

Ruth Wade Replies

RUTH K. WADE

Sparks' response demonstrates a clear understanding of my article and an awareness of the caveats to be observed in its interpretation. I am pleased that she was given an opportunity to raise several important issues and that she, in fact, agrees with most of my conclusions.

Meta-analysis can overlook effective techniques, because categories are predetermined. Subtle differences in techniques or methods are often obscured if they fall within the definition of a particular variable. However, if a carefully defined technique or method shows up as significantly effective, you can be sure of its general effectiveness because meta-analysis detects robust effects. Consequently, meta-analysis provides a good way of testing the robustness of broad claims regarding the effectiveness of specific techniques or methods. When these broad claims are not confirmed, then it is time to go back and do the micro-analysis Sparks suggests in order to find out under what circumstances a specific technique or method may or may not be effective.

However, Sparks appears to misinterpret several points. All of the 91 studies were, in fact, read in their entirety. I commented that "I initially read many of the selected studies to determine the variables that were frequently represented in this body of literature." This initial reading was followed by a thorough reading of each study. Likewise, Sparks seems to think the independent and dependent variables in this study were not carefully defined and that variables that were grouped together were perhaps not defined and measured in the same ways. For example, she assumed that I combined programs that were developed, initiated, or funded by the state or federal governments or a university. In fact, they were not lumped together in the study. Only in my summary of the study were they

combined, because the effect sizes were quite similar. All variables studied were carefully and somewhat narrowly defined. Only those practices that fell within the established definition for each variable were included.

For a complete listing of the references for the 91 studies, the independent and dependent variables studied, the variable definitions, and the weighting system used to ensure an accurate measure of effect size, see Wade (1984). Space limitations did not permit inclusion of many details in this summary article.

Finally, Sparks mistakenly seems to believe that I recommended excluding discussion activities from workshops. I state that discussion, as an instructional technique, was associat-

ed with lower effect sizes. Throughout my paper I was careful never to suggest what not to do. Rather, my suggestions were meant to encourage those practices that I found to be significantly above average in effectiveness.

I appreciate Sparks' insightful and helpful comments. She and I agree that a number of important issues have been raised through the meta-analysis. The next step is to look at the major findings in order to shed more light on the intricacies of inservice education. □

References

Wade, R. K. "What Makes a Difference in Inservice Teacher Education: A Meta-Analysis of the Research." Doctoral dissertation, University of Massachusetts, 1984.

Position Vacancy ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENT FOR INSTRUCTION MIDLAND INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT Midland, Texas

QUALIFICATIONS: Doctorate
School and central office
administrative experience.
Instructional leadership ability

MAJOR RESPONSIBILITIES: Provide comprehensive leadership for the assessment, development, operation and evaluation of the K-12 instructional program.
Direct and supervise the work of the instructional services professional staff.

SALARY: Low to mid-fifties

APPLICATION DEADLINE: February 1, 1985

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