

# An Effective Inservice Model for Content Area Reading in Secondary Schools

*A statewide program is helping Pennsylvania teachers teach reading skills in regular classes.*

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How can content teachers—from English and social studies, through math and science, to home economics and industrial arts—be helped to overcome their negative attitudes toward teaching reading as part of their regular instruction? And how can they acquire the knowledge necessary to teach the reading skills important for their students?

The Content Area Reading Program (CARP) is one answer to these questions. CARP, a validated program used for five years in Pennsylvania, began as a state-funded project in three Pennsylvania junior high schools (rural, suburban, and urban sites). In a year-long program of 15 three-hour workshops, university instructors described techniques for teaching reading and demonstrated models of instructional procedures. By the end of the program, nearly every teacher had completed techniques from informal diagnostic procedures to textbook evaluations, from developing a complete teaching unit including reading instruction to developing learning centers and skillbuilding materials. In each case, the teachers used their own texts and materials, followed their own curriculum guides, and taught their own students. The results were unexpectedly large positive changes in teachers' knowledge and attitudes (Dupuis and Askov, 1977; Dupuis, Askov, and Lee, 1979).

Since attitudes are notoriously fickle, we tested these same teachers' attitudes again a year after the project ended. To our delight the attitudes remained stable and at a high positive level. In fact, in a junior high school in which the principal had provided great support and encouragement, and had actually attended many workshops, the teachers' attitudes continued to rise, even though nothing

was done overtly to encourage it (Dupuis and Askov, 1979).

## Statewide Network

CARP, a statewide network of over 50 trained instructors, was the result of these initial successes. CARP delivers similar workshops to school districts anywhere in the state through The Pennsylvania State University's Continuing Education Program. The program now includes teacher-tested models of techniques for integrating reading into content area teaching. In addition, instructors have access to a range of materials, from a professional library of texts and other sources, to model learning centers, videotapes, slide-tapes, and audio centers.

The program has evolved into a set of general competencies covering many aspects of content area reading instruction:

- Diagnosis and grouping
- Evaluation of texts and instructional materials
- Teacher-directed instructional processes, such as the direct reading activity
- Student-directed processes, such as learning centers and packages
- Basic instruction in language differences, from dialects to bilingual concerns
- Motivation issues
- The change process as teachers see it.

Districts seeking CARP workshops determine which competencies their teachers need, whether they wish university credit or not, and how they wish the program to be presented. The actual content of the program has recently been published in book form (Dupuis and Askov, 1982) although the earlier student and instructor manuals are still available.

## Providing Instructors

Because we cannot make weekly trips to the far reaches of Pennsylvania's 500 school districts, we have recruited read-

ing and curriculum leaders in schools and colleges across the state. These instructors must submit credentials for approval through the university's regular procedures. Our staffing criteria include: (1) certification as a reading specialist; (2) teaching experience at the secondary or adult level; (3) participation in our CARP training program.

Beyond these basic criteria, we seek instructors who have a record of successful inservice work with teachers. Instructors without such experience are given tentative approval until we receive evaluations from the first group of teachers with whom they work. Our program training includes two days at the main campus studying the program and its materials, reviewing procedures, and meeting with program staff. Most instructors respond enthusiastically to our structure, materials, and statewide organization.

A major staffing problem continues to be finding trained instructors for daytime workshops because most instructors have regular positions with local school districts or colleges and are available only after school or in the evenings. To partially solve this problem, we have trained doctoral students from our main campus who have excellent experience and appropriate certification. Using these students helps solve our staffing problem and provides them with important experience that makes them more marketable upon completion of their degrees.

## Variations

Since the program became statewide, we have encouraged our instructors to experiment with various time and space patterns in presenting it. To date, we have offered it under the following forms:

1. Regular three-credit university class open to anyone in the area who registers (funded by tuition). Fifteen courses at eight campuses and nine at the main campus.
2. A year-long series of nine monthly

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noncredit workshops, each followed two weeks later by a second workshop in which teachers develop their own materials (funded by Title IV-C). Two offerings at one site.

3. A year-long series of five inservice workshops (noncredit) on regular inservice days (funded by the district). Teachers are paid for work done on their own time between sessions. One offering at one site; two more planned at different sites in the same district.

4. A one-week intensive workshop (noncredit) offered in August, with follow-up workshops throughout the school year (funded by a district). Two offerings in one district.

5. Assorted shorter noncredit programs, one to five sessions, scheduled at district convenience and for specific, limited topics. Fifteen offerings in different districts.

#### Principles Contributing to the Program's Success

These different organizational patterns have been successful in changing teacher attitudes and knowledge. However, several important principles governing the program's success at a site continue to arise as we work with it.

1. Because moving to systematic, objective-based instructional planning is an overwhelming change and requires teachers to rebuild their curricula completely, administrators should understand that putting CARP in place will take three to five years for good-sized schools.

2. Since the best teachers of teachers are teachers, districts should develop their own internal experts who can

eventually do the training.

3. Schools are encouraged to set up a buddy system for teachers who have completed a workshop one year to work with the new teachers the next year. This solidifies knowledge and develops positive attitudes.

4. Participation should always be voluntary. In a sequential program first-year teachers will spread the word sufficiently to encourage volunteers for the second year. In a school with 60-80 teachers, three years is enough to retrain, in groups of 20 to 25, all who will volunteer. Administrators shouldn't expect 100 percent involvement.

5. Teachers should understand the time and work commitments of the full program at the beginning. Pretesting teachers on competencies will eliminate unnecessary instruction and let teachers see how they will be evaluated.

6. Program evaluation must be clear and thorough. Validated instruments for assessing knowledge and attitudes are available in CARP for pre- and post-testing. We also keep careful records of materials developed by teachers. These are generally assessed as satisfactory or unsatisfactory on a competency basis, with numerous comments on strengths and weaknesses. As a final evaluation, each teacher makes a short oral presentation to the workshop demonstrating a particular technique, describing a class trial of some materials, or reporting on classroom data of some type. Grades are developed, on a published scale, for those courses receiving university credit. Otherwise, only satisfactory/unsatisfactory scores are recorded. Recycling of all teaching materials receiving unsatisfactory marks is encouraged.

7. Extensive program evaluation is undertaken each time the program is conducted. A formal procedure asks teachers to indicate before and after whether they know about and have used each technique. They are also asked to rate each technique for its classroom value. More informal evaluations are gathered about instructors and the program itself. Many program changes have resulted from teacher and administrator feedback.

8. The best results from CARP have come from those schools and districts in which building administrators support the program and demonstrate this to their teachers. Some principals indicate support by participating in the workshops and actually working through the program along with the teachers. Other forms of support include providing time for teachers to attend workshops and to implement the program; providing modest budgets for development of teaching materials and purchase of supplementary materials; commenting to teachers on their involvement in the program, otherwise known as "an encouraging word"; and providing access to important support personnel, such as reading teachers or supervisors or teachers who have already completed the program.

#### Planning an Inservice Program in Content Area Reading

What, then, are the steps to take in developing a program to provide inservice training in content area reading?





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*First*, identify a member of the reading staff (supervisor or specialist) and a curriculum staff member to work with the building administrator in developing a plan. These three (or in a large building, proportionately more) staff members can assess the needs of teachers, choose incentives and a time frame suiting the district, outline the major components of the program's knowledge base, and plan for evaluation of both knowledge and attitude.

*Second*, determine who will deliver the training, whether a person within the district or an outside consultant.

*Third*, inform teachers of the proposed program, the incentives, and the scheduled time, being sure to give them time to decide about committing themselves to it. The result should be a list of volunteers. Be sure reading staff are encouraged to take part.

*Fourth*, conduct and evaluate the program. The planning/supervisory staff and instructor should also identify teachers who are willing and able to become staff for future programs.

*Fifth*, plan to run the program a second time, using the newly trained cadre working with volunteers who have been encouraged by word-of-mouth reports from the first participants. This second offering may be a year later, two years later, or another time suitable to the district.

Following a sequence of planning, implementation, and evaluation like this provides the best potential for an effective inservice program in content area reading. CARP has demonstrated that it can respond to the problem of retraining teachers on a practical level, responsive to local needs. Schools outside of Pennsylvania can develop a similar program. The goal is always to help content teachers become confident and competent in handling their students' reading needs in the context of their classroom teaching. **EL**



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**CARP's Specific  
Objectives**

The Content Area Reading Program is designed to help teachers:

- Prepare informal diagnostic procedures for assessing development of reading skills in a content area
- Develop teaching procedures that integrate reading skills and content area
- Develop teaching techniques for different levels and purposes
- Identify and evaluate readability levels of materials in content areas
- Study and evaluate linguistic differences in students and materials
- Identify motivational techniques that are effective with individual students
- Use these techniques in their classrooms and apply specific procedures to meet diagnosed needs of individual students
- Understand the role of the change agent and techniques for working with other teachers.

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