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An Inservice Training Manual of Selected Writing Techniques to Improve Reading Achievement in Primary Grades

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AN INSERVICE TRAINING MANUAL OF
SELECTED WRITING TECHNIQUES TO IMPROVE READING
ACHIEVEMENT IN PRIMARY GRADES

A Project Report
Presented to
The Graduate Faculty
Central Washington University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts
Education

by
Roni L. Rumsey
June, 1997

AN INSERVICE TRAINING MANUAL OF SELECTED WRITING
TECHNIQUES TO IMPROVE READING ACHIEVEMENT IN
PRIMARY GRADES

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The purpose of this project was to design and develop a manual of writing techniques that could be used in kindergarten and first grade classrooms, in order to increase reading achievement. To accomplish this, current research and literature on emergent literacy, reading, writing, and communication was reviewed. Additionally, information and selected materials from selected schools and school districts related to the utilization of writing techniques to improve reading skills was obtained and analyzed.

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CHAPTER ONE

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Introduction

Reading and writing are reciprocal processes. It is in the writing part of the daily lesson that children are required to pay attention to letter detail, letter order, sound sequences, and letter sequences, and the links between messages in oral language and messages in printed language. The writing knowledge serves as a resource of information that can help the reader and vice versa (Clay, 1985, p. 51).

As suggested in the above statement, focusing on selected concepts during the writing portion of a day can help increase awareness of subtleties in printed language for students in the early grades. Children's writing can become a powerful source of learning how to work on many things: story structure, letter-sound relationships, punctuation, and other components of writing. As a result, teachers can make informed decisions as to which teaching points to be focusing on with individual students (Glassbrenner, 1989).

Research conducted by Marie Clay has shown that writing was often the precursor to reading. As Clay suggested: "The first explorations of print in the preschool years may occur in writing rather than reading." "What a child writes is a rough indicator of what he is attending to in print (1991, p.108-109). Knowing this has been helpful in developing activities that will increase the writer's abilities to incorporate knowledge about writing into the reading process.

Clay (1975) further stated that the child who engaged in writing activities was manipulating the units of written language. To put his ideas down in print, the

child was required to pay attention to the details of print in order to construct words, letter by letter. Poor readers tended to ignore these details in their reading, but they were forced to give them attention in their writing.

Finally, many links have been suggested between early writing activities and those skills needed for reading. These included how to attend and orient to printed language, how to tell left from right, how to visually analyze words, what to study in a word, and how to direct one's behavior to carrying out a series of movements needed in writing words and sentences (Clay, 1972). The child who has failed to learn to read is often delayed in writing stories. Often remedial lessons exclude the teaching of writing as this is seen as an extension of language that comes after reading or is viewed as a different subject. An alternative view sees reading and writing in the early acquisition stage as both contributing to learning about print. (They are separated by educators for timetables and curricula.) A case can be made for the theory that learning to write letters, words and sentences actually helps the child to make visual discriminations of detail in print that he will use in his reading (Clay, 1982).

Purpose of the Project

The purpose of this project was to design and develop a manual of writing techniques that could be used in kindergarten and first grade classrooms, in order to increase reading achievement. To accomplish this, current research and literature on emergent literacy, reading, writing, and communication was reviewed. Additionally, information and selected materials from selected schools and school districts related to the utilization of writing techniques to improve reading skills was obtained and analyzed.

Limitations of the Project

For purposes of this project, it was necessary to set the following limitations:

1. Scope: The manual of writing techniques would be designed for teachers in the early grades, particularly kindergarten and first grade at Morgen Owings Elementary School in Chelan, Washington.
2. Target Population: The activities in the manual were specifically designed for use with kindergarten and first graders. The activities are also appropriate for second language learners in other grades.
3. Research: The preponderance of research has been limited to the past ten (10) years. Additionally, several educators were asked to participate by responding with an activity/activities that had been used successfully in his/her classroom.

Definition of Terms

Significant terms used in the context of this project have been defined as follow:

1. Concepts About Print: One of several areas necessary for written language learning. This area includes basic concepts such as letter, word, sound, writing and reading. It also includes hierarchical concepts such as collections of letters which make up words and collections of words which make up sentences. Another concept includes terms for positions such as first and last, beginning or start and end, and next, when they apply within the directional constraints of the printer's code (Clay, 1991).
2. Developmentally Appropriate: Concept related to both "predictable sequences of growth and change that occur in [most] children during the first 9 years of

life” and to the “individual pattern and timing of growth, as well as individual personality, learning style, and family background” (cited in McGill-Franzen, 1993).

3. Emergent Literacy: Literacy development in young children, specifically before the ages of five or six when they begin to read and write in conventional forms. Literacy means reading and writing and the relationship between the two. Emergent suggest that development is taking place, that there is something emerging in the child that had not been there before (Sulzby & Teale, 1986).
4. Phonological Awareness: The conscious ability to detect and manipulate sound (e.g., move, combine, delete), access to sound structure of language, awareness of sounds in spoken words in contrast to written word (Gunn Kameenui, & Simmons, 1996).
5. Shared Writing: During the shared writing process, the writing is a negotiated process with meanings, choices of words, and topics discussed and decided jointly by students and teachers. The teacher serves as scribe, while the students are the apprentices (Routman, 1994).

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Introduction

The review of research and literature summarized in Chapter Two has been organized to address:

1. Conditions of Learning
2. Early Literacy Development: Home and School
3. The Reading/Writing Process: Learning to Read/Write
4. Washington State Basic Education Act (RCW 28A.150.210)
5. Becoming Better Readers through the Writing Process
6. Summary of Selected Programs Using Writing to Improve Reading Scores
7. Summary

Data current predominantly from the last ten (10) years was identified through an Educational Resource Information Center (ERIC) computer-search. A hand-search of various other sources was conducted which involved the use of the Internet, reviewing journal articles, reading texts, and conversations with colleagues. Additionally, information and selected materials from selected schools and school districts related to the utilization of writing techniques to improve reading skills was obtained and analyzed.

Conditions of Learning

Brian Cambourne stated that “. . . while the conditions for learning to talk cannot be precisely replicated for the written mode of language, the principles which they exemplify can” (1988, p. 45). These conditions, as paraphrased below are:

- Immersion
- Demonstration
- Engagement
- Expectation
- Responsibility
- Approximation
- Use
- Response

IMMERSION

Children are immersed in the language they are expected to learn. They see adults reading books, newspaper, shopping lists. They hear people all around them communicating in order to have their needs met. Learners need to be surrounded both visually and aurally by whatever they are to be learning.

DEMONSTRATION

Immersion in language is not, by itself, sufficient to produce children who are literate. Children also need demonstration. “Demonstrations are artifacts and/or actions from which we can learn” (Cambourne, 1988, p. 47). Infants regularly receive demonstrations through objects and actions, most often accompanied by language. An example given by Cambourne follows. We might ask (language) an infant, “Do you want a drink?” (object) as we hand him/her a glass (action). These are whole, meaningful, and functional demonstrations.

ENGAGEMENT

Babies are given demonstrations of language from birth on, but they will only learn from these demonstrations if they become engaged in them. Learners become engaged in that which is personally meaningful and purposeful to them, when they feel success, and when the experience is positive (Cambourne, 1988).

EXPECTATION

Parents expect their children to do many things: walk, talk, run and so on. Because a significant person in a child's life expects these things to happen, most often they will. These expectations transfer to the learning process as well. Parents and teacher have high expectations based on individual needs and these expectations are communicated to the student. These beliefs show the student that he/she has the skill necessary to accomplish the learning. The student must see the expectation that with use, he will master the task at hand and be responsible for accomplishing that (Cambourne, 1988).

RESPONSIBILITY

According to Cambourne children "**must** eventually learn to talk" (p. 37). They take the responsibility for choosing which demonstrations to engage in and which aspects of oral language to focus on at a given moment. In the classroom it is the teacher's responsibility to provide the best conditions for language learning, whereas it is the students responsibility to engage in reading and writing activities that meet their developmental needs (Fisher, 1991).

APPROXIMATION

Approximations are most often accepted and celebrated in young children. These are considered natural and essential behaviors to language acquisition. Approximating dominates learning, especially in the early stages of any developmental task (Holdaway, 1984, p. 64).

USE

Frank Smith (1983) stated that one can learn to read by reading and to write by writing. Parents of young children will tell you that their child learned to talk by talking and children find plenty of opportunities to use talk in meaningful ways.

Learners need the opportunity to practice whatever it is they are expected to learn. In a classroom situation students need time to read, write and communicate in order to become successful (Cambourne, 1988).

RESPONSE

Talking is a universal method of communication. Response is a natural part of talking. Parents give constant feedback to their child in conversations that they have. They answer questions, give them what they ask for, and tell them more about a subject of interest. In the classroom, teachers and peers supply constant feedback. They talk about the work being done, ask questions, and tell stories. Evaluation is often included in response as a way of leading instruction (Cambourne, 1988).

Holdaway (1986) has identified similar conditions for learning within the classroom. This model has often been referred to as the Natural Learning Classroom Model. It includes Demonstration, Participation, Practice, and Performance.

During the demonstration portion of the model, the teacher performs genuine activities, while the learner is observer and audience. According to Holdaway (1990), the participation phase includes both teacher and learner as participants. Each child participates at his/her own developmental level. During this portion of the model, it would seem more as group participation, although each child is responsible for his own response. As Holdaway observed, "The unison situation, properly controlled in a lively and meaningful spirit, allows for massive individual practice by every pupil in the teaching context" (1979, p. 129). Learners

need time to use, employ and practice their developing control in functional, realistic, non-artificial ways.

Practice is a time when there is no audience except self. (Holdaway, 1990)
As children engage in activities they are self-monitoring and self-regulating, working toward automaticity in reading and writing. By sharing what they have learned, children are performing. Holdaway further suggested teachers knew learning had occurred when their students came to them and wanted to show their work (Holdaway, 1990).

The conditions of learning described by Cambourne and Holdaway are not the only areas to be considered in the learning process. Russian linguist, Lev Vygotsky (1986) also found the relationship between language and thinking to be an interactive one. Vygotsky stated that although language and thought happen independently, it is not until these two systems work with the process of inner speech that logical reasoning begins to develop. Vygotsky further explained (as cited in Schwartz, 1988) that young children not only use language for communication purposes, but also to plan and guide their behavior in a self-regulatory manner. In addition, the highly social approach to learning language supported by recent research shows that learning to speak is firmly embedded in the child's social life.

Learning must be relevant to the child in order that optimal learning will take place. Marie Clay summarized this in saying:

Children's learning is constrained by our schemes and our scheming, by our allegiances and our theories. We construct the learning situations for the children. . . Unfortunately when teachers say of a child 'He cannot make progress in reading and writing' or 'He is not ready for reading and writing' too often that is only true if he has to learn by that teacher's program. There is probably another route by which he could learn and in that case the instruction would start, not where the teacher is, but where the child is (1991, pg. 16).

Early Literacy Development:

Home and School

Literacy has been defined by Scribner and Cole (1981) as a set of socially organized practices that make use of a symbol system and a technology for producing and disseminating it. They further stated that “literacy was applying this knowledge for specific purposes in specific contexts of use “(p. 236).

The development of literacy begins before a child first attends school. Each child brings with him a wide variety of background experiences and knowledge. Children have learned a tremendous amount about their world before they get to school, but their world and the world of school are very different. At home, there is the shared memory of common experiences which helps in learning new skills and making sense of new ideas.

Barbara Tizard and Martin Hughes (cited in Ministry of Education, 1994) pointed out that in talking about things at home, parents and caregivers make use of hundreds of analogies and explanations that a teacher cannot begin or hope to share. Literacy in the home can be seen in activities such as cooking, food buying, the making of lists, or reading books. Reading and writing, like listening and talking are processes that cannot be separated. Heath (1983) suggested that the types of literacy interactions a child is involved in at home are most important for a successful beginning to literacy.

Children who had rich literacy experiences in the home tended to have a clear idea about how print is organized and used to convey meaning. These children have a repertoire of books they know well and have begun to use writing in the home to create messages. They understand concepts about print, such as where to

begin reading, which direction the text flows on the page when reading and writing, and how organizational structures are used to begin reading and writing (Deford, 1991).

The Reading/Writing Process:

Learning to Read/Write

Research has shown that learning to read and write occurs in much the same manner as learning to speak and listen. Badger (1990) summarized the basic conditions for learning language as follows:

Children learn language when:

- They are immersed in it.
- It fulfills their own needs and purposes.
- Others trust that they can learn and expect that they will.
- They receive positive responses to their attempts.
- They get the help they need when they need it (pg. 10).

A young child's writing is an outgrowth of an infants gestures. Vygotsky (1986) pointed out that gestures are like writing in the air, and written signs are simply gestures that have been fixed. A baby moves his/her arm and faces around him light up with smiles. Because meaning is attached to what could be called meaningless gestures, the gestures assume meaning.

Babies learn the power of their gestures by the response to them. Babies learn how powerful of speech is in a much similar fashion. Calkins stated (1994, pg. 60) that "children learn the power of language because they are surrounded by people who use language for real world reasons and expect children to do so as well." To become literate a child must see people using reading and writing to accomplish real world goals. They can learn that grocery lists help us remember to

get items we need from the grocery store. They can learn that cookies can be made from a recipe. They can learn that we communicate by writing and receiving letters, even when the letters are made up of pictures, scribbles, and drawings. These scribbles and writings are their “real writing.” Children need to be active participants when those around them use reading and writing to accomplish daily activities (Pierce, 1995).

Developmental learning has three characteristics--self-motivation, self-direction, and self regulation. When children learn to talk it is self-motivated. A child gets something out of talking. This effort is rewarded by increasing effectiveness at operating their world using language. It is self-directed because the child chooses what to say and learn according to his/her needs and the language models provided for them. It is also self-regulated because the child constantly judges the effectiveness of his/her attempts at talking and listening, mostly through feedback from those they are communicating with (Cormack, 1990).

Ferreiro and Teberosky stated (as cited in Clay, 1991 pg., 26) that “Everything changes if we suppose that individuals learning to read and write already possess a notable knowledge of their mother tongue. The young child has learned to manipulate language with the help of the adults around him in order to make sense. Particularly, he has learned how to learn language. Phillip Morrison wrote (cited in Calkins, 1994) “that by the age of four to six, the child . . . controls the phonetic system of his language; he handles the grammatical core; he knows and uses the basic vocabulary of his language.”

Washington Basic Education Act

The Basic Education Act of Washington State mandated that all students in Washington State have the opportunity to become productive, responsible citizens after receiving instruction in a state funded public school. Specifically, this Act states:

The goals of each school district, with the involvement of parents and community members, shall be to provide opportunities for all students to develop the knowledge and skills essential to:

- (1) Read with comprehension, write with skill, and communicate effectively and responsibly in a variety of ways and settings.”
- (2) . . .
- (3) Think analytically, logically, and creatively, and to integrate experience and knowledge to form reasoned judgments and solve problems (RCW 28A.150.210).

In 1995, the Washington State Commission on Student Learning formed a committee to address the needs of school children across the state in several areas. As a result, the Commission identified the following areas as essential academic learning requirements in writing. 1) The student writes effectively and clearly. 2) The student writes in a variety of forms for different audiences and purposes. 3) The student understands and uses the steps of the writing process. 4) The student analyzes and evaluates the effectiveness of written work (State of Washington, 1997).

To meet the requirements of the Basic Education Act, the Commission stated that many classrooms are focusing on the mechanics of writing in the early years, as is developmentally appropriate. The end result has been found to be students who are able to write with depth and richness because the content of the writing has been the focus.

Studies done by the Commission on Student Learning also were related to developmental readiness of students. It found that current research regarding brain

functions showed that the ability to integrate the use of mechanics with creative thought needed to compose the content occurs around the middle of elementary school at age 8 or 9 for most students (State of Washington, no date). The mechanics of writing are introduced slowly for the reason stated earlier. The focus initially, is more on the content of what is being written rather than how it is written, with the expectation that the two areas will merge as the student progresses.

Becoming Better Readers Through the Writing Process

Marie Clay, a New Zealand researcher, has done observations of children reading and writing development over the last twenty years. She concluded that “The child who engages in creative writing is manipulating the units of written language--letters, words, sentence types-- and is likely to gain some awareness of how these can be combined to convey unspoken messages. . . . To put his messages down in print he is forced to construct words, letter by letter, and so he becomes aware of letter features and letter sequences, particularly for the vocabulary which he uses in writing again and again” (1975, pg. 2).

Clay (1975) further suggested that language could be broken down into a hierarchy of units: sentences could be broken down into phrases, phrases into words, and words into sounds. This is not so in the early stages of writing. All features of this hierarchy must be attended to by the child. Marie Clay stated (cited in Ministry of Education, 1994. p. 8), “For children who learn to write at the same time as they learn to read, writing plays a significant part in the early reading process.” The first explorations of print in the preschool years may occur in writing rather than reading. What a child writes is an indicator of what he pays

attention to in print. Furthermore, Clay suggested that writing offers an extra opportunity for the child to gain control of literacy concepts. Because the child is creating a story in print, the eye and the brain are directed to important features. The child must attend to the features of letters, construct his own words, letter by letter. He must also focus on spatial concepts and work within the order and sequence constraints of print. The child must break down the task into small segments while at the same time synthesizing them into words and sentences, then engage in his own form of segmenting sounds in words in order to write them (Clay, 1991).

Clay explained two features of the learning process that warrant special attention in the learning environment. The first, labeled “gross approximations” referred to this as the strange letter forms, invented words, and make believe sentences that children write. These approximations suggested that the child was working towards the principles of written language and any instruction should encourage him to do this. The second consideration referred to was specificity, which was defined as the stage of progress in which “. . . individual letters and words become recognizable.” For example, a child may reject the spelling of his name “Dan” because HIS name is written “DAN” (1975, pg. 15).

Clay additionally found that when the eye, hand and ear are all involved in the management of a task, each may be seen as offering a check on the other. Writing activities make the learner aware of new ways to check the language he has been saying and using. If a child had learned to visually analyze a word, knew what to study in a word in order to be able to produce it and how to organize his/her actions to achieve this writing goals, he/she would be able to use this knowledge in the reading process. In studies reviewed by Clay (1975) many links between early writing activities and the skills needed in learning to read. Skills and concepts addressed were:

- How to attend and orient to printed language.
- How to organize one's exploratory investigation of printed forms.
- How to tell left from right.
- How to visually analyze words and letters.
- What to study in a word so as to be able to reproduce it.
- How to direct one's behavior in carrying out a sequence of movements needed in writing words and sentences (pg. 75).

What a child can say, he can write, what he can write he can read. The concept of scribbles on a piece of paper can represent thoughts and ideas that may be new to the learner. By using the child's ideas to expose him to written text researchers have found that students increase their understanding of the reading process. Creative writing activities have been shown to be an excellent addition to a reading program. This type of writing can be used to guide the child's sophistication with the concepts of written language as well as a means of directing his/her attention to the more important details of written language. Further implications have shown that the synthesis of information used for writing will help a child deal with the detail of print (Calkins, 1994).

Summary of Selected Programs Using
Writing to Improve Reading Scores

WRITE TO READ, EASTMONT SCHOOL DISTRICT

The Write to Read program is currently being used in the Eastmont School District, East Wenatchee, Washington. This program has been implemented district wide, beginning in kindergarten and continues through grade five. Each classroom has been equipped with at least one IBM computer on which the program ran. The program was managed on each school's computer network. Teachers served as the program managers within their classrooms.

Students used a "center approach" in which they visited different activities within the Write to Read program. Common activities in all classes included:

- Composing (creative writing done on the computer)
- Editing (working with pencil and paper to edit work)
- Publishing (children illustrated and got their work ready to be viewed by others)

The author found that each student in first grade was able to read the work that belonged to him, and also several of the works authored by other children.

**MORGEN OWINGS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, CHELAN,
WASHINGTON**

With the participation of two kindergarten teachers, Marsha Rolfs, and Rosanna Detering, a program has been designed for use in the kindergarten classrooms at Morgen Owings Elementary School, in Chelan, Washington. This

program has been in place for two years. The following is a description of that program.

Kindergartners wrote daily. During the beginning of the kindergarten year, many students simply drew pictures. Adults were available in the classrooms in order to provide modeling, conversations and assistance.

The adults also helped with the process of hearing sounds in words during the writing portion. When a student asked the adult how to spell a word, the adult helped the child say to the word slowly. This often meant that the adult was doing the sounding of the word in the first few months. As the months progressed, the student was able to hear beginning sounds or ending sounds in words as well as saying words slowly in order to hear and write all the sounds in order.

The adults in each classroom encouraged much conversation concerning concepts about print (directionality, one-to-one correspondence, placement on a page, words that begin the same, etc.). They conducted further conversations with the child regarding what the child's picture might have been about, expanding the story or encouraging the child to take a risk.

Shared writing was another activity that was included in this program. In this activity, students and teacher wrote collaboratively. The teacher served as scribe and the students acted as apprentices. The advantages of shared writing included: reinforcement of the reading process, all students were able to participate, it encouraged close examination of text and recognized the child who may have had a wealth of verbal story material but was unable to write it down.

Students wrote about everyday events and needs. Some may have been making birthday cards, Valentine's Day letters, thank you notes or lists. Others may have been writing books. Some students seemed to write the same sentence everyday. These types of "real" writings were encouraged.

SUMMARY

The research and literature summarized in Chapter Two supported the following themes:

1. Instruction during the writing portion of language activities can lead students to be more aware of the relationship between reading and writing.
2. Concepts about print can be effectively addressed while a child is writing.
3. The knowledge a child brings to school regarding the communication process and the background experiences he has had influence what a student will need to focus on in the classroom setting.
4. Students arrive at school in kindergarten with a wealth of knowledge.
5. What a child can write, he/she can read.
6. Writing is a developmental process, much like learning to speak and listen.

CHAPTER THREE

PURPOSE OF THE PROJECT

The purpose of this project was to design and develop a manual of writing techniques that could be used in kindergarten and first grade classrooms, in order to increase reading achievement. To accomplish this, current research and literature on emergent literacy, reading, writing, and communication was reviewed. Additionally, information and selected materials from selected schools and school districts related to the utilization of writing techniques to improve reading skills was obtained and analyzed.

Chapter Three contains background information describing:

1. Need for the Project
2. Development of support for the Project
3. Procedures
4. Planned implementation and assessment of the Project

Need for the Study

The need for the project was influenced by the following considerations:

1. The writer (Roni L. Rumsey), a certified kindergarten through eighth grade educator, was currently serving as a Reading Specialist at Morgen Owings Elementary, in the Lake Chelan School District. The writer was looking for developmentally appropriate ways to increase reading achievement in the early grades in order to lower the number of students entering the Title 1 program by second grade.

2. The writer's nine years of teaching experience, five of which included teaching in the Reading Recovery program, resulted in an awareness that many children learn more about reading as a result of being able to write than actually being taught reading skills.
3. The writer's work with kindergarten teachers, Rosanna Detering and Marsha Rolfs in developing a kindergarten component that would include extended time for writing, fostered an awareness that some children were picking up concepts about print without direct instruction, while others needed those same concepts pointed out.
4. The writer's role as facilitator in working with the first grade teachers to incorporate some of the techniques in those classrooms led to the realization that teachers in the early grades held a belief that all students were capable of learning to read, but the teachers weren't aware of how writing could be the bridge to better understanding of the reading process.
5. Current research findings and evidence supported the idea that writing techniques used in the early grades could increase reading achievement.
6. Undertaking this project coincided with graduate studies in Educational Administration at Central Washington University.

Development of Support for the Project

During the writer's second year working as a Reading Specialist in the Lake Chelan School District, particularly with kindergarten through third grades, she became aware that student's were coming to these grades with less awareness about how print works and how the written language is tied to spoken language. Training in Reading Recovery and attendance at various workshops, conferences and

inservice training on successful techniques to increase reading led the writer to believe that a more systematic approach to early literacy needed to be taken. The writer began discussing plans to include more writing time in the kindergarten day with kindergarten teachers, Marsha Rolfs and Rosanna Detering. Discussion was also held with kindergarten bilingual teacher, Vicky Eiben. After discussion and practical application these individuals pointed out some successes, confusions, and needs that were addressed. It was deemed necessary to develop a set of techniques that teachers in the building could use without having a reading specialist in the room to help with them. Because Morgen Owings Elementary also has a Spanish Reading component, it was necessary to include activities that could be used to increase literacy in either language. Influence from the individuals named above as well as Jeff Peck, Principal, Bill Roberts, Special Programs Director, and Tom Reese, Superintendent, led to the completion of this manual.

Procedures

To obtain background information essential for understanding early literacy and developing techniques to increase reading achievement an ERIC computer-search was undertaken. A hand-search of various other sources was conducted which involved the use of the Internet, reviewing journal articles, reading texts, and conversations with colleagues. Additionally, information and selected materials from selected schools and school districts related to the utilization of writing techniques to improve reading skills was obtained and analyzed.

Planned Implementation and Assessment of the Project

The project will be presented to the local school board and superintendent at the September 8, 1997 board meeting. Implementation of a inservice training by

the writer will occur in October, 1997 at which time teachers will have the opportunity to review the manual and ask questions. Use of the manual will be on a voluntary basis. At the end of the first year, a review of the manual will be provided for.

The writer will coordinate an assessment process to include Morgen Owings Elementary School faculty members who have incorporated use of the manual into their instructional programs. Recommendations and/or suggested modifications of teaching strategies used, resource manual format, and new strategies recommended for inclusion in the manual will be invited and considered at that time.

CHAPTER FOUR

The manual of writing techniques to increase reading achievement in kindergarten and first grade classrooms which was the subject of the project has been presented in Chapter Four in four instructional units including:

Unit One	Concepts about Print
Unit Two	Hearing Sounds in Words
Unit Three	Games
Unit Four	Adaptations

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OF SELECTED WRITING TECHNIQUES
TO IMPROVE READING ACHIEVEMENT
IN PRIMARY GRADES**

Prepared by
Roni L. Rumsey
June, 1997

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UNIT ONE
CONCEPTS ABOUT PRINT

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Overview

This unit focuses on activities that will help the student become aware of important concepts about print, such as directionality, one-to-matching and onsets and rhimes. (Known as word families, chunks and rhyming words.)

Green Light

To prevent students reversing words when they write, or beginning their writing on the wrong side of the paper, place a green light (purchased dots work well) on the left hand side of the paper. This draws the child's attention to the starting point.

Fistful's of B's and D's

For the child who has difficulty remembering which direction these letters go, teach the child to make a fist. Point out that b is first in the alphabet so it will be on the left hand. That is the direction the letter is made. D comes after b in the alphabet, so it is on the right hand. Teacher can trace each letter on student's fist. Then have the student do the same. By forming a fist, the student has a visual reminder of what each letter looks like.

Cut-up Sentences

This activity is successful with students who are having trouble understanding what a word is. It also works well with students who haven't mastered spaces in between words.

Using text that the student has written, write the text on a strip of heavy manila chart paper about 1" wide. After the sentence is written on the chart paper (using the sentence exactly as the student wrote) cut between each word. Scramble the letters up so the student can find them on a flat surface. Student then looks for the words in order and put them back together in his original sentence. A students just beginning this activity may need a copy of their sentence to refer to. Initially, the student can match his words directly on top of the words that he originally wrote. As he gets more comfortable with the activity, the words may be assembled under the original sentence and then without looking at the sentence. An important aspect to include is verbalization of each word as the child moves it.

The student is encouraged to correct on his own. Initially the teacher should ask the student to check his work. (Whether the work is correct or incorrect) This enables him to begin to self-monitor. If student states that the sentence is correct, when in fact it is not, then the teacher may say something such as, "Something isn't right. Try again." (Clay, 1993)

Magnetic Letter Match Up

For this activity you will need a supply of magnet letters. It is preferable that you use the style of letters that the students will be learning to write. Magnet letters can be found in both D'nealian and Zaner-Bloser styles from many resources. You will also need a cookie sheet or some sort of metal to work with the magnet letters on. I have often used lockers, filing cabinets and magnetic chalkboards as well as white boards.

Your objective for this activity is to help the student learn to look at print, to notice details in letters and eventually words as well as to be able to copy words using correct directional movement.

When working with students who have very little letter knowledge begin with the following:

Select magnet letters that are not visually similar. Give the student a selection that includes at least three of each letter you have selected. (i.e.; 3-i's, 3-a's, 3 m's) Have the student sort all the letters into groups. This work should be done standing up at eye level in order for the student to get another perspective for looking at letters and print.

In the beginning, the student may sort the letters by color, style, or shape.

After the student is comfortable with this show him a magnet letter that he has and ask him to find all the letters that look like it. (Letter name is not important

at this point.) Continue to do this until the student is fluent in matching letters. Then select letters that are visually similar i.e.; m, n, h. Have the student find letters that match the letter chosen.

As the student continues introduce letter names. “Find all the b’s. B looks like this.” As you would expect, the next step would be to ask the student to find all the b’s without showing a model of the letter. This would occur after the student is familiar with letter names, but not necessarily when the student knows ALL the letter names.

As the student masters the names of the letters, individual sounds and words can be added using the process described above. As words are added, it is important that you model left-to-right directionality when building words.

Magnet letters can also be used to build onsets and rhimes. By placing the word cat on the surface, the student can begin to change the beginning letter to build new words. As he becomes fluent the teacher may want to scramble the letters in order for him to begin focusing on how words look.

Unit Two
Hearing Sounds in Words

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Sound/Letters Connection.....	P-10
Noisy Letters.....	P-11
Boxing.....	P-11

Overview

Many children are unable to connect a symbol for a letter to an abstract sound. In order to facilitate this process, it may be necessary for the teacher to build the bridge for transfer. This unit includes activities that help students slow down the sounds heard in words in order to be able to hear them in order to record them.

Sound/Letters Connections

Encourage the children to use symbols for the letter representation. Along with this, signals that represent the letter help to build the kinesthetic reinforcement necessary for many children. (The writer recommends the ZooPhonics program.) When teaching the letter “f” for example, have children make a fat f. Then have them glue feathers on the f while emphasizing the “f” sound.

Use this same process when teaching difficult sight words. Teach the word “see” while writing it inside eyes. Teach “big” while making the word bigger than other words.

Noisy Letters

Using some form of tactile letters (felt letters, bumpy letters, sand letters), have the student say the letter sound while tracing the letter. This can also be done while writing the letters on a chalkboard or whiteboard.

Boxing

This activity was developed by a Russian linguist named Elkonin. This strategy is one used in Reading Recovery regularly.

Make a few picture cards for simple words such as *cat*, *bus*, *boy*, *ship*, *house* to use to introduce the task. Prepare some cards on which you draw a square for each sound segment in words of two, three and four sounds, for example:



m-e

b-oy



c-a-t b-oa-t

sh-i-p h-ou-se



j-u-m-p

t-r-ai-n

Have a selection of counters ready. Pennies work very well.

Step I:

Introduce the child to the activity of slowly articulating words. Use a picture card and:

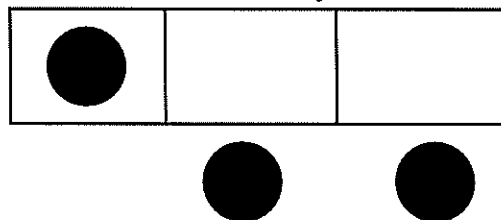
Slowly articulate the word for the child. Let him hear the sounds separated but in a natural way.

- Ask the child to say the word aloud. "Say it slowly." This transfers the initiative for the activity to the child.
- Use a mirror if it helps the child to be more aware of what his lips are doing.

Use stress to emphasize the sound you want the child to hear.

Step II:

The sound segment cards make a visual model within which to place the sounds that have been articulated. (Choose a card that has a square for each sound in your demonstration word, i.e., a three-square card for c-a-t.) *You need a square for every sound in the word, NOT every letter.* Slowly show the child how to push the counters into the box as he says the word slowly. You may need to guide the child's hand for many tries.



As the child progresses use words the child is using in his writing. Questions to ask:

“What do you hear?”

“Where did you hear that?”

“What did you hear first?”

What else can you hear?”

Unit Three

Games

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Overview

These activities are designed to use when students need extra work remembering what words look like or recalling high frequency words. These can also be used to build writing vocabulary.

Can It

Take two empty 35 mm film containers. On one write the family name (op). On the other container, write letters such as c, h, t, b. The child holds both containers in a fist-like grip. The left hand rotates the letters as the child clicks the containers and sounds out the words.



Rainbow Words

Use different colored crayons to trace around words which are difficult for the student to remember or high frequency words. The student should start tracing the designated letter with yellow, next blue, and finally read. The words can be used for bulletin boards or hung around the room.

Shaping Words

Use pipe cleaners, wikki sticks, clay or play dough and have the child form words. Give the child a large cutout of the word and have the child place pipe cleaner or chosen tool on the word, then under the word. Then remove the model and have child do the word on his own.

Variation: Use frozen bread dough. When thawed, give the child a golf-ball sized piece of dough. Have child practice sight word by shaping the word. Be sure to enjoy the word by baking and eating fresh from the oven!

Board Writing

Develop gross motor skills as well as using tactile senses in order to help students develop fluency with words. Use white boards or chalkboard to use full arm strokes. Thick paintbrushes with disappearing paint (water), sponges, and purchased envelope sealers can be used to write on chalkboards.

Cookie Spelling

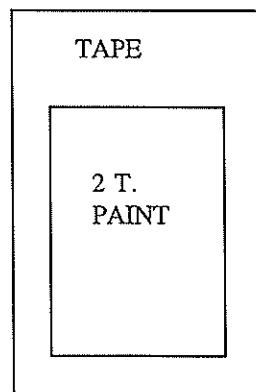
Using small cookie sheets or metal cookie can lids, give the student magnetic letters that form the word family for spelling. Have him/her add or change only the necessary beginning letters on the tin.

Glitter Words

Children who need tactile reinforcement can write sight words with glitter glue pens. Or they can mix bright glitter with white glue and use the glue bottle as a pencil. When glue is dry they can trace the word with their finger.

Paint Bags

This activity can be used for tactile reinforcement of identifying and writing letters and words. Use a large freezer Ziploc bag. Place two tablespoons of bright finger paint inside. Zip the bag shut and reinforce the outside edges with heavy duty masking tape. Children use the bag like a magic slate. They can practice writing and erasing with soft hand pressure.



Unit Four Adaptations

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Overview

Literature can be one of the best tools for extending writing. Children can hear patterns from books and poems often and without them changing. They then can imitate and improvise from these patterns as they write.

Why use patterns for writing? Children can use them as a framework for their writing and get ideas from patterns. The use of patterns also helps the learner understand the connection between writing and reading. Using patterns for writing can also increase the child's awareness of how print works, helps the writer to feel competent that he can read something and builds the foundation that the writer needs in order to make predictions about what to write next, which in turn increases his/her predicting ability in reading.

The following is a brief explanation of various kinds of patterns.

Repetitive Pattern

Stories organized around this pattern are those in which language or episodes repeat.

Cumulative Pattern

Continual stories that add events then repeat all that has gone on before.

Interlocking Pattern

Parts of the story are interconnected in this type of pattern. They do not repeat or add on. Circle stories fit into this category.

Chronological Pattern

These stories follow a time sequence. This happens, then this happens and then this happens and so on. Autobiographies, recipes, and experiments belong in this type of pattern group.

Familiar Cultural Background

These stories are written around common patterns in our culture. Examples are our alphabet system, numerical system, days of the week, months of the year, seasons, holidays and so on.

Rhyme and Rhythm Pattern

Stories organized around this pattern are stories built on rhyme or a certain rhythm. (Ferguson, 1987)

Adaptations can be gotten from other types of books as well. These usually have a strong theme running throughout the story. The pattern (although it is there) is often underlying the storyline. A list of books that can be used for adaptations with early writers follow.

BOOK LIST FOR EACH CATEGORY:

Repetitive Pattern

Dance Away
The Important Book
King Bidgood's in the Bathtub
It Looked Like Spilled Milk
Silly Sally
Greedy Cat
Pigs Peek
Goodnight
The Fox

George Shannon
Margaret Wise Brown
Audrey Wood
Charles Shaw
Audrey Wood
Joy Cowley
Rhonda Cox
Penelope Coad
Janice Boland

Cumulative Pattern

Giraffe and a Half
 Napping House
 The Judge
 I Know an Old Lady

Shel Silverstein
 Audrey Wood
 Margot Zemach
 Rose Bonne & Alan Mills

Interlocking Pattern

Where the Wild Things Are
 If You Give a Mouse a Cookie
 If you Give a Moose a Muffin

Maurice Sendak
 Felecia Bond
 Felecia Bond

Chronological Pattern

Grandfather Twilight
 The Very Hungry Caterpillar
 One Monday Morning
 Carla's Ribbons
 The Drummers

Helen Berger
 Eric Carle
 Uri Shulevitz
 Leslie Harper
 Carol Gould

Familiar Cultural Pattern

My Bike
 Ten Little Bears
 Uncle Buncler's House
 One Monday Morning
 The Drummers

Craig Martin
 Mike Ruwe
 Joy Cowley
 Uri Shulevitz
 Carol Gould

Rhyme and Rhythm Pattern

When Bear Bakes a Cake
 Jam Berry
 Hello, Cat You Need A Hat
 This is a Place for Me
 Lady with the Alligator Purse
 Wheel Away

Jasper Tompkins
 Deborah Guarino
 Rita Golden Gelman
 Joanna Cole
 Nadine Bernard Wescott
 Dayle Ann Dodds

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

The purpose of this project was to design and develop a manual of writing techniques that could be used in kindergarten and first grade classrooms, in order to increase reading achievement. To accomplish this, current research and literature on emergent literacy, reading, writing, and communication was reviewed. Additionally, information and selected materials from selected schools and school districts related to the utilization of writing techniques to improve reading skills was obtained and analyzed.

Conclusions

Conclusions reached as a result of this project were:

1. Reading and writing should be taught together in the classroom setting. This leads students to understand how the reading and writing processes are reciprocal processes.
2. Children should have the opportunity to write about what they know, using their own language and stories to begin with. Children who are able to write stories, generally, are able to read those stories to a listener.
3. Many reading skills can be taught during the writing portion of a day. Learning to look at the differences in words, sentences, beginning sounds and syntax are just a few things that can be taught during the writing process.

4. Phonological awareness should be taught during the writing portion of a lesson. Students need to know the sounds/letter relationship in order to record words in their writing.

Recommendations

As a result of this project, the following recommendations have been suggested:

1. Students should be encouraged to write from the first day they step into the classroom. Students already have a vast amount of information to write about. Teachers must be aware of the developmental levels of their students. With this awareness comes the knowledge that some children are at the “scribble” stage, while other may begin the year writing words or even sentences. All stages of writing development need to be honored. Adults within the educational setting must also be sure to do much writing talk. “Tell me about your picture.” “Was it fun? What made it fun?” “I like how you started your sentence on this side of the page, just like in the book we read this morning.” are just a few examples of writing talk.
2. Teacher must believe that all children can write. Writing may be simply random marks on a page. Students need to be encouraged to read their writing to others. All classrooms should have a time for students to celebrate their writing successes. Time needs to be included within the classroom, as well, for students to do “real” writing. This would include making cards, lists, letters and publishing books.
3. Teachers and adults must help students focus on some of the intricacies of the reading/writing process. This may include saying the words slowly for students to hear and then encouraging them to try to say it. A teacher may point out how that word begins (or ends) the same as another word, or even

the child's name. This is also a good opportunity to talk about punctuation, compare fiction to non-fiction and other items that the child may encounter in the reading process.

4. Hearing sounds in words is most needed during the writing process. In reading, most readers decode words only as far as is necessary to solve the word. In writing, students must hear the word in its entirety. In order for students to become accomplished at this task they must begin sounding out words slowly. Teachers should begin by having students write down any sounds they hear, regardless of letter order. Then together they can put the sounds in order. Vowel sounds are harder to discriminate. These should be left until the writer is able to distinguish most other sounds in words.
5. Other school districts seeking to develop writing activities to increase reading achievement may wish to adapt the activities which were the subject of this project for use in their school districts, or undertake further research in the area of writing to meet their unique need.

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