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# MODELING: AN EFFECTIVE TOOL FOR TEACHING READING

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Research has identified specific conditions and times when a child will model the behavior of an adult (Osborn, 1977). Early studies on modeling focused on the youngster's imitation of parents (Miller and Dollard, 1941). Later, Bandura (1971) emphasized why modeling influences were important in everyday living. He stated that individuals need models who exemplify the patterns in their culture because most of overt behaviors are learned either deliberately or unconsciously by example. Using variables which could be related to modeling, Travers (1972) cited studies focusing on the sex of the model and the subject, the consequences that follow the model's behavior, the effects of reinforcement, and the newness or uncertainty of a situation.

A teacher who understands the principles of modeling can certainly apply this knowledge in the classroom. Bandura (1971) observed the relationship between modeling and teaching when he stated that in many cultures, the word for teach is "to show." Numerous observational and experimental studies confirm that pupils learn what a teacher is as well as what s/he says. Pupils absorb the teacher's attitudes, imitate his or her behavior, and reflect his or her moods. In other words, the teacher is the model figure providing the impetus for behavior. If the teacher is accepted, he or she becomes a model and is consciously imitated. If the teacher is not liked, pupils may still unconsciously absorb his or her manners and attitudes (Bernard, 1965).

Because children are more apt to model when they encounter an unfamiliar concept or different situation, modeling will probably be strongest at the beginning of the school year. However, there are principles of modeling that need to be considered daily.

## Modeling and Interest in Reading

Studies support the theory that children are more apt to read if they have a model to emulate. Parents in the home set an example for a child but later the teacher becomes a parent substitute and the model for identification. In general, intellectual curiosity and value of learning are modeled through the comments and behaviors of parents and teachers. More specifically, the enthusiasm and interest in reading is projected by the teacher in formal and informal ways. An example of an organized activity that integrates modeling and reading is Sustained Quiet Reading Time (SQUIRT), which can be used successfully at any grade level

with any ability grouping. Every day at a designated time all children and adults within the school building should do the same activity—read. The amount of time spent reading in each classroom varies, but increases as the children learn to concentrate on their reading. Even though a teacher may be tempted to grade papers or complete other tasks during this time, he/she must read to be a model to the children in the classroom; otherwise SQUIRT will not be effective (Cunningham, 1977). The personal interest of the teacher about reading will be modeled in the other activities and resources selected for teaching reading.

#### Modeling and Questioning

A technique developed to improve student questioning through reading comprehension is the ReQuest, or Reciprocal Questioning procedure (Manzo, 1970). This strategy is based on the principle of modeling since the student is expected to imitate the teacher's questioning patterns. First, a selection should be read silently by both the teacher and student. Then the pupil is expected to ask the teacher questions; afterwards, the teacher asks the student appropriate questions. This procedure continues through several sentences. Manzo emphasizes that the child should be given direct or indirect reinforcement for modeling the teacher's questioning strategies.

Too often questions of teachers remain at the recognition, recall, or translation levels without progressing to the higher order of conjecture, explanation, and evaluation. Teachers need to learn these different levels of questions and how to incorporate them into the classroom. An approach which utilizes this hierarchy of questions to stimulate a child's thinking process is the Comprehension Question Response Model (Guszk, 1967). Effective modeling characteristics that might improve question asking include the following: (a) careful explanation of the relationship between the question and answer; (b) cooperation between children and teacher in working and questioning together on particular problems and activities; (c) honesty in answering student questions; (d) teaching students the various types of questions (Marksberry, 1979).

Hillerich (1979) contends that teachers should consider the need for poor readers to be exposed to higher level questions. Poor readers should not be automatically eliminated from instruction involving a variety of advanced thinking skills. Even these children are able to think critically and infer from their reading and listening, regardless of their diagnosed reading level. Questioning techniques, problem solving, demonstration, and discussion are strategies that should not be reserved for the better readers.

#### Conclusion

The teacher's attitudes concerning reading will certainly be reflected in the instructional strategies and materials chosen for the classroom. Moreover, the approaches used for teaching reading are affected by the teacher who in turn influences the behavior and learning of the students. A conscientious teacher

will not neglect the responsibility he/she has as a model, no matter what teaching strategies are used. Whether the teacher is organizing the classroom, instructing, relating to students, or involved in any other activity, he/she is a "living example" who can inspire pupil behaviors in a positive (or negative) way. Teachers are able to teach, in part, through example because all children do imitate adults. Modeling is a powerful tool which has not yet been fully utilized in the teaching of reading.

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