

Teaching Reading across the Curriculum

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Abstract—Hand-in-hand with the current renewed emphasis on students' success and a resurgence of reading across the curriculum, teachers (instructors) in all disciplines need to refocus on reading across the curriculum to address students' needs to achieve instructional goals, and to prepare citizens for independent learning. It seems clear that a refocused emphasis on reading as a process of getting meaning from text to be used for analysis, synthesis and evaluation, in the context of critical literacy across the curriculum could potentially address the difficulties of students, the goals of teachers and the needs of the nation for an educated, informed, fully participatory, democratic population. These goals can be achieved through four specific strategies that can make faster, better reading possible for everyone, including, first an understanding of the nature of the reading process; second, a consistent focus on direct classroom teaching of critical reading skills that go beyond comprehension; third, opportunities for modeling and practising of these critical reading skills; and fourth, the development of an understanding of the conventions of disciplines and the particular strategy used in an array of academic areas. This is going to be the focus of this paper.

Index Terms—teaching, curriculum, reading, learners, skills, vocabulary

I. INTRODUCTION

One of the most important things that children learn in school is how to read. Teaching reading to younger ones can help prepare them for the rest of their academic career, and depending on the effectiveness of reading, it can set learners up to succeed or otherwise. Hence, teaching reading across the curriculum is critical to equip students with the skills they need in all areas of their education.

Reading is a key skill for learners and without it students cannot function efficiently and successfully in the world. Imagine how much better our students would be in reading if we all, no matter what subject we teach, take some time to re-enforce important reading skills everyday. Once students begin to see the application of reading in the classroom, especially the skills that hold sway, the teacher can now actively reinforce and practice these skills subsequently with the learners. Through constant daily use, these skills will be refined to the point where they are implemented fluently and without conscious effort.

In every society today, it is so important to be literate; and one cannot get an advanced education, unless reading skills are mastered. The ability to read is inherent in every human, so it is possible to teach anyone how to read. The struggling readers probably just need some extra attention, patience and motivation from the teachers and students themselves in order to succeed in reading.

As a teacher, when planning our lessons, think about ways you will incorporate vocabulary, textbook reading, and reading from other sources to enhance students' learning of the curriculum. As you write your instructional objectives, be sure to include the reading objectives that will be used in the lesson. For instance, a science teacher may have a lesson on photosynthesis. Before the textbook reading, the teacher may want to inculcate important vocabulary terms that students will encounter when reading the notebook. When discussing the vocabulary terms, it would also be easy to incorporate a discussion on how the prefix or suffix gives a clue as to the meaning of the word and this little bit of reading instruction won't take more than a few extra minutes in the discussion. The contribution and impact made in utilizing an important reading skill within the teaching of the science, curriculum cannot be overemphasized. In addition, the teachers could also point out to their students that the use of prefixes and suffixes will help them determine word meaning in everything they read. In the space of a few minutes, teachers will have reinforced reading skills, and applied such to the curriculum thereby helping students to become fluent readers. The time is minimal, but if every teacher in a school makes the commitment to apply at least one reading skill each day, the effects will multiply and we will see a surge in fluent readers.

By understanding the objectives of reading, teachers can very easily incorporate them into the instruction. For students who read at their grade levels, you can still help them to improve. Often, teachers focus too much on the students that are behind and they neglect the students that perform at average level. If teachers spend more time with those at the average level, they could become more advanced. A teacher should endeavour to motivate all manner of readers, and not only those that need it most.

A. *Definition of Reading*

Reading is generally defined as the fastest way to bring information into our body. Babies that are constantly read to grow to become great readers. As they grow up, they tend to love reading even more. To children, reading is pronouncing the letters and filling out workbooks. According to Schmoker (2008), children view reading from a unique viewpoint. It means putting sounds together; learning hard words; it is like thinking and understanding a story where things can be found etc.

Those working in the field define reading in the following ways:

Kelly, (2007) defines reading as an active process in which readers interact with text to reconstruct the message of the author. Printed symbols are signs which lead an active mind to reflect on alternatives during the process of constructing knowledge.

Palincsar, Peterson and Simington (eds) (2009) view reading as a process. It is strategic, interactive and its instruction requires orchestration.

Yusuf (2009, 2010) described it as the recognition and interpretation of symbols. It involves using both the information provided on the text by the author as well as the sources of information outside the text, and that Reading is the key to success in life.

Dechant (2006) in his study of "Reading: A Complete Guide" clearly sees reading as a process which is complete only when comprehension is attained. The critical element here is that the reader reconstructs the message encoded in the written language. Full comprehension occurs when the reconstruction agrees with the writer's intended message that understanding and or comprehension depends more on the information stored in the text.

The essential skill in reading is getting meaning from a printed message. As a mark of endorsement, Caroll (2009) agrees that reading involves the following:

- knowledge of the language to be read
- ability to separate words into component sounds
- ability to recognize and discriminate the letters of the alphabet
- understanding of the correspondence between letters and sounds
- ability to recognize printed words from a variety of cues
- ability to comprehend text etc.

According to Oyetunde (2009) reading is a complex process integrating all aspects of human behavior and demanding varied and continued instructional guidance to read accurately, and efficiently, to appraise what is read, and to relate what is read in a significant way to other areas of life. On the whole, one would agree that reading is key to wealth of experiences that links people in a way that is not limited by outside or time. Reading provides experience, through which the individual expands academic and intellectual horizons, identifies, extends and deals with personal interests and attributes that affect the task of reading. Reading is a psycholinguistic process involving the interaction of readers' thinking with the language of the text.

B. *The Reading Process/Students' Problem*

Most students see reading as a single act and not a process at all. In order to help students improve teachers (instructors) have to assist them become good readers. Every reader has a process and as the complexity of the text increases, students need to know what and how they are reading such texts. Reading is the realization of general interpretative process which underlines all communicative activity. Many definitions of reading make it clear that the fundamental reason why many students lack the skills they need to be successful is inadequate instruction and motivation. Their difficulties arise in part from the ideas that reading is some fundamental skill taught early in school and that little or no instruction is needed once the basic idea is mastered, usually in primary, secondary and senior secondary schools.

Another problem is based on the view that there is less need for reading now that everything is on the computer. Also, students' difficulty arises partly because while they engage texts and visual displays to an increasing degree (in games, blogs, text messages on cell phones), learners become less aware of the ways in which their attentions and responses are shaped by the media.

Students' difficulties arise in part because the tacit goals of reading including integration of ideas in a large context and application require a refocused emphasis on reading as a process. Getting meaning from print to be used for analysis, synthesis and evaluation, in the context of teaching across curriculum, could potentially address the difficulties of students, the goals of teachers and the needs of the nation for an educated, informed, fully participatory democratic population.

C. *Objectives of Reading*

Reading is a key skill for students. Without it, students malfunction and efficiency and success become far fetched. However, by taking some time to reinforce important reading skills daily, the exact outcome of reading objectives laid out will be met and the following are some of the basic objectives, that can be applied in the classroom.

- Identify main ideas
- Summarize a passage

- Distinguish fact from fiction
- Identify supporting detail in a passage
- Determine the meaning of words
- Compare/contrast ideas
- Make observations and analyze issues within a passage
- Locate specific information in a passage
- Use graphic sources to help interpret reading
- Make generalization and draw conclusion from passage
- Identify purpose of text

Once a student begins to see the application of reading skills, it can then be reinforced. Through constant daily use, these skills will be refined to the point where they are implemented with little or no effort.

II. TEACHING READING ACROSS CURRICULUM (AN OVERVIEW)

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 from different academic perspectives should make for optimal students' growth in understanding others which is one of the objectives for reading across the curriculum.

Developing a love for reading is an important objective for all students to achieve. Individualized reading in which students choose which book to read based on interest and readability is hereby advocated. 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 optimal reading progress. The teacher writes brief comments to use in future conference.

Reading is an important skill and being able to read has great impact on learning and achievement in every area of the curriculum and children, if they are backed up by good support throughout the school. Helping colleagues to understand the development of reading and enabling them to contribute to the process will be time well spent.

Most importantly, in this respect, teachers are the people who provide extra practice and encouragement for individuals and small groups of students. Make sure teachers know about:

- appropriate books, plays, poems for different ages, levels of ability and different interests in different versions of taking books.
- the importance of reading to children and young people whatever their age; taking turns with reading aloud can speed up this process, provide a good model of reading aloud and make the whole process more interesting.
- the value of encouraging pupils to read familiar books and stories, they will do well with these, boosting confidence and allowing them to focus more on expression and enjoyment.

A. Support for Teachers

Many teachers, especially those in the primary and secondary setting, feel that it is someone else's job to teach pupils to read facts. It is a shared responsibility that every teacher should know enough about phonics and other reading cues to be able to support pupils' reading development. At the very least, teachers need to be confident on how to prompt a reader effectively when he/she is stuck on a word.

The following points offer some generic advice on how to support pupils' reading across all areas of the curriculum:

- i. try to maintain a balance between providing regular reading and practice. Without it, learners will not improve; and thus avoid reading altogether which can be disastrous.
- ii. stressing reading across curriculum from basic 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.
- iii. according to Moats (2008), students will become proficient readers with a concerted effort. One must remember that quality method of instruction is highly essential.
- iv. teachers must try out ideas expressed at school/class contact hours and workshops and take note on how they work in classroom teaching.
- v. in addition to schools and staff, parents also need to perceive value in students' reading across the curriculum. School leaders should educate parents about the philosophy of instruction so they can aid in its implementation.

B. How Reading Should be Taught across the Curriculum

Teaching reading is an integral part of all content areas. Every teacher must be a reading teacher. The following are techniques and strategies in teaching reading across the curriculum:

- 1). Design lessons using a before, during and after format with which reading is a significant component
- 2). Have students respond to stance questions in writing: providing support from the text.

1. Teaching reading across curriculum in the primary school

- For primary phase children, make a game of word recognition using flash cards in newly-learned words. Three to five minutes each day for this activity can make a big difference in improving sight vocabulary.

- Make activities sheet accessible – short sentences, avoid extraneous text; using the first person pronouns where possible.

- Provide support for reading by placing pupils in pairs (a good reader with a less good reader) and groups.
- Be a good role model – talk about personal reading with parents to sit with pupils around the dinner to tell them about a really good story you read to your children: your son/daughter/nephew/niece some time ago.

2. Teaching reading across the curriculum in Junior Secondary Schools

There are a number of good guides to classroom activities that lead readers to read more efficiently and effectively, Thus:

- Introduce and explain technical vocabulary. Look at work together as a group or whole class using phonetics if appropriate to decode. Talk about the meaning and any related words; photosynthesis; photo (prefix) synthesis. Remember that there is also a whole bank of vocabulary that is not deemed technical but the understanding of which is critical to students' understanding of exam questions. Words like discuss, analysis, justify, review can confuse students who may actively be able to respond if only they understood the question.

- Use news items: Bring in newspaper cuttings that are relevant to your subject area or current topic and ask a pair of pupils to read it and report back to the class.... It might be a new discovery (science); someone finding a relic or report on floods. This can be a homework activity with article of different length and complexity given to readers of different abilities.

3. Teaching reading across curriculum in the Senior Secondary Schools

Reading across curriculum should be the real goal of all courses in the senior classes, in both public and private schools and in community programs. The need for reading is clear and it is growing as the world become increasingly digital with all forms of communication. We must therefore develop ways of making reading more attractive to out students in order to develop a life long love for reading. We must prepare students to find pleasure in reading.

The following reading strategies capitalize on adolescent needs in teaching reading in schools:

- Encourage students to create plays about materials they are learning and to present the play in class. Students get to hear how others use inflection pacing to convey emotions.

- Teachers should usually pair a fluent reader with one that needs help. Students take turns reading to each other and share what they have read so as to reinforce comprehension.

- Keep students focused always. In this strategy one student reads part of a selection which also helps content area teachers to cover text material in class but does not ensure that student comprehends the material.

- Guided reading typically involves the whole class in reading a passage together. It allows the teacher to expose children to a wide range of literature while teaching reading/vocabulary and comprehension strategies.

Teachers can also provide focused practice in reading in every assignment given, building readers' skills over the course of study through the use of carefully constructed set of reading guides.

III. CONCLUSION

The need for teaching reading across the curriculum cannot be under emphasized. It is effective reading that opens the windows of information to individuals and learners in the various content areas.

Teaching reading across the curriculum assists learners in good vocabulary knowledge development and intelligent sharing among one another. Learners are also able to explore and exploit texts and materials to their own advantage in the varied content areas. In this age of Information and Communication Technology, teaching Reading across the curriculum is very crucial for integrative and complementary as well as wholesome and meaningful learning.

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