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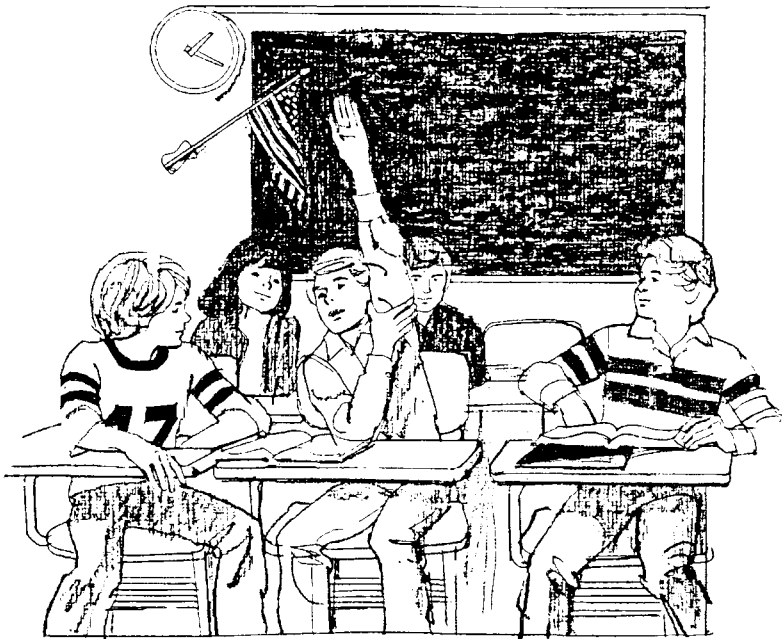


READING TEACHERS ARE ASKED "WHAT IS RELEVANT IN CLASSROOM?"

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One of the most crucial problems facing teacher education today is one of relevancy. This cry for relevance suggests that what we in higher education do as we prepare students to become teachers is not compatible with the real world of the classroom. Backman tells us that as teacher educators we are perceived as (1) delivering preparation programs which have little real influence on the way in which our graduates actually teach; and (2) being completely out of touch with the actual teaching conditions in contemporary schools (1984).



Considering this perception, and to better prepare our students, we undertook a survey to determine if the activities used in our reading methods classes to teach identified course competencies were compatible with the teaching/-learning activities of the elementary classroom. A questionnaire was developed listing twenty reading activities used to facilitate learning in methods classes. In considering teaching activities to enhance learning, Nelli (1981) indicates that teacher preparation programs should be designed around generic competencies based on what beginning teachers should know and be able to do and at what levels of proficiency. She identified two types of teacher competence to be considered: (1) functions and tasks of teaching and (2) behavior and action of the teacher.

For our study, one hundred teachers from each of the first, third, and fifth grades were surveyed from randomly selected elementary schools in Kansas. The teachers were to select and rate those activities they felt were most relevant and should be taught in reading methods classes (preservice) and those most practical for classroom teaching (inservice). The ratings for each of the twenty items were on a scale of one to ten, with one being the highest or most useful. The teachers were also asked to list any additional activities that they felt should be included to promote relevancy in teaching (both methods and classroom). The analyzed data are presented in Figures 1 and 2. Figure 3 summarizes the additional activities teachers suggested for inclusion.

Figure 1 indicates the overall average rating given by the first, third, and fifth grade teachers to each learning activity. The rating is based on the teachers' perceived importance of the activity for use in a reading methods class. After all of the ratings (1 to 10) given by the study population were tabulated, each of the twenty items was then given an average score to determine those considered most useful. An average score of one (1) would be considered the highest possible score while a twenty (20) would be the lowest.

The activity of "working on an individual basis with a child in a reading practicum involving diagnosis, analysis, and remediation" was considered the most important. "Knowing how to teach a lesson" was also rated very high.

Figure 1
Rank Ordered According to Average
Rating for Methods Class

- 3.0 Work on an individual basis with a child in a reading practicum involving diagnosis, analysis, and remediation
 - 3.3 Develop and teach a skills lesson
 - 3.4 Observe children being taught a reading lesson
 - 5.1 Administer a standardized reading test
 - 6.2 Administer informal reading assessment measures
 - 7.9 Develop goals for reading instruction
 - 8.9 Administer an Informal Reading Inventory
 - 9.5 Do a language-experience lesson with a group of children
 - 10.2 Administer an IQ Test
 - 10.3 Develop a week-long directed reading activity for a group of children
 - 10.6 Develop a Case Report on a child
 - 10.9 Administer a Cloze Test
 - 12.3 Develop a directed reading lesson for the content fields
 - 12.4 Group and schedule for reading instruction a hypothetical class of children
 - 12.9 Evaluate one or two basal reading series
 - 13.8 Construct materials to aid in teaching the basic skills of reading
 - 14.8 Write a philosophy of reading instruction
 - 15.0 Administer several reading expectancy (potential) formulas
 - 15.1 Administer several readability formulas
 - 17.1 Analyze basal series to determine the extent of multi-cultural elements and the extent of activities for exceptional children
-

A survey conducted by Cheek (1982) supports this data. Her survey determined reading teachers' opinions of reading courses taken at the undergraduate level. It reports that the most helpful topic covered in such courses was how to plan a reading lesson.

The activity considered the least important by teachers was to "analyze basal series to determine the extent of multicultural elements and the extent of activities for exceptional children."

The overall average rating received by each activity on the basis of its perceived importance in an elementary classroom is shown in Figure 2. It is noted that to "develop a case report on a child" is considered most important while "administering readability formulas" is considered least important of the twenty possible learning activities.

Figure 2

Rank Ordered According to Average
Rating in Classroom

- 4.3 Develop a Case Report on a child
- 4.6 Observe children being taught a reading lesson
- 4.7 Group and schedule for reading instruction a hypothetical class of children
- 5.6 Work on an individual basis with a child in a reading practicum involving diagnosis, analysis, and remediation
- 7.6 Write a philosophy of reading instruction
- 7.8 Administer a standardized reading test
- 8.6 Develop a week-long directed reading activity for a group of children
- 9.1 Administer several reading expectancy (potential) formulas
- 9.5 Analyze basal series to determine the extent of multicultural elements and the extent of activities for exceptional children
- 9.6 Evaluate one or two basal reading series
- 10.0 Administer an I Q Test
- 10.0 Develop goals for reading instruction
- 10.0 Develop and teach a skills lesson
- 10.7 Construct materials to aid in teaching the basic skills of reading
- 12.6 Develop a directed reading lesson for the content

fields

- 13.0 Administer informal reading assessment measures
 - 13.4 Do a language-experience lesson with a group of children
 - 15.3 Administer a Cloze Test
 - 15.5 Administer an Informal Reading Inventory
 - 16.0 Administer several readability formulas
-

The teachers were given the opportunity to suggest additional learning activities they felt should be included in the teaching of reading methods at the university level. Among others, "making a resource file and materials" was expressed as a very important activity by several teachers. This was an interesting finding as one of the teaching activities listed on the questionnaire, "Construct Materials to Aid in Teaching the Basic Skills of Reading," ranked 16th (with an average rating of 13.8) in importance as a methods class activity and 14th (with an average rating of 10.7) in importance as a classroom activity to enhance the teaching of reading. Figure 3 details additional suggested activities in order of perceived importance by the study population.

Figure 3

More experience with class or children	13
Gather resource file and materials	13
Know several approaches to phonics/reading	7
Be aware of available materials	6
Know criteria needed to group children	6
Have a complete foundation of phonics	6
Prepare seat activities to be used during reading	5
Know motivation techniques	5
Develop activities to provide for exc. reading, low reader, high reader, etc.	3
Get involved with children	2
Know management techniques	2

Know evaluation activities	2
Present a realistic picture of the situation	2
Construct story starters to use in creative writing	1
Make a poetry file	1
Visit and observe a remedial reading program	1
More emphasis on language experience	1
Professors need renewed classroom indoctrination	1
Transpose reading concepts to other subject areas	1
Learn to make reading an all day activity	1
Know ways to assess child for level of reading	1
Know about resource people	1
Learn how to ask good questions	1
Allow time for free reading	1
Develop learning centers	1
Have more communication with teachers	1
Develop speaking and listening skills	1
Teach selectivity of television viewing	1

It can be concluded that elementary teachers have definite opinions concerning what should be taught in college and university reading methods classes and what should be incorporated into reading instruction in the elementary grades. It is essential that instructors of methods classes and classroom teachers concern themselves with the results of this and similar studies and incorporate the more important activities into their instructional programs.

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