

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 439 407

CS 013 924

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TITLE Teaching Reading at the Work Site.
PUB DATE 2000-00-00
NOTE 10p.
PUB TYPE Opinion Papers (120)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Individual Development; *Reading Improvement; *Reading Instruction; *Reading Skills; Reading Teachers; Vocabulary Development; *Workplace Literacy
IDENTIFIERS Reading Uses

ABSTRACT

Inadequate self-concepts develop due to being a poor and insecure reader. Any company invests time and money wisely if it provides individuals opportunities to develop needed reading skills at the workplace. There are selected prerequisites for reading instructors to stress when teaching at the workplace: (1) the instructor needs to have basic information from each candidate; and (2) the reading level of the candidate needs to be determined, either by using a standardized test or by having the candidate/worker read aloud. Reading achievement of the learner depends upon his or her proficiency in vocabulary development. The worker needs to communicate orally with others at the workplace and needs a rich speaking vocabulary in addition to reading skills. The reading teacher needs to show a caring attitude toward the learner and encourage as well as reward improved reading performance. Each person needs to become increasingly proficient in reading to optimize his or her opportunities at the workplace. (NKA)

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Teaching Reading at the Work Site.

by Marlow Ediger

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TEACHING READING AT THE WORK SITE

For one reason or another, there are workers at a work place that read very poorly. This hinders opportunities for promotion and advancement. Poor readers, no doubt, are paid considerably less remuneration for services performed as compared to others. Not only is it harmful to be a poor reader at the workplace, but also these individuals are hindered in live a fuller life due to the following consequences:

1. feelings of extreme inadequacy. A neighbor living next to the author's rural property admitted he could read a few words only. He admitted to not having taken schooling seriously and dropping out at the end of the sophomore high school year. This person was too embarrassed to be tutored free by a tutorial program in a small city.
2. unable to order from a menu in a restaurant. He looked at a menu appearing to read the contents. The others at his restaurant table always ordered first. He then repeated an order that someone else in his group gave. Sometimes, the food ordered was not liked! This was all due to not being able to read.
3. not being able to read to the self for enrichment purposes. One of the most important skills I possess is to read to myself during spare time or for leisure item experiences. Not being able to read prose and poetry for enjoyment must truly be devastating. Not being able to read a needed manual pertaining to work being performed at the workplace further handicaps the ineffective reader.
4. some, including adults, have mentioned they do not attend Sunday School because of being a poor reader. Here, in most cases, the lesson is read orally before being discussed. The oral reading is done because very few have read the lesson in the Sunday School Quarterly prior to class time. I have listened to numerous adults read poorly and stumble over simple words when reading orally. Sometimes, the Sunday School teacher mentions to say "pass" for those not wishing to read orally. Embarrassing situations come about when one can not read effectively. Several mothers have told me not to have their children read aloud the Sunday School lesson in class.
5. avoiding many situations due to believing there will be a necessity to read something orally in an organization, on demand and at random, in front of others. The oral reading may even be just a line or two.

Inadequate self concepts develop due to being a poor and insecure reader. Feelings of belonging do not generate due to these situations. In return, esteem needs are not being met. Individuals do want to feel good about themselves and this does not occur in a vacuum, but when accomplishments occur, such as reading well orally in a group setting. It certainly is true that individuals who read poorly can be

skilled in another kind of endeavor. The author's neighbor mentioned above is very good at repairing automobiles at home. He does not work at a Motor Company doing automobile repair work due to not being able to read well, such as reading a manual when being stymied on doing repair work on a specific model of car.

Teaching Reading at the Work Place

Any company invests money and time wisely if they provide individuals opportunities to develop needed reading skills at the work place. There are retired teachers who are willing to work free to assist those who need help in learning to read or to increase skills in reading to function more fully at the work place and in life involving wise use of leisure time. Why have adults not learned to read at an appropriate level of proficiency?

1. when supervising student teachers in the public schools, the author has noticed many pupils who do everything possible to disrupt and distract from the ongoing lesson presentations.

2. classroom size is small with too many pupils in a room. The author supervised a student teacher in the public schools where there were thirty-two pupils in one room. I could not walk between the rows to notice how well pupils were doing in a workbook exercise, well introduced by the student teacher. Pupils truly misbehaved in such a situation.

3. a lack of reading materials for diverse achievement levels of learners in a classroom can be noticed rather quickly.

4. the range of achievement, from high to low, is too great in managing reading instruction in a classroom.

5. mainstreamed students, such as the behaviorally disordered, who disrupt continuously and would do better in a special school designed to assist these learners to achieve. The classroom teacher cannot do a good job of teaching reading if there are constant problems in misbehavior management.

6. a lack of encouragement from administrators and supervisors in doing a good job of teaching reading is in the offing. Many teachers say they do not hear any words of encouragement from school leaders to move forward in curriculum improvement, including reading instruction.

7. meaningful inservice education in reading instruction is lacking. Teachers have indicated to the author what is meaningful and what does not have meaning when workshops and inservice education is in the offing. Meaningful approaches stress what is useful and works in the classroom. These are ideas that may be tried out in actual teaching, but are not presented dogmatically. Workshops/in-service education become a "tacked on" experience at the end of a busy school day when teachers are tired and need preparation time for teaching as well as being with

their families and friends.

8. articles published in educational journals to improve instruction are of little use to teachers. Why? They are too theoretical without a utilitarian orientation. Sometimes, the ridiculous is being written about, such as give your free lunch time to helping a students in reading, it is worth it. That is extremely bad advice. All people need adequate nourishment and have physiological needs met (See Maslow, 1954). This includes classroom teachers of reading. In addition to meeting physiological needs, Maslow indicates the importance of having safety, belonging, esteem, and self actualization needs met. Teachers also need to have these needs met in school and in society. Too frequently, professors from universities do much of the writing on "improving the schools." They have the time to do so. More articles in educational journals should be written by classroom teachers where relevance may be more in evidence on what to do to improve teaching and learning situations. Professors at universities should be more involved in the actual teaching of public school pupils and not write from an ivory tower point of view only.

9. teachers do not have spare time during the school day to read professional journal articles. Public schools, in most cases, do not have these journals. All public schools should have a professional library for teachers with an adequate number of journals in education. In thirty years of supervising student teachers in the public schools, I noticed one elementary school that does and this was at Bloomfield, Iowa. Professional journals are expensive to subscribe to and a teacher's salary is not that great to give money to subscribe to professional education journals. When starting out as an elementary teacher in the early 1950's in Kansas, state law mandated each teacher be able to subscribe to one educational journal at district expense. At that time, the author chose Education Digest.

10. psychological needs of teachers are not being met such as feeling membership in groups, being recognized for work well done, and becoming independent in one's deeds and actions (See Ediger, 1997, Chapter Five).

Too frequently, the news media desires to defame teachers and teaching. I have rarely met a poor quality teacher in the thirty years that was spent supervising student teachers in the public schools. I consider other professions and industries much less efficient as compared to classroom teachers. Everyone seemingly has horror stories to tell about the medical profession. Misdiagnosis and mixed up prescriptions are quite prevalent of medical doctors and hospitals. The legal profession truly has had problems. With DNA testing, many inmates have been released from prison. Clever arguments were presented by selected attorneys to incarcerate individuals in court trials.

One wonders how many prisoners were executed over the years due to a lawyer desiring to win a case rather than obtaining justice.

Prerequisites for Work Place Reading Instruction

There are selected prerequisites for reading instructors to stress when teaching at the work place. first, the instructor needs to have basic information from each candidate. The basic information should include the name, age, years of schooling, kind of work performed at the work place, and vocational goals of the involved person.

Second, the reading level of the candidate needs to be determined. A standardized test with high validity and reliability may be used to ascertain the present reading level of the candidate. The standardized test results may include a percentile, a grade equivalent, and and/or a standard deviation. Or, a reading series, published by a leading company may be used to ascertain the present reading level of the candidate.. The series may cover subject matter sequentially from grades five and higher, through high school. If a candidate for reading instruction at the work place cannot read aloud effectively from the fifth grade basal reader, a lower level text needs to be located for candidate evaluation purposes. The reading teacher needs to start with the reader that is relatively easy for a candidate to read aloud so that the present reading level may be found. The present reading level should be one whereby the reader generally pronounces 95% of the involved words correctly and answers three out of every four questions correctly covering the content read. Results from the standardized test or from the basal reader approach might not provide the information desired by the reading instructor. Thus, content from either source may not relate to necessary ideas to be read at the work place for the worker to function more effectively.

A third approach then may be to have the worker read aloud, for example, content from an automobile manual used at the work place. The candidate should be able to read aloud correctly 95% of the running words correctly and answer three of four questions correctly covering the related content. These are approximate per cents and numbers. Perhaps, a candidate also could state what was read orally in his/her own words. The latter would be a check on the worker's comprehension of truly understanding what has been read. If a candidate cannot identify an adequate number of words when reading aloud, such as 95 %; comprehension will be hindered. The individual will not understand what the manual says.

When using different approaches to ascertain reading levels, the instructor notices where the candidate is weak in the area of reading. The following information from the read aloud is provided to the reading teacher:

1. weaknesses in association sounds (phonemes) with symbols (graphemes). Letters make sounds individually or in combination. Sound/symbol relationships may be quite consistent or there may be irregularities in degrees.
2. weaknesses in dealing with silent letters while reading.
3. weaknesses in adding sounds that are not located in print.
4. weaknesses in going overboard or underboard in phonics while reading aloud.
5. weaknesses in paying attention to punctuation marks in content read.
6. weaknesses in not reading in thought units.
7. weaknesses in reading in a halting manner.
8. weaknesses in reading too rapidly whereby comprehension suffers.
9. weaknesses in not paying attention to syllables within a word.
10. weaknesses in not paying attention consciously to subject matter read for comprehension (See Ediger, 1996, 135-139).

The reading teacher needs to take careful note of the kinds of errors made by a candidate in oral reading so that diagnosis and remediation may be in the offing. Errors made in oral reading provide a basis for helping a candidate in work place reading instruction. If a candidate then has problems with analyzing words and dividing them into syllables, this weakness then provides opportunities for the learner to practice that which is lacking.

Anyone who desires to improve reading skills should have the opportunity to participate in developing each skill to improve reading abilities. What is emphasized and taught by the reading teacher needs to harmonize with needs of the learner. A better educated and trained work force should increase productivity and efficiency. The self concept of the learner should improve as a result of achievement in reading comprehension. Learners need to be encouraged to participate in the work place reading program. Each candidate needs to be respected and assisted to achieve as optimally as possible. No person should be ridiculed or experience put downs. Good attitudes toward reading by the candidate as well as of the reading teacher toward each learner are musts! Esteem needs or being recognized for personal reading achievement should be in the offing for each learner. Success in learning is vital. Quality sequence should then be in the offing after the present reading level of the candidate has been discovered. Thus, with success in each sequential step of learning in reading should envision further worker successes. Too frequently, the reading teacher may move forward too rapidly in instruction and the learner then cannot keep up with what is desired by the former. Thus, the order and pacing of instruction needs to be such that the candidate can benefit as optimally

as possible from reading instruction.

Vocabulary Development and the Learner

Reading achievement of the learner at the work place depends heavily upon being proficient in vocabulary development. A rich speaking vocabulary will assist in developing a quality reading vocabulary. The worker needs to communicate orally with others at the work place so that vocabulary growth may be in evidence. Reading materials need to be available to the worker so that practice may follow in learning to read. Doing much reading on one's own helps in becoming a better reader. Thus, a plethora of reading materials on diverse topics and on different reading levels need to be in the offing.

A very valuable approach in vocabulary development while reading is to use context clues. Here, the unknown word may be ascertained by viewing the surrounding words. Sometimes, the unknown word may be defined by reading several sentences later. Thus, more information provides necessary content to understand the unknown. Not only does the use of context clues help to define unknown vocabulary terms, but also to identify unknown words. Use of context clues is indeed a valuable approach for the reader to use in vocabulary development and in word recognition!

A rather simple dictionary may be used to find needed definitions for unknown words, as are glossaries in basal textbooks. Numerous skills are needed by the reader at the work place to use a dictionary or glossary, such as alphabetizing words. A glossary is more specifically related to the words encountered in the basal textbook as compared to the dictionary. Thus, the glossary in the basal will have definitions directly related to the words encountered while reading. The dictionary is more open ended in that the words and definitions pertain to a wide variety of reading materials. Many readers may need assistance in noticing that the writer may provide a definition for a word used in the reading selection. Thus, the writer may provide the meaning of a word in parenthesis or in an extended phrase or sentence. The reading teacher at the work place needs to provide help to those who need different kinds of help in word recognition and vocabulary development. The author of this writing has noticed workers carry a pocket sized dictionary for reference purposes. One even memorized word meanings as time permitted at the work place! There are adults who are very eager to learn to read at an improved level. The motivation is certainly there to activate. At other times, the reading teacher needs to encourage and instill a desire to improve reading habits and skills. Those who do not read well are being left out of promotions and better pay with a higher quality life style. It costs money to buy the good things in life, such as reading materials, better health care, quality clothing, sight seeing and travel,

higher education, and good transportation.

Motivating the Work Place Individual in Reading

A person at the work place may not have been successful in school and thus did not learn to read. He/she may have fought against all attempts in learning to read while in the public schools. Parents may have disgraced teachers in front of their very own offspring. The author has heard parents in selected situations say that they did not do well in reading and did not expect their child to do any better! A parent may ridicule a child in front of an adult by praising how well the older child did in reading, but the younger will never accomplish anything. How can motivation then be built up to where it should be, or to the best it can be?

- 1. show a caring, not smothering, attitude toward the work place reader.**
- 2. avoid ridiculing the level any person is reading on at the present time.**
- 3. encourage and reward improved reading performance.**
- 4. provide assistance when and where needed.**
- 5. determine the kinds of errors made by individual readers and help them to overcome the identified deficiencies.**
- 6. be available to provide help in providing help to readers at the work place.**
- 7. give specific help as necessary, such as in the use of phonic analysis, context clues, configuration clues, syllabication, structural analysis, and use of picture clues in learning to read more proficiently.**
- 8. offer assistance in having the reader think at higher levels of cognition, such as in critical and creative thinking, as well as in problem solving.**
- 9. guide individuals to be problem solvers in improving reading performance. Thus, what is not being mastered in reading might well become a problem to solve.**
- 10. advocate the development of positive attitudes toward the reading enterprise and what it entails .**

Conclusion

Each person needs to become increasingly proficient in reading in order to optimize opportunities at the work place as well as in spare time experiences. The workplace needs to offer opportunities to all workers to increase proficiency in becoming a better reader. Increasing skills in reading is ongoing and continuous. There is always room for further achievement of objectives through quality learning opportunities in reading. An assessment component needs to be in the offing to

determine what a reader has learned as well as to provide further sequential instruction.

One is never too old to learn to read. At a recent Dallas area celebration of the 2000 African-American Read In, more than 2,300 people heard 102 year-old George Dawson read about his times from Life is so Good (Random House, 2000). Dawson learned to read when he was 98 and then turned to Richard Glauberman who wrote the book (NCTE, 2000).

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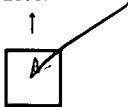
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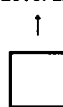
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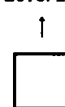
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