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ABSTRACT

A program model for teaching basic reading and writing skills to secondary special education students is described. Instruction is divided into three levels, within which instruction covers decoding, spelling, vocabulary, comprehension, and composition. Assessment measures are discussed for each area. Criticisms of high interest-low vocabulary materials are cited. A teaching procedure for oral instruction in vocabulary is outlined. Teaching materials and curricula are specified throughout the paper. (CI)

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TEACHING REMEDIAL SKILLS TO SECONDARY STUDENTS

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TEACHING REMEDIAL SKILLS TO SECONDARY STUDENTS

Remediation of basic skills in reading, writing, and math is just one aspect of a complete secondary program in special education. Math programs for teaching basic skills are generally useful at all levels, however, materials for teaching basic skills in reading and writing are often written at a primary interest level and are not useful with secondary students. The following program model outlines the instructional methods and materials that can be used to remediate basic skills in reading and writing in a secondary special education program.

The two major goals of the instruction in this program model are to bring students to read at at least the sixth grade level and to write a six sentence paragraph with a topic and clincher sentence and with only five minor errors in spelling, capitalization, and punctuation. In order to reach these two major goals instruction may be required in any or all of the five following areas of basic skills: decoding, spelling, vocabulary, comprehension, and composition.

Most of the materials available for teaching these skills follow a long developmental sequence, which often seems inappropriate in its entirety for the secondary student, and difficult to manage in parts that are appropriate. A method for adapting these materials to fit the needs of the students and providing motivation at the same time is a management system of contingency skipping. Contingency skipping is requiring the student to earn the privilege of skipping a certain amount of material by performing a task to a specified degree of mastery.

Assessment--Where to Start Teaching

The content of instruction should be divided into three sequential levels. The content of each level can be taught within one class period a day.

Level I	Level II	Level III
Decoding	Comprehension	Capitalization Punctuation
Spelling	Spelling	Composition
V o c a b u l a r y		

The first area for assessment is decoding ability. A good criterion-referenced measuring tool for this level is the Gallistel-Ellis Test of Coding Skills. If decoding is weak, reading comprehension and spelling must also be weak. Vocabulary knowledge and comprehension ability can only be measured if the test is presented orally. Instruction should begin in teaching mastery of the code, both in decoding and encoding (spelling). Vocabulary-comprehension can only be taught orally at this point.

The second level of instruction includes instruction in reading comprehension and additional instruction in spelling. If the student has already mastered the code, or if the student's reading comprehension is lower than her level of mastery of the code, s/he is ready for instruction in reading comprehension. Reading comprehension cannot be taught unless the student has mastery of the code in that particular selection or material. An assessment instrument which addresses this question in measurement is the Spache Diagnostic Reading Scales. Also the Woodcock Reading Mastery Tests can be used to answer this question. Group tests can never be used to answer this question because decoding can only be measured in an individually

administered test. Another important question to ask in assessing reading comprehension is whether the student's difficulties in comprehension are in reading narrative materials or in reading expository materials, such as her school textbooks.

Experience reading and understanding many examples of writing in the second level of instruction provides the best introduction to the third level of instruction, composition. After having satisfactorily gained some experience using the structure of written materials to assist her comprehension, the student is ready to apply her own structure to her own thought in composition. The third level of instruction should include written expression, both language mechanics and composition.

By sequencing the instruction in this way the teacher gives the student what s/he needs most first, in a relatively short portion of the day, leaving time for scheduling other important aspects of the entire secondary program.

Critique of High Interest--Low Vocabulary Materials

The greater bulk of materials written specifically for the secondary student are the high interest--low vocabulary materials. These materials are usually designed so that a series of selections are at a specified low reading level, and another series of selections is one step higher in reading level. Usually no provision is made for teacher instruction between levels which will guarantee that the student will be able to make the leap to the next level. Most often the learning exercises provided focus on comprehension, when comprehension is usually not the problem of a reader who reads below the fifth grade level. Most often decoding is the problem. The decoding exercises are usually presented in a haphazard, unsystematic way. This makes the material inappropriate for teaching decoding.

High interest--low vocabulary materials are often also inappropriate for teaching comprehension because they often only include narrative

passages. The bulk of secondary students with comprehension problems do not have difficulty following narrative materials. Their difficulty is usually in reading expository materials.

High interest--low vocabulary materials may be appropriate for increasing interest in reading and for independent reading. Students who have reading skill deficiencies in the above areas, however, could not logically be expected to improve their reading skills if the only intervention used were the high interest--low vocabulary materials.

Decoding

Common problems

A typical secondary student with decoding problems often uses context and guessing strategies well, but not sufficiently enough to read at grade level. This reader's previous schooling may have taught her reading as a "psycholinguistic guessing game." This reader usually reads between the second and sixth grade level on standardized reading tests. Using the following methods and materials 30 such readers at Junction City High School grew from three to six years in six months of instruction, the average growth being four years improvement in reading level.

Remedy

The basic program for instruction was Corrective Reading (SRA). Motivation was increased through the use of contingency skipping by changing the group reading procedure in the following manner. During the group reading students were asked to raise their hands if they heard the reader make an error. The reader was then given a chance to find his/her error and make the correction him/herself. If no one in the group caught the error made by the reader, or if the reader was unable to self-correct, the teacher recorded one error. Following the reading of the entire selection errors were totalled and reinforcement was given according to the number of errors.

- 8 or less errors -- Move to next lesson
 5 or less errors -- Skip one lesson
 2 or less errors -- Skip four lessons

Although the story line became somewhat fragmented through the skipping, the students were much more motivated by the idea of skipping lessons than they were by the stories themselves. At particularly interesting points in the stories, students were allowed to save up skips for later.

As a supplement to the above Corrective Reading Program, a series of probes were developed to teach syllabic analysis skills. Students who are successful decoding one-syllable words often still have difficulty decoding longer words, simply because of their length. By teaching strategies for cutting those words into pieces for decoding, longer words become as easy to read as short words.

There are four types of syllable patterns:

<u>Pattern</u>	<u>Example</u>
1. <u>vc</u> / <u>cv</u>	sar cas tic
2. <u>vc</u> / <u>v</u>	mod ern
3. <u>v</u> / <u>cv</u>	ru mor
4. -- / <u>cle</u>	rip ple

The fourth pattern can be taught as a separate word family, since it is easily identifiable by its le ending. Of the three patterns remaining, patterns one and two can be encompassed in one rule called the "vowel, consonant, dot rule"--divide all words that you can't read by finding the vowel sound, the next consonant sound, and placing a dot following the consonant sound. The result will not be a group of syllables that agree with Webster, but instead a group of sounds which make the word easier to decode, for example, lig am ent, lol lip ep, dog mat ic. This is the desired result of the syllabic analysis rule. In order to derive the

actual syllables in a word the student must be able to read the word. We want a rule here that will enable the student to read a word s/he couldn't read before the rule was applied.

Students are first given probes which include words of patterns one and two above, i.e. multisyllabic words with short vowels only. After they become proficient in the application of the rule they are given words with syllables of pattern #3 (words with some long vowels), to which they are to apply the same rule, for example, development, independence. Although these words have syllables that follow a different pattern, by applying the same "vowel, consonant, dot rule" students can come close enough to the real pronunciation of the word to decode it accurately. According to Burmeister's research (1968) pattern #2 occurs 48% of the time and pattern #3 52% of the time when a single consonant divides two vowels. The teaching time that it requires to acquire two syllabic analysis strategies and the little increase in the number of words the student will be able to decode using two strategies, instead of one, does not seem to warrant instruction in a "long vowel, dot" rule. Students can be taught simply that if the "vowel, consonant, dot rule" doesn't work in some cases, then try the long sound of the vowel. The vowel, consonant, dot rule can also be applied to decode multisyllabic words with vowel digraphs. The application involves counting vowel sound, consonant sound, dot.

In order to have time to give these probes to individuals in a reading group, other students must have some independent activity. Two materials which can be used independently and are also appropriate for teaching decoding skills to secondary students are the Mott Basic Language Skills Program (Allied Education Council) and Programmed Phonics (Educators Publishing Service).

Non-readers

The secondary student who reads at a first grade level or lower can be called a non-reader. There are two possible reasons why the student may be this low. S/he may have been in a highly structured decoding program individualized in grades one through eight or nine to meet this student's needs, but still for some reason the student was unable to master the skills needed to decode. For this student the teacher may wish to shift the type of reading program to one that teaches highly necessary sight vocabulary, so that by the time the student leaves the school system, s/he will have at least some meaningful reading vocabulary, although s/he cannot master the code.

A second reason why the student might be reading at only the first grade level is that s/he was not taught decoding specifically using a highly structured decoding program individualized to meet his/her needs. If this is the case, which it more often seems to be, this student deserves a crack at mastering the code through just this kind of program.

Contingency skipping can be used to increase motivation considerably for a non-reader learning to decode. The teacher needs to first collect a variety of materials that are designed to teach decoding specifically, i.e. materials that follow a phonetic sequence. These are usually elementary materials.

The teacher should then analyze the phonetic sequence of the materials and choose one material as the basis for the program. Then write the phonetic sequence out on a chart. List vertically the skills (sounds) to be taught. Then list horizontally all the pages in all the materials that could be used to practice or reinforce the respective skills, either specifically or cumulatively.

Now contingency skipping can be used to skip across the list horizontally and down the list vertically. The teacher may say something like,

"If you read the twenty words on this probe (or in this selection) with only one error, we will skip these steps on our list." The teacher may skip other materials which teach the same skill if the student has mastered the skill, or the teacher can allow the student to skip skills s/he has already mastered contingent upon his/her mastery of the skills s/he doesn't know.

Spelling

Spelling should be taught in the first two levels of instruction. In the first level of instruction while decoding is being taught, the goal of spelling instruction should be to teach the student to match symbols to sounds in sequence. In the second level of instruction spelling should be taught as a system of morphographs (meaningful units of words) which are hooked together according to certain rules.

Level I Spelling

If possible spelling should be used to reinforce the decoding skills being taught by including spelling practice for the same words being practiced in the reading part of each lesson. Frequently, however, the student's spelling level is far below her/his reading level. In this case spelling must be taught somewhat separate from reading. A program that uses contingency skipping in its design and is very appropriate for this purpose without any adaptation is Speed Spelling (C.C. Publications).

Level II Spelling

The second level of spelling instruction should teach the student to spell common meaningful units (morphographs) correctly, and to combine them into longer words by applying basic spelling rules for combining morphographs. A program excellent in its concept is Corrective Spelling through Morphographs (SRA). This program teaches about 650 base morphographs and rules for combining these morphographs so that students can

spell up to 12,000 words. The growing snowball effect of this program makes it highly motivating for secondary students as well as junior high and lower. However, the program design does not provide for skipping what the students already know, and mastery learning is not built into the program.

The secondary student who has mastered words like "bit" and "born" but who still has not mastered "furious" and "congressional" is often highly insulted by the formats for teaching the base morphographs. In order to allow the student to skip what s/he knows, a fast cycle was developed. In this fast cycle the words were extracted from the formats and listed in groups combining five lessons together. This way the teacher who already knows the Corrective Spelling teaching formats has more flexibility and students can leap forward in the program until they reach a point where mastery becomes more difficult. At this point they can be placed in the regular "slow cycle" program. Some special areas where students had particular problems were changed in format in this fast cycle. Dictations were also added to develop automaticity in writing multi-morphographic words. The fast cycle is available upon request from the author.

Vocabulary

Vocabulary, an important part of reading comprehension, should be an integral part of all three levels of basic language arts instruction. Vocabulary must be taught orally. The following is a general procedure for oral instruction in vocabulary.

PROCEDURE FOR TEACHING A VOCABULARY CONCEPT

1. Assess

2. Present definition

Definition includes--class

--distinctive feature

3. Test application of the definition by giving an example and a non-example of the concept in a minimal pair.

4. Give further examples and non-examples

--to check generalization

--to check student's ability to discriminate relevant and irrelevant information.

EXAMPLE APPLICATION OF THE PROCEDURE

Teaching expedition and voyage

Step 1. Assess--

expedition--Give me an example of an expedition.

voyage--Where would you like to go on a voyage?

Step 2. Present meaning--voyage

T.: A voyage is a journey. (class) What is a voyage?

T.: A voyage is a journey by sea or by space. (distinctive feature) What kind of special journey is a voyage?

Step 3. Application

T. (Point to map) I flew in a 747 from Sun Valley, Idaho to Florida. Did I make a voyage?

T.: Suppose I drove my car. Did I make a voyage?

T.: I travelled from California to Hawaii. Did I make a voyage? How do you know?

T.: Where would you like to go on a voyage?
(or present other hypothetical examples and non-examples)

Step 2. Present meaning--expedition

T.: An expedition is also a journey. (class)
What is an expedition?

T.: An expedition is a journey for a specific purpose.
(distinctive feature)
What kind of a special journey is an expedition?

Step 3. Application

T.: When I made my voyage to Hawaii, I went for a vacation. That was not an expedition, because I didn't go for a very specific purpose.

But let's say I went to study the volcanic rock. Would that be an expedition? Why?

T.: Let's say Susie here went to South America to look for gold. Was that an expedition? Why?

T.: Ralph is going to go to South America to enjoy himself. Is Ralph going on an expedition? Why isn't it an expedition?

Step 4. Discrimination

T.: (Write voyage and expedition on the board.)

Tell me which word is best for these journies.

(Give 4 or 5 mixed examples of voyage, expedition, and plain old journey. Add as much irrelevant information as you can to test the students' ability to sort it.)

Comprehension

In the second level of instruction emphasis shifts from decoding to reading comprehension. Following a highly structured intervention in decoding as outlined earlier, students are generally reading from sixth to eighth grade level. Some particularly low intelligence individuals may be reading lower than this. Most commonly high school students have particular difficulty reading the expository textbooks in their content classes, rather than reading narrative materials.

It is important to provide instruction which focuses on the particular reading problems that the students have. Teaching comprehension of narrative material can be expected to have little generalization to comprehending expository material because of the very different organization. Whereas, a narrative material ties all of the details together into one sequential story line or plot, an expository material presents groups of coordinate, subordinate, and superordinate concepts and ideas, which may have no time sequence at all. If students have difficulty comprehending expository information, then comprehension of expository materials is what must be taught.



Organizing a comprehension sequence

Frequently comprehension materials do not seem to have a direct relationship to any meaningful long-term goal. The teacher must decide what the comprehension problems of the students are, what the corresponding long-term goal should be, and how to reach that goal. In the appendices are included two long-term goals the author has found meaningful and a task analysis of short-term objectives to reach these goals. Following is a description of the sequence and materials that can be "plugged into" this sequence with little effort by the teacher.

Problem #1--Student cannot remember what s/he reads

Appendix A is a task analysis of the skill of summarizing and recalling what/one reads in an expository material. The first short term objective assures the teacher that the student does in fact

comprehend the syntax of more complex written language. Narrative materials could be used to develop this skill, if the syntax is complex enough. More systematic practice can be found in the exercises from the SRA Basal Reading Program workbooks for levels G through I, which require the student to find two sentences out of three which mean the same.

The second short term objective presents the basic structure of an expository material--the outline--using words only instead of paragraphs. Exercises to use in teaching this objective can be found in Lessons in Outlining from Curriculum Associates.

For the third short term objective the teacher can use any textbook that the student is using. Topics and subtopics of paragraphs can be identified in any expository reading assignment the student might have. Commercial materials with more obvious topics and subtopics can also be used, such as Lessons on Paragraphing from Curriculum Associates.

Objectives four through seven are a task analysis of recall. Short term objective #4 practices the quick review of topics for retention. Short-term objective #5 requires the student to find the topic word in a topic sentence and recall it for each sentence in the passage. Objective #6 requires the student to find the topic sentence in a paragraph, reduce it to a key topic word, and recall all of those topic words for use in his/her oral summary. Objective #7 is the same task as #6 except that the student must now do the entire operation in her/his head.

When the student is able to successfully recall the information presented in four paragraphs, s/he can begin to apply this skill to longer passages. Timed Readings (Jamestown Publishers) can be used to extend this practice in a systematic way.

Problem #2--Student is inept with expository materials

Many secondary students are simply inefficient in using textbook material. They have trouble finding significant information. They are too slow and cannot keep up with their assignments. They have trouble getting assignments from their texts finished in time. Appendix B is a list of short-term objectives designed to teach students to gain important information from a textbook assignment in no more than five minutes. This skill may be called "speed reading," skimming, preview skimming, or just previewing.

The first short term objective accomplishes two things. First, it loosens the students from their word-by-word reading. This first short-term objective could also be developed into an additional task that requires the student to pick the key word in a question, then scan the material for that key word, and find the answer.

The second short-term objective helps students find information within the text itself that is highlighted by numbers, or locator words, like first, second, third, another, etc. These words frequently are followed by the key information in the text.

Graphs also often summarize the information in the chapter and skill reading them can provide a valuable short-cut to learning for the handicapped reader. Objective #3 teaches graph reading skills. The teacher should use graphs which are in textbooks the student is required to read. Often textbooks have a specific format for graphs that is used repeatedly. Learning this format specifically can reduce the learning that a handicapped student may need to do in order to be successful in his/her text.

What is true for graphs is also true of maps. Often a particular format is used throughout an entire textbook. Learning that format in a reading class can facilitate better performance in the textbooks of

that content class.

Objective #5 teaches the student the actual steps for application of the above skills by providing him/her with a written guide to follow. The guide should be designed by the teacher to provide the student with the best procedure for gaining the most information in the least amount of time in the particular textbook that s/he is required to use in a given classroom. The general format of the guide should be as follows:

1. Read title.
 - a. What is the major question to be answered in this chapter?
2. Read maps, graphs, pictures, and diagrams.
 - a. Questions regarding the information to be gained in the maps, graphs, and pictures.
3. Study the (summary).

The summary is rarely labelled "summary" but usually given some other name, or perhaps there isn't any. Students should learn to find the summary by whatever name it is called in the text.

4. Read the subtitles.
 - a. Questions regarding information that can be gained through reading the subtitles alone.
 - b. Questions regarding the location of important information.

(Questions that must be answered by reading under the subtitles here are not "fair," unless that information is marked by key locator words.)

Appendix C is an example application of the above procedure to the textbook American History by Abramowitz (Follet) for low comprehenders.

Composition

Good written expression requires mastery of five subskills: handwriting, spelling, capitalization, punctuation, and composition (thought organization). These skills should be generally taught in the above order. Capitalization and punctuation can best be taught through a series of dictations, so that 1, the student's poor composition ability does not interfere with his/her punctuation capitalization ability, and 2, in order to provide numerous composition models for the student. (Such a material will be available through Mastery Programs, Logan, Utah.)

The focus here is only the composition skills, including grammar. Appendix D is a series of short term objectives designed to teach composition without teaching parts of speech and complicated grammar rules. Clarity of communication is the goal and "re-tells" are the primary teaching strategy. A "re-tell" is a model paragraph which is read to the student two times usually, and which the student is then asked to paraphrase in written form. Using this strategy the student can borrow some of the language patterns and ideas from the paragraph presented to her orally. S/he can concentrate entirely upon representing the ideas clearly, without also having to originate the ideas herself. Following mastery of the "re-tell" the student can then attempt to create her own ideas in addition to representing them clearly in writing.

The first short-term objective in the composition sequence requires mastery of complex-sentence composition. The exercises for this objective were taken from Comprehension B (SRA).

The second objective involves a retell exercise. The student is required to include all of the ideas presented orally by the teacher in her sentence in order to pass this objective.

The third objective requires the student to learn the concept of what a good paragraph is and to evaluate some good and bad paragraphs as such.

The fourth objective requires finer discrimination of the quality of topic sentences. The main goal here is to teach the student that the more specific the topic sentence is, the better it is.

The fifth objective requires the student to compose his/her own topic sentence for some sentences which are already well-composed to fit a specific topic. Exercises for this objective were taken from Lessons on Paragraphing (Curriculum Associates).

Objectives #6 and #7 prepare the students for the paragraph retells. Model paragraphs for these exercises can also be taken from Lessons on Paragraphing and from Lessons on Outlining from Curriculum Associates.

Summary

Basic skills, if not mastered earlier, are still an important part of the secondary resource room. This paper has outlined a program model for teaching reading and writing during a minimum of one class period per day. In this model instruction is divided into three levels. Within these three levels instruction takes place in decoding, spelling, vocabulary, comprehension, and composition. This model has been found to be very effective in bringing secondary learning disabled and educable mentally retarded to passing the minimum language arts competencies required for high school graduation in Junction City, Oregon.

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APPENDIX C

AMERICA'S REFUSAL TO JOIN THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS

PREVIEW GUIDE

TEXT: Abramowitz, J. American History, Follett

pp. 643-646

1. Read the title.

a. Did America join the League of Nations?

2. Look at the pictures.

a. List the "Big Four"

Last Name	Country
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

b. After the First World War Austria-Hungary was divided into seven pieces. Those seven pieces either became a new country or were added to other countries. Name the countries that were formed from the Austria-Hungarian empire or were added to by the empire.

c. Germany lost land to three other countries. Name them.

3. Read the black subtitles.

a. What was one problem?

b. What president faced a dilemma?

c. What treaty ended the First World War?

d. Under which subtitle would you read to find out what the League of Nations was?

e. Under which subtitle would you read to find the weaknesses of the League of Nations?

f. Who refused to compromise?

