

A Successful Approach To Reading At The Hebrew Academy

By Rose Massachi

In elementary education, the concept of drawing pictures as a preliminary step to writing, and writing as a preliminary step to reading, has proven extremely valuable in reaching the ultimate goal of children reading fluently.

One of the pioneering figures who brought this theory forth was Dr. Donald Graves, a professor at the University of New Hampshire.

Lynne Tarleton, one of the secular teachers at the Hebrew Academy, became extremely interested in this new way of teaching after hearing Dr. Graves and reading his book, *Teachers and Children at Work*. She began to implement this procedure of drawing, writing and reading into her curriculum with kindergartners and first and second graders last year. This fall she attended the annual Reading and Writing Workshop held at UNCC, at which she presented her own workshop entitled, "Children as Both Authors and Readers."

Basically, the research has shown that children develop skills in spelling through clearly defined stages, much the same as the earlier stages of language development.

Mrs. Tarleton pointed out, "If a child is not well into the stages of phonetic or transitional spelling, using consonants consistently and correctly, along with the insertion of vowels, formal instruction will be extremely frustrating." She continued to explain her teaching procedure.

"Since writing is an abstract activity, many young children need to draw pictures before they write. The act of drawing and the pictures, themselves, help to make the process concrete and, therefore, more naturally understood to a five or six-year-old. Drawing is actually a rehearsal for the writing of a younger child."

Recently, Lynne had a conversation with Colee Curtis, a first grader at the Academy, about a piece of writing she was working on. "I asked Colee if she knew what was going to happen next. 'No,' she said, 'I haven't drawn it yet.'"

Because each child enters and leaves the different stages



Lynne Tarleton

at various paces, Lynne uses different techniques to promote learning. One special project, that is into its second year, is that each child receives a published book of his/her writing. "Tarleton Publishers" is very busy preparing colorful covers and sewing the many bindings. Lynne intends to let the second graders try their hands at the publishing aspect this year.

Lynne has the children write every day. "They become at ease with writing simply because it is a familiar activity. I give them freedom to write words even if they can't spell them correctly. When they're ready for corrections, they ask for them. It's their paper and they take responsibility for it."

When asked how she knows exactly where each child is in his/her progress, Lynne replied, "I go through their papers and look for what kinds of mistakes they're making. I keep records to be sure of what I've already taught them. For example, if I've taught them capitals and periods, I ask them to go back and put them in. They are aware of the editing process, and they know that I am the final editor before their work gets published. Whatever I think they can handle, I'll ask them to do."

"I don't overwhelm the children with whatever stage they're in. When I see that a new stage has arrived, I celebrate rather than look for their mistakes."

Children hit dry spells just as adults do in their writing. Lynne finds peer conferences helpful in this case. "Usually we sit in groups of four. They each read the piece they're working on. Then they receive feedback from the listeners."

(Continued on Page 14)

On The Issues

By Ira Gissen, Director, NC/VA Region ADL

This Chicken Isn't Kosher

A North Carolina correspondent shared with us a letter she had written to the office of the Superintendent of schools for her district. It states:

"I am writing in regard to an incident that took place at South Mecklenburg High School on October 9, 1984. During school hours, a leader from the Young Life organization was in the cafeteria passing out flyers about their group meeting. To attract the students' attention, he was dressed up as a chicken. Since Young Life is a religious affiliated group, his presence in the school was in violation of Regulation 1328 — Schools and Religious Speakers. I quote directly from the rule: 'Chapters of religious affiliated organizations must be outside school and without school sponsorship', March 1982.

"On Friday, October 12, 1984, I spoke to Mr. Frank Gadsden on the phone and brought this matter to his attention. He claimed he was not aware of Young Life's religious affiliation and would check into the matter. I feel that this incident needs more than checking into. It needs to be prevented from happening at South Mecklenburg or any other school. Since this regulation was instituted, it needs to be followed as do all other rules.

"I do not have any objections to the Young Life group. They are known to provide quality services to our youth. I object to the fact that they

or any other religious affiliated group would be allowed to enter during school hours for the purpose of recruiting students to join their organization.

"I appreciate Mr. Gadsden's efforts to handle this matter in a highly professional manner. He manages a fine school with excellent academic surroundings. Let's keep it that way."

We replied: "Thank you for sharing with me a copy of your letter to Dr. Robinson.

"For your information I am enclosing a copy of a recent memorandum that was sent to the ADL Regional Board regarding 'Abuses Of The New Federal Equal Access Law.' You will find this useful in dealing with the situation you described.

"By the way, you did not indicate in your letter whether or not the person who was costumed as a 'chicken' was a student at the high school. That information could be

useful in determining whether or not there was a possible violation of the federal law. I would appreciate your letting me know.

"Kindly keep me posted on any subsequent developments in regard to this matter.

"Thank you for sharing this information with the Anti-Defamation League."

Our correspondent responded:

"Thank you for the information in regard to the equal access law. At the time I initiated my protest, I was thinking only in terms of violation of school regulations. This adds more light to the matter.

"The person who was costumed as a chicken was not a student at the school. He was the Young Life leader. Fortunately we have had a positive response from the Superintendent's office. Enclosed is a letter for you that was sent to my address.

(Continued on Page 14)

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