ED331827 1991-06-00 Locating Practice-Oriented Materials in ERIC. ERIC Digest.

ERIC Development Team

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Table of Contents

If you're viewing this document online, you can click any of the topics below to link directly to that section.

ERIC Digests

Locating Practice-Oriented Materials in ERIC.

ERIC Digest.

THIS DIGEST WAS CREATED BY ERIC, THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES
INFORMATION CENTER. FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT ERIC, CONTACT
ACCESS ERIC 1-800-LET-ERIC
The Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) is a national information network
designed to provide users with ready access to education literature. ERIC is the largest
education database in the world, containing over 725,000 bibliographic records
(resumes). These records represent documents such as conference proceedings and
presentations, research reports, literature reviews, public policy papers and curriculum
guides; and articles from nearly 800 education-related journals.

Most teachers and teacher educators have become familiar with the ERIC database
and its reference tools through their research for theses or conference papers.
However, many may not be aware of the large amount of material in the database that
could be used in day-to-day work. In recent years, an increasing amount of material of
direct practical use to teachers, administrators, and other school personnel has been
acquired by ERIC, and system innovations are making this material more accessible.

Many libraries and curriculum resource centers have acquired ERIC on compact disc
(CD-ROM versions) in addition to or in lieu of online access, which they make available
to patrons. CD-ROM versions of ERIC are menu-driven, making it easy for novice
searchers to locate information. It is useful, therefore, for teachers to know what kinds of
practice-oriented materials are in the database and how to work out search strategies
that will locate them.

WHAT TYPES OF PRACTICE-ORIENTED MATERIALS ARE IN ERIC?

Both ERIC monthly abstract journals, Resources in Education (RIE) and Current Index
to Journals in Education (CIJE), contain numerous bibliographic records of actual class
activities, unit plans, ideas for innovative instruction, curriculum guides, descriptions of
promising practices, and other such materials of practical interest and use to teachers.
RIE and CIJE also contain abstracts of articles or papers that are not intended for
immediate classroom use but provide information on the research behind the actual
practices.

HOW DOES ONE FIND SUCH MATERIALS?

A computer-assisted search is the most efficient way. Computer searches are available
online through the ERIC Clearinghouses and other ERIC service providers (see
References). Searches can also be done directly by the teacher or other practitioner
using CD-ROM, which is also available at many libraries and curriculum centers. To

facilitate the search process, the user should consult the reference manuals accompanying the CD-ROM; these explain how to use the equipment and read the onscreen menu or directions. NOTE: three vendors, DIALOG, Silver Platter, and OCLC, provide versions of ERIC on CD-ROM, and search commands differ from one to the other. Therefore, in executing the search, one must follow the directions for the version being used. The searches in the following examples use "DIALOG Command Search" commands and field names.

HOW DOES ONE SET UP A SEARCH STRATEGY?

It is relatively easy to find materials using a CD-ROM: (a) note exactly the kinds of materials, subject matter, and grade level of interest; (b) consult the Thesaurus of ERIC Descriptors to identify keywords that most closely match the topic, (e.g., Class Activities, Social Studies, Primary Education); and (c) use the Bolean Logic operators (AND, OR, NOT) to link the descriptors.
In the development and execution of a search, the teacher will probably be most concerned with the following fields: Publication Date (PY), Target Audience (TA), Document Type (DT), Descriptor (DE), and Identifier (ID). (These fields, as well as the others in the resume, are explained in the introductory pages of RIE and CIJE.) The examples in the section, "How does a searcher use the TA field to find materials?", are illustrated by specific search strategies; these examples should further clarify the search process.

After the user executes the search by following the onscreen menu instructions, the CD-ROM system will display the number of document resumes containing the terms specified and allow the searcher to read the document resumes on screen. The searcher can then print the most useful resumes and, if desired, order the paper copy of the entire document from ERIC Document Reproduction Services (EDRS), read it on microfiche, or, in the case of a journal article, locate the journal. Availability information is always provided in the document resume.

It is also possible to talk to the information specialist, the reference librarian, or the user services coordinator at an ERIC Clearinghouse about the kinds of materials one is looking for and, together with the specialist, work out the search strategy.

WHAT DOES TARGET AUDIENCE INDICATE IN AN ERIC RESUME?

One of the newer fields in the document resume is the Target Audience (TA), introduced in 1984. When a document or a journal article is addressed specifically to practitioners (policymakers, teachers, administrators, media staff, students), an entry specifying the audience is made in the TA field. Documents in RIE have been reviewed and identified with the practitioner label in the TA field starting with 1975 documents; journal articles in CIJE have been identified since 1984. Since 1975, 64,335 entries in

RIE and CIJE have been identified with the term "Practitioners"; since 1980, 10,796 entries have been identified with the term "Teachers."

HOW DOES A SEARCHER USE THE TA FIELD TO FIND MATERIALS?

Because there are so many documents bearing the practitioner or teacher label, one would have to combine the TA field with appropriate keywords or descriptors. A useful strategy is to pair TA, the education level, the subject area, and the type of material desired, (e.g., TA=Teachers AND Elementary Education AND Reading Instruction AND Class Activities). If the results are too numerous, one might specify particular instructional approaches (e.g., Whole Language Approach), and/or limit the search to publication year or years.
The following are some examples of typical cases, search strategies, and initial results. In each case, the searcher would look at the resumes and decide which documents would be most appropriate for the purpose intended.

* A primary level teacher is looking for ideas for her math classes. If she uses the strategy: TA=Teachers AND Primary Education AND (Mathematics Instruction OR Elementary School Mathematics OR Mathematics Materials), she will find 112 citations. Of these, 84 are marked with a major descriptor, i.e., one or more of the keywords just mentioned is the main focus of the resource.

* A student teacher in the intermediate grades needs guidance on teaching language arts in elementary school. The strategy, TA=Teachers AND Language Arts AND (Grade 4 OR Grade 5 OR Grade 6 OR Intermediate Grades), yields 71 citations. In a second step, the searcher could specify a particular teaching method or approach such as, Computer Assisted Instruction or Whole Language Approach.

* A cooperating teacher is looking for promising practices or innovative techniques for teaching science in the middle and upper elementary grades--a different strategy would be useful. In the ERIC resume, the Document Type (DT) code 051 refers to materials for learners, and the Document Type code 052 refers to materials for teachers, such as teaching guides. The specification "maj" after a descriptor indicates that the searcher wants citations in which that term is a major descriptor. The strategy used in this case was Science Activities/Maj AND (DT=051 OR 052) AND (Elementary Education OR Intermediate Grades) and yielded 80 citations. One could combine these results with TA=Teachers to see how many documents have that entry in the TA field.

ARE THERE PRACTICE-ORIENTED MATERIALS NOT IDENTIFIED WITH

PRACTITIONER LABELS IN THE TARGET AUDIENCE FIELD?Yes. Unless the

audience is stated or clearly implied in the document, there will be no entry in the TA field. So, if a search pairing TA=Practitioners AND other practice-oriented terms does not yield all that the searcher might hope for, one could use a different search strategy and come up with many useful citations. For example, one could search the Document Type (DT) field for teaching guides (code 052) in combination with the grade level, subject area, and possibly a particular teaching method.

REFERENCES

References identified with an EJ or ED number have been abstracted and are in the ERIC database. Journal articles (EJ) should be available at most research libraries; documents (ED) are available in ERIC microfiche collections at more than 700 locations. Documents can also be ordered through the ERIC Document Reproduction Service: (800) 443-3742. For more information contact the ERIC Clearinghouse on Teacher Education, One Dupont Circle, NW, Suite 610, Washington, DC 20036-2412, (202) 293-2450; or (800) USE-ERIC.

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[Return to ERIC Digest Search Page]