

EFFECTIVE TEACHING OF READING IN EDUCATION.

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Annotation. In our attempts to improve reading instruction we have had hundreds of studies of the characteristics of pupils, and scores of studies in which instructional programs and materials have been compared, but there have been surprisingly few studies of the teacher's contribution--of the teacher characteristics that make for successful learning, or of specific forms of teacher behavior that are associated with good and poor pupil learning in the reading program.

Key words: reading, program, vocabulary, phonics, phonemic, fluency, comprehension, writing, spelling.

It is generally accepted that the teacher plays a major role in determining the effectiveness of a reading instructional program. Duffy-Hester(1999) perhaps stated it best when she noted the role the teacher played in helping children learn to read: "I am convinced that the teacher is more important and has a greater impact than any single, fixed reading program, method, or approach". Our purpose in this article is to attempt to answer the crucial questions "What teaching strategies must teachers of reading be able to perform and how are these strategies effectively applied in teaching children to read?"

There are five essential and interdependent components of effective, evidence-based reading instruction — the five 'keys' to reading:

- Phonemic awareness: Knowledge of, and capacity to manipulate, the smallest distinct sounds (phonemes) in spoken words.
- Phonics: Learning and using the relationships between sounds and letter-symbols to sound out (decode) written words.
- Fluency: The ability to read accurately, quickly and expressively. Fluent readers are able to focus on reading for meaning.
- Vocabulary: The words children need to know in order to comprehend and communicate. Oral vocabulary is the words children recognise or use in listening and speaking. Reading vocabulary is the words children recognise or use in reading and writing.

- Comprehension: Extracting and constructing meaning from written text using knowledge of words, concepts, facts, and ideas.

An examination of the areas that cut across these research efforts and position papers reveals a set of common, important instructional features associated with effective teachers of reading. These common and repeatedly emphasized features stress the “what” and “how” of effective reading instruction and include the following:

1. assessing students’ reading strengths and weaknesses,
2. structuring reading activities around an explicit instructional format,
3. providing students with opportunities to learn and apply skills and strategies in authentic reading tasks,
4. ensuring that students attend to the learning tasks, and
5. believing in one’s teaching abilities and expecting students to be successful.

The major reviews of reading not only agreed on the key components of reading programs but also the most effective way of teaching them. They found that explicit or direct instruction was the most effective teaching method, especially for the fundamental code-based components—phonemic awareness and phonics.

In Australia, the 2005 National Inquiry into the Teaching of Literacy produced similar recommendations, exhorting the education field to turn towards science for its inspiration. The committee argued strongly for empirical evidence to be used to improve the manner in which reading is taught in Australia.

“In sum, the incontrovertible finding from the extensive body of local and international evidence-based literacy research is that for children during the early years of schooling (and subsequently if needed), to be able to link their knowledge of spoken language to their knowledge of written language, they must first master the alphabetic code – the system of grapheme-phoneme correspondences that link written words to their pronunciations. Because these are both foundational and essential skills for the development of competence in reading, writing and spelling, they must be taught explicitly, systematically, early and well.”

METHOD

Reading proficiency is the most fundamental skill for academic learning and success in school. According to a study done in the United States, the ability to read proficiently is significantly related to how much a person can achieve in his or her personal and professional life (Block & Israel, 2005). It is for this reason that I have decided to do this action research. According to Brown and Dowling (2001), action research is a term which is applied to projects in which practitioners seek to effect transformation their own practices...” Generally an action research is carried out in a school setting. Corey (1953) believed that the value of action research is in the change that occurs in everyday practice rather than the generalization to a broader audience. Action research is a reflective process and it deals with the practical concerns that are

close to the instructors and allow them to make a change. The main aim of an action research is to find solutions to real problems faced in schools and searching ways to improve student success. The process of action research assists educators in assessing needs, documenting the steps of inquiry, analyzing data, and making informed decisions that can lead to desired outcomes.

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