



Training Staff to Teach Reading Across the Curriculum

Principals should provide strong leadership in teaching reading across the curriculum.

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by Marlow Ediger

There is a great need for teachers of diverse subjects to emphasize reading instruction at each learning level. Because acquired reading knowledge and skills transfer across the curriculum, students must have guidance and direction in reading in different curriculum areas. A quality sequential program of reading instruction assists students to read in as optimal a manner as possible. Principals and teacher leaders must foster the concept of excellence in teaching reading across the curriculum.

Staff Development

There are specific instructional reading topics that must be emphasized within in-service professional development programs. As a university professor who has supervised student teachers in public schools for 30 years, I have noticed that the following areas of expertise typically need strengthening:

- Word recognition skills, including phonetic analysis, syllabication, and using context clues to help students unlock unknown words;
- Comprehension of ideas, be it in narrative or expository reading, including critical and creative thinking;
- Structural analysis to assist students in understanding the significance of word order when reading;
- Syntax, including vocabulary development, in guiding students to attach meaning to what is being read; and
- Problem-solving and gathering information in offering solutions (Ediger, 2007).

Promoting Reading

Developing a love for reading is an important objective for all students to achieve. I suggest individualized reading in which a student chooses which books to read based on interest and readability. After reading a book, the student has a conference with the teacher to check comprehension and word recognition growth. The teacher and student discuss what changes and improvements, if any, must be made to make for optimal reading progress. The teacher writes brief comments to use in future conferences. Generally, individualized reading then replaces or supplements the basal reader approach.

A more open-ended procedure is to use sustained silent reading. The student chooses which book to read, but there is no conference with the teacher after completing the book. In either case, reading across the curriculum is emphasized in that the student may choose to read about social studies, science, mathematics, physical education, music, art, or literature. Enjoyment and motivation for reading is salient. Teacher observations will reveal if students are connected to reading (Ediger & Bhaskara Rao, 2007). Using basal readers in the reading curriculum makes for a more formal program of instruction, but interest in reading content dealing with different subject matter areas should still be stressed.

Following reading activities, teachers guide students to discuss the content, leading learners to higher levels of cognition with challenging questions and comments. An appreciation for people of different cultures and from different academic perspectives should make for optimal student growth in understanding others, one of the objectives for reading across the curriculum.

Principal Support

Principals should provide strong leadership in teaching reading across the curriculum. By reading, attending professional meetings, studying, and talking to teachers about innovative approaches in teaching, teachers can move toward an improved reading instruction program.

In addition to faculty and staff, parents also need to perceive value in students reading across the curriculum. School leaders should educate parents about this philosophy of instruction so they can aid in its implementation.

Securing an increased number of library books on different reading levels, in different genres, and on different subjects—as well as demonstrating their possible classroom uses at faculty meetings and workshops—assists in implementing the concept of reading across the curriculum.

Stressing reading across the curriculum from basal science, social studies, mathematics, and literature textbooks on different grade levels helps teachers to understand how important it is to be an excellent reading instructor.

Students will become proficient readers with a concerted effort. One must remember that quality methods of instruction are especially necessary. Teachers must try out ideas expressed at faculty meetings and workshops and notice how they work in classroom teaching. Reporting the results back to participants can make for productive discussions on innovative methods of reading instruction. Teachers must pinpoint how they assist students in reading comprehension across the subject matter areas of science, social studies, mathematics, and literature, among other academic disciplines (Cochran-Smith, 2006).

References

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On the Same Page

Here are suggested questions that principals and teachers can use to spark discussion about how to apply the points made in this article to their particular schools.

1. How does our faculty apply the reading across the curriculum philosophy?
2. How have faculty members been trained in the past to teach reading across the curriculum? What should be done differently?
3. How can we use professional development or faculty meetings to improve the teaching of reading at our school?
4. What are some impediments to teaching reading in the content areas?
5. How can the principal and teacher leaders assist the faculty with reading across the curriculum?