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Perceptive Reading Instruction.

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The goals and content of a practicum course in reading instruction are discussed. The opportunity to tutor a slightly disabled reader twice a week is provided. Subsequent class sessions are spent on the problems arising from the semiweekly tutoring sessions. Consultations with supervisors occur each day. Perceptive teaching, which leads the tutors to analyze their own behavior and feelings as they work with their students, is emphasized. Special attention is given to the meaning of the child's mistakes. Students' nonverbal behavior is carefully looked at, and common signs of tension and common avoidance techniques are noted and examined for underlying causes. Tutors vary their techniques according to their purposes and to the needs of the child. Questioning techniques requiring higher level thinking are learned and practiced. At least one tutoring session is recorded on video tape for self-analysis. Program evaluation revealed that teaching phonics to children was a specific problem area and that experience in such a practicum course facilitated perceptive teaching. (RT)

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Perceptive Reading Instruction

Involvement in teacher education demands continual seeking and probing for teaching strategies which hold promise of developing the potential of each fledgling teacher and of choosing guiding principles which are basic to the teaching-learning situation. Assisting undergraduates to become more perceptive regarding the affective aspects of learning as they master the subject-matter of the teaching of reading places special requirements on the teacher-education institution. The writer is fortunate to be one of those teaching a course which fosters self-direction, encourages freedom to explore and requires learning by doing. A majority of first year teachers continue year after year to choose it as the most valuable course in the professional sequence.

There are a number of specific assumptions about the teaching-learning situation underlying this course which will clarify the goals:

1. Learning is exhilerating to the young child. Learning should and can continue to be exhilerating as long as a person lives.
2. The student has to be involved in the decision making process to learn with verve.
3. Cognitive and affective learning are, in the main, inseparable. We learn as much with our viscera as we do with our heads! Learning for some of us may well be visceral first and intellectual second.
4. People learn more from their peers than they do from instructors.

5. Children remember ideas best when framed in their own words rather than in the teacher's terminology.
6. Teaching is the facilitating of another's search for adequacy as he interacts with the environment.
7. There is so much to learn, that no time should be wasted teaching anything which is already known. Therefore, a test-teach-test sequence of instruction seems to hold more promise than a teach, test and reteach formula - and makes individualization of instruction possible.
8. It is the instructor's responsibility to insure the relevance of the course content to the immediate lives of the students.
9. No one becomes a real human being in his own right or a responsible citizen without the experience of being trusted.
10. One of the best ways to learn anything is to teach it to someone else.
11. The student is more important than the course. Human beings everywhere are crying out to "matter" more than things and facts.

The University of Georgia requires two five-quarter-hour courses in the teaching of reading for its elementary majors. The first is intended to give the students a background in developmental reading and the second is the practicum which provides the opportunity to tutor a slightly disabled pupil twice a week with class sessions on alternate days. Although the title of the course implies remediation, the practicum is slanted toward extending understandings, gained in the

tutoring of one child, to the classroom. This same practicum is the vehicle for graduate students to try their wings supervising reading instruction. This means that the instructor is supervising both beginning reading supervisors and students taking their second course in the teaching of reading during each session of the practicum. The ratio of student to supervisor is in the neighborhood of eight-to-one with the overall class size limited to twenty-five. This second course is the subject of this paper.

Modus Operandi

The first class session is devoted to a pre-test and general explanation of modus operandi. The next five sessions are spent studying the accumulated information on the assigned child, looking over material and equipment, and teaching each other how to administer the audiometer and telebinocular, and most importantly, building background for those who show deficiences on the pre-tests. Those areas of understanding identified by the pre-test as of general concern are listed for special discussion. Two students are then assigned to one of these areas of concern together - one student serves as a supervisor of the preparation of the presentation, demonstration, or simulation and the other student teaches the topic as planned. Each student has the opportunity to serve in both roles.

Subsequent class sessions are spent on the problems arising from the twice-weekly tutoring sessions with the pupils. Much reassurance is needed as the students approach with deep concern this first test of their teaching ability.

Building Perception

The accent is on perceptive teaching and effort is made to lead students to analyze their own behavior and feelings as they are learning the meanings of the behaviors of their pupils. In order to understand a little better some of their own dynamics, these university students must be freed to make mistakes. They are encouraged to be honest and are assured that mistakes are "a sign something is happening."

The student who has known little tolerance himself finds it most difficult to accept the learning pace of his pupil and must be given as much supportive assistance as is possible in understanding his own impatience and intolerance. Great leaps forward are rarely taken but almost all students are able to accept the fact that the pupils having problems in learning to read are going to "know" some words under certain circumstances and not "know" them under others. Occasionally, a student cannot accept his pupil's learning pace and problems and is referred for counseling.

Many students have an adjustment to make in changing from the role of student to teacher in the practicum session. They find it difficult to accept an alert but passive role and to put the child in the active role. The picture they commonly have of the teaching situation is that of the teacher "teaching" something in the front of the room with the students sitting quietly in their seats. The concept of the teacher as facilitator rather than director may be established only after such reminders as:

"If one of you has to sit still, <u>you</u> be the one!"

"Let the child do the doing."

"Learn to listen actively."

"Accept the results of the child's work whenever possible without qualification."

"Accept a child's way of explaining an idea rather than always improving on the way he has explained it."

In an effort to educate the students to teach diagnostically, special attention is paid to the meaning of the mistakes of the child. The students are cautioned to ignore omissions and additions in oral reading, which do not change the meaning, but to pay close attention to substitutions. Each substitution is analyzed to yield a pattern of miscalls to aid in programing instruction. Comprehension errors are given particular attention and categorized for further direction.

Much attention is given the meaning of non-verbal behavior. Everyone involved is subject to analysis by everyone else. Your slouch on a particularly hard day is likely to be noted! Interpretation of postural signs, eye blink rate and facial expressions quickly become a part of the diagnostic tool kit. Common signs of tension are noted and examined for underlying possible causes. Common avoidance techniques of children are also explored to further understanding of the child under stress. Many students realize for the first time during this tutoring experience some of the meaning of non-verbal behavior. They become more willing to consider non-verbal clues along with what the child says as they evaluate performance. They aren't as easily fooled by the child who says he doesn't care!

Two behavioral manifestations of difficulty peculiar to the reading act which cause new students concern are finger-pointing and vocalizing. With every class these behaviors have been a valuable learning for the students. They are told that these behaviors are crutches and that the children will stop using them when they don't need them. They appear to accept this interpretation intellectually. However, many students are soon faced with the actuality of a child who points. They often have to struggle to treat the behavior as normal and acceptable for these children.

Students are urged to examine the techniques they use in teaching. How do they vary their plans when their puppose is to establish needs, introduce a new concept, reinforce or review concepts previously taught, give a "mastery"check, or use an alternative technique to re-teach? Learning to vary the technique in accordance with their own purposes and the needs of the child requires building an understanding of the alternativesand usually takes the entire quarter.

Students are assisted in learning to ask questions requiring a higher level of thinking from their students. At first, many of their questions require only a "Yes" or "No" answer but very soon they are able to pose an occasional inferential question to the delight of everyone involved. A number of students are unable to use an inductive method and must learn to set up the situation for the children to find the generalization. The temptation to answer their own questions instead of waiting for the child's response is a tendency which occasionally poses a problem.

Each student records at least one session for self-analysis. The video-tape equipment is becoming more accessible and is proving to be a powerful tool in the improvement of teaching. At the completion of each of the sixteen sessions the student is required to analyze the session from the child's point of view as well as his own. This procedure provides another avenue through which both the supervisor and the instructor can interpret the interaction in the teaching-learning sessions.

Consultations with both the supervisor and the instructor occur every day and are usually instigated by the student. These informal consultations are supplemented by formal conferences at two check points during the quarter. Seminar sessions are held weekly for supervisors of all sections of the practicum to build awareness of aspects of human interaction which enhance and those which inhibit learning.

Problems

The process of the teaching of phonics has produced special problems. Students are able to answer questions about the teaching of phonics in a variety of examinations forms. However, Dr. Bob Jerrolds, of our staff, found they were unable to perform the same task we were asking the children to perform. When given a series of words like "prize" they were unable to formulate two generalizations as they would word them for children. Although a minimum knowledge of phonic generalizations is expected, many students have had to build understandings from the beginning using all the devices and equipment they were to use later with children.

During the tutoring, one of the tasks the students identify first is knowing when to "tell" a child an unknown word and when to let him try his developing skills. They find they do not automatically know when a word is phonically "regular" enough for phonics analysis to be useful.

A surprising problem is that of penmanship. Many students do not know how to print or write correctly. One of the first checks made is that of handwriting proficiency. It takes a few weeks for miswritten words like "cricKet" and "2arge" to disappear.

Summary

Perceptive teaching becomes more possible when experience in a practicum of limited enrollment is provided. The children blossom with the attention and enjoy realizing that they are helping while receiving help. One third-term, ten-year-old boy when asked if he enjoyed the term, replied, "Yes, she didn't start out so good but she turned into a pretty good teacher." Improvement when working with undergraduates in reading skills undoubtedly takes longer as a whole than when working with graduates but some apprentice teaching is of the highest caliber. There is, of course, about the same range of sensitivity among the students at the conclusion of the course but the lower end of the continuum is not nearly as low. Students leave feeling much more confident that they will become good teachers. They have been trusted with a real, live human being! One wonders why, when there is so muhh evidence of the effectiveness of early contact with children, we wait until so late in the professional sequence to provide this contact.