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ECHOES FROM THE FIELD

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Reading instructors have been using the language experience approach to teaching reading for a good many years. Philosophically, this approach to reading instruction like all others has been debated.

Many argue that, while it is instructionally helpful to utilize materials that are meaningful to the pupil, the clerical time involved in developing language experience stories is too great. This argument is not altogether hollow. Quite often a teacher can be seen with seven stories to prepare for her pupils by tomorrow or at least by day after tomorrow. The clerical task involved not only takes its toll in times, but it also takes a toll in the teacher's enthusiasm for using the materials. Teachers are supplied with enough record keeping and paper shuffling without the added burden of spending several hours printing or typing pupils' creations.

This echo from the field offers a solution to these clerical woes for the language experience enthusiast.

Step I

Enlist the services of a high school shorthand, typing class. This should be a group of second term stenography students.

Step II

Record the pupils' experience on tape.

Step III

Transport the tapes to the stenography students. These students will practice their shorthand from the tapes and their typing from the shorthand notes. Their finished product will consist of a completely typed story and a set of vocabulary cards created from the words in the story.

Step IV

Retrieve the tapes and the typed materials.

Step V

Use the materials for instruction.

Advantages for this procedure are listed below:
1. Teacher is no longer saddled with typing load.
2. This conserves energy for instruction and helps sustain enthusiasm for language experience activity.
3. Helps to motivate the stenography student. This presents the "real world" of working for accuracy and time because the material will be used. How exciting can it be to type "Now is the time for all good men to sue Adam?"

Disadvantages also exist.
1. It takes time and patience to convince a typing instructor that this procedure is worthy of the effort necessary to have the idea be successful.
2. Someone must transport recordings to and from the typing service.

This is not a scheme born out of an ivory tower, but a procedure that has been tried and shown to be successful in aiding teachers of reading and typing. It is not an echo that will cause McGuffy to rise and recite from his reader, but it will increase enthusiasm for helping students express themselves orally.