**READING IN THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL**

**BY**

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Reading is an essential subject that we use in everyday life; therefore, reading is one area a student should not take for granted or put off for later learning. I am working towards a degree in elementary education with reading and math credentials. Helping students to learn to read and enjoy reading is a goal of mine. I will share some best practices I learned about and some strategies I plan to use in my classroom.

For some students, reading can be very frustrating and stressful. In order to make reading fun, a teacher must first find out what the student likes to read about and help them to learn to read for success. According to John Santrock (2011), there are two approaches to reading, the phonics approach and the whole-language approach. In the phonics approach, students are primarily focusing on the rules of producing sounds. While the whole-language approach is based on instruction that parallels the student’s natural learning (Santrock, 2011).

One way for students to learn how to read is through support to help decode words and feedback to help them understand what they are reading about. Summarizing is thought to be another important reading strategy (Santrock, 2011). Students can also build on what they already know in reading by developing a broader vocabulary and learning new, more difficult words; therefore, “vocabulary plays a fundamental role in learning to read” (Roskos & Neuman, 2014). In order for the students to comprehend what they are reading, they need to have a good vocabulary base. Their vocabulary base is built through teaching students new words and associating them with something they already know.

Rereading is thought to be a good strategy to help the students understand what they are reading and to “carefully consider how the text works to communicate concepts, principles, themes, and arguments” (Roskos & Neuman, 2014). Rereading is a good practice to use in order for the students to find out more information about the story or document they read.

One last best practice that is becoming more common is use of the digital textbook. Digital textbooks are a collaboration tool that provide feedback to both the student and the teacher. Digital textbooks “personalize student learning, increase relevant instructional time, and support differentiation to meet students’ needs” (Roskos & Neuman, 2014).

In order to obtain good reading skills, I plan to use the reciprocal teaching approach which is having the “students taking turns leading a small group discussion” (Santrock, 2011). In using the reciprocal approach, students can learn from one another while reading. They are able to help sound out difficult words and help understand what is being read by asking questions like what did we just read, where is this story taking place, or who are the main characters? When setting up the group, I would be sure that there are readers of varying levels to achieve the best possible learning environment.

Another approach I plan to use would be the direct instruction approach. With the direct instruction approach, the goal would be to “maximize student learning time” (Santrock, 2011). During instruction time, I could have the students doing read to self or reading in smaller groups where I would be available to help with questions or would be available to guide the students who are struggling.

I plan to assign the students reading homework as an approach to better one’s reading skills. I would assign the students to read an average of 5 to 10 minutes per night (depending on grade level) and ask the students to keep track of their minutes on a calendar to be turned in at the end of the month. Good reading habits set in place in the younger years will be a benefit once the student enters the higher grade levels.

With technological advances, I would like to implement electronic books into my curriculum as well. In the lower grades, I would use eBooks as part of a center activity where the students would be able to listen to books online or read them with the opportunity to have more difficult words sounded out for them. In the upper grades, I would implement eBooks to my students, if possible, in the form of their textbook. The use of eBooks would optimize their learning experience.

A good strategy to start the students building their reading skills would be to do weekly vocabulary words. In the lower grades, I would use vocabulary words we would be learning in our story and focus on the vocabulary words daily. I would have the students pronounce the words with me and repeat the meaning. We would review the vocabulary daily throughout the week and then have them complete a comprehensive test at the end of the week. In the older grades, one could have the students keep a vocabulary journal with new words they learned from their reading and the meaning of the words. They too would work on the words throughout the week and have a comprehensive test at the end of the week. In addition to vocabulary building skills, I would implement a word wall, especially in the lower grades, where we place new words we learned about on a bulletin board. With the word wall in place, the students have access to these words daily and can use them in their writing assignments.

With all the different strategies and best practices available for reading, it is important to find a strategy that works well for the students, implement it, and make necessary changes. I would like to get the students engaged in reading so they can find the enjoyment in it, build on their own knowledge, and create a world of opportunity for themselves.

REFERENCES

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