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A comparison of reading instruction recommendations for good and poor readers

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A comparison of reading instruction recommendations for good and poor readers

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to compare the published recommendations for instruction made for two ability groups. This comparison was made within the context of actual classroom reading instruction.

A COMPARISON OF READING INSTRUCTION RECOMMENDATIONS
FOR GOOD AND POOR READERS

A Research Paper

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FOR GOOD AND POOR READERS

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | | |
|------|---|----|
| I. | Introduction..... | 2 |
| | Purpose of the Study..... | 2 |
| | Importance of the Study..... | 2 |
| II. | Review of Literature..... | 3 |
| | Actual Practices in the Classroom..... | 3 |
| | Content Analyses of Reading Education Literature..... | 7 |
| III. | Procedure..... | 11 |
| | Materials..... | 11 |
| | Method..... | 12 |
| IV. | Findings..... | 13 |
| | Word Identification..... | 13 |
| | Comprehension..... | 15 |
| | Oral Reading..... | 21 |
| | General Approaches..... | 22 |
| | Grouping..... | 27 |
| | Analysis of Textbooks..... | 29 |
| V. | Summary, Discussion, and Conclusions..... | 32 |
| | Summary..... | 32 |
| | Discussion..... | 33 |
| | Conclusion..... | 35 |
| | References..... | 36 |

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Educators have long been aware of differences among children in the elementary schools. This awareness has been especially true in the field of reading education. In an attempt to maximize effectiveness in teaching and learning, children have been placed in groups labeled with terms such as gifted, good, high-achieving, talented, disabled, poor, low-achieving, learning disabled, nonreader, and remedial. Because of this practice one would assume that authorities in the field of reading would recommend the best instructional methods to use with each group.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to compare the published recommendations for instruction made for two ability groups. This comparison was made within the context of actual classroom reading instruction.

Importance of the Study

Much data has been provided in regard to actual practices in the classroom. Studies showed that good and poor readers were treated differently in instruction and materials. However, there was little information as to why these practices existed. This study was made to determine what the current recommendations for reading instruction are for good and poor readers. If current recommendations reflect a different philosophy for the treatment of good and poor readers, then actual practices at least are supported by the literature. However, if there is a trend toward similar recommendations, reading educators would need to consider changes to create a more equal basis of instruction for all students.

Chapter 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This chapter deals with a review of literature in order to ascertain what is actually being practiced in the classroom. In addition, it reviews content analyses of reading education literature that deal with related topics in connection with language arts education.

Actual Practices in the Classroom

Elementary classrooms contain students with a mixture of abilities. Grouping for reading instruction is a common way to accommodate this mixture. According to Unsworth (1984), current research shows that homogeneous groupings are not effective in raising pupils' reading achievement levels. Ability grouping tends to harden categories, especially for the low achievers. The discrepancy between high-achieving and low-achieving readers seems to increase dramatically as children progress through elementary grades. Widening gaps may also be caused by different experiences in reading groups. Allington (1983) stated that the discrepancy between the performance of high-achieving and low-achieving readers might be due to differences in their instruction as well as variations in their individual learning styles or aptitudes.

Hiebert (1983) suggested that homogeneous groupings perhaps are not always the most effective method of teaching reading. She concluded that many children's reading experiences occur almost exclusively within the context of homogeneous ability groups. This creates a climate of relative permanence as few, if any, changes are made from group to group. She found that experiences were different from group to group. These different experiences could influence learning outcomes. Teachers tended

to spend more time with high-ability groups. Children in high-ability groups were given meaning-related activities, received new information at appropriate rates, and had higher expectations as to their capabilities. The students in low reading groups spent more time in oral reading, decoding skills, and dealing with behavior problems and management. Poor readers were more often placed in frustrational material and received much less praise for correct responses. Hiebert noted that the discrepancy between good and poor readers increased dramatically as the children progressed through grade school. She stated that a critical component was teacher expectations for individuals and groups.

Teachers' expectations about their students are likely to function as self-fulfilling prophecies (Brophy, 1983). As the existence of teacher expectation for a particular student's performance increases, the probability that the student's performance will move in the direction expected and not in the opposite direction also increases. Differences in expectations lead to differences in what is taught which in turn lead to differences in what is ultimately learned.

High-achieving students receive a distinctive set of expectations. Teachers tend to plan and implement more independent projects and introduce more high-level concepts with high-track students. Teachers stress more structured assignments dealing with basic facts and skills in low-track classes. Low achievers were exposed to less content than high achievers.

High-expectation students will contribute to class activities and interact with teachers more often than low-expectation students. The high achievers may be treated with more warmth, support, encouragement, and respect. Brophy suggested that making teachers more aware of

expectations' effects may induce them to assume more responsibility for the achievement of low-expectation students in the classroom.

Allington (1980) provided compelling data that disabled readers are provided different reading instruction than gifted readers. Specific observations made about instruction for disabled readers included the following: a lesser amount of time allocated to reading lessons, fewer opportunities to respond to discussion, less praise, less sympathetic treatment, immediate attention to errors, direct attention to graphic and phonic characteristics within words, little silent reading instruction or practice, relatively little actual reading orally or silently, and more attention to oral reading than silent reading. It was noted that gifted readers read more than twice as many words per session as disabled readers.

Alpert (1975) concluded that significantly more high reading groups were given meaning lessons in which no phonics was taught, but an emphasis was placed on visual recognition of whole words and reading whole sentences. As opposed to this treatment, low reading groups were given meaning-code lessons in which meaning was of prime concern and phonics was taught as one of a group of word attack skills. The high groups used more basal readers at a higher readability level. Low groups read about half as many books and at approximately a grade level below other readers.

Giving equivalent time to both gifted and disabled readers is not really giving equivalent instruction to disabled readers according to Allington (1983). He concluded that disabled readers should be getting more reading time if we expect to see improvement and growth from that ability group. He observed that while equal time was given to both

groups, there were more incidences of off-task behavior in the low group, thus providing less engagement to reading. Off-task behavior is not an inherent learning characteristic, and therefore, the problem may well lie in the inability of the instructor to have holding power over poor readers for a long sequence of learning.

Unsworth (1984) characterized the low-ability group instruction as including an emphasis on decoding tasks, more time on oral reading, more time on behavior management, teacher interruption for errors, and attention to graphophonic cues for unknown words. High-ability group instruction is seen as full of meaning, related activities, silent reading, the giving of syntactic and semantic cues for unknown words, and little interruption of silent reading. A study by Gambrell (1981) showed that contextual reading accounted for 57% of instructional time for high-ability readers and 22% for disabled readers. High-ability readers received 7% instructional time on isolated word or letter sounds while disabled readers received this instruction 17% of the time during reading class.

Observations were made by Durkin (1984) as to assignments being made on the basis of needs in reading classes. She found that although all reading manuals included a section making provisions for individual and group differences, only 2 of 16 teachers observed in her study used this section. Those using it assigned the practice to an entire class rather than to a particular group exhibiting a need for the practice.

Mason (1983) found a contradiction between what was taught and what teachers believe ought to be taught. Her findings showed that very little reading comprehension was taught in the elementary school, especially to students in low-achieving reading groups. Their lessons

were less well-coordinated and included phonics and word-level comprehension with very little text-level comprehension instruction. There was more emphasis on recognition of words than recognition of concepts. Large portions of instruction consisted of drills from workbooks, skill sheets, and other skill-oriented activities. High achievers' instruction, however, was directed toward more text-level comprehension instruction with an emphasis on analysis of information.

The research of classroom reading instruction clearly shows that there is a difference in the kind of instruction that students of different abilities receive. In general, the instruction poor readers receive differs from good readers because poor readers' instruction dwells more on decoding skills and less on actual comprehension skills. In addition, more time is spent dealing with off-task behavior which in turn leaves less time for actual reading instruction.

Content Analyses of Reading Education Literature

Efforts were made to locate content analyses that addressed the topic of this study. Although content analyses have been done in many areas of study, nothing was found regarding a comparative analysis of teaching recommendations for good and poor readers. The following describes three major content analyses in order to provide a context for interpreting the one reported here.

Durkin (1981) conducted a study dealing with reading comprehension instruction within five basal reader series. This study was done in order to see what was recommended for teaching children how to comprehend and to learn if a match existed between what was seen in classrooms and what was recommended in the manuals. Analyzing the basal manuals fostered the impression that they were very much alike. Furthermore, the

manuals were not providing adequate comprehension skills. There seemed to be many activities, but all became ends in themselves rather than a means to improve students' comprehension when reading on their own. There seemed to be an excessive amount of questioning in all the manuals which led to assessment rather than explicit informative instruction. In addition, Durkin determined that little was done with expository discourse in basal reader programs.

A comparative study of four reading journals' contributions to comprehension instruction methods was conducted by Ceprano & Stabile (1986). They chose the years 1973 and 1983 for their study. Eight categories of comprehension instruction and three categories of comprehension follow-up were analyzed. Ceprano and Stabile found that assignment strategies that provided independent practice of comprehension behaviors were not adequate. Teaching strategies for introducing text, guided reading, and discussion of text needed to be given attention, also. They found that manuals provided assessment and practice with "brief" procedures for teaching children how to comprehend. Contributors in journals discussed and conducted experiments pertaining to theories of reading comprehension, but infrequently concerned themselves with instructional implications. There seemed to be more articles dealing with comprehension instruction in 1983 than 1973 except for those in Reading Improvement. Journals seemed to de-emphasize techniques for comprehension assessment and emphasize assignment and application purposes. Teaching strategies for introduction of text, guided reading, and discussion of text were offered most often. Practitioners were receiving relatively little insight into how to promote syntactic awareness, passage structure awareness, or comprehension monitoring

despite research evidence indicating their importance in reading comprehension development. Researchers writing theoretical articles emphasizing the importance of comprehension abilities were urged to offer more concrete practical suggestions on how teachers could develop these skills in their students.

Bridge and Hiebert (1985) compared classroom writing practices, teachers' perceptions of their writing instruction, and textbook recommendations for writing practices. The data was limited in that teachers often inaccurately described classroom behaviors concerning the quality and quantity of writing being done by the children. Teachers had little formal training in writing, and this lack of knowledge could have an influence on instruction. Teachers tended to incorporate suggestions of specialists for motivating children to write. Published materials seemed to have a pervasive influence on instructional practice. A much larger percent of time was devoted to mechanics and grammar rather than the child's own composing. Most texts perpetuated traditional approaches which emphasized product rather than process. The materials seemed to target on the average-ability student. Results of the study showed that students spent about 15% of their time on some type of writing activity, but few assignments required students to write more than a sentence. Teachers stressed neatness and correctness but gave little instruction as to writing strategies. There was very little practice time observed with few revision activities or paraphrasing assignments.

Analysis of the textbook recommendations revealed that only 1% had suggestions for prewriting activities to help students gather and organize ideas prior to writing. Textbooks continued to stress grammar, although experiments in formal grammar instruction showed that there was

little improvement in quality of student writing from this type of instruction. The authors concluded that it was not enough to merely upgrade preservice and graduate programs in teacher education. A gap exists between current writing instruction practice in schools and practices that researchers and theorists recommend.

Though these studies dealt with reading and writing topics, they did not specifically relate to a designated group such as good or poor readers. They tended to deal with generalities within reading programs. No content analyses were located that addressed recommendations for instructing good and poor readers.

Chapter 3

PROCEDURE

This chapter provides a list of materials chosen for this study. It also describes key words which were used in the selection of articles and sections of textbooks. In addition, specific areas of reading instruction considered for this study are given.

Materials

An analysis of articles appearing in five reading journals for the years 1984 and 1985 was made in this study. The journals were chosen from a list found in the Johns, Ary, and St. John (1986) study of institutional productivity ratings based on publications in reading journals. The journals chosen by these authors are national publications whose contents are devoted solely to the discipline of reading, and they are refereed. These journals publish practioner-oriented professional articles rather than researcher-oriented reports. Included for this analysis were the five following journals:

- (1) The Reading Teacher
- (2) The Journal of Reading
- (3) Reading Horizons
- (4) Reading Research and Instruction (formerly Reading World)
- (5) Reading Psychology.

Also reviewed were four current professional methods textbooks on teaching reading. These included books by Harris and Sipay (1985), Spache and Spache (1973), Durkin (1978), and Heilman, Blair, and Rupley (1986).

Method

For the purpose of this analysis the terms gifted, high-achieving, good, and above average were considered synonymous as were the terms low-achieving, disabled, below average, remedial, poor, and nonreader. These key words were used in a search of books' tables of contents and indexes. They were also used as a guide for the selection of titles of articles in the professional journals.

Specific areas of reading method designated as topics for consideration within the articles included comprehension, oral reading, word identification, general approaches, and groupings. These were selected on the basis of current focuses in the area of reading instruction.

Summaries were then produced and compared to determine differences with the reading recommendations for good and poor readers. A determination then was made subjectively as to whether there were differences and in which areas these differences existed.

Chapter 4

FINDINGS

This chapter deals with recommendations being made in the areas of reading included in this study. It contains findings for good and poor readers in word identification, comprehension, oral reading, general approaches, and grouping. A summary of each section is included.

Word Identification

Poor Readers

In the area of word identification, Fagan (1984) stressed individual tutoring for remedial reading groups. Students should be given practice in saying words in syllables following a tutor's pronunciation. Work also should be done with visual syllables including focus on words in isolation, in sentences, and larger contexts. Word skill lessons should be part of a spelling component with emphasis on word parts and correct visual form. Difficult words should be discussed in subsequent lessons when pupils would be asked to pronounce them. Meanings would be discussed in comprehension study. If a word could not be pronounced, then students would be given help by considering the meaning framework and syllabic make-up of the word. The recommendation was that it seemed appropriate that graphemic strategies focusing on units larger than a single letter should be developed with disabled readers in addition to the use of semantic and syntactic cues.

An intensive program of sight word instruction for nonreaders was suggested by Baumann and Koch (1985) as a means of grasping the concept of immediate word recognition. In order to expand sight vocabulary, teaching the use of meaning clues was said to be of utmost importance.

Teaching analogic strategies for improving word recognition for

disabled readers was recommended by Wolf, Desberg, and March (1985). They suggested that many disabled readers have difficulty using phonics and decoding, so a different approach might be appropriate. If disabled readers could be taught to use analogy strategies and generalize them, the authors felt it would speed reading development. A direct method of instruction as to root word and pronunciation changes would be the first strategy to be followed by a second strategy in which a comparison of unknown words to known words about letter combinations such as "ight" words would be given. Wolf, Desberg, and Marsh also recommended that these strategies be taught to competent readers but perhaps at a faster rate. It should be noted that these authors were in a very small minority in making a recommendation that was said to be appropriate for both good and poor readers.

Good Readers

Carr (1984) suggested that gifted readers' need for drill exercise was inappropriate. The use of a wide variety of children's books rather than controlled vocabulary from a basal would provide for vocabulary instruction. A few minutes of individual instruction would take care of the necessity of teaching particular skills in word identification.

Summary

Although few articles addressed word identification specifically for good or poor readers, there appeared to be a definite trend for an emphasis on bottom-up word attack skills for disabled readers with little or no emphasis on word attack skills for gifted readers. It would seem that authorities believe that phonics instruction is needed for the disabled reader, and that the gifted reader will be able to decode words with little or no formal instruction.

COMPREHENSION

Poor Readers

Hansen & Hubbard (1984) stated that many teachers focused on literal comprehension with disabled readers because they had trouble with inferential questions. The authors believed disabled readers used the same thinking operations as gifted readers but lacked background experiences or had not practiced inferential thinking. By the use of prereading activities, disabled readers could be taught critical comprehension skills which were being used by gifted readers. The prereading activities would focus on a discussion in which questions were modeled to create a relationship connecting new information to prior knowledge. Questions were to help students compare something in their own lives to something that might happen in the story. Teachers lead students through the inference process before the students read in order to help them realize what thinking process they need to use. As the students begin an active involvement in the reading, they are able to draw inferences by making connections using relationships from the prereading activity. Discussion follows reading with only inferential questions asked. The interest level of disabled students increases as they feel freer to respond to questions with no one correct answer.

Critical listening, critical reading, and critical thinking were all defined as the ability to analyze and evaluate ideas by Boodt (1984). She would agree with Hansen and Hubbard (1984) in that remedial readers should not be denied these skills but should be instructed in the use of them. Boodt emphasized that studies provided support that teaching critical skills in reading was appropriate for children in elementary

grades and should not be denied because of lack of basic decoding skills. She believed that an overemphasis on skills might result in negative attitudes toward reading. The reader must view reading as pleasurable and have a positive attitude toward it. This would not be provided with a scenario of drill in decoding skills. She suggested a method for a daily 1 hour reading period. The first 30 minutes would be spent together for a listening lesson in which a particular critical listening skill was introduced, explained, and illustrated by example. The group would be instructed to listen for specific examples of the skill being taught that day. Discussion would immediately follow the reading with students encouraged to express opinions and make judgments on literature. Reading selections would be taken from fiction and biographies. Boott emphasized the importance of instruction in critical listening for disabled readers as a way of increasing ability to think and read critically.

Sinatra, Stahl, and Gemake (1984) suggested improving comprehension for disabled readers through semantic mapping to develop study skills for comprehension. They used readiness for a reading assignment as the appropriate place to give instruction in this strategy. Since mapping is a cognitive strategy, the teacher would conceptually organize content and structure before, during, and after reading to give students time to organize and integrate ideas. This could be implemented as a whole class activity or an individual assignment. It could also be verbal readiness as an approach in preparation for silent reading. Mapping focuses on a visual display of skeletal vocabulary and key concepts for the nodes of the reading material.

The effects of vocabulary load on the readability of social studies

texts could be a determining factor in the success of disabled readers according to Sledow and Hasselbring (1984). They suggested using a readability formula to determine passage difficulty. Their study showed that text could be rewritten to alter its level of readability without sacrificing its comprehensibility. A rewritten text could result in increased comprehension by students with reading difficulties. However, the task of altering the text readability is both difficult and time consuming. Great care would have to be taken to assure that altered versions were comprehensible and true to the original. Even with a rewritten text, the teacher's instructional capabilities are essential. Planned pre- and postreading instruction of vocabulary and text in combination with altered readability text resulted in increased comprehension and better text scores.

Reis and Leone (1985) stated that mildly handicapped students have difficulty reading and understanding textual material and remembering and answering questions about what they have read. They tend to read passively and do not monitor their own comprehension. The teacher must be sure to explain to the students why a strategy might help them and provide regular feedback to students on their independent use of the strategy. Students need to be taught to scan a passage to locate information using graphic cues and key words. These authors suggest a training period of 3 to 5 days with a checklist of strategies taught. The specific strategies include "why you look back," "when you look back," and "where you look back" as models. This method does not assume prior knowledge or understanding.

Remedial students need to be taught to be strategic readers and better comprehenders, according to Hahn (1985). Lessons on certain text

strategies need to be part of a reading curriculum. Students need to know how, when, and why to use a strategy. The teacher should provide extensive modeling in the areas of reading a paragraph orally and self-questioning. Using three question-answer relationships of "right there," "think and search," and "on my own," students learn to underline sentences, look back to discover answers, and realize that some answers had to come from their own knowledge base. As a result, students understand the difference between text-based and reader-based questions, how and where to locate answers to text-based questions, and that it's not illegal to look back to text for answers to questions.

Questions modeled on strategies employed by readers when comprehension failure occurs can be defined as a study of metacognition, thinking about one's own cognitive processes, according to Raykovicz and Bromlet (1985). Poor readers think of reading as a task but do it because it is required. They need continual guidance and outside reinforcement. They do not appear to be able to control their own thinking processes and need specific instruction in certain strategies that enhance their comprehension monitoring abilities.

Bristow (1985) suggested that poor readers are passive readers, and this may be a large factor in their comprehension. They do not rely on memory, intuition, and mental images for comprehension. They seem to need outside reinforcement and guidance. The poor readers seem to accept passively whatever an author might present with little or no active questioning of what they read. The problem may lie in the level of material in which they are placed as they are often in frustration levels. They exhibit a "learned helplessness," and the teachers instruct them differently. The poor readers seem to view reading differently as

they tend to focus on word-calling rather than comprehension. The author suggests that placing children in appropriate level materials is an important beginning to change this passivity. The students need to focus attention on making sense as a goal of reading and develop a background of experience. The teacher needs to instruct them to use active comprehension seeking strategies in order to actively combat the "learned helplessness."

Readers must assimilate new information that they read into structures of previous knowledge. Since most declarative sentences in English text express some given information and some new information, Vande Kopple (1984) has determined that poor readers might have problems spotting linkages between bits of related given information in different sentences. They are unable to process the given information to decide which schemata to call to the forefront of consciousness for consideration of that particular text. Some have difficulty drawing proper inferences. Teachers should be sensitized to proper instruction of given and new information in sentences in texts so they could judge the appropriateness of the reading material. Many times poor comprehension could result from placement in frustrational material.

Poor comprehension would appear to be a great problem for poor readers. Causes for this could be lack of understanding as to what reading is about as well as the lack of training to use abilities they possess. Poor instructional placement for reading instruction would also be a major factor in the struggle for poor readers to comprehend materials they are confronted with in the classroom.

Good Readers

Bates (1984) offered several strategies for gifted readers in the area of study skills and comprehension. He suggested that students use DR-TA to set the purpose, adjust reading rate, and evaluate comprehension as the reading progresses. The teacher is only a facilitator, and the students do the DR-TA independently. Students could create study guides, reading guides, and glosses rather than be given them as an assignment. These could be used as learning aids for other students within the class. A ReQuest Procedure in which students formulate their own questions about a reading selection which keeps them actively involved in reading processes while improving their independent comprehension skills was suggested. This method might be done with a pair of students alternately asking and answering questions as teacher and student.

Cooter and Alexander (1984) suggested that independent reading assignments and research projects would be appropriate for gifted students based on their interests and attitudes. They agreed that instruction for gifted readers be primarily comprehension skills to develop critical comprehension with an emphasis on teaching critical and evaluative methods of analysis for a variety of reading materials.

Carr's (1984) approach to critical reading skills for gifted readers would be to deal with complex concepts through discussion of conceptual background and inferences to reach their potential. Follow-up discussions should focus on interpretive questions, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. She gave no specific method of instruction but rather assumed that these skills would be inherent in the gifted readers. She did state that independent reading alone would not be sufficient to develop these skills.

Summary

There seemed to be more recommendations of critical thinking skills to be taught to the disabled reader than the gifted readers, although both groups recommendations stressed the importance of comprehension skills. The instructional strategies were somewhat different from poor to good readers. With the poor readers much of the thinking process was taught as a prereading lesson while less attention was given to good readers' thinking processes until after the reading was completed and discussion was taking place. It would appear that other factors such as passiveness, improper placement of instructional levels, and readability of text are also key factors in determining recommendations for comprehension. More authors have placed emphasis on study skill strategies for the gifted than the disabled readers in the analysis of these articles.

Oral Reading

Poor Readers

Bell, Mathews, and Seibert (1984) wrote on the topic of motivating the remedial reader to practice for fluency. They suggested that remedial readers who need the most practice seldom have opportunities to improve. They are rarely asked to read, which has a downward spiraling effect. It is important to provide opportunities for small successes in order for remedial readers to improve in abilities to achieve in reading. Studies have shown that as decoding improves, so does comprehension. The authors suggested four quick game-type activities to encourage remedial reading students to practice independently for improvement. Each activity could be implemented with very little time or effort on the part of the instructor, yet the games would provide competition in a

nonthreatening way. Some could be done in free time before or during school with peer monitoring. These authors feel that fluency can play an important role in the attainment of success for disabled readers.

Good Readers

No author addressed the factor of oral reading in connection with gifted readers. Oral reading did not appear to be an area of need or concern for the good reader.

Summary

There was little information found dealing with oral reading even with the disabled student. In the material included, it was of interest to note that the emphasis was on fluency rather than accuracy. It would appear that this reading skill was not a high priority as far as making recommendations for improvement with either poor or good readers.

General Approaches

Poor Readers

Johnson, Vickers, and Norman (1984) suggested the Language Experience Approach (LEA) in order to emphasize basic skills with mildly handicapped learners. The aim of LEA is to capitalize on children's interests by allowing them to dictate stories and accounts based on their own experiences. It was said to be important to identify those who could benefit from this approach. This identification could be done by observation and assessment devices. The rationale for LEA is that it capitalizes on students' interests, language, and knowledge of the world. It involves procedures and activities not like those in other materials. It should be noted that Bauman and Koch (1985) also recommend the LEA for nonreaders.

Another set of materials and methods for the remediation of reading

problems was suggested by Arnold and Swaby (1984). Neurolinguistic programming was used to match language with thinking processes. It united present information and past experience of individuals with observations made by the teacher to help students learn previously difficult information. It prepared the student to learn by establishing an appropriate physiological state, letting the student know that you anticipated success, and using prior knowledge when presenting new content. Instructions were delivered by ensuring that gestures were leading to a positive learning mode, being enthusiastic, and consistently leading students to visualize information. Learning was maintained and reinforced when students reviewed and remembered to apply visualization strategies to expository as well as narrative material.

According to Gentile, Lamb, and Rivers (1985), some neurologists contend that children's difficulties with reading are due to organic dysfunctions expressed through symbol-language deficits, childhood depression, right/left brain dysfunctions, hyperactivity, and low vigilance. Strategies suggested by these authors would be to teach to reading strengths rather than weaknesses or a developmental by-pass approach to prevent frustrations. It might be necessary to make adjustments in kinds of activities provided and to provide learning environments to offset depression or hyperactivity. With correct approaches affected children are able to continue with classroom reading activities.

Baumann and Koch (1985) state that a good reader, meaning-focused program will work for a disabled reader. Texts need to be provided that are meaningful with appropriate words to identify. The student should be able to view understanding as the ultimate goal of reading. Students

need to be treated as good readers, not poor ones.

Baumann and Koch stated further that a prerequisite for developing reading programs for mildly handicapped students was to know about their performance and style of functioning. Students can learn to read if proper educational adaptations are made. The motivational variable is very important as mildly handicapped students possess poor self-concepts and have little or no control over their own fate. They may have an approach-avoidance type of behavior. The relationship between the child and educator carries positive correlation to success. The child's feeling of self-worth needs to be enhanced. The teacher needs to continually change expectations as progress is made. The importance of increasing success, positive reaction tendencies, and internal locus of control are critical to increased functioning of the handicapped learner. The teacher is the key factor and must understand the characteristics of reading of the mildly mentally handicapped, determine the needs, build and maintain motivation, and be successful in planning appropriate reading programs.

Good Readers

In regard to general approaches suggested by authors, the majority indicated that gifted readers needed a wide variety of reading books. Carr (1984) said that even first graders should be using encyclopedias and that in-depth investigations could be implemented by middle grades with the use of reference books. Cooter and Alexander (1984) stated that a large quantity of appropriate materials should be available for gifted readers. Gaug (1984) conducted a study to determine opinions of classroom teachers as to the need for enrichment materials for high-achieving readers. An overwhelming majority felt that gifted

readers should have access to a wide range of reading materials.

Cagney and Sakiey (1984) recommended that instructors use the Renzulli Enrichment Triad of general exploratory activities, group training activities, and individual enrichment projects as a basis for gifted students. They suggested interest centers, resource persons, field trips, a development of thinking and feeling processes, sensitivity training, and historical, environmental, and consumer investigations whenever possible. The students gain skills in vocabulary by reading a variety of materials. They practice notetaking, outlining, and organizing of information. They experience group interaction to gain insight into the dynamics of group process, and individual projects provide opportunities to assume responsibility and develop a sense of commitment. These authors do suggest that the first two types of activities in the triad would be appropriate for all students.

Gifted readers should be exposed to a wide range of subject matter and challenging works in different areas of professional journals, research reports, abstracts, and works by major authors according to Moller (1984). They should have small group instruction for guided learning activities and discussion. All students should read the same selection to give purpose to follow-up questions. They could be taught to apply skills developed by reading other works by the same author or one with similar style. As an extension, they could locate a source, read and apply newly developed skills, and share them with their group.

Whorton, Karnes, and Currie (1985) suggested that instructional level of gifted students should not be at grade level, but two to four levels above placement. This should be determined by individual diagnostic reading tests or criterion referenced measures to determine

the level of placement. There should be incorporated computer assisted instructional programs and programmed or individualized reading materials based on the interest and abilities of the students.

Differences in the free-reading books selected by high, average, and low achievers was studied by Anderson, Higgins, and Wurster (1985). They determined that readability was not a big factor and length was only a minor factor. Good readers more often finished a book as low achievers tended to select books above independent reading levels. It is therefore important for the teacher to provide guidance for students as to appropriate books, showing them what is suitable, and that it is unwise to pick books for show rather than pleasure. It is important to provide a circulating library that is full of topics and levels. Books should be read aloud, and comments on books read by class leaders are also important. Status should be given to short books. Students should be taught to make selections on personal interest and reading comfort.

Summary

All authors reviewed here agreed that enrichment activities were a necessary part of a program for gifted readers. No mention was made in reference to using a variety of interesting and varied materials for poor readers. A wide variety of methods were suggested for poor readers including LEA. There seemed to be no consensus on one procedure that would work for all disabled students or gifted students. Only occasionally was a method suggested for both poor and good readers, and even then, the pace was varied to meet individual needs. There seemed to be a trend toward much reinforcement for poor readers regardless of the materials used. This recommendation was not so apparent for the gifted student. It seemed that providing a wide variety of materials and

experiences for the gifted and a great deal of reinforcement for the disabled were high priority areas. Methods of direct instruction were an obvious difference in recommendation.

Grouping

Mixed Readers

Small group cooperative learning strategies that would require four to eight students of differing ability levels was a recommendation of Maring, Furman, and Blum-Anderson (1985). The students would work noncompetitively toward common goals and objectives. The cooperative learning technique would promote positive peer relationship. Mainstreamed students would become productive members of a small group structure. These groups could be organized for peer teaching, categorizing or mapping, small group structured overviews, SP2R (survey, predict, read, revise), and translation writing.

Maring and Furman (1985) suggested seven "whole class" strategies to help mainstreamed young people read and listen better in content area classes. As mainstreamed students have problems learning subject matter terminology, organizing information to major concepts, and completing and comprehending textbook reading and assignments, strategies were listed to benefit both the mainstreamed and regular students. These included once-a-week oral reading, pyramiding with key words, study skills inventories, teaching contextual clues, word walls, guided reading procedures, and study guides.

Ability grouping was discussed by Unsworth (1984). He recommended no permanent groups. He suggested that groups need to be created, modified, or disbanded periodically to meet the needs of a particular learning situation. At times all pupils may be in one group, but group

membership would not be fixed. This atmosphere enhances commitment when students know how group work is related to the overall program. It also provides opportunity for all students to interact.

Good Readers

Cooter and Alexander (1984) suggested mixed-age grouping for gifted students whenever the situation would be appropriate. This would provide the same stimulation for these students as mixed-interclass grouping for the disabled readers.

Moller (1984) suggested grouping gifted advanced readers with students from other classrooms whose reading skills are well above grade level, and for whom there is no appropriate instruction available. Small group instruction would offer time for guided learning activities and discussion with challenging classmates. The students would have access to instructional materials in math, social studies, science, literature, art, etc. to meet their abilities and interests.

Summary

There seemed to be a consensus that a certain amount of changes in grouping among students would provide a positive climate within the classroom for everyone. Not only would it create a positive climate, but it would also help all students learn and maintain important study skills. However, some authors seemed to believe that the gifted students would benefit more from grouping within their own ability range. It would appear that the students who would benefit most from wide range grouping within classes would be the average and disabled readers.

Analysis of Textbooks

Using the descriptors gifted, high-achieving, talented, good, disabled, remedial, low-achieving, remedial, poor, nonreader, and meeting individual needs, a search was made of the table of contents and glossary of each of four current reading textbooks on the teaching of reading. Textbooks were studied because they are part of the professional literature. It was noted that very little writing was devoted to discussion of ability groups.

Harris and Sipay (1985) defined gifted students as those who tend to be 1 to 3 years ahead of their age peers in academic achievement. They mentioned that these students needed reading assistance in continuing their accelerated growth in reading abilities and interests. In regard to disabled readers, the authors stated that they needed programs geared to their abilities. Instructors need to accept their limitations, set reasonable expectations, and design programs to meet their needs and interests. Instruction should differ mainly in pace and materials. Materials should resemble those found in remedial programs rather than basals because interests are often more mature than reading programs provide. The students need additional time to learn and should be paced through a sequence of tasks. It should be noted that this textbook deals with information concerning testing and implementing plans for students who are not at their ability level for a variety of reasons.

Spache and Spache (1973) described gifted students as those who read earlier and more easily, have high verbal ability, strong vocabulary, and a quick learning aptitude. They have a need for an individualized approach though they could function as a group for some activities. A basal would be only a small part of their program. They need help in

planning and organizing, in developing discrimination, and setting a purpose for reading. They need to develop some method of record-keeping. Slow learners need extended readiness programs along with reinforcement of visual, auditory, listening, and language skills. They need a strong use of basal materials with a carefully controlled application of skills. A step-by-step approach to programmed instructional materials was suggested with reinforcement, review, and reteaching of processes in reading development.

Durkin (1978) dealt with individualized instruction by stating that very different kinds of activities contribute to a child's eventual progress in reading. Effective instruction is based on the kinds of help each child needs to advance in his or her ability to read. Skills and abilities are to be introduced or expanded while shortcomings are to be remediated. No single materials would be best for all children. A remedial reading teacher may be provided for the slow learners. There was no mention of gifted readers in her text.

Heilman, Blair, and Rupley (1986) suggested that gifted students are those who upon entering first grade are reading substantially above grade level or who possess the ability to make rapid progress in reading when given proper instruction. They need diagnostically based instruction, and the focus should be on instructional needs. Little mention was made of disabled or remedial readers except in reference to groups who need review in specific skills such as word identification. Grouping was suggested as a management technique to meet needs within the classroom.

Summary

The textbooks did not seem to focus specifically on the needs of ability groups but rather on general reading instruction in a classroom setting. Harris and Sipay were the only authors to give directed guidelines for any ability group, and their thrust was toward the remedial readers.

Chapter 5

SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, AND CONCLUSIONS

Summary

Studies have shown that good and poor readers are treated differently within classrooms. Students in differing reading groups are given different expectations, different materials, different assignments, and different methods of teaching. The purpose of this study was to determine if recommendations in professional reading journals and textbooks were indeed different for good and poor readers.

Analysis of the professional literature revealed that in the area of word identification, decoding skills are emphasized slightly for poor readers with drill as follow-up, while little or no time is recommended for word analysis for the good reader. The assumption is that good readers will identify words with little instruction from the teacher.

Recommendations for comprehension skills were provided by many writers. A need for critical thinking skills to be taught to poor readers was in evidence, while an emphasis on study skill strategies seemed to be the most prominent area for the gifted student. While authors emphasized comprehension skills in depth, it appeared that some felt that other factors such as attitude of the student, placement of instructional levels, and readability of text were also important in comprehension instruction.

Oral reading was an area in which there was very little information. There were no articles dealing with oral reading for a high-achieving student. Even for the poor student there was little emphasis and that centered primarily on game-type activities to improve fluency rather than accuracy.

Providing a wide variety of materials and experiences for gifted students seemed to be the consensus of authorities. There was little or no mention of varied materials for poor readers but rather a trend toward much reinforcement regardless of materials used.

Most writers seemed to be in agreement that a certain amount of changes in grouping among students would be beneficial for all concerned. It would create a more positive climate, and it would help students learn and maintain important study skills. Students benefiting the most from mixed groupings would be the average and low readers. Gifted students would probably achieve more from grouping within their own ability range.

Little or no mention of recommendations for either the good or poor reader was found in the reading textbooks. They seemed to concentrate on the general population of a classroom with little reference to students on either end of the spectrum.

Discussion

In contrasting recommendations with actual practice, it would appear that teachers do follow the recommendations given for good and poor readers. The good readers do receive a wide variety of materials with enthusiasm and encouragement to achieve to their potential. The poor readers are given drill on decoding skills, practice in oral reading, and an emphasis on quantity of instruction rather than quality. They are not encouraged to extend themselves because time has to be spent on behavior and management rather than positive reinforcement and encouragement. Few authors believed that good and poor readers could be given the same treatment or grouped together for a common purpose. It was noted that those who recommended similar treatment still differ in the approach concerning how and when the skill would be introduced and developed.

Thus, it would appear that actual practice is based to a great extent on recommendations which encourage separate and different approaches for each group.

Although reading abilities are addressed in texts and published articles in journals, little has been indicated that recommendations for one ability group might be applicable to another group. Authors only addressed themselves to one category of students with suggestions that gifted students needed different materials or methods of instruction than a disabled reader. However, it was noted that some of these same strategies could be implemented with both gifted and remedial readers. Good and poor readers could conceivably be taught some of these strategies at the same time as suggested by Unsworth (1984) to develop more interaction within the classroom. Britton (1985) has suggested that children learn in community and what better way to apply this than in the reading situation where critical reading, thinking, and listening skills are imperative.

Perhaps reading authorities should examine their findings and come forth with innovative suggestions for reading groups and reading instruction. They could apply Allington's (1983) assumption that good and poor readers differ in their reading ability as much because of differences in instruction as variations in individual learning styles or aptitudes. It may be time for a change in our perspective toward teaching reading. Perhaps we need to deviate from those homogeneous groups and allow opportunity for students to reach their reading potential without the confines of limited reading instruction in a predetermined group setting.

Conclusion

The data reported in this study suggest variations in the reading instruction recommendations for good and poor readers. However, it seemed that many strategies for teaching reading could be used for both groups. In most of the writing, a common characteristic was that an author dealt with only one ability level. As a reader, the instruction would tend to stop short of being all inclusive by the very specific nature of the article. It now seems important to determine through research if in fact a poor student does need different materials and instruction than a good reader. There is a need to determine whether placement within an ability group can be more detrimental than effective. If this is the case, the question is raised as to how we might more effectively deal with the good and poor reader in the classroom to better meet each individual's needs. Anyone who is concerned about the reading instruction of good and poor readers has an obligation to deal with all areas of reading and find the most appropriate and efficient methods of dealing with the students for the benefit of all concerned.

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