

## Michigan To Test Values Instead of Reading Abandons Testing of Reading Despite High Illiteracy

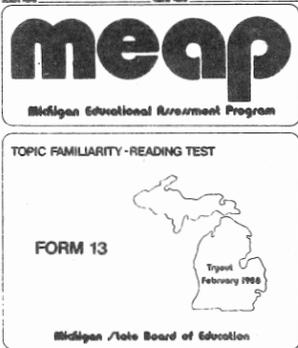
The Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP) will test all public school children in the 4th, 7th, and 10th grades between September 25 and October 20 with a reading test that is radically different from what has been used in past years. Many parents and teachers believe this new test is a fraud on the public because it will not test reading skills, but instead will test personal opinions, values, attitudes, feelings and expectations.

The state board of education voted in February this year to use the new test on an every-child basis in three grades starting in the fall of 1989. The test will take one hour a day for four or five days.

The test is expected to "go national" after it begins in Michigan. At one statewide conference in Michigan, participants were told that "the entire United States is waiting for this test to be released as well as two foreign countries."

### A "Different Type" of Test

In January 1988, the Michigan Department of Education announced what it called "a different type of MEAP reading test" in order to conform to "the State Board of Education's adoption of new reading objectives." The announcement said that specialists had been working for three years to develop this new reading test and that 14 school districts had been selected to use the Tryout test. This Tryout test, using a drastically different methodology,



was administered in the spring of 1988, and the Pilot test was given in 40 schools that fall.

Many parents were upset last year because they were never notified of the experimental test and their rights regarding it. The letter announcing the test was addressed to students rather than to parents.

Parents were also alarmed because of the secrecy surrounding the test. Parents were not allowed to take the test home for examination and were not permitted to see a sample test outside of the presence of school administrators. The state department of education declared that the test was "secure" and could only be seen in the department's offices at the state capitol.

Legislators asking for copies were only allowed to see the test when education department personnel hand-carried it to their offices and remained in the room with it at all times. The department of education refused to allow out-of-state professionals to evaluate the test.

### Teachers' Objections

Last year, the new-style Tryout test ran into immediate objections from teachers at the selected schools because of the large number of questions to which the teachers could not

determine the correct answers and the large number of questions to which there were admittedly no right or wrong answers. One of the school superintendents stated that "concerns [about the test] are legitimate." Quotations from letters written by teachers are printed elsewhere on this page.

Following this initial negative reaction, the state department of education sent in trouble-shooters who were referred to as a "crisis intervention team" to assuage fears and placate the teachers.

The principal concerns expressed by teachers can be summarized as follows:

1. The "reading test" is not a reading test because it does not test the pupils' reading ability or basic reading skills (such as decoding or vocabulary). Some called the test a "fraud on the public" or a "phony test."

2. The majority of test questions are value related or require personal evaluations, both of which are improper testing areas and have little or nothing to do with reading competence. (For example, teachers feel it would be appropriate to test a pupil on the meaning of the word "unhappy," but inappropriate to ask "what makes you unhappy?")

3. The test questions require the pupil to reveal dozens of personal opinions for which there are no right or wrong answers. Teachers asked, How can a test "assess" a child's competence, achievement, or progress by opinion questions that have no correct or incorrect answers?

4. Many test questions are isolated from context and have no relation to the story which the pupil is supposed to comprehend in order to answer the questions.

5. The questions are subjective rather than objective. They ask matters of opinion, attitude, behavior, feeling or expectation which are not reading skills and are inappropriate for testing academic achievement. In addition, they are considered offensive because they inquire about subjects that are "none of the school's business" and invade psychological areas without parental consent.

6. The test confuses children as to what is expected of them.

7. The content of some stories used in the test is objectionable because it is not true to life and focuses on negative or depressing situations or behavior. Raising psychological problems or dilemmas is not a proper function of a test of reading ability.

MEAP's own description of the new reading test confirms that it tests subjective values rather than reading skills. The new test consists of two test booklets per student. The first is described as "a Topic Familiarity item booklet assessing a student's prior knowledge of pertinent concepts related to the selections he/she will read." That means that the first part of the test is given before the student reads the passage upon which he is being tested. The second booklet includes the reading selections and then tests "Constructing Meaning, Knowledge of Reading, Attitude and Self Perception."

### Legal Objections to the Test

Some teachers concluded that the new-style reading test is really a Personality Test, which is defined in Michigan law as a test to assess

behavior characteristics rather than aptitude, achievement or intelligence. The General School Laws of Michigan state that a Personality Test may be administered to public school students only after due notice in writing is given to the parent or guardian, and that no test shall be given to any child whose parent or guardian objects. The Michigan law also stipulates that only persons with a Ph.D. or M.A. in psychology or counseling plus other specific training may administer or interpret a Personality Test, and no such provision has been made for the new reading test.

Some teachers cited the federal Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment (20 U.S. Code §1232h), which prohibits psychological testing or treatment in seven sensitive areas without the prior written consent of the parent. Federal funding in the MEAP testing program was admitted by the Senate Fiscal Agency in Lansing to be \$87,100 for FY 1986-87 and \$92,400 for FY 1987-88. More than a million dollars each year was provided to MEAP out of the Michigan Department of Education budget.

The official MEAP "Time Line" shows that the project started in 1982 and continued year after year with administrative work, conferences and contracts. The target date for "every-pupil testing" was set years ago for the fall of 1989, and the project is on schedule.

### A New Definition of Reading

A 1988 news release from MEAP states: "In 1982 a review by reading educators resulted in a reconceptualization of the philosophy of reading..." This new definition was the cause of the drastic change in the reading test.

The new definition of reading approved by the state in 1986 is: "Reading is the process of constructing meaning through dynamic interaction among the reader's existing knowledge, the information suggested by the written language, and the context of the reading situation." Some teachers say that this definition reveals its fundamental defect: it teaches the student to reply to the test questions using prior knowledge, suggestions, and context, instead of requiring him to understand what the words actually say.

Some teachers believe that this new definition means that the schools will no longer try to teach the student to decode the written language, but will just teach him to guess at the story's meaning based on his prior knowledge, the pictures, and the limited vocabulary that he has already learned to recognize by sight.

Other teachers say that this new testing methodology is an attempt to conceal the failure of the whole-language method of teaching reading, which is seen by many as just modern jargon for the whole-word (look-say) method used in approximately 90% of public schools during the last 20 years, the same period when our nation has experienced a marked decline in literacy.

Professor Marie Carbo, an advocate of the whole-language method, told the New England Reading Association in Portland, Maine last fall that "Previous reading tests have measured specific skills," but the new Michigan and Illinois tests will "focus on students' overall understanding of the critical concepts and ideas in a text." She specifically cited the new

Michigan tests as "adapted to whole-language," and called her reading method "holistic" and a "whole world language experience." She said she is out to destroy some myths about reading such as that "there is a definite set of reading skills that should be taught to every child."

At a teachers' seminar held in Marquette, Michigan on February 24 this year, Sheila Potter, a state department of education reading specialist, trained teachers in how to handle the

### What Teachers Said About the New MEAP

"They are value related items that are personal opinion. Because they require personal opinion answers, how can you mark an answer right or wrong?"

"Many of the questions in this new test are inappropriate for statewide testing of reading. They are questions of opinion, not fact. In this test, there are questions of personal evaluation for which there are not right or wrong answers. An effective reading test must test the child's training in basic reading skills: phonics, decoding skills, vocabulary development."

"Without parental consent the new MEAP tests children in psychological areas. This test requires the children to answer questions about behavior and attitudes. Personal attitude questions which invade the private thoughts of the child have no place in statewide testing."

"The test is vague in its expectations and not a true measurement of the children's reading abilities. Rather than testing objective matter (specific skills such as a decoding, punctuation, syllabication, glossary skills, word referents, and the like), some of the items are subjective, concerning opinions and/or values. Subjective items should never be included on an achievement test. Only objective items with specific answers should be presented. The subjective items on the test caused doubt in the minds of my students and only upset them."

subject of reading under its new definition. She said that the new approach addresses demographics and information on who the students are, their ages, and family backgrounds including income levels.

Linda Rulison, a seminar participant, expanded on this: "In the past, reading was taught through learning sounds [which] letters and groups of letters make. Now, the new approach takes into consideration the student's life, interests, everything."

Those involved in the new MEAP reading test see themselves as blazing a trail for the nation. "Michigan is a leader in all this, but it's really kind of an explosion that's happened all over the country," said Dorothy Jackson, compensatory education director in the Bloomington Public Schools. "Michigan is acting as a beacon for the whole country" in changing reading techniques, said Jerry Jennings, who was Michigan Principal of the Year in 1984.

MEAP was established by the state in the late 1960s to determine the progress of Michigan education in essential skill areas. MEAP tests are given annually to all public school students at the beginning of the 4th, 7th and 10th grades in reading and mathematics. ■

# Actual Questions From the MEAP Reading Test

[Used with Forms 13 and 15, *Fat Puss* by Harriet Castor is about a cat called Fat Puss. He was sad because he was made fun of and was too fat to participate in many activities. Fat Puss trips and rolls down a hill, which he decides was fun. The other cats want to roll too but cannot because they are too thin. Fat Puss is pleased because he is the only cat who can roll down the hill. The story suggests that bad traits can be advantages.]

## Reading Test — Form 13/Topic Familiarity

- Read the following. Are they examples of **having pride**?
- feeling good about yourself  
A. Yes B. No
  - crying when a friend makes fun of you  
A. Yes B. No
  - doing things you don't like so you are accepted  
A. Yes B. No
- Read the following. Are they examples of things that can make you sad?
- not being asked to play with your friends  
A. Yes B. No
  - discovering you have a talent  
A. Yes B. No
  - being teased by your friends  
A. Yes B. No
  - foolish behavior results in pride.  
A. Yes B. No
  - Pride leads to positive feelings about yourself.  
A. Yes B. No
  - Being teased causes you to feel sad sometimes.  
A. Yes B. No
  - When you are sad, you often feel unpleasant.  
A. Yes B. No
  - Taking time to think helps you overcome sadness.  
A. Yes B. No
  - Not being able to solve a problem can make you sad.  
A. Yes B. No
  - People are responsible for causing pollution.  
A. Yes B. No

For each pair of words or phrases, which one BEST tells about rejecting someone?

- A. avoid B. disobey
- A. avoid B. not accept
- A. not accept B. disobey

## Reading Test — Form 13/Section 2

- How did Fat Puss feel just before he rolled down the hill?  
A. tired and grumpy  
B. excited and joyful  
C. lonely and upset  
D. frightened and sad
- What is the MOST important lesson of this story?  
A. Not everyone has the same abilities.  
B. Having friends is more important than being talented.  
C. Personal differences allow you to feel special.  
D. To respect others, you must first respect yourself.
- What would help you MOST to understand this story?  
A. discovering you have a special talent  
B. having many good friends  
C. knowing how cats live  
D. being able to roll down a hill
- What could you do BEFORE reading this story to help you understand it better?  
A. look at the drawings and think about what will happen  
B. find out more about cats from other books  
C. count the number of pages you need to read  
D. make a drawing of some cats
- Without the drawings, this story would lose some of its  
A. mystery.  
B. humor.  
C. message.  
D. realism.
- I had trouble understanding the story *Fat Puss*.  
A. Yes B. No
- I had a hard time understanding the main ideas of the story *Fat Puss*.  
A. Yes B. No
- I tried hard to understand the ideas in *Fat Puss*.  
A. Yes B. No
- I worked hard so I would do well on the story *Fat Puss*.  
A. Yes B. No
- I would read a story like *Fat Puss* in my free time.  
A. Yes B. No
- I dislike reading stories like *Fat Puss*.  
A. Yes B. No
- Reading more stories like *Fat Puss* would be boring.  
A. Yes B. No
- Finding stories like *Fat Puss* in the library would be fun.  
A. Yes B. No

[Questions 35-45, with the title changed to correspond to the reading selection, are the final questions in each section.]

[Used with Form 14, *No Dogs is Not Enough* by Linda Leopold Strauss is about Tony whose mother says no when he wants a dog. The boy spends his allowance money on a leash, bowl and dog food for an imaginary dog which he then walks daily and feeds regularly. When he asks again for a real dog, his mother says two dogs is too many. The boy's "dog" then gets lost whereupon his parents decide to get the puppy he originally wanted. The story shows how the boy circumvented a parental decision.]

## Reading Test — Form 14/Topic Familiarity

- Boredom often results when you use your imagination.  
A. Yes B. No
- Being determined usually results in losing.  
A. Yes B. No
- If you are determined, it is not necessary to have a goal.  
A. Yes B. No
- Owning a pet requires being responsible.  
A. Yes B. No
- Only adults can have responsibility.  
A. Yes B. No

- Caring for a friend requires that you give of yourself.  
A. Yes B. No

## Reading Test — Form 14/Section 2

- What MOST LIKELY happened after Tony got his puppy?  
A. Tony's parents changed their minds about having the puppy.  
B. Tony tried to get Nosey back.  
C. Tony took good care of the puppy.  
D. The puppy got lost like Nosey did.
- Which sentence tells what Tony's BIGGEST problem was?  
A. Nosey was not a very well-behaved dog.  
B. Tony had to prove his mother's decision was not right.  
C. Tony's parents knew Tony would have difficulty finding Nosey again.  
D. Tony's father failed to see that Tony had a good imagination.
- Tony is MOST like a person who  
A. gives up without a fight.  
B. becomes angry quickly.  
C. cries to get what he wants.  
D. makes up his mind to prove something.
- This story shows that someone can reach a goal by being  
A. careful and kind.  
B. patient and funny.  
C. quiet and fair.  
D. responsible and determined.
- Which of these experiences would be MOST helpful in understanding this story?  
A. living with a make-believe friend  
B. buying a new pet and pet supplies  
C. getting your way with your parents  
D. wanting something enough to work for it
- To understand this story better, having tried to change someone's mind would be  
A. helpful. B. not helpful.

## Reading Test — Form 15/Topic Familiarity

- Someone who acts different usually has serious problems.  
A. Yes B. No
- Being different can lead to being left out.  
A. Yes B. No
- Choosing to be alone is the same as being rejected.  
A. Yes B. No
- Rejection is a type of criticism.  
A. Yes B. No
- Being rejected is painful.  
A. Yes B. No
- When someone is unwelcome, they [sic] are rejected.  
A. Yes B. No
- When you are disappointed about something you did, you feel pride.  
A. Yes B. No

## Reading Test — Form 15/Section 3

- What important lesson did Fat Puss learn in this story?  
A. It is okay to be different.  
B. It is not nice to tease others.  
C. Being like others is very important.  
D. Thinking hard solves problems.
- How did Fat Puss change MOST from the beginning to the end of the story?  
A. He grew even bigger in size.  
B. He learned to accept himself.  
C. He was able to understand his friends better.  
D. He learned how to keep from getting hurt.
- Which of these would Fat Puss be LEAST LIKELY to do?  
A. share his things  
B. try something new  
C. tease others  
D. spend time alone
- What made Fat Puss finally realize that being fat was okay?  
A. He could play the new game with his friends.  
B. His friends decided they liked him that way.  
C. He could eat many things that the other cats could not eat.  
D. He found something that only he could do successfully.
- Fat Puss realized that he had a special talent when  
A. he did not get hurt.  
B. he rolled down the second hill.  
C. the other cats failed to do what he did.  
D. his friends asked him to join them in a game.
- How does this story differ from a fable?  
A. The characters are animals.  
B. It does not have a moral.  
C. It is longer.  
D. It has a happy ending.
- How can you figure out from whose point of view this story is told?  
A. Read the first few parts of the story.  
B. Look for the author's name.  
C. Look at the pictures.  
D. Think about the title.
- In Part 13, how could you figure out what the word *pastime* means?  
A. Divide the word into syllables.  
B. Read the whole paragraph.  
C. Practice saying the word.  
D. Write the word on paper.
- Why are the drawings important in this story?  
A. They help to show Fat Puss' problem and how it gets solved.  
B. They show how Fat Puss and his friends play together.  
C. They show that the author does not like cats.  
D. They show that the story happened long ago.

[Used with Forms 17 and 18, *Thank You, M'am* by Langston Hughes is about a teenager, Roger, who tries to steal Mrs. Rogers' purse because he wanted money for shoes. She grabs him when he trips because of the weight of her purse and drags him all the way to her house. Once there, she has him wash his face and join her for supper. She says she "had made similar mistakes. . . . Everybody's got something in common" and gives him \$10 to buy shoes. A reasonable inference is that everybody has stolen at some time and that crime sometimes pays.]

## Reading Test — Form 17/Topic Familiarity

- Opposing beliefs can lead to disagreements.  
A. Yes B. No
  - Consequences are not fair.  
A. Yes B. No
  - Maturity means accepting the consequences of your actions.  
A. Yes B. No
  - Helping out is influenced by sympathy.  
A. Yes B. No
  - Sympathy means showing that you care about someone.  
A. Yes B. No
  - We protect ourselves when we are threatened.  
A. Yes B. No
  - Being angry with someone is usually a way of protecting that person.  
A. Yes B. No
  - Protecting others is harder than protecting ourselves.  
A. Yes B. No
  - Acceptance prevents a person from advancing.  
A. Yes B. No
  - Acceptance can change a person's life.  
A. Yes B. No
  - Gratitude often makes a person feel jealous.  
A. Yes B. No
  - Dishonesty is a form of gratitude.  
A. Yes B. No
- For each pair of words or phrases, which one BEST describes **protect**?
- A. struggle B. observe
  - A. observe B. defend
  - A. struggle B. defend
- For each pair of words or phrases, which one BEST describes **consequence**?
- A. predictable B. result
  - A. precaution B. predictable
  - A. result B. predictable
- For each pair of words or phrases, which one BEST describes **brave**?
- A. courageous B. strength
  - A. courageous B. devoted
  - A. strength B. devoted
- For each pair of words or phrases, which one BEST describes **acceptance**?
- A. admiration B. understanding
  - A. admiration B. indifferent
  - A. indifferent B. understanding

## Reading Test — Form 17/Section 3

- How did Roger feel at the end of the story?  
A. hostile B. accepted  
C. disappointed D. abandoned
- The main problem of the story is that Roger  
A. was not able to obey the law.  
B. would not take advice from older people.  
C. had to face the consequences of stealing.  
D. needed a pair of suede shoes.
- Mrs. Jones' actions in this story probably forced Roger to  
A. examine his own behavior.  
B. learn to accept punishment for his crime.  
C. realize that all people are different.  
D. understand and accept his family.
- Mrs. Jones did NOT punish Roger for trying to steal her purse because  
A. she knew that it would not do him any good.  
B. she had made similar mistakes.  
C. he volunteered to do some work for her.  
D. he apologized for what he did.
- What important idea does this story contain?  
A. It is almost impossible to reform a delinquent such as Roger.  
B. Punishment is much more effective with a thief than forgiveness.  
C. Acceptance and kind treatment affected Roger's attitude about stealing.  
D. Because of Roger's background, there was no way that Mrs. Jones could reach him.
- Considering the end of the story, how is Roger MOST LIKELY to behave in the future?  
A. He will expect everyone to be like Mrs. Jones.  
B. He will trust others enough to ask for what he needs.  
C. He will call Mrs. Jones to thank her for her kindness.  
D. He will feel guilty for taking money from Mrs. Jones.
- What does Roger's character change show?  
A. that young people cannot be influenced by older people  
B. what little effect wealth has on some people  
C. how kindness can influence people  
D. that seeking luxuries leads to acceptance
- Based on this story, Roger will be LEAST LIKELY to  
A. continue to steal.  
B. attempt to reform himself.  
C. take better care of himself.  
D. buy a pair of suede shoes.
- Why did Roger try to steal Mrs. Jones' purse?  
A. He wanted some new shoes.  
B. He needed money for food.  
C. She looked small and weak.  
D. She looked rich and powerful.
- Which sentence from the story hints at one of the story's themes?  
A. "He would run, run, run."  
B. "Everybody's got something in common."  
C. "Was I bothering you when I turned the corner?" asked the woman.  
D. "I got a great mind to wash your face for you."
- What experience would MOST help you to understand Roger's problem?  
A. getting caught stealing  
B. having a big brother or sister  
C. taking a vacation in another state  
D. being invited to a stranger's house for dinner

Read the following. Do they help describe **acceptance**?

- shame  
A. Yes B. No
- approval  
A. Yes B. No
- admire  
A. Yes B. No

Read the following. Do they help describe **brave**?

- spiteful  
A. Yes B. No
- daring  
A. Yes B. No
- heroic  
A. Yes B. No

Read the following. Are they examples of **acceptance**?

- learning to deal with another person's bad habits  
A. Yes B. No
  - a group criticizing someone for being different  
A. Yes B. No
  - avoiding people on the street  
A. Yes B. No
  - Bravery depends on physical strength.  
A. Yes B. No
  - Kindness is a consequence of understanding.  
A. Yes B. No
  - Consequences are not fair.  
A. Yes B. No
  - To have a belief, you must trust that it is right.  
A. Yes B. No
  - We believe in some things even if we cannot see them.  
A. Yes B. No
  - Trust and belief must be scientifically proven.  
A. Yes B. No
  - Feeling sympathy often leads to dishonesty.  
A. Yes B. No
  - A friend who stops someone from hurting you is being loyal to you.  
A. Yes B. No
  - Being loyal keeps you from defending your friends.  
A. Yes B. No
  - Loyalty lessens as a friendship grows stronger.  
A. Yes B. No
- For each pair of words or phrases, which one BEST describes **belief**?
- evidence  
B. faith
  - A. faith  
B. exaggeration
  - A. exaggeration  
B. evidence
- For each pair of words or phrases, which one is the BEST example of **loyalty**?
- A. believing in someone when others do not  
B. changing your views without a reason
  - A. changing your views without a reason  
B. doing what your parents say
  - A. believing in someone when others do not  
B. doing what your parents say
- For each pair of words or phrases, which one is the BEST example of **belief**?
- A. having confidence in someone else's actions  
B. guessing about the outcome of a game
  - A. knowing your multiplication table  
B. having confidence in someone else's actions
  - A. knowing your multiplication table  
B. guessing about the outcome of a game

## Reading Test — Form 18/Section 2

- Which phrase BEST describes Mrs. Jones?  
A. old but childish  
B. tough but caring  
C. cautious but wealthy  
D. frightened but friendly
- What is one theme of this story?  
A. The punishment should fit the crime.  
B. Older people should try to understand why young people behave as they do.  
C. Acceptance can have a greater influence than punishment.  
D. Those who break the law should be punished or they will repeat their crime.
- During the story, Roger's behavior changed from  
A. frightened to trustworthy.  
B. ashamed to confident.  
C. dishonest to angry.  
D. quiet to talkative.
- Mrs. Jones did NOT take Roger to jail because she  
A. could not find a police officer.  
B. understood what it was like to be young and to want something.  
C. was lonely and wanted Roger's company.  
D. thought that he was too young to go to jail
- One way Roger and Mrs. Jones are alike in this story is that they both  
A. were deeply religious.  
B. were afraid to trust others.  
C. worked hard to get what they wanted.  
D. had done things they should not have done.
- In this story, Roger learned that  
A. you cannot expect understanding from others.  
B. it is easy to steal from old people.  
C. it is important to be clean.  
D. he does not have to steal.
- As a result of Roger's attempted crime  
A. Roger received more money than he could have received from the theft.  
B. Roger learned that Mrs. Jones needed her money more than he did.  
C. Mrs. Jones took him home, fed him and gave him \$10.00.  
D. Roger was sent to jail.
- The events of the story tell you that Mrs. Jones is  
A. forgiving and generous.  
B. lonely and bitter.  
C. rich and well-known.

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# FOCUS: Reading is the Civil Rights Issue of the '90s

by Charlotte T. Iserbyt

Charlotte T. Iserbyt is a free-lance writer and former Senior Policy Advisor in the U.S. Department of Education.

The failure to teach our children to read and write is the most important civil rights issue facing our nation today.

How can our children enjoy the fruits of freedom if they are illiterate? Their ability to express themselves, defend themselves, support themselves and their families, and to be independent human beings not manipulated by others, all depend upon their ability to read and write. Shouldn't we attack this civil rights problem with at least the same vigor that we attacked racial discrimination in our society?

The whole-language/look-say method of reading instruction must be stopped if we truly want to cure the nation's illiteracy problems.

Alarming information has come to light which suggests that the Federal Government has given the discredited whole-language/look-say method of reading instruction its stamp of approval, thereby taking the most important first step towards a national curriculum, since reading is the foundation of literacy.

## Tests for Whole-Language

Professor Marie Carbo, a leading proponent of whole-language, told a conference in Portland, Maine last fall, "New tests better suited to whole-language teaching methods are being introduced into the U.S. Department of Education's National Assessment of Educational Progress." Professor Carbo was referring to the expanded NAEP tests which will allow large-scale assessments (national achievement tests in various disciplines) to be achieved and to provide state-by-state comparative data.

That the administrators of the NAEP decided, in effect, to mandate whole-language reading instruction, to the exclusion of all other methods of instruction, is shocking, especially in the light of important "teach to the test" criticism of the recently expanded NAEP by highly-credentialed educators.

A *New York Times* article (December 27, 1987) entitled "U.S. Testing of Students Raises Growing Debate" quotes Professor George F. Madeus, Director of the Center for the Study of Testing, Evaluation and Educational Policy at Boston College, as follows: "Whoever controls those power tests will control to a large measure what is taught and learned in American schools." Bernard R. Gifford, Dean of Education at the University of California at Berkeley and Director of the National Commission on Testing and Public Policy is reported as saying, "If you have national standardized tests you will end up with a national standardized curriculum."

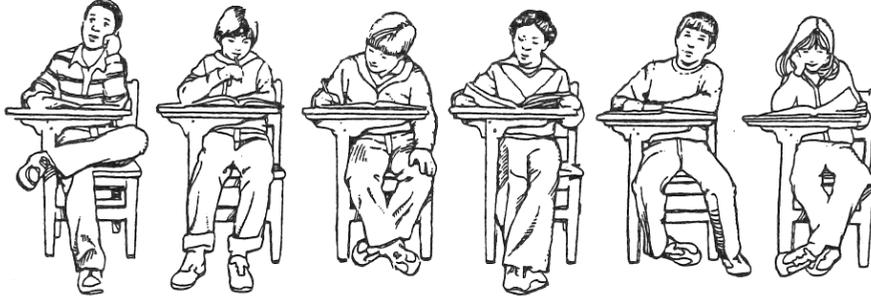
Chester Finn, then Assistant Secretary in the U.S. Department of Education, in an article entitled "Advocating an Expanded NAEP," in *Education Week* (November 18, 1987), said: "There is no chance that NAEP will yield a 'national curriculum.' I don't want a national curriculum. . . . Nor does Secretary [William] Bennett. But there is no reason to fear that an expanded NAEP would bring one about."

Two years later in an apparent reversal, Dr. Finn told business leaders that he favored the development of a "national curriculum."

The reason for our nation's illiteracy (60 million Americans cannot read their local newspaper) is that the social engineers and "reading specialists" in the International Reading Association, over the past 60 years, have been busily at work changing the method of reading instruction from the tried-and-true intensive phonics to whole-language/look-say.

## Whole-Language vs. Phonics

The whole-language method of reading, which is now being incorporated into the NAEP reading test, will replace the present look-say system, but unfortunately it continues the look-say theory by teaching children to read English as a picture-writing system, like the Chinese language. As far as children know, letters are simply a bunch of squiggles with no



particular meaning whatsoever, arranged in an arbitrary manner to make symbols of meaning, like Chinese ideographs.

Children do not hear the sounds but instead look at the word or sentence like a picture puzzle, trying to figure out what it "means." On this basis, they are told to guess the meaning. Once trained to treat reading as a guessing game, children read inaccurately, substituting words (pony for inaccuracy, dadday for father, Solomon for salami). Children are taught that letter order is not significant as they search for "meaning." They will mutilate words (read delicacy for delinquency) or telescope words (read "testing the iron" for testing the heat of the iron).

This method of teaching reading produces the well-known symptoms of dyslexia, that dreaded reading disability now affecting millions of Americans which was non-existent prior to the introduction of look-say reading instruction in the 1930s.

On the other hand, the intensive phonics approach used prior to 1930 gave us a highly literate population, probably the most literate in the world. With true phonics, the child is first taught to recognize the letters of the alphabet and then is drilled in the letter sounds — first vowels, then consonants, then consonant-vowel combinations — so that the child develops an automatic association between letters and sounds. When that is accomplished, the child is then given words, sentences, and stories to read. To master an alphabetic writing system and become a fluent-phonetic reader, the child must develop this automatic association between letters and sounds.

In response to the declining test scores and the outcry from parents, taxpayers, corporation presidents, and students themselves, the demolition experts, who brought us Look-Say and New Math, have now jumped on the Whole-Language bandwagon which is guaranteed to hammer the last nail into the literacy/civil rights coffin and to assure that no student will slip through their illiteracy net. (The attorney for Raymond Poremski, in a lawsuit filed against Poremski's school due to his inability to read his high school diploma, argued in District Court in Detroit that "school officials violated Poremski's civil rights by failing to make him a literate citizen.")

The U.S. Department of Education's alignment of a national reading examination to one specific method of teaching reading, in effect, mandates the teaching of reading by whole-language methods. The education establishment is already following this unwritten mandate;

many teachers colleges, including some in Maine and Arizona, mandate its use. As the whole-language illiteracy virus sweeps across the nation, our children will be unable to function as responsible citizens.

## Reading Instruction Redefined

Why are desperate parents and citizens finding it impossible to get rid of whole-

language instruction? Because, unbeknownst to them, the deindustrialization of America, with its accompanying transfer of millions of American jobs overseas, has allowed "change agents" to redefine literacy, with some even going so far as to question the need for everybody to be literate — writing and reading in the traditional context of functionalism comic books "may not be all that bad."

An article in the *Marquette, Michigan Mining Journal* by Bud Sargent, entitled "Reading Instruction Redefined," sheds light on the whole-language educators refuse to budge on the whole-language issue. Sargent quotes educators at a reading conference in Michigan in February 1989 as saying, "Teaching methods will be specifically addressed by the Michigan Education Assessment administered to all 4th, 7th and 10th graders in the state. It's important that teachers and administrators know that the test this fall will not be the same one they've seen in the past."

Most if not all states now have assessments (tests) similar to Michigan's, developed with advice and partial funding from the U.S. Department of Education, teachers nationwide are probably being given the same advice so that their students will do well on the test and their schools will look good on the nationally-publicized wall charts.

## Testing Students' "Backgrounds"

Of perhaps even more importance from the standpoint of de-emphasis of basic skills and invasion of privacy, are the following comments made by educators: "We're looking at the background of students, individual characteristics, the textbooks, everything. . . . In the past reading was taught through learning sounds, letters and groups that letters make. Now the new approach takes into consideration the student's life, interests, everything. . . . information on who the students are, their ages, family backgrounds, including her levels."

Professor Carbo, during her Portland lecture to Maine teachers, verified Bud Sargent's information by saying, "State tests in Michigan and Illinois also will be adapted to whole language. . . . Previous reading tests have measured specific skills such as finding the main idea and supporting details. Instead, the new Michigan and Illinois tests focus on students' overall understanding of the critical concepts and ideas in a text."

And what "critical concepts and ideas" does one find in the Michigan whole-language reading texts which will most likely be reflected in the new NAEP reading test?

## Teachers' Objections to Tests

They are controversial enough for the Michigan Department of Education to demand "security" for its U.S. Department of Education-funded whole-language pilot tests, and to have had hysterics when the parents of a child taking the reading test got possession of a test. The parents, both public school teachers, wrote a letter "To Whom It May Concern" which was circulated all over Michigan. Their concerns are: (1) types of questions — value-related and personal evaluations; (2) require personal opinion answers — no right or wrong; (3) questions are isolated and not asked in relation to particular stories; (4) not effective reading test — doesn't test basic skills; (5) tests children's psychological areas without parental consent; (6) causes children to be confused as to what is expected of them." Their letter concluded: "As educators and parents of four children, we implore you to consider assisting in a legal battle against the state of Michigan's experimental test."

Isn't it sad when parents and teachers must become detectives and spies in order to find out what the education "change agents" have planned for their children and our nation? Like detectives, parents and teachers must search for all the pieces of this puzzle of "guaranteed illiteracy" and put them together in order to find out that the new whole-language is required by the federal Department of Education's new NAEP assessment and is not, as taxpayers are so often told, a result of work among teachers at the local or state level.

Does not the NAEP reading test's alignment to the discredited whole-language reading

**"As far as children know, letters are simply a bunch of squiggles with no particular meaning."**

instruction spell disaster for any hoped-for improvement in our nation's schools and resulting ability to compete internationally? How long will we wait to demand action to stop our nation's slide into totalitarian illiteracy? Why don't our media education moguls, who seem almost to delight in parading uneducated American public school students across our TV screens for all the world to see, ever discuss the real cause of illiteracy: the use of whole-language/look-say reading instruction?

## The Wall of Silence About Phonics

A wall of silence, as potentially deadly as the Berlin Wall (if you cannot read, you are not free) has been erected, blocking out the views of pro-intensive phonics educators.

Professor Jeanne Chall, who heads Harvard's remedial reading laboratory, calls the move toward whole-language "shocking" and says, "there has been little research to document the method's success in this country. . . . children are coming into the lab who were in whole language classes."

Marian Hinds, President of the Reading Reform Foundation in Tacoma, Washington, says, "The professors of reading, aided and abetted by the International Reading Association, are in the process of foisting on American primary schools another form of educational

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## Questions

Continued from page 2

- D. weak and afraid.
25. An experience such as being the victim of a crime would MOST help you to understand how
- Mrs. Jones felt at the end of the story.
  - Mrs. Jones felt at the beginning of the story.
  - Roger felt at the end of the story.
  - Roger felt at the beginning of the story.

[Used with Forms 19 and 20, *The Richer, The Poorer* by Dorothy West is about two 60-year-old sisters. Lottie made choices all her life to save money instead of spend it, go to college, or get married. Bess married a musician and they lived like gypsies; she regrets never having children, "not having sense enough to know she was better off without one." When Bess' husband dies leaving her penniless, Lottie invites Bess to come live with her and refurbishes her house to prepare for Bess' arrival. Lottie begins to enjoy spending money to fix the house and buy a wardrobe. Bess doesn't notice the finery, but instead shares about the good times she had with her husband. Lottie confides that the best years went by "without my ever spending a day or a dollar enjoying them" and entrusts herself to Bess to learn how to make the time left count. The message is the reverse of the famous Aesop's fable, "The Ant and the Grasshopper."]

### Reading Test — Form 19/Topic Familiarity

25. Reaching a goal is an important part of success.
- Yes
  - No
26. Success is unrelated to wealth.
- Yes
  - No
27. Only famous people have true success.
- Yes
  - No
28. Persistence often leads to success.
- Yes
  - No
31. People with no common interests or language form a network.
- Yes
  - No
32. A network requires several elements.
- Yes
  - No
33. Sensitivity implies that a person respects others.
- Yes
  - No
34. Sensitive people are likely to ignore their families.
- Yes
  - No
35. Sensitivity is unrelated to tenderness.
- Yes
  - No
36. The more sensitive a person is, the less successful he is likely to be.
- Yes
  - No
39. Standardized products tend to be very expensive.
- Yes
  - No
51. Most people who make sacrifices are wealthy.
- Yes
  - No
52. People generally make sacrifices for themselves only.
- Yes
  - No

For each pair of words or phrases, which one BEST describes economic growth?

- spending
  - savings
  - expansion
  - spending
  - expansion
  - savings
- For each pair of words or phrases, which one BEST describes risky?
- deceive
  - take chances
  - deceive
  - profit
  - profit
  - take chances

For each pair of words or phrases, which one is the BEST example of economic growth?

- urban renewal
- auto companies lay off workers
- urban renewal
- new highways open up markets
- auto companies lay off workers
- new highways open up markets

### Reading Test — Form 19/Section 2

1. In Part 10, what does the word self-denial mean?
- admiring yourself excessively
  - turning your back on happiness
  - enjoying life's many pleasures
  - choosing to be without
4. Which pair of terms describes Lottie at the beginning of the story?
- sensitive and energetic
  - critical and generous
  - rigid and reflective
  - single-minded and obsessive
5. Which BEST states one theme of this story?
- Through Bess, Lottie realizes that she still has a chance to experience life.
  - Bess becomes a widow and has no way home.
  - Lottie feels that she has to take care of Bess.
  - Bess has had a happy though unusual life.
7. At the end of the story, which of the following mottoes would Lottie be MOST LIKELY to adopt as her motto?
- Money cannot buy friendship.
  - Blood is thicker than water.
  - The secret of success is a constancy of purpose.
  - Live every day as if it were your last.
8. What is one theme of the story?
- Sometimes it is important to delay short-term pleasure for long-term happiness.
  - Being responsible for family members can cause problems in your life.
  - Happiness is found in enjoying life, not in acquiring material things.
  - With age comes wisdom.
12. At the end of the story, Lottie decided to
- enjoy life with Bess.
  - work to get her job back.
  - stop feeling sorry for Bess.
  - worry more about the future.
14. Lottie was resentful of Bess because Bess had
- attended college while Lottie worked.
  - married Harry but had not had any children.
  - bored her with many stories about her travels.
  - led a carefree life without preparing for old age.
17. In the sentence, "She supposed she would have to redo that room, too, and went about doing it with an eagerness that she mistook for haste," the author is trying to show that

- Bess resented Lottie's enthusiasm.
  - Lottie was misunderstood by Bess.
  - Lottie still lacked self-understanding.
  - Lottie loved any kind of work.
23. Why does the author tell about the way Lottie's house has almost fallen to ruin?
- to emphasize Lottie's messy habits
  - to symbolize how poor Lottie's life is, despite her savings
  - to indicate why Bess is not jealous of Lottie
  - to show why Bess does not want to visit her sister
27. Which of these statements is essential to a summary of this story?
- Lottie was unable to get another job.
  - Bess and Lottie behaved very differently even as children.
  - Lottie finally realized she had never really enjoyed her life.
  - Bess was unhappy because she could not have children.

### Reading Test — Form 20/Topic Familiarity

27. Transportation introduces an element of risk in our daily lives.
- Yes
  - No
28. Being confident encourages people to take more risks.
- Yes
  - No
29. Self-discovery implies awareness.
- Yes
  - No
31. Self-discovery can lead to a change in behavior.
- Yes
  - No
32. Self-discovery is related to success.
- Yes
  - No
33. Profit is an indication of economic growth.
- Yes
  - No
35. War can bring about economic growth.
- Yes
  - No
36. Economic growth causes unemployment.
- Yes
  - No
38. The more you place someone's needs before your own, the less you sacrifice.
- Yes
  - No
49. Standardization eliminates confusion.
- Yes
  - No
50. Standardizing encourages inequality.
- Yes
  - No
52. Making things identical is a fundamental part of standardizing.
- Yes
  - No

For each pair of words or phrases, which one BEST describes network?

- form
- part
- part
- system
- form
- system

### Reading Test — Form 20/Section 3

3. What is one meaning of the title of this story?
- Lottie got rich at the expense of those who were poor.
  - Lottie was rich in material goods but deprived of personal happiness.
  - Lottie was rich when she was young, but had fallen on hard times when Bess arrived.
  - Bess always knew she would feel poor compared with Lottie.
4. What was the major problem presented in the story?
- Lottie was devoted to her work, but her boss fired her unjustly.
  - Lottie remodeled her house, but Bess did not even notice.
  - Lottie saved all her life for security in her old age, but Bess did not.
  - Lottie was jealous of the lucky breaks Bess had received in her life.
5. The MOST important conflict in this story was that Lottie
- sacrificed for the future but then realized that she should have lived for the day.
  - encouraged Bess to have a full life but did not have one of her own.
  - was torn between saving her money and helping Bess.
  - wanted Bess to live with her, while Bess wanted to travel.
6. What lesson does Lottie learn about life?
- Life rewards those who work hard.
  - Concentrate on enjoying life rather than on saving money.
  - Being close to one's family is the most important thing in life.
  - Happiness comes to those who save money for their future.
8. By saying nothing of Lottie's appearance, the lovely room, or the turkey, Bess revealed that she
- realized that her life had been wasted.
  - was too jealous to say anything.
  - could not imagine what it was like to have so much.
  - cared more about feelings than about material possessions.
10. Which of the following statements BEST describes Bess's attitude about life?
- She sacrificed personal needs to help her family gain financial security.
  - She lived each day to the fullest with little regard for future needs.
  - She found it difficult to share her life with others.
  - She was angry because she had been poor all her life.
11. At the end of the story, Lottie realized that
- her entire life had been misdirected.
  - she had made a bad choice of careers.
  - her relationship with Bess was meaningless.
  - she had made a rich and full life for herself.
14. Which of the following would Lottie have valued MOST before the end of this story?
- an expensive wardrobe
  - a high-prestige job
  - a high-paying job
  - a well-furnished home
16. What is one theme of the story?
- Life is mainly hard work with few pleasures.
  - Relationships unfairly burden the oldest child in the family.
  - Success is living a full life, not acquiring material things.
  - Success in life results from working hard and knowing the right people.
28. Which sentence represents the climax of the story?
- Lottie admitted she had a life never lived.
  - Lottie had always urged Bess to prepare for old age.
  - Lottie had more fun redoing her house than she had ever had in her life.
  - Lottie knew she had no choice but to take her sister in.

## Civil Rights

Continued from page 3

malpractice [whole-language] that will guarantee the continued intellectual crippling of American children for years to come."

Samuel Blumenfeld, reading teacher and author of numerous books on American education, says, "whole language proponents claim that they teach reading for 'meaning.' What they actually teach is reading for very limited meaning, for it is impossible to develop an extensive, complex reading vocabulary via that method. Once you've mastered the alphabetic system, everything in the library is at your disposal. How is it possible that after almost 60 years of failure, such utter nonsense as look-say and whole-language can still command the fervent allegiance of so many supposedly intelligent teachers?"

Dr. Kenneth Lexier, former Assistant Superintendent in a large school district in Maine, says, "the almost total avoidance of the research supporting a code emphasis [intensive phonics] in beginning reading instruction may be one of the most outrageous injustices perpetuated by our preservice training institutions. From small state colleges to major universities, the bias is clear and undeniable — phonics is out and whole language is in. . . . This is a conspiracy deserving of a *Washington Post* expose."

Sigfried Engelmann, a researcher at the University of Oregon, says, "The whole language argument is a study in fantasy. The argument is simple-minded, at best. Yet in states like California, Washington, and Arizona whole language is the big thing . . . and the approach is actually treated as a serious approach, even though it doesn't have a shred of evidence to support the notion that it works well, let alone that it is the 'best' approach."

Our nation continues to be a "nation at risk" mainly because we have increasingly become a "nation of sheep" afraid to take a stand for our children and nation in opposition to the mammoth educational establishment which thrives financially on the serious problems associated with illiteracy. The more illiterates, the more social problems and crime. The more social problems and crime, the more courses in drug, alcohol, suicide, and sex education, and, of course, the greater the need for more teachers and counselors to deal, usually unsuccessfully, with those problems. (Note the push for tax-supported school-based clinics and daycare.)

Can we any longer trust or afford the education "experts" and social engineers to solve the problems they caused? According to Education Secretary Lauro Cavazos, the United States will invest more than \$199 billion in precollegiate education this year. He said in the Department of Education's sixth annual report card on U.S. schools:

"We are already spending more money per student than our major foreign competitors, Japan and Germany. And yet our students consistently fall behind the competition in comparative testing. Looking at virtually every qualitative measure — college entrance exams, graduation rates, the National Assessment of Educational Progress, and international assessments — we see our students performing minimally, lacking the advanced skills needed to succeed. This deplorable fact further underscores my belief that money alone is not the answer to our education deficit. Since 1982, we've seen per pupil spending rise from \$3,165 to \$3,977, a 26 percent increase. . . . We must do better or perish as the nation we know today."

Write Mrs. Barbara Bush at the White House, Washington, D.C. 20500, and tell her you support her efforts to wipe out illiteracy. Ask her to have Secretary of Education Cavazos autho-

rize a controlled experiment whereby the three reading instruction methods are fairly tested. Designate ten schools to use intensive phonics, ten to use a regular basal reading program, and ten to use whole-language. In that way, we shall be able to determine once and for all which method is the most effective.

Write your Congressmen and ask them to put a hold on the new NAEP reading test scheduled for administration in 1990, pending an investigation of its alignment to one single discredited method of reading instruction, whole-language. Tell them that such an investigation *must* include the views of prominent educators who support intensive phonics reading instruction. Non-partisan citizen action on this extremely important civil rights issue is vital to the survival of our free society.

## Redefined literacy: "Some even go so far as to question the need for everybody to be literate."

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