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ABSTRACT
                This chapter is part of a book that recounts the year's work
at the Early Childhood Development Center (ECDC) at Texas A & M University-
Corpus Christi. Rather than an "elitist" laboratory school for the children
of university faculty, the dual-language ECDC is a collaboration between the
Corpus Christi Independent School District and the university with an
enrollment representative of Corpus Christi's population. The chapter details
an evaluation of a pilot model for reading tutoring, which was based on
America Reads monies, incorporated aspects of Reading Recovery, and used some
of the materials developed under the Right to Read program. Evaluation of the
pilot program found it to be very successful based on students' reading
scores on the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS). Recommendations for
tutor selection and training, format for tutoring sessions, and ongoing tutor
support were also developed.(Contains 25 references.) (EV)

Chapter 8

America Reads + Reading Recovery + Right to Read = Quality Tutoring A Pilot Program

Jack Cassidy
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In his State of the Union Address on January 20, 1997, President William J. Clinton announced that he intended to devote significant funds to hiring college work-study students to tutor primary children in reading (Clinton, 1997). Subsequently entitled America Reads, the program soon garnered much public support (Manzo, 1998). Funds were quickly allocated to colleges and universities to hire college students to work with children in grades one through three who were experiencing difficulty with reading. Institutions of higher education immediately implemented these programs. The topic "tutoring," long dormant in the professional literature, became a very "hot" issue (Cassidy & Cassidy, 1998; Cassidy & Wenrich, 1997). Research reports indicated that even with minimal training, tutors could significantly affect the reading achievement of at-risk first- and second-grade children (Fitzgerald, 2001). After a few years, the enthusiasm for the volunteer tutoring began to wane (Cassidy & Cassidy, 2000/2001); however, it is important to examine the results of the programs that emerged from the various initiatives to see if there are viable models for future tutoring programs which might use non-professionals.

When Clinton proposed his program, no funds were allocated for the training or supervision of tutors, nor were any monies made available for materials. Professionals in the field of reading immediately rushed to fill the void by publishing a variety of manuals and handbooks (Bader, 1998; Chall, Roswell, Fletcher, & Richmond, 1998; Morrow & Walker, 1997, Pinnell & Fountas, 1997; Roller, 1998). These handbooks offered prospective tutors a veritable smorgasbord of methods, worksheets, and assessments. None of these publications, however, offered a research-based model for the training and implementation of a tutor program that universities and tutors could follow. Often, the undergraduate tutors hired had little background and/or interest in education let alone reading education. It was unrealistic to expect that these undergraduate students would devote hours to reading these manuals and then selecting the appropriate strategies and materials. Articles in professional journals attempted to offer guidelines and synthesize research (Wasik, 1998 a & b). Inevitably, the America Reads tutoring programs came under fire from critics (Edmondson, 1998; Topping 1998).

Careful examination of the literature revealed, however, a good deal of information on successful tutoring. Cohen, Kulik, and Kulik (1982) did a meta-analysis of tutoring programs and found that they

varied widely in their effectiveness. Despite finding that math-tutoring programs were generally the most effective, they also identified features of successful tutoring programs for reading. They concluded that:

1. Highly prescribed tutoring programs are more effective than those with looser guidelines.
2. Programs that focus on word recognition and factual comprehension are more effective than those that stress higher-level comprehension skills.
3. Programs in which tutors provide hints of the correct answer and allow the children to come up with the answer are more effective than those in which the tutor supplies the correct answer.

Many of these components of successful tutoring programs are embodied in the world's most heralded tutoring program—Reading Recovery (Clay,1993). Developed in New Zealand in the seventies, Reading Recovery was brought to the United States in the mid-eighties. The program was designed for first-graders who were at-risk of reading failure and centered on prevention of reading problems, a focus now sanctioned by the widely cited government report *Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children* (Snow, Burns & Griffin, 1998). Like previously successful tutoring programs in reading, the Reading Recovery program is highly prescribed, focuses on word recognition, and constantly calls on the student to solve his/her word recognition difficulties by monitoring comprehension. Unlike tutoring programs of the past, the tutors in Reading Recovery are highly trained and well compensated. The high price tag attached to Reading Recovery has caused some to question the overall cost-effectiveness of the program (Shanahan & Barr, 1995).

Government supported tutoring programs are not new. During the nineteen seventies, President Nixon launched the Right to Read program, supposedly to eliminate illiteracy in the United States by 1980. The Right to Read program ended in 1980; illiteracy did not. Unlike the America Reads program, the federal government allocated no funds for hiring tutors. School districts were directed to recruit community volunteers. Any federal money was spent on the development of materials. The Tutor's Manual developed for Right to

Read tutors (Robbins, 1972) listed sixty skills needed for successful readers and then gave a sample lesson for each skill.

Research Methodology

During the 1997-98 academic year, Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi (TAMUCC) first applied and used America Reads monies. However, in the fall of 1998, the Early Childhood Development Center at TAMUCC began a pilot tutoring program which was based on the previous research, was funded with America, Reads monies, incorporated aspects of Reading Recovery, and used some of the materials developed under the Right to Read program. Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi houses a public lab school for preschool and primary children in its Early Childhood Development Center (ECDC). The ECDC is a school in the Corpus Christi Independent School District (CCISD). Students in the ECDC learn both English and Spanish and generally come from low-income families. The purpose of the America Reads program at the ECDC was to provide help for children experiencing reading difficulties (in English) and to develop a research-based model that might be used by other universities. During the 1998-1999 school year, efforts centered on piloting a model for training tutors and implementing the program. Although some data would be gathered on child performance, the major focus was to develop an efficient, effective, inexpensive model for training tutors and implementing an America Reads program.

Tutor Selection and Training

Tutors were selected from fulltime TAMUCC students eligible for work-study funds. Two TAMUCC reading professors and a graduate assistant interviewed prospective tutors. Initially, ten tutors were hired and this number remained fairly constant although some tutors had to be replaced in the spring semester because of their course requirements. All of the students were asked about their backgrounds with children and were asked to read expressively from a children's book. The major training session took place on a Saturday and focused on introducing tutors to the format of each tutoring session. (See Figure 1).

Figure 1
America Reads tutor training session

I.	Introduction	9:30 — 10:00
II.	First Day	10:00 —10:30
III.	Introduction to Schedule	10:30 —11:30
IV.	Skills/Strategies	1:30 —1:00
V.	Lunch	1:00 —1:30
VI.	Continued Reading	1:30 —2:00
VII.	Writing	2:00 —2:30
VIII.	Tutor Reading	2:30 —2:45
IX.	Questions	2:45 —3:00

Format for Tutoring Sessions

Tutoring sessions attempted to follow the guidelines suggested by Cohen, Kulik and Kulik (1982) and the format used in the Reading Recovery program. Because the Reading Recovery program uses thirty-minute sessions, this time frame was adopted. Unfortunately, due to various scheduling difficulties, tutors were usually able to meet with their children only three times a week. The Corpus Christi ISD made arrangements for a late bus on Tuesday and Thursday so several children were tutored after school on these two days. The particular format for the tutoring sessions was again borrowed from the Reading Recovery program (Clay, 1993) and then modified. The thirty-minute time frame was divided into six time segments:

1. Fluent writing practice (2 minutes). When the children came into the tutoring session, they were instructed to write as many words as they could on the board. Sometimes this procedure was modified. ("Write as many two syllable words as you can." "Write words that rhyme with cat." "Write as many words from your story as you can.")

2. Rereading familiar books, stories, or parts of stories (5 minutes). Children were then asked to reread familiar books or stories that they had read the day or week before. Sometimes they were given a choice as to the

stories they would read. Other times, the selection was assigned by the tutor. Research has shown that rereading familiar text builds sight vocabulary and fluency.

3. Skill lesson (6 minutes) The tutor then taught a specific skill lesson. The focus was often on word identification. The Tutor Manual (Robbins, 1972) developed for the Right to Read program was used to provide examples of specific skill activities.

4. Continued reading (6 minutes) In this segment of the lesson, tutors guided the children as they continued reading in a story or book. Tutors were cautioned to try to avoid supplying a child with an unknown word. Rather, the children were given clues so that they could ascertain the words themselves.

5. Writing (5 minutes) In this segment of the lesson, children wrote about something they had read or something that was of interest to them. Efforts were made to see that the children used the words in their writing that they were using in their reading. The cut-up sentence strategy used in the Reading Recovery program was employed here also.

6. Tutor reads (5 minutes). In this segment of the tutoring, the tutor read orally to the child a book of particular interest.

Although many of the components of the Reading Recover program were used in this America Reads project, there were som differences. Because the tutors were not the highly traine professionals employed in Reading Recovery, some of the mor difficult components of that program were not employed. There wa no extensive record keeping, and the daily running records, essentia to Reading Recovery, were eliminated. Tutors kept simple recor sheets, which were stored in each child's folder and kept in a fil cabinet. Although initial staff development was relatively brie monthly meetings (later weekly) helped provide needed support fc the tutors.

Tutors had a variety of materials available for them to us including a number of easy to read books. Initially, many tutors use books from the Read-Reason-Write series (Cassidy, Cassidy, Garret

Behmer, & Micklos 1998). These student texts provided many of the tutors with the support that they needed.

On-going Tutor Support

Because the tutors were not highly trained, it was recognized that they required some on-going support. Thus, for one hour every Friday afternoon, tutors met with the graduate assistant (and sometimes the university professor in charge) to discuss problems and review strategies. At these meetings, tutors also provided feedback about the model used for the tutoring sessions.

Selection of Children

The first children selected to receive help from the America Reads tutors were nine (later ten) third-graders enrolled in the Early Childhood Development Center on the TAMUCC campus. The third grade teacher selected the children based on her assessment of their needs. All of the third graders had taken the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS) in April of 1998 when they were completing second grade. Seven of the ten students had scored below the 33rd percentile using national norms on the reading subtest of the ITBS. Three of the ten children had scored above the 50th percentile (52nd, 65th, 69th percentiles), but the teacher felt that they were performing below their capacity (Corpus Chrisit Independent School District, 1998).

In February of 1999, America Reads tutors began working with five second-grade students, again upon the recommendation of the teacher. All five students had ITBS reading scores below the 50th percentile when they took the test at the end of first grade in April of 1998. In March, the tutors began working with five first-grade students, again upon the recommendation of the teacher.

Results

Because the primary purpose of this pilot study was to perfect the model for the tutoring sessions, student achievement was measured using the reading test required by the state testing program. All public schools in Texas are required to administer the Texas Assessment of

Academic Skills (TAAS) on an annual basis. The TAAS consists of criterion-referenced tests in reading, mathematics, and writing. The TAAS reading and mathematics tests are administered to all eligible public school students in grades three through eight and ten. The writing test is administered only at grades four, eight, and ten (Texas Education Agency, 1998).

The TAAS reading test is designed to measure essential reading objectives from a list of standards called the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS). The TEKS were developed by the Texas Education Agency to provide public school districts with guidelines for a state-required foundation curriculum in reading. Schools receive a rating of exemplary, recognized, acceptable, or low performing on the basis of TAAS results and attendance rates. In order for a school to receive an exemplary rating, at least 90% of the students must receive a passing score on the TAAS. In order to pass the test, students must achieve a standard score of 70, which is roughly equivalent to answering 70% of the items correctly (Texas Education Agency, 2000).

Because students in the study were in grade three, the third grade TAAS reading test was used to measure achievement. Data were collected for a two-year period in order to show student progress. Records indicate that all 18 students who were in the study in 1998-99 and 18 of the 19 students who were in the study in 1999-2000 passed the reading test. The student who did not pass the test in 1999-2000 was being tested for placement in special education at the time of testing and was later placed in special education. The fact that 36 of the 37 students who participated in the program passed the test is a clear indication that students in the study attained the reading skills measured by the TAAS. Because all of these students were judged to be "at-risk" either by their teachers or by existing informal assessments, the high pass rate for these thirty-seven is noteworthy (TEA, 2001).

Recommendations & Conclusions

1. Based on observations and input from everyone involved, it appears that the thirty minute tutoring session three times a week is the most effective. Many of the children, perhaps because of their reading problems, have difficulty focusing

their attention. It would be difficult for non-professional tutors to keep the children on task if the tutoring sessions were any longer.

2. The basic format for the tutoring sessions appears to be effective. However, some consideration should be given to condensing some of the six components or implementing them on an alternating schedule. For instance, the fluent writing component might be implemented only once a week. Also, some consideration should be given to slightly altering the format of the tutoring session based on the age and/or reading level of the child.

3. More staff development should be scheduled for the tutors. Particular attention should be paid to providing tutors with more strategies for the writing component of the tutoring model. Tutors reported a great deal of difficulty in getting children to write. Other topics for on-going staff development of the tutors would include: quick informal assessment strategies, means to select appropriate materials, and multi-sensory reading techniques.

4. Meetings should be scheduled with the first- through third-grade teachers to gain specific strategies that they would like reviewed by the tutors. Specific word lists and reading selections would also be helpful.

5. Formal observations should be made of the tutors at least twice a month. Following the observation, tutors should be given feedback on their performance.

6. In order to judge adequately the effectiveness of the tutoring model, a control group should be established.

Overall, it appears that the America Reads program, as implemented at the Early Childhood Development Center, was extremely successful during its first two years. All involved in the program report a great deal of satisfaction with the program, and the implementation model (with some modifications) appears to be one that could be adopted by other universities.

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