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Approaches to differentiated instruction that serve the needs of struggling readers

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Approaches to differentiated instruction that serve the needs of struggling readers

Abstract

Educators have long grappled with the dilemma of how to deal effectively with students who are not performing successfully in classrooms, in particular with students having difficulty learning to read. In elementary classrooms we group students according to their reading ability. We put low performing students together, thereby slowing down the pace of instruction; which in the long run pulls the students even further behind. We need to discover ways to meet the needs of all of our students without leaving behind or "boring" them.

Approaches to Differentiated Instruction that Serve the Needs of
Struggling Readers

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Table of Contents

Chapter 1

Introduction	4
Statement of Problem	4
Research Question	6
Significance of Problem	6
Definition of Terms	7
Organization of Research Paper	8

Chapter 2: Past Practices

Introduction	10
Parent-Teacher-Student Relationship	10
Phonemic Instruction	12
Guided Reading	15
The Daily Five	16
Conclusion	18

Chapter 3: Current Research

Introduction	19
Content	20
Comprehension Instruction	20
Conceptual Framework	21
Assessment	
Assessing Reading Comprehension	23
Scaffolded Reading Experience and Questioning	
the Author	26
Collaborative Strategic Reading and Peer-Assisted Learning	
Strategies	27

Concept-Oriented Reading Instruction	28
Conclusion	29
Chapter 4: Putting It All Together	
Introduction	30
Table Showing Implementation	31
Guided Reading	31
Whole Group Reading Instruction	34
Interactive Read-Aloud	34
Shared/Interactive Writing	35
Shared Reading	35
Reading Mini-Lesson	36
Writing Mini-Lesson	36
Phonemic Instruction	36
Phonics/Spelling Mini-Lesson	38
Word Sorts	38
Independent Instruction	40
Conclusion	41
Chapter 5: Implementation In My Classroom	
Introduction	43
Implementation in my classroom	43
Conclusion	46
References	48

Chapter One

Introduction

Educators have long grappled with the dilemma of how to deal effectively with students who are not performing successfully in classrooms, in particular with students having difficulty learning to read. In elementary classrooms we group students according to their reading ability. We put low performing students together, thereby slowing down the pace of instruction; which in the long run pulls the students even further behind.

Statement of Problem

Every year I struggle with meeting the needs of three or four students who are not making sufficient academic gains. They have a hard time with concepts of print, phonics, sight words and fluency. Not all students have the same experiences with literature. Most of the time, these students receive Title One help. Usually they qualify for Reading Recovery. This is where the big question comes into play. In order to give students Reading Recovery instruction they need to be pulled from the classroom for 30 minutes everyday. Some students qualify for Title One and English Language Learner (ELL) services. These students are pulled out of

the classroom for sixty minutes a day. This means they miss out on classroom instruction, which puts them even further behind.

Reading Recovery students receive daily instruction on the foundations of reading. A Reading Recovery program consists of sixty 30-minute sessions over a 12-16 week period. Students are encouraged to use multiple sources of information while reading and writing (Snow, Burns and Griffin, 1998). The students are taught to be self-regulated learners.

This year we implemented a new delivery of instruction. The Title One teacher and the Special Needs teacher came into the classroom to deliver services. This way the teachers were able to collaborate easier, and the students did not leave the room so they did not feel like they were missing out. A Title One teacher, Staci, told me that pulling out students for Title One instruction creates a false sense of security. She prefers to deliver instruction in the classroom because it teaches students to "tune out" things that get in the way of learning to read. It helps the students become self-regulated learners. Staci believes that environment is a big part of learning to read.

Research Question

Meeting the needs of struggling readers is an ongoing challenge for teachers. We need to discover ways to meet the needs of all of our students without leaving behind or "boring" them. I am hoping to find the answers that will help meet the needs of the struggling readers I work with each year in my classroom.

Significance of Problem

If we meet the needs of our struggling readers they will not need to be pulled out of the classroom for remedial instruction. It is widely accepted that fluent readers are able to comprehend what they are reading, work independently and are more successful in all academic areas. Fluent readers have a strong understanding of concepts about print, sight words and fluency. They are able to decode unknown words based on reading strategies they acquired in small group reading instruction.

If we enrich the students with a wide variety of reading strategies they will be able to become independent readers. Along with reading strategies the students need to be able to perform independently in the classroom. When we teach students strategies for working independently, and how to ignore outside stimuli when working, they will be able to complete

their school work and make wonderful academic gains. Children who learn independent reading strategies and spend more time reading text, do better in reading.

The findings for this study could be helpful because the evidence of success could prove beneficial to teachers and students. More methods are needed to develop thinking by students. Therefore, it is important to find out if the research will work in the regular classroom, Title One classroom, and Special Needs classroom.

Definition of Terms

Reading Recovery has four driving principles: children learn to read by reading in meaningful contexts; reading instruction should be differentiated based on the diagnosis of learner's need; phonics instruction should be systematic and paced according to a child's developing hypothesis about how words work; and reading, writing, and spelling develop in synchrony as children interact with others who assist their learning and development (Snow, Burns, and Griffin, 1998).

English Language Learner (ELL) classroom- The ELL teacher pulls the students for 45 minutes daily. They work on vocabulary instruction, Concepts about Print and writing. The students who receive ELL instruction

are students whose native language is not English. Usually the students are new to our country and the parents do not speak English as their first language. The main idea behind ELL instruction is the acquisition of the English language. The students are not supposed to be pulled out of reading instruction, but unfortunately, they are. This is because of scheduling conflicts. Our ELL teacher is at Poyner in the morning, so the students have to be pulled out of Reading instruction.

Special Needs Services- This year we are utilizing the "push in" approach. The Special Needs teacher comes into the classroom to deliver instruction. They work with students on concepts that need extra instruction. The Special Needs teacher works with both identified and unidentified special needs students. This works well for the teachers who are able to have the Special Needs teacher in their room during reading and/or math instruction. Unfortunately, not every one can have the prime teaching times.

Organization of Research Paper

Chapter one of my paper states the research question, statement of the problem, significance of the problem, and definitions of terms. Chapter two consists of literature reviews that describe past practice of reading

instruction. I will include background information about small group reading instruction and helping struggling readers. Chapter three will tell about current research on helping struggling readers. Chapter four will include current curriculum and pedagogy. I will explore what is most effective for meeting the needs of struggling readers, as well as, where to best meet the needs of struggling readers. Chapter five will summarize my findings and show how I will incorporate them into my classroom. I will also include recommendations for reaching struggling readers.

Chapter 2

Past Practices

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to describe effective strategies to differentiate reading instruction as supported by research literature. I will also discuss the correlation between parent-teacher-student relationships, small group reading instruction, and learning to read. The third topic I will discuss is phonemic instruction. I plan on showing how phonemic awareness has a direct correlation with students learning to read.

Parent-Teacher-Student Relationships

Home environment has a huge impact on students reading achievement. Parents, students and teachers need to work together to ensure that students needs are met. When everyone works together, the students' needs are always put on the forefront.

Early elementary students gain more in achievement when they and their parents experience supportive relationships with teachers. The parents need to feel comfortable working with the teacher to support their child's learning. It is equally important for the students to see the parents and teacher working together. The students will put increased effort in

their school work when they see the importance their parents and teacher put on it. The quality of student-teacher and parent-teacher relationships makes unique contributions to children's engagement and achievement in the early grades.

Studies have found a concurrent effect of engagement on reading achievement, but not on math achievement. One reason for this could be that twice as much time is spent on literacy instruction.

The results suggest that African American children and their parents are less likely to experience home-school relationships and student-teacher relationships that support children's achievement. Differences in the parenting practices, communication styles, and educational beliefs between teachers and African American parents are a second possibility for lower teacher relatedness for African American students and parents. African American parents communicate more frequently with teachers and are more likely to criticize teachers and the school than are Hispanic parents, who are more deferential.

Teachers may endorse ethnic or racial stereotypes about children, which may influence their feelings toward students and their parents and lead to behavioral self-fulfilling prophecies. Teachers receive very little or

no preparation in building successful alliances with parents or supportive and warm relationships with students. An increased focus on helping teachers connect with students and their parents is one means of helping children at risk for academic failure get off to a good start in school.

Phonemic Instruction

There are no significant differences between the phonics achievements of first grade students who received daily supplemental instruction in addition to their regular classroom reading instruction and first graders who did not receive supplemental instruction (McIntyre and Petrosko, 2005). Students need to make connections with reading and phonemic awareness.

Phonics is only a sub-skill of reading. It is possible for students to raise their reading comprehension level without raising their phonemic achievement. Too many struggling readers in the upper elementary grades are those students who do not have a firm grasp of phonics and who cannot advance their reading when confronted with new, lengthy words to decode (Bear et al, 2000). Bottom line -the students who receive more academic attention simply perform better. The study determined that the inclusion

of supplemental instruction as an option for schools attempting to reach all students is worth considering (McIntrye and Petrosko, 2005).

Word Sorts help make these connections. The purpose of word study is twofold. First, students develop general knowledge of English spelling. Second, word study increases specific knowledge of words - the spelling and meaning of individual words. Word study help students examine words in order to reveal consistencies within our written language system and to help students master the recognition, spelling, and meaning of specific words.

Words can be recognized with many types of textual supports, so the ability to read words correctly lies a little ahead of students' spelling accuracy (Bear and Templeton, 2008). Teachers need to determine where students are in this continuum; using this information the teacher can determine which type of word sorts the students need. Word Sorts draw students' attention to sound, because sound is the first aspect of a word a speller has for reference.

There are five developmental stages for word study. The first stage, emergent, corresponds with the emergent stage in reading and writing. The second stage, letter name, corresponds with the beginning stage or reading and writing. The third stage, within word, corresponds with transitional

stage of reading and writing. The fourth stage, syllables and affixes, corresponds with the intermediate stage of reading and writing. The fifth stage, derivational, corresponds with the advanced stage of reading and writing.

Phonics is only a sub-skill of reading. It is possible for students to raise their reading comprehension level without raising their phonics achievement. Too many struggling readers in the upper elementary grades are those students who do not have a firm grasp of phonics and who cannot advance their reading when confronted with new, lengthy words to decode (Bear et al, 2000).

Word sorts are a researched based approach to use when teaching phonics to beginning readers. Teachers start out with picture sorts, move to sound sorts, next introduce beginning and ending consonant followed by vowel sounds. Teachers assess the students to see where they are at, and then build from there.

Bear, Invernizzi, Templeton and Johnston (2008) published a book called *Words their way: Word study for phonics, vocabulary, and spelling instruction*. This is an excellent text to follow when determining where students are at in regards to phonemic instruction and how to best meet the

students needs when teaching vocabulary, phonics and reading. Bottom line - the students who receive more academic attention simply perform better. The inclusion of supplemental instruction as an option for schools attempting to reach all students is worth considering (McIntrye and Petrosko, 2005).

Guided Reading

Primary teachers often provide guided reading lessons with rich book introductions. These introductions prepare students to understand the meaning and structure of leveled books. Teachers follow the reading of these texts with discussions that help to build comprehension and word recognition knowledge. Most students learn to recognize gross visual differences among words before they attend to more subtle difference in the middle or end of words (Clay, 2000).

Small group reading instruction (Guided Reading) is an effective way to meet the needs of all learners. The teacher is able to reach students at their instructional reading level. Students are able to use reading strategies with text that is at their level. The reading groups are flexible; therefore, the students are able to move from group to group depending on their instructional needs. Small group reading instruction is used in addition to, not in place of, large group reading instruction. Clay (2000) reminds us that

students need the experience of large group reading instruction in addition to the specifics of small group reading instruction.

Teachers can prepare to respond to a student by looking for patterns in the errors observed in previous running records (Clay, 2000; Schwartz, 2005). First, think about the clues the student use for initial attempts. Secondly, look for a pattern in errors that the student notices versus those that are ignored. Finally, when the student does notice an error, look for a pattern in the students' responses at that point.

For too many struggling readers, their first and only searching attempt at difficulty is to look at the teacher for help. Listening to a student read a text that is only partially familiar allows us to apply and refine our theories of literacy learning and instruction. Teaching for self-monitoring is at least as important as any particular searching strategy for many students (Schwartz, 2005).

The Daily Five

The Daily Five is a guided reading program that generates structure and organization. The students are held accountable for their learning through choices. The atmosphere in the classroom fosters independent literacy behaviors that are so ingrained that they become habits. The Daily

Five consists of five researched based activities that the students participate in each day. The activities include: Read to Self, Read to Someone, Work on Writing, Listen to Reading and Spelling/Word Work.

It is suggested that children should spend a minimum of one and a half hours a day reading in school. Instructional time is in addition to these ninety minutes. When the teacher meets with a small group the rest of the class is participating in one of the components of the Daily Five. The students may choose the order, but they need to make sure they do each activity every day. In between each small group the teacher pulls the class back together and does a mini lesson with the whole class.

The mini lessons are lessons from the Reading Curriculum Guide, Language Arts Curriculum Guide, or they cover skills the teacher notices deficiencies in. The teacher does a "status of the class" each day. It is during this time the students are allowed to tell where they want to begin. When students are allowed choice, the "buy in" is huge. Students need to be independent learners; they need to be taught strategies to help them use their class time wisely.

Conclusion

Research has shown several successful strategies for teaching young readers. All the strategies have a common thread, scaffolding. Teachers need to start where the child is at and build. By building on what students know, the learning process goes smoothly. Students tend to get frustrated when presented with concepts too difficult, scaffolding concepts builds confidence, which builds knowledge.

Throughout this chapter I told about effective reading strategies that help struggling readers. During the next chapter I will explore current research on helping struggling readers. I want to discover the factors that weave word work, reading and comprehension all together.

Chapter 3

Current Research

In the previous chapter we looked at past practices for reaching struggling readers. In this chapter I will discuss six strategies that current research suggests teachers use for helping struggling readers. I will discuss six reading strategies that are utilized by many teachers who work with struggling readers. Comprehension instruction and conceptual framework are content strategies that are beneficial tools to use with struggling readers. Assessing reading comprehension using a scaffolded reading experience and Questioning the Author are two assessment strategies that monitor students' achievement. Collaborative Strategic Reading, Peer-Assisted Learning Strategies and Concept-Oriented Reading Instruction are tools that help teachers give students the foundations they need to become successful readers. Reading instruction is a complex entity.

Teachers need to meet the needs of each student. This isn't easy. A class of twenty students could have readers ranging from pre-primer to advanced readers. Small group reading instruction is used in most elementary classrooms. This chapter tells about teaching comprehension, fluency, and blending phonemic instruction into small group reading

instruction. There are several programs available to teachers ranging from basals to anthologies to small group instruction. Teachers need to look at their class and choose components from each to best meet the needs of their students.

Current research shows the importance of scaffolding learning for our students. Teachers need to assess students, determine their instructional needs, then base instruction on the needs of the students. In order for teachers to accomplish this they need to teach in a variety of ways. Teachers need to be flexible. They need to have a balance of whole group instruction, small group instruction and individual instruction. The key is knowing which type of teaching is best for each lesson.

Content

Comprehension Instruction

How can educators move students from decoding to meaningful comprehension? There are four research-based strategies that teachers can use to guide students away from sole reliance on asking for support toward more independent and strategic approaches to text.

The first strategy, ask strategic questions about context, suggests making question asking more explicit by integrating these questions in students' daily literacy tasks or during shared reading.

The second strategy, identify a range of textual and visual clues, models to students the importance of looking at pictures, reading sidebars for key information, making predictions and the heading, subtopics and italicized titles.

The third strategy, frontload text, teaches children how to activate prior knowledge before reading new texts. Frontloading text shows students how to create word webs using key words, visualize and draw out predictions. As a pre-reading strategy, teachers can create role-play scenarios that engage students with a similar topic, to envision predictions.

The fourth strategy, skims texts strategically, teaches students that skipping unknown words can be a helpful strategy. When the students' encounter an unfamiliar word or phrase, teachers should ask students to read ahead and then go back to infer its meaning.

Conceptual Framework

A.L. Brown (1982) used a tetrahedron as a conceptual framework to organize factors affecting reading and other complex cognitive tasks. The

tetrahedron starts with Response history - focusing on the strengths reflected in the students' errors lets teachers build on what the student can do and focus our teaching decision to extend that processing system.

Struggling students are less likely to shift their processing strategies without direct support in the context where strategic action is required.

This is one reason that isolated phonics instruction has often failed to result in improved performance. Contingent instruction during oral reading can support struggling readers to apply their letter-sound knowledge in context (Clay, 2000).

Cues are the second side of the tetrahedron. Cues come from meaning, sentence structure, sound-to-letter expectations and print cues.

Prompt support is the third side of the tetrahedron. The prompt support is varied in the level of adult support provided, increasing support when the student struggled and decreasing support when the student succeeded.

The last tetrahedron side is strategies. For beginning readers, the two types of strategies that develop rapidly over the first few years are monitoring and searching strategies (Clay, 2000; Schwartz, 2005).

Searching strategies are used as an initial attempt to read a word.

Monitoring strategies are used to evaluate the attempt and initiate further searching if needed. Phonics, the use of context cues, and decoding by analogy are all forms of searching.

Assessment

Assessing Reading Comprehension

When assessing students reading comprehension, teachers tend to use questions that require factual recall of information. Teachers who regularly use higher order questions to engage pupils in discussions are likely to find that their students read more. The eight profiles in comprehension are as follows: Literalists, Fuzzy Thinkers, Left Fielders, Quiz Contestants, Politicians, Dodgers, Authors and Minimalists. Each profile has a specific characteristic.

Literalists believe that all answers can be found in the text. They find it difficult to distinguish between questions that require them to think and those that require them to seek information. Literalists respond well to Question-Answer Relationships (QAR) instruction and quickly internalize the semantic and syntactic markers that identify different question types. Pre-reading activities are crucial for Literalists.

Fuzzy Thinkers have vague and imprecise concepts that are frequently reflected in vague and imprecise language. Students can give answers to any type of question, but the thinking behind their responses will be elusive and ambiguous. Fuzzy Thinkers benefit from story maps and vocabulary development. One other strategy that can enhance precision in thinking is the use of Semantic Feature Analysis grids. Think Alouds can help Fuzzy Thinkers adopt a greater emphasis on meaning making in their approach to reading.

Left Fielders are known for their unpredictable responses. Their responses frequently have nothing to do with the text and may even seem incoherent or illogical. Left Fielders benefit from using story maps to find the key ideas in the text. Left Fielders need teachers to model relationships between ideas that are triggered by syntactic clues, especially during pre-reading activities.

Quiz Contestants respond to questions about text by searching their memory banks for an explanation that will serve as a plausible response. They use their background experiences to answer questions, but do so with no consideration of the text they have read. They don't understand that there must be a link between the text and their experiences. Quiz

Contestants benefit from QAR and mapping activities. Classification tasks can provide opportunities for increasing clarity in an awareness of relationships between ideas.

Politicians will do their best to tell the teacher what they think the teacher wants to hear. Politicians benefit from Discussion Webs that force readers to think about and draw conclusions by looking at both sides of an issue. This will help them develop a greater level of text awareness and organization.

Dodgers are the readers who evaluate the comprehension question themselves. If it is not to their liking, they will change the question into one that they feel is more suitable and then respond to the new question.

Dodgers respond well to List-Group-Label strategy and QAR. The List-Group-Label strategy begins with brainstorming and requires students to sort word lists into groups and then label each group of words. One other strategy Dodgers benefit from is the use of a plot-relationship chart. This forces students to see the connections among four story dimensions: a character, a desired action or goal, the problem and the solution.

Authors are readers who, dissatisfied with the literacy content they read, add more to it, often at great length and with much confidence. A

strategy that directly addresses the Author's orientation toward reading is Story Impressions. In this strategy, students are given a list of words or phrases from the story and asked to use them in a creation of their own story. The most effective strategy for Author's is the use of Literacy Circles.

Lastly, Minimalists are characterized by their simple and unelaborated responses to even the most complex of questions. There are two types of Minimalists. Type A Minimalists refuses to elaborate because they lack self-confidence. Type B Minimalists have a profound fear of being wrong. They often show signs of anxiety when they believe their responses are wrong. Minimalists need a safe and supportive classroom environment. Minimalists benefit from pre-reading strategies that encourage links between their own thinking and experiences and that of the author. Sketch to Stretch gives Minimalists a way to express interpretations of text.

Scaffolded Reading Experience and Questioning the Author

Two instructional frameworks that focus on the readers' understanding of the content of given text are Scaffolded Reading Experience (SRE) and Questioning the Author (QTA). Teachers use SRE to carefully plan and implement reading activities that will scaffold students'

understanding of the text. SRE is divided into two phases: planning phase where the teacher considers the students, the text and the purpose for reading. The second phase; Implementation phase consist of three activities - pre-reading, during reading and post-reading.

Teachers use QtA to teach students what they read, to think, to probe, to associate and to critique. QtA has four features: viewing the text as a fallible product written by fallible authors, dealing with the text through questions that are directed toward making sense of the text, questioning as students are reading and encouraging student collaboration in the construction of meaning.

Collaborative Strategic Reading and Peer-Assisted Learning Strategies

The two frameworks that focus on teaching the process of reading through comprehension strategies are Collaborative Strategic Reading (CSR) and Peer-Assisted Learning Strategies (PALS).

CSR is divided into three steps. First, students use a preview card where they brainstorm what they know and predict what they will learn. Next, students read the passage looking for "clicks" and "clunks." Clunks are a word, concept or idea they do not understand. In the last step, the

students use "Get the Gist" cards to determine the most important idea of the passage. After the entire text is read students use "Wrap Up" cards to generate a list of questions with answers that show they understood the most important information in the text.

PALS, also consists of three steps. First, two readers read together - one high level reader is paired with a low-level reader. The high leveled reader reads for five minutes than the low-level reader reads the same passage for five minutes. Then the low level reader retells the passage. The next step is called Paragraph Shrinking. The students now take turns reading a paragraph - then the low level reader tells the main idea of the paragraph. The last step is called Prediction Relay. This step is divided into four parts: reasonably predict what will happen next, accurately read one half page, accurately check prediction and correctly summarize the most important information.

Concept-Oriented Reading Instruction

Concept-Oriented Reading Instruction (CORI) straddles both categories by teaching comprehension strategies within the context of learning about a specific topic. CORI engages students with knowledge about a specific topic and comprehension strategies specifically designed to

learn more about the topic. CORI is divided into four phases: observe and personalize, search and retrieve, comprehend and integrate, and communicate to others.

Conclusion

Teachers need to monitor and assess students so they are able to meet the academic needs of their students. Research shows that teachers need to use a variety of methods when teaching children. A well-rounded curriculum is important because it will ensure that a variety of learning styles are addressed. CORI is a successful strategy because it incorporates all content areas. Students are better able to relate to content when it relates to them. CORI helps this happen.

In this chapter I explored current research for helping struggling readers learn. Next I will describe what these strategies would look like in a classroom.

Chapter 4

Putting It All Together

Structured reading instruction is vital for student achievement. One of the greatest challenges to teachers determining the amount of time needed for each component of reading instruction. A balanced curriculum is needed to ensure achievement for all students. This concept was a major theme in three major works used by reading teachers at a national level. Boushey and Moser (2006); Bear et al (2008) and Clay (2000) advocate the need for teachers to have a balanced curriculum and to present the curriculum in a manner that shows connectivity between all content areas. Boushey and Moser (2006) show that reading instruction can be split into 5 categories: Independent instruction, phonemic instruction, word sorts, guided reading and large group reading instruction.

In this chapter I will discuss the amount of time researchers suggest we allot for each category and why it is the appropriate amount of time. Boushey and Moser (2006) stressed the importance of consistency and structure in the classroom. They recommended a schedule that supports students' independence and fosters a climate where teachers provide guidance without overpowering the students. I will discuss the categories in

a sequence that will show their level of importance. By this I mean the percentage of time spent on classroom instruction for each category. All five strategies are important to a student's success and they act as a ladder which leads to the student's ultimate goal - becoming an independent learner.

The following table demonstrates the model Boushey and Moser (2006) recommend, keeping in mind the teacher needs to adapt according to their time frames and district requirements.

Boushey and Moser -Time Recommendations

Strategy	Percentage of time spent per day	Manner of delivery
Independent Instruction	10%	One on one and/or Student works independently.
Phonemic Instruction	20%	Whole group
Word Sorts	10%	Whole group.
Guided Reading	40%	Small group.
Large Group Reading Instruction	20%	Whole group.

Guided Reading

In recent years, educators have faced the twin challenges of meeting the needs of every child and raising test scores. There are many ways to raise test scores, and focusing resources on the very lowest achievers is not necessarily one of them. "Longitudinal studies reveal that there is a 90%

chance that a child who is a poor reader at the end of first grade will remain a poor reader at the end of fourth grade."

Guided Reading offers a many-layered and coordinated approach to high-quality instruction in the variety of forms necessary to serve each child at the level needed. This instructional method provides students with the opportunity to read a text selected to help them expand their reading abilities. Children receive explicit instruction in a particular aspect of reading or writing, small group instruction gives students the opportunity to apply their knowledge of phonics to the reading of continuous text. The instruction is targeted to the specific skills that the small group of children need.

This approach facilitates the learning styles of a wide variety of children. Clay (2000) indicates that 90-95% of children with reading problems can overcome their difficulties if they receive appropriate treatment at an early age. It is the responsibility of educators to fine-tune instructional services so that small group and individual teaching occur. Teachers need to identify in a timely fashion the students who need help. Teachers must incorporate three keys to success: expert teaching, good books and effective instructional design.

The responsibility of educators is to provide students with explicit, clear, effective instruction. This instruction should result in students understanding letter-sound relationships, how words "work," how to use their knowledge of letters, sounds, and words while reading texts. Students should also know how to use their knowledge of letters, sounds, and words while writing texts.

In the small-group instruction associated with Guided Reading the teacher needs to limit text choice; create a very precise sequence of texts; slow down to work closely on a text; or provide some very explicit and systematic work with letters, sounds and words in isolation. The bottom line is that children who find literacy learning difficult need to spend most of their time reading and writing continuous text. Teachers need to design instruction to meet each learner's individual needs.

The teacher works with a small group of children who have similar enough needs that they can be taught together. From a series of texts organized by level of difficulty, the teacher selects a book that the children can read with a little support. The teacher provides explicit instruction to help the children read the text proficiently and at the same time learn more about the reading process. Guided Reading usually includes several minutes

of explicit word work at the end of the lesson. Because Guided Reading has so many layers, it is what teachers spend the most time on throughout the day. Boushey and Moser (2006) suggest 40% of the day be spent on Guided Reading.

Whole Group Instruction

Children need to hear numerous texts read aloud and have the opportunity to engage with the language. Hearing the same texts read several times helps young children internalize the structure of written language. Whole-class instruction encompasses the following contexts: interactive read aloud, shared/interactive writing, shared reading, reading mini lessons, writing mini lessons and phonics/spelling mini lessons. Boushey and Moser (2006) suggest spending 20% of the day on Whole Group Instruction. This time is crucial because it provides the students with a foundation of what "good reading" looks like and sounds like. During this time the teacher must stress the importance of fluency, reading for meaning and using reading strategies.

Interactive read-aloud

The teacher reads a story aloud and invites thinking before, during, and after reading to help children deepen their understanding and develop

the ability to talk with one another. The teacher models fluent reading, using punctuation and different voice tones. Showing the students how these concepts help readers' comprehension of text.

Shared/Interactive Writing

The teacher acts as scribe as she guides children in composing and then reading a text. As the teacher writes, she may draw children's attention to specific aspects of print, including letters and sounds. Shared writing becomes interactive writing when the teacher invites children to "share the pen" in writing the text. The teacher reinforces the concept of using voice, word choice and a variety of sentence structures when writing a story.

Shared Reading

The teacher and students read a text in unison, talk about the meanings, and attend to aspects of text such as directionality, voice-print match, punctuation, letter-sound relationships, or parts within words. Children have the opportunity to behave like readers with the teacher's support.

Reading Mini lessons

The teacher provides a brief, explicit lesson on a particular aspect of reading. Often texts that have previously been read aloud are used as examples. The mini lessons are usually followed by small group work and independent reading. Children then share what they have learned.

Writing Mini lessons

The teacher provides a brief, explicit lesson on a particular aspect of writing. Often texts that have previously been read aloud are used as mentor texts. The teacher is able to show proof reading and editing skills using the actual student stories. This helps the students make a connection between their life experiences and the art of writing. After the lesson, children work on their own pieces and then share their writing.

Phonemic Instruction

Phonemic instruction begins with the whole group. Boushey and Moser (2006) suggest 20% of the day is spent on phonemic instruction. Keeping in mind that phonemic instruction is also taught during Large Group Reading, Guided Reading and Writing. The teacher uses interactive activities to increase participation and interest. Literature books are a powerful resource for teaching phonemic concepts. There are several activities that

can be done using literature books. "Reading/Writing Rhymes" is an activity where the students blend the beginning sound(s) of a word with the "chunk." For example, the student has the letter "s" and the chunk is "at" -the student puts his letter in front of the chunk and says "s-at, sat." Then, the teacher uses the word in a sentence.

Another activity is "Rounding up the Rhymes." During this activity the teacher reads a story that has several rhyming words. Before the story is read the teacher puts a list of rhyming words on a chart paper, and tells the students to listen for words that rhyme with the words on the chart paper. After the story the teacher goes back into the book and re-reads the parts that have rhyming words. The teacher stops reading right before the rhyming word, asking the students to supply the rhyming word. Once they find the rhyming word we go back and add more rhyming words.

With both of these activities the teacher needs to stress the "chunks," distinguishing them from the beginning sounds. Phonemic awareness is a vital component to learning to read. During kindergarten and first grade 30 % of instruction is in the area of phonemic awareness. According to the chart that Boushey and Moser (2006) provided 20% of time should be on Phonemic Instruction, and 10% of Word Sorts. Based on

my readings throughout this paper, I have come to the conclusion that Phonemic Instruction and Word Sorts go hand in hand. They are both very important to the students' success in reading.

Phonics/Spelling Mini Lessons

Phonics and spelling instruction is an approach to phonemic instruction. During phonics and spelling instruction the teacher provides a concise, explicit lesson on a principle related to letters, sounds, and words: phonemic awareness, letters, letter-sound relationships, high-frequency words, vocabulary, spelling patterns, word structure, or ways of solving words. The mini lesson is followed by an application activity in which children individually apply what they have learned and then by a group share.

Word Sorts

Through listening to and talking about life experiences and stories, children develop a rich speaking vocabulary. Students' knowledge of spelling or orthography strengthens that bonding. When purposeful reading, listening, and speaking take place, vocabulary is learned along the way. Letter-sound correspondences, phonics, spelling patterns, high-frequency-word recognition, decoding, word meaning, and other attributes are the basis of written word knowledge.

Students need hands-on opportunities to manipulate word features in a way that allows them to generalize beyond isolated, individual examples to entire groups of words that are spelled the same way. Word study is well worth 10 to 15 minutes of instruction and practice daily. Word Study needs to match the level of word knowledge of the learner. Students in first grade are somewhere between the Emergent Stage, Letter Name-Alphabetic Stage and Within Word Pattern Stage. These stages correspond with the reading stages: Emergent, Beginning Reading and Transitional Reading.

Bear et al (2008) suggest starting with Letter Name sorts when working with first graders; with these sorts the students sort pictures according to the first letter. The students use the names of the letters as cues to the sound they represent. Next, the students use concept sorts. With concept sorts the students sorted pictures according to related concepts. The last type of word sort for first graders is Letter Name-alphabetic sorts. With these sorts the students sorted words and pictures according to the vowel sound.

Bear et al (2008) suggest working on the same word sort for a period of four days. On the first day the students orally say the names of the pictures and/or words, color the pictures, and cut out the cards. Once

finished with these tasks the students do a "free" sort. With a free sort the students sort the pictures any way they wish. Then the students explain their sort to a friend. On the second day, the students sort the cards as directed by the teacher. On the third day, the teacher and students work with the word sorts in Guided Reading groups. On the last day, the students sort the cards, and then glue them in their word sort notebooks.

Independent Instruction

Independent instruction is the time when students work independently on content taught in whole group. These concepts are at the students' independent level, they are not new concepts. Boushey and Moser (2006) said that students need independent work time to process new concepts. They felt that 10% of the day should be set aside as independent work time. This is the time when students practice concepts taught throughout the day. Teachers need to monitor independent time carefully. If you allow a student to work independently on a concept the student does not understand frustration will lead to reduced effort followed by a shut down. Teachers can vary this time according to the students "bottom power," or ability to work independently. Some first grade students are able to work independently for 10 minutes at a time, some for 30 minutes. It is up to the

teachers' discretion to determine what is most appropriate for their students.

Conclusion

In summary, whole class teaching demonstrates to children what it is like to be part of a community of learners. Children experience explicit teaching of reading, writing and phonics competencies. Children learn how to compose their own texts and engage with print as they write them. And finally, children learn principles for how letter sounds and words work. Students need to have many opportunities to apply the principles while doing hands-on activities.

It is my goal to teach my students to become independent learners. If the students are able to master the five components discussed in this chapter, I feel they will be able to become independent learners. I want my students to be able to decode unknown words, comprehend text and compose well written stories. Each of the components mentioned throughout this chapter will help lead them to this ultimate goal.

In the following chapter I will show how I took what I learned and implemented it into my classroom. I plan on showing how following the

research, implementing the strategies and making them my own will help me;
help my struggling readers become independent learners and readers.

Chapter 5

Implementation in my classroom

Introduction

Throughout the process of researching for this paper I realized how important it is to have structure and consistency. I have always prided myself in including both in my classroom. One thing that has been missing is integrating concepts together. It is so important that everything ties together and that the students understand "why" teachers teach specific concepts and "how" the concepts help them become better learners. In this chapter I will show what the five components; independent instruction, phonemic instruction, word sorts, guided reading and large group reading instruction look like in my classroom. I will show how I blended them together and led my students to become independent, self-regulated learners.

Implementation in my classroom

In the past I split the morning into three time frames, Calendar Board, Whole Group Reading and Guided Reading. During the Guided Reading time the students who were not working with me were doing worksheets or participating in a center activity. I hated it. I felt like I was the worksheet

queen. The worksheets only purpose was something to keep the students busy with so I could meet with groups of students.

During the course of this research project I have discovered that there are many things that are so much more productive for students to do during small group reading time. I have to admit, I was a non-believer. I didn't think students could handle the freedom to decide what they were going to do while I worked with small groups.

Boushey and Moser (2006) have shown me the light. Not only are my students able to make good choices during small group time - they are making wise choices. My students are able to work independently -they are able to decide what area they need the most work in.

This year I decided not to split the morning up, instead I am teaching whole group reading, writing, phonics, and spelling as mini lessons. I begin the morning by having the students write in their journals. This is a free writing time. While the students are writing I meet with one of my reading groups.

After meeting with one group, I pull the kids back together and I have 5 students share their journal stories. Then we do a phonemic activity. Once the activity is done, I work with another small reading group. The

students who were with me the first time need to write in their journals - the other students chose one of the Daily Five to do.

After meeting with my second reading group, we get together as a class again. This time we do a whole group reading activity. This usually takes about 20 minutes. I have the students do some type of "return to text" activity that goes along with our story. While the students are working I meet with my third reading group.

After meeting with the third group, we meet as a class again. This time we work on spelling. Everyday the students have a specific activity they must do to practice their words independently. While the students are working on this I meet with my fourth reading group. The students who were with me in the third group work on their reading activity.

After my fourth group, we meet as a class again and do a Word Sort activity. We finish out the morning with students doing a Daily Five activity they haven't participated in yet.

After lunch, we do Calendar Board, Working with Words, and then I meet with my last reading group. While I am working with my last reading group (my top group) the rest of the students are working on their Word Sorts. Students do a different activity everyday with their word sorts.

The activities vary from free choice sort, sorting with a friend, sorting according to how the teacher tells you to sort, writing about the sort and finally gluing the sort into our Word Sort journals. We finish out the day with Math, Social Studies/Science, Specialists, and recess.

Conclusion

I am very pleased with the flow of my classroom this year. I am so grateful to "the Sister's." They believe that students need to have a say in how they learn, but at the same time they need structure and consistency. Just about every article and book that I read throughout this process said the same thing. Teachers have a very hard job - they not only need to teach, they need to nurture, instill independence and stress the importance of working cooperatively with others.

When trying to answer my research statement "Approaches to Differentiate Instruction that Serve the Needs of Struggling Readers" I wasn't able to find any one definite answer. It reminds me of Dr. Henning's favorite phrase to us throughout our master's program - "It depends." It depends on what the students needs are, what their maturity level is, and the confidence level of the teacher. One thing that I did discover is that

students' need a variety of instructional techniques in order ensure that all students learning styles and needs are met.

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