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# Follow up study of 129 first grade children

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Faulkner, M.J., et al  
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BOSTON UNIVERSITY  
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Thesis

FOLLOW UP STUDY OF 129 FIRST GRADE CHILDREN

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## INTRODUCTION

### Statement of Problem

This study is an attempt to measure the reading achievement in February 1957 of the children in the first grade success study who had not reached primer level in June of 1956. Individual tests measuring knowledge of letter names and sounds and a vocabulary inventory test were administered to one hundred and twenty-nine children in three different communities. Their scores on similar tests in September, January and June the previous year were used to discover growth patterns.



## CHAPTER I

## SUMMARY OF PREVIOUS RESEARCH

Many factors have been considered as contributing factors to success in beginning reading. This study is concerned particularly with the effect of knowledge of letter names and sounds. The research will cover general readiness factors, letter names, phonics and learning rate in relation to reading achievement in grade one.

In 1936 Gates and Bond <sup>1/</sup> studied the factors determining success and failure in beginning reading. After testing over 100 children they concluded that:

"Readiness for reading is something to develop rather than wait for.....the optimum time of beginning reading is not entirely dependent upon the nature of the child himself but is a large measure determined by the nature of the reading program.....The remedy is the correction of the difficulties or adjustment to them rather than merely waiting for the time to cure them. Preparation for reading consists in part in discovering and correcting or adjusting to various constitutional handicaps."

In 1939 Harrison <sup>2/</sup> in her study concluded in the summary that the factors in reading readiness may be classified under three headings:

(1) Intellectual Development, (2) Physical Development, and (3) Personal Development. She concluded with the following material:

"Before reading is taught to any child, the first grade teacher should be certain that the necessary factor of readiness, or at least the factors of prime importance, are present in the child.

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<sup>1/</sup> Arthur I. Gates and Guy L. Bond, "Reading Readiness, A Study of Factors Determining Success and Failure in Beginning Reading," Teachers' College Record (May, 1936), 37: 679-685.

<sup>2/</sup> Lucille M. Harrison, Reading Readiness, Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston, 1939, p. 28.

The kindergarten teacher should delay promotion to first grade until she is confident that the factors of readiness are present to such an extent that success is assured. The factors as described are related to three types of development, namely: (1) mental, (2) physical, (3) personal.

Of major importance among all factors are those of (a) adequate mental age, (b) good vision, (c) good hearing, and (d) emotional stability, (e) adjustment to school situations, and (f) the seven abilities which should result from the preparatory period of instruction in reading. Chronological age is comparatively unimportant and should no longer be considered the sole criterion for entrance to first grade and the beginning of the reading process."

In 1940 Steinbach <sup>1/</sup> found in studying three hundred parochial school children in and around Milwaukee that there was no one factor that caused reading failure. She lists the following in order of rank as the most closely related factors to reading shown by various statistical studies: (1) auditory discrimination, (2) information, (3) visual discrimination between words, (4) visual discrimination between letters, (5) mental age, (6) vocabulary.

In the same year Maxwell <sup>2/</sup> conducted a study in Texas and found that the first grade teacher must know the mental, physical, social, and emotional characteristics of the first grade child; that maturity plays an important role in beginning reading and a testing program to determine this maturity should be conducted.

According to Witty <sup>3/</sup> in evaluating readiness for reading:

1/ Sister Mary Nila Steinbach, An Experimental Study of Progress in First Grade Reading, Published Doctor's Dissertation, Catholic University, Washington, 1940; Washington Catholic Educational Press, Catholic University of America Educational Research Monographs, Vol. 12, No. 2, 1940, p. 117.

2/ Jewell T. Maxwell, Preparation for Primary Reading, Master's Thesis, East Texas State Teacher's College, Texas, 1940, 113 p.

3/ Paul A. Witty, Reading in Modern Education, D.C. Heath and Company, Boston, Massachusetts, 1941, p. 65.



"The first responsibility of the teacher is to make an appraisal of each child's status. Deficiencies should be corrected and help should be given as needed. Systematic reading instruction offered before such steps are taken may lead to irreparable harm. Parents as well as first grade teachers should give serious attention to the problem of readiness. Home and school should work together to prepare the child for successful reading. This endeavor should include activities which will deepen and enrich experiences, cultivate expression, stimulate vocabulary growth and foster desirable attitudes."

He also states that there are many prerequisites which must be satisfied to fulfill the ability to read simple passages. He stresses the importance of intelligence, maturation, motivation, and language development as experience. He lists the following related factors for readiness:

- Home Background
- Physical Status and Growth
- Mental Maturity
- Readiness as determined by tests
- Vocabulary Development
- Speech Habits and Language Proficiency
- Emotional and Social Growth
- Interests, Attitudes and Experiences
- Experience Charts
- Film Strips
- Reading Books

In conjunction with Witty's statement concerning intelligence, Hildreth <sup>1/</sup> in her book states that:

"The factors that make up mental maturity for beginners-- capacity to think, to reason, to learn, to observe, to be curious, to remember, to follow directions and to deal with ideas on a sixth year level of understanding - are essential to learning during the first grade."

Durrell <sup>2/</sup> says, however, that:

"It is safe to assume that a child with good eyes and ears, with no physical handicaps to upset his attention, and with a mental age of at least six years can learn to read."

1/ Gertrude Hildreth, Readiness For School Beginners, World Book Company, Yonkers, New York, 1950, p. 13.

2/ Donald D. Durrell, Improvement of Reading Abilities, World Book Company, Yonkers, New York, 1941, p. 184.

Davidson <sup>1/</sup> found that the:

"Increase in ability to discriminate between letters comes with increasing mental maturity and especially with experience with these confusing letters."

Dunn <sup>2/</sup> in 1951 in a study of fifty children at the first grade level found that first grade children need to have the various meanings of the words found in first grade material presented to them.

Wilson et al. <sup>3/</sup> states that the "ability to read alphabet letters is one of the best indicators of the ability to learn to read." He further says that the mastery of letter symbols, forms, and sounds is of great importance.

In relation to this Haskell et al. <sup>4/</sup> in 1951 studied six hundred and thirty-nine first grade children to determine the relationship of the knowledge of letter names and reading achievement in grade one by testing the visual perception of letters (similarity of configuration), the recognition of letter names, and the knowledge of capital and lower case letters. They concluded that there is little relationship between the knowledge of letter names and reading achievement, that there is a definite relationship between the IQ and reading achievement in favor of children of 110 and above,

1/ Helen P. Davidson, "A Study of the Confusing Letters b, d, p and q," Pedagogical Seminary and Journal of Genetic Psychology (December, 1935), 47:458-468.

2/ Margaret Virginia Dunn, Word Meanings in the First Grade, Master's Thesis, Boston University, School of Education, Boston, 1951, p. 40.

3/ Frank T. Wilson et al., "Reading Progress in Kindergarten and Primary Grades," Elementary School Journal (February, 1938), 38:442-449.

4/ Barbara Haskell et al., The Relationship of the Knowledge of Letter Names and Reading Achievement in Grade One, Master's Thesis, Boston University, Boston, Massachusetts, 1952, pp. 23-24.

and that girls are superior in reading achievement and all factors studied.

In 1953 Carew <sup>1/</sup> found in a case study of twenty-eight first grade children who scored low in readiness tests that many parents who have not an interest in higher education themselves often will not provide educational opportunities in their home for their children. They concluded that this can be a contributing factor in the child's lack of verbal readiness for reading, especially in verbal areas.

In 1954 Boynton et al. <sup>2/</sup> studied to find the different backgrounds that children bring to first grade and to determine how these backgrounds affect beginning reading. Seven hundred and eighty one children were given seven group tests and in addition an individual test. The hundred and thirty children were observed by the teachers who noted the physical and emotional maturity, social adjustment, attention, motor control, speech defects, and verbal fluency. Parents of some children were interviewed to find previous experiences concerning social habits. Of these children the greatest number were found to be in the first reading group. In October they discovered that:

- "1. Children coming to school varied in motor skills.
2. Over one half were able to copy a sentence and write their first name.
3. Identification of letters from flash cards and dictation show little differences.

1/ Alice Teresa Carew, A Case Study of Twenty-Eight First Grade Children Who Scored Low on Readiness Tests, Master's Thesis, Boston University, Boston, Massachusetts, 1953, p. 132.

2/ Katherine Boynton et al., Differences in Background Brought to First Grade, Master's Thesis, Boston University, Boston, Massachusetts, 1954, pp. 84-85.



4. Initial consonant of a word somewhat easier than identifying final consonant
5. Varied in visual memory with a diminishing number of correct responses as length of words increased
6. Identification of small letters was more difficult than identification of capitals.
7. Identification of sounds of small letters was more difficult than identification of sounds of capitals
8. The teacher's rating scale results indicated normal distribution in; physical maturity, attention in group, social adjustment, emotional adjustment, motor control, verbal fluency. Most of the children came to school with no errors in speech.
9. It appears that the knowledge in all of the areas tested in September affect reading achievement. Children paired exactly for mental age but achieving differently in reading in November, one high and one low, showed differences on all of the factors measured in September in favor of the high reading group. Those differences were all significant except the motor. "

Reading achievement was measured in October and February on different forms of the Detroit Word Recognition Test. The test resulted in the following data:

1. Mean of high reading group was 4.9 compared with 1.4 for low reading group.
2. Mean scores of high reading group in identification of letters from dictation was 13.80 to 9.27 for low reading group
3. Auditory, initial sounds - 8.79 for high reading group compared to 6.42 for low reading group; final sounds - 7.31 for high reading group compared to 5.04 for low reading group
4. Visual memorization, 9.18 for high reading group compared to 7.14 for low reading group
5. Identification of names of capitals, 11.36 for high reading group compared to 9.12 for low reading group
6. Identification of sounds of capitals, 2.78 for high reading group compared to .851 for low reading group
7. Identification of names of lower case, 9.33 for high reading group compared to 5.15 for low reading group

8. Identification of lower case sounds, 1.71 for high reading group compared to .37 for low reading group

"A study of comparison in achievement of upper and lower quartiles according to mental age showed significant difference on all of the tests given in September as well as the reading test in November in favor of high mental age group. "

1. Identification of letter names from dictation - 14.11 letters for high reading group compared to 6.21 letters for low reading group. On flash cards - 14.57 for high reading group, 7.09 for low reading group
2. Auditory, initial sounds - 8.55 for high reading group compared to 5.14 for low reading group (quartiles) final sounds - 7.05 for high reading group compared to 3.85 for low reading group
3. Visual, upper quartile - 9.90 for high reading group compared to 5.44 for low reading group
4. Identification of names of capitals - 12.62 letters for high reading group compared to 3.75 letters for low reading group
5. Identification of sounds of capitals - 2.45 letters compared to .39
6. Identification of lower case - 8.56 to 1.89
7. Identification of lower case sounds - 1.32 to .10

Currier <sup>1/</sup> tested second graders of Tilton, New Hampshire to find the value of phonic training. She discovered in her study that:

1. The phonetically trained children read with less speed; interest, and showed greater fatigue with greater confusion of ideas.
2. The classes without any phonetic drill, read with greater interest, speed and more expression.
3. Phonetic drill proved helpful to foreign children with previously poorly formed speech habits of pronunciation.
4. There proved to be little difference between the average ability

1/ Lillian Beatrice Currier, "Phonics and No Phonics," Elementary School Journal (February, 1928), 23:448-452.



of those having phonetic training and those not having it when attacking sight work.

She concluded that phonetic drills have a very definite value but are not mandatory for every child as a part of the daily program in the primary grades. Furthermore, phonetic drills should be used at all times with caution and adjusted to individual needs of the group or individual child.

Sexton and Herron <sup>1/</sup> in their Newark Phonics Experiment tested over a thousand first graders in the Newark area. The purpose of the study was to discover the value of phonics in beginning reading. The first grade children used were divided into two groups, experimental and control. The results clearly showed that the teaching of phonics made little impact on beginning reading during the first five months. Phonics began to be of some value during the second five months. It was, however, of greatest value in the second grade. The results also indicate that there was less difference between classes taught with and without phonics than between different schools. It was found that the classroom teacher made the difference with or without phonic training.

Garrison <sup>2/</sup> in 1927 began a three year study which entailed following one group of first grade children through the third grade. Bright and dull children were distinguished by the Pintner-Cunningham Primary Mental Test, and both were included in the phonics and non-phonics groups. The children being tested were placed in four classrooms, two of which received phonic training and two of which received no phonic instruction. As far

1/ Elmer K. Sexton and John S. Herron, "The Newark Phonics Experiment," Elementary School Journal (May, 1928), 28:690-701.

2/ S.C. Garrison and Minnie Taylor Heard, "Experimental Value of Phonetics," Peabody Journal of Research (July, 1931), 9:9-14.

as possible, the same teaching procedure was used in both groups. In the phonic group the teachers used Dougherty's The Teaching of Phonetics for 15 minutes daily. Whereas the non-phonetic group had 15 minutes of drills, reading and dramatization.

The conclusions which Garrison reached are as follows:

- "1. Training in phonetics makes children more independent in pronunciation of words.
2. Children with no phonetic training make smoother and better oral readers in the lower grades.
3. In teaching children to read in the early part of the primary grades, bright children seem to be helped more by training in phonetics than dull. For all children phonetic training seems to be more effective in the latter part of the primary grades.
4. In the teaching of reading it seems probable that much of the phonetic training now given should be deferred until the 2nd or 3rd grades.
5. It appears the work in meaningful exercises which are planned to increase comprehension and to teach discrimination of words is more important than phonetics."

Dolch and Bloomster <sup>1/</sup> tested children in the first two grades to measure their mental development and their phonic attainment in order to see whether one was in any way related to the other. They concluded that children of high mental age sometimes fail to acquire phonic ability but children with low mental age are certain to fail. A seven year mental age is the lowest at which a child can be expected to use phonics. The test, however, does not show when phonics training should be started.

Biggy <sup>2/</sup> conducted a study to establish the relative order of diffi-

<sup>1/</sup> E. W. Dolch and Maurine Bloomster, "Phonic Readiness," Elementary School Journal (November, 1937), 38:201-205.

<sup>2/</sup> Mary Virginia Biggy, The Establishment of a Relative Order of Difficulty of Word Elements in Auditory Perception, Master's Thesis, Boston University, Boston, Massachusetts, 1946, pp. 26-29.

culty in auditory discrimination. She administered a group test for auditory discrimination to two hundred and thirty-seven children in seven first grades during the first week of school, in September. The test was designed to measure untrained abilities in auditory discrimination to determine the following orders of difficulty.

1. Of initial sounds
2. Of initial blends
3. Of final consonants
4. Of rhymes
5. Of both beginning and final consonants

She reached the following conclusions:

- "1. Initial Sounds - Q was the easiest initial consonant in auditory discrimination for the group tested. W was found to be the most difficult. R was found to be more difficult than g though not as difficult as h. Both h and s were found to be similarly difficult to distinguish, but s the more difficult of the two. P, j, and n were found to be more difficult than s, but the three appeared to be relatively difficult. T was found to be more difficult than n and l more difficult than t. The m sound was found to be more difficult than l. W and v were found to be the most difficult initial consonants to distinguish and the two appeared approximately equal in difficulty.
2. Initial Blends - ch was the easiest and sh the hardest. Ch, the least difficult blend, was found to be more difficult than g, the easiest initial consonant. Sp was more difficult than ch, but of similar difficulty to tr and st. The most difficult blend sh, was found to be approximately comparable in difficulty to w and v, the most difficult initial consonants.
3. Final Consonants - y was the easiest to discriminate while d was the most difficult. S was fairly comparable to y, but both s and y, as relatively easy final consonants were found to be equal in difficulty to the most difficult initial consonants. T was found to be more difficult than s as a final consonant, and k was more difficult than t. N was found to be much more difficult than l, and g more difficult than n. P and d were found to be considerably more difficult than g. All but the first 3 final consonants - namely, y, g, and s were found to be more difficult than the most difficult initial consonants.



4. Rhymes - The phonogram ing was found to be much easier than any of the other rhymes included in the test. At was found to be noticeably more difficult, but even as the most difficult rhyme tested, it was found to be easier to distinguish than the least difficult final consonant. The phonogram ing was found to be easier to distinguish than the initial consonant g for the group tested. An and un were found to be fairly comparable in difficulty and followed ing in the order established. And was more difficult than the initial blend st.
5. Both Beginning and Final Consonants - Six of the consonants were used and tested both as initial and final consonants. The easiest final consonant in this group was found to have a higher per cent of error than the most difficult beginning consonant in the same grouping. The sound s was easiest to distinguish both in final and initial consonants. G was found to be the easiest initial consonant, and the second most difficult final consonant. L was found to be twice as easy to distinguish when used as a final consonant as when used as a beginning consonant. N was found to remain in the same position both as an initial and a final consonant. P as an initial consonant was found to be twice as easy to distinguish as when used as a final consonant. T was found to be much more difficult to distinguish as a beginning consonant than when used as a final consonant."

Fahy <sup>1/</sup> did a follow up study on Biggy to determine whether the order of difficulty of word elements remains constant in different situations and to evaluate the effect of a certain teaching method on the comparative ease of learning word elements. Nine communities were tested within a twenty mile radius of Boston including high economic areas, middle class, and industrial. She formed experimental and control groups of approximate equality in auditory and visual discrimination, learning rate, and mental, and chronological age. The experimental group was given training in auditory and visual discrimination using lantern slides and teaching of word elements as beginnings and endings in the same lesson. The control group was given training based on material in the basal readers and on Building Word Power

<sup>1/</sup> Anne Fahy, Evaluation of Ear-Training in Grade One, Master's Thesis, Boston University, Boston, Massachusetts, 1949, p. 78-83.

by Durrell. Consonants were presented first as initial sounds. In March, after the completion of fifty lessons the final tests were administered. Five weeks later an individual test was given to measure retention.

The conclusions are as follows:

- "1. The experimental group showed a far lower percentile age of error than the control group on all word elements tested.
2. When those letters were isolated which were tested in both initial and final positions, the percentages of errors in the experimental group were more nearly alike than in the control.
3. The experimental group was not only better in retention of initial consonants but the differences for final consonants was statistically significant."

The conclusions concerning the analysis of the effect on individual letters in response to teaching are as follows:

- "1. Word elements responding best to teaching in terms of differences in percentage of error from November to March were -
  - a. Percentage of error was low for all initial consonants after teaching. H, d, t, and v responded best for teaching.
  - b. The error for initial blends was also low after teaching.
  - c. P, n, and k responded best to teaching in terms of differences in amount of error.
  - d. Rhymes ing, and and showed the best responses.
  - e. Short middle vowels with a relatively high percentage of error in March made less gain after teaching than other word elements.
  - f. The March percentile of error for long middle vowels were relatively higher than the percentile for other word elements tested.
2. In general the word elements most difficult to hear before teaching responded better than those elements which were easier.
3. The letters d, g, l, and s responded best as initial sounds and t, n, and p as final sounds."



The implications for teaching are:

- " 1. There is apparently no set order of difficulty of word elements which remains constant in every situation.
2. From the study results the position in terms of difficulty before teaching does not influence the learning as much as one might believe.
3. Though both short and long sounds of vowels showed definite improvement after teaching, the percentage of error in this study indicated that in general vowels were more difficult than consonants.
4. In many specific instances, however, vowel sounds showed gains equal to or larger than those for final consonants, blends and rhymes."

McCarthy and McKenna <sup>1/</sup> analyzed the Nason Phonics Test to find a relative order of difficulty of beginning consonants and blends and of final consonants. The relative order of difficulty of initial sounds and blends for grade one was as follows:

"Qu was the hardest initial sound with th, bl, ch, cr, v, pl, l, g, k, wh, y, t, f, s, following in order of decreasing difficulty. The relative order of phonograms tested in order of decreasing difficulty in grade one was ent, ock, an, ing, and us. The relative order of difficulty of final consonants was b, c, g, f, and s. The relative order of difficulty of initial and final sounds combined in order of decreasing difficulty in grade one was c-y, tr-d, b-l, n-t, fr-n, gl-d, m-les, j-g, r-sh, d-t, h-m, p-k, w-ch, r-ck, st-p. There were significant sex differences in the results of the tests. Girls were statistically higher in the mean score and the percent of correct responses on the majority of the items."

Clarke <sup>2/</sup> did a study to discover the word perception errors made by first graders in the vocabularies of the Row-Peterson pre-primers to determine the persistence of these errors. The original tests of this study

1/ Eleanor McCarthy and Regina McKenna, An Item Analysis of Nason Phonics Test in Grades One and Two, Master's Thesis, Boston University, Boston, Massachusetts, 1950, pp. 60-62.

2/ Nina Honemond Clarke, Word Perception Errors in Grade One and the Persistence of These Errors, Master's Thesis, Boston University, Boston, Massachusetts, 1952, pp. 78-79.

were administered following the completion of the reading of the pre-primers. One group was tested in January with a re-test for persistency of errors in April. Another group completed the pre-primers in April with a re-test in June. The following conclusions were reached:

- "1. Proper names are easy for children to learn because there were no initial or subsequent errors on the proper names in the story test.
2. The words that persisted in the greatest number of errors were - what, saw, play, store, said, had, this, caps, is, it, home, got, airplanes, the, puppy, name, have. Eleven out of the seventeen words were abstract. This shows that abstract words are hardest for children to learn.
3. The slow children made the same types of errors that the bright children made but the slow children made more of the same type.
4. The same words that were difficult for the slow children were difficult for the bright children.
5. The same words that were easy for the slow children were easy for the bright group.
6. Children use various ways to help themselves to determine what a word says.
7. Children confuse words with similar letters and similar parts.
8. Children confuse difficult words with words they already know.
9. The length has little to do with the ease with which a child learns a word. "

Cerica <sup>1/</sup> in 1950 studied the rate of learning of colorful and abstract words in grade one. She tested one hundred and thirty-six children in four first grades of a small residential town, using thirty words which were divided into three groups of ten words each. Her conclusions were that:

1/ Louise Adelle Cerica, The Comparison Rate of Learning of Colorful and Abstract Words in Grade One, Master's Thesis, Boston University, Boston, Massachusetts, 1950

- "1. The difference between the rate of learning of colorful and abstract words was statistically significant in favor of colorful words.
2. The comparison in learning rate between boys and girls revealed no significant difference.
3. A study of the number and types of errors in the learning rate of colorful and abstract words showed that a colorful word was substituted for another colorful word twenty-six times. Twenty words not taught at all were substituted for words in the test. Errors in abstract words showed that substitutes were made eight times for words not taught.
4. On the basis of correct responses, handkerchief was the easiest word presented, 90% of the children learning it, and touch was the most difficult word with only 37% of the children learning it."

Murphy and Junkins <sup>1/</sup> stated in 1941 that:

"Two special abilities affect the learning rate - auditory and visual discrimination of word elements. The ability in auditory analysis of word elements appears to be a primary factor in success in beginning reading. If he has never noticed the sounds within spoken words, the printed forms of those words give him no clue to pronunciation. Children also have difficulty with visual discrimination of letters and words clearly shown up in oral reading."

This paper presents auditory exercises which offer practice in discriminating initial and final consonant sounds and blends known to the child. The easier words are presented first. Provision is made for constant review and variety. Visual exercises provide matching of letters and words and finding words in context. The authors studied one hundred and fifty children in ten classrooms who were not progressing in reading in grade one. They were divided into groups on the basis of the chronological age, mental age and sight vocabulary. Fifty children were given the auditory discrimination exercises which replaced the reading period. Fifty children were

<sup>1/</sup> Helen A. Murphy and Kathryn M. Junkins, "Increasing the Rate of Learning in First Grade Reading," Education (September, 1941), 62:37-39.



given the visual discrimination exercises which replaced the reading period with no special supervision. The control group continued with the usual lessons. At the end of six weeks, the three groups were retested on auditory and visual discrimination and learning rate. The following results were found:

1. All groups progressed in visual discrimination.
2. The special group using the auditory discrimination exercises made marked progress, while other groups made little or no gain.
3. In the beginning all groups were about equal in the rate of learning, but at the end of the experiment, the two experimental groups doubled in retention of words, while the control group increased in score only slightly. Three months later all groups were tested with the Detroit Word Recognition Test. The experimental groups had raw scores of twelve and thirteen respectively as compared to seven for the control group. The differences are statistically significant. The auditory training group had a higher score on the rate of learning test at the end of the experiment.

Callahan <sup>1/</sup> determined the rate of learning of colorful and abstract words in grade one in 1947. The population used was sixty-eight boys and girls in the first grade in a large, cosmopolitan city in Massachusetts. Thirty words were taught to all the children. A reading aptitude test, an intelligence test, and a word recognition test were also given. The conclusions reached were as follows:

- "1. The study of the data showed that the best predictive measure of reading success used in this study was learning rate.
2. The study of relations of reading achievement and learning rate showed high positive correlation.
3. A study of the relations of reading achievement with other reading factors showed low positive correlation. "

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<sup>1/</sup> Dorothea Therese Callahan, The Comparison in Rate of Learning of Colorful and Abstract Words in Grade One, Master's Thesis, Boston University, Boston, Massachusetts, 1947, pp. 26-27.

Boyle <sup>1/</sup> did a similar study in 1950 to compare the rate of learning of colorful and abstract words in grade one. She tested one hundred and twelve children in the first grade in a large industrial city in Massachusetts. The thirty words were divided into three groups of ten words each. An intelligence test and word recognition test were also given. The conclusions were as follows:

- "1. There were no statistical differences in the learning rate between boys and girls. The differences, however, were all in favor of the girls.
2. There was a definite relationship between learning rate and reading achievement. The difference in reading achievement was in favor of the girls."

The research indicates factors which contribute to readiness and achievement. There appears to be some relationship between knowledge of letter names and sounds and reading achievement. This study is an attempt to gather additional evidence concerning these knowledges and achievements in January of the second year.

<sup>1/</sup> Virginia Boyle, Learning Rate of Colorful and Abstract Words in Grade One, Master's Thesis, Boston University, Boston, Massachusetts, 1950, pp. 36-37.



## CHAPTER II

## PLAN OF STUDY

In February of 1957 a study of a group of children in three Massachusetts communities who were previously tested in September 1955, January 1956, and June 1956 in first grade was undertaken to discover progress in knowledge of letter names, consonants and blends, applied phonics and reading achievement.

One hundred twenty-nine children, eighty-nine boys and forty girls who received a score of ten or below on the Detroit Word Recognition Test,<sup>1/</sup> were used as the cases in this study. An individual test was administered to measure knowledge of letter names and sounds and reading achievement. With the exception of the reading achievement test, Part II, the entire test was taken from the Boston University Success Study<sup>2/</sup> administered in January 1956. The first section measures the child's knowledge of the twenty-six letters both capitals and lower case arranged in order of difficulty. The order in which the capitals were presented was O, X, A, B, T, C, L, R, I, S, P, N, F, E, H, D, M, K, Z, J, Y, W, G, Q, U, V. The order of presentation of lower case letters was o, x, s, c, i, p, t, m, k, z, e, w, r, j, y, f, n, a, h, v, u, b, d, l, g, q. In administering section one of the test the child was asked to read the letters as they appeared on the page.

<sup>1/</sup> Detroit Word Recognition Test, World Book Company, Yonkers, New York, 1953.

<sup>2/</sup> Boston University First Grade Success Study, June Test, Boston University, Boston, 1956.

The second section of the test consists of sounding twenty-four consonants s, t, f, p, m, z, k, o, b, c, h, j, n, r, d, w, q, a, e, l, v, i, u, y, and sixteen blends, st, ch, th, wh, sh, dr, tr, cl, fr, sm, pl, tw, fl, sk, sw, gr. In administering this part of the test the child was asked to give the sound of each letter and blend.

The third section of the test measured the child's knowledge of applied phonics. Seventeen beginning sounds and eight final sounds were presented. In presenting the beginning sounds the examiner explained that the first word in each pair of words was known and would be read by the examiner. The child was to read the second word in the pair by changing the beginning consonant. The words presented were: house-mouse, jump-bump, sunny-funny, ball-tall, yellow-fellow, car-jar, boat-goat, not-dot, find-kind, see-bee, look-cook, puff-huff, make-lake, big-rig, for-nor, can-van, red-wed. A similar procedure was used for final sounds. In administering the rhyming words the teacher said the example word, Dick, at the top of the section and asked the child to say the second word, tick, which sounded like the first word with the first letter changed. In the remainder of this section the teacher said the first word while the child responded with the second. The eight final sounds were big-bid, red-rep, Tim-Tis, run-rut, in-if, work-worm, not-nor, can-cab. This section was administered in much the same way as the one in rhyming words. The teacher gave the example word, and, at the beginning of the section and told the child to say the word beside it, ant, which remained the same except for the final letter.

The final test in the battery was devoted to reading achievement. The first story contained seventy-two words. The examiner said, "I have a story for us to read. I'll start my part and then tell you when to read."

Teacher: One rainy day Dick, Jane, and Sally had to stay inside.

Child: "I want to play something," said Sally. "We can work and make a house. Jane you be mother, Dick - father, and Tim for Spot. Puff can be my little baby. Where is he? Help me find him."

Teacher: The children looked everywhere. Dick looked in the toy box and said:

Child: "Come! See the big, blue ball, one yellow boat, two cookies, three red cars. But Puff is not in here."

Teacher: As Jane walked by the dollhouse, she saw Puff sleeping in there. She called:

Child: "Oh go look. It is funny!"

Teacher: The children looked at Puff sleeping in the little house and laughed. He didn't like to be laughed at. "Oh," said Dick--

Child: "See him jump up and down and run away."

The second part of the reading achievement test was constructed by this group. The vocabulary consisting of forty-nine words for the new story was derived by taking every sixth word from the first grade common word list of Scott Foresman, Row Peterson, Houghton Mifflin, Ginn, Silver Burdett, and Macmillan compiled by E. Virginia Bennett et al.<sup>1/</sup> Using this vocabulary each member of the group wrote a story. The purpose in writing these stories was to include as many different words as possible with a minimum of repetitions so that the testing time would not be longer than absolutely necessary. The group decided on the story which was the briefest and most logical. From this the story was further revised to its final form containing eighty words with the, and, and a the only repetitions.

<sup>1/</sup> E. Virginia Bennett, et al., Construction and Evaluation of Group Tests in Reading for Grades One, Two, and Three, Master's Thesis, Boston University, Boston, Massachusetts, 1953.

Teacher: Dick and Jane visited a farm during their winter vacation.

Child: Every morning from the window they saw old black goats bump each other.

Teacher: One day Dick and Jane went outside to feed the hens.

Child: Jane ran and got corn and water. She just pushed it under the snow gate on the ground. Then the fat roosters and hens said a word, "Cluck!"

Teacher: On the way back to the house, Jane saw an empty bird's nest.  
Dick said:

Child: "No, please don't take the nest home!"

Teacher: The children ran back to the house. Dick said:

Child: "Let's have another milk and ice cream party as we did at school this spring."

Teacher: Jane said, "Oh yes, I remember ....."

Child: ....when that man came and began the story which was about a barber trained to fly airplanes."

In taking the test each child was given a large faced type copy which was mounted on a sheet of colored construction paper. The examiner used a copy which allowed for the child's name, teacher, and community. As the child responded, each incorrect response was checked. The administration of the test battery took about fifteen minutes per child. The entire testing was accomplished in a period of five weeks beginning January 24th and concluding March 1st.

The analysis of the test results is presented in the following chapter.



CHAPTER III  
ANALYSIS OF DATA

The data were analyzed to compare the test results of September 1955, January 1956 and February 1957.

Tables I and II show the distributions, means, and standard deviations of the mental and chronological ages in September 1955.

TABLE I  
DISTRIBUTION OF CHRONOLOGICAL AND MENTAL  
AGES IN SEPTEMBER 1955

	CA	MA
99-101		2
96-98		1
93-95		1
90-92		4
87-89	1	1
84-86	1	10
81-83	9	11
78-80	18	19
75-77	37	19
72-74	35	14
69-71	22	10
66-68	2	12
63-65		7
60-62		2
57-59		5
54-56		2
51-53		1
48-50		1
45-47		3
Total	<u>125</u>	<u>125</u>



TABLE II  
MEAN CHRONOLOGICAL AND MENTAL AGES

N	CA		MA	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
125	74.98	3.84	74.20	10.35

The chronological ages ranged from 66 months to 89 months with a mean of 74.98. The mental ages ranged from 45 months to 101 months with a mean of 74.20.

Tables III and IV show the distributions, means, and standard deviations on tests of knowledge of capital letters in September 1955, January 1956, and February 1957. The means are compared for the three different measuring periods.

TABLE III  
DISTRIBUTION OF SCORES ON KNOWLEDGE OF CAPITAL  
LETTERS IN SEPTEMBER 1955, JANUARY 1956 AND  
FEBRUARY 1957

	September 1955	January 1956	February 1957
26	4	13	73
25		15	25
24		6	9
23		9	8
22		4	2
21		3	1
20	1	6	1
19		7	4

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TABLE III (concluded)

	September 1955	January 1956	February 1957
18	1	4	
17	2	2	1
16	1	5	1
15	2	4	1
14	1	7	
13	2	1	
12	2	3	
11	7	2	
10	3	5	
9	3	2	1
8	2	6	
7	2	2	1
6	6	2	
5	6	1	1
4	9		
3	14		
2	19	1	
1	19	1	
0	20		
Total	126	111	129
Mean	5.09	18.32	24.44
SD	6.28	6.60	3.41

The September 1955 scores ranged from 0 to 26 with a mean of 5.09. Approximately fifty per cent of the scores were below 8. The January 1956 scores ranged from 1 to 26 with a mean of 18.32. Approximately fifty per cent of the scores were between 20 and 26. The January 1957 scores ranged from 5 to 26 with a mean of 24.44. Fifty-seven per cent of the scores were 26.

TABLE IV  
COMPARISON OF MEANS OF CAPITAL LETTERS

Year	No	Mean	SD	SE M	Diff	SE Diff	CR
September 1955	126	5.09	6.28	.559	13.23	.84	15.75
January 1956	111	18.32	6.60	.625			
January 1956	111	18.32	6.60	.625	6.12	1.135	5.39
February 1957	129	24.44	3.41	.300			

The mean score in September 1955 was 5.09 compared with 18.32 in January of 1956. The mean score in February 1957 was 24.44 compared with 18.32 in January 1956. The critical ratio of 15.75 and 5.39 show both of these differences to be statistically significant in favor of the last test.

Tables V and VI show the distributions, means and standard deviations of the knowledge of lower case letters in September 1955, January 1956, and February 1957. The means are compared at each measuring period.

TABLE V  
DISTRIBUTION OF SCORES ON LOWER CASE LETTERS IN  
SEPTEMBER 1955, JANUARY 1956, AND FEBRUARY 1957

	September 1955	January 1956	February 1957
26	1	3	14
25	1	8	47
24		7	23

(concluded on next page)

TABLE V (concluded)

	September 1955	January 1956	February 1957
23	1	9	15
22	1	8	7
21		7	9
20		7	5
19		3	
18		10	2
17		2	1
16		6	
15		1	
14	1	4	2
13	1	1	
12	2	2	
11	3	3	
10	5	2	1
9	1	2	
8	3	2	1
7	2	4	
6	3	3	1
5	6	7	
4	9	4	1
3	11	2	
2	22	3	
1	25	1	
0	28		
Total	<u>126</u>	<u>111</u>	<u>129</u>
Mean	3.67	16.11	23.16
SD	4.98	7.41	3.64

The September 1955 scores ranged from 0 to 26 with a mean of 3.67. Approximately fifty per cent of the scores were below 3. The January 1956 scores ranged from 1 to 26 with a mean of 16.11. Approximately fifty per cent of the scores were between 18 and 26. The February 1957 scores ranged from 4 to 26 with a mean of 23.16. Approximately fifty per cent of the scores were 25 or 26.



TABLE VI  
COMPARISON OF MEAN SCORES OF KNOWLEDGE OF  
LOWER CASE LETTERS

Year	No	Mean	SD	SE M	Diff	SE Diff	CR
September 1955	126	3.67	4.98	.443	12.44	.830	14.97
January 1956	111	16.11	7.41	.703			
January 1956	111	16.11	7.41	.703	7.05	.772	9.13
February 1957	129	23.16	3.64	.320			

The mean score in September 1955 was 3.67 compared with 16.11 in January of 1956. The mean score in February 1957 was 23.16 compared with 16.11 in January 1956. The critical ratios of 14.97 and 9.13 show both of these differences to be statistically significant in favor of the latest test.

Tables VII and VIII show the distributions, means, and standard deviations on the knowledge of consonants and blends in September 1955, January 1956 and February 1957. The September test included only beginning consonants. The January tests were identical and included blends as well as single consonants so that the comparison of the results of these two tests is made.

TABLE VII  
DISTRIBUTION OF SCORES ON CONSONANTS AND BLENDS  
IN SEPTEMBER 1955, JANUARY 1956, AND FEBRUARY 1957

	September 1955	January 1956	February 1957
39-41			11
36-38			14
33-35		1	25
30-32		1	13
27-29		1	9
24-26		1	10
21-23		7	5
18-20		12	12
15-17	2	10	11
12-14	1	4	3
9-11		13	6
6-8	4	13	5
3-5	10	13	3
0-2	109	35	2
Total	126	111	129
Mean	1.59	9.19	23.76
SD	3.32	7.10	10.65

The September 1955 scores ranged from zero to sixteen with a mean of 1.59. Approximately eighty-five per cent of the scores were below three. The January 1956 scores ranged from 0 to 35 with a mean of 9.19. Approximately fifty per cent of the scores were below 8. The February 1957 scores ranged from 0 to 41 with a mean of 23.76. Approximately fifty per cent of the scores were between 30 and 41.

TABLE VIII  
COMPARISON OF MEAN SCORES OF CONSONANTS AND BLENDS

	No	Mean	SD	SE M	Diff	SE Diff	CR
January 1956	111	9.19	7.10	.673	14.57	1.154	12.61
February 1957	129	23.73	10.65	.937			

The mean score for January 1956 was 9.19 compared with 23.76 for February 1957. The critical ratio of 12.61 shows this to be a statistically significant difference in favor of February 1957.

Tables IX and X show the distributions, means, and standard deviations on the applied phonics tests for January 1956 and February 1957.

TABLE IX  
DISTRIBUTION OF SCORES ON APPLIED PHONICS IN  
JANUARY 1956 AND FEBRUARY 1957

	January 1956	February 1957
25		3
24		4
23		4
22		11
21	1	8
20		3
19		5
18	1	6
17	1	2
16		12
15	1	4
14	1	3
13		11
12		6

(concluded on next page)

TABLE IX (concluded)

	January 1956	February 1957
11	1	2
10	1	3
9	3	5
8	4	1
7	2	2
6	1	3
5	2	4
4	4	3
3	4	7
2	6	6
1	12	3
0	66	8
Total	111	129
Mean	2.23	13.05
SD	4.20	7.58

The January 1956 scores ranged from 0 to 21 with a mean of 2.23. Fifty-nine per cent of the scores were 0. The February 1957 scores ranged from 0 to 25 with a mean of 13.05. Approximately fifty per cent of the scores ranged from 14 to 25.

TABLE X

## COMPARISONS OF MEAN SCORES ON APPLIED PHONICS

Year	No	Mean	SD	SE M	Diff	SE Diff	CR
January 1956	111	2.23	4.20	.398	10.82	.777	13.92
February 1957	129	13.05	7.58	.667			



The mean score in January 1956 was 2.23 compared with 13.05 in February 1957. The critical ration of 13.92 shows this difference to be statistically significant in favor of February 1957.

Table XI shows the distributions, means, and standard deviations of the reading tests in January 1956 and February 1957. The first seventy-two words were identical. Part II included a different vocabulary for each test so that mean comparisons were not made. The total possible scores were 162 in 1956 and 152 in 1957.

TABLE XI  
DISTRIBUTION OF SCORES ON TOTAL READING IN  
JANUARY 1956 AND FEBRUARY 1957

	January 1956	February 1957
150-159		1
140-149		14
130-139		16
120-129		9
110-119		11
100-109		16
90-99	1	11
80-89		10
70-79	4	9
60-69	6	8
50-59	8	6
40-49	10	6
30-39	16	4
20-29	17	3
10-19	20	5
0-9	29	
Total	111	129
Mean	28.80	94.50
SD	18.70	36.00

Table XII shows the distribution, mean and standard deviation of the June 1956 reading test which was a group test.

TABLE XII  
DISTRIBUTION OF SCORES OF TOTAL  
READING IN SEPTEMBER 1956

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70-79	3
60-69	2
50-59	9
40-49	16
30-39	37
20-29	31
10-19	15
0-9	9
Total	<u>122</u>
Mean	32
SD	15.10

---

## CHAPTER IV

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This study was undertaken to discover the progress of a small group of children who had not made progress in Grade I in the knowledge of letter names, consonants and blends, applied phonics and reading achievement. The test battery given in an individual testing situation consisted of materials established in the Boston University Success Study <sup>1/</sup> and a reading achievement test which was written by the group.

One hundred twenty-nine children, eighty-nine of which were boys and forty of which were girls, took part in the study chosen on the basis of receiving a score of ten or below on the Detroit Word Recognition Test <sup>2/</sup> in June 1956. This study did not analyze the relationship of scores between the sexes. Approximately the same group of children had previously been studied in September 1955, January 1956 and June 1956.

## CONCLUSIONS

1. The group tested was that of a normal population. The mean of the chronological age was 74.98 while the mean of the mental was 74.20.
2. The group improved in knowledge of capital letters. The mean gain from September 1955 to January 1956 was 13.23 and from January 1956 to February 1957 was 6.12. The critical ratios of

<sup>1/</sup> Boston University First Grade Success Study, June Test, Boston University, Boston, 1956.

<sup>2/</sup> Detroit Word Recognition Test, World Book Company, Yonkers, New York, 1953.

of 15.75 and 5.39 show both of these to be statistically significant in favor of the last test.

3. The group improved in knowledge of lower case letters. The mean gain from September 1955 to January 1956 was 12.44 and from January 1956 to February 1957 was 7.05. The critical ratios of 14.97 and 9.13 shows both of these to be statistically significant in favor of the latest test.
4. The group improved in knowledge of consonants and blends. The mean gain from January 1956 to February 1957 was 14.57. The critical ratio 12.69 shows this to be statistically significant in favor of February 1957.
5. The group improved in applied phonics. The mean gain from January 1956 to February 1957 was 10.82. The critical ratio of 13.92 shows this difference to be statistically significant in favor of February 1957.
6. Reading achievement improved with the increase in knowledge of letter names, sounds, and applied phonics.
  - a. On the individual reading test in January 1956 fifty per cent of the people had scores less than 30.
  - b. On the individual reading test in February 1957 fifty per cent of the children had scores of 100 or more.
  - c. In January 1956 only five children in the group scored 70 or better. In February 1957 eighty-seven children scored more than 70.



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APPENDIX



2.

Every morning from the window they saw  
old black goats bump each other.

\*\*\*\*\*

Jane ran and got corn and water.  
She just pushed it under the snow gate  
on the ground. Then the fat roosters  
and hens said a word, "Cluck."

\*\*\*\*\*

"No, please don't take the nest home!"

\*\*\*\*\*

"Let's have another milk and ice cream  
party as we did at school this spring."

\*\*\*\*\*

"...when that man came and began the story  
which was about a barber  
trained to fly airplanes."

1.

" I want to play something," said Sally.

" We can work and make a house.

Jane, you be mother, Dick - father,

and Tim for Spot. Puff can be

my little baby. Where is he?

Help me find him."

\*\*\*\*\*

" Come! See the big blue ball,

one yellow boat, two cookies,

three red cars. But Puff is not in here."

\*\*\*\*\*

" Oh go look. It is funny!"

\*\*\*\*\*

" See him jump up and down and run away."

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Nn Nk Wd Wm Teacher \_\_\_\_\_

Phrasing:

\_\_\_\_ word-by-word  
\_\_\_\_ incorrect

Voice

\_\_\_\_ monotonous  
\_\_\_\_ too loud  
\_\_\_\_ too soft  
\_\_\_\_ poor enunciation

Skills

\_\_\_\_ ignores punctuation  
\_\_\_\_ repetition  
\_\_\_\_ addition  
\_\_\_\_ omission  
\_\_\_\_ inadequate analysis  
\_\_\_\_ errors on easier words

2.

Teacher: Dick and Jane visited a farm during their winter vacation.

Child: Every morning from the window they saw old black goats bump each other.

Teacher: One day Dick and Jane went outside to feed the hens.

Child: Jane ran and got corn and water. She just pushed it under the snow gate on the ground. Then the fat roosters and hens said a word, "Cluck!"

Teacher: On the way back to the house, Jane saw an empty bird's nest. Dick said:

Child: "No, please don't take the nest home!"

Teacher: The children ran back to the house. Dick said:

Child: "Let's have another milk and ice cream party as we did at school this spring."

Teacher: Jane said, "Oh yes, I remember...."

Child: ...when that man came and began the story which was about a barber trained to fly airplanes."

I.)

O X A B T C L R I S P N F E H D M K Z J Y W G Q U V  
o x s c i p t m k z e w r j y f n a h v u b d l g q

II.)

s t f p m z k o b c h j n r d w g a e l v i u y  
st ch th wh sh dr tr cl fr sm pl tw fl sk sw gr

### III. Dick - tick

house - mouse	car - jar	see - bee	big - rig
jump - pump	boat - goat	look - cook	for - nor
ball - tall	not - dot	Puff - huff	can - van
yellow - fellow	find - kind	make - lake	red - wed

### IV. and - ant

big - bid	Tim - tis	in - if	not - nor
red - rep	run - rut	work - worm	can - cab

\*\*\*\*\*

### 1.

( I have a story for us to read. I'll start my part and then I'll tell you when to read. )

Teacher: One rainy day Dick, Jane, and Sally had to stay inside.

Child: " I want to play something," said Sally. "We can work and make a house.  
Jane you be mother, Dick - father, and Tim for Spot. Puff can be  
my little baby. Where is he? Help me find him."

Teacher: The children looked everywhere. Dick looked in the toy box and said:

Child: " Come! See the big, blue ball, one yellow boat, two cookies,  
three red cars. But Puff is not in here. "

Teacher: As Jane walked by the dollhouse, she saw Puff sleeping in there. She called:

Child: " Oh go look. It is funny!"

Teacher: The children looked at Puff sleeping in the little house and laughed.  
He didn't like to be laughed at. "Oh," said Dick --

Child: " See him jump up and down and run away."