

Classroom Relevant Research in the Language Arts, coordinated by Harold G. Shane and James Walden. Published by the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 1978.

Reviewed by John Schifsky
College of St. Scholastica
Duluth, Minnesota

Classroom Relevant Research in the Language Arts is the fifth in a series of periodic reviews of language arts research published by the Association. Considering the current interest in skills development and the demand for a return to the "basics," such a review is especially valuable in that it focuses on studies which examine the viability and success or failure of programs intended to meet contemporary educational goals.

The book is divided into 13 chapters, including an introduction and epilogue. Research in these fields is reviewed: visual literacy, critical thinking, foreign languages, English as a second language, listening, reading, composition and creative writing, spelling and handwriting, literature. With a few exceptions the research reviewed has been published since 1970. The coordinators were selective in their choice of research; contributing authors were urged to choose the most pertinent current studies. The review does not pretend to be comprehensive.

Generally each chapter opens with an overview and an enumeration of research categories. For example, in "Visual Literacy" there are four categories: what is visual literacy; why is visual literacy important; what does research contribute to visual literacy; how

are visual literacy programs implemented. In most cases, each chapter ends with a brief summary, most of which reach similar conclusions: we don't really know enough yet about this particular area; we haven't been able to identify a best procedure because of research limitations; researchers often reach dramatically opposing conclusions like these, suggesting that not enough research has been done on more fundamental matters; etc.

Do not misinterpret the tone of the above. Classroom Relevant Research is an important resource text; teachers at any level can use it to guide their reading in areas of interest, to develop and implement new techniques or to find evaluations of techniques and programs already in use. But it is not a book to be read cover to cover in a sitting or two; no review of research is. The number of articles, books and dissertations cited is impressive and somewhat overwhelming. Perhaps they stand as a testament to the diligence of the researchers, but this reader felt that some sharper focus might have been more productive. In his concluding remarks, Mr. Shane acknowledges the reality of a dwindling student population and a more cost conscious government. These have created "unfavorable conditions" for educational research, conditions which he hopes will be changed. At the risk of sounding like I oppose research, perhaps it would be better if they weren't. With less money available for research and smaller number of sources for gathering data, we can assume that researchers will be forced to be more accountable,

their goals scrutinized more closely. Less isn't necessarily more, but the research done under these conditions has, I feel, more of a chance to be significant both to specialists and teachers alike. And that is an important goal: classroom relevant research.

WHAT?	MCTE ANNOUNCES "CONVENTION 1980"
WHEN?	May 2 & 3
WHERE?	Normandy Inn, Duluth, Minnesota
WHY?	To explore cross-curricular aspects of the language arts, particularly reading and writing.
HOW?	Panels, lectures, demonstrations, workshops, informal conversation
WHO?	Language arts teachers at all levels-- elementary, secondary, college

WATCH FOR FURTHER ANNOUNCEMENTS AND REGISTRATION MATERIALS IN THE SPRING.

Program Call

Persons wishing to suggest programs or to present programs during the Spring 1980 MCTE Convention should contact:
Jim Olsen, 2020 Arkwright, St. Paul, MN 55117.