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Process of change in reading instruction: A model of transition

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to examine closely the processes, both theoretical and enacted, a teacher undergoes when making changes in methods of reading instruction. A case study using qualitative research methods chronicled a teacher who after 19 years of teaching strictly by the basal began changing toward a balanced literature approach. A model of transition demonstrating this teacher's processes of change is included.

What does a veteran teacher, who for years has taught children to read strictly by the basals, do when she learns there may be more effective ways to teach reading? That was the guiding question for this study. The purpose of this study was to examine closely the processes, both theoretical and enacted, a teacher undergoes when making changes in the methods of reading instruction. Another aspect of the change process also examined the teacher's feelings regarding the changes she has made. Martens (1992) found that even when teachers see a change as desirable, they can still experience ambivalent feelings toward the change because they may feel a loss of control over an area where they felt competent. Gann and Friel (1993) believe that "acknowledging those feelings is an important part of the change process" (p. 286). They believe that "too often little awareness is evident that change entails developmental growth both in feelings and in skills" (p. 286). Radencich (1995) believes that "it is not so much the product but the process of change that is important" (p. 88).

Many teachers in the area of reading often make changes in their teaching methods, materials, or curriculum. As a result, they are constantly engaged in the change process. Gann and Friel (1993) contend

that “change is a process, not an event” (p. 286). Newman (1990) states that the “process of changing from a traditional transmission way of teaching to creating an open, learner-directed environment is complex” (p. 2). In his book, *Supervision of Literacy Programs: Teachers as Grass-Roots Change Agents*, Erickson (1995) stated that “teachers are becoming recognized as active and powerful change agents who, acting individually and collectively, change the teaching of reading and writing in school and community” (p. 1).

When teachers see problems in their classrooms and set out to find solutions to those problems — looking for ways to change — they can be thought of as teacher-researchers. Routman (1996) believes teacher research “involves wondering, posing questions, problem solving, trying out new procedures, working out our thoughts through writing, and ultimately acting on our new insights by changing our practices” (p. 167). The teachers become change agents in their own classrooms. Duffy-Hester (1999) contends that “teachers should be decision makers, using their practical, personal, and theoretical knowledge to inform their reading instruction” (p. 489). According to McCutcheon (1992), teachers “select and enact every teaching practice rationally because they are engaged in intentional, purposive action to create optimum conditions for learning to occur” (p. 193). She believes teachers choose these practices by “reflecting upon and interpreting their experiences” (p. 193).

Debate still exists among reading educators concerning the best approach to reading instruction. The current movement is toward a balanced literature approach (Baumann and Ivey, 1997; Johns and Elish-Piper, 1997; Leu and Kinzer, 1999; McIntyre and Pressley, 1996; Reutzel, 1996). Newman (1990) believes that teachers “have to explore the implementation of these research insights in their own classrooms based on what they’ve discovered about the needs, interests, instructional history, and proficiency of individual students” (p. 2). Because teachers are often in the process of change, it is important to look at those processes to see how and why teachers make the decisions to change the way they teach.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Thorndike (in Gredler, 1992) contends that “man’s power to change himself, that is, to learn, is perhaps the most impressive things about him” (p. 3). For many people, change is not easy. Mayher (1990) states that “nothing is harder than to put on new theoretical lenses that may help us to see that the tried was not always true” (p. xv). According to

Gann and Friel (1993), the purpose of change is to “improve instruction and learning” (p. 286). Teachers are often trying new approaches in their classroom. Ohanian (1992) believes that teachers should always be trying out new practices because this is how they learn what works the best for them and their students. According to Watson and Stevenson (1989), “teachers who are going through professional changes (whether the changes are described as moderate or transforming) also are going through personal changes” (p. 121). Gann and Friel purport that “change is a highly personal experience for the individuals involved in the process” (p. 296). Ayers (1990) contends that teachers often feel that teaching is not merely what one does, but who one is.

According to Gann and Friel (1993), the process of change involves three levels: 1) initiation phase, 2) the implementation phase, and 3) the institutionalization phase. During the initiation phase, “teachers are learning about a new practice or program” (p. 420). Gann and Friel believe that “a strong support system furnished through workshops, demonstrations, observations, and on-site support is needed” (p. 420). The implementation phase is where the teacher is trying out a new practice for the first time. During this phase especially, a teacher is apt to give up “if appropriate assistance and encouragement are not available” (p. 420). The final stage, the institutionalization stage, is when a new practice becomes “part of the fabric of the school” (p. 420). Progression through these stages takes time.

Martens (1992) conducted a case study in which she examined the experiences of a teacher making transitions from teaching directly from a science textbook to teaching science using a problem-solving approach. The study began with observations and interviews of the teacher during a seven-day workshop conducted by the researcher concerning implementing a problem-solving approach in the classroom for teaching science. Following the workshops, the researcher observed and interviewed the teacher in her classroom once a week for 45 minutes during a six-week period to study how and/or if she incorporated the problem-solving approach she had learned in the workshops. Martens concluded from her research that although the teacher did use some of the techniques she learned from the workshops, she did not change her beliefs about teaching. Martens stated that the teacher incorporated “pre-planned problem-solving activities into her teaching in ways that allow her to remain in control” (p. 155). She was unable or unwilling to let go of the structured control of the classroom to allow the students to gain some control in problem-solving. Martens concluded that “current reward systems of schools... maintain and encourage the kind of

teaching that makes it possible to incorporate new materials and teaching strategies without changing one's teaching beliefs" (p. 155). She found that the individual teacher determines "the extent to which any innovation occurs" (p. 150).

Ramirez-Smith (1995) also found this to be true in her study of a school under change in which "teacher morale was low, and students' rates of failure were at an all time high" (p. 14). The change began for the school when district administrators were looking for a school that would be willing to make some changes. They began by forming a team made up of volunteer teachers and others within the school system. They first had to deal with a lack of communication in the school and an absence of staff development. Ramirez-Smith found that teachers are often threatened by the idea of having to change their teaching styles, and that "personal struggles accompanied the change process" (p. 18). These teachers felt it was risky to attend staff development meetings and converse with other teachers in the school but they chose to do so anyway because of the "promise of fewer discipline problems and greater student engagement in learning" (p. 18). In the end (although perhaps there is no end when it comes to change and growth), the teachers found that as they changed their old habits and adopted new ones, the "results were dramatic" (p. 18).

Keller (1995) examined changes made at the Thomas Edison Elementary School in California and found that "while the changes seem dramatic in retrospect, staff members are quick to point out that change has been neither sudden nor without resistance" (p. 11). Before the school began to make changes, decisions usually came from the administrators down to the teachers, and teachers usually worked in isolation. The change in the school came from a movement away from traditional approaches to becoming part of the Stanford Accelerated Schools Project which advocates a constructivist view of education. In this school, teachers began working together and observing each other teach. The excitement grew and they became eager to incorporate changes in their teaching beliefs and practices. Keller found that "the resulting collaboration and camaraderie created a more trusting and supportive environment" (p. 12).

Sadker and Sadker (1994) stated "when teachers change, so do their students" (p. 5). If teachers want their students to be learning and growing, then teachers themselves must also be learning and growing. Mayher (1990) stresses the importance of looking at the "processes of learning and teaching" (p. xiv). He found that "strong voices" emerged from "the classroom and from the teacher education community" in which

they looked “afresh at the processes of learning and teaching” (p. xiv). Erickson (1995) believes that “true and lasting change occurs when teachers, bolstered by their moral purpose of making a difference in their students lives, act as change agents both individually and collectively” (p. 17).

In order to understand one teacher’s quest for a different method of teaching reading, it is beneficial to first explore those methods in question regarding reading instruction. Two basic approaches to reading instruction lead the discussion of the most effective method by which to teach children to read. Those approaches include the traditional approach and a balanced literature approach. Transition refers to a movement from the traditional approach to the balanced literature approach. Teachers who are in transition are said to be moving away from the traditional method of reading instruction and making changes toward incorporating more methods of a balanced literature approach in their reading instruction.

The traditional approach to reading instruction has been defined by Reutzel and Cooter (1992) as a method of reading instruction which “relies heavily on teacher-directed instruction usually in conjunction with basal reader textbooks” (p. 3). According to Ruddell and Ruddell (1995), the basal reader is the “most widely used instructional approach for literacy development in the United States” (p. 610). The philosophy behind basal readers is that instruction needs to be systematic, to have sequence of skills, and to offer selections for students to read, followed by practice activities. Advocates of basal readers believe the basals have tremendous value in that they have been successful in teaching students to read. This success has been shown in “standardized tests, competency tests, and other measures of reading achievement commonly used in most school systems” (Reutzel and Cooter, p. 3). Another advantage of the basal readers is that they are often easier for the teacher to use because they are very structured and systematic. Beginning teachers, especially, find them easy to use because everything included in a reading lesson has been described in detail for the teacher including pre-reading activities; building background; activating prior knowledge; vocabulary building; guided reading suggestions; discussion questions before, during, and after reading; comprehension questions; assessment measures; and enrichment activities. However, it is this structure that some teachers find a disadvantage because they see basals as boring and focusing too much on isolated skills and worksheets (Routman, 1988).

Literature-based instruction, a balanced approach, is when “teachers use children’s literature as the basis for teaching students to read and to

enjoy reading" (Au, Mason, and Scheu, 1995, p. 77). Teachers also "attempt to integrate the four language modes of listening, speaking, reading, and writing across all curriculum areas" (Reutzel and Cooter, 1992, p. 3). Reutzel (1996) states that "An effective reading program requires a variety of approaches — carefully selected and balanced to ensure that children are regularly exposed to literature, a variety of reading materials, rich language experiences, and systematic instruction" (p. 6). According to Leu and Kinzer (1999), "Children learn best when teachers take a balanced approach, using a range of strategies to teach reading" (p. 11).

Because teachers are becoming aware of the balanced literature approach and its success, many are beginning to slowly try to incorporate some of the balanced literature ideas in their own classrooms. This process does not happen at once. It is a gradual change from one belief about teaching to another. This gradual change is referred to as a transition. Radencich (1995) states that "making the transition from traditional approaches to holistic instruction is a time-consuming process" (p. 79).

Reutzel and Cooter (1992) define transitions as a "philosophical position that encourages teachers to initiate changes in reading beliefs and practices by building bridges, not walls, between traditional and holistic approaches" (p. 5). They contend that transition means movement for teachers from "where they are and progressing to where they want to be" (p. 5). Routman (1988) writes that teachers who are in transition from a traditional approach to a more holistic approach may make changes in their classrooms a little at a time and that it could take a sizable amount of time to change. Radencich (1995) states that "it is important to take one step at a time" (p. 80). In other words, most changes from traditional to balanced literature do not happen overnight. Change does not come quickly or easily. Routman (1991) also believes that change is a continuous process that is always evolving and getting better, but she is not certain that we ever get there totally. Routman states

Typically, I notice that teachers feel comfortable adding one new component to their program each year — perhaps shared book experience the first year, journal writing the next year, and independent reading program the following year, shared decision making about rules and curriculum the next year, and integrating spelling after four or five years. The thoughtful, slow change that is occurring may not always be visible, but it is a change of the highest order—stemming from a

greater understanding of the philosophy and of the literacy model of learning and teaching. (pp. 23-24).

While the literature reveals varying opinions and research findings regarding the different approaches to reading instruction, one theme that does not seem to vary, is the idea that change is a process which evolves and develops over time and that change comes from within. Regardless of the area under change, the process of change takes time and is generally ongoing.

METHOD

In order to best answer the question regarding the processes a teacher undergoes when making changes in reading instruction, the following questions guided this research study: 1) Why did this teacher change her method of reading instruction? 2) What processes did she undergo as she made changes in the way she teaches reading? 3) How does she feel about the changes she made?

A case study provides a careful examination of the processes a teacher undergoes when making changes in reading instruction. The primary research technique of data triangulation includes observation, interviewing, and document collecting (Glesne and Peshkin, 1992).

In looking at the processes a teacher undergoes when making changes in the way reading is taught, I chose a teacher who was in the process of making changes in reading instruction, specifically from a traditional method to the balanced literature philosophy. Patton (1990) refers to this as purposeful sampling. The specific type of purposeful sampling chosen for this study was criterion sampling based on the theories and constructs of balanced literature reading instruction. Patton states that theory-based sampling occurs when the researcher chooses samples on "the basis of their potential manifestation or representation of important theoretical constructs" (p. 177) like the theories underpinning balanced literature reading instruction. According to Patton, the sample becomes "representative of the phenomenon of interest" (p. 177).

For this study, a teacher of a split third and fourth grade classroom, who will henceforth be referred to as Ms. Wilson, was chosen to participate in the study. She has taught school for 19 years, and was beginning her 20th year (the year of this study) by changing from a traditional manner of teaching reading to the use of balanced literature instruction (or was in a state of transition from one to the other) which qualified her as a representative sample.

Before the year of study, she taught reading strictly from reading basals. Included in this method was adherence to the basal reading program which included materials such as a teacher's manual, student reading texts, student workbooks, student skills books, and teacher resource materials such as charts, scope and sequence, copy masters, and testing materials.

In keeping with the basal approach, she grouped her students according to grade level and ability. She met with the groups individually in a reading circle in which they would read "round robin" style. Also in these groups she gave instruction in vocabulary and other skills, as well as led them in discussions of the material read based on questions in the teacher's manual. Following the group work, students were assigned worksheets to do at their desks. Worksheets generally consisted of a page or two in their workbook which asked comprehension types of questions based on the story. Other workbook pages consisted of skills which may or not have been related to the story. These workbook pages or worksheets were completed individually by the students and turned in at a designated area in the room. The teacher then graded all of these worksheets and recorded the grades in her grade book. These worksheets formed the basis for the students' grade in reading at the end of each quarter. After assigned seatwork, these students would return to their desks and the process would begin again with the next group of students.

Since the purpose of this study was to examine teacher change, the main focus was on the behavior, language, and interactions of the teacher. I observed carefully how she approached reading instruction and compared it to how she had taught it in the past. Through the use of interviewing, observing, and document collecting, I was able to conclude some differences in her methods of reading instruction as well as some similarities of past and present methods.

I also looked at the students' interactions with the teacher, and their responses, to see if how they were reacting to the methods of reading instruction matched the way the teacher felt they were responding. I was constantly comparing what the teacher was saying with what was going on with the students.

The way Ms. Wilson currently teaches reading was demonstrated and recorded through the means of observation and documentation. Through the use of teacher interviews, I discovered how and why she made these changes, as well as the teacher's feelings regarding those changes.

To ensure trustworthiness of the study, several qualitative research techniques were employed. Those techniques included data

triangulation, prolonged engagement and persistent observation, member checks, peer debriefing, and an audit trail.

The data collection stage was divided into three stages as explained by Lincoln and Guba (1985). The first stage, phase one, they term the "orientation and overview" phase (p. 235). During this stage, which can take anywhere from "a few days to many months," the researcher's goal is to become oriented in the field and to get a good overview. During stage one, I focused on extensive observation of what was going on in the classroom as a passive participant. My focus began with the surroundings in the room such as the layout of the room, what was on the walls, how many students were in each grade, what was the reading instruction like, how did the students react to the reading instruction, and how did the teacher present reading. My purpose was to get a feel for the classroom, the teacher, and the students. Also during this stage, I formally interviewed Ms. Wilson with a standardized open-ended interview, and I began to collect documents as supporting evidence of the changes she was making in reading instruction. Documentation collected included both past and present lesson plans, student work, teacher records, state guidelines, notes from International Reading Association meetings, and notes from inservice professional development sessions.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) refer to phase two as the "focused exploration" phase (p. 235). During this stage the researcher obtains "information in depth about those elements determined to be salient" (p. 235). The constant-comparative method, developed by Glaser and Strauss, "provides for alternate phases of data collection and analysis" (Parker and McDaniel, 1992, p. 101). With the constant-comparative method "newly collected data are constantly compared to categories and hypotheses that emerged in earlier rounds of analysis, and those categories and hypotheses are refined and elaborated or abandoned in light of the new data" (Parker and McDaniel, p. 101). Stage two was the stage in which I was brought in as an active participant in the classroom. During this stage I began looking for patterns in what was going on in reading instruction. I was also making comparisons between what the teacher was saying and what she was doing. Informal interviews took place throughout this stage as well as the following stage three. Lincoln and Guba state that it is important to allow time between phases one and two for the data to be analyzed, and time allowed between phases two and three to analyze and develop a report.

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), phase three is the "member check" phase. They refer to a member check as when "data, analytic categories, interpretations, and conclusions are tested with members of

those stake-holding groups from whom the data were originally collected" (p. 314). They believe that "if we take seriously the proposition that context is all important in assigning meaning to data, it is useful to carry that assigned meaning back into the context for verification" (p. 212). During this stage, the member checks increased through the means of many informal interviews. At least some informal interviews took place every day I was in the classroom. Further comparisons were made between what was learned from the informal interviews with the teacher and what was observed in the classroom. During this stage I also made comparisons of her reading instruction practices now as compared to how she taught before. These comparisons came from informal interviews and documentation of how she taught before, such as lesson plans. The conclusions drawn were checked and rechecked to make certain they were correct. Lincoln and Guba state that "the provisional report (case) is taken back to the site and subjected to the scrutiny of the persons who provided the information" (p. 236).

One method used to look at and interpret data was the paradigm model which helps us "link subcategories to a category in a set of relationships denoting causal conditions, phenomenon, context, intervening conditions, action/interactional strategies, and consequences" (Strauss and Corbin, 1990, p. 99). The paradigm model for this study began with a description of the causal condition or the events that lead to the occurrence of the teacher changing her methods of reading instruction. This condition became clearly evident through the interviews between the teacher and the researcher. This particular teacher had been dissatisfied for some time with "the way things were occurring" in her classroom regarding reading instruction. The phenomenon, or the idea under investigation, was the process of change which formed the basis for this study. Context for this study involved the teacher in question, her classroom, and the activities of both the teacher and her students concerning reading instruction.

The intervening conditions would be those conditions which caused this teacher to change the way she taught reading. The cause has been established as a dissatisfaction with her current methods of reading instruction. The intervening conditions were the ideas, strategies, and philosophies she learned at meetings of the International Reading Association. She stated,

Like going to the meetings, and going to the workshops, and different things and seeing the way people are doing things and that gives me ideas that I can carry over into the classroom. But I'm not

good at brainstorming myself and saying 'Oh, let's do this and let's do this'. You see people and they're so excited and they want to do these things and I think, well, great, let's try it and see what happens. And it kind of falls into place. You start doing it and [it] kind of chains together. I don't know how to describe it to you but you start with an idea and as that idea starts it kind of snowballs and moves into a new idea and you just keep going and it falls into place. You didn't realize it was going to until you start it and it's fun. I like it.

The action/interactional strategies, strategies Ms. Wilson used to make changes in her methods of reading instruction, included using literature books in place of the basal series, not using workbooks for reading, language, or spelling, and incorporating more writing activities into the curriculum.

The consequences of this teacher's changes in reading instruction impacted both her students and a sense of herself as a teacher and change agent. She believes that she has reached a goal in that her students are finally excited about reading. Consequently, Ms. Wilson reported that she has not been experiencing feelings of burnout as she had in the past.

RESULTS

Ms. Wilson taught reading for 19 years with the aid of a basal instructional program. She decided before her 20th year of teaching to make changes in her methods of reading instruction. Those changes included aspects of the balanced literature approach such as using literature books to teach reading rather than the basals, focusing on themes, focusing on certain authors of children's literature, incorporating more writing, incorporating the use of journals, and the absence of basal workbooks in reading, spelling, and language.

Answers to the first question of the study, why did this teacher change her method of reading instruction, became clearly evident from the data, shown in the following excerpt of an interview.

The reason I changed is because when I was doing basals and I was doing reading groups, I had one group at the table and they would sit there and they were so bored and they weren't there and they didn't want to participate. It wasn't active involvement at all. And the other group, you'd give them seatwork but you couldn't really monitor them because you were doing readings. So I just didn't like the way it was occurring. I didn't like the feel, and I

didn't think they were getting enough interaction and enough actual active learning.

Ms. Wilson began the change process because of a dissatisfaction with the way she was teaching reading because her students were not responding to reading the way she wanted them to. She wanted them "to be really excited about reading because there's nothing better to me." Since she was already dissatisfied with what was going on in her classroom, she was very interested in hearing new ideas for teaching reading. These new ideas were what she was learning at meetings of the International Reading Association which she had been attending regularly the last four or five years previous to this study. At these meetings, both at the local level and at state conferences, she heard speakers and teachers talk about different ways of teaching reading, and she saw their excitement about what was going on in their classrooms. Ms. Wilson made the following comments concerning the IRA meetings.

If I see something I like and I want to try it then I'll go for it, but I'm not very good at making up my own new directions. Like going to the meetings, and going to the workshops and different things and seeing the way people are doing things, and that gives me ideas that I can carry over into the classroom. But I'm not good at just brainstorming myself.

Ms. Wilson had been wanting to change the way she taught reading and had learned new ideas that she was interested in implementing; therefore, after dialoguing with other teachers in her district and learning that they felt the same way she did, she became an active part of the process of making the decision for the district to change the way they taught reading. The year of this study, not only was Ms. Wilson changing her methods of reading instruction, but so were a few other teachers in her district. Ms. Wilson stated that while the reason she changed the way she teaches reading was for her students, it has also been good for her.

The second guiding research question, what process did she undergo as she made changes in reading instruction, was documented in the transition from basals to literature books. Instead of using the basals, Ms. Wilson began her reading program by focusing on themes, focusing on certain authors of children's literature, incorporating more writing, incorporating the use of journals, and no longer using basal workbooks in reading, spelling, and language. She stated that she wanted to use

literature so that the students would be reading “real books” instead of reading out of a basal.

Ms. Wilson commented during interviews that she felt that her strong background with the basal helped her teach reading using literature books.

I think if I hadn't have taught before it would have been harder. If I didn't have the background and know what each level would be doing. I use the basal to go back and look and see what skills they're doing, or what we would have been doing if we would have been using the basal, so I can try to pull them [the skills] out.

Ms. Wilson stated that she still teaches the skills but she now teaches them in context of real literature rather than in isolation which is commonly done with basal readers.

After careful analysis of the body of data, the processes Ms. Wilson underwent as she made changes in her method of reading instruction can be summarized as follows:

1. Identification of a problem. She was unhappy with her current method of reading instruction.
2. Search for solutions — She began attending meetings of the International Reading Association in search of new ideas.
3. Upon learning new ideas for teaching reading, she began dialogue with others teachers regarding those solutions to her reading dilemma and formulated a plan of action.
4. She put her reading plan of action into effect — one idea at a time.
5. While she was working her plan she constantly evaluated and re-worked her plan.

The third guiding question, how does she feel about the changes she has made, was answered through interviews. Ms. Wilson stated that she feels good about the changes she has made in reading instruction. She said she is a lot more enthusiastic about reading because she sees her students are a lot more enthusiastic. She also stated that she is enjoying school a lot more now.

Although Ms. Wilson is excited about the changes she is making in reading instruction, she also gets discouraged sometimes. Her overall feelings from reveal satisfaction with what she is doing this year. One aspect she stated that helps her is the support she receives from the district reading specialist and another teacher in her building. They attend the meetings of the International Reading Association together and share

ideas concerning reading instruction. Ms. Wilson also stated that she receives a lot of support from her principal who is behind her efforts to improve reading instruction in her classroom. She appreciates the support and ideas from other teachers.

Ms. Wilson seems to be in a constant process of evaluating the changes she is making in her classroom. She stated during one interview: "I'll analyze and reevaluate in the spring and see what I need to do differently. I've written down things I want to do differently next time." After each new method she analyzes how she felt it went and thinks about how she could do it next time.

CONCLUSIONS

As described previously in the literature review concerning change, when a teacher makes the decision to change her methods of reading instruction, moving from a traditional method for teaching reading in favor of the balanced literature philosophy, it is not a sudden change as in just changing a textbook. It is a long process which happens little by little, year by year. As Routman (1991) explained, transitions happen slowly as teachers often change one thing in their classrooms at a time. Routman also believes that early changes in the process of transition are often superficial ones. This seemed to be evident in this particular case study. Ms. Wilson's first change was to discontinue use of the basals by replacing them with literature books. Yet while she abandoned the workbooks with the basal, she created her own worksheets to use with the literature sets. Perhaps in subsequent years, if she continues making changes in the direction of balanced literature, she will begin phasing out the use of worksheets. What is evident, is that Ms. Wilson is indeed in the process of transition.

Data collected through interviews observations, and documentation show that Ms. Wilson is in the beginning stages of change. The processes Ms. Wilson underwent while changing methods of reading instruction seem to closely resemble the steps of the scientific model as explained by Heimler (1989): 1) identify the problem; 2) collect information about the problem through observation, experimentation, or by reading recorded information; 3) form a hypothesis or "suggested solution to a problem" (p. 10); 4) test the hypothesis; 5) accept or reject the hypothesis; and 6) report the results.

A comparison between these steps in the scientific model and the process of change undergone by Ms. Wilson indicate that they both began with identification of a problem. Ms. Wilson identified her problem

as a dissatisfaction with the way she was teaching reading, and her search for solutions began by her attending meetings of the International Reading Association. She also was searching for solutions by reading resource books for teachers such as Routman's books and by talking to other teachers such as the district reading specialist.

Ms. Wilson, in effect, formed her hypothesis when she decided that she would try the balanced literature approach in her classroom. She believed that the balanced literature philosophy would better serve her needs of not only teaching her students how to read, but also teaching them to love reading. Ms. Wilson tested her hypothesis this year as she began incorporating some aspects of the balanced literature philosophy in her classroom. The entire year of this study was a testing of her hypothesis.

In accepting or rejecting the hypothesis, Ms. Wilson expressed that she is happy with the changes she has made in her classroom, and she plans to continue in the direction she is headed. This would seem to indicate that she has accepted her hypothesis. She has tested it by incorporating the methods and has evaluated them positively enough that she thinks they are successful.

For the final step in the scientific model, personal record keeping, Ms. Wilson has not done any type of recording of the results of her efforts this year. Early in the study I asked her if she would be willing to keep some type of journal. She said she was very willing and agreed to do so. Although she was interested in keeping a journal and believed it would be beneficial to her, as time went by, she found that she was unable to find the time.

Ms. Wilson went through a model of transition which demonstrates how a teacher in transition progresses through stages of change. The model of transition reflects the gradual upward progression of change beginning at the point of a traditional approach moving, one new method at a time, to the balanced literature approach. The steps involved in incorporating these individual changes closely resemble those in the scientific model as described by Heimler (1989). Once the teacher has formed her hypothesis (decided what method believes will work best), tested her hypothesis (actually put the practice into effect), and then accepted or rejected her hypothesis (evaluated the change to see if it has worked to her satisfaction), then she begins the process all over again by adding yet another new method. For example, this year Ms. Wilson incorporated the use of literature books in her classroom. Next year she wants to try another new method which will involve adding creative writing to her

reading program. With each new method she incorporates in her classroom, she repeats the same basic steps.

Figure 1 is a model of transition as it was developed based on this study. The numbers within the spiral represent the steps involved in the process of change.

Figure 1. Model of transition.

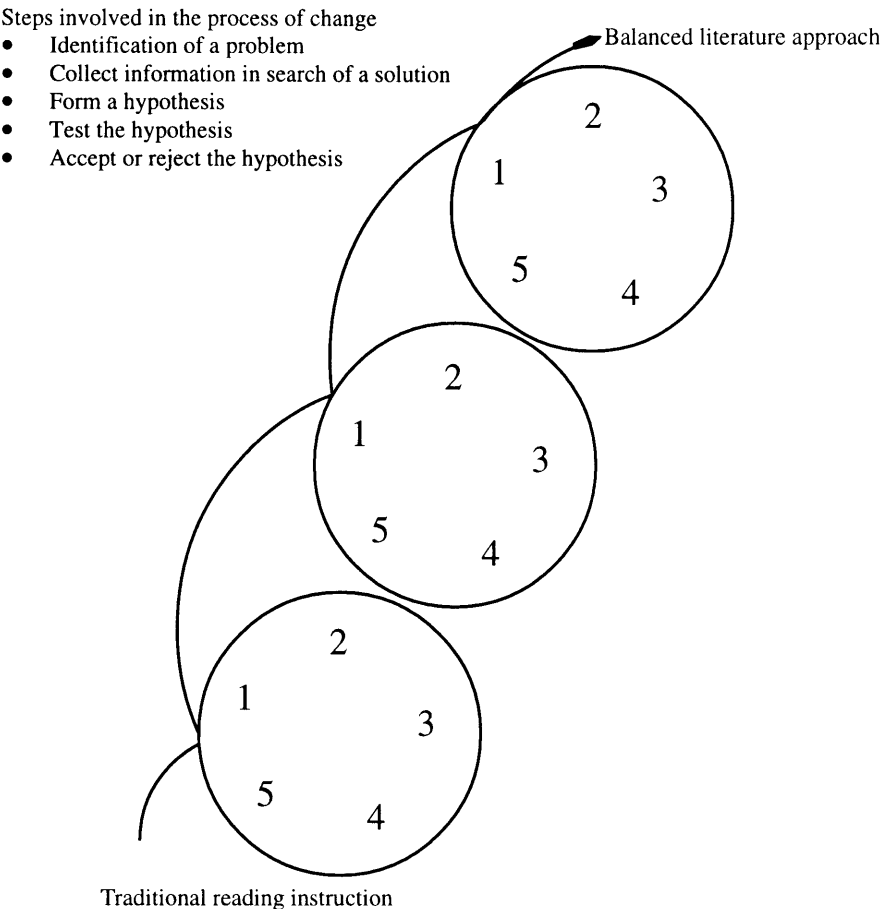


Figure 1. The model of transition demonstrates the processes involved in changing approaches in reading instruction based on the case study teacher's stages of transition.

This study began with a broad question of what processes a teacher undergoes as she makes changes in reading instruction from a traditional

approach to reading instruction to a balanced literature approach. A major conclusion is that the phrasing of this question in itself might be misleading. It seems to imply that one makes a one-time change from one approach to teaching to another. I discovered through data analysis and interpretation that changing from a traditional approach to a balanced literature approach is a very long process.

During another follow-up interview with Ms. Wilson, I asked her how her belief system has changed or if it changed prior to her transition toward the balanced literature approach to reading instruction. After some thought, Ms. Wilson expressed that she did not think her beliefs had changed because she has always believed very strongly that part of her goal was to teach children not only to read, but to enjoy reading. So this was not a new goal or belief system. The reason she changed her methods of reading instruction was not because her beliefs had changed, but because she thought she had finally found a method by which to reach her goal of teaching children to love to read. She stated that she "put two and two together and thought this was a better way to go."

I believe that this study can impact all teachers who are interested in changing the way they teach. The model based on this particular case study offers a picture of how teachers can become change agents in their own classrooms by evaluating how they teach and by changing one thing at a time. When following the outlined process of change, change does not have to be scary or daunting. Teachers who might feel overwhelmed with all of the new research and literature about teaching reading can be encouraged that they may begin the process of change one idea at a time, one day at a time.

In closing, I leave the reader with the words of a teacher who has impacted the lives of so many other teachers who are wanting more for themselves and their students. Routman (1991) said:

I believe we need to be kind to ourselves and accept and acknowledge that the kind of deep change we want to make takes time, lots of time. We need to go slowly, let ourselves make mistakes, and, most of all, give ourselves credit for what we are doing well and for the risks we are taking. (p. 24)

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