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Quick Reviews

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QUICK REVIEWS

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Rhodes, Lynn K. "I can read! Predictable books as resources for reading and writing instruction." The Reading Teacher, 34, Feb. '81, pp. 511-518.

This article discusses the characteristics of "predictable" books - books in which children can quickly begin to predict what the author is going to say and how he is going to say it. Characteristics are: repetitive pattern, familiar concepts, good match between the text and its illustrations, rhythm of language, rhyming pattern and cumulative patterns. The author describes how these patterns can be used with beginning and early readers to encourage immediate success with reading pictures, words, sentences, and whole books.

Rhodes also describes how such books can be used as resources for beginning writers. Children find that they can use other authors' patterns to generate and shape their own ideas. As they manipulate authors' written language, children become aware of and gain control over these conventions and patterns. Such learning leads to reading and writing growth.

Lickteig, Sister M. Joan. "Research-based Recommendations for Teachers of Writing." Language Arts, 58, Jan.'81, pp.44-50.

One answer to the back-to-basics movement in education, according to Lickteig, is renewed emphasis on writing skills. This response does not have to be more drill, rigidity, or teaching of facts and rules. Research findings free the writing teacher to "breathe the fresh air of creativity". Six suggestions, based on research, can be implemented by teachers. The six areas are concerned with: 1)positive teacher attitude, 2)supportive learning atmosphere, 3)wide experiences accompanied by discussion, 4)varied reading opportunities, 5)extensive writing experiences, and 6)cultivation of a sense of community.

Many authorities think the experience of writing itself is the teacher - that growth occurs separate from teacher instruction and evaluation. Expressing ideas in writing is the desired behavior. Writing, according to Lickteig, must become routine in the elementary classroom as well as a national priority.

Gentry, J. Richard. "Learning to spell developmentally" The Reading Teacher, 34, Jan. '81, pp. 378-381.

This article traces the development of spelling skills in young children through clearly defined stages which parallel the earlier stages of language development. The initial "babbling" stage occurs in early kindergarten or first grade, and is called the Deviant Stage. It illustrates an awareness that letters represent words (btBpa), yet shows no knowledge of letter-sound correspondence. The teacher should look for evidence of alphabetic knowledge, mastery of left-to-right orientation, and discrimination of letter forms. Language experience stories provide a good approach for teaching at this stage of development.

The Phonetic Stage follows, and is characterized by an almost perfect match between letters and sounds (i.e., "ADE LAFWT KRAMD NTU A LAVATR" for "eighty elephants crammed into an elevator"). This stage should be nurtured without correction or criticism, allowing the child opportunity for fluency to develop; some spelling competence will evolve naturally.

Next comes the Transitional Stage; words look more like English (i.e., "ELG" for eagle is now "EGUL"). Finally, the Correct Stage follows with cues for formal instruction in spelling to begin. Opportunities for writing must be ample.

Noble, Eleanor F. "Self-selection: A remedial strategy for readers with a limited reading vocabulary". The Reading Teacher, 34, Jan. '81, pp. 386-388.

Noble describes a technique used with readers with limited vocabulary and discouraged readers who may be two or more years behind their classmates in reading achievement. Short stories and articles for directed reading instruction, on the child's instructional level but in areas of special interest to the student, are read both silently and orally by the child. He is then directed to choose several words "you want to learn". These are then written on an index card and taught in a short instructional session by the teacher, using appropriate techniques for teaching sight vocabulary.

Data is presented to show that words selected by the students themselves are retained much more often than words selected by the teacher. Self-selection is a motivational strategy that can help students with a limited background grow and increase reading vocabulary.