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ABSTRACT

Currently, many states are providing inservice education for teachers so that higher student test scores result. State mandated objectives are available to teachers for study and used as benchmarks for teaching. The local reading curriculum then needs to be aligned with these objectives of instruction. The major objective of inservice education is for teachers to use and implement the state mandated objectives of reading instruction. This paper discusses types of inservice education that will help teachers provide learning opportunities in reading for students and their relation to state mandated objectives. The paper points out that an increasing number of basal reading textbook companies are providing workshops which are designed to assist teachers in using the basal series more effectively, and, in particular, to help students achieve more optimally and to become independent readers. It notes that publishers are expanding their online teacher support, tests aligned to textbook content, and other supplementary products. The paper suggests using an experience chart to provide a firm basis for inservice teacher education, but the experience chart method of reading instruction should be modeled by a teacher in a workshop involving a set of young students. It states that workshop participants must view and analyze each step of the model as it is being taught to notice what needs diagnosis and remediation. And it concludes that whichever plan of reading instruction is being followed, inservice education might well fill voids and strengthen the curriculum. (NKA)

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# Inservice Education in Reading Instruction.

by Marlow Ediger

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## **INSERVICE EDUCATION IN READING INSTRUCTION**

**Inservice education for teachers is a salient item to emphasize in the teaching of reading. It does not take long after receiving the BSE or the MAT upon graduation from an accredited university that inservice education must begin, according to a plethora of educators. There appears to be numerous disagreements as to the kind of inservice education to offer. The author taught university teacher education courses and supervised student teachers in the public schools for over thirty years. His emphasis in teaching education courses was general, not program specific. Reasons given for a general emphasis were the following:**

**1. the students came from many regions of the US and selected students came from foreign nations. The learnings did not harmonize with a single state's mandated objectives due to the many states from which students came and might later teach in.**

**2. there are approaches in teaching reading which fit the general needs of pupils of public school age. If the approaches are specific to state's objectives, they may not be relevant for a different state's objectives in the nation. But, there might well be general procedures of teaching reading, applicable to all states and their respective objectives.**

**3. the following guidelines in teaching reading should be appropriate for all reading instruction of public school pupils:**

**a) pupils need to be actively engaged in reading activities, not passive recipients of knowledge.**

**b) pupils need to experience sequential knowledge and skills in the teaching and implementation of diverse strategies.**

**c) pupils need to perceive purpose or reasons for learning and not learn for the sake of doing so.**

**d) pupils need to use word attack skills to unlock unknown words.**

**e) pupils need to comprehend well and engage in higher levels of thinking such as in critical and creative thinking, as well as in problem solving.**

**f) pupils need to be able to read fluently and efficiently.**

**g) pupils need communicate clearly what has been read in a clear and concise manner.**

**h) pupils need to work harmoniously in collaborative settings as well as be responsible for individual achievement.**

**i) pupils need to evaluate their own achievement and reflect upon that which has been learned (Ediger and Rao, 2000, Chapter Five).**

**These criteria when followed should apply to any specific set of state mandated objectives of instruction. However, in part, there will be other goals emphasized by different states. Thus, states may differ in teaching of phonics -- systematic versus whole language in context methods of instruction. There might be differences in emphasis in reading for facts as compared to reading for higher levels of thinking. Additional differences may well include emphasis placed upon grammar, punctuation, and structural analysis. Thus, for example, grammar may be a part of an actual written product as compared to grammar being tested upon within multiple choice test items.**

### **Inservice Education and State Mandated Objectives**

**Many states are providing inservice education for teachers so that higher test scores from pupils result. It might be too, that a school district sponsors the inservice education so that locally the test scores are higher when compared to other school districts. The workshop then is content specific and pertains to upping test scores.**

**The state mandated objectives are available to teachers for study and used as benchmarks for teaching. The local reading curriculum then needs to be aligned with these objectives of instruction. The state mandated assessment is valid if the test items cover the benchmarks of instruction. Reliability in testing is inherent if consistency of test results from pupils is in the offing be it test/retest, split half, and/or alternative forms. The major objective of inservice education is for teachers to use and implement the state mandated objectives of reading instruction. Learning opportunities need to be in the offing to implement the reading objectives.**

**Standards which need to be followed in their implementation as learning opportunities for pupils include the following:**

- 1. individual differences must be provided for, such as pupils differing from each other in achievement and ability.**
  - 2. pupils possess diverse learning styles**
  - 3. learners differ in intelligences possessed.**
  - 4. interests acquired are different among learners.**
  - 5. motivational differences are inherent among pupils**
- (Ediger, 2002, 11- 15).**

**The above need to be considered thoroughly when teachers provide learning opportunities for pupils in reading**

instruction. Certainly “one size does not fit all,” meaning that standardized teaching procedures for all pupils is futile due to differences among and between pupils.

State mandated objectives and related testing for pupils must cover what is important to learn. The tests need to be field tested through pilot studies to weed out poorly written items. Statistical data must be available to give validity and reliability information. The test items, too, need to be arranged from that which is easiest to what is increasingly complex. This builds feelings of security within individuals since responding correctly to the earlier test items should make for feelings of success psychologically. These feelings of power hopefully will continue as the pupil continues to respond to sequential test items.

Poorly written multiple choice test items do not indicate that which pupils have learned but rather may cause pupils to guess. Showing what has been learned through testing may differ from pupils actually reading and comprehending well in functional situations. Functional situations represent reality where information is needed to solve a problem. Reading, among other approaches, might well be an important way to secure this information. The reading is done then with purpose in mind and that being to solve a vital problem. Testing represents an on demand situation whereby a pupil responds to a multiple choice test item. One of the four responses is correct. The pupil needs to respond in terms of what the writer of the test items believes to be correct. A highly factual test item has only one correct answer. There might be some disagreement as to which is the correct answer on selected other multiple choice test items.

Workshops focusing on teaching for high test results should feature

- \* demonstration teaching so that pupils achieve state mandated ends of instruction.

- \* analyzing what is contained in each state mandated objective so that teaching reflects each facet or part of the desired end.

- \* teaching in the local classroom what has been stressed in the workshop, such as actually teaching to help pupils achieve the state mandated objectives sequentially.

- \* reteaching when pupils have not attained a state mandated objective.

- \* reflecting upon what transpired during teaching and learning situations.

- \* keeping a journal on what was done and what pupils achieved in an ongoing lesson (See also Ruben, 1983).

**The workshop should also stress the importance of selected statistical terms used in testing. These should include**

- \* content, face, and predictive validity.**
- \* reliability such as test/retest, alternate forms, and split half.**
- \* arranging test items for pupils to take and achieve sequentially.**
- \* feedback from pupil test results with diagnosis and remediation content.**
- \* mean, median, and mode as measures of central tendency.**
- \* quartile and standard deviation.**
- \* formative and summative evaluation.**
- \* norm referenced and criterion referenced tests.**

**An assessment of reading comprehension serves a two fold purpose. It enables the teacher to make an informed decision regarding the materials that would be appropriate for instruction, and it alerts the teacher to a student's specific instructional needs. Such an assessment is generally undertaken when there is some question concerning a student's present placement in instructional materials or the type of instructional emphasis that would enable the student to make better progress. For the most part these questions arise when a student is not performing well during daily lessons. But they should arise also when a student is performing extremely well. For instructional materials should not be so difficult that the student can have little success with them nor so easy as to require little thought or intentional effort. (Barr and Sadow, 1985).**

### **Workshops to Emphasize Using Basal Reading Series**

**An increased number of basal reading textbook companies are providing workshops to strengthen the teaching profession. These workshops are designed, in particular, to help pupils achieve more optimally and to become independent readers. The major objective might well be to assist teachers in using the basal series more effectively. The manual section will list objectives for pupil attainment in each story to be taught. The new words for a story will be listed and hints given on how to introduce these words to children. Background information which needs to be presented properly will be stressed so that pupils may benefit optimally from the new story. Questions will be listed to check pupil comprehension from reading the story content. Followup experiences are listed for teachers to**

implement in culminating a story/lesson.

Teachers here need to use the learning opportunities stressed to see if they assist pupils to achieve the desired objectives as stated in the manual of the basal. This can be done in his/her classroom. The teacher needs to report back to the workshop participants on how well the objectives were achieved by pupils as a result of instruction. Modifications and reteaching may need to occur to find improved ways of helping pupils achieve objectives listed in the basal. Participants need to assist in the evaluation process. It is good if the lesson has been video-taped. Participants may then need to view the video and come up with suggestions for change and modification, if necessary.

An important kind of critical reading involves comparison of two or more sources of information. Children are usually amazed when they find two authorities contradicting each other. An experience like that can serve as a preliminary to discussion of such questions as the reputation and prestige of each author, his impartiality, or bias, the comparative recency of the two sources, and so on. Reading experiences of this sort develop naturally when children do wide reading to find data on a problem. The teacher should be alert and should make use of such occasions as stepping stones toward a more mature attitude on the credibility of reading matter. In the study of current events, comparison of treatment of an event by two newspapers or magazines of opposing points of view can form an effective point of departure (Harris and Sipay, 1985)..

Workshops sponsored by basal reading companies tend to be content specific to their goals. This does not say that these workshops have no/little values. There are learnings which transfer, here, from one basal series to the next as well as to helping pupils attain state mandated objectives of instruction. It is good teaching procedure to build background information within pupils before they read a specific selection. Otherwise, it will be more difficult for readers to understand the new content. It might even sound strange unless pupils experience background information. In comparison, Whole language approaches, such as the Big Book, also advocate building background information within pupils before they read a given selection.

Basal reading series tend to emphasize teachers printing the new words on the chalkboard, prior to pupils engaging in reading the ensuing story. These new words are carefully noticed by each pupil and discussed in terms of contextual meaning before being encountered in the reading selection. In contrast, Big Book approaches, emphasize pupils learning to

identify and recognize new words as they read aloud together with the teacher, as the latter points to each word being read.

Educators across the country will soon have access to a program designed by some top reading experts that will help them refine their reading strategies. But these experts are not employed by colleges, universities, or non-profit education groups --- the leading sources of professional development for teachers. They work for Scholastic, Inc., one of the nation's biggest publishers of children's books and educational materials ...

Scholastic is the latest publisher to enter the professional development market, further expanding publishers' traditional role of providing a textbook and teachers' manual, and offering a day or two of sessions to introduce teachers to the new materials.

Publishers are expanding their products and services to include online teacher support, tests aligned to textbook content, and other supplementary products. Most of their activity, however, is in the world of professional development, in which publishers are aggressively touting new products such as Scholastic Red, acquiring small companies that have established professional development businesses, and investing in start ups to show potential growth (Hoff, May 22, 2002).

### **Holistic Methods of Reading Instruction**

The experience chart might also provide a firm basis for inservice education of teachers. From my observations as a supervisor of university student teachers, there are selected factors which have made for a lack of success in its use. There are several reasons for this occurrence:

1. teachers need to have quality concrete materials at a learning center for pupils to view and learn from. Pupils need to be encouraged to manipulate these materials. Sometimes inadequate time is given for this stage of experience chart development.

2. teachers need to encourage pupils to interact with these concrete materials. Interaction with the objects and items at the center too frequently have been given short shrift.

3. teachers, gradually, need to sequence pupil behavior from viewing the concrete materials to presenting ideas orally based on these experiences. Pupil attention can be divided between the viewing and the presenting of related ideas for the



experience chart.

4. the teacher needs to record on the chalkboard, with neat manuscript letters, the content given by pupils. The print very frequently is not as legible as should be, hindering pupils from the reading aloud of ideas.

5. the content is read aloud by the pupils with teacher guidance. The teacher needs to read aloud clearly so that pupils may follow readily in identifying words by sight.

6. the teacher and pupils reread the contents as often as desired. Rereading should not be done haphazardly, but with enthusiasm.

The experience chart method of reading instruction should be modeled by a teacher in the workshop involving a set of young pupils. Each of the six above named steps should be modeled by the demonstration teacher. Workshop participants must view and analyze each step of the model as it is being taught to notice what needs diagnosis and remediation. For example, step number one above may need to be highlighted with more quality objects which capture pupil attention. These concrete materials need to actively engage pupil attention. This is important since pupil enthusiasm may hinge upon the interests developed from viewing the learning center. Or, step number two may need more attention such as pupils having more time to discuss objects and items on the learning center. With video tape results, the workshop participants may review sections and take time to analyze each part. Quality experience chart presentations in the classroom should result from the workshop. They may be shared with workshop participants, if regular teaching is going on in the classroom which harmonizes with the workshop schedule.

Whichever plan of reading instruction is being followed, inservice education might well fill voids and strengthen the curriculum.

### Conclusion

There are selected beliefs about the teaching of reading which, hopefully, will be stressed in any program of instruction. Emphasizing the following will strengthen the teaching of reading:

1. Each pupil begins at a point where he/she is ready to achieve as optimally as possible.

2. The learner experiences continuous progress and success in reading.

3. The four vocabularies --- listening, speaking, reading, and writing --- are integrated in the curriculum.
4. Word recognition skills such as phonics, syllabication, context clues, and structural analysis are taught within the framework of interesting content to be read.
5. Major emphasis should be placed upon reading literature, not analyzing words into component parts.
6. Multiple approaches are used to motivate pupils so that an inward desire in learning to read is inherent.
7. Problem solving, critical and creative thinking, as well as appreciation of salient concepts should be stressed in teaching reading.
8. The best sequence is used to guide each pupil toward optimum achievement in reading.
9. Learning to read is considered a life time endeavor.
10. The use of relevant research results is important in the teaching of reading (Ediger, 1997, 24, 27).

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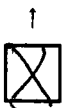
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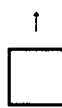
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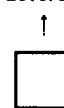
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