

4-1-1976

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George Canney
University of Illinois

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Recommended Citation

Canney, G. (1976). Take a Reading Vacation--Go DRP (Directed Reading Plan). *Reading Horizons: A Journal of Literacy and Language Arts*, 16 (3). Retrieved from https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/reading_horizons/vol16/iss3/9

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TAKE A READING VACATION— GO DRP (DIRECTED READING PLAN)

Dr. George Canney

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS

While vacationing may seem a remote thought from directing a reading program, effective implementation through daily lesson planning does require an analogous sequence of activities. Just as thoughtful preparation helps to make the trip successful, thoughtful planning for reading instruction can contribute toward more effective reading skill development with elementary level students.

For example, in preparing for the family vacation to Grandma's—two-thousand miles distant—there is more than one major route that can be taken (across the desert, up the coast, through the mountains). Immediate objectives, such as places to stop for the night or to camp for a few days, are also selected. Side trips to out-of-the-way places can be planned in advance to provide opportunities for individual members of the family to pursue special interests.

Mom and Dad study road maps in an effort to plot the most interesting, yet most efficient route (remember gas costs?) to take, while the children read about some of the places they'll be seeing.

Still, the "best laid plans . . ." never seem to provide for a lazy day or an unexpected attraction which mandates a pause in the journey. Such stopovers sometimes are occasioned by the loss of a suitcase, or a child, and require backtracking to pick them up again.

Although the family may have prepared for the trip, the parents don't expect the children to remember everything. The more mature members of the family may anticipate particular points of interest while the younger children are continually being reminded: "There's the Grand Canyon! Remember when we saw it in the book?" By sharing ideas and information there occurs a continual process of group recall in which each person contributes special bits of information that may not have been remembered by others.

After the trip each member of the family recalls in a very personal way their shared experiences. The slides taken and souvenirs gathered provide many opportunities to re-experience the trip and to learn even more about the important points as well as how they were related along the roads travelled.

Planning and executing the reading program through directed reading activities is in many ways a similar experience to the trip just described. The "trip" is the total reading program, while each day's itinerary is the directed reading plan (DRP) in operation. To make the "trip" a rewarding and successful experience, most educationists agree that planned instruction is both essential and helpful for effective teaching. Recent articles by Thompson (1973) and by Durkin (1974a; 1974b; 1975a) have stressed the

need for thoughtful, systematic instruction which is sensitive to the individual strengths, weaknesses and interests of children.

Like parents studying road maps and planning to visit particular places of interest, the teacher relies on her maps—a scope and sequence chart, a teacher's manual and her own experience—to plan the instructional route to be taken. Teachers who are comfortable with their reading instruction and who know well what to teach and where they're going instill a sense of confidence and security in their pupils—as do the parents on vacation who seem to know where they're going. Careful planning frees the teacher to focus attention on the pupil's performance and to continually evaluate each child's growth in reading proficiency. For these teachers the goal (Grandma's) is never lost. Each day's experiences focus both the teacher's and the pupils' efforts on developing fluent readers—people who know how to read effectively and critically to gain understanding and for enjoyment.

Like many repetitive operations (including hours of travel over quite similar terrain) the directed reading plan (DRP) runs the risk of becoming routine—almost ritualized in some classrooms. Such routinization, while it may insure coverage of the material in a reasonable order and at a comfortable pace, can lead to inflexible, uninteresting, unmotivating and purposeless instruction which is not sensitive to the individual needs of students. In such a climate, side excursions to interesting places, or going back to pick up someone left behind, seldom occurs. Some children are lost—they fail to attend to instruction and cease to be curious, excited learners.

To avoid becoming locked into a rigid instructional scheme, the teacher might consider more than one format for the DRP. While there are real differences between some plans, most seem to incorporate these procedures: preparation (background, motivation, vocabulary, purpose), silent reading, discussion (include purposeful rereading, oral and silent), skill development/maintenance, individualized instruction or practice, and knowledge application through enrichment activities. (Harris, 1970; Burron and Claybaugh, 1972; Wilson and Hall, 1972; Bagford, 1975; Karlin, 1975). The DRP listed below is a consolidation of these various plans.

Elements of a Directed Reading Plan

A. Preparation

1. Provide a *brief* description relating the story setting to the child's background and experiences
 - through discussion (pull from the children)
 - through pictures
 - through examination of concrete objects
 - through direct experiences
 - through use of a brief overview of the story
2. Motivate the child to read the selection
 - make it relevant
 - make it somewhat familiar, yet still intriguing

3. Introduce new and/or difficult vocabulary
 - in story context
 - based upon the child's oral language
 - choose words that are *significant* in the story
 4. Clarify difficult or unfamiliar concepts
 - through discussion
 - pictorial aides
 - direct activities
 - student testimony
 5. Establish the main purpose for reading
 - by the teacher
 - by the pupil
 - B. Silent Reading
 - assign the whole story for advanced groups, and portions of the story for specific purposes for less advanced groups of students. Note-taking may be involved.
 - C. Discussion and Purposeful Rereading (silent or oral)
 - to recall facts
 - to clarify recall
 - to verify recall and opinion
 - to check comprehension
 - (oral rereading) to diagnose fluency and word attack skills
- Note: It is seldom advisable to have even primary students reread the entire story orally, unless it is dramatic or poetic in character.
- D. Development/maintenance of skills
 - teacher-directed skill lesson
 - workbook exercises
 - vocabulary practice
 - testing
 - E. Follow-up practice
 - to provide for *individual* differences through supplemental instruction and practice, and pupil interaction
 - F. Knowledge Application and Enrichment
 - related readings
 - creative activities, such as plays and creative dramatics
 - construction and writing projects
 - activities which reflect student thought, interpretation of the story, and application of information from the story in novel settings.

An alternative approach, sometimes viewed as more appropriate for advance readers, is the Directed-Reading-Thinking-Activity (DR-TA) developed by Stauffer (1970; 1975). The elements of the DRTA are: 1) developing purposes for reading, 2) developing habits of reasoning, and 3) developing habits of testing predictions based upon reading. Pupils are expected to set their own purposes for reading and the teacher functions as a "cognitive agitator." Through teacher use of "provocative questions" the student is directed to clarify and verify his own understanding of what was

read through discussion, purposeful rereading, and enrichment activities intended to extend his comprehension and appreciation of the readings.

The numerous components within the general DRP are meant to be used *flexibly* and *selectively* by the teacher to develop lessons which focus on important relationships and skills of value to the pupils in the reading group. For a particular story, not all DRP components are emphasized; in fact, some procedures might be omitted altogether.

While pursuing the ultimate destination for reading instruction—reading fluency and personal enjoyment—numerous intermediate objectives must be attained. Some objectives, like decoding skills, adequate sight vocabulary and the ability to locate stated facts, need to be acquired by every student. Other objectives, such as broad reading experience, flexible use of reading speeds, and detailed knowledge of phonics rules, may be like side trips—varying in interest and accessibility to class members. For some students many of these skills will require explicit instruction; other students will acquire such skills through their own reading. The amount of teacher time needed to develop fluent readers, then, will vary for individual children and should be planned with this in mind.

In the DRP the teacher prepares students to reach these objectives by setting background, introducing new and/or difficult concepts and by helping them to anticipate a pleasurable experience (motivation). Unfamiliar terms or facts may be presented in the hope that difficult relationships can be understood, but these may have to be reintroduced and discussed once the children have read the story. By helping the children to attend to important events and features of the story the entire experience may be more clearly understood (setting a purpose).

Next, the children silently read the story. More capable students may read the entire story, while less able pupils may read only parts of the story before discussing what was read.

Silent reading (for a purpose!) prior to oral reading prepares the reader to read aloud. The pupil is in a better position to utilize context clues and his own experiences to decode difficult words and comprehend complex passages. For example, if the child has not seen the new vocabulary item *horse* in the story prior to reading orally, he may be forced to rely heavily on his decoding skills and be unable to utilize story context to help attack the word.

Example. The big h_____ . . .

If, on the other hand, the child has been allowed to read the section silently beforehand, his general understanding of the story together with the fact that he has already seen *horse* in this context, may facilitate accurate decoding of the new word.

Example. The big h_____ is in the barn.

Teachers' questions before, during and after the story may help the readers to better understand the material, just as parents' questions and comments when sight-seeing help the children to better understand what is being experienced. As on the trip, if important points are not overlooked, the

group may talk about what they learned. Understanding parents may even turn the car around and drive back through the place to help their children understand more clearly what they saw and thought—understanding teachers may have the children reread orally or silently to clarify and verify their understanding of what was read silently. Having pupils retell earlier experiences, discuss what they read and thought, and reread help to refresh the child's memory and to encourage relearning when important experiences have been forgotten or not put into perspective, just as an event of some significance during a vacation usually elicits discussion. It may even prompt the parents to help their children develop more effective observation skills or identify relationships which they may have overlooked. On the other hand, the events may have been understood well enough such that further discussion or analysis might spoil the entire experience.

In the DRP the teacher may or may not provide for skill development, since some stories may not lend themselves to further instruction, while student performance on other stories indicates that the planned skill lessons are unnecessary. When warranted, skill instruction may be for all the pupils in the group, or limited to those children who appear in need of additional instruction. Supplemental worksheets and exercises, like slides taken on a trip, can provide opportunities to review previous experiences and to renew and strengthen skills. Such individualized instruction should have, as its goals, a deeper level of pupil understanding of the material presented, an opportunity for the teacher to evaluate the skills of the pupils, and an estimate of the degree to which the instructional plan was successful.

Provisions for students to pursue special interests and to demonstrate their understanding of the story are represented in the DRP through enrichment activities. Like side excursions on the vacation, special projects allow for individual differences in interest and expertise among pupils in the same reading group. The learning that can occur at this time may surpass in both depth and importance the stated objectives of the reading lesson.

A word of caution, however, might be warranted at this point. While it is not imperative or expected that every member of the family will understand all that is encountered on the trip, pupils are expected to understand and utilize much of the material presented in the reading program. For this reason it is essential that the teacher progress at a rate appropriate for the learning capacities of her students. To miss major sights on a trip can be excused; failure to acquire important skills in reading, however, is not acceptable. The law to follow in teaching applies as it does when driving a car: The maximum speed limit is the rate at which one can progress safely toward one's destination. And it is the driver (teacher) who is held accountable for careless driving (teaching).

It has been proposed, then, that the reading program must be structured, like a vacation, to insure direction, sequence, and success. Rigid adherence to one daily plan, however, can never successfully meet the needs and interests of each pupil or teacher. Having a thoughtfully prepared instructional plan will permit sensible deviations sensitive to pupil's needs

and interests. Such flexibility will help make the directed reading plan more like an interesting day's travel than a tedious experience. It may be the best approach to helping young readers become confident, experienced, curious travelers of books—independent seekers who know what to look for in their reading and how to incorporate it meaningfully into their lives.

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