

The Blumenfeld Education Letter

"My People Are Destroyed For Lack Of Knowledge" HOSEA 4:6

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The purpose of this newsletter is to provide knowledge for parents and educators who want to save the children of America from the destructive forces that endanger them. Our children in the public schools are at grave risk in 4 ways: academically, spiritually, morally, and physically — and only a well-informed public will be able to reduce these risks.

"Without vision, the people perish."

Forty Massachusetts Professors of Linguistics and Psycholinguistics Blast Whole Language

In an unprecedented action taken by forty professors of linguistics and psycholinguistics from Harvard, Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), Northeastern University, University of Massachusetts, Brandeis, and Boston University, a letter was sent to Robert V. Antonucci, the Massachusetts Commissioner of Education, strongly criticizing the state's intention to mandate whole language as the standard for reading instruction in the new state curriculum. Because this is the first time in the history of the great debate between phonics and whole-word teaching methods that a group of prestigious academics has come forth and entered the battle on the side of systematic phonics, we feel compelled to make the text of this letter available to our readers across the U.S. Dated July 12, 1995, it reads:

Dear Dr. Antonucci:

We are researchers in linguistics and psycholinguistics—and Massachusetts residents. We are writing to raise certain questions about the inclusion of contentious and, in our view, scientifically unfounded views of language in the sections on reading instruction of the draft Curriculum Content Chapter on Language Arts ("Constructing and Conveying Mean-

ing"), recently circulated by the Massachusetts Department of Education. These views are presented as a principal support for the reading curriculum advocated as an instructional "standard" in this document.

The proposed Content Chapter replaces the common-sense view of reading as the decoding of notated speech with a surprising view of reading as directly "constructing meaning". According to the document, "constructing meaning" is a process that can be achieved using many "strategies" (guessing, contextual cues, etc.). In this view, the decoding of written words plays a relatively minor role in reading compared to strategies such as contextual guessing. This treats the alphabetic nature of our writing system as little more than an accident, when in fact it is the most important property of written English—a linguistic achievement of historic importance.

The authors of the draft Content Chapter claim that research on language supports their views of reading. The document asserts that research on language has moved from the investigation of particular "components of language—phonological and grammatical units" to the investigation of "its primary function—communication". These supposed developments in linguistic research are used as arguments for a comparable view of reading. We are entirely unaware of any such shift in research.

We want to alert the educational authorities of Massachusetts to the fact that the view of language

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research presented in this document is inaccurate, and that the claimed consequences for reading instruction should therefore be subjected to serious re-examination.

The facts are as follows. Language research continues to focus on the components of language, because this focus reflects the "modular" nature of language itself. Written language is a notation for the structures and units of one of these components. Sound methodology in reading instruction must begin with these realities. Anything else will shortchange those students whom these standards are supposed to help.

As linguists, we are concerned that the Commonwealth, through its powers to set standards for schools, should presume to legislate an erroneous view of how human language works, a view that runs counter to most of the major scientific results of more than 100 years of linguistics and psycholinguistics. We are even more concerned that uninformed thinking about language should lie at the heart of a "standards" document for Massachusetts schools.

Respectfully,

1. Prof. Emmon Bach (Linguistics, U. of Mass. Amherst; Pres. Linguistic Soc. of Amer.)
2. Prof. Andrea Calabrese (Linguistics, Harvard)
3. Dr. David Caplan (Neurology, Mass. Gen. Hosp.; Dir. Reading Disability Clinic)
4. Prof. Charles Clifton (Chair, Dept. of Psychology, U. of Mass. Amherst)
5. Prof. Mark Feinstein (Dean, Cognitive Science & Cultural Studies, Hampshire Coll.)
6. Prof. Kai von Fintel (Linguistics, MIT)
7. Prof. Suzanne Flynn (Foreign Languages and Literatures/Linguistics, MIT)
8. Prof. John Frampton (Mathematics, Northeastern U.)
9. Prof. Lyn Frazier (Linguistics, U. of Mass. Amherst)
10. Prof. Edward Gibson (Brain and Cognitive Studies, MIT)
11. Prof. Kenneth Hale (Linguistics, MIT; 1994 Pres. Linguistic Soc. of Amer.)
12. Prof. Morris Halle (Linguistics, MIT; 1973 Pres. Linguistic Soc. of Amer.)
13. Prof. Irene Heim (Linguistics, MIT)
14. Prof. Kyle Johnson (Linguistics, U. of Mass. Amherst)
15. Prof. James Harris (Foreign Languages and Literatures/Linguistics, MIT)
16. Prof. Ray Jackendoff (Linguistics, Brandeis;

author *Patterns in the Mind*)

17. Prof. Samuel J. Keyser (Linguistics, MIT)
18. Prof. Michael Kenstowicz (Linguistics, MIT)
19. Prof. John Kingston (Linguistics, U. of Mass. Amherst)
20. Prof. John McCarthy (Chair, Dept. of Linguistics, U. of Mass. Amherst)
21. Prof. Joan Maling (Linguistics, Brandeis)
22. Prof. Gary Marcus (Psychology, U. of Mass. Amherst)
23. Dr. Janis Melvold (Neurology, Mass. Gen. Hosp.)
24. Prof. Shigeru Miyagawa (Foreign Languages and Literatures/Linguistics, MIT)
25. Prof. Mary Catherine O'Connor (Applied Linguistics, Boston U.)
26. Prof. Wayne O'Neil (Chair, Dept. of Linguistics and Philosophy, MIT)
27. Prof. Barbara Partee (Linguistics, U. of Mass. Amherst; 1986 Pres. Linguistic Soc. of Amer.)
28. Prof. David Pesetsky (Linguistics, MIT)
29. Prof. Steven Pinker (Brain and Cognitive Sciences, MIT; author *The Language Instinct*)
30. Prof. Alexander Pollatsek (Psychology, U. of Mass. Amherst)
31. Prof. Mary C. Potter (Brain and Cognitive Sciences, MIT)
32. Prof. Janet Randall (Linguistics, Northeastern U.)
33. Prof. Keith Rayner (Psychology, U. of Mass. Amherst)
34. Prof. Thomas Roeper (Linguistics, U. of Mass. Amherst)
35. Prof. Elisabeth O. Selkirk (Linguistics, U. of Mass. Amherst)
36. Prof. Margaret Speas (Linguistics, U. of Mass. Amherst)
37. Prof. Esther Torrego (Chair, Dept. of Hispanic Studies, U. of Mass. Boston)
38. Dr. Gloria Waters (Neuropsychology Lab, Mass. Gen. Hosp.)
39. Prof. Calvert Watkins (Linguistics/Classics, Harvard)
40. Prof. Kenneth Wexler (Brain and Cognitive Sciences, MIT)

A cover letter from MIT's Department of Linguistics and Philosophy, signed by Prof. David Pesetsky (MIT) and Dr. Janis Melvold (Mass. Gen. Hosp.) accompanied the above letter and list of experts. Dated July 14, 1995, it reads:

Dear Dr. Antonucci:

We are writing in the hope that the Commonwealth will make the most of an opportunity provided by Education Reform to put our state on a positive track in the area of primary-school reading instruction.

We enclose a letter signed by forty experts on language and on reading—all of whom are Massachusetts residents (and many of whom are parents). This letter concerns the current draft of the Curriculum Framework for English Language Arts ("Constructing and Conveying Meaning"), which proposes standards for reading, writing and literature instruction. The signers include linguists and cognitive psychologists from seven Massachusetts institutions. Among the signers are three members of the National Academy of Sciences, four presidents of the Linguistic Society of America, three directors of major research training programs, and the authors of two of the leading books on language for the general public. The signers of this letter take strong exception to the standards for reading proposed in various sections of this document.

The sort of instruction advocated in the draft Curriculum Framework (often called "Whole Language") has already been adopted as a standard in various other jurisdictions. In many of these jurisdictions (most recently, California), it is widely blamed for serious declines in reading achievement. In the 1994 National Assessment of Educational Progress, Massachusetts (though highly ranked) was among ten states whose average 1994 scores were singled out as "significantly lower" than its 1992 scores. Fully 33% of Massachusetts public school fourth-graders tested "below basic" in reading, 4% more than in 1992. Given conclusions about reading decline that have been drawn elsewhere, we wonder whether the recent decline in Massachusetts could be connected to increased use of Whole Language methodology here.

Linguists and psycholinguists believe they can be a productive and cooperative part of some common-sense solutions to this decline. We see no reason why Massachusetts cannot take the lead in reversing nationwide declines in reading. The solutions we would propose are not exotic, but simply follow from the nature of reading and the nature of language. They are also solutions widely advocated by educators involved in the objective study of reading and reading pedagogy. Unfortunately, the standards advocated in the current draft Curriculum Framework point in exactly the wrong direction—*away*

from a curriculum that takes linguistic realities into account, and *towards* methods that have failed elsewhere.

We would like to request a meeting with your office at which these issues can be discussed. A number of signers of this letter have indicated their interest in participating in a serious discussion of state standards for reading instruction. Massachusetts has substantial resources in the areas of linguistics (including the two top-rated departments in the country: MIT and UMass/Amherst), psycholinguistics and reading education. These resources could be marshaled in the service of genuine and productive Education Reform.

Here is some background on this issue:

Both empirical research and common sense teach us some elementary facts about reading and reading pedagogy. Written language is a way of notating speech. The basic principles of alphabetic writing systems guarantee that letters and letter groups correspond quite well (even in English) to the fundamental units of spoken language. To become a skilled reader, a learner must master this notational system, learning how the sounds and oral gestures of language correspond to letters and letter groups. Once this happens, the same system that "constructs meaning" from spoken language will quite naturally "construct meaning" from written language and the learner will be a reader. Learning how to decode the speech sounds notated by the writing system ("phonics") is fundamental to reading.

The standards advocated in the draft Curriculum Framework depart from these views quite considerably. In this, they closely mirror the popular but increasingly criticized approach known as "Whole Language". The essential points of the Massachusetts document are the following:

1. Learning how to decode speech sounds notated by the writing system is not a special key that opens the door to reading.
2. Reading is a way of "constructing meaning" from text. Readers "construct meaning" in many different ways. Using phonics is one of these ways, but it is just one of many "strategies" a reader uses for "constructing meaning" from unfamiliar text. Others are "using context, . . . help from peers, and making a guess and going on to decode, understand, and use

new words [sic]". Learners need to develop competence in all these strategies.

3. Knowledge of phonics, like knowledge of the other strategies believed essential to reading, should not be taught systematically. This knowledge will emerge in simple response to "print-rich" environments full of "authentic" texts, so long as the child has a helpful teacher who offers some (unsystematic but sympathetic) assistance.

As "Whole Language" advocates themselves have acknowledged, empirical research does not support these claims and recommendations. Skilled readers, it turns out, do not use a multitude of strategies, but examine every letter of every word, and decode the sounds associated with written words. Furthermore, it seems that there is a good correlation between quantity of systematic phonics instruction and ability to read unfamiliar text.

Furthermore, in many jurisdictions where the three points mentioned have already become standards, parents and educators have become alarmed by quite apparent declines in reading levels among students. For example, California recently placed last in a national assessment of elementary-school reading. In response, a state-wide task force is currently charged with re-examining the reading curriculum—i.e. with *moving away* from the standards now being considered for Massachusetts. The Canadian Psychological Association responded to very similar concerns with a 1993 resolution opposing the imposition of these sorts of standards on education in the various provinces.

The Whole Language community typically offers two responses to these criticisms:

A. They reject controlled (and quantitative) research of all sorts that seems to disfavor the approach. This includes experimental results on reading as well as standard assessments of student performance. Instead, they appeal to unverifiable and subjective reports of classroom experience—so-called "ethnographic" research. This appeal forms an important part of the draft Curriculum Framework as well, which cites exclusively this sort of anecdotal literature, and makes no mention of the empirical literature that casts doubt on its recommendations. In fact, two members of the committee that wrote the draft Curriculum Framework volunteered to us in separate phone conversations the fact that it is "ethnographic" literature on which the drafters of the framework rely for validation of their recommenda-

tions. Concerned educators, citizens and parents should find this rejection of verifiable research in favor of unverifiable research alarming.

B. They appeal to linguistic research in support of the approach. It is alleged in the Curriculum Framework, for example, that the "multiple strategies", "constructing meaning" view of reading is just one consequence of an overall shift in a pattern of research results in the language sciences. The group letter speaks quite directly to this issue. The claim about language and the claim about language research is simply false.

Packaged with the dubious methodology of Whole Language are some marvelous features, which account for its wide popularity among teachers—and which we enthusiastically support. It breaks with the tradition of "Dick and Jane" basal readers in allowing for wide-ranging use of good literature and discussions about books, authors, and literary conventions as early as kindergarten. We are aware of no reason to abandon this aspect of Whole Language. Indeed, a *literature-based curriculum coexisting with systematic instruction in phonics* is exactly the recommendation of Marilyn Jager Adams' famous study of reading instruction.

As Adams notes, "written text has both method and purpose. It is time for us to stop bickering about which is more important". The draft Curriculum framework repudiates method and goes overboard in attention to purpose. There is no reason to insist on a false dichotomy between systematic phonics instruction (method) and good literature (purpose) any more than there is reason to insist on a gap between systematic musical instrument instruction and good music.

We look forward to your response.

The professors received a response from the Commissioner of Education which they considered to be inadequate and answered with another letter on August 10, 1995 as follows:

Dear Dr. Antonucci:

Thank you for your letter of August 4. We appreciate your attention to our concerns about the curriculum framework "Constructing and Conveying Meaning".

We are, of course, delighted that the next draft of the Curriculum Framework will put more emphasis on the need for a "strong foundation in phonemic decoding". We see this as an obvious step forward. However, we still have some concerns. In particular, a revised document that differs from the draft only in some additional emphasis on phonics and phonemic awareness would fail to address the depth and scope of the problems with the draft. If our criticisms and those of our colleagues are taken seriously, the existing draft will have to be thoroughly revised in order to bring it into accord with current knowledge about reading and reading instruction. Specifically, we would like to raise the following questions about the revised draft:

- Will the revised document continue to advocate teaching reading skills only in context, rather than advocating a rational plan of instruction as the basis for the newly emphasized "strong foundation in phonemic decoding"?

- Will the revised document continue to present reading as directly "constructing meaning", rather than as a decoding skill which feeds into a process of meaning construction common to all linguistic communication (including spoken and signed language)? And will it continue to present this view of reading as arising somehow from research in linguistics?

- Will the revised document continue to assert that successful reading involves use of many "strategies"—of which phonics based decoding is just one? Will the child taught according to the recommendations of the revised document still be encouraged to guess at words that she could be encouraged to sound out instead?

- Will the revised document continue to value anecdotal reports from the Whole Language literature more highly than empirical research-based recommendations?

Our personal interest in this issue arose from our dismay as linguists and parents at the misinformation about language and reading that too often guides instructional practice. As a consequence our discussions with colleagues (culminating in the group letter from forty linguists and psycholinguists), Massachusetts now has an opportunity which we hope you will want to take advantage of.

Several of the signers of the group letter are eager to contribute directly to your department's

efforts on matters connected to language and reading both now and in the future. In particular, we would be happy to contribute to the process of revision of the Curriculum Framework, rather than wait for a discussion after its completion. Among the signers of the group letter, Prof. Alexander Pollatsek (a specialist in the psychology of reading, UMass/Amherst) and several others (including ourselves) have volunteered to work with your office separately or as a group during the process of revisions. Our personal expertise in linguistics and language sciences is also at your disposal, now and in the future, as is the expertise of Massachusetts specialists in reading education such as Dr. Marilyn Jager Adams.

We acknowledge the obvious hard work and sincere efforts of the Curriculum Framework committee. We are also grateful that two members of this committee took the time to discuss the Framework over the telephone. These conversations, however, have given us additional cause to ask whether the particular expertise of the committee members should not be balanced during the process of revision by the expertise of other specialists from around the Commonwealth. This is one reason why several signers of the group letter (including ourselves) ask for a way to participate in the revision process in the manner envisioned by the drafters of Education Reform, who wrote (emphasis ours):

"The process for drawing up and revising the frameworks shall be open and consultative, and may include but need not be limited to classroom teachers, parents, faculty of schools of education, and leading college and university figures in both subject matter disciplines and pedagogy." (section 29, subsection 1E)

We, like you, "consider the development of the first-time statewide curriculum frameworks in Massachusetts to be an unprecedented opportunity to bring the vision of the Education Reform Act into classrooms." This is why we hope that your document will be a genuine "reform" document, and not merely a codification of current, often unsatisfactory common practice. We are aware that you have a rather stringent timetable, but we hope that we will be allowed the opportunity to contribute substantively and constructively to the process of revising this document. If the meeting you offer could be arranged at the beginning of September, we would be most grateful.

Finally, we note that your letter was mainly a reply to the cover letter written by the two of us. The

forty linguists and psycholinguists who signed the group letter focusing on the framework's unsatisfactory discussion of language will also be grateful for a separate, direct reply to their common concerns. We will be happy to make such a reply available to them.

Thank you once more for your attention.

The letter was signed by Prof. David Pesetsky (Linguistics, MIT) and Dr. Janis Melvold (Dept. of Neurology, Mass. Gen. Hosp.)

As of Nov. 9, we have had no success in contacting Prof. Pesetsky or Dr. Melvold. But we have spoken to some of the signers who have informed us that a meeting did take place between three of the signers and several state education officials and that the Curriculum Framework is being revised to reflect the concerns of the professors. When the new Curriculum Framework is made public, we will review it.

In any case, the letter signed by the 40 professors adds a new significant dimension to the ongoing battle between advocates of intensive, systematic phonics and advocates of whole language. Whether or not the views of the professors will find their way into the minds of primary school principals and teachers of Massachusetts is to be seen. A report in the *Boston Globe* of Nov. 7, 1995 sheds some light on the present situation in the state. It says:

With the city of Boston now embarked on a 10-year campaign to get all third graders reading at grade level, effective reading instruction has become a critical issue. Most Boston schools, and most schools across Massachusetts, educators say, have adopted some form of the whole-language approach.

A showdown over the whole-language method also seems likely as Boston University president John Silber, a whole-language opponent, has promised to make reading a top priority as he settles in as the state's new education board chairman.

Adding to the debate are statewide curriculum

standards, being assembled by the state Department of Education, that recommend a whole-language foundation—raising fears that whole language will become the rule. Whole language has been on the rise in most school districts for the last 10 years.

An early draft of those standards drew fire from a group of 40 linguists, psychologists and other academics who claim that whole language has been a disaster where it has been tried elsewhere—particularly in California, where reading scores went down after a whole-language curriculum was adopted.

"As linguists, we were in a position to see that rotten science is at the heart of a system being used to educate countless children, across the country, including our own," said David Pesetsky, a professor at [MIT] who has children in the Lexington schools. . . .

Though many educators in Massachusetts have pleaded for a compromise—rejecting the "either-or" premise of the debate and calling instead for a combination of the two approaches in the classroom—the difference between whole-language and phonics-and-skills instruction is stark. . . .

"Writing is a human invention. People don't learn to read unless they're taught how to do it, knowing the rules," said Marilyn Jager Adams, a Belmont psychologist whose report, "Beginning to Read," rebuts many whole-language claims.

Whole-language advocates, meanwhile, say that phonics drills and Dick-and-Jane readers turn too many children off. Reading is an innate and instinctive ability that lies within all children, almost like walking, they say—and it can be coaxed out of children with the right nurturing environment and more content-rich books.

"I prefer to call it literature-based teaching," said Martha Gillis, senior program director of reading and language arts at the Boston School Department, and an organizer in the Read Boston campaign. Whole language has been used predominantly in most Boston schools for several years, and Gillis said she believes it will produce good results. . . .

[M]any conservatives have adopted the fight against whole language as part of a back-to-basics campaign, and as a reaction against what they view as faddish innovations by liberal-minded educators.

That, in turn, has prompted whole-language advocates to claim politics is infecting what should be discussion about pedagogy.

"This is part of an orchestrated campaign by the far right, and some of these academics have wandered into this without realizing who they're getting in bed with," said Ken Goodman, professor of education at the University of Arizona and a leader of the whole-language movement.

Scare tactics and politics prevailed in California,

Goodman said, where a task force recently condemned whole language and the state Legislature called for an immediate return to phonics instruction. Goodman acknowledged that California reading scores plummeted to last among the 40 states that do testing after whole-language methods were adopted statewide—but he blamed school budget cuts, not the whole-language method.

However, Thomas Payzant, the new superintendent of the Boston Schools and most recently the superintendent in San Diego, said some valuable lessons could be learned from the California experience—namely, that a whole-language approach should not exclude phonics instruction.

"I want to take the strengths of each. You go with what works," Payzant said. "The mistakes we've made over the years in education is the result of searching for that one best way."

And so, the battle goes on. Note Ken Goodman's explanation—"school budget cuts"—for the failure of whole language in California. Also note his comment about the 40 professors that they were getting into bed with the far right. We have no doubt that among the 40 academics will be found a variety of political views and commitments. But their arguments are based on science, not politics. As scientists they are unanimous in their condemnation of whole language as a means of teaching reading. Few people are aware that Rudolf Flesch, who wrote *Why Johnny Can't Read* in 1955, was an "old Viennese socialist," as he called himself. It will be quite interesting to see how all of this evolves in the coming months.

Scores Decline At Top Boston Schools

The following report appeared in the *Boston Globe* of 10/5/94. It provides irrefutable proof of the damage being caused by the currently used whole-language curriculum in the schools of Boston:

Test scores for Boston public school students

showed no broad change last year, but there was a dramatic decline in scores at many of what are perceived to be the city's best schools. And, for the first time in recent years, the district's elementary schools, long held to be the stars of the system, reported substantial drops in student performance.

"When you have schools where you can walk in classrooms and see quality instruction going on and where there is high parental involvement, normally that translates into improved school performance," Superintendent of Schools Lois Harrison-Jones said. "We can't explain what happened in these schools. It is something we will be taking a look at."

The district's third annual Systemwide Report on Performance and Accomplishments measures the district's performance on a variety of indicators. Academically, 55 percent of Boston students scored at or above the national average in math. In reading, only four grades—1, 2, 4 and 9—were at or above the national average.

Many of the city's most popular and highly thought of schools showed drastic drops in some grades. First-graders at the Tobin Elementary School, for example, scored in the 30th percentile in reading last year compared to scoring in the 80th percentile the previous year. At the Trotter, reading scores dropped in all grades. The high schools continue to do poorly scoring below the national average in both reading and math. School Committee Chairman Felix Arroyo said he was dismayed by the results.

"I'm disappointed we did not improve in a significant way," Arroyo said. "I believe we have a school system where we have the teachers and administrators who should be able to teach things in a way students can learn, yet our students don't seem to do better. I can't explain why."

Comment:

Obviously, the introduction of whole language was responsible for the decline in reading scores. This occurs wherever whole language is introduced. Neither the Superintendent of Schools nor the School Committee Chairman had the slightest clue why the children were doing so badly. They must have assumed that whole language, invented spelling, the new new math and other progressive innovations were Quality Instruction par excellence. That was a year ago. Yet, Martha Gillis, senior program director of reading and language arts in the Boston system stays on while Lois Harrison-Jones was fired and replaced by Thomas Payzant.

As long as Martha Gillis and whole language command reading instruction in Boston schools the children will suffer.

Boston Mayor Launches Child Literacy Campaign

Mayor Menino—with the support of the School Department, universities, business leaders and community groups—announced on Oct. 17, 1995, a 10-year campaign to get all Boston children reading at grade level by the time they finish third grade. Half of all Boston public school third graders read below grade level, according to May 1995 test scores, a failing that educators and economists say dooms too many of these children to grim futures.

The campaign called Read Boston plans to bring together libraries, health centers, monitoring and volunteer groups, universities, corporations and parents to support early childhood programs and elementary schools.

Organizers say many of their efforts will be directed at preschool children. They hope to reach parents through doctors, health centers, day care workers and housing projects, to emphasize that talking and reading to children as young as 6 months old is crucial to building language skills and their reading ability later.

"The ability to read happens over time. But a community mobilization around reading starts at birth," said Neil Sullivan, executive director of the Boston Private Industry Council, which is coordinating Read Boston. "The key years for reading happen before a child is ready to read. Two-year-olds can learn how a book works, how pages turn, how a story evolves. They can learn this at day care or at home."

Read Boston will receive \$150,000 in seed money from Manulife Financial, a Canada-based insurance company that is

making Boston its national sales and marketing center. School officials emphasized many existing programs already have excellent track records for improving reading, but need money to reach all the children who need them. Among the programs they hope will be expanded are the Reading Recovery tutoring program; computer assisted reading labs; and Reading is Fundamental, a program that gives youngsters books to keep.

Martha Gillis, reading coordinator of the Boston Public Schools, said ideas she is discussing with the committee include a plan to give out workbooks kindergartners can use with their parents; a program to give pupils in higher-level kindergarten or K2, 20 books of their own to take home, and a video showing children how to use the library.

Menino has set a deadline of Feb. 15 for the committee to develop a detailed plan to accomplish its reading goal by the year 2005. (*Boston Globe*, 10/17/95)

Comment:

Note that there was no mention of replacing whole language with intensive phonics. If they did that, it would not take ten years to improve the children's reading skills. Also note that Martha Gillis, a whole-language advocate, is in charge of the program. No doubt she's read the letter from the 40 linguists and is not impressed. We shall keep our readers informed of the volatile situation in Boston

BEL Goes World Wide Web

We are pleased to announce that the *Blumenfeld Education Letter* now has a site on the World Wide Web in cyberspace. You can get information about BEL, our books and other materials and can make contact with other home schoolers by simply typing in our WWW address, which is:

<http://www.cyberhighway.net/~phil/blumenfd.html>

Happy web surfing!