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ABSTRACT

A teacher who had directed a K-12 language arts program at the Alamo Navajo Reservation in Magdalena, New Mexico employed problem-solving skills that involved the affective domain as well as the sensory-motor areas important to education even in older children. This teacher's classrooms are heterogeneously grouped. A thematic approach is used across the curriculum to learn through language. Third- and sixth-grade students write across the curriculum: spelling, reading skills, math, and language arts texts are integrated to complement the social studies curriculum, for example. Reading, reflection, and revision play an important role in the writing process approach used in the classroom. Oral exercises include "raps" made with spelling words, and reading aloud utilizing "beat" techniques. Groups of students follow developmental progression, and an interactive, thematic approach to multicultural literature insures affective/cognitive development. Various research indicates that it is by hearing written language read aloud that the emergent reader-writer constructs surface structure. Group reading and writing projects should include creative parallel activities that involve motor skills. Working in small groups, students read and write with reflection, integrating concepts as they move towards a larger understanding. (Two samples of student writing are included; 25 references are attached.) (RS)

THE TEACHER AS "ENABLER": HETEROGENEOUS WHOLE LANGUAGE AND SELF-ESTEEM

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The Teacher as "Enabler":
Heterogeneous Whole Language and Self-Esteem

Writing, reading, creating, and critiquing are inseparable, and group writing provides an interactive process that invites evaluation and correction. I directed a K-12 Language Arts program at the Alamo Navajo Reservation in Magdalena, New Mexico, that employed all the problem-solving skills, involved the affective domain, and the sensori-motor areas, so important, even in older children. There was both oral and written work, poetry, art, math (mask-making), and organizational skills effort.

Thinking operations such as observing, hypothesizing, evaluating, synthesis, and extrapolation can be utilized in examining the causality of a simple narrative plot. Literature from multi-cultural sources demonstrates common motifs, with commonalties and differences. Reading and writing can promote creative, inferential, and critical thought, and suggest values and perspectives. I use a thematic approach across the curriculum, as well as literature in the content field, to learn through language. There may be a developmental sequence in language acquisition, but in our heterogeneous classroom we think in terms of cognitive conflict and challenge, not cognitive restraint. Mixed grouping promotes interaction and learning.

In both my third and sixth-grade classes, we write "across the curriculum". Spelling, reading skills, math, and language arts texts are integrated to complement the social studies

curriculum, for example. Interdisciplinary efforts with social studies, reading, and writing have been particularly successful. The textual correlations are there for a whole language, thematic unit approach. The teacher needs only note and implement interdisciplinary work in such areas as outlining, chart-making, paragraph construction, pictographs, etc. Writing folders are kept "across the curriculum", and contain outlines, creative essays, technical social studies paragraphs, literary critiques, and all rough drafts and final edits.

Reading, reflection, and revision play an important role in the writing process approach, and as we read for many purposes, we also write for many. Writing is the communication of message - letter writing, note-taking, lab reports, list-making, scripts, narrative, and expository form. To learn <u>about</u> language structure (sentence building, expansion, combination, rearrangement) aids metacognition, and suggests that syntax is the relationships of the meanings of elemental concepts (semantics). Cloze technique and various forms of language play lead to concept formation. As Humpty said to Alice (who must have been experiencing staggering lexical expansion), "When I make a word do a lot of work like that, I always pay it extra."

Using small-group peer editing, my sixth-grade class has been creating book critiques, concentrating on genre, characterization, style, structure, and literary devices. We have also used reference materials to construct charts, tables, and outlines. Our "piece de resistance" is a research paper, complete with bibliography. We quote extensively from our

sources, in the literary critiques, as well as in the research papers.

Oral exercises include "raps" made with spelling words, and reading aloud utilizing "beat" techniques described herein in detail. Based upon comprehension and storage of "chunks" of meaning in long-term memory, students read ahead silently, in proscribed length beats. Breathing and rhythm are set at these intervals. "Saccades" and miscues are minimized, and even difficult poetic passages are understood contextually. This method has met with success in dealing with poor readers, and the hearing impaired, and for Navajo children for whom English was a second language.

Piaget demonstrated the integral relationship of peer interaction and a child's developmental level. (Hiebert 1980, 878) Peer writing will challenge the child, and it is through cognitive conflict that we promote learning in a psycho-social environment. As the child enters the formal stage, decentering occurs, and the writing process is most effective as a series of conferences, revisions, and draft-making, that provokes reflection. Writing, reading, creating, and critiquing are recursive, and necessarily require each other in a self-correcting, evaluative process.

Visualization and the imaging of schemata occur spontaneously during narrative listening activities, and the thinking skills implicit in the storytelling experience, for instance, can be transferred to parallel activities in reading and writing. Remember - Process Writing means nothing to a

child if there is no affective involvement:

1. Writing vocabulary and rap (performances of poetry complete with boom box).

2. Alphabeteasers (constructing run-on sentences with a wealth of adverbs and adjectives).

3. Writing and art (free-form fantasy creatures that inspire poems and masks).

4. Student-designed, environmental coloring book with a statement dealing with the history of waterways, transportation, and pollution.

5. Symmetrical, formal-sonnet style valentines.

Following are two examples of sixth-grade work. The latter represents the efforts of a lower-level reader, who rose a level at the year's conclusion (with a significant rise in self esteem), at the recommendation of her Special Reading teacher. The success of these students affirms John Hopkins Researcher Robert Savin's positive findings on heterogeneous groupings. (qtd. in Rachlin 1989, 51)

Anteater

A four-legged vacuum cleaner with a big nose
that's used to suck up ants like a hose.
How crunchy and yummy those little ants taste.
Oh! There's another one we must not waste!
by a sixth-grader who suffers from Tourrettes Syndrome

Secret of the Andes

The title of this book is the Secret of the Andes.

The author is Ann Clark. The genre is adventure. The two main characters are Chuto and Cusi. They go searching for the Secret of the Andes.

They live in Hidden Valley "high up on the rock slope of a mountain peak, among mountain peak sher and hard and glistening in frozen mountains of ice and snow." Chuto and Cusi live by themselves (except for Misti the Llama) and haven't seen people in about eight years. The place they live in is so beautiful. It has pretty yeho grass and every morning the clouds "soften the tips of the mountain peaks."

One day a wandering ministrel came close to where Cusi lived and asked "Where is he? Will he say his poems? Will he sing his songs? Will he play his music on the pipes of pans?" Cusi is the one who goes searching for the secret of the Andes. But he also ends up finding some other things that he never really thought about. That one thing was his golden earplug meant that his real family was royalty and so is he. Cusi also found the secret is a gigantic rock-kewn which is piled up to the floor to the roof with powered gold.

Chuto is Cusi's gardien. Chuto is more like a father though. By reading the book I think that he is very serious man. I also think that he always comes right out with whatever he is trying to say. When Chuto talks he talks very straight and stern. Chuto also says things that you really have to think about to understand. One example

is "A man learns but I think:" The End

Groups follow developmental progression (Schmuck 1975, 98) and an interactive, thematic approach to multi-cultural literature insures affective/cognitive involvement. (e.g., Scott Odell's works, various folktales, etc.) Figurative language, poetry and imaging encourage inferential thinking. Activities could include original poetry-writing, art work, and creative dramatics as a group effort. The influential thought process, indeed the higher thinking operations of Bloom's taxonomy, are embraced by Halliday's and Smith's functions of language. There are multi-cultural commonalties and differences in simple tales and the instructor can pose indirect, open questions to encourage evaluation. Perspective, cultural bias, and values can be presented in such works.

Various research indicates that it is by hearing written language read aloud that the emergent reader-writer constructs surface structure. (Smith 1977, 393) This structure is not always accurate, but nothing essential to meaning is omitted. (Cohn 1981, 551) If meaning can be taken as a schemata of Vygotsian symbols, then we may assert, with Halliday, that the "construction of this system is a cognitive process that necessarily takes place in the context of social interaction." (qtd. in Bartolucci 1985, 334) We know early readers have been read aloud to and this supports Bloom's constructivist view that participants "construct the meaning the text will have, construct ways to think about the text, and construct social interaction wherein the process of reading is learned." (Thomas

1985, 474)

Group reading and writing projects should include creative parallel activities that involve motor skills. It is interesting that the linguistic stages of development coincide with a child's motor development. (Smith 1971, 51) Baby holds up its head and creates all the sounds it will ever produce. It stands and pronounces syllables. Linguistic development is also correlated to social interaction and previous exposure to literature. (Huck 1977, 366) Yet, the language arts are often taught merely as a cognitive process, largely ignoring the affective, sensorimotor domains.

Effective metacognition of language structure can be enhanced by sentence composition work and word play. The younger child struggles with overgeneralization and gross approximation of rules. As Hamlet replied to Polonious who asked, "What do you read, my lord?", "Words, words, words." (II.ii) Affective word-play erects constructs that house generalizations and exceptions in comprehensive concepts. According to Downing, children learn to discriminate sounds (phonemes) earlier than words. So quotes Victoria Chou Hare. (1984, 362) However, Downing more specifically states, "...the beginner's perception of speech segments does not coincide with either word or phoneme." (Downing n.d., 331) I think again of the run-on sentence of early childhood, of the syllabic scribble and its spoken referent. This certainly suggests that precise meaning is extracted from the whole, with elemental, rhythmic division into parts or "chunks". Abstract representation (the mechanics of writing) follows later.

Breathing patterns, saccade patterns (eye fixation), and

their constituent phrases are equivocal to short-term memory capacity (7±2). The reader/writer decodes/encodes most effectively for meaning in "chunks" of this length (e.g., phone numbers, nursery rhymes, iambic pentameter). We must digress (and fluent readers do as often as poor readers) within certain phrases to discover meaning from the phrase: They were playing cards. (semantic variable) It is rhythm and intonation that suggest meaning here. For what's in a word? . . . "A rose by any other name would smell as sweet" . . . This from the master of creative thought and figurative speech - Shakspere (Romeo and Juliet II.ii) - and there were scounds of ways to spell Shakespeare, but that was before the dawn of verbal incontinence.

Literature is such a wonderful springboard to a variety of listening, oral, reading, writing, and thematic experiences. The emergent literate may exhibit various skill levels simultaneously in writing. It seems that orthographic conventions might be learned primarily through reading. (Smith 1971, 72) The reader-writer-thinker attends to function rather than form in a comprehension centered program. Comprehension behavior is suggested by quality, not quantity of miscues, since we all miscue to integrate, for cohesion. The RMI may be unreliable since we read differently silently, as compared to orally, when we must read ahead. Regardless of the method of measurement we choose as an indicator, we do know that exposure to literature, and in particular to various themes from literature, has been shown to raise a child's linguistic level.

(Chomsky 1979, 125)

It is sad that only fifty percent of the adult population ever reach Piaget's stage of formal operation. (Menyuk 1977, 34) Fifty percent of the adult population can neither infer, abstract, nor create. The NTE exam discourages inferential thought and is quite literal. The CTBS focuses on literal recognition and recall. Our primary children can't use adjectives. Graduate students only know how to prepare a summary of action and plot. We need a more creative approach to literature and the language arts, and we mustn't structure our classrooms to death. Peer interaction within an organized but flexible schema should produce the best results.

Comprehension is dependent upon selective attention. The fluent reader deploys cognitive strategies in transferring and storing information from short to long-term memory. It is the selection and rehearsal of these perceptual units that allows one to extract meaning from written language and, like the computer, a brain which integrates rather than attends to detail is more efficient. Time is a factor because information in short-term memory which is not rehearsed fades quickly. (Peterson 1959, 112)

Linguistic and etymological research indicates that English spelling makes sense in terms of meaning - words that mean the same look the same, are spelled the same regardless of pronunciation.

medicine	medical
c	k

Phonics distorts meaning and cohesion, and as a cuing system, calls attention to smaller, discrete perceptual units. Readers must first select the perceptual unit, then predict, confirm, and self-correct. (Goodman, Ken 1986, 38) Teachers of readers and writers would do best to employ an affective-cognitive process that provokes schemata formation (e.g., small group riddle writing, using semantic webbing by Latin suffix or prefix). Interaction within groups promotes reflection and concept formation, (Stauffer 1975, 99) and erects constructs that can process reflective thought and predict meaning. This is comprehension.

Students, regardless of their respective levels, help one another read and write with meaning. Working in small groups, we read and write with reflection, integrating concepts as we move towards a larger understanding. Whether reading aloud for audio taping, or writing, we leave blanks, in problem areas, when we don't recognize, or can't find the right word. Then the larger idea doesn't escape us, and we can trouble shoot later. Higher level students are challenged by the process as much as lower level students are encouraged. I recall reading beyond my level at eight years of age - The Arabian Nights and The Rhyme of the Ancient Mariner. Context helped me in the former, phrasing in the latter, to go beyond my level and arrive at the essential in meaning. I've seen this happen to my students, too. I saw the happy twinkle in my challenged student's eyes when expressing Mole's frustration in Kenneth Grahame's Wind in the Willows, "Onion Sauce! Onion Sauce!".

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