

The vita for this member of the Reading Hall of Fame, who is now deceased, was submitted to the then office of the Reading Hall of Fame housed in the headquarters of the International Reading Association while this individual was still active in our profession. Hence, the vita may not include a complete delineation of the individual's professional contributions across a lifespan. The vita is simply what was available for uploading as of the summer of 2018. Still, it provides current and future scholars with a valuable primary source on the professional endeavors undertaken by this respective member of the Reading Hall of Fame.

WILLIAM K. DURR  
College of Education  
Michigan State University  
East Lansing, Michigan 48824

RANK: Professor of Education

DEGREES: Ed.D., University of Illinois  
M.S., Butler University, 1951  
B.S., Butler University, 1949

#### I. BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Dr. Durr was born in Independence, Kentucky on February 5, 1924. He attended elementary schools in Independence and Covington, Kentucky and graduated from Holmes High School in Covington in 1942. He attended the University of Cincinnati prior to enlisting in the United States Army Air Force in February, 1943.

During World War II he served as a fighter pilot in the Pacific Theatre, flying P51's in sorties from Iwo Jima to the mainland of Japan. Prior to discharge from the Air Force he served as Information-Education Officer for the Seventh Fighter Command on Saipan and Guam.

He then attended the University of Kentucky and Butler University. After receiving a B.S. Degree from Butler in 1949 he taught third grade in Indianapolis, Indiana for two years.

In 1951 he received the Master of Science Degree from Butler and became an Elementary Superintendent of Schools in St. Joseph, Illinois.

In 1953 he became an Assistant Instructor at the University of Illinois where he supervised student teachers and taught undergraduate courses in elementary curriculum while pursuing advanced graduate work. He received the Doctor of Education Degree from the University of Illinois in 1955 and became a member of the faculty at Michigan State University the same year. He retired as a Professor of Education from Michigan State University in 1981.

## II. RESEARCH PROJECTS

Among others, Dr. Durr conducted the following research projects:

A computer study of high-frequency words in popular trade juveniles.

A study of the value of arithmetic workbooks in relation to mental abilities and selected achievement levels for elementary school pupils.

A study of the value of a developmental reading program in high school English classes.

A comparison of the personality traits of high-achieving and low-achieving gifted students.

A survey of educational programs for gifted children in Michigan.

A study of the teacher characteristics associated with high-achieving and low-achieving gifted students.

## III. ON CAMPUS ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES AND COMMITTEE WORK

Dr. Durr served on and chaired a number of committees in the Department of Elementary and Special Education including being the first Chair of the Departmental Faculty Advisory Committee and being Faculty Advisor for the Elementary Education Club.

At the College level he was chairman of the Honors in Education Program. He also served on a number of committees at this level including the Faculty Advisory Committee, the Curriculum Committee, the Educational Scholarship Selection Committee, and advisory Committees to the Office of Research and Publications, the Office of Curriculum and Program Development, and the Mott Institute for Community Improvement.

At the university level he served on the University Learning Resources Conference Committee and the University Tenure Committee

## IV. PROFESSIONAL OFFICES AND HONORS

Dr. Durr was one of the organizers of the Michigan Reading Association. He was Chair of the Membership

Committee and the Publications Committee of the M.R.A. from 1959 to 1961. He was Treasurer of the organization from 1961 to 1964 and President from 1964 to 1965.

He served with the Michigan Congress of Parents and Teachers as Chair of the Problems Clinic from 1961 to 1964 and as a member of the State Board of Directors for that same period.

He was a member of the Board of Directors and Michigan representative for the National Association for Gifted Children from 1961 to 1964.

He served the Michigan Department of Public Instruction as a member of the School Holding Power Committee, the Michigan Language Arts Committee, the Michigan Advisory Council to Right to Read, and as a member of the task force which wrote the rules and guidelines for allocating state reading funds. In addition, he was a continuing member of the Michigan Right to Read Advisory Council.

In 1968 he was elected for a three year term to the nine member Board of Directors of the International Reading Association. He had previously served this organization as Chair of the Committee on Parents and Reading and as a member of both the Regional Conference Planning Committee and the Placement Services Committee.

In 1971 he became President-elect of the International Reading Association and served as President for the 1972-73 year. This position entailed, among other things, presiding at the Fourth World Congress on Reading in Buenos Aires, organizing and presiding at an annual convention attended by some ten thousand people, organizing and directing the work of forty IRA committees, serving general supervisory functions over the work of the association and representing the association at an international meeting of the World Congress of the Teaching Professions in Nairobi, Kenya.

As a result of his contributions in reading, Dr. Durr received a "Resolution of Tribute" from the Michigan Senate in 1973. This resolution states, in part, "That by these present a grateful State accords a tribute to Dr. William Kirtley Durr for his immense contributions to the children of the world in basal reading skill."

In 1982, Dr. Durr received the Citation of Merit Award from the International Reading Association for outstanding contributions to the field of reading instruction.

He was one of four educators elected to the Reading Hall of Fame in 1985 and he served as President of that group in 1986-87.

His biographical listings include:

Community Leaders and Noteworthy Americans

The Compendium: Persons of Eminence in the Field of Exceptional Children

Contemporary Authors

Contemporary Notables

Dictionary of International Biography

The International Authors and Writers Who's Who Leaders in Education

Men of Achievement

Who's Who in Education

Who's Who in the Midwest

The World Who's Who of Authors

The Writers Directory

#### V. OTHER PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES

Dr. Durr has consulted or made professional presentations to local, state, national, or international groups in fifty states and on five continents. These include speeches at annual meetings of the International Reading Association as well as speeches at biannual World Congresses on Reading in Buenos Aires, Vienna, and Singapore. He has taught, consulted, or given speeches at Ball State University, Eastern Illinois University, Indiana University, Marquette University, Montana State University, Northeast Louisiana State University, Ohio State University, Syracuse University, the University of Maine, the University of Omaha, and Wisconsin State University at Oshkosh. He gave telelectures or made radio or television presentations in ten states.

He was called upon to evaluate instructional programs in reading in Illinois, Michigan, New York, Ohio, and the

Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. This included serving with a small team of reading experts from throughout the United States who evaluated an experimental reading program being used with forty thousand children in the inner-city schools of New York City. It also included an intensive study of reading methods in the Soviet Union with a small group of reading experts headed by the United States Commissioner of Education.

Dr. Durr served as an evaluator for a variety of institute proposals as well as other proposed contracts with the United States Office of Education and he served as an Editor-at-Large for Reading Horizons, a quarterly journal devoted to the improvement of reading instruction.

He served as a member of The American Heritage Dictionary Usage Panel. This panel, chaired by Edwin Newman, is made-up of authors, editors, speakers, and educators who are recognized for their abilities to use our language effectively. The panel provides guidance in current and controversial English usage.

## VI. PUBLICATIONS

### A. Articles

"Building Initial Critical Reading Abilities," Vistas in Reading, J. Allen Figurel (ed.), Newark, DE: International Reading Association, 1967.

"Characteristics of Gifted Children: Ten Years of Research," The Gifted Child Quarterly, 6 (Winter, 1961), 75-79. Reprinted as "Who Are the Gifted Children?" Child and Family, 1 (January, 1962), 37-45.

"Comprehension Abilities: Some Ways to Improve Them," Houghton Mifflin Magazine, 1 (1978), 8-9, 21.

"Computer Study of High Frequency Words in Popular Trade Juveniles," The Reading Teacher, 27 (October, 1973), 37-42.

"Developing Reading Independence in the Primary Grades," Today's Challenges in the Teaching of Reading, Beverly Hills, California: Southern California Intermediate Reading Council, 1965.

"Developing the Habit of Reading Success," Expanding Reading Interest, Response, Achievement, (Richard C. Culyer, ed.) Proceedings of the Seventh Annual Conference of the North Carolina IRA Council, Greensboro, NC: Deal Printing Co., 1976.

"Developmental Reading in High School English Classes," Journal of Developmental Reading, 2 (Winter, 1959), 57-60.

"Dilemmas and Disagreements in Reading," Michigan Reading Association Journal, 3(Spring, 1969), 52-57.

"Dimensions of Enrichment," Exceptional Children, 26(December, 1959). 202-206. Reprinted in Readings in the Language Arts by Anderson and others, New York: Macmillan, 1964.

"The Disadvantages of Individualized Reading," Current Issues in Reading, Nila B. Smith (ed.) Newark, DE: International Reading Association, 1969.

"Editorial" Michigan Reading Association Journal, 8(Fall, 1973), 4-8.

"Forward," The Politics of Reading, Sister Rosemary Winkeljohn (ed.), Urbana, Illinois: International Reading Association and ERIC/RCS, 1973, vii-viii.

"Initial Steps in Developing Independent Readers," The Oklahoma Reader 1(September, 1966), 2-5.

"Johnny Can Read," Reading: A Focus on Leaders, 1(April, 1970) 1,7.

"Let's Not Neglect the Gifted," Instructor, 79 April, 1970), 58.

"Personality Differences Between High Achieving and Low Achieving Gifted Children," The Reading Teacher, 7(January, 1964), 251-254.

"Provisions for the Gifted in Relation to School Size and System Size at the Elementary Level," Journal of Educational Research, 25(December-January, 1962), 149-158. Reprinted in A Guide to Educational Research, by David R. Cook, Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1965.

"Reading and the Gifted Student," Ohio Reading Teacher, 12(July, 1978), 28-32.

"Reading Instruction in Soviet Schools: Methods and Materials," The Reading Teacher, 28(November, 1974), 134-140.

"Teaching Reading: Implications from Recent Research," Wisconsin State Reading Association Journal, 21(January, 1977), 5-33.

"Teaching Strategies for Developing Comprehension Abilities," Baylor Educator, 3(Spring, 1978), 22-32.

"Through the Book by December 15," Instructor, 84(May/June, 1975), 82-84.

"Types of Activities in a Well Balanced Reading Program," Reading and Inquiry, J. Allen Figurel ed.), Newark, DE: International Reading Association, 1965.

"The Use of Arithmetic Workbooks in Relation to Mental Abilities and Selected Achievement Levels," Journal of Educational Research, 51(April, 1958), 561-572.

B. Tests

Diagnostic Reading Test for Overcoming Meaning Difficulties, Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1968, 8 pp.

Diagnostic Reading Test for Reading for Different Purposes, Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co. 1968. 8pp.

Diagnostic Reading Test for Unlocking Strange Words, Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1968, 8pp.

C. Booklets

Arithmetic Aids for All the Grades, Champaign, IL: Garrard Press, 1958. Book One, 35 pp. Book Two, 37 pp. Book Three, 42pp. Book Four, 45 pp.

The First Day of School, East Lansing: MI: Bureau of Educational Research, College of Education, Michigan State University, 1957, reprinted, 1965, 16 pp.

Helping Youa Child Grow in Reading, Newark, DE: International Reading Association, 1968, 22 pp.

Individualized Reading Skills Program, (senior author), Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1976.

Overcoming Meaning Difficulties, Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1968, 96 pp.

Reading for Different Purposes, Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1968, 96pp.

Target Series: Interpretive Studies in Reading: Books One, Two, Three, and Four, (Member of Project Advisory Committee), Newark, DE: International Reading Association, 1969.

Unlocking Strange Words, Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1968, 96 pp.

#### D. Books

The Gifted Student, New York: Oxford University Press, 1964, 300 pp.

Houghton Mifflin Reading Program (senior author) Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1971 and 1974.  
(Complete developmental reading program for grades K-8, including fifteen pupils' books plus practice books and teachers' guides.)

Houghton Mifflin Reading Series (senior author), Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1976, 1979.

Houghton Mifflin Reading Program (senior author), Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1981, 1983, 1986.

Houghton Mifflin Literary Readers (senior author), Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1989.

Introducing English, (ed.) Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1965, 312 pp.

Reading Difficulties: Diagnosis, Correction, and Remediation, (ed.), Newark, DE: International Reading Association, 1970, 276 pp.

Reading Instruction: Dimension and Issues, (ed.), Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1967, 359 pp.

Reading: A Program of Instruction for the Elementary School (co-author), Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1966, 498 pp.

Reading for Meaning, Fourth Edition, (co-author) Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1966. (A complete developmental reading program for grades K-6).

"Teaching Reading in the Elementary School," chapter in The Elementary School: Principles and Problems, Joe L. Frost and G. Thomas Cowland (eds.), Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1969, pp. 363-402