

A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE MACMILLAN READING PROGRAM  
and the  
SRA READING LABORATORY METHOD

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The two reading systems used in this comparative study were the Macmillan Basal Reading program and the SRA Reading Laboratory method. The Macmillan program used three items of instruction: (1) the basal reader which included a great variety of stories and a comprehensive check on each story; (2) the preparatory book which provided material for developing basal reading technique; and (3) the supplementary reader which provided an extension for a wide-reading program. Two additional items of instruction were used, a phonics workbook, The Atomic Submarine Book, and The Reader's Digest Reading Skill Builder. The teacher was an important part of the basal reading program for she motivated, taught, reviewed guided, and directed it. The children worked under her supervision.

The SRA Reading Laboratory method was a multilevel reading improvement program. Each child worked as an individual and advanced as fast and as far as his learning rate and his learning capacity would allow. A child was placed on a level of reading difficulty determined by a test provided by the SRA Laboratory. He moved from one level to the next according to how well he scored on the daily check-up material. Four items of instruction are used. (1) The Power Builder provided material

for developing comprehension, vocabulary growth, and practice in a newly-taught reading skill. (2) The Rate Builder was a device for developing reading-thinking skills. (3) The Listening Skill Builder provided the child with definite instruction in how to get information from an auditory experience. (4) All the work which the child wrote was kept in the Student Record Book. Daily progress charts were in this book also. All teaching was done through these four items. The students were responsible for their own learning and, with the teacher, determined when he should move to the next level of difficulty.

The fifth-grade class which participated in this six-weeks study was considered to be average in a three-group grade level. There were thirty-five children in the class. The median I. Q. of 114 was based upon the Otis Mental Ability Test, Beta Fm, administered in October, 1960.

Before the study began, the reading and vocabulary tests of the Metropolitan Achievement Tests, Intermediate Battery-Partial: Form R were administered on January 19, 1961. On the basis of these two tests an attempt was made to divide the children into two groups. Because the number of children involved in the study was so small, it was possible to pair only twelve children. In these six pairs the greatest difference in I. Q. scores was five points and the greatest difference in total reading grade level was one month.

The total class was retested on March 16, 1961 using Form S of the Metropolitan Achievement Tests. The evaluations made

and conclusions formed, regarding the study of the two reading methods are based upon a comparison of the two tests administered to the class. On the basis of the class medians, both groups showed a growth of five months in reading comprehension. The SRA group median indicated a growth of eight months in vocabulary development and the Macmillan group median showed a gain of four months. On the basis of the medians of the total reading achievement levels, the SRA group indicated a growth of six months and the Macmillan group indicated a growth of nine months.

Using the results of the tests for the twelve paired children, the growth for the SRA group was 3.83 months in comprehension, 3.66 months in vocabulary development, and 3.66 months in total reading achievement. In the Macmillan group the average growth in comprehension was 5.5 months, in vocabulary the average growth was 4.33 months, and in total reading achievement, it was 5.16 months.

The study used with this fifth-grade class, would indicate that the SRA Reading Laboratory method is superior to the teacher-Macmillan Basal system combination in developing vocabulary. In total reading achievement, the children using the Macmillan Basal system showed a greater growth, however.

Methods, devices, or techniques, such as the SRA may counteract the weaknesses of the teacher and basal system combination. If it provides such an aid, then it should be a part of the reading program.