

Early literacy program proves to be successful

By **MAGGIE PETRUSHEVSKY**
The New Tanner

While Halton's Early Literacy program is only one reason Halton pupils did so well on last year's provincial tests, the new program is an important one.

Allison Mitchell, board contact with the Ministry of Education's Evaluation, Education Quality and Ac-

countability office, says Halton implemented a new Halton-created literacy program in 1996.

Halton did a reading and writing test several years ago and saw a need for change in those results, Mitchell says. Then, with the clear motivation of helping pupils to learn better in the classroom, a committee began researching ways to achieve that goal.

The resulting plan,

known as the Early Literacy program, was created and turned into a full curriculum for Halton schools. Teachers began using it in the classroom in experimental portions before the full program was completed, testing methods, refining strategies and generally working out ways to make their ideas work.

Despite provincial test results in which Halton lead

the province, seeming to indicate the value of the program, Mitchell says it is still too new to receive all the credit.

"Teachers have been doing good things all along," she says. "This just solidifies the ideas into a system for everyone. But not everyone has received training in all the parts yet. We started out offering in-service workshops for people's individual areas of interest. Now we are trying to fill the gaps so that everyone will eventually get training in all the components."

Those components consist of 12 segments says McKenzie-Smith Bennett vice-principal Brian Speed.

Language development follows very sequential steps and placing students on that path allows teachers to help them sort out problems and progress. The stages are known as emergent, early and fluent.

"Each stage has clear definition so teachers know where students are at and what strategies to show

them," he says.

It also helps teachers program for pupils at differing levels in the same classroom. While the spread may only be a couple of grades in the early years, by the time pupils hit the senior grades their reading abilities can range from Grade 1 to high school levels.

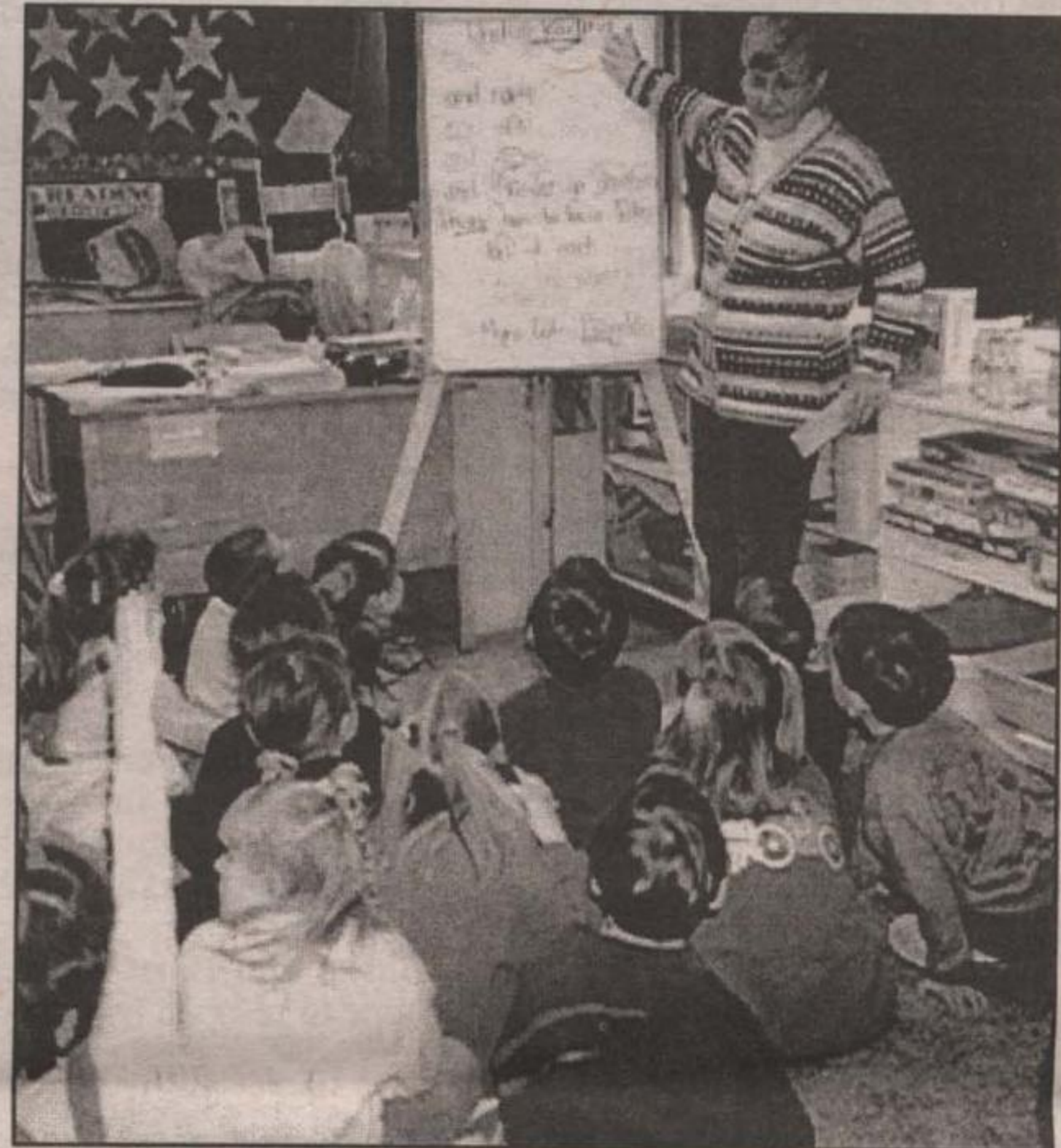
The Literacy Workshop Model used in the primary grades includes 12 components. These are Read Aloud, Write Aloud, Shared Writing, Guided Writing, Independent Writing, Authoring Cycle, Home Connections, Responding, Conversation, Independent Reading,

Guided Reading and Shared Reading.

Finding a way to get those older pupils who have difficulty involved with less challenging material without embarrassing them is one of the big challenges in those senior grades, Speed says.

Propaganda to the contrary, phonics is, and always has been, a major part of teaching youngsters to read, says Marie Wiens, Gr. 1 teacher at McKenzie-Smith Bennett.

"You just use it in different ways. Instead of the old specific lesson on a sound you work it into all sorts of lessons. That's all this new program is, full of phonics."



Marie Wiens, of McKenzie-Smith Bennett, takes her Gr. 1 class through a session of Chime-Ins. Pupils work out the words in the poem, then read it aloud together. - Maggie Petrushevsky photo



Beautiful cat needs a home

To the Editor:

I am writing this letter to your paper in hopes that you may be able to help us.

On Friday, March 13, 1998, we took possession of our house in Acton. Friday evening, a cat appeared at our back door. I took for granted that it was a neighbour's cat snooping around, and never gave it a second thought. However, on Saturday the cat was still there, meowing and refusing to leave. Sunday morning, a neighbour across the street informed me that it was the previous owners' cat, and they had abandoned it over a week ago.

When I heard this, immediately I let the cat in the house. We have three cats already, but they were staying at my parents' house while we moved. Unfortunately, I only had some bologna to offer her, which she took gladly. I have never seen a cat drink so much water and eat so fast in such a short period of time. These people had literally left this cat for dead!

She appears to be a Persian/tabby mix with a domestic cat's facial features, and

may I add. A VERY BIG cat - just gorgeous!

I have contacted the area Humane Society and they have been great, however, the best they could do is give her a cage where she might end up staying for months, till they find her a home. They have been able to get an Animal Clinic that will gladly give her all of her shots at no cost.

Could you please print this letter in your paper with our hopes that someone will adopt our new friend, and give her the loving home that she truly deserves.

Barb Burrows-Morrison
Arthur Street

Clarification

The Tanner story on the Achilles Mazda anniversary mistakenly said Les Pelitis was mayor of his hometown in Greece. We should have said he was a councillor and stood in for the mayor in his absence. We also incorrectly identified Les Politis' home town. He lived in Langada, a suburb of Thessalonki.

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Streetproof your kids

I have had a lot of requests to provide information to parents regarding streetproofing of children. The following is a checklist of responsibilities of parents.

1. Explain to your child that a stranger is anyone he does not know, even if the stranger seems to know him.
2. Parents should know the areas that their children play.
3. Make sure that your child knows his home area; point out landmarks to him.
4. Teach your child his phone number and his address.
5. Parents - do not let your child wear clothing with his name printed on the outside where strangers can readily identify him by name.
6. Instruct your child that if someone is bothering him to yell "You are not my daddy," or "my mommy", etc. Tell them to run if they can.

Don'ts for children

1. Don't hitch hike.
2. Don't tell anyone on the phone that you are home alone.
3. Always know how to contact your parents.
4. Tell your parents where you are going and when you will be back.
5. Don't let strangers into your house
6. Never accept a ride in a vehicle from a stranger.

Remember: Don't be a victim!

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