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# A MULTI-MEDIA APPROACH TO READING

*Lucetta A. Johnson*

*Allegan Public Schools*

As a new teacher in the Allegan Public Schools one of the primary goals for the year was to present reading activities to the children in as many interesting ways as possible to enrich their reading experiences. A multi-media approach was chosen to accomplish this goal and to encourage the children to love books. By multi-media approach (1) is meant an approach that uses as many printed and audiovisual forms of communication as possible. The program used consisted of the following media, which are by no means all that are currently available: Basal Readers, Library Books, Film Strips, Educational Television, Home Television, S.R.A. Reading Laboratory, Room Visitors, Daily Writing, Creative Writing, Film Strips with Coordinated Records, Creative Art, and a Class Motion Picture.

## **Basal Readers**

The Basal Readers used at the Dawson Elementary School for Second Grade Level are *We Are Neighbors* and *Around the Corner* with accompanying workbooks from Ginn and Company. This is a good series with an ample amount of suggestions for the development of reading skills and it serves as a core of information from which to work and innovate.

## **Library Books**

Dawson Elementary School is fortunate to have a small library in the school with a librarian in attendance. The children have two library periods of thirty minutes each, every week. During one of these sessions the librarian reads aloud to the children a book pertinent to the grade, the time of year, and the teacher's planned curriculum. The library books were used in numerous ways in the classroom in addition to pleasure reading. Each week special themes were chosen in the classroom and the children searched for the best possible books on this subject. They soon learned to share their findings and admire each other for their book choices. On special days the children read aloud from their library books in regular reading classes. Simple book reports were encouraged. Some children chose to tell their report.

Others drew pictures that told the story. The better writers wrote about the books in their own words.

#### **Film Strips**

Nearly every day for the thirty minutes right after lunch, film strips were shown. These films were carefully chosen each Friday for the week to come from the stock available in Primary Science, Health, Conservation, Geography, History, Community, Holidays, Safety, Transportation, Music Stories, Children's Literature and Language Skills. A supplementary series was used that stressed the vocabulary and procedures of Modern Mathematics.

There are many advantages of film strips: the common visual experience that the children have together, the discussions and ideas that the films bring forth from the children, the restful attention it promotes, the listening skills it encourages, the interest it creates in school work, and the desire to read more books that results.

#### **Educational Television**

Channel Ten was used for Children's Literature, Art, Science, Music, and Health this year. Channel Ten sent schedules of the programs in advance with suggested activities to proceed and follow the program. Related materials were listed. This cooperation on the part of the television station made it possible for teachers to coordinate the curriculum with the television lessons. It takes a great deal of work before and after the program for Educational Television to be really effective. There are times when a program should be skipped if it doesn't fit the needs of the classroom or if there isn't time to prepare properly for it and follow it up. Many times during the year a good Literature program led to reading books from the library or doing dramatic plays; Art lessons led to creative projects; and Science demonstrations led to classroom experiments and research reading.

#### **Home Television**

Everywhere you hear that children are spending too much time at home in front of the television. What can the classroom teacher do about this or should she do anything? Home television can be a big asset to the classroom teacher if an effort is made to use television as an enrichment to reading. Last year the *TV Guide* was checked carefully. When a good children's program was coming the children had writing lessons to take home that told about the program. In

the room the children did art work related to the programs and read books relating to the programs before and after the TV presentation. Some of the programs that went best with the reading curriculum last year were: The four "Charlie Brown" specials, "Mayflower Mouse," "The Nutcracker," "Cinderella," "Tom Thumb," "Rudolph," "Babar," and "Pinocchio." Factual programs of special interest were: National Geographic's "Australia" and "Underwater Life"; Specials "Big Cats, Little Cats" and "Circus Life." Even the children who missed the television programs shared in the common class experience as they participated in discussions, reading, and art projects about them.

#### **Science Research Associates Reading Laboratory**

This Laboratory, when properly used, can be an excellent addition to the classroom by giving all students a chance to work on the same skills but at their own speed and on their own level. Second graders find this to be fun when competition is not emphasized and special interests are encouraged. The listening booklets from S.R.A. are also very helpful in developing listening skills and the children enjoy the exercises much as they do puzzles and riddles.

#### **Room Visitors**

In the Second Grade curriculum, projects built around Community Helpers go very well with interests of the children and as background for both formal and library reading. While it is not practical to take thirty children on a trip every week, it is quite easy to have a community helper come into the classroom every Friday afternoon during the first few months of school. Some of the people visiting the classroom last year were: a Fireman, Safety Policeman, City Librarian, School Librarian, Dairy Farmer, Folk Singer, Bus Driver, Safety Patrol Boys, Slot Car Demonstrator, and the Room Mothers. The best source of these visitors proved to be parents. Each classroom has its own helpers represented and parents make excellent visitors to have. The children looked forward to the visitors, asked good questions, read books about them before and after their visits, drew pictures of the helpers, and wrote Thank You Notes to them. The people in their books seemed to become real to them after they talked to the people from their town.

#### **Daily Writing**

The children did a written paper every morning. This was not just

Penmanship; it was a real reading, writing, and drawing exercise. Each paper was written and then illustrated in detail like a page from a book. The papers were later stapled into booklets for the children to keep after they were first presented to parents at Parent Conferences. The children had three booklets for the year: Beginning of the Year, Mid-Year, and End of the Year.

The main purposes for the booklets were to put the children's daily writing together in such way that they could keep it, so they could see their own progress from book to book. The first two books were in manuscript, the last one in cursive. The books became a running diary of what went on in the room during the year.

#### Creative Writing

Many opportunities arose for creative writing during the year: letters, experiences, endings to stories, riddles, but the best project turned out to be the "Tigger and Tiggra" booklet. I say booklet because it was only writing papers stapled together but it represented a great deal of fun on the part of the children. Two stuffed tigers were brought to school the second semester. Each night a boy took Tigger home and a girl took Tiggra home. The next day they brought a written story about the tigers which told what had happened during their visits to the children's home. Tigger got as far as Chicago and Tiggra took ballet lessons. The tigers helped wash dishes, watched television, and slept soundly on all their visits. After corrections were made in spelling and punctuation, the children copied their stories over and illustrated the adventure on their page. Those children who were unable to put their experiences down on paper reported orally and the teacher wrote their stories as they told them. The children later copied the stories and illustrated them for the class booklet.

Creative writing may prove to be more important in learning to read than we now realize. In a statement made by Martin Mayer(2) in his book *The Schools* he says, "Children speak long before they listen and . . . children learn to read most easily and most successfully when reading comes initially as a by-product of writing." This is food for thought. Have you ever noticed how eagerly a child reads what he has written? If you have ever written anything yourself, you know how interesting it is to you. Mayer maintains that language skills do not come in the order that we now assume: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Even in Second Grade children like to speak much better than they like to listen and with a little help they like to write

about their own experiences better than they like to read about what someone else has done.

#### **Film Strips with Coordinated Records**

The most rewarding media used during the year were the film strips with coordinated records. These were treated as a "Special Event" and were scheduled every Thursday afternoon. Since early elementary children hear women's voices so much at school and at home it is useful to use records that have an ample sprinkling of men's voices. The music and sound effects on the records also add to the children's enjoyment. A series of records were used called Music Stories from the Society for Visual Education. Typical titles were: "Peter and the Wolf," "William Tell," "Hansel and Gretel," and "The Nutcracker." Another series of films were used from Coronet Films with their accompanying records: "Aesop's Fables," "Just So Stories," "Stories About Colors," and "Let's Listen." The "Let's Listen" is a record of farm and city sounds with the film strips showing pictures of the animals and vehicles making the sounds.

The best series used were from Weston Woods Studios. (3) Weston Woods technical skill has brought about films and records that cover outstanding books and Caldecott Medal Winner. This leads to an increased interest in really good children's books. Examples are: "The Snowy Day," "Millions of Cats," "The Happy Owls," "Chanticleer and the Fox," and "Frog Went A-Courtin'." Two that coordinated well with the Ginn Basal Readers were "Mike Mulligan and His Steam Shovel" and "Stone Soup" because parts of these stories appear in *We Are Neighbors*.

#### **Creative Art and A Class Motion Picture**

During the year Art Activities were related directly to our reading and language activity with the children drawing from film showings and creating stories in art form on paper. Near the end of the year we embarked on a culmination project for the year. The project was called "Bring A Friend from a Book to Life." Each child drew his "Friend from a Book" on manila paper and colored it in the actual colors to determine the colors of paint needed when it would later be done of papier-mache. Each child started his figure from a 2 quart milk carton which he covered with newspaper strips wet with wheat paste. The only time teacher assistance was needed was in bending wires around the cartons to make the frame for legs, arms,

ears, and tails. These wires were then covered with papier-mache strips and the entire body painted. Each child made a different and unique character. There were soon thirty-two "Friends." To name a few: "Little Black Sambo," "Sleeping Beauty," "Winnie the Pooh," "Moby Dick," "Pinocchio," "Snoopy," "Black Beauty," "Patchwork Girl of Oz," "The Pink Snail from Dr. Doolittle," and "Peter Rabbit." When the project was all finished, the children posed with their book, their papier-mache Friend, and their name card for a Bell & Howell Super 8 Movie Camera and an 8 mm film was made. The movie was shown the last day of school and is now stored in the school archives to show future classes as a homemade multi-media communication.

#### Summary

The children of today are a film and television generation. By using multi-media approaches to reading, books can come alive to them. Students do get excited about books, they read them with pleasure, and they learn to love them. It is an exciting way to teach.

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3. Weston Woods Studios. Weston Woods, Connecticut.