
12-1-1990

The Role of Modeling in Teacher Education Programs

Davida R. Schuman
Kean College

Juliette Relihan
Salve Regina College

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/reading_horizons



Part of the Education Commons

Recommended Citation

Schuman, D. R., & Relihan J. (1990). The Role of Modeling in Teacher Education Programs. *Reading Horizons: A Journal of Literacy and Language Arts*, 31 (2). Retrieved from https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/reading_horizons/vol31/iss2/2

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Special Education and Literacy Studies at ScholarWorks at WMU. It has been accepted for inclusion in Reading Horizons: A Journal of Literacy and Language Arts by an authorized editor of ScholarWorks at WMU. For more information, please contact wmu-scholarworks@wmich.edu.



The Role of Modeling in Teacher Education Programs

**David R. Schuman
Juliette Relihan**

Teacher education has come under scrutiny in the recent past because teacher educators are recognizing a gap between what they have traditionally taught in their classrooms, and what new teachers are doing in theirs. Somehow the messages about the effective ways to teach have not been getting through. The solution to the problems seems fairly simple. If beginning teachers are to be effective, they must have a model of the various instructional techniques which can be implemented. Teacher educators, then, must model these techniques in their education courses. In this way, the message clearly comes through, that what is modeled in the college classroom is what should be evident in the classrooms in which they teach.

Children learn to speak and read by adult modeling of both language and literacy. Much of the literature refers to the teacher modeling various reading behaviors and skills for children in preschool and elementary classrooms (Combs, 1987; Duffy, Roehler, and Herrmann, 1988; McCracken and McCracken, 1978; Perez, 1986; Roser, 1987). Parents have also been trained to help develop reading skills in young children by observing teachers model effective teaching techniques (Spewock, 1988).

Because individuals will imitate the behavior of a person they respect and with whom they have a rapport, the use of modeling as a teaching tool has been shown to be effective (Bandura, 1977).

The premise of modeling to learn novel behavior can also be applied to teaching preservice education students in methods courses. Modeling has been compared to direct instruction (Putnam and Johns, 1987). It has also been studied in combination with videotaped feedback as opposed to videotaped feedback alone, modeling alone, and lecture/discussion (King, 1979, 1980; Martin and Fanslow, 1980). Investigations that involve models revealing their thoughts and reasoning (cognitive modeling) while performing a task, in contrast to direct instruction, have shown that cognitive modeling is more effective (Gorrell and Capson, 1988, 1989). Additional research on modeling has indicated that the decision on how to model is as important as what to model (Sharp, 1981). Thus it is crucial that the focus in whole language methods courses be concerned with how preservice students learn to use the knowledge they are gaining in order to be most effective in their role as teachers.

Journal writing

The focus of reading and language arts methods has changed drastically in the last few years. No longer are teachers to emphasize the disparate skills of grammar, spelling, composition, etc., but rather to develop language as a whole. A critical medium for drawing writing skills together is the use of journal writing in the elementary schools. Through this medium teachers enable even young children to bridge the gap between reading and writing.

Because journal writing plays such an important role in the elementary classroom, preservice students need to

have experience with the mechanics of this activity as well as the theoretical structure of it. The methods instructor needs to demonstrate how journal entries are written by modeling the procedure for preservice students. The content of the entry will vary as much as the students themselves. It is not what they write but writing itself that is crucial.

In initial sessions, the college instructor and students reverse roles. The instructor models the role of the student writing in the journal. The preservice students in their role as teacher can then comment on the entries. Once the instructor determines that the method of journal writing has been sufficiently demonstrated, it is time to resume original roles. For the rest of the semester the preservice students become the writers and the instructor the commentator.

From a pool of topics related to whole language development, preservice students are encouraged to choose one concept or activity which was discussed or modeled during the class session. This includes any activity or concept related to writing, speaking, reading, and listening. Using any one or a combination of the four areas as an impetus for their journal writing, they can then describe their reasons for choosing as they did. In addition, they should also describe the benefits of their choice to them as future teachers. While reading the preservice students' entries, the instructor writes comments and reactions in the journal without attaching grade values. Preservice students come to understand that expressing their ideas in written form is an important activity if they are to become advocates of emergent literacy. In this way they have learned not only the technique of journal writing but the theoretical framework which benefits both the writer and the commentator.

Use of big books

Book sharing is another aspect of whole language which is now emphasized in teacher training. Once again the instructor assumes the role of an elementary school teacher and the preservice students the children in the class. Use of actual materials contributes to the real life modeling which is about to take place. The preservice student needs to see how the big book is used in the overall schema of emerging literacy. It becomes a source for lessons that go beyond the pure enjoyment of listening to the instructor read the story. By drawing their attention to the name of the book, the author's name, and showing the pictures, preservice students are directed to predict what the book is about. The instructor reads the story tracking the print by moving a hand across the page. This hand motion demonstrates the importance of left-to-right and top-to-bottom eye movements in conjunction with the concept that print "talks."

In assisting preservice students to understand the mechanics of enabling young readers to construct meaning from the text, the instructor uses a variety of questioning techniques designed to develop specific skills. The instructor explicates understanding of the story by thinking aloud about the process. Predicting, making inferences, and drawing conclusions demonstrate to preservice students how readers should think as they read. As the preservice students become familiar with the procedure, the instructor draws them into making predictions, recognizing inferences and drawing conclusions. After the story has been read, the instructor guides the discussion with emphasis on developing skills in language, recalling events and important concepts — methods that help students to derive meaning from words. As a concluding activity, the preservice students are asked to write about a character they liked or dis-

liked in the story. For the next several class meetings, the preservice students participate in small groups, practicing the strategies they saw used with the big book and taking turns being teacher or child.

DL-TA and DR-TA

An additional reading activity which has its roots in the whole language classroom involves making predictions and verifying them. The terminology used for this activity with prereading children is the Directed Listening-Thinking Activity (DL-TA) described by Stauffer (1980). For those children who can already read, activities such as this are involved in the Directed Reading-Thinking Activity (DR-TA) (Stauffer, 1980). This strategy should also be modeled by the college instructor. Preservice students need to be given opportunities to practice this strategy from the perspective of both teacher and student.

An ideal starting point for this activity is to use the college textbook for the DR-TA exercise. In the initial meetings with preservice students, the college instructor guides their use of the text by asking pertinent questions which involve these students in making predictions about what they are reading. Along with prediction making, they are also accruing experience in verifying these predictions. Once the students have acquired some proficiency in playing the role of a student in the DR-TA, it is time to acquire practice as the teacher. Using the techniques modeled by the instructor, they take turns leading their class in DR-TA exercises. A beneficial by-product of this exercise is the increased effectiveness of the college text. Development of this technique is especially useful in the curriculum areas which use content area texts that can be difficult to use for many elementary school-age children.

LEA

The language experience approach is used in many primary classrooms and is another reading strategy which preservice students need to learn in order to become effective whole language teachers. This strategy has long been used in teaching reading and continues to have impact in the whole language program. At the heart of LEA is an experience which has been shared by the teacher and children. Having shared an experience assures a common pool of ideas which will facilitate the writing of the story. To stress the importance of this shared experience, the instructor must demonstrate it through modeling. The modeling helps students see differences between a lesson based on a shared experience and one in which the experience is personal.

As with the journal writing, the instructor models this procedure while preservice students assume the role of children. The instructor presents an experience they can share and discuss. To keep the discussion active, the instructor uses questioning techniques which are designed to cover the topic under discussion. Once the instructor determines that enough has been said, it is time to write the story. Preservice students dictate their story for the instructor to write on chart paper. The instructor then reads the story to the students tracking the words in a left-to-right progression. After the initial reading by the instructor, a second reading is done, this time by the group. In addition to the story chart, the instructor makes individual phrase and sentence cards, matched to the story, which allow for further exchange between writer and print. As a final step, the instructor makes individual copies of the story for each preservice student to have.

Over a period of the next few weeks, preservice students practice the technique of the language experience approach modeled by the instructor. They take turns playing the role of classroom teacher and student. This enables them to reinforce the modeling strategy to which they have been exposed. In this way they are building a repertoire of questioning techniques which will enhance their ability to maintain the needed discussion for success in the language experience approach.

Summary

The strategies presented in this article are components of whole language programs in many classrooms today. The integration of reading, writing, listening and speaking should be brought about in meaningful contexts which enable children to learn in an atmosphere that encourages literacy in all of its aspects. Correspondingly, preservice students should learn how to implement these strategies if whole language is to provide the avenue to literacy for an educated society. Since our goal as methods instructors is to have preservice students become successful teachers, they should understand the concepts and how to use them, from the perspective of the child as well as that of the teacher. This can be accomplished by the instructor demonstrating these strategies while preservice students role play first as children, then as teachers. All of this is a prelude to the preservice students testing their wings as classroom teachers in actual situations which give closure to what they have learned.

References

- Bandura, A. (1977). *Social learning theory*. Englewood Cliffs NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Combs, M. (1987). Modeling the reading process with enlarged texts. *The Reading Teacher*, 40, 422-426.

- Duffy, G., Roehler, L., & Herrmann, B. (1988). Modeling mental processes helps poor readers become strategic readers. *The Reading Teacher*, 41, 762-767.
- Gorrell, J. & Capron, E. (1988). Effects of instructional type and feedback on prospective teachers' self-efficacy beliefs. *Journal of Experimental Education*, 57, 231-244.
- Gorrell, J., & Capron, E. (1989). Cognitive modeling effects on preservice teachers with low and moderate success expectations. *Journal of Experimental Education*, 57, 231-244.
- King, K. (1979). An experimental field study in elementary health education methods classes comparing four training procedures on the acquisition of three specifically defined teacher behaviors (Doctoral dissertation, Pennsylvania State University, 1979). *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 39, 4882A-4883A.
- King, K. (1980). Modeling vs. lecture/discussion in training undergraduates as teachers. *Perceptual and Motor Skills*, 51, 527-531.
- Martin, R., & Fanslow, A. (1980). Video tape versus live model presentation in teacher preparation. *Home Economics Research Journal*, 8, 412-420.
- McCracken, R., & McCracken, M. (1978). Modeling is the key to sustained silent reading. *The Reading Teacher*, 31, 406-408.
- Perez, S. (1986). Children see, children do: Teachers as reading models. *The Reading Teacher*, 40, 8-11.
- Putnam, J., & Johns, B. (1987). *The potential of demonstration teaching as a component for teacher preparation and staff development programs*. East Lansing MI: Michigan State University College of Education. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 280 845).
- Roser, N. (1987). Research currents: Rethinking literature and literacy. *Language Arts*, 64, 90-97.
- Sharp, G. (1981). Acquisition of lecturing skills by university teaching assistants: Some effects of interest, topic relevance, and viewing a model videotape. *American Educational Research Journal*, 18, 491-502.
- Spewock, T. (1988). Training parents to teach their preschoolers through literature. *The Reading Teacher*, 41, 648-652.
- Stauffer, R. (1980). *The language-experience approach to the teaching of reading*. New York: Harper & Row.

David R. Schuman is a faculty member in the Department of Communication Sciences at Kean College of New Jersey, in Union New Jersey. Juliette Relihan is a faculty member in the Department of Education at Salve Regina College in Ochre Point, Newport Rhode Island.