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## Reaction to Alvarez, Stewart, and Vaughn

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Using literature to learn about math and science in primary classrooms involves elements of integration of curriculum areas plus intensifying interest and response to relatedness for young learners. Marino Alvarez is noted for bringing novel and innovative concepts and resources to share at meetings of American Reading Forum. Delightful bearers of ideas came to present at this session in the form of Judy Vaughn and Marty Stewart from Westmeade School in Nashville, TN.

Vaughn described responses of a kindergarten class to a fable that involved (a) estimating, (b) counting, (c) planning and carrying out provisional trials. This seems to provide a more focused application of the "Theme-based Integrated Texts" which were developed in their 1991 presentation at American Reading Forum. Their premise that "Learning contexts become meaningful when new information is linked to existing concepts and becomes incorporated (integrated and related to other knowledge sources in memory) rather than compartmentalized (isolated due to rote memorization)" would support the interdisciplinary approach to literature, math, and science (Alvarez & Vaughn, 1992, p. 128).

Stewart added evidence from use of integrated approaches in grades one and two. Young learners at these levels not only read but also wrote their own fables. Urged to use their brains to solve problems they analyzed differences and similarities, recorded information using tally marks, and counted by twos and fives. This group made predictions and carried out experiments on displacement of water. The water project was followed up by moving on to the study of wind and sun.

The potential of using literature as a vehicle for learning math and science at these early school levels appears very promising. Alvarez, Stewart, and Vaughn are urged to bring additional data to support this integrated approach to teaching. As convincing evidence of effectiveness is gathered, they could be asked to help with a blueprint for introducing this strategy to teachers in schools across the nation.

## Reference

- Alvarez, M. C. & Vaughn, J. (1992). Kindergartners' use of theme-based integrated texts. In B. L. Hayes & K. Camperell (Eds.) *Developing Lifelong Readers: Policies, Procedures, and Programs* (pp. 127-136). *American Reading Forum, Vol. 12*. Logan, UT: Utah State University.