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The Challenges of Implementing Best Practices: Implications for Teachers and Teacher Education

One of the most challenging aspects of teacher education is translating theory and research into practice for emerging teachers. As teacher educators, we are responsible to stay abreast of research and articulate how to implement interventions and strategies within the classroom. This session will review how research intended to bring best practices to special education classrooms revealed significant gaps in both knowledge and practical experience in teacher education programs.

The study was undertaken to investigate a specific shared reading intervention, dialogic reading, for the purposes of addressing the unique needs of Deaf and Hard of Hearing students (hereafter DHH) in regards to language and literacy. These children frequently have delayed language and little experience with books because they do not share a common language with their hearing parents. However, there is little research concerning language and literacy development in the DHH classroom and equally little discussion of teacher responsibilities to address these issues. This study investigated the implementation of dialogic reading, which aims to engage students in active discussion and retellings of stories, using American Sign Language. Because dialogic reading research with language delayed, hearing preschool students resulted in significant improvement of language skill (Whitehurst, Arnold, et al., 1994; Whitehurst, et al., 1999), it was a logical candidate for implementation with DHH students.

A hybrid of case study and design-based research methods was used to investigate the implementation of dialogic reading with four elementary teachers of DHH students. This study was undertaken collaboratively with teachers in order to overcome obstacles that might interfere with implementation and sustainability, to make adjustments to alleviate such problems as they arose during implementation, and to identify necessary adaptations for their student population.

Findings indicate that the teachers were hindered in implementing dialogic reading, first by a lack of knowledge and then subsequently by the difficulties of implementation. Teachers lacked knowledge in the topics of best practices for reading, the benefits of reading to students, and the importance of language competence for literacy development. Specifically, teachers were not regularly engaged in reading to students and admitted they did not know how to address language delays within the classroom. The difficulties of implementation included those identified in previous research: teacher time for small groups, a difference in philosophy of teaching and learning, and teacher effort (Lonigan & Whitehurst, 1998). In addition, teachers felt additional adaptations for their students competed with their professional commitment to other curricular areas.

Implications of this research include relying more heavily on the cyclical process of research in classrooms and supervision of student teachers to inform curriculum decision making within teacher education programs. Future research needs to investigate implementation issues for the purposes of sustainability, and teacher education programs—for pre- and in-service teachers—need to prepare teachers for the multifaceted, complex nature of instruction.

Impediments to Implementation:	
<p>Time for Small Groups</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grouping students • Planning and coordinating simultaneous activities • Communicating with staff 	<p>Teacher Effort</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitating and maintaining conversations • Simultaneously supporting student participation and monitoring behavior
<p>Teaching Philosophy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fostering primary language development vs. fostering literacy development • Recognizing different purposes for reading: reading books <i>to</i> students, guided instruction <i>with</i> students, independent reading <i>by</i> students • Responsibility to curriculum vs. to individual needs 	<p>Adaptations for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Students</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Modeling conversation and turn-taking skills • Visual attention needs: seating arrangements, pre-reading book, holding book • Bilingual support: comparisons between American Sign Language and English print

Dialogic Reading

<i>Teacher Communications</i>	<i>Examples</i>
Prompt	
Completion ask student to complete a phrase	“Corduroy lost a _____.”
Recall ask child to remember details	“Do you remember what happened with the security guard?”
Open-Ended encourage to discuss story ideas and use new words, “How...? Tell me... What happened...”	“What happens when Corduroy looks for his button?”
Wh-Word Questions <i>Who, what, when, where, which</i>	“Who found Corduroy in the bed?” “When did Corduroy look for his button?” “Which toy does the girl want?”
Distancing Connect something in book to child’s life	“What kind of toys do you like?”
Evaluate Provide gentle correction to student misinformation	“That is not an elevator. It’s called an escalator.”
Expand Provide further information	“People live in many types of housing. Lisa lives in an apartment building with many floors.”
Repeat Prompt child to repeat correct response.	(Discussion of reasons why Lisa’s mom does not let her buy Corduroy). “Tell me again why Lisa’s mom didn’t want to buy Corduroy.”

Pearson Early Learning, 2006

Examples from: Freeman, D. (1968). *Corduroy*. New York: Viking Press.

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