AN INVESTIGATION OF READING AS A LEARNING ACTIVITY IN
GRADE 9 SOCIAL STUDIES, SCIENCE AND ENGLISH CLASSES

by

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Abstract

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Under the supervision of Professor Wayne Otto

The purpose of this study was to investigate the extent to
which ninth-grade students read to learn in six social studies,
science and English classes. Four foci were identified to facilitate
the observation of reading as an assigned learning activity: out-
of-class reading, in-class reading, in-class spoken questions related
to assigned reading, and in-class written questions (i.e., tests)
related to assigned reading. In order to collect accurate data
and yet not disturb normal classroom routine, four procedures were
followed: (1) Daily classroom activities were observed in the
six classrooms over a five week period. Class proceedings were
recorded on audio-tape and notes were taken to detail activities
that could not be captured on tape. (2) Response forms were
completed by teachers and students whenever an assignment was
given to be completed outside of class. (3) Teachers were inter-
viewed. (4) Written materials were examined. All data collected
were analyzed and summarized for each of the foci.

Reading was observed to be a learning activity that was
utilized to some extent in all six of the classrooms. Similar demands
were observed in all three content areas with regard to (1) the
teachers' purposes for assigning out-of-class reading, (2) the
percentage of spoken questions that required simply the recall of information and (3) the percentage of written questions that reflected what was discussed in class. Different demands were observed across the content areas with regard to (1) the amount of time allotted for reading, (2) the way in which that reading time was used, and (3) the percentage of spoken questions that were reading dependent. Across the content areas the teachers transmitted to the students both the explicit and implicit messages about the importance of reading, and the students' compliance with reading assignments to be completed outside of class appeared to be dependent upon the consistency of the explicit and implicit messages of the teacher. The observed reading experiences of the ninth-grade students are summarized in ten generalizations that relate to the reading assigned, the reading skills the students applied, and the type of questions to which the students responded.