

CHAPTER THREE: Durrell as Teacher

As has already been noted, a professor's role can seldom be divided neatly between research and teaching. Durrell's work as a researcher has been summarized in Chapter Two. This chapter deals specifically with his work as a teacher.

The Commitment

Although there is some family lore that suggests Donald Durrell's mother had hoped to see him one day in the United States Senate, he never wavered from his conviction that teaching was a high calling and that classroom learning problems must be solved in that setting. He always said after reading a 1925 biography of Sir William Osler that he wanted, like Osler, to be a man who "admitted students to the words". He believed that teachers with proper pre-service education and adequate in-service support could solve problems.

Durrell's early experiences with exotic labels for problems that, he believed, sprang simply from weak teaching, had made him very suspicious of labels. As he said, they never seemed to include any logical plan of action for correction but burdened teachers with pseudo-psychological, physiological or psychiatric terminology that left them feeling inclined to suggest that children with learning problems should simply drop out of school and find honest work.

Until 1929, "dropping out" into the world of work had not been very difficult. Work for unskilled labor was plentiful; but after 1929, the world economy changed. Jobs were scarce even for skilled workers and schools found themselves forced to cope with students who could not be allowed to drop out and add to the unemployed. It was an ideal time for educational psychologists like Durrell to turn to specializing in the

reading process, both its natural evolution and its problems. With that setting and sharply focussed goals, Donald Durrell never looked back.

As Durrell never wavered from his commitment to making school classrooms a better place for learners, he also never wavered from his commitment to his own university classroom. Whatever his schedule of speeches and consulting, he very seldom left his classes to other faculty members or teaching assistants. If he flew to California for a mid-week conference speech, he was back on Saturday morning for his Supervision class, full of fresh ideas. Students did not miss classes, because they knew he would be there expecting their contributions. The Durrell model of commitment was an on-going inspiration to his students.

A Multi-Faceted Role

Dr. Durrell's role as teacher encompassed many related activities. Besides the predictable university lecturing, he used his creative energies as course designer, constantly changing both content and processes to reflect new insights into ways to prepare both undergraduate and graduate students for a variety of positions. He was, as well, the author of carefully designed teaching materials that were based in controlled research. And with his appointment in 1961 to the U.S.O.E. Research Advisory Council, he became an ambassador for teachers, schools and educational research in the corridors of power.

Chapter Two used a conventional academic organizational pattern to present the information about the Durrell scholarly writing and details of research projects. Chapter Three uses a narrative presentation to allow a combination of factual material and the personal commentary of the writer.

The Early Years: 1930–1942.

When Donald Durrell moved to Boston University, he began at once to develop the Educational Clinic and a graduate reading education program. The Clinic was opened in 1932 and became both a "methods lab" for remedial teachers and a source of research on educational learning problems. Children with learning problems were referred by the local schools. There full-time graduate students were supervised as they tested and tutored the children.

Many of the graduate students collected data in schools as well for their master's theses. These data, collected on the individual tests Durrell was designing, formed the basis for the norms of the *Durrell Analysis of Reading Difficulty*.

Durrell Analysis of Reading Difficulty (1937)

Samples from the Durrell files show that as early as May 1933, he and his students were using an informal instrument for Grades 2–6 that tested Oral Reading, Silent Reading, Word Recognition (both flashed and untimed), a Letter Naming test, and several tests requiring the pronunciation of word parts (consonant digraphs, phonograms, prefixes and suffixes). An Interest Inventory reflected Durrell's conviction that motivation to read was critical if problems were to be corrected. In this same May, 1933 informal instrument, space was provided for details about the child being examined, including physiological problems, eye and ear testing, handedness, motor coordination and the results of any individual IQ testing.

In two later editions, still in 1933 and still informal, were added a Word Recognition test for Grade 1 and time norms for Oral Reading; and in the years 1933–36, adjustments were made to incorporate the results.

The test published in 1937 by World Book Company included: Oral Reading paragraphs, with both Aided Recall Questions and Unaided Oral Recall; and Silent Reading paragraphs with Unaided Oral Recall. Time and Memory norms were provided for both oral and silent reading. The instructions to examiners in the Manual indicated what factors in the child's oral and silent reading behaviors were to be noted.

Also included were tests of Word Recognition, both flashed and untimed, for First Grade and another for Grades Two to Six. Subprocess tests included a Letter Naming test and a test of Pronunciation of Word Parts. Extensive checklists were provided to guide the examiner's thinking about problems and possible remedial action. Many DARD users consider these checklists one of the most important features of the instrument.

A Cover Sheet on each test provided a place to record scores on a graph so that levels could be compared. Included was space for the results of the Durrell-Sullivan Reading Capacity and Achievement Test and the Binet-Simon individual IQ test. The two pages following provided space to summarize the various checklists, details of the child's

school record, medical record, psychological factors and home history, and remedial plans.

Durrell-Sullivan Capacity and Achievement Test (1937)

The reading capacity and achievement tests originated in Durrell's conviction that children were being badly served by the "paper and pencil" intelligence tests being used in the 1930 schools. He believed that many children who scored low on group IQ tests were often actually handicapped by poor reading ability. As a result, he thought, children were denied help with a reading problem because of apparent low intelligence. Their problems were, therefore, compounded. In a search for an alternate way to test reading capacity, Durrell hit on the idea of asking children to mark pictures in response to sentences read aloud to them. To test for reading ability he reversed the process and asked the children to mark pictures as they read words and sentences to themselves. The two measures provided a comparison of capacity and achievement. When Durrell was asked where he got the idea he always insisted that it was not original with him but found in an educational psychology text.

The tests were prepared by Durrell and a Harvard doctoral student, Helen B. Sullivan. She did, in fact, draw the pictures herself (and saw her first pen-and-ink sketches float down the Charles River when a wind blew them out of her bicycle basket). The completed study became her doctoral dissertation. Published in 1937, the tests enjoyed considerable success and were in use at least as late as 1970 in some school systems.

Durrell and Sullivan: The Basic Reading Abilities Series (1941)

The contracts for a basal reading series were signed in 1941 and the first few items were produced by 1950 and 1951.

The Deanship Years (1942–1952)

Dr. Durrell was persuaded, reluctantly, to take over the deanship in 1942, during the war years when candidates for such positions were scarce; he continued until 1952 when he gave it up with relief. He often said that he begrudged the lack of research time while he was an administrator. Although that may have been true, much was done that was to have long-range effects.

Findings on Auditory Discrimination (Murphy 1940, 1943)

Details on the Murphy master's (1940) and doctoral (1943) research

have been presented in Chapter Two. The Murphy findings (1943) had shown that auditory discrimination practice added to a beginning reading program had a significant positive effect on the word recognition abilities of children who were not given such practice compared to the abilities of readers who were given such practice. As dean, Dr. Durrell invited Murphy to join his faculty and began a collaboration on primary reading research and instruction that ended only with her death in 1987.

Building Word Power (1945)

As a team, Durrell and Murphy with Helen B. Sullivan, published Murphy's dissertation on auditory and visual discrimination exercises as *Building Word Power* (1945). Produced as a hard cover handbook, it guided teachers in teaching children to "hear" the beginning and final consonants in words. *A sample Lesson:*

Lesson 13

13A. Auditory: *d* and *j* as Beginning Sounds

I am going to say some words that begin alike. Listen. [Write these words on the blackboard as you say them.]

do day dog

All these words begin with *d*. [Name.] Say them with me. [Repeat the three words again.] Here are some other words that begin with *d*. Listen and say them after me. These words name things to do. Be sure to say the first sound so I can hear it. [Dictate these words slowly, emphasizing the first sound:]

dance decorate dig digging dust darn dump

What was the first letter in all those words?

Here are the names of some things that are good to eat. They also begin with *d*. Listen and say the words after me.

duck dates doughnuts

Now we'll say the names of some things that most boys and girls like. Listen first and say the word after me. All the words begin with *d*.

desk dinner dogs dolls daddy

All these words are names of people that begin with *d*. Say them after me. Let me hear the *d* at the beginning of each word.

dentist doctor daddy

These are names of animals that begin with *d*. Say them after me.

deer dog donkey duck

See if you can think of some words that begin with *d*.

It is worth noting that although the name of the letter is used, there is no suggestion that the letters be printed on the blackboard although, as was agreed later, they probably should have been. A visual support for the auditory signal would have assisted memory.

Consultant, Third Air Force (1945)

Although Durrell was considered to be doing war service by filling the role of Dean, he was seconded by the commanding officer of the Third Air Force to assess their training programs and find ways to improve them. He said later that what he did was ask those who were taking the courses to rate their instructors. Having identified the best teachers, he asked them to revise course manuals and procedures and assisted them as they did so. These course materials are preserved in the Third Air Force Archives.

Murphy-Durrell Diagnostic Reading Readiness Test (1949)

In 1949, Durrell and Murphy published the first edition of their readiness test. In it, they provided a Visual test, the Auditory test from the Murphy dissertation and a Learning Rate test. The latter was a product of Helen Murphy's belief that a readiness test should test not just sub-processes of word recognition but the child's ability to combine sub-processes to recognize whole words taught to them in a natural classroom situation. The Auditory test was the first ever used in a readiness test and the only one for many years.

Basal Reading Series (1941–1952)

As has already been noted, the first contracts for the reading series had been signed just before Dr. Durrell became dean. However, the pace of production was not rapid; and when Durrell was asked later why this was so, his response was, "well, we were doing research every year and finding answers we wanted to incorporate into the series. The publisher finally concluded we would never be fully ready to finish!"

What is worth noting is the fact that the Durrell-Sullivan readers, influenced by the Murphy dissertation of 1943 includes the first instructional mention of *auditory discrimination of the beginning sounds of words* that occurs in basal readers. The list of readiness skills includes these three: 1) to note which spoken words begin with the same sound; 2) to know the sounds of initial consonants *b, m, f, t, r, s, d, h*; and 3) to name known words that begin with a given consonant. The readiness workbook *Look and Say* provides practice with these skills.

Such authors of basal readers as Paul McKee and David Russell accepted the Murphy-Durrell auditory discrimination findings and Paul McKee used them extensively in his readiness lessons. Only the *Dick and Jane* series authors refused to listen until after 1965.

Research Directed (1942–1952)

With the assistance of Helen Murphy and other colleagues, 71 theses and dissertations on Reading Education were completed during this period.

Long-Range Effects of the Durrell Deanship

Dr. Durrell might have agreed that, in the end, his sojourn as Dean did have long-range good effects. The position did, in fact, put him in regular contact with senior university administrators and officers of public foundations. As a result, when a man like Conant later wanted to discuss not reading education but public education in general, he called on Durrell's knowledge and judgment. There were many other instances of these kinds of interactions that had good effects for Boston University that went beyond what might have been achieved by someone whose major role was mainly as professor.

Additionally, Durrell always said that his deanship put him in touch with the kinds of courses students valued. He became very conscious of the significance of "methods" courses and practice teaching. Although he never undervalued the importance of having Education students who had a good Arts or Sciences background, he was always impatient with those who suggested that content backgrounds could substitute for specific knowledge about how to teach. And he was especially scathing about the idea of adding Philosophy, Psychology or History of Education courses to reduce time on courses centering on classroom instruction. When he returned to "professing" he made changes in course offerings for both undergraduate and graduate programs to increase time on applications of research.

The "Full Throttle" Years (1952–1969)

It would be difficult to suggest to anyone who has known him that Donald D. Durrell ever lived and worked at less than full throttle. However, it is true that between the deanship years and his retirement, he put to full use his enormous energy and acute intelligence in the broadest context possible. He drew from across the continent and other countries students who had read his texts, used his tests or teaching

materials, or heard him speak at a conference and wanted to study with him. The contacts with administrators he had made during his years as dean served him well as he returned to teaching and research.

Boston University First-Grade Studies (1955-1956)

During the latter years of his deanship, Durrell and Murphy were focussing their attention on Readiness and Beginning Reading. They had been convinced by the Murphy dissertation in 1943 that the best predictor of first grade readiness for beginning reading was the ability to “hear separate sounds in words” (now being called “phonemic awareness”). Many subsequent studies of the same phenomenon had supported that conclusion. They had, however, found it hard to persuade others of its validity. This gave them the motivation to pursue a large study that included several communities and would produce enough data to command attention. The results of the study are described in Durrell (1958), the February 1958 edition of this *Journal*. With doctoral students Sylvia Gavel, Alice Nicholson, Arthur Olson, and Eleanor Linehan involved in the five-community study, both students and professors were surprised at the results. They found that the auditory discrimination test was *not* the best predictor as they had expected but *knowledge of letter names*, a test they had added as an afterthought to “round-off” the list of pre-tests. That result was reported at the AERA meetings in Spring, 1958.

The findings on Letter Names set off what could only be described as a storm of controversy. The most widely used basal readers of the period had been insisting that some 50 words of “sight” vocabulary must be taught in a “look-say” approach before any attempt was made to break words into their component parts of letters or sounds. The Boston University data put that method into question. Both professional reputations and royalties were at stake. A good deal of energy was expended to “prove” that the B.U. data had been mishandled or misinterpreted.

Durrell and Murphy were not in any doubt about the results since they had examined the data exhaustively. They concluded that they must revise their readiness test. They began work on the task which took some five years. At the same time, Durrell was planning a revision of the *Durrell Analysis*. Besides concerning himself with test revision, Durrell had been troubled by what he saw as a weakness in the Supervision class he shared with Dr. B. Alice Crossley.

Supervision Class: Lab Component (1955–1956)

The feeling that a lab component ought to be added to the Supervision graduate class came about when students in that class commented that they found it easier to write papers about helping teachers with their classroom programs than actually to set about entering those classrooms.

As it happened, Durrell had already begun to see the possibilities in what he called “Pupil Team Learning” as a way to replace “the teacher makes a presentation at the front of the class and then the children do individual practice as the teacher supervises.” He began to think of designs for packages of lessons that could start with teacher presentation as usual but then move into “job cards” that could be placed in the hands of teams: pairs, threes or other numbers, sometimes adjusted to the ability levels of the team, at other times mixing ability levels. Durrell had always deplored the fact that schools allowed little opportunity for mutually supportive learning and social interaction. He wanted to move schools away from competition in learning. As he pointed out, one could always test individually, after team learning had gone on.

The difficulty with Pupil-Team Learning lay in providing teachers with materials that could form the basis for classroom activities. Preparation by each teacher was unlikely, given the time required.

The first step in this process was taken when the graduate students who wished to register in the Supervision class of 1955/56 were told that they would have to expect to spend a week away from their school communities helping teachers to get started on Pupil-Team procedures. Armed with sets of job cards designed to be used in teams, the Supervision students moved into classrooms and demonstrated the processes for getting the lessons started. Sometimes the focus of the lessons was a skill/process, such as word analysis or math problem-solving. At other times, it was content: the products of Egypt, the settling of the West. Overall the class was considered a great success by both teachers and graduate students. As a result, the Supervision continued with this format.

Once the lab component was in place for the Supervision class, Dr. Durrell turned his attention to a new publication and two revised ones.

Building Spelling Power (1957)

In 1957, Durrell published, with Helen Murphy and K.V. Russell, a

book of spelling lessons: *Building Spelling Power*. Russell, a doctoral student in 1954, had built a series of lessons that stressed analyzing words by structure and found that they produced above average gains in spelling. They were published in a hard cover handbook to be used by teachers.

The Durrell Analysis of Reading Difficulty: Second Edition (1957)

The 1957 edition remained very similar in purpose and format to the 1937 edition, but with some changes in content.

The whole language processes of Oral and Silent Reading were retained but the tests were revised so that for Oral Reading only question-answering was required after the oral reading and no unaided recall was used. Again, after the Silent Reading, only unaided recall was required. Time and memory norms were retained.

A new “whole language” process test was substituted for the Durrell-Sullivan Reading Capacity and Achievement Test: a set of Listening Comprehension paragraphs with questions afterwards to assess the grade level of a child’s ability to understand prose and so provide a measure of capacity. The Word Recognition and Word Analysis tests were retained.

In terms of subprocesses, two Letter tests were added: a test of Identifying Letters Named and Matching Letters Named. These new tests had been developed in master’s theses and were to be given to non-reading children or to children at a first grade level of reading.

Also added were tests of Visual Memory (Primary) and Visual Memory (Intermediate). In the primary test the examiner flashed a word and the child circled its match in a display on the test blank. In the intermediate test, the examiner flashed a word and the student wrote as much of it as he could remember.

Another addition in 1957 was a test of Hearing Sounds in Words (Primary) and Phonic Spelling (Intermediate). Both tested the ability to “hear sounds in words.” In the primary test, the examiner presented the test booklet with words printed on it in a series of horizontal boxes. After the examiner had pronounced a word, the student circled the word that contained the sounds that were the same as those in the word pronounced by the examiner. In the intermediate test, the examiner pronounced a word and the student wrote as much of it as he could. Checklists and general features of the test blank remained much the same.

Pupil-Team Learning Research (1957–1958)

Having used the “Pupil-Team Learning” idea in the Supervision class and found it successful, Durrell felt that he could move ahead with a formal research project. He had four students from the Supervision class of 1955–56 who were ready for doctoral study. With a U.S. Office of Education grant, the four students, Harvey Scribner, a school superintendent, and John Manning, Walter McHugh and George Rochfort, all experienced school supervisors, undertook to work with classroom teachers to help them adjust their programs, spending a full year to do so. This research is summarized in Chapter Two of this *Journal*.

The research also provided the basis for many more theses and dissertations centering on information needed for Pupil Team Learning packages: optimum group sizes for discussion groups and elaborative thinking groups; the results of individual versus team assignments following mass presentations in social studies; and so on.

Supervision Course for Principal-Teacher Teams

Another effect of the Pupil Team Learning study was the gradual offering of the Supervision course to principal-teacher pairs both on campus and in Extension courses and in National Defense Education Act (NDEA) Institutes funded by the U.S. government. Attendance at the courses, including living expenses during the summer session, was covered; and many attended.

Word Analysis Practice (1960)

Two doctoral dissertations (Spenser and Catterson) compared the relative merits of two methods of teaching word recognition in fourth and fifth grade: a “rules and exceptions” method compared to a “sorting words by meaning” method. The meaning approach had been shown to produce better results for word recognition and the materials were published by Harcourt Brace and World in 1960 as *Word Analysis Practice*. An amusing side-issue may be noted here. A reviewer of the Catterson materials suggested that it was not surprising that the “meaning” approach had been the more successful since these words were more “interesting.” Actually, of course, the vocabulary was exactly the same in both sets of lessons. The reviewer had not been assiduous in checking detail!

Possibility of Collaborative-Competitive Research

As the team worked, Dr. Durrell had been trying to find ways to push

letter knowledge into educational consciousness as a reading readiness factor. He had attended two meetings on reading education funded by the Carnegie Foundation in 1960 and 1961. The first was on reading research and the second on the place of phonics in reading instruction. The meetings had made him speculate on the possibility that Carnegie might be willing to fund a study nation-wide that would be collaborative-competitive and would assess all the then-current methods for teaching reading in the first grade. This idea was to come to fruition in the USOE First Grade Studies in 1965–66.

Department of National Defense Visits (1961–62)

When Dr. Durrell found that he was eligible for a sabbatical in 1961/62, he decided to accept an invitation to visit the U.S. Department of National Defense schools in Europe. Although never really enthusiastic about the process of foreign travel, he found the visits stimulating and commented on the high quality of teaching he found. He did workshops and demonstrations everywhere and opened a dialogue with teachers who were interested in pursuing graduate study later.

International Reading Association (1962): Keynote Address

The content of Durrell's keynote address in 1962 at the International Reading Association (IRA) Annual Conference held in San Francisco is summarized elsewhere in this volume. There is no need, therefore, to discuss its content. But students of Durrell who were there have agreed that the event was rather special. His speech was thoroughly prepared, the content was fresh and his delivery was perfect. J. Allen Figurel, who edited the *Proceedings*, commented on the Durrell "inimitable style and fine sense of humor." Durrell students still feel that there may have been as good a speech delivered at IRA sometime (we doubt it) but that there never has been a better one. The enthusiastic crowd went away sure that educational problems could be solved—a significant achievement when teachers were being accused of letting the U.S.S.R. overshadow American education.

Clinic/Lab Experiences for Undergraduates (1960s)

Once he had settled the "lab" experience problem for the Supervision class, Durrell turned his attention to the problem of labs for undergraduates. He had learned during his years in administration that undergraduate students valued practice teaching more than any other experience in their programs. And they valued "methods" classes more than history of education, philosophy, psychology. He concluded that

an attempt should be made to tie the reading methods classes to a practice teaching/lab experience. At first this was done for only three weeks, with the junior class being rotated into and out of tutoring children from local schools, with Dr. Murphy and her graduate Clinic students overseeing the tutoring. Later, when a new Education building provided a very large Clinic space, it was possible to have juniors tutor for a full 15 weeks, to the obvious profit of both students and children.

Boston University Research in Elementary Reading (1933–1963)

In the early 1960s Dr. Durrell had begun to feel that a reference was needed for all the research studies that had been produced at the Boston University School of Education in Reading Education during his career there. With Helen Murphy's collaboration, the various theses and dissertations were summarized under general categories. Produced as a *Boston University Journal of Education* in 1963, the reference covered the years 1933–1963. Indresano and Chambers (1972) completed the summaries from 1963–1969 when they produced a volume on Language Arts research for the years 1927–1969.

The Murphy-Durrell Reading Readiness Analysis (1964)

Although others had questioned the validity of the findings on Knowledge of Letter Names after the B.U. First Grade Studies, Durrell and Murphy were in no doubt about them. They worked for the next few years on a revision of their readiness instrument and it was ready for 1964. They retained the Auditory test, now renamed the Phonemes test, in line with the popularity of linguistics vocabulary, then newly fashionable. They retained also the Learning Rate test. For the Visual test, however, they substituted a Letter Names test, which required a child to circle one letter in each of 26 arrays of 5 letters as the examiner named a letter. The letter name process added a dimension to the test that had not been there before.

Speech to Print (1964)

Also as a product of the 1955/56 B.U. First Grade Studies, Drs. Durrell and Murphy had begun to work on a publication that would draw together much of what they had learned about teaching beginning word recognition. They conceived that publication at first as a "methods" book on First Grade reading. Rather than describe methods and materials, however, they decided to produce a package of lessons that could be used to lead children through a sequence of skills development. It was structured to lead children from letter knowledge through

the early stages of word recognition: hearing and using initial sounds in words, then final sounds in words, and finally, medial vowels. The lessons were based in high meaning, high imagery and every pupil response techniques. Matched to an “average” basal reader, the materials would serve children from beginning reading through second grade word recognition processes. They decided to call the lessons “Speech to Print.” After the collection of data on the effects of the lessons in two group master’s theses, the lessons were published in 1964.

LESSON 6

p as a beginning sound

Materials

A. These words printed on the board:

paste push pull point pour paint

B. Each child needs a P card, and 1, 2, and 3 cards.

C. Applied Phonics Practice Cards for Lesson 6.

Directions

1. We have a new letter today. Listen for the first sound in these words on the board. They are all things you can do (pointing):

paste push pull point pour paint

Now you say them after me (pointing): paste, push, pull, point, pour, paint. What is the first sound in these words? Yes, *p*. Notice what you do with your lips when you say a *p* sound. You press your lips together, then open them with a little puff. Put your hand in front of your mouth while you say the words after me again (pointing): paste, push, pull, point, pour, paint. Do you feel the puff at the beginning of each one? All of these words begin with what letter? Yes, P. Show me you the letter P.

2. Now I’ll say some names of different kinds of fruit. Say each word after me. If the word begins with *p*, show the letter P:

pears oranges peaches pineapples cherries

(Comment on children’s responses: “Good!” “Right!” “Yes, P!” as in earlier lessons.)

3. Here are some things you can carry. Say them after me and if they begin with *p*, show your letter P:

pail package puppy pillow pocketbook pumpkin

(Comment on responses.)

4. Here are some names of birds. Say them after me and show P if they begin with *p*:

pigeon parakeet crow parrot robin penguin

(Comment on responses.)

5. Here are some things you might have at a party. Say them after me and hold up P if they begin with *p*:

popcorn cake pudding peanuts candy

(Comment on responses.)

The USOE First Grade Studies (1965–1966)

As it happened, Durrell had been appointed to the U.S. Office of Education Research Advisory Council in 1961, and this gave him the ideal venue in which to propose the collaborative-competitive research he had conceptualized earlier. He proposed that the U.S.O.E. fund projects that would evaluate the results produced by all the then-current methods of teaching reading in first grade. The money was authorized in 1963, advertised through the country, and twenty-seven projects selected to participate. Each project had to have at least two methods and ten classrooms in each method. All project leaders had to agree to give the same tests, visit each other's projects, and send all data for analysis to the University of Minnesota. One of the tests to be given in each project was the newly published *Murphy-Durrell Reading Readiness Analysis*; and some of the projects decided to use the also newly published *Speech to Print* lessons as their "phonics" program.

The U.S.O.E. First Grade Studies were carried on in 1964–1965. When the data were all analyzed, it was with a certain amount of triumph that Dr. Murphy and Dr. Durrell heard that the best predictor of all methods— "Sight Vocabulary" basals, Phonics-Linguistics basals, Language Experience methods, i.t.a. and Individualized methods—was their Letter Names test. And that the second best predictor was their auditory discrimination test, now called the Phonemes test.

Effects of the U.S.O.E. First Grade Studies

As any examination of reading methods after 1965 will show, all basals added work with letters to the beginning stages of any first grade program; and Phonics-Linguistics basals multiplied almost overnight. Unfortunately, many tried to do too much too quickly. As Durrell often said, "Not knowing letter names is a guarantee of failure but knowing letter names is not a guarantee of success."

Actually, overall findings were very much as Durrell had expected: no one method was uniformly successful and none uniformly a failure. As a result, most projects claimed "their" method was best. An impetus was given to a wide variety of methods and materials.

Oddly enough, although everyone seized on the idea of teaching letter names, the findings on phoneme perception continued to be ignored; and so far as we can discover, few researchers took any notice of the idea until two U.S. researchers mentioned the phenomenon, citing a source in Russian literature from 1925. Apparently Shaposhnikov had produced a statement in which he said he had concluded that

beginning readers need to learn the “mental action of the sound analysis of words” Strangely, the U.S. researchers seen not to have made the connection between that reference and the Boston University research that had been going on from 1943, and that had been validated nationwide in the USOE studies reported in 1967. So far as her students are concerned, it was Helen Murphy (1943) who introduced the concept to American reading education. But many researchers have since claimed credit for the “discovery” and it is now beginning to be part of accepted reading readiness teaching as “phoneme awareness,” credited to a variety of people. It seems unlikely that Helen Murphy ever heard of Shaposhnikov, but the fact remains that they were discovering the same phenomenon at about the same time, half a world apart.

Favorite Plays for Classroom Reading (1965)

Always fond of oral play reading for entertainment, Dr. Durrell collaborated with Dr. Alice Crossley, a colleague, on a volume of plays that was published in 1965.

Primary Phonics Practice (1968)

With the success of the *Speech to Print* program during the First Grade Studies, the publishers asked for an additional set of lessons to be used as “seatwork,” since *Speech to Print* had been largely teacher-directed and teachers had had to provide their own practice work. The new *Phonics Practice Program* was published in 1968.

Listening-Reading Tests (1970)

The Durrell-Sullivan Reading Capacity and Achievement Tests had been published in 1937 and sold steadily through the next twenty-five years. It was agreed that it was time to replace them. The basic rationale remained the same: children were to be asked to mark pictures as words and connected prose were read to them, so that their “capacity” could be assessed. Then they marked pictures as they read vocabulary and connected prose, to provide an assessment of their reading achievement.

Produced by Hayes (1965) at the Primary level and Brassard (1965) at the Intermediate level, the tests were published in 1970. Based on exactly the same concept and procedures but probably a more sophisticated data collection and analysis process, the Listening-Reading tests never had the same success as the Capacity/Achievement tests. Some have suggested that so much individual psychometric testing is available that the tests are not needed. Others refuse to believe that reading

capacity can be measured by a “listening” test. In our opinion, the error may have been in re-naming the test functions. The title *Capacity and Achievement* should probably have been retained. For former Durrell students, the concept remains a valid one, useful for testing not only English speakers, but second language students. We believe further research could validate the concept on which the tests are based and renew interest in the concept itself.

The “Retirement” Years (1969–)

The word “retirement” is placed in quotation marks because if retiring means work stoppage, one can hardly imagine anyone less retired than was Donald Durrell after 1969. Without the restrictions on his time of preparing lectures and meeting with graduate students about their research, he plunged, sometimes with Helen Murphy, sometimes alone, into preparation of teaching materials and a hectic schedule of speech-making and visits to communities using the Durrell or Durrell-Murphy materials.

Association with Curriculum Associates, Inc. (1970–)

Dr. Durrell had often toyed with the idea of finding a small local publishing company that was interested in producing publications out of lessons written for his experimental research at the B.U. School of Education. When just such a publisher appeared, he agreed to assist in the process of finding appropriate materials and preparing them for publication.

On the list following, items designated with ** were published by that company.

**** *Word Growth Program (1970)***

This spelling program was developed by Durrell and two graduate students for a Team-Learning situation.

*****Letters in Words (1970)***

This program was designed as an 8½- by 11-inch workbook with a child-sized 2- by 3-inch notebook to take home. In the lessons, the emphasis was on visual discrimination of letters in words and writing of letters.

Plays for Echo Reading (1970)

As an extension of play reading for pleasure, Durrell had directed a doctoral dissertation that measured sight vocabulary growth resulting

from echo reading of plays especially written for first grade children. The materials were highly successful in raising word recognition scores in what teachers considered an activity that both they and the children enjoyed.

*****Thirty Lessons in Outlining (1971, 1999)***

Two graduate students had prepared a series of outlining lessons for intermediate grades in a research project. Their success motivated publication first in 1971 and then in a revised edition in 1999.

Vocabulary Improvement Program (VIP) (1971)

Harcourt Brace Jovanovich had been asking for a revised edition of the Word Analysis Practice lessons. It was finally concluded that the three 30-lesson sets should be expanded to four sets, with the final set including words that would capture the interest of precocious readers. Renamed and repackaged into a boxed kit, it had a new lease on life and sold again very well.

Teen Age Plays for Classroom Reading (1971)

Durrell shared a second book of plays with Alice Crossley, a colleague on the B.U. faculty.

Systems 80 Programs (1971–1976)

The next project came from Borg-Warner of Chicago. They were well-known as an airplane parts manufacturer, but had decided to branch out into teaching machines and found that they needed programs for the machines. In the end Durrell produced four programs: *Learning Letter Sounds* (1971–74); *Beginning Language Concepts* (1973); *Letter Names Through Sounds* (1974–74); and *Structural Analysis Skills* (1976).

All of the machine programs were produced under the general rubric “Systems 80.” The *Learning Letter Sounds* has been modified for computer and is again available (2000) in that medium.

Durrell has always said that he started the work on the *Letter Sounds* program with every confidence that he would produce it quickly; but he found that the task was not as easy as it looked! The extremely careful programming required to produce a high ratio of correct answers was demanding, he said. However, it was also intensely interesting and very much “his” kind of task.

The introduction of the lessons at the International Reading Association Conference of 1971 created quite a stir. Red-haired identi-

cal 6-year-old twins took turns using the machines and it took most of the first day for observers to realize they were not seeing the same child being worked to exhaustion!

Speech to Print: Second Edition (1972)

Even before Durrell's retirement, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich was asking for a revision of *Speech to Print*, which had had very large sales after its introduction in the National First Grade Studies. Since Helen Murphy had retired in 1965, both were free to get the work done and the revision was published in 1972.

PreReading Phonics Inventory (1975)

A new readiness test reflected a wholly unexpected change in the Murphy-Durrell thinking about readiness. The circumstances around that change of thinking are interesting.

After retirement, Dr. Murphy had been hired as a consultant by the Wellesley Public Schools and, besides producing materials, she took on some tutoring of children who were floundering with beginning reading. One day she was trying to teach a boy to "hear" (discriminate) phonemes at the beginning of words.

<i>Dr. Murphy</i>	<i>Student</i>
She tried "baby, ball, bounce"	No response.
"boy, back, bad"	No response.
Then, "bean, beef, beet"	"Oh, 'b'", naming the letter
And, "deer, deep, dean"	"d", naming the letter.

After she had discussed this result with Dr. Durrell, they tried "elm, elbow, elephant" and the child said, "l"—letter name; "empty, Emma, embalm" and the child said "m".

Informal testing of many children showed that both four and five year olds found it consistently easier to hear letter names in words than to hear letter sounds (phonemes) in words.

Durrell and Murphy began to design a new readiness test, which they called *The Pre-Reading Phonics Inventory*. They described it in an article in the *Reading Teacher*; and offered it for use by anyone who wished to write to Helen Murphy for a copy. The new test included tests of ability to:

1. identify lower case letters named
2. write letters from dictation
3. identify letter names in spoken words

4. identify spoken words in print.

When the test was ready, Durrell and Murphy began to write a new program for beginning reading.

Durrell Analysis of Reading Difficulty (1980)

From 1970–75, Dr. Durrell had been under constant pressure from Psychological Corporation, a subsidiary of Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, to revise the 1957 Durrell Analysis. Since he still wanted to produce a team-learning book, he decided that a former student, Jane Catterson, who was using the test in her clinic work should take over the task. In December 1976 she agreed to the work with some trepidation. The test had, after all, been “his” for forty years. However, he was entirely supportive throughout and never once created problems.

The 1980 edition of the Durrell Analysis kept general format and overall purposes the same as those of the first two editions but made some changes in both content and norming procedures.

Most of the original Oral Reading, Silent Reading and Listening Comprehension paragraphs remained the same. However, a few new paragraphs were written; and both these and the “old” ones were checked for readability in two ways. First, the Dale-Chall Readability Formula was used. Then the materials were tried out on students at the appropriate grade levels. We believed that this dual process yielded a well-graded series of paragraphs.

Consideration was given to the idea of adopting a more “informal” process to determine oral and silent reading levels by dropping the use of time norms. However, it was concluded that removing that factor in determining grade level would be unwise. Teachers find it difficult to assign instructional levels on the basis of word errors, hesitations, and repetitions alone. In fact, they are inclined to overestimate levels unless a more objective measure is available. Time norms provide that objective measure, producing lower instructional levels and, therefore, less frustration as teaching begins.

It was also decided that the comprehension questions after oral reading should remain simple and fact-based. Asking questions of the “open-ended” type (a notion popular in the 1970s) often yields interesting answers, but leaves one with the problem of guidelines for assessing them.

An addition to the Third Edition was a Listening Vocabulary test to compare with the Listening Comprehension paragraphs. Dr. Durrell

developed the test from the largest categories of the Roget's Thesaurus, with a range of word frequencies from those categories. The task was to identify the meaning of a word pronounced by the examiner by pointing to a picture, an adaptation of the pencil and paper capacity-achievement tests produced in 1937 and 1970.

The Listening Vocabulary test became the new Word Recognition/Word Analysis test, with instructions the same as for the earlier tests. This combining of content for the two tests made possible direct comparison of vocabulary capacity and achievement.

Another addition to the 1980 edition was a number of tests for the non-reader/readiness level, which reflected the findings of the Boston University First Grade Studies of 1956–57 and the National First Grade Studies of 1964–65.

The norming process was much more elaborate than on previous editions. For some reason there had been carping by some other test authors about the validity and/or reliability of clinic-collected data. With Dr. Durrell deciding to underwrite the cost of a wide norming, test directors were found in six locations across the country: California, Texas, Illinois, North Carolina, and Ohio. Graduate students from each community were enlisted by local test directors and trained by them. The revision author travelled to each location to supervise the data collection.

The completed test booklets were sent to the University of British Columbia for correction by the revision author's graduate students in the Reading Clinic there. The resulting data were analyzed by the University of British Columbia Computing Centre. It was concluded that the country-wide norming had probably not been necessary. One large city with a range of population would have been just as useful.

*****Sound Start (1980, 1982)***

Durrell and Murphy had concluded that what was needed by beginning readers was a very carefully programmed practice in the processes identified in their pre-reading phonics inventory. They designed such a program; and it was produced by Borg-Warner in a workbook format in 1980.

To the team's disappointment, the materials sold somewhat poorly and Dr. Durrell concluded that this was the result of Borg-Warner's inexperience with selling non-machine-oriented items. Curriculum Associates, Inc., agreed to take over the item. It had reasonable success

thereafter but not as much as its quality warranted. In the opinion of this reviewer, its best use would be for the “bottom” 20 percent of an average class (the group that knows only about 8 letter names at school entrance) to be taught by a teaching aide rather than a certified teacher. The lessons are so well programmed that few adjustments are needed and so teacher education is not required.

It must be admitted that the concept of hearing letter names in words is a cognitive stumbling block to some teachers and must be witnessed to be understood. We expect the concept to be validated experimentally in the future, although it seems to us that the concept has already been validated clinically by the Invented Spelling approaches that are clearly based in spelling words from letter names, a process that often precedes word recognition.

Dr. Durrell and Dr. Murphy continued to attend and speak at the IRA Annual Conference until Spring 1987, always trying to persuade researchers to consider letter name sounds the child’s first “phonics”. However, after Dr. Murphy’s death in Fall 1987 Dr. Durrell’s progressive macular degeneration made it impossible for him to read and write and to travel alone. He has remained in a home in Exeter, N.H. since Mrs. Durrell’s death.

Vocabulary Fluency (Books A and B) (1982)

This program has two levels, the first for students needing remedial assistance at the primary level, the second focusing on the intermediate level. Both use echo techniques to guide the reading of word lists and short plays and guided writing to fix the learning. It is very useful as a remedial vehicle for small groups in the intermediate grades.

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CHAPTER FOUR: Durrell as Mentor and Friend

In considering what should be included in a final chapter of this volume, we decided that we should touch on a more personal aspect: Donald Durrell as mentor and friend. That role is reflected in names that represent an ever-widening circle of professional influence that has spread outward for 70 years; and in the tributes that were selected from those sent when knowledge of this project became known.

The Ever-Widening Circle

Margaret Early, President, National Council of the Teachers of English. General Editor and Author, Harcourt Brace Reading series.

Harold Herber, Author, 2 best-selling texts on the teaching of high school literacy.

Lee Indresano, President, International Reading Association. Author, Ginn Basic Reading series.

John Manning, President, International Reading Association. Author, Scott-Foresman Reading series.

Olive Niles, President, International Reading Association. Author, Scott-Foresman Reading series.

Nancy Santeusano, Author, Harcourt Brace Reading series.

Harvey Scribner, Former Superintendent of Schools, New York City.

Carl Singleton, Editor, *My Weekly Reader*.

Perhaps it should be noted that there is no intention here of suggesting that these former students were entirely dependent on Durrell's mentoring for their success. Clearly, they were people of talent, intelligence