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Best practices in reading instruction

Abstract

This paper is a review of literature pertaining to the best practices in reading instruction. There are many methods and approaches to the teaching of reading not only in the curriculum, but in the instructional procedures as well. This paper studies the changes that have occurred in reading curricula, as well as in the methods of instruction. Thirdly, this paper provides the reader with statistics that provide a factual basis for the support of the many instructional approaches. Finally, this paper will give the reader a conclusion that provides recommendations as to how to teach reading using the best practices in reading instruction.

Best Practices in Reading Instruction

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By

Becky Jean Jones

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Abstract

This paper is a review of literature pertaining to the best practices in reading instruction. There are many methods and approaches to the teaching of reading not only in the curriculum, but in the instructional procedures as well. This paper studies the changes that have occurred in reading curricula, as well as, in the methods of instruction. Thirdly, this paper provides the reader with statistics that provide a factual basis for the support of the many instructional approaches. Finally, this paper will give the reader a conclusion that provides recommendations as to how to teach reading using the best practices in reading instruction.

Introduction

The best method of teaching reading has been a topic of discussion in education circles for several years. The pendulum continues to swing between traditional methods of instruction, and the best practice methods of instruction. For those of us that practice in the classroom each day this swing only gets more frustrating as the years pass. One minute it seems schools are jockeying for Whole Language, only the following year to turn around and criticize it saying it isn't producing the desired outcomes. Thus leads educators with the need to discover for themselves which curricula and methods are best for reading instruction.

Definitions of Terms

First, one must define traditional methods of instruction. Traditional methods of instruction would refer to the use of basal readers, isolated phonics instruction, and reading groups based on ability. In thinking back to this researcher's own experiences with learning to read, the use of the basal readers was prevalent, and there were usually two or three different sets in order to section students into different groups. This method could also be characterized as being on one end of "The Continuum", as described by Constance Weaver. She described this traditional approach as the "Transmission Model". In the "Transmission Model, the learner passively and often begrudgingly practices skills, memorizes facts, and accumulates information." (Weaver, n.d.) The curriculum on this end of the Transmission Model is divided into subjects, skills, and facts. Language and literacy are taught as the mastery of these isolated skills.

The learners in each classroom are all instructed in the same manner through whole group instruction. There is little room in this type of instruction for any individualized instruction. The curriculum at this end of the Continuum is "divided into subjects and subjects into skills and facts." (Weaver, n.d.) This curriculum is also based on what states, school administration or some other outside member determines needs to be taught. The teacher in the traditional classroom uses lecture methods as a means of teaching the lesson and gives assignments. "Students in traditional classrooms are introduced to isolated words out of meaningful context, and they read words from charts with no word identification strategies or search for meaning" (Carson, 1999).

The definition of best practice instruction would best be characterized as allowing students to experience reading authentically. The students in best practice classrooms are given individualized instruction that meets the needs of each student. In "The Continuum, this method would be characterized as the "transactional model" (Weaver, n.d.). This model allows the learner to become actively involved and often enthusiastically engages in complex language and reasoning processes and the construction of complex concepts. The "curriculum is characterized by the students participating in learning experiences that lifelong learners engage in outside of school. It is also integrated around topics or themes with an emphasis on developing language and literacy skills across the curriculum" (Weaver, n.d.). The teacher in these classrooms assumes the role as the mentor or facilitator, and there is a common ground between the teacher and the student as to what the curriculum entails. In other words, "there is a shared responsibility for the curricular decisions" (Weaver, n.d.).

This leads to the big question, what is the best method for reading instruction?

This paper's goal is to examine the traditional and contemporary curricula, as well as, the methods of reading instruction. How can educators find a balance in their curriculum that produces the desired results?

Methodology

In writing this paper, this researcher hopes to discover which curriculums and methods are best for the teaching of reading.

Reading scores have become very important to most school systems, as well as, the state pursuing an increase in achievement scores for reading. The school system in which this researcher works is not immune to this pursuit. For many years, the debate has raged over how best to teach reading, and thus has resulted in this debate being dubbed "The Reading Wars." In writing this paper, this researcher hopes to discover which curriculums and methods are best for the teaching of reading.

Identifying relevant information was important to this researcher. First, the researcher began searching for information that focused on the "traditional" reading curriculum. Basal texts are a main area of focus, since these are most closely associated with traditional curriculums. The next area of focus for traditional curriculums was phonics. In searching for articles that related to basal texts and phonics, this researcher found the subject of phonics to be most controversial. There were many articles for and against the teaching of phonics, as well as, two differing approaches to best teach phonics.

The next task was to locate sources that pertained to contemporary instruction in reading curriculums. In best practice instruction, this researcher focused on whole

language, guided reading, literature circles, as well as, several other areas. Interestingly enough, this researcher even came across an article involving a teacher's documented journey through the reading wars. This article was of interest to the researcher since this teacher had moved from traditional instruction to a more contemporary instruction, and finally into a balanced approach to the teaching of reading. This article was a first hand account of how this teacher viewed student learning in the classroom.

Finally, the research for curriculum led into methods of instruction. The curriculum of any reading program is important, but so are the methods that an instructor uses. In any curriculum, there has to be a presentation method. The curriculum and methods of instruction go hand in hand. However, which methods of reading instruction be it traditional or best practice produce the desired results that both school districts and states are looking for in their reading programs.

As the reading of articles, books, and Internet sites was completed, various practices began to repeat as far as the need for their use in the classroom. This repeating in the research caused this researcher to begin to look at the curriculum and instruction of reading as a possible balanced approach between traditional and contemporary practices.

The types of references varied from journal articles, Internet web sites, books, as well as, various Internet search engines. This researcher then studied these sources and searched for validity. After sources were critiqued, the researcher then began sorting the articles into the different areas for the focus of the paper. The information that is located in the rest of this paper is a result of the culminating research on the search for the "best practices" in reading instruction.

Analysis and Discussion

Even though traditional instruction and best practice instruction differ greatly, they both have a curriculum in which to guide instruction. The traditional curriculum involves the use of basal texts and isolated phonics instruction. Let's look at each of the various aspects of the curriculum separately, starting with the basal texts.

Basal Texts

Basal texts are "commercially-produced series of grade-specific anthologies which have been developed to facilitate reading instruction" (Crawford, 1997). The use of basals in the instruction of reading has been used for many years. The basal texts grew out of concern that teachers did not have enough formal training in order to teach reading effectively. Basal texts allowed teachers to "implement a system rather than create innovative curriculum on their own" (Crawford, 1997). These texts focused on a selective set of skills and each lesson was given to the teacher in an efficient outline. The teacher did not have to think about how they were going to teach reading that day. Everything needed was supplied in their basal texts. The basal program expanded in the 1920s and led to publishing houses being the creators of the curriculum. This led to basal readers being given acceptance by almost every school in America. "Ninety-eight percent of the participating teachers in a Harvard Report on Reading indicated that basal use was almost universal" (Crawford, 1997). "The reading pendulum hung nearly motionless from about 1930 to the mid-1950s" (Graves & Dykstra, 1997). Teachers across the country were using the basals as their method of teaching reading. However, in 1955 the basal method of reading was "attacked with a vengeance, with Rudolf

Flesch's book *Why Johnny Can't Read*" (Graves & Dykstra, 1997). This book suddenly was in high demand with teachers and school administrators alike questioning the basal approach to reading. Even with this newly published book, many teachers continued to use basal textbooks and regarded them as an important component of their curricula.

In 1992, another survey was completed on the use of basal readers in the curriculum by the National Assessment of Educational Progress; their "findings indicated that eighty-five percent of participating teachers continue to use basals in their reading instruction" (Crawford, 1997). However, with numbers declining from ninety-eight percent of the schools to eighty-five percent, the basal series publishers began producing texts that allowed for more teacher choice. These texts claimed to allow a teacher the ability to choose from different literature. However, when looking at a basal series teacher's manual, one would find that it still guides the teacher through various steps and in order to create the best outcome for the students the program should be implemented as the manual suggests. There are researchers who would refer to the basal as "value-free educational tools, instructional materials that can be used to make teaching easier and learning more efficient" (Crawford, 1997). Basal publishers viewed their texts as "time-saving devices, which teachers can use at their own discretion, accepting or rejecting each idea that is presented with in the commercially-produced lesson plans. While student anthologies were viewed as attractive and practical vehicles for bringing quality literature into children's lives" (Crawford, 1997).

Basal texts teach reading directly. These texts are "encoded with the authority to control both the content and pedagogy of reading instruction" (Crawford, 1997). According to many, the basal series takes away the control that teachers have to be

present the students with creative material. "Basal pedagogy is incompatible with child-centered developmentally-appropriate instruction" (Crawford, 1997). The teaching profession is too valuable to turn all that teachers have to give their students in a prepackaged curriculum. This prepackaged curriculum when chosen by a school system "commits that school system to the overall goals of that program" (Durkin, 1983). This brings up the question if basal series are so constraining, then why is the use of basals so wide spread? According to Durkin (1983), "The human trait know as habit is to blame, along with the risks of change."

Phonics Instruction

The other major focus of any reading curriculum has been phonics. Phonics is the part of the curriculum that utilizes the twenty-six letters of the alphabet to symbolized forty-four sounds in the English language. The debate over the explicit use of phonics has brewed for many years. The term phonics has "come to be associated with direct explicit instruction based on a strictly sequenced curriculum" (Stahl, 1992).

Children who grew up during the early years of phonics instruction often speak about the many hours they spent in phonics instruction each week. "Phonics was characterized as an important and time-consuming subject with its own curriculum" (Zemelman, Daniel, & Hyde, 1998). Students were asked to repeat what the teacher pronounces. There was little use of the letter sounds in context or concern for student choice and many believe was simply boring for the students. The phonics curriculum was also envisioned to involve the use of endless worksheets and skill books, and that one must not use this instruction in context. However, there are others that view phonics as the instruction that saves many struggling readers.

Phonics is not the "dirty word" that some people envision. "Phonics merely refers to various approaches designed to teach children about the orthographic code of language and the relationships of spelling patterns to sound patterns" (Stahl, 1992). Approaches to phonics instruction can either be through direct instruction or through reading in literature. There is no written rule that phonics instruction must use worksheets, or groups of students reciting the sounds, or even that it be taught in isolation.

Types of Phonics Instruction

There were also other issues associated with phonics instruction. There are two differing curriculum approaches to the teaching of phonics known as implicit and explicit.

Explicit Phonics Instruction

Explicit phonics involves the students learning the letters and their sounds. This curriculum would involve giving the student various graphemes and teaching them the sounds that each of these graphemes make. Once the letter sound is taught the students are then shown phonograms such as er, ir ur, wor, and ear. During this teaching there may also be the use of controlled vocabulary books that involve using words the students know.

In a study by Ball and Blachman (1991), "Seven weeks of explicit phonics instruction in phonemic awareness combined with explicit instruction in letter-sound correspondences for kindergarten children was more effective than instruction in letter-sound correspondence alone" (I Can Read). The explicit type of instruction has also been found to be more beneficial for at-risk students. In *Becoming a Nation of Readers* (1995), the national Commission on Education reviewed the research on reading and

concluded "Classroom research shows that, on average, children who are taught phonics get off to a better start in learning to read than children who are not taught phonics. This advantage is most apparent on tests of word identification, though children in programs which phonics gets a heavy stress also do better on tests of sentence and story comprehension, particularly in the early grades" (I Can Read).

Implicit Phonics Instruction

Implicit reading instruction is used most commonly with the word analytic. "Implicit instruction signifies the analysis, or breaking down of the whole word into parts" (Hempenstall, 2002). In implicit instruction, students are to gain insight to words through the information from the words structure. However, the implicit method involves a hurdle for some teachers, this type of curriculum usually only works well for students that already have a firm grasp of phonemic awareness.

After years of teachers using basal texts as their curriculum and teaching phonics, it seemed that suddenly that way of teaching was being abandoned. The curriculum or term of whole language had arrived. This of course became the "new" and "better" method of teaching students to read. Oddly enough however, the whole language curriculum is not a "new" method.

Whole Language

Whole language arrived in the mid 1920s, although the term "whole language" had not been used. It was "originally called the whole word method" (Arizona Parents for Traditional Education, 1997). This method was given even more prominence when John Dewey, a philosopher and professor of psychology at the University of Chicago began the "New Education, or Progressive Education movement in America" (Arizona

Parents for Traditional Education, 1997). Thus, led to the University of Chicago teaching this method to all of its teachers.

However, there was some scrutiny to the whole word method in the light of World War I. Many of the men that were going to join the military were tested and they were finding that they were having trouble reading. This failure was seen as a failure of the progressive methods of instruction. By the 1950s, this method of whole word instruction was still the dominant form used.

The term "Whole Language was coined by Dr. Kenneth Goodman of the University of Arizona in the early 1980s" (Arizona Parents for Traditional Education, 1997). This curriculum became a philosophy instead of just a method or a curriculum. Teachers everywhere began to jump on the bandwagon and the great debate began.

The whole language curriculum involves teaching students to read through text. This curriculum believes that language is a natural meaning-oriented process, thus language would be best taught through authentic reading and writing situations. Whole language programs allow for students to learn reading in a language rich atmosphere. Students in whole language classrooms, read books, talk about books, write and rewrite. This type of curriculum did not mean that the students were not learning phonics. Instead, of learning phonics through drill and practice, whole language phonics curriculum comes through literature. "Goodman as well as many other teachers believe that students don't read word for word, but they construct the meaning of words through text." (Arizona Parents for Traditional Education, 1997). Thus, the whole language curriculum was born.

Instructional Methods

Reading curriculums are a crucial part of reading, however, so are the methods of instruction. There are two methods of instruction that are the focus of this paper. One is the traditional method of instruction, which involves the use of whole class instruction, round robin reading, using only textbooks with no student choice, ability grouping, and the teaching of skills in isolation. Then, there are the best practice methods of instruction that involve, whole language, literature circles, reading workshops, and student choice in their reading.

Traditional Instructional Methods

In traditional classrooms, one would see students reading in basal textbooks in groups that are arranged according to ability. These ability groups were often given names such as, "Bluebirds, Sparrows, and the Buzzards, but even as first graders, we could always crack the code that camouflaged the winners and the losers groups." (Zemelman, Daniels, and Hyde, 1998). While at these reading groups, the main activity was to engage in "round-robin" reading. Round-robin reading is when the students sit in a circle and they read aloud. Many students often dreaded this time, and often felt embarrassed when it became their turn to read. This type of reading also led to students paying more attention to the passage that they were going to read next rather than the strategies or the underlying meaning they were supposed to be constructing. Basal textbooks were used and "provided for synthetically controlled vocabulary and complexity." (Zemelman, Daniels, and Hyde, 1998). Children were allowed to read books of their choice at home.

Isolated phonics instruction was also the focus in a traditional classroom. Students spent time doing worksheets and working in books that didn't correlate with their reading. Phonics was a separate activity that took place at a particular time of day and this time didn't necessarily coordinate with the reading period. However, studies have found that "Phonics instruction produces significant benefits for children from kindergarten through sixth grade and for children having difficulty learning to read" (National Reading Panel). The systematic approach to teaching phonics is teacher directed. This approach is based "on logical analysis of the skills required and their sequence" (Hempenstall, 2002). This method of instruction must involve practice of skills that does sometimes involve isolated practice. However, incidental practice allows for the instruction to shift from the teacher to the student. This type of instruction assumes that "students will develop a self-sustaining natural, unique reading style that integrates the use-of contextual and grapho-phonetic cues, without the possibly disabling influence of systematic instruction" (Hempenstall, 2002).

Best Practice Methods of Instruction

Then, there are the classrooms that subscribe to the best practice of reading instruction. These classrooms are often full of activity and have several qualities that set them apart from the traditional classroom. First, the students are not put into groups according to reading ability. Students in best practice classrooms are grouped according to their interests. These classrooms go beyond the basal series to "include material that is both narrative and expository". (Zemelman, Daniels, and Hyde, 1998). Students in these classrooms are exposed to a wide variety of literature. Once the students have been grouped by reading interest, these classrooms allow for students to go beyond the basic

skill level and look for more comprehension and understanding of the text. "Reading is not phonics, vocabulary, syllabification, or other skills". (BP book) "The main goal of reading instruction must be comprehension: above all we want students to understand what is written on the page." (Zemelman, Daniels, and Hyde, 1998).

Reading instruction in contemporary classrooms also involves the use of literature circles. This method of instruction is focused on the students rather than the teacher. "Literature circles are discussion groups in which children meet regularly to talk about books" (Hill, Johnson, & Noe-Schlick, 1995). These groups of students are based on theme, genre, or author. The students make the choice on which books to read with the teacher's assistance. This opportunity for student choice allows the students to take a greater responsibility for their learning. "Students' interest and quality of thinking become visible, as does their confidence and knowledge of learning" (Hill, Johnson, & Noe-Schlick, 1995). These circles allow students to share their thoughts about their reading, and they can move beyond just comprehension to a greater understanding of the book. Through literature circles students can become the characters in their stories, and experience the joy of reading as if they themselves were part of the story.

In the primary classrooms, students may meet once a week with their teachers; intermediate grades are allowed more fluxation in their meetings. Students in the upper grades may have their meeting times determined by the number of pages they expect their other group members to read, and thus leads to these groups meeting sometimes two to three times each week. During group time, one would see students involved in their huddle discussing their books. They might be discussing the characters in their books, the author's method of writing, or how the book connects to their lives. Students in

literature circles are not just reading their books; they are engaged in their books and their conversations. Literature circles provide students the chance to experience the love of literature.

Students that are allowed choice in their reading curriculums often learn to love and enjoy reading. These classrooms are also focused on a child-centered philosophy. The students often keep reading journals in which they write about how they have made connections to the story, interesting or difficult vocabulary, questions pertaining to the comprehension of the text, and often use skills, such as main idea, sequencing, and finding facts. Students often meet with other students that are reading the same book to discuss conclusions, and share thoughts.

In addition to the group book that they students are reading, the students are often reading a book of their choice, as well as, a class book. "The essence of reading is a transaction between the words of an author and the mind of a reader during which meaning is constructed" (Zemelman, Daniels, and Hyde, 1998).

Secondly, a best practice classroom would be rich in literature. "Access to interesting and informative books is one of the keys to a successful reading program" (Zemelman, Daniels, and Hyde, 1998). Reading does not always come from books. Students are also exposed to poetry, newspapers, and magazines. This variety of literature should also be at various reading levels, so that students not only have a choice of what they want to read, but will also experience success.

However, what happens in the early childhood classrooms in which students are just learning to read. The great debate on phonics instruction has continued for several years. Does phonics instruction belong in the best practice classroom, and if

so, what does it look like? First, phonics instruction does belong in the best practice classroom. However, it has a different look than the typical drill and worksheets of the traditional classroom. Phonics in a contemporary classroom is "not a subject in itself, but rather a tool, and that the goal of teaching word analysis is comprehension" (Zemelman, Daniels, and Hyde, 1998). Phonics instruction "is only one ingredient of a successful reading program." (Zemelman, Daniels, and Hyde, 1998) Phonics instruction does not involve drill and practice and worksheets. Teachers can teach phonics through the use of word walls, personal dictionaries, and word sorts.

One method of instruction in the primary classroom that allows for students to experience reading, as well as, phonics is guided reading. Guided reading is an instructional technique in reading with a leveled set of books so that each reader can read at their own reading level. As the reader becomes more fluent and better in their reading they move through the levels that support their abilities. The teacher works with small groups of who use similar reading processes and focuses on the strategies that these readers need to achieve success. These books not only provide the students success because the books are at their reading level, but there books also provide students with the opportunity to test themselves at new strategies and skills. "The ultimate goal of this program is to help children learn how to use independent reading strategies effectively" (Fountas, and Pinnell, 1996).

However, according to Kathy Short, there are few concerns about the guided reading. First, "there are many ways that teachers can teach reading, but some schools districts become so involved in guided reading that they believe it is the only approach" (Cambourne, 2000). The other concern that arises from this program is the fact that

literature circles are often eliminated. Literature circles as stated above offer students that chance to share and discuss literature that is of interest to them.

All of the previously discussed methods of instruction would primarily fit under best practice reading. The use of basal texts and a teacher directed reading instruction would fit under traditional reading instruction. After, discussing the various types of methods one must then find some statistical data in order to begin to determine which methods are better.

In a Reutzel and Cooter study of ninety-one first grade students in four different classrooms, in which two of the classroom were based on traditional instruction while the other two were based on contemporary instruction, the study found that "children in the contemporary classrooms became significantly better readers at the end of the school year than the children in the traditional skills classrooms" (EdResearch Info). This research of better scoring of students in the contemporary classrooms continued throughout the various grade levels.

This research then caused this researcher to begin to question what is the main focus of these contemporary programs that has led to the success rate? Could it be the fact that students in these programs were interested in the material they were reading because instead of being required to read stories from a basal or a teacher chosen book, these students were allowed to read stories that were of interest to them? Hence if the students were more interested in their reading, they would in turn spend more time reading. If this were true then the students in best practice classrooms tend to read more in volume than those in classrooms with traditional instruction.

In an interesting contrasting study, it was found by Collins (1986) that first graders that spent "approximately seventy percent of their instructional time reading passages and discussing or responding to questions about the reading were ranked as higher achieving" (Allington, 2001) than the students that spent most of their time with traditional skills and drill practices. This evidence suggests that students that spend more time reading generally have a greater improvement in their reading scores versus those that spend more time in the skill method of reading instruction.

Teacher's Role

Thus, leads to the role of the teachers in both the traditional and best practice classrooms. In the traditional classroom, one would observe the teacher as the leader. The teacher would be found at the front of the classroom, and would most likely be teaching to the whole group. The reading instruction would involve the use of basal texts and would not allow for student choice. The teacher would be the sole determiner of what and when the students read in the classroom. The students would be allowed to read books of their choice outside of class time. Reading skills would be taught out of context, and would primarily involve the use of workbooks and worksheets. The students would have little if any time to discover the needed skills for themselves.

In contrast, in the best practice classroom, the teacher would act as the facilitator rather than the leader. The teacher would expose the students to a wide variety of literature based on the students' interest. This of course does not mean that they students would have free rein over their selections of books. Teachers in this type of classroom would search for books on the students' interest level that would also be at the students reading level. Students would still be able to experience success in their reading at the

same time reading books they enjoy. The students however, would have complete choice in the books that they chose to read on their own.

Secondly, the students would participate in reading groups however; these groups would not be based on ability, but rather on interest. These groups would have a wide range of ability levels. This type of grouping not only allows for the students to learn from each other, but also allows for the students to not have the experience or the feeling that they are poorer reader than another student. Reading in the classroom would be of utmost importance, and the skills that they students learn would come through their reading. The teacher also needs to model reading. The teacher should read while the students read. This shows the students that reading is a skill that they will have and use for a lifetime.

Parental Involvement

How can parents become involved in the reading process? In the traditional classroom, parents really didn't have much input into their child's reading instruction. However, it has been proven in many studies over the years that reading at an early age and reading often is of utmost importance in developing of good readers. Parents can assist their students at home by reading to them, with them, and modeling reading by reading themselves. Teachers may also provide opportunities for those parents that what to help in the instruction process at home by showing the parents how to assist their children.

Conclusion and Recommendations

In conclusion, after reading some of the research on the various types of curricula, as well as, the instructional methods, one would have to come to the conclusion that neither the traditional nor the best practice methods are best. The method of instruction that would produce the results that schools and teachers are looking for would be to use a combination of both. However, what does a combination or a balanced approach to reading instruction really mean?

There is not one single method to a balanced reading approach. Balance reading is not a method, but is a "philosophical perspective about what kinds of reading knowledge children should develop and how those kinds of knowledge can be attained" (Fitzgerald, 1999). In other words there is not one exact method that produces the best readers.

If an exact definition of a balanced approach is necessary, it would be defined as "a decision making approach through which the teacher makes thoughtful choices each day about the best way to help each child become a better reader" (Fitzgerald, 1999). Children not only need to have a program that provides an emphasis on literature, but also has the necessary skills component. In other words, some students will require more instruction in phonics than others. It would not be right to make those students that are successful with phonics sit through the lessons that are needed for the students that are lacking in the area. At the same time, it would also not be beneficial for the student that is struggling with the phonics aspect of reading to engage in an instructional program that focuses only on the literature with little or no instruction on phonics.

In order for a teacher to design a reading program that is effective for all students there are several factors that one must consider. First, the program must have goals. The goals of the program should not only support the program, but also allow for each student to be an individual. Thus, the program goals should wide in breadth to encompass the needs of all students in the classroom. The teacher does not drive the curriculum, but determines what each student needs to be a successful reader.

Secondly, the instructional methods of the reading program must be balanced. The instructor in a reading program does not always need to initiate the instruction. An instructor should balance the instruction between student led instruction and teacher led instruction. In student led instruction, the students are in charge of what they are planning to gain from their reading. For instance, if an instructor is using literature circles in his or her room, the students can each take turn being the facilitator, the questioner, the note-taker, the summarizer, and the task keeper. The facilitator would be the student leading the session. The questioner would be the student that is going to be asking and thinking of questions they would like the other students to answer. The summarizer would be keeping track of what is taking place during the reading session, and the task keeper would make certain that everyone is on task and that what is to be accomplished is getting done. This type of instruction may seem like it is a good dream, but in reality it wouldn't work right? Well, this researcher can speak from experience that this form of instruction does work in the classroom. The students are engaged, and excited about meeting with their groups. They enjoy the opportunity to gain other insights into their reading, as well as, sharing their own thoughts.

The last area that an educator should look for in creating a balanced reading program would be to use a variety of literature. This literature not only varies in skill level, but also in genre. The students should be exposed to various types of books, as well as, poems, magazines, and newspapers. This literature should also focus on different strategies that the readers would need to decode the texts. This variety will allow students to read books that are of interest to them, but also allow them to use their reading strategies that are needed in order for them to become successful readers.

Even though it appeared throughout this paper that best practice teaching techniques produced the desired results, the traditional approaches cannot be abandoned. A teacher must use a balance between the two programs in an order to assure that all students in his or her classrooms become successful readers.

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