

**FEEDBACK
CAN HELP**

In-Service Growth

WILLIAM LIDDLE*

THERE ARE three ways to change reading instruction. Change can be made administratively by imposing a new grouping system. It can be done through curricular reoption. We have tried nearly everything in print to see if one system will teach children to read better, but when the tale is told, one system to teach reading will work over the long haul about as well as another.

The third way to change has to be the name of the game, and is the only way really to create change in the quality of instruction. This is in-service. The reason becomes obvious when one realizes that materials do not teach. They are instructional vehicles for teachers, and what has to be changed is teachers, their behaviors, and their methodologies.

I became Director of Elementary Education in January of 1963, and fortunately took over a smooth sailing ship. However, I felt the reading program was totally locked into a single basal approach. My doctoral work had oriented me to a more flexible approach, so I looked around for a way to excite teachers about growing in their jobs.

Teachers went to school off and on and got some ideas, but it did not seem that their ideas were spreading or taking hold anywhere other than perhaps in their own classrooms. So, we began taking a look at various reading programs. We tried basals, Programmed

Through varied activities, teachers are being exposed to in-service opportunities for growth. Careful feedback helps to shape the continuing program.

Reading, i.t.a., Words in Color, Bank Street, various phonetic approaches, Language Experience, and what have you.

I felt the elementary division to be organized around two main thrusts. On the whole, elementary education should provide an environment wherein children ages 5-12 or 13 may learn skills that they need which will ultimately allow them to learn about their world. Therefore, the first responsibility or thrust is to assist in the improvement of instruction, using techniques such as: (a) orientation to a local curriculum; (b) classroom visitation; (c) conferencing; (d) supporting new ideas that teachers wish to try and assisting in their implementation, thus, helping teachers to grow in their skills; (e) demonstration technique; and (f) evaluation of teaching methodologies.

The second thrust is to assist in the development, implementation, and evaluation of curriculum. With this in mind, one must be alert to certain things that are happening currently.

1. There is a trend for a curriculum thrust downward.

** William Liddle, Director, Division of Elementary Education, Colorado Springs Public Schools; presently on sabbatical leave at the University of Reading, England*

2. The role of the teacher is changing.
3. Materials are coming out of publishing houses that are geared to this changing role. These materials require continual upgrading of teaching skills.
4. Organizational structures in the schools are changing, and teachers must be taught to work within these.

As can readily be seen, staff development becomes the major need. After trying various materials and arousing some interest by bringing in a trio of consultants in 1964, I thought we had a system to excite teachers that might work. What if we were to start a series of classes at our local college and to encourage teachers to take these; then try to capitalize on developed enthusiasm and see if we could transplant that back to the school district in-service program? I talked to the college where I had taught for several years and the powers that be agreed to go along with me as long as I did not lose too much money for them.

Our first year we probed into contemporary reading methodology. We explored with authors or major consultants basal readers, *Words in Color*, *Sounds of Language*, *Language Experience*, i.t.a., *Talking Time*, and other programs. Authors or chief consultants worked with us, and in some cases publishing houses paid part of the expenses for their people to participate.

In the school district that year we held classes that would parallel the summer ones. For example, we had Emerald Dechant and Arthur DeLong in to help out. The State Department co-sponsored this first effort with District No. 11, so expenses were held to a minimum for the district.

The second summer we tried to answer the question why, with all of our know-how and good materials, do children still fail to learn to read? Specialists Roy Kress, Emerald Dechant, Tanya Brown, and Justin Fishbein all came in and we studied remediation techniques and materials. I taught a 40 hour in-service class in Diagnosis and Remediation that fall, and other district in-service effort was directed to that point of view.

One of the apparent difficulties was

dealing with the linguistically and culturally different child, so with the assistance of Lois Roth, Bill Martin, Jr., Thomas Edwards, and Mela Leger, we attacked this problem. In the district we broadened out our field and had 50 hours of in-service dealing with the psychological, sociological, physical, and neurological aspects of children. Also, by this time we had discovered the need for reteaching at earlier grade levels, when the problem can be more readily overcome, and had started an Earn-a-Book club to encourage recreational reading. In this club, the child would read six books, then earn one of his choice out of a large collection of material we had bought from McGraw-Hill Book Company. I had also requested representation of this firm to provide an art person who would design a marvelous book plate for the books that the children would earn.

In 13 schools, 713 children read 14,519 books, and earned 2,267 books, for an average number of books read per child of 17.9, and 4.5 books earned. We were also aware of a need for intercultural relations materials for children, so we began a change in our social studies program which would fuse intercultural factors into each grade level. This program now includes:

K—Families and Schools Are Multiracial

1—Green Circle Program

2—Families Near and Far

3—Indians and Multicultural Pioneers

4—Local People Who Affected Colorado.

We developed a series of books written for \$300 each and edited by one of our elementary supervisors. The following books were produced: *Barney Ford*; *The Barela Brand* (Casimiro Barela); *Youngster with a Goal* (Juan del Regato); *Blind Tom* (Thomas Bethune); *The Story of Mr. Bristol and the Little Red Brick Schoolhouse*; *The Lady in the Golden Dome* (Frances Jacobs); *A Story From the Land of Cherry Blossoms* (story of a Japanese family).

5—Women's Heritage Series: *We Are Black*; *Reading for Concepts*

6—*The Magic Door*; *Reading for Concepts*.

The intercultural materials were paid for out of the curriculum budget of the Elementary Division and printed out of the text-

book budget. This turned out to be a 3-4 year project and also elicited the use of a consultant, Horacio Ulibarri, who led us ultimately into a bilingual project presently being tried out in one of our schools, and soon to spread to others.

We also used Juan Martinez as a consultant, and later for a workshop, Leonard Olguin. We followed Olguin with a workshop using his film series "Solutions in Communications." Workshops on a variety of topics on reading and intercultural relations began to proliferate.

Innovations in educational techniques including computer assisted instruction, team teaching, nongrading, and individualization of instruction became the topics for year four. Madeline Hunter, Gabriel Della-Piana, and Max Jerman were our star performers. From an original college class of 30, the enrollment had grown to 80.

By this time many teachers had been exposed to a lot of ideas and we had a number of classes. Some were led by corrective reading teachers who taught teachers in buildings other than target area schools, who in turn were acting as consultants for upgrading instruction in their respective schools.

Year five featured learning disabilities, with leaders in the field such as Cruickshank, Kephart, Wepman, Reid, Rabinovitch, Abrams, and Artley participating. The enrollment soared to over 100 and we had a packed school board area. That fall with a class on behavior management taught by a dynamic local college professor, Carl Roberts, we also used a local pediatrician, a reading specialist from Southern Colorado State College, an ophthalmologist, and a neurologist.

Teachers Seek Practical Help

Year six was reading research, and though the enrollment stayed high and the interest was great, it did not seem as meaningful. Teachers want, instead, ideas on "how to do it," and "what can I use tomorrow?"

Year seven was upon us and we decided the direction to take was behavior modifica-

tion. By this time I felt I had created a Frankenstein. We had people clamoring for classes and had gone from a few in-service classes per year to many. We brought in Madeline Hunter and Russell Stauffer for workshops and paid expenses by charging \$10 per semester hour increment credit. Ethna Reid came in and the same thing happened. The behavior modification class proved to be a smashing success and we followed this with an Ethna Reid workshop on basal reading methodology and had 143 of our teachers involved. We repeated this at the end of the next summer session and had 157 in class.

This summer we are going into areas of interest and the following schedule will be followed. At the time of this writing there are over 600 teachers involved in these five workshops:

July 16-20, Practical Help for the Teacher of Reading, Ethna Reid

July 23-27, Preventing Reading Difficulties, Mildred Bebell

July 30-August 3, DISTAR and Its Many Uses, Siegfried Engelmann

August 6-10, The Basal Reader as an Innovative Reading Teaching Tool, John Manning

August 13-24, The Teaching Process in Relation to Team Teaching or Any Organizational Plan, Madeline Hunter and staff.

Teachers want ideas, and aren't we all fascinated a bit with celebrities? Programs are more real when we see their authors. I have usually followed our afternoon lectures with an informal party at my house where all of us can get together and interact on an informal basis. The consultants have also done a great deal of individual counseling with teachers during these informal sessions. A fringe benefit from all of this is that the curriculum director is better identified by teachers than he might otherwise be.

We have found out many things. Reteaching teachers is possible and lots of fun. Reteaching children must be done early. Early follow-up of new teachers after college graduation is equally important. It is easy to get into a rut soon, and let's face it, the

colleges can only do so much. It is the school district's responsibility to continue the education of its teachers. In-service has got to be fun and rewarding. Increment credit on the salary schedule is a must.

Know always that good instruction not only creates more differences in children, but in teachers as well. Accept the fact that more demands are going to be put on you, your staff time, and budgets if you try this. You never know from where you are going to get your next request.

Motivation of teachers is part of my responsibility as a curriculum leader. Teachers must be aware of new materials, methods, and ideas. I cannot provide all this on my own. Therefore, I must stay well tuned in to see who can be brought in to help us.

Listen carefully to speakers you hear and that others tell you about. Talk to them by phone. Are they interesting and communicative? Try to find people and then provide a personal and flexible touch. Maybe the lecturer is not great, but in a one-to-one or one-to-six situation much learning can take place. Therefore, change your structure as needed in order to improve the presentation.

Have fun with in-service and consultants. Publishing houses are extremely helpful to the curriculum person in planning for in-service, and often will even assist in paying some of the expense. State Departments, councils of IRA, and other local associations will often help out with expenses too, if the person can be used in some way for one of their meetings. □

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