If there is a unifying theme in all these prescriptions and a common characteristic of the very best classrooms, it is that kids are taken seriously. The educators (and parents) who do the most for children are those who honor, and work hard to find out, what children already know. They start where the student is and work from there. They try to figure out what students need and where their interests lie. Superb teachers strive constantly to imagine how things look from the child's point of view, what lies behind his questions and mistakes. All of this represents a decisive repudiation of the Old School, where, as Dewey observed, "the center of gravity is outside the child. It is in the teacher, the textbook, anywhere and everywhere you please except in the immediate instincts and activities of the child himself."

—Alfie Kohn (1999, 131)
Any curriculum that takes children seriously and starts with the children requires the most professional, most knowledgeable teachers. Such teachers are able to tap their students' existing knowledge—to observe their interests, questions, and approximations—and plan from this. Planning to teach thus, that is, planning so that curriculum, and specifically reading, is relevant to children's lives, is a far cry from following a state-prescribed curriculum with teacher manuals ensuring that teachers of similar grade levels teach the same content, words, letters, and sounds; that children of similar ages read the same texts; and that all children are driven toward the same narrow outcomes.

In this latter approach, the children are quite irrelevant. In this latter approach, teachers are deprofessionalized. When systems make curriculum decisions that are best made by on-site professionals who know their students and their communities, and when systems monitor student performance with the statewide testing of trivia that can be tested and marked by machines, they are dumbing down education: they are dumbing down, or deprofessionalizing, our teaching force.

Teaching is a social activity. Pre-designed programs cannot take the place of teachers, even when the programs are administered by teachers.

Teaching involves decisions made on the spot, not decisions to move from one instructional goal to the next, but decisions about the condition of the learner. Such conditions might include the learner's (and also the teacher's) physical, emotional, and psychological state at that particular time, together with interest, comprehension, past experience, self image, feelings about the task at hand, and feelings about the teacher (or about the student).

All these considerations require teachers to interact with and be responsive to learners personally, as individuals, not as items on an instruction chart or data on an achievement record. (Smith 1999, 151)

Planning for the Big Picture

When planning for a class of children, it is most important to plan for the big picture. This is where we draw upon our belief systems about living, about learning, about language, and about reading. As teachers, we must consider why we wish for our students to be literate. We must ponder the type of lives we hope for our students and then consider which literacies they will need to attain such lives. Once we have answers to these questions, we can plan our particular class literacy programs.

I think of an Australian teacher named Thinh Hoang, who was born in Vietnam and has spent her school holidays travelling around Vietnam collecting children's books, traditional rhymes, and stories. Thinh teaches at Footscray Primary School in Melbourne, where most of the children are Vietnamese. Thinh appreciates the link between bringing children to literacy in their first language with later success in literacy in the community language. In her teaching, the Vietnamese rhymes and tales are very important components. How relevant are these texts not only to these children but also to their families!
Hence, before we can plan reading activities for our classrooms, we need to address the following questions. Ideally a whole school staff would address these questions together so that in the school teaching program there would be some consistency and continuity.

Which sort of literate lives do we wish for the children we teach?
Which literacies are important in these children's communities?
Which reading practices are important for these children: do they need to be code breakers and text participants and text users and text analysts?
How do we describe the reading process?
What is our definition of reading?
Do we value personal response to literature?
What are the different purposes for reading?
What are the different text types?
Which of these purposes and text types will be necessary in these children's lives?
Which community events could be the subject of classroom literacy? (local book fair, community agricultural show, sports team success, etc.)
How can we work together with the school community to promote literacy?
What are these children's current understandings about literacy?
What are these students' needs and interests?
What are the resources (both human and material) we need for our preferred literacy program?

Hopefully, the teacher will plan a program designed to make children comfortable and confident in all four practices of Luke and Freebody's Four Resources Model.

Different emphases may be desirable and necessary in the reading programs of different school communities. Catering to such different emphases and to differing children's interests and existing knowledge will mean that no commercial teaching manual will possibly be right for all teachers of the same grade level across the same country. If reading instruction is to be relevant to children's lives, reading programs are best developed at individual school sites. Teachers must be free to tune in to their students' conversations, to observe them at play and in the community, for the purpose of planning reading that will matter to them.

**Planning for Authentic Reading**

We do not read to read. We read to do something else. Therefore, classroom reading should never be for its own sake, for example, to get to a higher level or to keep quiet while the teacher works with another group. Classroom reading should serve the same purposes as reading done in the big wide world, for example, reading to learn, reading
to follow directions and make something, reading for relaxation and enjoyment, reading some social communication from a friend, reading about some local community event, and so on. We must remember that reading is social practice.

Last Saturday evening, Nicholas came for tea with his mom and dad. During the previous week, Jaqueline (his mother) had offered to bring dessert. She said she would let Nicholas choose. Dessert that Saturday was a chocolate brownie slice with fresh strawberries. Jaqueline explained that she had given her dessert recipe book to Nicholas and told him to sit down and select a dessert. She reflected later that it might have been the enticing photograph that influenced his choice rather than the written recipe. But how often are we adult cooks tempted by the photographs in recipe books? Why else would full-color photos be included?

No wonder this little boy is reading. This is just one example of many of the authentic purposes for reading to which he has been exposed. We see also the expectation and trust that he will make an acceptable choice of dessert.

I wondered later about cooking in school. Usually, we teachers choose the recipes. We copy just one recipe on the board for all to see. How easy it would be to have some attractive recipe books in the classroom library from which the children could make cooking choices.

**Integrated Curriculum**

If one is planning to take account of differing cultural, economic, and geographic characteristics of particular communities, if one is planning for the interests and the needs of pupils, and if one is planning for authentic language use in the school curriculum, then it follows that the curriculum is integrated. Language is not learned divorced from content or context.

Integrated curriculum involves integrating children's lives into their curriculum, integrating the learning of symbol systems and skills with learning about the world, and integrating the development of children's listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

If language is learned best when it is whole and in natural context, then integration is a key principle for language development and learning through language. In fact language development and content become a dual curriculum. For learners it's a single curriculum focusing on what is being learned, what language is used for. But for teachers there is always a double agenda: to maximize opportunities for pupils to engage in authentic speech and literacy events while they study their community, do a literature unit on Lloyd Alexander, carry out a scientific study of mice, or develop a sense of fractions and decimals. Speaking, listening and writing and reading are all happening in context of the exploration of the world of things, events, ideas and experiences.

The content curriculum draws on the interests and experiences children have outside of school, and this incorporates the full range of oral and written functions. It becomes a broad, rich curriculum that starts where the learners are in language and knowledge and builds out from there. (Goodman 1986, 30)
Integrating Children’s Lives into the Classroom

Integrated curriculum is more than a series of integrated topics or investigations. A curriculum that is inclusive of all children’s culture, race, religion, and economic status and that plans learning from children’s interests and current knowledge integrates the children’s lives into the classroom programs. Time is planned for children to explore personal concerns, personal interests, and family happenings via writing and the arts. At personal writing time, which is scheduled at least twice per week, the children choose the writing form, the topic, and whether or not the work goes to publication. Children of all ages may use this time to recount those things they have been doing both in and out of school. They may also take the opportunity to write about issues that are concerning them or to pen letters to family members.

Letter diaries in which the teacher and one student exchange letters approximately once per week provide opportunities for children to raise ideas, suggestions, and personal worries. Each letter diary is the joint property of the teacher and one student and is an excellent vehicle for incorporating each child’s life into the classroom.

Integrated Themes or Topics

Integrated curriculum will in part involve integrated themes or topics. Such topics arise from children’s questions and interests and follow children’s inquiries. In planning integrated topics, the teacher should be mindful of possible content outcomes of the unit as well as the type of language texts that will be necessary for the content objectives to be met. When planning an integrated topic, ask:

What is it the children wish to find out?
Which conceptual understandings of the content disciplines will be important through this unit?
Which language uses and which text types will be necessary for the children to come to the content understandings?
How will I plan for the literacy needs of individual children when using these texts during this unit of study?

For example, in an integrated study of clothing with young children, many of whom are learning English as a second language, language aims for the unit might include the following:

oral labelling of clothing
oral recounts of clothing worn on special occasions
listening to members of national groups tell about national costumes
reading class experience stories (recounts) of visiting community members who knit or sew
labelling diagrams as part of the literacy curriculum (in the context of learning the names of items of clothing)

reading procedural genre (in the context of children making paper dolls and clothes to fit and following simple patterns to make simple garments)

Any integrated unit that starts with the children’s existing knowledge, follows the children’s lines of inquiry, and incorporates an inquiry process, cannot be done in two weeks. Where children are genuinely involved in asking questions and researching information by reading, interviewing, experimenting, visiting, using the Internet and so on, such integrated units spread over nine or ten weeks or longer. This allows time for children to process and refine new information. Generally, teachers conclude such units knowing the work could have continued. Perhaps it is positive that one unit of study finishes with children being enthused and still generating questions. Is this not developing enthusiasm for learning?

Teachers I know generally plan to conduct four integrated studies per year: one each term in their four-term year. They try to ensure that two of the units are science-oriented and two are more socially oriented, although some units include the study of both the social world and the physical world.

The children take part in listing topics they would like to investigate and questions they want to answer. Where children have not been accustomed to having their inquiries valued, it sometimes occurs that their ideas of possible class investigations are limited and reflect previous class studies in which they have participated. The teacher may then suggest possible topics or investigations. The children then vote on the topic of investigation to be undertaken.

Then the teacher discusses possible lines of investigation and possible related excursions with the class. Initially in the unit development, teachers tap the children’s existing knowledge. At the commencement of an integrated study of living things, Mary Kadyra, a K–2 teacher, asked her students to define on paper a living thing. Her words to the children were “Show on your paper what you think a living thing is. You can write or draw.” Figures 9–1 through 9–3 show responses to this task from three children in her class. Note the different conceptual understandings these children have.

The Crowded Curriculum

Today we hear teachers speak of the crowded curriculum. Schools are being asked to teach curricula to cure societal ills, such as drug education, bike education, and family education, to name just a few. As more and more special subjects are included, teachers are finding it harder to have long uninterrupted teaching blocks for integrated studies. Teachers are constantly pressed for time. Classroom sessions are never quite finished properly. I think we all need to slow down and perhaps attempt less, in more time. If we teachers are feeling frazzled and rushed, how must the children be feeling? No one gains from feeling frazzled or from never completing anything properly.
Figure 9–1 Josie's Response

What is a living thing?

A person

Figure 9–2 Joel's Response

What is a living thing?

Mammals

Reptiles

Amphibians

Fish

Birds

Spiders

Figure 9–2 Joel's Response
The Schedule

Professional teachers do not need someone else to plan their daily and weekly class routines for them. Professional teachers make judgments about what occurs where and when, taking into account the needs of the children (Are they hungry, sleepy, cold, upset?), the availability of resources, special subject schedules, and special events.

The schedule is a servant of curriculum: it reflects the philosophical stance of the school or the teacher. Teachers on-site in their classrooms with their students are the best people to determine what happens when during the school day.

Designing the daily schedule is a delicate balance between being flexible in adapting to daily curriculum foci and children’s needs and providing regular routines that give the children some stability and security. In the state of Victoria today, it is expected that all K–2 classes have a two-hour literacy block each morning. The first hour is for the teaching of reading and the second hour is for the teaching of writing. (Yes, the teaching of reading is separated from the teaching of writing.) The large majority of schools start this two-hour literacy block at 9 A.M., to fit it in before the morning recess break at 11. School begins at 9, and so the very first thing the children experience each day is reading instruction. Educationally, how sound is this? Are all Victorian four- and five-year-olds ready for instruction in reading the moment the school day starts?

Of course they’re not. I think of schools where I have taught and where some children had to get themselves up and off to school. Their parents started work at 6 A.M. in
the factories. Sometimes the children did not hear their alarm clock and came late. All children are tired on some mornings. Is it not better to let them sleep a little longer than to have them at school by 9 A.M. and have them be tired and cranky throughout the day? And why should the school day start so formally for young children?

Starting the School Day
Let us consider an alternate way of starting the school day. The room is prepared with a variety of activities available for the children: a home area with dolls, beds, and tea sets; building equipment; art tables; computer games; a book corner; a writing table; puzzle center; and a farm or zoo animal area. Where the school room is prepared with such developmental activities, children may arrive before the bell and enter the room with a parent who will perhaps help the child settle into an activity. Children who arrive a few minutes after the bell are not obviously late. The teacher is able to greet each child individually as he or she enters the room. Because the children are all busily engaged with a variety of educational activities, the teacher is able to spare a minute or two for any parent wanting her ear or for any distressed child.

And what about the children? The children find something they wish to do. They are engaged in hands-on activities with others. They are able to socialize with their classmates and make friends. As well, all the activities have educational value; they are not time fillers.

Any classroom is a social unit. Learning is social by nature. Beginning each school day on the first bell with instruction in reading is extremely regimented and sends a message about authority and the power of the teacher in controlling learning. This is in conflict with the notion of children being active in the learning process. With such a regimented start to the school day, where is there allowance for personal greetings between teacher and students, students and students, parents and teacher?

Starting the school day with a choice of activities is equally valid for older students. Similarly, they too may enter their classroom before the first bell, have a chat or exchange a greeting with their teacher, and then find something to do. The choice may not include dolls and motor cars, but certainly eleven- and twelve-year-olds have much to gain from constructional kits; independent time on the classroom computers; extra time to continue writing and publishing; games such as Monopoly, checkers, and chess; an opportunity to complete unfinished work; the challenge of fitting a few more pieces into a large class jigsaw puzzle; a chance to add further strands to a class weaving; and, of course, time to curl up with a book or a magazine.

Weekly Planning
Weekly planning for reading includes the following:

- the teacher reading aloud quality literature, big books, poems, rhymes, songs, factual texts, school notices, daily schedules, routines, etc.
- all children reading some of the same texts, such as rhymes and songs
members of small groups reading the same texts (e.g., a small-group literature book or a factual text to find answers to research questions)

- individual children choosing texts around personal interests
- children reading both commercial and classroom-made texts
- children reading fiction and nonfiction texts
- children revisiting texts
- children meeting new texts
- children working in different group structures
- children working in shared literature groups twice weekly
- children borrowing take-home books (maybe a literature book or a library book)
- the teacher leading a study of print features arising in the context of a text being read or needs revealed in children’s writing (a particular letter, capital letters, sound-letter patterns, morphemic spelling patterns, items of punctuation)
- the teacher conducting at least one reading conference per child. This may include the child reading aloud to the teacher or discussing books read with the teacher. (With some large classes, the teacher may conference with each child once every two weeks.)
- the teacher making an evaluative comment about most children on the children’s reading profiles

Over a week, reading sessions might include the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Two integrated reading sessions</th>
<th>For Early Inexperienced Readers</th>
<th>For More Experienced Young Readers</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>For example, compilation of class experience story about class experience (excursion, experiment, visitor, etc.) OR Reading and illustrating individual copies of the class-compiled book. AND/OR Recomposition of class story using sentence strips. AND/OR Listening at listening center to story or factual text related to topic. Children write what they have learned or children tell what they have learned and teacher records on master list. AND/OR Children read and examine individual copies of illustrated factual text or news report and write what they have learned. AND/OR In mixed-ability groups, brainstorming predictions for forthcoming excursions. Class list is compiled and read.</td>
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</table>
In addition, there are two personal writing sessions each week. As mentioned earlier, reading may be part of the demonstration of writing that occurs at the start of the writing session. At personal writing time, children choose the topic they write about and the audience they write for. Some of their writing is published. The published works become part of the reading stock of the classroom. Of course, the children write every day, but the writing on other days will be for more specific purposes, e.g., write a prediction before a science experiment; write a recount of a school outing.

**Daily Planning**

While some routines occur each day, e.g., sustained quiet reading, the daily literacy program is not the same each day. Each day:

The teacher reads aloud.
Children read privately.
Everyone reads silently.
In early literacy classes, some familiar text is revisited.
In any one literacy session, writing, reading, listening, and speaking activities may be occurring at one time.
Children read a variety of text types.
The teacher makes anecdotal comments about several children in evaluative files. Some children’s samples of writing or literature responses are added to their evaluation files.

**Small-Group Literature Sessions**
For K–2 students, a small-group literature session can take place twice a week. The session outlined below is for a class with some emergent readers and others beginning to read picture books for themselves.

1. **Whole-class immersion/demonstration**
   Teacher reads a familiar big book aloud with children joining in. She also reads aloud a new picture book, big book, or title of author under study.

2. **Small group work**
   Three to four small groups, each of four to five children, move to independent work areas to read titles of their choosing. Each group of children has a leader, who follows instructions on a cue card, outlining the expectations for each group. (See Chapter 7.) The teacher works with the remaining nine to ten children who are emergent readers. She engages them in repeated readings of a big book or a picture book where each child has a copy.
   or
   Teacher and children engage with language experience work.
   or
   Emergent readers follow a story at the listening center. The teacher works with this group, demonstrating the workings of the cassette player and how to follow the text in the book, so in the future this group might work independently.

3. **Whole-class share**
   Children sit in a circle to share what they have done. Some books are read aloud. Some literature journals are shared.

**Alternatives to Sustained Quiet Reading**
In many grades there are one or two children who do not enjoy or who do not make good use of sustained quiet reading time. It is purposeless, then, to make them engage in this activity. Since most children make good use of this reading time, it should not be stopped because of a few. Therefore, alternate reading arrangements need to be made for the few. For example, if two or three classes took sustained reading at the same time, a reading support teacher might read aloud to this group or involve them in repeated readings outside the children’s classrooms. Alternatively, the children who cannot sustain silent reading could listen to a taped book. Another idea is that a parent might volunteer to read aloud high-interest books to this small group.
Evaluation

If the teacher intends to develop lifelong readers who engage with the four reading practices described throughout this book, then evaluation will involve reference to how the children (1) code break, (2) make meaning, (3) use text, and (4) critically analyze text. When evaluating children, the teacher should keep the following question in mind.

**Code Breaking**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Observation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do the reader's miscues make sense?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What does the reader do when a miscue does not make sense? Does the reader self-correct?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are the miscues generally of a visual nature?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Do the miscues make sense semantically and syntactically?</td>
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<tr>
<td>What does the reader do when he encounters an unknown word?</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does the reader refer to pictorial information to confirm meaning?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does the reader sometimes refer to earlier sections of the text to confirm meaning?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does the reader stop and sound out each unknown word?</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does the reader skip an unknown word, read on, draw upon context, and return to insert a word?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does the reader start the sentence again and draw upon context to insert a word?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Does the reader's retelling indicate that the reader is reading for meaning?</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Text Participant**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Observation</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Does the reader read to make meaning?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Does the reader volunteer commentary on the book as he reads?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Does the reader laugh or cry as he reads?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Does the reader respond personally by reflecting on some related life experience?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Can the reader retell in his own words?</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does the reader choose to reread favorite books?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Can the reader discuss different themes from the book?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Does the reader peep to the last pages to see how the story ends?</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Text User**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Observation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What is the reader reading and why? (Hopefully he is not reading a book only because he was told to! This is not reading for living.)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does the reader read to pursue personal interests? (e.g., to learn more about sharks, to work out how to play a particular game, to check the position of his favorite team on the sports page, to escape and relax in a good book)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Does the reader interact with others who read the same material?
Does the reader make appropriate use of the features of the texts he is reading? (e.g., table of contents, glossary, quantities in a recipe)
Does the student choose to read on his own time?
Does the student choose to borrow from the school library?

Text Analyst
Is the reader able to identify author motives?
Does the reader present a point of view that is in conflict with that of the author?
Does the reader question decisions made by authors of fiction?
Does the reader question the accuracy of nonfiction writing?
Is the reader able to perceive how different social groups are portrayed in the writing?
Does he sometimes question this portrayal?
Does the reader perceive how particular texts position the reader?
Does the reader understand how authors and illustrators use particular words and colors in texts to position the reader?
Does the reader identify those voices not being heard?
Does the reader write to authors, querying their motives/portrayal of particular groups/why some points of view were not included?

Evaluation will also include notes on the children's interest and participation in regular classroom reading.

How do they participate at silent reading time? What do they choose to read at silent reading time?
How well do the children participate in small literature groups? Are they involved with the reading? Do they engage in book discussions?
In class book constructions, do the children contribute ideas? Are they able to identify inconsistencies in the text being constructed?
Do the children regularly borrow take-home books? Which types of books do the children borrow?
When reading factual texts, are the children able to find answers to their questions?
Which nonbook materials do the children read?

Importantly, each child's reading profile should include notes about the child's attitude toward reading.
Equipment

Classroom Library
Following are some suggestions for your classroom library. Have a wide range of books written in different styles and about different subjects on display. The books must be authentic texts: they have been written to tell a story or written to inform. They have not been written to teach reading. The books come from the school library or reading resource room and are changed regularly. The library shelves must be inviting with room to display book covers, to make selection easier for the children. The shelves should not be overcrowded and the books should not be worn.

Depending on the age of the children, magazines can be included, as well as a copy of the daily newspaper. There should be comfortable cushions, seats, mats, or a carpet to sit on. There should be displays about authors, illustrators, or particular types of books, for example, nursery rhyme books.

It is important that children are made responsible for caring for the books from the first days of the school year. When children use the book corner, they must be responsible for packing the books away. Books are not to be left on the floor and walked upon. At the end of each reading session, it is wise to quietly ask all children to turn their eyes to the book corner. Is it tidy? If it isn’t, those children who were reading there must either tidy it then and there or during their lunch period.

Caregivers will need to be advised that their children will be borrowing books of their choice, around their interests and hence may not be able to read these books independently. The caregivers are to read the books aloud to their children and engage them in discussions about the books.

The class library will also contain books published in the classroom. These books will be about the children and their classroom experiences, and these titles may also be borrowed by the children as take-home books.

Book Sets
A book set contains six to eight copies of a book for shared reading. These sets of books should be stored outside classrooms in a central area. Children take turns borrowing particular sets for their classroom. They choose a title that they would like to read and are able to read. The book sets are kept in the classroom after they have been used in shared literature sessions so that the children may borrow from them for take-home books. Books purchased for shared reading in multiple numbers must meet certain criteria:

- Meaning must be central (as opposed to controlled vocabulary and phonic texts).
- All books must be written by an author.
- Both fiction and nonfiction may be included.
- Books must be in good condition.
• Books must be accessible to the children.
• Books must be easily found and returned.

Finally, where possible, involve the children in the purchase of new book titles. When new books are to be purchased, a display can be mounted at school where the children peruse the possibilities and recommend their preferred titles. Older children can be involved in the selection of new titles for the early grades. I find they remember very clearly those books they enjoyed at an earlier age and they take great pride in advising teachers about the selection of books for younger children.

**Big Books**
The school big book collection should include folktales, narratives, poems, factual, and procedural texts. Because big books are to be used with a group, rather than an individual child, the print should be large enough for the group members to read from their position in front of the teacher. Where possible, the same books should be purchased in smaller editions as well, for individual children to borrow as take-home books, or use for individual research.

**Big Book Stand**
This makes life so much easier. It should have a shelf on which to stand the book that is wide enough that the book does not fall off when being read to the class. As well, it should include storage space for several big books at any one time.

**Blank Big Books**
These are essential for teacher-modelled writing (e.g., teacher's diary, teacher's modelled literature reflections), collections of favorite classroom rhymes, and collections of favorite classroom songs. Writing done in these large blank books does not go astray as easily, as when done on separate sheets of paper.

**Listening Center**
I believe a listening center is a must in each early primary classroom. It means that a group of eight children can be profitably engaged in listening to a good story or a factual text or participating in repeated readings of a text while the teacher is busy with another group.

**Taped Book Sets**
Popular books may be read onto audiotapes by parents. Many commercially taped books are read too quickly and do not leave time for the child to browse at the pictures. When taping books, do not read too quickly, but do not read so slowly that the listening becomes tedious. Always give some sort of signal when it is time to turn the page. At the start of a new page, wait a few seconds before beginning to read. When you have finished reading a page, wait again for a few seconds before giving the signal to turn the page. This allows time for children to examine the artwork.
Classroom Published Books
These are books the children have either written individually or jointly constructed. These should be on display in the classroom.

Copies of the Daily Newspaper(s)
Display the newspaper in grades 3–6 classrooms. Some children are avid followers of particular sports and enjoy reading the sports sections of newspapers. In rural areas, the local newspapers often feature photos of people the children know, with accompanying articles.

Literature Journals
These are exercise books that are the property of each individual child for the purpose of reflecting on books read. (See chapter 7.) They are introduced when children are starting to write in a way that is almost readable.

Dictionaries
A classroom should have several different dictionaries. These should include an adult dictionary that the children will witness the teacher refer to and several different children’s dictionaries for the children to use once they are able to check their own spelling.

The Alphabet
The alphabet should be on display in classrooms in a format that’s large enough for children to refer to from their tables. This applies not only to kindergarten, first- and second-grade classrooms but also to third- and fourth-grade rooms, for there are always some eight- and nine-year-olds who are not confident with the order of the letters of the alphabet. In grades 5–6, where children are learning English as a second language, it might be that their first written language features an alphabet other than the English one. Here, too, the English alphabet should be clearly in view. I would like to see the alphabet painted on school playgrounds, like a long snake or trail, so children could walk along it.

Writing Paper
On the writing shelves there should be a variety of paper: recycled paper for draft writing, plain paper and lined paper, and good white printer paper for publishing.

Publishing Materials
Good-quality publishing materials for the class publishing program include quality white paper, multicolored cover paper and cardboard, rolls of clear contact for covering books, a heavy-duty stapler and book tape for bookbinding, several small staplers, a small paper cutter (for the teacher’s use), publishing pens for the children to hand letter their books, a variety of materials for artwork (felt pens, paint, colored pencils, food coloring, colored paper for collage), glue, scissors, special felt pens (multicolored, silver, gold), glitter, correction pens, and so on. Note that special publishing materials are only used for publishing. They are not to be used for draft work.
Display Accessories
Keep on hand a collection of clothes pegs, binder clips, pins, strong magnets, reusable
adhesives, and so on, for displaying children's work.

Grouping Children
Throughout the week children should experience flexible grouping. Groups can be
formed according to interest, friendship, mixed ability, need/ability, and social cohesion.

Interest Groups
Interest groups work well for science or social studies research. Where a group of chil-
dren have identified a topic that they all wish to learn more about, they can work
together. For example, in an integrated study of the sea, those children wanting to find
out more about sharks might work together. They might listen to a taped reading of a
factual text about sharks. Either the children could follow this with a group brain-
storming of what they have learned or each individual child could make some notes
about sharks based on the taped book. They could also discuss questions and puzzles
they have after listening to the tape.

Friendship Groups
All of us enjoy working with our friends. Sometimes it is appropriate for groups of
friends to work together. An example might be after the teacher has read aloud from the
class serial and ask children to consider a critical literacy issue. For example, “Discuss
in your group who exercised power in this story. Who was without power? Support
your opinions with examples from the book.”

Mixed-Ability Groups
Mixed-ability groups work well with readers theatre. The procedures are introduced to
the whole class and many different small groups rehearse different rhymes and then
share them with the class. When the children are comfortable and confident in the rou-
tines of readers theatre, small groups can work independently while the teacher works
with other groups.

To prepare for this activity, make multiple copies of nine to ten rhymes and mark
them for part reading (e.g. Reader 1, Reader 2, Reader 3, All, etc.). Then explain read-
ers theatre as scripted theatre. The purpose is to entertain an audience, but the players
read their scripts. Voices must be clearly audible and expressive.

Now have proposed leaders read the group instructions from an enlarged cue card:

Readers Theatre
1. Leader reads aloud.
2. All read together.
3. Leader reads aloud.
Hand out copies of rhymes to groups, each of which has a competent reader as its leader. (If there are four parts to be read, then the group consists of four children.) Let the children gather in small groups so the leaders can take their groups through the routine as set out on the cue cards (ten to twelve minutes). Then have each group present to the whole class. Finally, encourage evaluation from the audience: Could the voices be heard? Did the group introduce its particular rhyme? Was the rhyme presented in an interesting way?

**Need/Ability Groups**
Sometimes children of all ages will be grouped according to need. In younger age groups, repeated readings are appropriate for those children not yet able to read an early text for themselves. To include in such a group children who can read those texts for themselves would be to waste their time.

**Socially Cohesive Groups**
In any classroom, a teacher has the right to form groups on the basis of children’s ability to work cooperatively together. Of course, the children must know the reason for the group membership and be given an opportunity to prove they can work well with friends of their choosing. However, where individual children are constantly disruptive, not only the teacher but also the other children have the right to exercise some control over which group those children work with.

In all small-group activities, the children must be engaged in educationally worthwhile activities. Busywork that is an end in itself is not acceptable.

**Summary: Planning for Classroom Reading**
In planning for classroom reading, there is much for the teacher to consider. As reading is social practice, it is wise for the teacher to begin by looking beyond the classroom and to think about the children’s lives and their futures. She must know and consider her students, their abilities, and their interests. She must be strong in her view of herself as a professional educator and her capacities to plan a curriculum for her students. She must plan to integrate the teaching of reading with children’s individual interests as well as with the class integrated units of study. She must plan to have the physical resources necessary to implement her desired program.

Sometimes it happens that as teachers, we become bogged down with matters imposed by our systems, such as compulsory statewide testing.
When teachers are told, either explicitly or implicitly, that their major responsibility is to improve test scores, they may understandably be driven to spend precious class time on the option that leads to short-term results. Nevertheless research backs up the majority opinion of teachers in the study who believe that, in the long run, students’ intellectual development and reading achievement are better served by practices that foster the desire to read. (Worthy, Turner, and Moorman 1998, 302)

I suggest that when that happens, it is time for us to pause and question:

How strong am I professionally?
What are the big issues?
Is my class program enthusing my children for reading?
Is the class reading program relevant to the children’s lives?
Am I developing readers who are not only code breakers but also text participants, text users, and text analysts?
Are my children reading to live?

References
LAST WORD

Read to Live
They say, we are what we eat.
I say, we are what we read.
Think for a moment.
List all you have read this past week.
Your list tells about your work
your home
your family
your friends
your worries
your dreams
your hobbies
your passions
your compassion.
Your list tells about you.
I say, we are what we read.
We read to live.

—LORRAINE WILSON
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