

# State Watches Clarenceville's 'Sequential Reading' Plan

There was a string attached when Clarenceville School District got a \$37,000 state grant for its "sequential reading skills" program.

The string was that

Clarenceville would work with the Oakland intermediate school office on brochures, slides and talks to tell other Michigan districts of its experience with a new K-6 reading system.

"Two years ago," recalls Dr. James Leary, assistant superintendent for instruction, "the board and administration made a commitment to improve reading skills in our district."

"We've borrowed ideas from all over. For example, some ideas came from the concept of performance contracting."

**THE BASIC** plan for Clarenceville's "sequential reading" plan, Leary explained, came from the University of Wisconsin's Center for Cognitive Skills. What it does is to break reading down into six basic skills, and then break each skill into five distinct levels, ranked A through E.

Incredibly complex as the plan is to put into practice, it's fairly easy for a layman to grasp in outline.



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—Dr. James Leary

motives of characters; and at E, reaches conclusions from facts.

THOSE ARE A FRACTION of the possible examples and only three of the basic skill areas. Other basics are comprehension, self-directed reading and creative skills.

Before all of this could be implemented on students, Dr. Leary said, it had to be taught to the teachers. This organizational job fell to Patricia Vickery, Clarenceville's elementary consultant.

Take the basic skill called level, uses maps and bar "word attack." At the A level, graphs and understands the meaning of the difference between fact and letters and numbers, rhyming opinion; at the E level, uses compound words, con-magazines and newspapers, tractions, plurals, and writes summaries and possessives; at the D level, organizes thoughts.

Take the skill called "study skills." At the B level, the student follows simple precision; at C, identifies directions; at the B level, uses character traits; at D, district-wide. Clarenceville has four elementary schools

workshops of two to four weeks for the teachers.

Other districts have applied "sequential reading" by introducing one or two skills at a time, but Leary says Clarenceville's plan to be the first in Michigan to introduce all six basic skills at once.

Clarenceville's elementary school is the first in the state to implement the program in kindergarten and first grade; last year, in grades two and three; this summer in grades 4-6. Each time it meant



TEACHERS NEEDED training to implement Clarenceville's "sequential reading skills" program. From left: Patricia Vickery, elementary consultant who set up two weeks of workshops; teachers Martha Sage and Rachel Bell. (Observer photo)

with about 75 teachers and 1,800 pupils.

This is where the \$37,000 state grant comes in. For participants' salaries, materials for teachers and students, computers costs for outside evaluation and the dissemination costs of spreading the word across the state.

IN PRACTICE, said Leary, students will take pre-tests to identify their precise levels in each kind of skill. "We could have kindergartners who score at the B and C level in some skills," he said.

Under "sequential reading," the student wouldn't have to repeat in class a skill he has already mastered. He could pick up at exactly what he needs to learn next.

"Nothing happens by accident. A student is diagnosed, is taught those needs and is tested for mastery of those needs," said Leary.

Teachers get together and split up the work of small group teaching. Students get attention in groups of four or five.

ONE BENEFIT Leary particularly likes is that older students get a chance to help younger ones. "We have a regular bus route to bring high school students into the elementary schools to help. They receive a half credit as a 'student aide' to the elementary school.

"We tried it on a pilot basis last year with 25, and this year we'll have 60. It was highly successful last year. They didn't do much teaching. In the feedback we got, they felt they had accomplished a great deal and learned a lot about the needs of younger students."

Parents, too, volunteer to help. Some 40 parents are already putting in one to three hours a day.

Stempien Hits 'Grandfather' Aid Veto

Aid Veto

ENTERING ONE of Clarenceville's elementary schools, a parent might wouldn't notice a great deal of difference in the reading program. No special textbooks are used; teachers adapt existing materials to teaching whatever skill they're currently working on.

Each day there will be a kind of "sacred hour" for working on reading skills. Leary explains:

"This is an uninterrupted time. Teachers teach from one to four skills, depending on student needs. A teacher may teach same skill to three or four if that is what is necessary to meet the needs of students."

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HENRY TAZZIA has been appointed marketing manager of Controlled Power Corp., Farmington Township. A graduate electronics engineer, Tazzia joined CPC in 1970 as sales manager. The firm designs and manufactures proprietary modular DC power supplies for metal-working processes. Tazzia of Troy, holds patents and is author of "Rectifier Theory and Application."

State Rep. Marvin R. Stempien (D-Livonia), has characterized Gov. Milliken's action in vetoing several items in the state school aid bill as being shortsighted and in contradiction of his declared policy of promoting educational reform.

Among provisions in the bill vetoed were a \$150,000 allocation for experimental programs for academically talented or gifted children and \$15,000 for professional development of teachers in conjunction with programs advocated by local districts and educational organizations.

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