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ABSTRACT

Being able to speak clearly and well is highly salient for classroom teachers. The preservice university curriculum needs to provide sequential activities and experiences for prospective teachers. This paper suggests the various situations in which this might be done. The paper first notes that the university instructor needs to model good speaking habits and patterns and should also encourage students to present ideas accurately and with clarity in discussion settings. It next gives examples of student-led groups which become an inherent part of each class and might well serve as a model to classmates: panel discussions, oral reports, explanations of teaching aids constructed for the teacher education class, committee work in class to solve a relevant problem in teaching, questions raised by students pertaining to concepts and generalizations discussed in class, and brainstorming. The paper also finds that field experiences in preservice education can provide valuable experiences for preservice teachers. It states that oral communication is important when teaching students in the public school setting. (NKA)

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Oral Communication and the Teacher.

by Marlow Ediger

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ORAL COMMUNICATION AND THE TEACHER

Much is written about the preservice education of classroom teachers, prior to certification. These teachers, according to specialists in the field, need adequate general education, subject matter background, professional methodology courses, field experiences, observation and participation in classroom teaching, and student teaching. They also need to be tested for mastery of accrued subject matter during the undergraduate years. After the completion of the preservice program, the certified teacher needs to experience an inservice education program during the first year of actual teaching. The inservice program might consist of beginning and pursuing the master's degree, doing an independent study on curriculum development, and/or engaging in professional research in the school setting, among other alternatives.

There are a plethora of specifics when analyzing teaching/learning situations which provide a basis for further strengthening the preservice teacher education program. This involves the speaking component of classroom teaching (Ediger and Rao, 2003, Chapter Four).

The Speaking Curriculum for Teachers

Being able to speak clearly and well is highly salient for classroom teachers. The preservice university curriculum needs to provide sequential activities and experiences for prospective teachers. This might be done in various situations.

Within each class, there are opportunities to participate in classroom discussions. The university instructor needs to model good speaking habits and patterns. University students learn from the professor of each class in terms of models for effective oral communication. If a professor speaks too quietly, the communication process is hindered. If ideas are presented too loudly, the manner of presenting content becomes obnoxious. A pleasant, well modulated speaking voice is an objective to achieve in teaching and learning situations. University students should learn about the quietness/loudness continuum of content presentation and its affect upon pupils.

Instructors need to encourage students to present ideas accurately and with clarity in discussion settings. Accuracy and clarity are essential ingredients in communicating ideas to public school pupils in the elementary, middle school, and senior high school level of instruction. The great philosopher

Rene Descartes (1596- 1650) in his search for certainty of knowledge came up with two ideas to express thoughts deductively. These two concepts being clear and distinct when pursuing sequential ideas leading to certainty in ideas, thoughts, and knowledge. Thus, a person would start with what is known and then proceed step by step deductively until the final known related statement could be written. Each sequential statement written deductively should be different and clear from the preceding one. The process would continue until no further content can be written. The professor may also state ideas clearly and distinctly, either deductively or inductively. Students learning by discovery has been added to the fund of procedures of learning since the days of Rene Descartes (Stumpf, 1971).

University student participation in class discussions should stress the importance of new ideas presented being related to concepts and generalizations already stated. Relating the new to the old ideas in sequence aids the learner to better retain subject matter from the discussion.

In addition to the university professor, students may present models of oral communication for each other in class discussions. The following are examples of student lead groups which become an inherent part of each class and might well serve as a model to classmates:

1. panel discussions. These panels are related to a topic being discussed in class. Each participant must be well prepared to present ideas effectively to others in the classroom setting. Generally, the total presentation is graded by the instructor in terms of criteria. The instructor, in an atmosphere of respect, should comment on strengths and weaknesses here in oral communication.

2. oral reports. These reports pertain to a specific topic interesting to the presenter. The oral report is a way of learning for both the speaker and listeners. Keeping the attention of listeners must be stressed. In later classroom teaching, public school teachers must assist pupils to attend to the ongoing learning activity.

3. explanations of teaching aids constructed and made for the teacher education class. Each teaching aide is to be made neatly and show effort in its making. The explanation of the aid to the class should indicate how it will be used in teaching pupils. With clear explanations, teacher education students should grow and achieve in their chosen profession when learning from others.

4. committee work in class to solve a relevant problem in teaching. Research is to be done here to show knowledge and

skill. Clarity of ideas presented enhances the collective endeavor and in the final oral report given to the entire class.

5. questions raised by university students pertaining to concepts and generalizations discussed in class. The questions raised should be clear to all in class. Each class session should provide for salient learnings in helping the preservice teacher to become a professional in attitude and deed.

6. brain storming. The multiplicity of ideas presented while brain storming should each be readily recorded on the chalkboard. Thus, each item needs to be a word or phrase. The purpose of this activity is to secure as many ideas as possible to solve a problem, such as in discipline. The problem as well the responses must be presented with clarity so all can understand their meaning (See Tiedt).

The above are presented as examples of diverse kinds of speaking activities which a university course may stress in teacher education. Each activity requires the use of speaking. Preservice teachers need a plethora of activities in which they can obtain practice and improve in oral communication. University students will also be required to take a class in public speaking.

Diverse kinds of speaking will be stressed here such as extemporaneous, after dinner, making introductions of a person such as a speaker to an organization, how to play a game, a famous person, among others. There are selected commonalities in relating the act of teaching to the diverse kinds of speaking stressed in a public speaking course. Understanding what is said is indeed salient!

Field Experiences and Oral Communication

Field experiences in preservice education can provide valuable experiences for preservice teachers. Thus, these students might assist public school pupils on a one to one basis. In reading, for example, it is very important to be highly cognizant of what a learner needs help in, when explaining orally a word identification technique. The pupil needs to attach meaning to what is being explained and be able to apply learnings secured. Diagnosis and remediation are salient tools for teachers to use in reading instruction.

In teaching a small group, the student needs to obtain the attention of and engage pupils in learning. If pupils are studying characterization of a story, the preservice teacher needs to assist each pupil in the group to explain the kind of person and

his/her attributes, as contained in the narrative read. Clarity in oral communication makes it easier for pupils to make progress in the literature curriculum.

Seminar methods in the teaching of reading involves a high level of oral communication. In-depth learning is a characteristic of seminars. If pupils are studying story settings in literature, a seminar approach involving five pupils can make for rich experiences in this area of literary understanding. Pupils in the seminar then need to read several narratives in making comparisons to understand the literary concept of setting. Analyzing and synthesizing pupil contributions on what is involved in writing a setting is necessary for in-depth teaching and learning.

Dramatizations can breathe life into what has been read by pupils. Preservice teachers within a field experience setting may assist the regular teacher in having pupils do dramatic activities. With creative dramatics, involved pupils can be spontaneous in playing their specific roles. Pupils need to understand the story content well in order to creatively enact its subject matter. Assistance needs to be given to pupils to play their respective roles in a meaningful manner. The presentation in its entirety might be given in front of pupils in other classrooms as well as the local one.

Field services for university students may include going over errors made by pupils from completed seat work. Each identified error needs to receive clear explanations as to why it is wrong and what can be done to change it to a correct form. If there are degrees of goodness, such as in essay writing, then the university student might assist in ways of improving the composition.

It is salient for the university student to read aloud to pupils in the classroom setting. With proper voice intonation and facing pupils while reading a carefully selected book aloud, listeners can enjoy quality literature in a challenging atmosphere.

In all pupil endeavors, the university student needs to be helpful, supportive, encouraging, and positive within the framework of field experiences (Ediger, 2003, 51- 57).

General Qualities to Improve Oral Communication

What can the professor and teacher do to assist the preservice candidate to improve in oral communication? There are a plethora of specific ways to guide pupils to achieve optimally in communicating well in an oral manner to others. The university student then needs to use and teach proper skills

in stressing words appropriately. Linguists recognize four levels of stress, when any word is being pronounced. It can then be noticed how the meaning of a sentence changes when a word therein is stressed differently, louder or softer. Linguists also recognize four levels of pitch. Any sentence will change meaning when a word therein is pitched differently. Pupils with teacher guidance need to practice saying the same sentence but stress words differently. Also, pupils should practice saying the same sentence, but each time pitch individual words differently.

In addition to stress and pitch, students should also practice using juncture properly. Sometimes, pupils leave out a period, a comma, a question mark, among other punctuation marks. Learners may then notice how the meaning of sentence changes when punctuation marks are omitted. It is difficult to notice how many food items there were at the picnic when commas are omitted in the following sentence: At the picnic, they had ham sandwiches jello salad and milk. There could be as many as five and as few as three food items at the picnic, depending upon where the comma is placed. Oral communication is important to emphasize when teaching pupils in the public school setting (See also, Piro).

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