Parts of things seldom make sense alone. Often parts cannot function in isolation. Moreover parts are typically designed to become whole by combining to form a type of system. With regard to spelling and for the purposes of this review, letters and their respective sounds (phonemes) are the parts, while the whole, is the complex, often misunderstood, and underestimated system that is spelling. In their article “Explorations in Developmental Spelling: Foundations for Learning and Teaching Phonics, Spelling, and Vocabulary,” Bear and Templeton (1998) borrow Beverly Cleary’s main character, Ramona’s words which describe spelling as “full of traps” (Cleary as cited in Bear & Templeton, 1998). What’s more is that she is right: spelling is full of traps and that is exactly how students learning English perceive the language. Bear and Templeton (1998) believe that letters and their sounds need to be systematically taught at a developmentally appropriate time. They believe that traps should be discussed and explored. Lastly, they believe that patterns of letters and sounds in combination with each other need to be studied in order that this trap is averted. The purpose of this review is to concur with Bear and Templeton (1998) and purport that the categorization of spelling patterns in a developmental system allows students to apply their new knowledge to unknown words thereby taking the leap from seemingly simplistic spelling instruction to decoding and finally to reading.
Bear and Templeton’s (1998) article delineates the development of spelling within literacy, as well as, illustrates a developmental model of spelling instruction with an emphasis on word study (Bear & Templeton, 1998, p.224). The first half of the article discusses the six stages of spelling development which include: prephonemic spelling, early letter name (semi-phonemic), letter name spelling, within-word pattern spelling, syllable juncture spelling, and lastly derivational constancy spelling. In order to determine a student’s stage, which is essential so that you know where to begin instruction, Bear and Templeton (1998) suggest administering a qualitative spelling inventory of orthographic development (p. 230). Their inventory contains typical spelling errors and categorizes the errors within one of the stages mentioned above. For example, if a student spelled bed, BD they are representing the sound /b/ and /d/, but have left out the short vowel /e/. This type of error would be typical of a child about to enter the letter name stage where short vowels are introduced and the CVC pattern begins to take shape. For each stage the authors make sense of many invented spellings and outline in detail why the student chose the letter they did and what the choice reveals. Since there is no letter that exactly represents the short vowel sounds, a child may spell sit as SET because they are vocalized in a similar manner. Bear and Templeton’s (1998) explanation was fascinating, “in spelling the vowel sound in sit, the child hunts for the letter name that feels most like the short /i/. It turns out that the letter name e as in /feet/ is closest” (p. 227). This system of coding and deciphering errors allows the teacher to understand his/her students’ mental processes and can enlighten him/her about what sounds and/or letters the student does not yet know or is confusing.

As the article progresses into the second half, Bear and Templeton (1998) discuss a model spelling program and elaborate on word study activities. After determining a stage, “which is not a label but serves as a starting point for planning instruction” (Bear & Templeton, 1998, p.230) teachers create words sorts for each stage and begin the task of studying the patterns. They counter the practice of some teachers who use only thematic words in spelling by stating that a student’s “ability to remember the spelling of these words is very limited” and “that they are reduced to learning to spell one word at a time, with no opportunity to discover and explore the spelling patterns that apply to many words” (Bear & Templeton, 1998, p.230). They stress that a balance of authentic reading and writing can be combined with controlled spelling patterns to form a comprehensive literacy program.

Sorting words is one example of word study. During a sort a child would be asked to categorize the patterns. Within word study the word rules should be omitted because it can “connote a lack of flexibility” (Bear & Templeton, 1998, p.230). Rather the word patterns and generalizations should be used when conducting an open or closed sort. The authors offer several other methods of word study activities such as writing sorts, word hunts, word study notebooks, and word games that engage and offer opportunity to work with and connect patterns in authentic ways. Bear and Templeton (1998) thoroughly outline the common developmental stages of spelling as well as discuss the proper execution of a model spelling program for the classroom.
A real life application of word study commences with a word sort. In my classroom I have assessed each child’s spelling stage using the qualitative inventory previously mentioned. Due to the disparity in my classroom (early letter name alphabetic spellers up to mid-stage syllable juncture) I devised three different color coded groups. I really could/should have had 15-16 different groups. However that is an impossibility in a classroom environment consisting of one teacher and 20 children. Therefore, I began each stage at the beginning with sort one from the Words Their Way text. I have four, blue letter-name spellers; ten, green within-word spellers; and six, yellow syllable juncture spellers. I meet with each group on Mondays to discuss and explore their new lists. I began the year with closed sorts, but will move away from that shortly. After cutting out their 8 ½ x 11 colored card stock pages, I call one colored group to the floor in front of the SmartBoard. I use an already created graphic organizer on the screen that matches their title cards. I use pictures to represent the sounds I want them to sort by. For example, the week of short /i/, I used a pig and for the long /i/ sound I used a kite. Next, I write their spelling words at the bottom of the screen and have one student at a time select the word on the screen with their finger and then move it to the corresponding column that represents its vowel sound. After several examples I send the group back to their desks to sort one more time independently. Once sorted, they move onto a partner activity which usually consists of a word search, crossword puzzle, or word scramble that I created using www.PuzzleMaker.com to exactly match each of the spelling lists. Throughout the week the children encounter many other opportunities to examine their patterns within authentic contexts. By Friday they are well versed in their respective patterns and participate in a spelling assessment that requires them to categorize the patterns and spell them correctly.

Finally, and most importantly, word study has transformed my classroom and challenged my students to think deeply about spelling. Exploration of word patterns has replaced the antiquated spelling assignment that required writing a word four times. My venture into Words Their Way has dramatically affected my students’ interest in spelling as well as, produced measurable success on their STAR exams. The vocabulary/spelling scores for last year’s 4th grade class on the STAR exam showed that all 29 of my students were proficient or advanced with the exception of one RSP student. Previous years’ scores did not reveal that level of whole group success. Word study demystifies English and encourages discussions about the traps in the language that Ramona suffered. It is common knowledge that what we wrestle with, we will retain. In the case of word study that is exactly what you can anticipate; word wrestling.


Courtney Rodgers teaches third grade at Lincoln Elementary in Corona Del Mar
Reconciling polarity: Toward a responsive model of evaluating literary performance.

By Kelly Lopez

Reading specialists are most often assigned the task of assessing, evaluating, and treating students with varying reading disabilities. Focusing on a causal model of diagnosis, specialists use a number of different assessment tools to establish if the student may be reading disabled. Following the initial assessment, an instructional plan is designed to treat the disability based on what was determined to be the cause, while drawing on information from the student’s development and background. Kathleen Hinchman and Pamela Michel, authors of “Reconciling Polarity: Toward a Responsive Model of Evaluating Literary Performance” (1999), believe that basing instruction solely on the causal model of diagnosis (discovering what the child can and cannot do, and working with or around the possible causes of failure) is extremely risky. As a result, Hinchman and Michel (1999) developed an alternative model of literacy evaluation which maintains some characteristics of a causal model, but places the student’s own perceptions and values of reading at the center of assessment. The purpose of this paper is to review the authors’ literacy model and provide examples of its application in an elementary level classroom.

In the article, “Reconciling Polarity: Toward a Responsive Model of Evaluating Literary Performance” (1999), Kathleen Hinchman and Pamela Michel share their child-centered model for assessing and designing literacy instruction for reading disabled students. Acknowledging that their business as reading specialists had become one of “best guesses”, and believing themselves to be successful only when their “tentative conclusions allowed students to move forward, or when they led us to newly refined guesses” (p. 579), Hinchman and Michel developed an alternative model of assessment. As reading specialists themselves, they had used a causal, or “medical”, model of diagnosis and remediation with the premise of treatment as a direct result of the knowledge of specific causes of reading disability. However, Hinchman and Michel (1999) acknowledge the risk in defining instruction solely in terms of assessment. The authors then summarize early alternative models of assessment in which researchers looked at children’s own explanations for their reading, which was important because of the “value it placed on the children’s perceptions of and actions related to reading” (p. 580). In the earliest stages of development, researchers using an alternative model developed questions based on the perceptions of reading proficiency, and then judged the children’s responses against these perceptions. This often led to the belief that children were confused about the “purpose and nature of reading” (Hinchman & Michel, 1999). Later these studies moved towards a “child-centered” approach which placed the child’s perspective of reading at the center of assessment. Hinchman and Michel coupled this child-centered approach with their knowledge and experience of the causal model, which in turn, helped them make decisions about assessment and organize their thinking. They developed a “framework for organizing ongoing assess-
ment and instruction” which moved “the literacy learner’s point of view to the center of a critical analysis of all available data” (Hinchman & Michel, 1999, p. 581).

Although Hinchman and Michel (1999) worked solely with reading specialists, teachers would also be able to use this model of assessment in their classrooms. For example, at the beginning of the school year I complete a number of reading assessments to determine my students’ reading capabilities. Even though I would not be able to diagnose any specific disabilities without further diagnostic testing, I would be able to identify students reading at an intensive level. Using this model of assessment, I would first begin to collect data that represents their realities and views of their reading abilities. Writing samples and lists of books they have read are some examples of child-centered artifacts. It would be important for me to ask questions which allow the student to discuss his or her view of reading without feeling as if the answers would be “wrong” in any way. At this stage I would also spend time observing my students in reading and writing situations to determine their approach to the tasks and the importance they place on each. In the classroom application of this model, it would be imperative to include data from the child’s parents. The information parents can share about development, attitudes, and practices at home is extremely valuable, and can provide further insight into their abilities beyond school reports. As Hinchman and Michel recommend, I would use my training about the causes of disabilities, and what I know about the child’s experiences to organize my thinking and continue into the interpretation and mediation phases.

In order to mediate the student’s constructions of their reading world, I would design activities that incorporate both the student’s perspectives and my own inferences based on the data collection. I would refine and restructure my instruction as a result of the student’s interpretation of this model. By allowing the student to feel as if they have contributed to their growth and that their perspective is valued, the student remains at the center of the assessment and instruction.

Kathleen Hinchman and Pamela Michel (1999) designed an assessment model to prevent students from being constricted in their growth by specialists using only a causal model. Viewing their work as an ongoing practice, rather than a cause and effect relationship, allows them to design remedial instruction for reading disabled students that keeps the student’s perspective on reading at the forefront. The data collected by questions, observations, school reports used in combination with causal model training and knowledge, assists specialists in creating an intervention program that values the student’s views and perspectives on their own reading. This alternative model of assessment prevents students from, essentially, being blamed for their own disabilities. By bringing the students’ perspectives to the center of assessment and remediation, Hinchman and Michel have created yet another successful means of helping children become successful readers.


Kelly Lopez teaches fourth grade at Adams Elementary in Costa Mesa
Faculty Footnotes

by Kathi Bartle Angus

The new Community Literacy and Learning Center (CLLC), housed at the Irvine campus, had its grand opening in the fall. Irvine campus graduate students and Irvine cohort graduate students worked with children from the community and the Court Appointed Special Assistants (CASA) program to fulfill the requirements of Read 581, Remediation of Reading Difficulties. Alumni will remember this fondly as “Clinic”. (See pictures below The Irvine Campus Reading Center is under the direction of Dr. Barbara Clark.

Meanwhile, our other Reading Center (EC24) on the main campus, is undergoing a major refurbishment. The original facility was designed in 1975 by Dr. Norma Inabinette. Now under the direction of Dr. Janice Crick, EC24 is getting a new look. The student carrels will become smart carrels, each fitted with a computer with internet access. The classroom space will gain an LCD projector to allow full multimedia presentations. The back of the room will include soft seating with children’s library style book shelving to facilitate a friendly environment for family reading and small group interaction.

Both center directors extend a very warm thank you to REG members for their generous contributions to the Hancock fund. Over $2200 of curriculum materials were purchased in the fall. New sets of scholastic books were ordered as a start at filling the shelves in the CLLC at Irvine. Updated materials from Lakeshore and Teaching Resource Center replaced outdated materials in EC24, including manipulative letters and magnetic boards, phonics, context, and comprehension games, and chapter book biographies.

Visitors to either Reading Center site are welcome. The Irvine campus clinic hours are Tuesdays and Thursdays from 4:00pm to 6:00pm. For information contact Dr. Barbara Clark at bclark@fullerton.edu CSUF clinic hours are Mondays and Wednesdays 4:00pm to 6:00pm.

For CSUF clinic information contact Dr. Janice Crick at jcrick@fullerton.edu
The Katrina Project will be ending this month. We had received extra publicity during the holidays in Orange Coast magazine and a press release through CSUF. A total of $4500 was raised. A check for that amount will be mailed to Lake Forest Elementary School in New Orleans for the purchase of books through the New Orleans representative for Scholastic Books. Scholastic has agreed to match some of the donations. We also received dozens of books from campus student organizations and are currently searching for a vendor to assist with shipping of those books, supplies and other materials. Dr. JoAnn Carter-Wells, who headed up this project, wishes to extend her thanks to REG members for their donations to this project.

**Proposed Constitutional Changes**

The REG Board requests that members check the proposed constitution changes on the website ([www.readerseducatorsguild](http://www.readerseducatorsguild)) The revisions are primarily to Amendment III (formation of chapters) and the removal of gender-specific language. The membership will vote on the changes at the Winter Dinner.

**REG Volunteer of the Year**

At the Concert Under the Stars on September 15, Gena Lovett received the 2006 Volunteer of the Year award for Reading Educators Guild. For the past four years Gena has been an active member of REG. She has served as the organization’s newsletter editor, devoting more than 100 hours editing the newsletter, preparing it for distribution as well as gathering contributors to the newsletters. Gena with the able assistance of her husband, has created a new and professional version of the quarterly newsletter. This newsletter is a source of pride for the organization and has been used as a model for other College of Education alumni groups.

**Angela Henderson Receives CRLA Scholarship**

Angela Henderson, the Reading Department Chair at Fullerton College was awarded a Professional Development Scholarship from CRLA for travel to the CRLA Conference. The conference was held in San Antonio in October of 2006. (Angela pictured right)

**Nominations Being Accepted**

We are asking REG members to nominate a fellow CSUF Reading Program graduate who has established a body of work as a reading educator through scholarship and/or leadership. Please email nominations to kangus@fullerton.edu. Deadline is February 23.
We would welcome your submissions to the newsletter. Please send your article via email to lovett.gc@verizon.net. Please type “REG” on the subject line of your email.

Thanks, we’d love to hear from you!
Gena Lovett, Editor