

The Contributions of Arthur I. Gates¹

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Arthur Gates has always been for me the epitome of a scholar and a gentleman. "A scholar and a gentleman": That phrase is a bit old-fashioned now. We can tolerate scholars, though we may think them quaint, but we are downright suspicious of gentlemen. We are likely to regard them as prissy or insincere, or sexist. Psychologically, they put us in a bad light, and we resent them, for it is hard to admire both ourselves and someone who exposes the hypocrisy of our rationalizations. At any rate, Arthur Gates was a scholar; the record on that score cannot be refuted. But, if you don't mind, he was also a gentleman. By that I mean that he was concerned about others and not afraid to show it; he knew his own capabilities and was not embarrassed by them; and he had a gracious way of expressing both his concern and his capabilities that made others feel good about themselves.

As a preliminary, I should tell you just a bit of my own association with Arthur Gates. I surely do not want to clutter a presentation on the

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contributions of Arthur Gates with information about me, but I am very frequently asked what my association with him was, and it may be helpful in evaluating what I will tell you if you have a basic understanding of our relationship. I came to Teachers College in 1956 after a couple of years as a sixth-grade teacher in California. Like many teachers, after a bit of practical work with children, I was hungry to know more about the reading process and the way language functions in relation to learning, and I determined to return to school for doctoral study. It was Dr. Gates who brought me to Teachers College with the offer of a generous fellowship.

When I arrived at Teachers College, I was disappointed to learn that Dr. Gates had recently retired and that, although he was still active at the College as the supervisor of the Institute of Language Arts, he had no intention of continuing work with doctoral students. It was his opinion that retired professors should not meddle in the affairs of the institution, and, since he believed that was a good rule for others, he insisted on applying it to himself. He was generous in his time and in his advice on personal matters and career directions, but when it came to my doctoral work, he simply assured me that I was in good hands. Toward the end of my studies, I did do some work in the Institute of Language Arts under his supervision, though the work was unrelated to my dissertation.

When I completed my doctoral work at Teachers College, I was invited to stay on and join the faculty. In those early years as an assistant

professor, I was very busy with my teaching, but I did stop by for discussions with Dr. Gates from time to time. One of the things we talked about was my work at the Lexington School for the Deaf, where I had begun some research on language processes in deaf children. To my surprise, I discovered that Dr. Gates had himself worked at the Lexington School for the Deaf thirty years before. He, too, had been attracted to the possibilities of research in language and reading with a group of children for whom the contribution of auditory input was minimal. Once he became involved with the deaf children, he became concerned with their handicap and produced a set of programmed materials for teaching reading and spelling to deaf children. The materials for teaching beginning reading consisted of over twelve hundred pages. Here are the first two examples, then, of Arthur Gates being far ahead of the field. There he was, all those decades ago, studying deaf children for clues to the contribution of auditory factors in reading and producing carefully sequenced and programmed materials in an effort to help the children learn in a cumulative way, avoiding errors, ensuring that they always had the prerequisite background knowledge.

On one of my visits with Dr. Gates, he proposed to me that I collaborate with him in a complete revision of his reading test program. I was delighted, and for the next four years spent a good deal of time working on that project. The remarkable thing about the collaboration was that it was like working with someone my own age. When you work with someone, you

get to know them well, and it was in this situation that I fully came to appreciate the openness and intelligence of Arthur Gates. Of course, he knew a great deal more than I did, and I learned an enormous amount from him. But he also knew that I had just gone through an intensive period of training and learning, and *he* was eager to learn from *me*. That he thought he could was startling and flattering to me. Although I took on a major responsibility for the work, he also assumed a significant portion and worked on it with incredible energy. Although he was in his seventies, he took work home and worked late into the night on it on many occasions.

In describing my own relationship with Arthur Gates, I have tried to introduce you to his remarkable personality. I turn, now, to a description of his career, his accomplishments, and his contributions. The outlines of Arthur Gates's life and work are available to us in his beautifully written autobiography (1971) in the Seventieth Yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education, a yearbook entitled *Leaders in American Education*.

Arthur Gates grew up in a small lumbering town in Northern California. While in high school he worked after school in the general store and wrote news and features for the newspaper. He was the county debating champion and good enough at baseball that he was almost lost to the world of science and education; when he graduated from high school he received a very tempting salary offer to play professional ball. Arthur Gates's account of his own youth is filled with the warmth of appreciation for the employers,

teachers, principals, and others who took an interest in him and guided his development.

Arthur Gates did his undergraduate work at the University of California, Berkeley, where he majored in experimental psychology. He had a small scholarship but largely supported himself by freelance writing, working as an assistant in the psychology department, and taking a year off to work. The experimental psychologist, Warner Brown, apparently took an interest in the young Gates and gave him a good deal of individual instruction in experimental psychology. By the time Arthur Gates had completed his undergraduate degree, he had already published three studies. He continued at California for two years of graduate study, during which time he was more and more attracted to the work of Cattell, Woodworth, and Thorndike at Columbia. When the opportunity for a teaching assistantship at Columbia was offered, Arthur Gates accepted and moved to Columbia, where, all in the course of single year, he completed his dissertation, served as an assistant to James McKeen Cattell, and taught the graduate course in experimental psychology. Lest you think that a dissertation done in so brief a time must be a shoddy job, I will note that his dissertation committee consisted of James McKeen Cattell, Robert S. Woodworth, Edward L. Thorndike, and A.T. Poffenberger. If you know any of the history of psychology, you will know that having a dissertation approved

by that committee would be a bit like having a musical composition approved by Handel, Haydn, Mozart, and Gluck.

During this year at Columbia, Arthur Gates took a course with Thorndike at Teachers College. Gates was intrigued. He writes that "It was new, ingenious, exceedingly interesting, and often puzzling to me. I remember that when he began to talk about teaching reading, he mentioned the term 'phonics,' which I didn't understand. There are many persons who, years later, have insisted that this is still the case" (1971, p. 196). At the end of the year, Thorndike offered Gates a place on the staff at Teachers College. Gates accepted and remained at Teachers College for the rest of his career.

You can imagine the situation of Arthur Gates as a young professor at Teachers College. He had been rigorously trained in experimental psychology, he was concerned for people in general, and he was intrigued by the importance and the difficulty of understanding learning in the case of school subjects. His autobiography contains several interesting passages in which he describes his effort to understand the relation of the techniques of experimental psychology to the problems of education and the role of theory in guiding both experimentation and education. He concludes that description by saying,

I gradually reached the conviction that I could do more for education by applying my kit of scientific

concepts and techniques to some of the multitude of complex and puzzling problems one must face in the daily tasks of teaching than to confine them to work in the typically narrow and artificial... laboratory tasks I had been trained to do...

I decided, however, to divide my time for a few years between work on general or theoretical psychological issues and the practical problems of education. Thorndike approved heartily and said, to my surprise, that I would find the latter more difficult... (1971, p. 203)

Arthur Gates never regarded himself as a specialist in the field of reading. His conceptions of his own professional specialty did change, however. When he began work at Teachers College, he was an experimental psychologist. As you can see from the quotation above, he soon began to think of himself as an experimental psychologist who was applying his techniques and training to the study of educational problems. Later, he regarded himself as an educational psychologist, and, eventually, he was willing to admit that he was an educational psychologist who had done a good deal of work in the field of reading. One of the remarkable things about Arthur Gates's contributions to reading, however, is that he did indeed do so

much more. During his early years at Teachers College, he maintained a full program at the college and wrote two texts in general psychology, one primarily for students of education and the other for students in all fields. He also continued his work in the psychological laboratory, where he studied the relation of pleasant and unpleasant emotions and of states of relaxation and fatigue to blood-sugar levels and stomach muscle contraction. His *Psychology for Students of Education* (1923/1930) was published in 1923 and his *Elementary Psychology* (1925/1926) in 1925. Of his educational psychology book Gates writes,

I think [it] was the first text to include a full treatment of 'mental adjustment.' It introduced some Freudian and other psychoanalytic ideas. Although these were reformulated into psychological mechanisms and given such innocuous names as 'sour grapes mechanism,' 'substitute activities,' 'compensation adjustment,' etc... [I] received many indignant protests of this and certain other novel sections of the book which later became the most popular ones... (1971, p. 204)

Gates never became a theorist. Early at Teachers College he read a great deal of psychological and educational theory and set out to contribute to the field, but he never found, or was able to develop, any grand theory

that satisfied him. I suspect that he was strongly influenced in this by his mentor at Columbia, James McKeen Cattell, whom he greatly admired. Of Cattell, Gates writes

He was somewhat skeptical of the value of most [theoretical] systems and never developed one... [though] he greatly admired top notch philosophers, especially the converted psychologists [William] James and [John] Dewey. I think he regarded Thorndike as I did—as the most inventive and versatile psychologist of his generation. He was a very strict perfectionist possessed of a piercing, caustic wit which made life miserable for many, notably President Nicholas Murray Butler, whom he regarded as a bit pompous. I thought of Cattell as a very loving father, but a quite naughty child. I developed a great affection for him. (1971, p. 198)

Strong, global theories were just too doctrinaire for Arthur Gates. This is not to say that Arthur Gates did not have strong opinions. But they were opinions that rejected extremes and panaceas.

Arthur Gates's opinions were based on an enormous amount of experimental work and practical experience. During the period from 1920 to 1935, Gates was deeply involved in experimental work, clinical analysis, and

diagnostic and prescriptive teaching in various schools, clinics, and hospitals. He was assisted by a remarkable group of students and collaborators. Among the early students were Ruth Strang, Margaret Mead, and Dorothy Van Alstyne. Later students included Guy L. Bond and David H. Russell. It is my guess that Arthur Gates felt a particular pride in, and affection for, his student David Russell. He saw his own style of careful research, brilliant analysis, helpful guidance to teachers, and complete honesty being carried on in Russell's work. He was deeply saddened by Russell's early death.

It is hard to grasp the enormous accomplishments of Arthur Gates during this prolific period of experimentation in schools. Some scattered sentences from his autobiography can at least give the flavor of this period.

[At the Horace Mann Elementary School] I undertook to subject some broad educational patterns to reliable tests....I also conducted or supervised studies of the initial stages of learning such skills as reading and handwriting and I made a kind of laboratory-test, clinical analysis of disabilities and difficulties in the school subjects. These lines of attack were shortly expanded and extended for use with other classes in the public schools,...in institutions such as the Lexington School for the Deaf, and community clinics and hospitals....I became convinced that the

most crucial and revealing way to test an educational material or method was to try it out on children who had an extreme aptitude or limitation or disability for a particular type of learning....Coming to grips with individual abilities and limitations was obviously important for wholly practical, as well as theoretical, values. Accordingly, I sought methods of diagnosing and prescribing for individual cases in the hopes that sooner or later schools would provide teachers and specialists who could rival in their field the expertness of a well-trained physician.... (1971, p. 206)

In 1927, Arthur Gates published "a program of diagnostic and remedial study of difficulties in reading, spelling, and a battery of tests and diagnostic materials" (Gates, 1971, pp. 206-207). This was the first edition of his famous book *The Improvement of Reading* (1927/1947). He had already published, in 1926, *The Gates Primary Reading Tests* (1926/1958) and *The Gates Silent Reading Tests* (1926/1935). While The Great Depression was a time of great hardship for many people, teachers, writers, artists, and other professionals were sometimes especially hard hit. Gates's response was typically energetic and resourceful.

Soon after 1930, unemployment among New York City teachers, especially of the younger ones, reached alarming proportions. In 1933 George Chatfield, then Assistant Superintendent of Schools, and I drew up plans for a citywide remedial project, a plan to deal individually or in small groups with the worst cases of reading difficulty to be found in the city's elementary schools. When the Federal Civil Works Administration support was provided, I selected twenty-three supervisors, mainly from students I had trained in diagnostic and remedial work, to join me in giving two weeks of intensive training to about two hundred previously unemployed teachers, and then sent them out to tackle the city's toughest education problems. Their phenomenal achievements during the following four months provided me with one of the most thrilling experiences of my professional life....A second enterprise, called "The 'Writers' Project," I sketched out with Mr. Chatfield, who succeeded in getting federal funds to support it. For the sizable group of "writers," mainly unemployed feature writers for

many kinds of publications, but including also teachers who wished to try their hand, and several previously successful authors of children's literature, I sketched a plan of developing small books of relatively easy reading material but of more advanced interest levels. Once the project was well underway, it was supervised by one or more city school officials. Unemployed artists were added. I now have in my files over three hundred published small books...of fully illustrated materials of all sorts, prose and poetry, adventurous, humorous, fanciful, historical, factual. The New York City school children loved them. (1971, pp. 208-209)

A third WPA project was carried out in collaboration with other Teachers College colleagues and with the administration of the city schools. This was a large scale curriculum project known as the Speyer School Experiment.

These responses to the needs of the Great Depression are remarkable in several respects. They illustrate how, in everything he did, Arthur Gates was farsighted, developing ideas and establishing procedures that became the basis for many aspects of educational practice or that were rediscovered by more flamboyant individuals in later years. His intensive training of

teachers in diagnostic and remedial work, based on the concept of a well-trained professional, and his concept of small books of easy reading but advanced interest levels are typical examples.

Toward the end of this period, Arthur Gates published books and articles whose titles illustrate his remarkable prescience. They read as if they were published this year. Some examples are: *Reading for public school administrators* (1931), *The Acceptable Uses of Achievement Tests* (with Paul R. Mort) (Gates & Mort, 1932), *Generalization and Transfer in Spelling* (1935), and "Should Reading Be Taught to All High School Students?" (1938).

After 1933, Arthur Gates became increasingly occupied with administrative duties and with work in professional associations. In 1933 he became head of the Department of Psychology and Research Methods and in 1948 Director of the Division of Foundations of Education at Teachers College. In 1940 Arthur Gates became the chairman of the Education Section of the American Association for Applied Psychology, in 1942 he was the president of the American Educational Research Association, and in 1948-49 the president of the Division of Educational Psychology of the American Psychological Association. He was a member of the National Academy of Education. You can see that he was widely respected outside the field of reading. Arthur Gates was the second recipient of the International Reading

Association Citation of Merit (William S. Gray was the first) and the first recipient of the IRA International Citation of Merit.

Arthur Gates became increasingly disappointed that, during the last twenty years of his work at Teachers College, administrative duties made him less productive in research than he had been during his first twenty years. He does admit that during his last twenty years at Teachers College he "kept alive several of [his] major textbooks by a series of revisions...[including] *Psychology for Students of Education* [1923/1930], which was translated into several other languages,...and...*The Improvement of Reading* [1927/1947]," (1971, p. 207), and that he "wrote chapters or sections for many other books and yearbooks; and edited a few..." (1971 , p. 207) and that "a large array of books, workbooks, practice exercises, and other classroom materials, together with more than three thousand pages of teachers ' manuals, were brought out and revised from time to time" (1971, p. 208).

Nonetheless, his research work actually did decline, and he advised me strongly never to publish a basal reading series (he was not an absentee author) and never to become too involved in administration. In an address at the fiftieth anniversary of Lambda Chapter of Phi Delta Kappa in Berkeley, California, in 1963, Gates noted that

It was here at Berkeley that I developed a
compulsion to be a scientist, one of the relatively

new types, a psychologist. This came as a shock to my family and friends who expected me to go into law or medicine or at least something respectable. To choose to become a psychologist, who was then regarded by many as some kind of vagrant mind reader, was to them sheer insanity. (1964, p. 297)

I can give...young prospective scientists a bit of heartfelt advice based on my conviction that the biggest mistake of my career-as-scientist was succumbing to the pressure to do administrative work....If one has a clear leaning toward science, it is better by far for him to be an insane scientist than a sensible administrator. I advise the young person committed to science to learn how to appear to be, if not insane, at least so impractical as to be hastily passed by when the practical assignments are made. (1964, p. 300)

Why was Arthur Gates so convinced of the value of the scientific approach to education? An anecdote that he tells in the same address gives a clear indication.

A few years after moving east from California, my wife and I vacationed in New England, in a charming log cottage in a grove of pines, inhabited by friendly squirrels. While visiting a nearby country store, I remarked, "I know California squirrels, but I'm not familiar with this New England variety. Which do you think they would prefer, raw peanuts or roasted peanuts?" The storekeeper, winking at his cracker-barrel cronies, replied, "I don't know about them Californy squirrels, but our squirrels here don't generally roast their nuts!"

Of course, this New Englander's comment was such good common sense that my apparent lack of it was amusing. But here we find the difference between the good common Sense of a cracker-barrel thinker, for whom I have great affection and respect, and the insanity of a Thorndike. Thorndike was habitually skeptical of just such long-established products of experience and common sense. For example, he doubted that the mind can, like a muscle, be best improved by hard exercise; that sparing the rod

spoils the child; that old dogs cannot learn new tricks; that verbal mastery implies practical control, and so on and on...

Education is, far more than medicine and engineering, still enmeshed in the seine of sanity; it needs to be released by science. (1964, p. 299)

For all his respect for science, Arthur Gates did not expect a science of education to discover any immutable truths. He believed that both the findings of experiments and the methods and materials that would be most effective depended on the larger context of the time. In one of his last public statements, an invited address at the 1968 IRA Annual Convention, he said,

Experimental results obtained before 1930 are often very different from those secured today, and practical recommendations made then were, and should have been, different....Any study done in the past is meaningless when taken out of context—that is, when interpreted without taking fully into account the vital characteristics of the time. (1969, p. 14)

The values of most reading materials and methods depend more upon what children do at the time in

school and out, upon attitudes and abilities they possess, and upon the skills and habits of their teacher than upon any inherent, absolute virtue of the material or method itself. (1969, p. 14)

I am of two minds about those statements. I can grasp their wisdom. I can believe that they must be true. And yet when I read the conclusions that Arthur Gates reached twenty—or forty—years ago, I am astounded at how well they apply today. Consider some of the issues of our own times and what Arthur Gates had to say about them in his. Let's begin with reading readiness. When I wrote a critique of reading readiness research a few years ago (MacGinitie, 1969), I had to acknowledge at the beginning of my article that the main point that needed to be made had been discussed by Gates (1937) more than thirty years before. Before my article and since, a great deal of foolishness has been written about criteria for whether a child is ready to begin to learn to read. More than forty years ago Gates conducted a series of studies and came to this conclusion:

[The studies] indicate clearly that statements concerning the necessary mental age at which a pupil can be intrusted to learn to read are essentially meaningless. The age for learning to read under one program or with one method employed by one

teacher may be entirely different from that required under other circumstances. (1937, p. 506)

The preceding discussion...should not be considered as antagonistic to the plan of attempting to determine the...characteristics of the pupil needed for making a successful beginning in reading. The study reveals the necessity of determining these factors in relation to the particular program into which the pupils are to be introduced. The writer believes, in fact, that this consideration is not only an important but a necessary phase of normal instruction. That is to say, he believes that it is necessary for each teacher to understand the...qualifications required for the successful persuance of the program that he or she² will put into effect.

Finally, it should be made clear that the results presented in this report do not answer the question:

² I have changed pronouns throughout the quotations so that both sexes are represented. Gates wrote at a time when this issue was not generally considered. Had he been writing now, I believe he would have wanted to make these changes.

At what age is it best to introduce reading...?

Although the data seem to indicate that it is possible to organize materials and methods to teach children to learn to read at a mental age of five..., they do not, in any way, imply that it is desirable to do so. Decision on the optimum time of introducing reading to pupils must be based upon investigation of the...general educational, personal, and social effects of introducing reading at different stages....(1937, pp. 507-508)

In relation to reading readiness there is a good deal of interest today in the question of a child's ability to hear the component sounds in words. On this timely topic, too, Gates was before his time.

Children tend to hear words as total sound units. They may not think of the separate sounds in the words. They may not realize that many sounds occur in many different words, indeed that all words are made up of various combinations of a limited number of distinctive unitary sounds....It is very desirable to help the pupil become reasonably efficient in identifying word sounds....With a foundation of such

skills, phonetic training offered later in the reading program will be much more fruitful. (1947, p. 165)

Does that statement sound to you, by the way, like the statement of a person who does not believe in teaching phonics or decoding? In his day, Arthur Gates was a principal target of yesterday's "phonics first" fringe. He was also criticized by some very influential colleagues who believed he did not give enough emphasis to phonics and by others because he did not come out strongly against phonics.

Gates stated his balanced position clearly and early on. In a retrospective discussion of this divisive topic, Gates (1969) cites his reaction to the anti-phonics tone of the Twentieth and Twenty-fourth Yearbooks of the National Society for the Study of Education:

The yearbooks presented the views of the leading scholars of the day, Ernest Horn, William S. Gray, G.M. Whipple, G.A. Yoakam, Stuart Courtis, E.L. Thorndike, and others. The following is quoted from... the Twenty-Fourth Yearbook.

Recommendation 2. No separate work in phonics should be done until the child has established the habit of thought getting, has a reasonable stock of sight words, and has

begun to note freely gross similarities and differences in words. ("Report of the National Committee", 1925, p. 90)

This was the official launching of this still widely used method. Let us call it the Twenty-fourth Yearbook method.

I was not a member of either of these yearbook committees. I was, however, asked to review the Twenty-fourth Yearbook at the annual presentation meeting. I was critical of delaying teaching the letters and all visual and auditory insights until *after* a batch of sight words had been introduced. I said I thought it would be better if they were introduced simultaneously and evolved together. (1969, p. 13)

Arthur Gates was not against phonics; he was simply against stultifying phonics—against substituting phonics training for reading. He cites (1961, March) with approval George Spache's (1961) criticism of some phonics programs as providing "page after page of isolated words and letters which we are to drill, vertically, horizontally, and diagonally until they are

fixed in our pupils' brains. In fact, we are forbidden to introduce the child to anything resembling reading for at least several months...." (p. 106).

After considering the great differences among the systems advocated by various proponents of phonics, Gates (1961, March) concluded, "there is little agreement among these people except that most of them want to teach mainly by memorization and isolated drill a very complicated and difficult phonics system and the manipulation of a large number of phonetic details" (p. 9).

"Of course," Gates concludes, "it would be ridiculous to suggest that...children should be handicapped by depriving them of the assistance which ability to utilize word sound clues, along with others, provides."

The best teaching consists in providing shrewd guidance of the child in...trying to improve his technique [for] working out the recognition, pronunciation, and meaning of words in genuine, normal reading situations rather than in drill on lists of isolated word elements and the principles embodied in some elaborate phonetic system. (1961, March, p. 10)

A much more conspicuous and important need [than improving phonics instruction], in my opinion, is to

develop comprehension programs for teaching the wide variety of skills needed at higher levels—the abilities required to deal with all the complexities and subtleties encountered in the whole range of materials, from light fiction to heavy technical texts. It is here that current programs are most conspicuously inadequate and incomplete. (1962, p. 552)

Indeed, Arthur Gates was long ago concerned with that problem that has attracted so much recent attention—the problem of the transition from reading in the primary grades to the study type of reading required in the intermediate grades. In 1947 Arthur Gates was writing about this problem and citing a 1933 doctoral dissertation by Doris Lee that showed that in typical large American schools the demands upon reading ability in the fourth, fifth, and sixth grades are well beyond those which can be realized on the basis of primary reading skills (1927/1947, p. 53).

The sheer amount of material to be read requires considerable speed. The large vocabulary and formidable organization of typical materials in the social studies, sciences and elsewhere require advanced techniques of working out the recognition of unfamiliar words....The pupil must be able not only

to read rapidly but to read in different ways and to select out and evaluate materials for various purposes. Dr. Lee found that children who have not equaled the level of reading ability represented by a reading grade score of 4.0 on typical standardized reading tests will be handicapped in school work in the fourth and later grades. She referred to this as the "fourth-grade hurdle."....There is evidence from various sources that children often need some help in breaking away from the primary reading habits to advance to the higher...level. (1927/1947, p. 35)

[The child must] advance beyond the stage of word-by-word reading to reading by thought units. [The child must] advance, as one child expressed it, from the stage of "reading by talking" to the stage of "reading by thinking." (1927/1947, p. 34)

Is there any topic that Arthur Gates's far-seeing mind did not think through ahead of us? How about life skills education and functional literacy? Hear this plea back in 1962:

The reading materials with which most persons are confronted today are far from literary classics. The

five-year-old child at home, the twelve-year-old in school, and the adult in [the] business office are faced most of the time with ordinary workaday stuff. The printed materials encountered...in store windows and street advertisements, in correspondence, and in the flood of circulars, advertisements, periodicals, business letters, trade journals, automobile license applications, and directions for operating numberless gadgets are a far cry from the classics....The teaching of reading should be critically reviewed to determine whether it is properly meeting the practical as well as the cultural demands of everyday life today.

(1962, November, pp. 2-3)

A look at Arthur Gates's philosophy of reading and education would not be complete without examining his attitudes toward basal readers. Arthur Gates was among the first to prepare a series of basal readers. He revised them and improved them over the years and was often identified as part of the "basal reader establishment." No, he wasn't Dick and Jane, but he was Ted and Sally. What did he think he had accomplished by producing a set of basal readers? Here is his advice to the American Association of School Administrators.

It is important [to]...realize what the carefully prepared basal program is designed to do, and what it cannot accomplish. The basal program with its accompanying array of diagnostic and practice materials...should be thought of as providing for teaching activities something like the lesson given by the golf teacher or the bridge or dancing teacher. Here...an expert sizes up the learner's abilities, spots [the] mistakes, and figures out appropriate remedial or practice procedures. No golf or bridge or dancing teacher would assume that a person would become expert by confining his or her activities to such a series of short lessons. One learns to dance...or play bridge only by extensive practice....The basal program in reading should represent only a fraction of the total reading experience. The basal materials in theory should save the teacher time and help him or her to come to an understanding of [the] youngsters, and to provide some degree of practice in securing improvement along definite lines, but...the teacher [must] understand that individuals are different and that he or she must also advise,

direct, and guide them individually. I believe that the main deficiency in teaching reading at the present time is that too many teachers depend too much upon the basal reading program to do the work.

(1961, March)

Arthur Gates had great admiration and respect for colleagues like Leland Jacobs who enriched children's lives by helping them experience the joy and excitement of reading good literature.

Arthur Gates's reputation in the field of reading was perhaps most strongly based on his work on evaluation and remediation. I wish to conclude, therefore, by presenting some of the guidelines he advocated for the diagnosis and remediation of reading problems. The material I cite will come from the 1947 edition of his book *The Improvement of Reading* (1927/1947). You will notice that his program was based on common sense and good judgment. He absolutely rejected the ploy of gaining status through using arcane terminology or playacting at science. His concern was for children and teachers, not for his own prestige. He uses a revealing anecdote in his talk to the Berkeley Chapter of Phi Delta Kappa.

Many years ago I suffered a temporary injury to my back. One day I walked out gingerly to inspect some work a couple of men were engaged in at my summer place. In response to their friendly inquiry, I

remarked, "Well, the doctor said it's the sacroiliac."
As I was walking away, I heard the older man, who because of partial deafness talked much louder than he realized, say, "When you and me gits it, it's just a crick in the back, but when one of them high-toned perfessers gits it, it's a sacred ickity-yakl "

One of the afflictions to which professional persons in education are very susceptible is a form of professional jargon—a disease of the verbal mechanism, very infectious and likely to become chronic.

My impression is that during the second quarter-century of my professional life professors of education have been getting increasingly badly infected with this dread malady, verbalism. Ideas are often lost in clouds of verbal pomposity. It is of course well known that cumbersome expressions, loaded with professional clichés and technicalities, are often the retreat of a person whose ideas are neither very clear nor very original. I am more

concerned about the opposite relation of cause and effect—the cases in which the resort to verbalism, especially to glib use of professional jargon, tends to produce cloudy thinking. (1964, p. 299)

Observe how clear and helpful his own thinking was in this description of a good remedial program. It would be an excellent remedial program today that was guided by these principles set forth decades ago.

Most [reading] difficulties, ranging from the least to the most serious, are believed by the writer to be due primarily to failures of the pupil to acquire techniques that might have been acquired had the right guidance and instruction been given at the right time. The author recognizes, however, that many different factors may serve as a handicap to the child in learning to read. Failure to learn to read in these cases is the result of failure to recognize the handicap and to provide instructional methods and materials which will enable the pupil to circumvent or surmount them. (1927/1947, p. 14)

He then lists a large number of possible conditions that one must consider in evaluating the sources of a child's reading difficulty. Among these conditions are those that we would class as physical or neurological, as

psychological, and as social. Except for extreme or unusual cases, however, his approach to remedial instruction was very down-to-earth.

Some persons are inclined to think of remedial instruction as individual work in which the teacher and one pupil work face to face. In such a situation very searching diagnosis of the individual's strengths and weaknesses and very precise teaching to adjust to [the pupil's] special needs are, of course, possible. However, the classroom teacher is urged to employ methods... to enable him or her to do some individual intensive work with one pupil at a time as part of the daily program....[The] distinction between remedial instruction and first-rate classroom teaching is not a distinction of kind: it is one of degree....(1927/1947, pp. 121-122)

Arthur Gates always recognized that there were exceptions to every rule and that the principle of individual differences meant that some individual students required very special programs. Indeed, his book contains a separate chapter on "Instruction for the Extreme Disabilities...." For the general guidance of a remedial program, however, it would be hard to do better than to follow the sixteen guiding principles that he sets forth:

1. *Remedial instruction should not be substituted for enjoyable activities....*
2. *Remedial instruction should be managed so as not to classify the pupil in an embarrassing way....*
3. *The time allowance for remedial work should be generous....*Indeed, the best remedial work provides not only the definite instructional periods, but a whole program including activities in other subjects worked out around reading as a center.
4. *The teacher should have sufficient time to arrange and supervise the remedial work....*
5. *Remedial work may be either individual or cooperative....*Indeed there are certain advantages in having several pupils work together at a time....
6. *Remedial work should be begun at a favorable time...*The first meetings for individual remedial instruction are very important ones....

7. *Successes should be emphasized in remedial work...* [the] art of the strategy of remedial work is to shift the emphasis from failure to success....

8. *Improvement should be measured and the record shown....*[The learner] needs both the teacher's assurance that he or she is getting on and objective evidence of improvement....

9. *The pupil's particular errors and successes should be detected....*Children who have had trouble in reading have sometimes overheard discouraging, if not terrifying, explanations or terms—have caught such expressions as "word-blindness," "moron," "laziness, " "brain injury,"...and so on. [Of course, today, one could replace some of these terms with "learning disabled."] As a result, a pupil may harbor insidious impressions of which [the] teacher is unaware....Most of the tricks of the business of reading can be explained to the normal child to his or her advantage....

10. *The teacher's attitude should be optimistic and encouraging....*Children of the type most likely to be in need of remedial treatment are notably susceptible to "off days" and to periods of apparent or real stagnation in interest....

11. *The teacher should help the pupil avoid overanxiety and unduly extreme effort.* A common mistake in dealing with pupils who have had great difficulty in reading, especially the reading failure, is to assume that they have failed because they have not tried hard enough....[The teacher] must avoid giving the appearance of checking up on the pupil too rigorously....Even adults can be disturbed when others follow their every move in adding up a bridge score or in reading a bit of verse....

12. *Practice should be so distributed as to avoid fatigue and boredom....*Several short periods of lively work are superior to an equal total time devoted to continuous study....

13. *A variety of exercises and activities should be provided....*

14. *A plan should be dropped when it fails to produce results after a fair trial....*

15. *Individual supervision should be continued until the pupil has his improved techniques well habituated.*

16. *The pupil must be induced to read widely in order to insure further growth in reading.* A mistake sometimes made is to assume that reading ability is a kind of special technique which once built up in intensive remedial work will take care of itself in all future reading situations....Skill in reading is like skill in singing, playing the piano, painting pictures, and doing other subtle artistic acts. To achieve high levels requires continuously spending much time in the activity....No child is likely to continue to grow in reading ability or to maintain a high level of proficiency if his or her reading is confined to the

necessary assignments in school. (1927/1947, pp. 129-138)

You can see in those principles of remedial teaching a sensitive and humane mind. Arthur Gates was a person so understanding of the needs and the future of education that he even has some words to guide us through this very occasion on which we are honoring the educational leaders of yesterday. Typically, he tells us that we, too, should look ahead and get on with our work.

I can imagine nothing in education more utterly discouraging and ominous than a period during which no one is to find any serious fault or conceive of any considerable improvement on the ideas of yesterday. The lively criticisms of...today should be regarded not with dismay but with jubilation. They reflect a lively interest, an eagerness for change, for improvement. The thing to fear in education is not criticism but complacency. If education had nothing better to do than to polish up...the ideas of the leaders of half a century ago, I should advise you...to quit it and go fishing. But thanks to the recent appearance of many new forces, including lively criticism, I can conscientiously advise you to equip

yourself with the proper tools...and go forth on what promises to be a most exciting adventure, not to defend a safe and solid status quo, but to explore those unknown and astounding regions beyond our present educational horizons. (1964, p. 302)

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