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Joseph B. Tremonti
State of Illinois

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THE PREPARATION OF READING TEACHERS FOR THE DISADVANTAGED

Joseph B. Tremonti

*Educational Administrator
State of Illinois*

From September 1969 to September 1970 Loyola University of New Orleans conducted an EPDA Experienced Teachers Fellowship Program in Reading Instruction for Elementary and Junior High School Teachers. The purpose of the program, funded by the United States Office of Education, was to prepare 20 teachers chosen from Louisiana Public and Private schools to teach reading to disadvantaged youth.

OBJECTIVES

Brief statements of the specific objectives of the program are as follows:

- 1) To provide a substantive background in communication skills to enable the participants to serve as teacher-consultants in their school systems.
- 2) To provide in its instructional program the kinds of experiences, in appropriate sequence, which enable teachers to develop deep understanding of the psychoeducational dynamics of the reading process for disadvantaged children.
- 3) To provide understanding of the communication problems among disadvantaged children and practical experience in dealing in a supervised diagnostic and remedial situation with disadvantaged children who have reading problems.
- 4) To program professional readings that will concretize learnings from the formalized part of the program; provide professional visits to different settings that will give dimension and meaning to concepts developed in the formalized program; provide opportunities for participants to listen and react to authorities in the field of reading on pertinent problems and to provide for an evaluation of these activities by the participants and staff.
- 5) To provide guidance and supervision on an individual basis to the participants so that they will be able to evaluate their own professional growth and also discuss particular communication problems with staff members.

STAFF

The organizational structure consisted of the utilization of inter-

departmental and cross disciplinary structures of learning, involving psychology, sociology, economics, communications, reading, and computer sciences. The staff representing these disciplines had varying backgrounds which had an effective influence on the program. The effectiveness was further implemented by the consultants. These, along with the block structure and team teaching approach, made for enriched learning experiences.

ORIENTATION

Each staff member was given materials for orientation containing the purposes, general and specific objectives, project organization and content. They were also given a profile of the 20 teachers selected from Louisiana Public and Private Schools who were the participants.

The director maintained daily contact with all faculty members and required them to submit a weekly outline of what they covered. In turn, these summaries of activities were periodically distributed to all staff members and participants. This afforded an opportunity for all staff members to be familiar with everything happening in the program and enabled them to maintain their continued involvement throughout the program and encouraged carry-over into their regular work.

To determine each participant's knowledge of reading, a check list of tests and terminology of testing, material of instructions, resource materials and references was given to them on which they indicated: (1) competent, (2) some acquaintance, or (3) more or less unknown after each item listed. This instrument is treated under evaluation. Results of this survey were distributed to teachers of related disciplines.

The periodic distribution of weekly outlines of materials covered an advance notice of activities to take place proved an effective means of sustaining communication between director and the staff, and between the staff and the participants. If a dialogue ensued and had a significant impact on the program, discussion took place in a democratic fashion with the fellows, director and concerned staff members. The program was sufficiently flexible to permit changes when needed to improve existing conditions.

During the first month of the contact periods the participants were permitted to observe in a variety of different school situations. Following these experiences they were assigned to a definite school. They were initiated into this experience by meeting with principals, reading supervisors, and other administrative personnel who also were concerned with the school districts involved.

PROGRAM

The program was centered around two blocks, utilizing staff members from various departments. Block "A" treated the sociological-psychological patterns of the disadvantaged. Block "B" the communication skills with emphasis on reading and other factors which affect the child's performance.

During the first two months full time was devoted to classroom instruction and laboratory experience in preparation for work in the schools. Beginning November 3rd and continuing for the balance of the first semester two mornings a week were spent in the schools observing and doing diagnostic testing and beginning remedial instruction on a one-to-one basis. During the second semester, two full days a week were spent in the schools doing further diagnostic and remedial work on a one-to-one basis with two students, one hour each, and with small groups during the remainder of the school day.

During the month of April the fellows spent four days each week, Monday through Thursday, in the schools. During this time they were visited and supervised. On Friday of each week they returned to the campus for seminars and additional forms of learning. All other time was spent with instruction periods from the various disciplines.

During the latter part of May and early June, students were diagnosed individually to screen them for the summer internship phase of the program.

Throughout the year tutorials were held to enable each participant to design, develop, and complete a project with the disadvantaged centering on his special interest. This project enabled the participants to utilize the skills learned in the formal class to an actual situation. Regular meetings of the participants and the tutors were held to allow greater exploration in depth of the problems of particular interest to the students. These projects were facilitated by the participant's work in cooperating school systems.

Workshops were programmed on pre-planned topics pertinent to the elementary and junior high school levels. Periods were programmed for a discussion and evaluation of pertinent articles in the field of reading and related problems in depressed areas. The participants were given certain required readings that were discussed under the supervision and guidance of select staff members.

Periods were programmed for visits to various centers of education where aspects of reading for the disadvantaged child were highlighted. These included visits to culturally disadvantaged elementary, middle

and junior high schools and reading centers where correction and diagnosis were provided.

Demonstrations were given. In preparation for demonstrations:

- Teachers observed a complete diagnosis of a child. A variety of formal and informal test devices were used. Tests were discussed as to purpose, data obtained, and how each test related to the findings and the remediation proposed.
- Teachers were taught to administer the tests previously observed.
- Discussions were held concerning informal techniques that could be used by the regular classroom teacher in the regular classroom to derive information concerning pupils similar to that obtained by clerical techniques.

A class in Metairie School was informally tested as the teachers observed the procedure. The basic instrument used was the informal group reading inventory which is similar to sight oral reading of a basal reader selection. Teachers observed the pupils in the class to locate:

- Indications of capacity.
- Vision and hearing problems.
- Visual and auditory discrimination difficulties.
- Dominance.
- Indications of emotional difficulty.
- Indications of possible brain damage.
- Reading levels and specific reading disabilities.

A follow-up discussion pointed out the responses and activities of the pupils in the classroom and how observation could locate many of the difficulties. These difficulties were followed up by clinical testing.

Periods were programmed for experts of national prominence in the field of reading and/or the education of disadvantaged children to present topics of interest to the participants for discussion and evaluation.

For the summer internship phase of the program students who were disadvantaged in reading were secured from schools in the greater New Orleans area. There were 206 applicants from public and private schools. From these 114 were selected. These students ranged from the first to ninth grades. Only those were selected into the program who were reading below their grade level. The program was geared for correctional and remedial cases.

Prior to testing, each student applying for the program was required to present a school and a home report, which had been sent

to them upon completion of registration. The school report requested such information as I. Q., scholastic achievement, previous reading test results, and teacher recommendations. The home report requested such information as family background, socio-economic status, and social and emotional development.

Individual testing of students was done by appointment during the latter part of May and the first part of June. The following materials were used in testing: Spache's Diagnostic Reading Scales, Durrell's Analysis of Reading Difficulties, Auditory and Visual Discrimination, Dolch's Word List, Betts Spelling Test, Rystrum's Test of Negro/Caucasian Dialect Differences, Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test, Keystone Visual-Survey Binocular Test, Audiometer Screening Test and the Nelson Reading Test. Forms A and B were used as the pre- and post-tests in the program for students in grades 3-8. The Botel Reading Inventory, forms A and B, were used as the pre- and post-tests in the program for the students in grades 1 and 2.

When all the diagnostic tests were completed and analyzed, the students were grouped according to reading level and reading needs, and assigned to a particular fellow. The serious problem cases were assigned on a one-to-one basis and others in groups ranging between 4 and 8 students per teacher.

A variety of new techniques, materials and equipment were used. A description of some of these and their effectiveness are described:

1) The Macmillan Reading Program by Harris and Clark—a multi-approach type of reading program. This series provides a firm primary program developing very early word analysis techniques, phonetic analysis, structural analysis and context clues. Supplied with four different methods of word attack, the student may choose whichever method best suits his needs. The intermediate program offers a unique constellation of challenging selections and a complete development of the reading skills.

2) The Sullivan Associates Programmed Reading—a linguistic approach based on a careful and precise analysis of our language. The programmed presentation of the material is divided into clearly defined and carefully organized segments, or stimulus-response units, each of which presents to the student a problem to solve. Immediately after the response is made, the student learns if his answer is correct, which is usually so because of the design of the program, and he is constantly being rewarded. Each concept is repeated several times in different contexts to insure mastery and retention. The student is allowed to progress at his own speed. The basic program, published by Webster-

McGraw Hill, was used in grades 1-4. The remedial program, published by the Behavioral Research Laboratories, was used in grades 5 and 6.

3) The Open Court Reading Program—an integrated language arts program and an intensive phonetic approach to reading. The program presents both vowel and consonant sounds from the start of the first grade. The nature of the reading material is of a rather high caliber, and there is less restriction in the vocabulary control of this series as compared with most other series. This series was used only in grades 3 and 4 and 5 and 6. It was not used in grades 1 and 2, since the materials and the approach at this level were too difficult for the remedial students at these grade levels.

4) The Open Highway Series—the remedial segment of the Scott-Foresman basal reading series, designed to meet the needs of those students who have encountered roadblocks in reading and have fallen behind their classmates in this area. Each book in the series is written at least two levels below grade level, yet the interest level remains high. The skills of the previous levels are reviewed and expanded.

The fellows were given instruction, earlier, on the philosophy underlying each approach of these series and recommended techniques related to the philosophies. The application of the philosophy and techniques recommended by the publishing company were closely followed and further implemented or supplemented wherever necessary to determine which of the methods of reading secured the best results.

Individualized Reading From Scholastic, Scholastic Book Services, Englewood, New Jersey, 1970, was also used. It is a program providing for individual differences with exercises varying in rate and style of learning. It includes the children's involvement in their own learning activities, development of positive self-concepts, opportunity for inquiry and an awareness of the purpose behind learning activities. The approach is fresh, practical and up-to-date. It can be used as a self-contained program and/or a supplement to an existing program. The grade three kit has a readability span of four years, ranging from grades two to five. The other kits or units also begin at grade two and increase one year in their range.

The class period was devoted to the teaching of one of the four basic programs to which each group had been assigned. Some of the basic individual needs of each student, whose needs could not be met by using a basal series alone, were supplemented with a wide variety

of materials in addition to the four basic series with Individualized Reading from Scholastic. These materials included:

Special Reading Approaches—Enabling students to learn by other methods than usual classroom procedures, especially adapted to the non-achieving disadvantaged child.

VAKT Technique

Individualized Reading

Language Experience

Word Analysis and Sight Vocabulary—Enabling pupils to increase proficiency in areas in which disabilities exist and provide teachers with a wide variety of materials on different levels of difficulty and utilizing different approaches to learning.

Phonics We Use (Lippincott)

Phonics Skilltext (Merrill)

Dolch Word Games (Garrard)

Listen and Learn with Games (Am. Interstate Comp.)

Reading and Spelling Games (Lippincott)

Language Master (Bell and Howell)

Spelling Series (Laidlaw)

Macmillan Spectrum (Macmillan)

Phonics in a Nut Shell (Eden, Pub.)

Comprehension—Enabling disadvantaged pupils who lack proficiency in understanding the opportunity to increase their comprehension using various techniques and levels of achievement.

Read—Study—Think (Weekly Reader)

Reading for Understanding (S.R.A.)

Listen and Think Series (E.D.L.)

Reading for Meaning (Lippincott)

Readers Digest Skill Text (Readers Dig.)

McCall Crabbs Test Lesson (Columbia)

Building Reader Power (Charles Merrill)

Controlled Reader (E.D.L.)

Macmillan Spectrum (Macmillan)

Multi-Purpose Skills Material—Reinforcing the previously listed materials by providing additional materials on a variety of skills and providing for specific areas not covered by other materials.

Diagnostic Reading Workbooks (Charles Merrill)

Building Reading Power Lab. (Charles Merrill)

Reading Laboratories (S.R.A.)

Specific Skill Series (Barnell Loft)

Spectrum of Reading Skills (Macmillan)

Controlled Reader Films (E.D.L.)
 Mott Basic Language Program (Mott)
 Distar (S.R.A.)
 RSVP (Anser)

High Interest—Low Readability Material—Providing challenging material to motivate reluctant readers to develop the desire to read for pleasure.

Morgan Bay Mystery (Harr Wagner)
 Americans All Series (Field Education Publisher)
 Kaleidoscope (Field Education Publisher)
 Dan Frontier (Benefic Press)
 Action Series (Scholastic)
 Pilot Libraries (S.R.A.)
 Chevelence Flags (Field Education Publisher)

On the closing day of the program, the teachers held conferences with the parents of the students and presented them with a report of the analysis of the student's reading difficulties, test results, and recommendations for further reading development. A duplicate of this report was sent to the school that each student attended.

EVALUATION

A variety of techniques was used to evaluate the effectiveness of the fellowship program. These included:

Faculty—Evaluation was a continuous process by the faculty of the program who had regular informal meetings with the director to discuss and evaluate the program. Weekly summaries of material covered were submitted by the faculty. These were reviewed to determine if the specific objectives of the program were being realized.

Participants—The director and his designated representatives visited the participants while they were working in the schools. These visits consisted of observation of the participants while teaching followed by private conferences.

Meetings were held with the fellows and the three staff members who were responsible for the bulk of the reading instructions and who served as a steering committee. These meetings were held on the average of about every three weeks to carry out a continuous evaluation of the program. Fellows were frequently asked to submit comments and specific questions concerning topics which they wished to be included in the program.

A pre- and post self-evaluation check list was used at the beginning and ending of the academic year, which included concepts of testing,

various tests, specialized procedures, materials of instruction, equipment and social, economic and psychological factors affecting the disadvantaged. The scores obtained by the participants on the pre- and post-test instrument, were determined by giving "1" point for knowing a great deal in the area, "2" points for some acquaintance with the area, and "3" points for a concept more or less unknown. The obtained difference between means was 77.5. This produced a *t* of 11.04 (*p*.001) which was significant at the .001 level.

SCHOOL SUPERVISORS OF PARTICIPANTS

A questionnaire was sent to the school supervisors of each participant near the end of the academic year to evaluate the effectiveness of each fellow's performance, to solicit in what respect the fellowship program was commendable, and to seek recommendations for improvement. Analysis of the percentages of the twenty school supervisors' progress report of the Fellowship Program shows that an excellent rating was given to eight of the thirteen items by eighty to ninety-five per cent of the supervisors. Replies from school supervisor to the question, In what respects is the fellowship program most commendable, are recorded:

1. New ideas were generated from the teacher and from Loyola Staff members.
2. Program has rendered invaluable service to students in need of an individual basis. This "personalized" teaching has given students a feeling of security and accomplishment.
3. The program helped the special education teacher in preparing and understanding the problems of these students.
4. Fellows were able to give special attention to non-readers—something they could not have gotten in a regular classroom.
5. Fellows helped to relieve some of the tension which pressured the regular classroom teacher by relieving her of the "special" cases.
6. The program can extend to the school services, consultative assistance and practical application of theories. It can also serve as a valuable tool for in-service training.

Replies to the question, In what respects is the Fellowship Program in greatest need of improvement, are summarized:

1. One improvement in the effectiveness of the program could be brought about by early assignments to schools, allowing for more time and service rendered to each school. This would result in greater improvement and maximum achievement in other academic areas.

2. More fellowships should be made available in order to give others the opportunity to participate and benefit from the program.
3. More meetings with principals, teachers, fellows and university officials during the on-going program to evaluate progress.

TUTORIALS

Tutorials were held to enable each participant to design, develop, and complete a project with the disadvantaged. This project enabled the participant to utilize the skills learned in formal class to an actual situation. Meetings of the participant and the tutor were held to allow greater exploration in depth of the problems of particular interest to the students. These projects were facilitated in some instances by the work that was being done in the cooperating school's systems. Meaningful and significant research to the participants was done in the following areas: Non-basal approaches to teaching reading; modified spelling approaches to teaching of reading; a remediation program for the treatment of the language patterns of Negro disadvantaged children at the fourth, fifth and sixth grade levels; analysis of individual cases which included details on intellectual, physical, environmental, emotional and personality factors; summary and evaluation of treatment; and recommendations for further treatment in school and home.

INTERNSHIP PROGRAM—PUPIL ACHIEVEMENT

After five weeks of intensive reading instruction, the results of the pre- and post-tests were compared and analyzed. The test results indicated that 78% of the pupils did make some gain in reading achievement. The remaining 22% showed no significant gain in reading achievement except in attitude. The average gain was six months.

Not all of the progress can be evaluated by the achievement test; change in attitude was accomplished but not measured. This was demonstrated by the student's own self motivation, willingness to enter a reading program, improved self image, and books and instructional materials taken home to use.

TEACHER EVALUATION

In an intensive reading program such as this, teacher evaluation would probably be a more accurate basis of pupil achievement than standardized tests. Therefore, at the close of the program each teacher was asked to submit an evaluation of the results of pupil achievement

and the Internship Program as a whole. A summary of these results is as follows:

- 1) Most of the teachers saw some definite areas of improvement in each of their students.
- 2) One of the aims of this program was to awaken in each student a desire and interest in reading, and teachers agreed that this had been achieved in most instances.
- 3) Materials were adequate to meet the various needs of the pupils. Supervision and direction were well planned.
- 4) Participation in the summer reading program was a valuable learning experience. Seminar, discussions, case studies, and the field trip to crippled children's hospital were particularly helpful.
- 5) The summer program offered the opportunity of developing in-depth diagnostic and corrective insights into the reading problems of an individual and with small groups in congenial and pleasant working conditions.
- 6) It was a wonderful, enlightening, and enriching experience. Help was given when and at the time it was needed. Staff members were always available for consultation and assistance in suggesting, selecting and evaluating materials. They shared freely and readily their experience and "know-how" in teaching reading. Their understanding and constructive criticism have assisted in helping the children and added to the personal knowledge of the participants.

Conclusions

The Experienced Teachers Fellowship Program in Reading Instruction for Elementary and Junior High School Teachers conducted at Loyola University of New Orleans generated an interest in meeting the needs of the disadvantaged and increased the effectiveness of participating teachers in providing adequate reading instruction. It is a program which should be continued in the future.