

# What's A Better Name For 'Exemplary Language Arts'?

By TIM RICHARD  
Sunday Editor

If the kids had been asked, the first thing they would have done would have been to retile the program.

The program is called "Exemplary Language Arts," and one of its purposes is to teach them how to write more vigorous and creative terms than the bureaucratic-sounding "Exemplary Language Arts."

The kids, in this case, are small groups of elementary, junior high and high school students in Clarenceville public schools. That's the district that perches on the southeast corner of Farmington Township, the northeast corner of

Livonia and the northwest corner of Redford Township.

Clarenceville has carefully but boldly leaped into a federally-aided program operated by the Oakland County Intermediate School District. The idea is to try new methods in the teaching of reading and writing using specially trained teachers, smaller classes, extra equipment—and an experimental approach.

IT'S NOT LIKE they taught school in the old days. The kind of adequate but uninspired prose that students have traditionally produced in essays is out the window. What these kids write shows sur-

prisingly mature techniques and a refreshing sensitivity to a reading audience.

The deal is typical of new U.S. programs: Federal money and local ideas. The federal government pays the teachers' salaries and finances such equipment as tape recorders, projectors and books; the county district provides the ideas and trains the teachers; Clarenceville and other participating Oakland districts release the teachers for training and provide the classroom space. It's a two-year arrangement. Last school year, three Clarenceville teachers took their training. This year, they're working with classes.

Next Year? Maybe there will be more federal money; maybe not. The federal government wants to finance and start programs "that could not be done locally... only until the districts are able to incorporate them into their regular school budgets."

So much for the theory and the economics. Let's see what they're doing in the classroom.

Her classes are drawn from all four of Clarenceville's elementary schools. They're third to sixth graders, and each class meets twice a week for two hours.

"It's a piece of writing is correct, but flat or stale," Mrs. Sage recently said in a report, "they'll not only be able to show you why but will offer several alternatives." The most beautiful handwriting in Clarenceville cannot compensate for a foggy notion.

Mrs. Sage recalls one youngster: "Everything (in her writing) was 'furry' or 'fuzzy' or 'pretty.' This is the way she was taught to think. She was getting all A's in school because she was checking the right boxes." In time, the boxes are splintered and discarded; the young writer tries to fascinate his audience.

"Audience," Mrs. Sage uses the word constantly. "Are you sure your reader is going to understand that?" They start with extremes—the effect of a breakfast food commercial on adults, the effect of a New York Times bank ad on children. Then they try to rewrite a story for an age group one year younger. Is this material right for the audience? How do you relate your subject to your audience's interests?

Across the district, only one to three children per classroom are directly exposed to Mrs. Sage. But part of the idea is that she'll be a consultant or resource person for other teachers. Teachers do get together a lot, after all.

THE JUNIOR high program is an extension of the elementary program. Both are called "Creative Writing." Dennis Ringle, 27, has a total load of 94 seventh and eighth graders, or about one-sixth of all the students in those grades. A University of Detroit graduate, he has been teaching five years, the last two in Clarenceville.

He uses no textbook. His raw materials are what the students read and what they write.

Like Mrs. Sage, he stresses the principles of creative writing—invention, arrangement, style.

Students, the teachers find, will tend to write like encyclopedias when working on a report. Ringle pointed to the first version of a student's explanation on blood: "...in the fourth or fifth month of fetal life..." The wording was abstract: How many kids that age know what "fetal" means? How many will stay awake?

The student rewrote the piece: "When your mother was in her fourth or fifth month of pregnancy with you, your blood formation took place within your liver and spleen." Now he was writing for an audience.

The class lesson that day was on solid objects and the emotions they can convey. Ringle's class numbered only a dozen. There is easy give-and-take of ideas—more like committee meeting than exercise in academic discipline.

He deals with projected pictures (see photo) of abstract shapes, the objects they suggest, and the human emotions those objects conjure up. The moral of the tale is obvious: When these youngsters write a story, it won't just have faceless people performing surface acts; each scene is going to have a mood, and the mood will be conveyed by the spiders or the waves or the tall pines of the setting.

THE ROOM in the high school is attractive—carpeting, comfortable reading chairs, a soft color scheme that the usual institutional tones, paperback books.

The teacher is attractive, too, although that isn't why she was picked for the job. Sherry Hosley, 23, has a great sympathy with youngsters, an ability to draw them out.

As she explains her work, it seems that the eighth and ninth grades are critical years for a lot of students, because reading development begins to drop off.

"But this age group will pick up a paperback when they won't touch a hardcover," she says, and so there are 1,200 paperbacks on the shelves.

Her program is called "R.E.A.P."—an acronym from "Reading Extension and Progress."

Miss Hosley has a pupil load of 105, all ninth graders. They come in two days a week in small class sizes of 15. They have a free choice of what they read.

"At the beginning, some of them came in and just sat. But they found that a bit boring.



JUNIOR HIGH creative writing teacher Dennis Ringle uses an overhead projector, quickly accumulating a class-offered list of sparkling, active verbs to replace drab, inert ones.



"R.E.A.P."—which stands for "Reading Extension and Progress"—is conducted with paperback books and an atmosphere more like a den at home than a formal library, as the program is conducted in Clarenceville High School. Teacher Sherry Hosley (left) looks over the shoulder of Steve Aguitar as Virginia Ballen and Elyce Lentovich pore over novels. The informality of this photo is staged; but the students really could repose this way if they felt more comfortable.

So they picked up books..." The books cover a wide range of subjects—teen stuff, biography, major novels, sports. They record their readings on a fan-shaped chart that puts the books into 13 categories.

There's a system of opinion cards. If a student is considering a certain book, he can look up the opinion cards under that title and find out what the other kids thought of it.

There are small-group book discussions. "Maybe four or five have read the same book. So rather than getting up for an oral book report and saying 'the book I read was...' and quoting the flyleaf," there is a more thorough discussion. And there is creative writing. They may be given the start of a story and told to finish. They may be given a situation—such as the survival of their family in a bombblast—and told to keep a journal of survival.

They may write a group mystery—an exercise in analyzing and fitting together parts of a story and in becoming conscious of literary style so that the yarn sounds like the work of a single author.

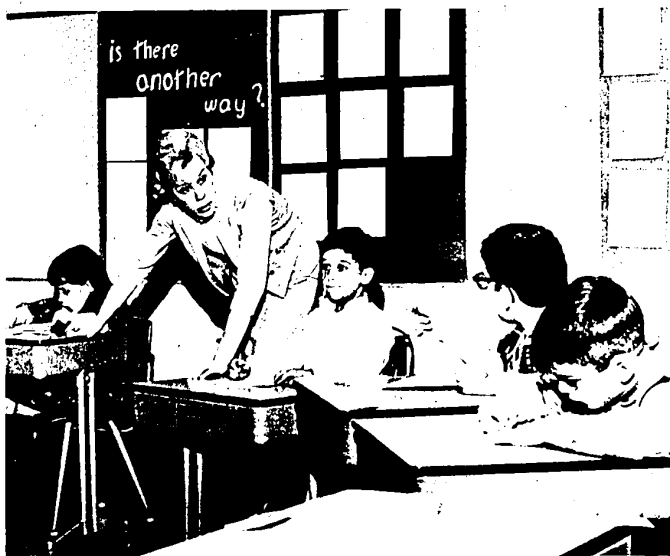
ANTHONY MARRA, the high school principal, says the value of the program will become apparent after a year or more when the students are tested.

Whether this type of teaching can become a permanent part of the Clarenceville curriculum, after federal funds run out, is becoming conscious of literary style so that the yarn sounds like the work of a single author.

This reporter made a list of his own. One of Dennis Ringle's junior high classes was asked, in the interest of a more sprightly English, to suggest alternative names for this program of "Exemplary Language Arts." They came up with:

"Fantastic Voyage Through the English Language."  
"Improving Language Skills."  
"Lingering Language."  
And especially this one:

"Writing Wonderful Reading." So, you see, there's some evidence that the students exposed to the program so far can concoct more audience-conscious word combinations than the educational jargonists who invented the program in the first place.



NO ROWS OF DESKS but an informal circle characterizes the third grade creative writing class of Mrs. Martha Sage, whose pupils come from all Clarenceville elementary schools to

her headquarters at Edgewood School. The pupils, from left: Karen Marie Dirette, Bart Van Dike, Charles Rambow and Matt Puisk.

## Ice Conditions Bad Locally

The ice on southern Michigan inland lakes is still rather thin for fishermen, the state Conservation Department office at Pontiac warns.

Some good perch catches have been reported further north on Lake St. Clair and on Saginaw and Wildowl bays, west of the state's "Thumb." Russian books are the recommended lure.

THE UPPER Peninsula ice fishing season for northern pike and walleyes is just getting under way, the Conservation Department reports.

Department officers told Observer Newspapers they are urging "extreme caution" and not recommending going out on any lakes south of Standish, Higgins Lake, popular with ice fishermen, still isn't frozen. Houghton Lake is safe for walking, but there are no autos on it yet.

ICE SPORTSMEN are being given this advice:

"The ice usually isn't safe until there have been several days of zero or near-zero weather."

"Lakes with currents or that are spring-fed will be last to freeze."

"The ice may vary in thickness from place to place on the same lake. Danger spots are where weeds come to the surface."

"Snowmobile drivers are advised to use 'extreme caution' especially because they don't have time to check the ice ahead."

"Check the thickness of the ice before venturing out."

"If you do go out on the ice, mark your trail with evergreen trees so that you can find a safe path back."

## Drug Firm Blasts Hart

PARKE, DAVIS & Co., has strongly denied charges by Senator Philip Hart (D-Mich) that the firm had failed to reduce the price of quinidine tablets following raw material price decline.

A company spokesman said the price of a bottle of 1,000 quinidine tablets had been reduced more than 50 per cent in the past year through a series of catalog price reductions and subsequent special offers.

"The net price was reduced from \$62.40 to \$30.04 in December 1966; another approximately 15 per cent drop to \$45 in July 1967; and the product has been on special offer four out of the last five months, with the current offer equivalent to \$30 per bottle of 1,000," the spokesman added.

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