

Purpose

The *Book of IFs – Two Teachers’ Stories* and *The Curriculum Book – Ending Illiteracy in America* were written with two different yet parallel purposes in mind. This parallel nature is reflected in the fact that the first chapter of this book is Chapter 10, not Chapter 1.

The purpose of the *Book of IFs* is tell the stories of the IFs in two people’s lives that marked their paths in life. The IFs in both Mary’s and Bob’s lives were responsible for bringing this unlikely pair together and causing the two to end up creating truly innovative mathematics and reading curriculum that neither one could have or would have done without the other.

Bob’s main interest was becoming an age-group swimming coach. His negative view of teachers was formed early on by his parents who’s view of teachers was expressed most often as “Those who can, do. Those who can’t, teach.” Bob’s reason for becoming an elementary school teacher was because it was the job most suited for earning him a living while his age-group swimmers were similarly occupied. Bob had been a good student in school. He had no complaints at all about the curriculum that was used to teach him. Having anything to do with changing how children might be taught was the farthest thing from his mind.

Mary’s interest was in becoming a librarian. She thought of becoming a teacher only when she learned that the University of California had a teacher-training program that paid its enrollee a full teacher’s salary for the year that the training was taking place. When the program rejected her, she continued her preparation for becoming a librarian. Teacher or librarian, either way, what she felt her future life had in store for her was being the stay-at-home wife of her future doctor husband.

The IFs in their lives were the cause of their unlikely pairing. This pairing matched Bob’s knowledge with Mary’s creativity and Bob’s self-assurance with Mary’s relatability. Mary’s relatability as contrasted with Bob’s self-assurance was often expressed by Center instructors as, “If Bob can do it, that means Bob can do it” versus “If Mary can do it, that means I can do it, too.” Bob was the why person and Mary was the how person. Apart from Mary’s first book *Workjobs*, all of their books were written jointly because each needed the other’s input.

Whatever Bob was doing with his intermediate students, Mary found a way to do it with her primary students, as well. Chapter titles for Mary’s book *Mathematics Their Way: Free Exploration, Patterns, Sorting and Classifying, Counting, Comparing, Numbers at the Concept, Connecting*

and Symbolic Levels, Place Value, Pattern Book Experiments. Each chapter is a reflection of Bob's why and Mary's how.

Mary taught Bob as much as Bob taught Mary. As one of many examples, Bob first used his Dienes Multi-Base Blocks to teach his sixth-grade students arithmetic concepts using different bases. Mary substituted beans and cups for the blocks to teach different bases to her first-grade children. Bob then abandoned the Blocks and adopted Mary's beans and cups model for his students.

Bob's reason for teaching different bases was to allow the same lesson to be taught over and over again without making the repetition obvious, allowing the children who understood more quickly to help those who needed more time. Mary used this same lessons to be taught over and over again strategy to create the Reading Program's learning stations. Children moved through a series of different activities that were, in essence, the same lesson being repeated, allowing the children who got it to work alongside the children who needed more time.

The purpose of the *Book of IFs* is to tell the many IF stories of how Bob and Mary became who they were. The purpose of *The Curriculum Book – Ending Illiteracy in America* is twofold. First, to show the thinking involved in why Bob and Mary ended up creating the curriculum that they did. Bob and Mary's math books were written as curriculum guides for teachers wishing to implement Bob and Mary's curriculum in their classrooms. The *Reading Program Teacher's Manual* is the curriculum guide for implementing the Reading Program in teacher's classrooms. Chapters 10 through 13 are not meant to be curriculum guides. The curriculum guides have already been written. Chapters 10 through 13 describe the thinking behind the mathematics and reading curricula.

The second purpose of *The Curriculum Book – Ending Illiteracy in America* is contained in the second half of the book's title – ending illiteracy in America. The program that has the capability of ending illiteracy was first put in use on a wide scale in 1984. Ending illiteracy everywhere in America has been possible ever since that time. So, why hasn't illiteracy ended yet? And is it still possible to end it now? Chapter 14 of this book answers both questions.

A hint at the answer to the second question: Is it possible to end illiteracy in America? That will be up to this book's readers to decide.