooms. Bullock, Slinger, and Hesse (1981) had gathered baseline data in eighth grade language arts and social studies and a comparable set of data was desired. The second purpose was to test the utility of the Pupil Reading Pursuits Observation Scale and the data it yielded. It was known the scale could be used in a social studies class, but the problems encountered in a language arts class still remained. In addition, while the scale had been designed to assess reading pursuits in a content class, we were curious as to whether or not it could be used to assess the kind and quantity of content reading instruction in a non-content class—reading.

A QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS OF READING INSTRUCTION IN LOW LEVEL LANGUAGE ARTS AND READING CLASSES IN ONE HIGH SCHOOL

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In 1981 more college textbooks dealing with teaching reading in the secondary school appeared on the market. Revisions of earlier versions only five to seven years old have been heralded as new and exciting. A new twist here and there is noted by the addition of terms in titles like "middle school," "middle grades," and "integrated." The Great America Reading Machine is functioning predictably!

In the secondary schools some trends are observable. While ten years ago few special education, remedial or developmental reading classes were in existence and the push was for every teacher to be a teacher of reading, today content area reading fervor has subsided. Today reading specialists coexist with the special education teacher, each teaching their respective portion of the students scoring in the first three stanines on standardized reading tests. The special education teacher, given the paperwork and referral system of 94-142, has fewer students. The reading teacher is a person without a home, with one foot in the special services department and another in the English area. In a few schools the reading specialist has advanced study skills or efficient reading classes and the "low level kid" stigma is reduced. In some other situations the reading specialist has some "released" time to serve as a reading consultant to other teachers. But entry into other classrooms is often painful.

In some junior high/middle schools the reading instruction is carried by "core" teachers through the use of the basal reading series that now have been adopted up through grade eight. Schools' goals and statements of philosophy make strong statements about reading throughout the curriculum, but the rhetoric is usually empty.

Some school building reading plans have been created for central office consumption, and 20 minutes a week of SSR, Sustained Silent Reading, has salvaged a few souls. Requests for

The third purpose was to suggest modifications in the scale and to establish a more definitive scale user's guide.

Classes to be Observed

One four-year high school of 1400 students in a suburban Oregon community was selected. Students in the high school are grouped for instruction in Language Arts and Reading by performance on standardized reading tests and performance assessment by previous language arts teachers. At the time observations were made, there were:

- 14 sections of low level language arts classes—students in stanines 4 and 5.
- 32 sections of regular language arts classes—students in stanines 6 through 8.
- 2 sections of advanced language arts classes—students in stanines 8 and above.
- 8 sections of special reading classes with students who were in stanines 2, 3, and 4.

The students in the reading classes were taught by certified reading specialists who were affiliated with the Special Services Department. They also took other language arts classes which were taught by certified language arts teachers.

Our focus within these four groups became the fourteen low level language arts classes and the eight reading classes. The fourteen sections of language arts were taught by seven different teachers. We selected five classes taught by five different teachers. Each class of fifty minutes was observed three times over a two-week period. The eight reading classes were taught by two teachers. Both teachers were observed three times in one of their reading classes.

The five language arts teachers reported their instructional plans in the classes observed were similar or identical to their own parallel sections that were not observed. The reading teachers team planned with precision and while only one of four ninth grade reading classes was observed, the activities in the other three on any given day would have been the same even though the exact allocation of minutes may have varied. Thus we assumed we had selected an adequate sample of the low level language arts and reading classes.

Observation Scale

The observation scale, the same one used in Bullock, Slinger, and Hesse (1981) study of eighth graders, was essentially identical to the scale suggested and described in detail in Hesse and Slinger (1981). The categories used in the scale can be seen in the presentation of data in Table 1 and each category is described in Hesse and Slinger (1981) and Slinger (1981).

Training of Observers

Two observers were used. One was one of the original designers of the scale and the other was a reading specialist from the high school in the study. The two observers studied the written description of the categories contained in Hesse and Slinger (1981) and Slinger (1981). They then met with others who had used the scale to discuss instances and non-instances of instruction that would fit each category. This was followed by use of the scale in a pilot class and a subsequent discussion and verification of data from the pilot observations.

The Observation Schedule

The twenty-one observations of 50 minutes duration were made over a two-week period of time. Teachers observed were contacted prior to the observation period, the study was explained in general terms, and permission to observe was secured. While each teacher knew they would be observed three times during the two-week period, the actual days of observation were not known in advance.

Each period of observation began and ended on the minute and second class was scheduled to begin and end. The observation scale is designed so the observer records the time any

student or teacher activity is initiated. In addition each activity is briefly described. Within a few hours of each observation, the description of each activity was shared with the second observer who validated or challenged the categorization that was used. The challenged categorizations were resolved through discussion which had as its primary aim consistency of categorization.

Results

Five language arts teachers were observed for three fifty-minute class periods. The total number of minutes observed was 750. Two reading teachers were observed for three classes for a total of 300 minutes.

Only six of the fifteen language arts classes—numbers 1, 2, 4, 10, 11, 12—had any activities in the reading categories and all six reading classrooms had activities distributed in the reading categories. A great majority of the language arts classrooms had more than thirty of each 50 minutes spent in non-reading content activities. While all classes had non-instructional time, the range varied from 1½ minutes to 18¼ minutes per 50-minute class period.

In Table 1 the percent of time spent in language arts and reading classrooms in each of the five major Pupil Pursuits is presented.

The data reveal considerable difference in time spent in the various categories and across classrooms. Students in language arts classrooms spent 10% of the time in active reading as compared to 50% in the reading classes. The total amount of time spent in reading, a sum of the first three categories, is 21% in language arts classes and 93% in reading classes. Also of note is the difference in non-instructional time, 22% compared with 7%.

Discussion

When comparing the results of this study with the Bullock, Slinger, and Hesse (1981) study, two things are interesting. The language arts classes' total percent of time spent in content activity, in noninstructional reading, and in passive reading are quite similar, 77% compared to 79%. While in this study very little time, 2%, was spent in passive reading, this percent would have increased if one of the teachers had run class in his usual fashion which was to give the students the entire period to read from their library books. But, as he explained to the observer, "I decided to teach today so you could have something to observe. Usually I just let the kids read. It give them a break and me a break, too. I do this every Friday."

In the language arts classes, given the amount of time observed in noninstructional activities, the low skill level of the students, and the low percent of time spent on any reading at all, it seems students would benefit by a restructuring of class time and priorities incorporating more reading behaviors. It seems as if the teachers in these language arts classes have designed a "reading free curriculum." This does not have to be the case. The reading teachers, in contrast, have a definite content as well as reading. Their secret to success lies in the following:

First, they have effective classroom management skills. Students move purposely and quickly from one activity to another. Structure is a given. Class activity begins on the minute it is supposed to. Expectations are clear, and the students respond accordingly.

Second, they are free to choose their own content—as long as they teach reaching. Given that, they choose to teach reading not as a set of isolated skills on worksheets, but as comprehension, thinking, and study skills. They have the freedom to decide what their students need to know to survive in school and the world and then develop their own materials accordingly. They use a minimum of commercially prepared reading materials and thus they breathe their own life into the content.

Third, they talk about units of instruction—their content—

rather than the skills or processes they teach. For instance, they speak of the "hero unit" or the "newspaper unit" or the "logic unit." Conversely, language arts teachers speak in terms of skills—spelling, vocabulary, writing, punctuation. They have no vehicle to carry their skills. The reading teachers do. Consequently, they have more content reading. If they taught skills rather than units, they would have had a considerably greater amount of their time spent in the "teaching skills in isolation" category, an oblique reading category, rather than an active reading category.

Table 1

PERCENT OF TIME BY GENERAL PUPIL PURSUITS
AND CLASSROOM CLASSIFICATION

Pupil Pursuits	Classrooms	
	Language Arts	Reading
Active Reading	10%	51%
Passive Reading	2%	0%
Oblique Reading	9%	43%
Non-Reading Content		
Activity	57%	0%
Non-Instructional Activity	22%	7%

Many nonreading issues surfaced and should be considered along with the data that is presented. Should curriculum be mandated for low level language arts classes and, if so, should that curriculum be a set of worksheets teaching skills in isolation? Does teaching adverbs and paragraphing have academic value for students who can barely construct a sentence? We are in the throes of a "no fault" syndrome where everybody loses. Teachers see students as dumb and unmotivated because the things being taught are inappropriate. So both teacher and student feel like a failure. Department heads and building administrators mandate a curriculum that they believe appropriate and meet with unhappy faculty and lowering test scores. Central office personnel managing curriculum from a distance respond to a competency base model mandated by the state and previous promises made to the public. Most teachers with low level classes have developed a teaching style that is appropriate for average and above average students. They use classroom management techniques that work with the mature students and do not easily shift expectations and structure for the low level class. The adjustments that are made are usually in an effort to "let up" on the students. Letting up results in teachers reading, a reliance on discussion, films, worksheets, and other strategies that are not dependent upon the students reading either in or out of class.

While this study was intended to only gather descriptive data about what was happening in reading and low level language arts classrooms and no attempt was made at measuring student gain, the teachers in this study were advised to examine the results of Stallings (1979) when she reported, "In each year of the study, we found students made more gain in classrooms where teachers spent more time instructing, discussing homework, providing considerable supportive feedback and having students read aloud in small groups. Students made less gain in classrooms where 40-50% of the time was allocated to written assignments, another 30-40% of time was allocated to silent reading and teachers graded papers or made lesson plans during class time." It seemed to these authors that an optimum amount of time in active reading and in some of the oblique pursuits would be desired. Given this awareness, it was felt the informed language arts or the reading teacher could, with appropriate collegial and administrative support, examine their own use of classroom time and adjust their teaching strategies so students would increase their likelihood of reading gain.

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