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Round Robin

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Round Robin is a forum intended for our readers' use to express or comment on any topical subject affecting the field of reading. Send your letters or comments to Dorothy E. Smith, Round Robin Editor.



Dorothy E. Smith, Editor

Dear Mrs. Smith:

In an earlier issue *Reading Horizons* cited the major concerns, questions, and suggestions practitioners have regarding the preparation in reading received by students at Western Michigan University. The list, while not exhaustive, did reflect perceptions shared by many individuals both in the schools and in teacher education institutions.

We at Western welcome the suggestions made in the interest of improving ultimately the experiences of boys and girls in our schools. It seems appropriate therefore to share some of the steps currently underway to improve preparation in reading not only in pre-service but also as they apply to in-service and/or graduate programs.

We have long been concerned that the reading component of pre-service programs was inadequate. As of the current academic year that component will change from one course to two courses in developmental reading.

During the past academic year the Reading Unit within the Department of Teacher Education has re-examined each of the courses in the Reading Program. Course descriptions have been revised to accurately represent the content of the course and to distinguish it from all other courses.

The question of the interdisciplinary nature of teaching versus the specialty focus of reading degree programs is another area of concern. Once again our Reading Unit has attempted to meet the problem head on by identifying several program variations based on the role the student hopes to play in the school. Thus, individuals who aspire

to be clinicians or diagnosticians will have options in the area of tests and measurements beyond those required of individuals planning to continue to be classroom teachers.

We are constantly searching for ways to make our experiences more relevant. Most often this means getting closer to children. Thus within our various programs we continue to search for on-site, clinical, internship, etc., experiences. These have been built into our pre-service programs and may be seen in attempts to move courses traditionally taught exclusively "on-campus" off campus.

The question of the relationship a new teacher has to the system is always difficult to deal with. The variables to be considered are as many and varied as the districts themselves. However, through earlier and more varied laboratory experiences we are attempting to acquaint teachers with the services available to support instruction within the school and the community.

We have also worked to expose students to the wide variety of techniques and materials favored, recommended and/or used by school districts to help students learn to read. Ultimately, however, we must face the fact that we cannot complete the job in four years let alone in six or eight hours of a 120 hour program. Recognizing this we must accept the fact that professional growth in teaching is a continuous process which begins when individuals make a commitment to teaching and continues throughout their entire professional career.

Our commitment must be to continue to provide options and alternatives to meet the obvious need educators have to improve experiences leading to the full development of each child's languaging ability.

Thomas Ryan, Chairman
Department of Teacher Education
Western Michigan University