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# Modifying a Basal Reading Lesson for Use in an Inclusive, Integrated Language Arts Classroom

*Hannah Andrus, Alisha Bissell, Emily Bronzie, and Abby LeMieux are senior-level undergraduate students enrolled in the Elementary Education Program at Central Michigan University. They gratefully acknowledge the assistance of Dr. Helen Gill, their reading professor, in writing this article.*

**T**he purpose of this article is to demonstrate how a basal lesson may be modified to meet the needs of all students in an inclusive, integrated elementary language arts classroom. To help our readers better understand the processes involved, we have included a description of a basal lesson built around a story titled *The Soup Stone*, a summary of the story, an explanation of the four principles that sustain an integrated, literature-based approach to the language arts, and two lesson plans using the Instructional Theory into Practice (ITIP) format. For the experienced teacher, we have also included a shorter, more integrated planning format.

## **Background**

Planning appropriate instruction for reading and language arts classrooms continues to be a challenge for both pre-service and in-service teachers. Although teachers may vary in their beliefs regarding how reading and language arts should be taught, they do share a common goal of wanting what is best for their students. While it is easier to provide one lesson that appears to meet the needs of students, teachers can no longer assume that all students' needs will be met by having the same expectations for everyone. Rather, as classrooms become more inclusive and di-

verse, teachers must increasingly consider the well-being of individual students. For example, Public Law 101-476, a federal law mandating inclusive education, directs that "to the maximum extent appropriate, students with disabilities should be educated with students who do not have a disability ... ." To further compound the problem of trying to meet various needs within the classroom, there are students from diverse cultures whose first language is not English, others who are gifted, and still others with attention-deficit, who are hyperactive, or who are simply turned-off to learning (Hennings, 1997). Thus, as more children with special needs are included in the classroom, it is the teacher's responsibility to provide effective lessons and activities that allow all students to learn.

Through the years, basal readers and the accompanying materials have remained a major tool in reading instruction. Most basals share a common lesson framework called the directed reading activity (DRA) that was developed by Emmett Betts in 1946. Focusing on skill development during the three stages of reading, the DRA consists of four major components including: (a) motivation and background building before reading; (b) guided reading; (c) skill development and practice after reading; and (d) follow-up en-

richment. Because vocabulary within the stories is controlled and skills are presented according to a scope and sequence, students are administered a publisher's test to determine their initial reading ability (high, average, low) and placement within the program. Thus, other than giving the slower students more time, proponents of the basal approach expected all children to read the same material and complete the same workbook exercises.

Furthermore, while the basal teacher's manuals of the 1990s claim to include everything that any classroom teacher will ever need to teach reading, Vacca, Vacca, and Gove (1995) report that overreliance on pictures, dialogue, and short sentences to carry meaning can lead young readers to picture dependence, thus hampering reading acquisition. One answer to these perplexing problems is to use an inclusive, integrative approach when lessons are being planned. To help one implement such an approach, Hennings (1997) provides a description of the four principles that underlie integrated language arts lesson planning.

#### **Four Principles Guiding Integrated Language Arts**

An integrated language arts program is guided by four principles. First, it is an approach that integrates speaking, listening, reading, and writing across the curriculum (Hennings, 1997). Whole language thinking significantly underlies this approach and emphasizes the importance of immersing children in print throughout the classroom environment. Throughout this immersion of print, students' interest, awareness, and knowledge of word usage are heightened as oral language is emphasized. This allows listening, reading, and writing to flow together as well as various subjects. When children interact, oral language opportunities allow children time to practice using language ideas in a social context. Thus, children become literate as they practice speaking, listening, reading, and writing throughout the curriculum.

Second, it is a literature-based program. Literature is used as a medium to develop communication, reading, and understanding of different content areas. As children are given opportunities to experience real books, stories, poems, and articles, interest in reading, writing, listening, and speaking can be heightened. Thus, experiencing real literature extends language experiences while helping students better understand what is happening in their lives and the world around them.

Third, its delivery is community-styled. As a community, students work together to develop speaking, listening, reading, and writing skills. Interaction among large groups, small groups, and pairs of children allows opportunities for students to naturally collaborate with one another. A community-styled language arts approach is especially helpful for special students in the classroom as well as those learning English as a second language. As students work together helping and teaching each other, social skills are heightened and lessons are reinforced.

Finally, instruction is organized in themed units. Creative ongoing blocks of instruction are linked together through an integral thematic unit. As lessons and activities evolve around a central theme, students can easily make connections among content areas. Lessons and activities revolving around a theme reinforce students' understandings of this main idea. Thus, students are given many opportunities to communicate, make connections, and develop various skills while functioning at their own learning pace.

#### **Summary of *The Soup Stone* and Its Basal Lesson Plan**

To help the reader understand the comprehensive nature of a basal lesson and how the basal approach differs from a more holistic approach, we have summarized the lesson plan found in the *Teacher's Edition* (pp. 248-265) for the target story *The Soup Stone* (Arnold & Smith, 1987, pp. 56-67 of *Look Again*).

The basal plan begins with a one-page introduction that includes a summary of the

story, instructional objectives, ways to relate reading to language arts (i.e., story mapping and retelling), enrichment maintenance (seven long vowels and graphemic bases), 15 vocabulary words, and specific materials needed during teaching. The introduction is followed by directions for carrying out four stages of reading. For example, **Stage 1: Preparing for Reading** includes ways to teach phonics and to present and reinforce vocabulary. **Stage 2: Reading for Comprehension** includes directions for developing background, setting purposes, reading and discussing the selection, guiding reading and applying comprehension skills, and discussing and rereading orally. This stage also contains 54 questions to ask students as they read the story. **Stage 3: Teaching Reading Skills** includes directions for teaching phonics, developing comprehension, vocabulary, literature, and language skills. **Stage 4: Follow Up Enrichment** includes directions for relating reading to language arts, a cooking activity (making jello), a science activity (planting vegetable seeds), and further decoding and phonics maintenance.

A summary of the story used in this investigation is as follows. Adapted from the folk tale *Stone Soup*, the story begins with an old man traveling home from a trip. Growing hungry, he stops at a home to ask for a bite to eat. However, the woman of the house refuses his request. The old man tells her that he can make his own soup using a stone and a pot of water. As the story proceeds, different people taste the man's soup and make suggestions to improve it. These suggestions include adding carrots, potatoes, chicken and other ingredients. The story ends with everyone enjoying a hearty bowl of soup.

### Procedures

After being introduced to principles and strategies that promote an effective integrated Language Arts program in an inclusive classroom, we and 32 other students enrolled in *ELE 538: Coordination of Language Arts with Reading* at Central Michigan University were given an assignment to modify the

above basal lesson plan. As we worked in pairs, we incorporated the four principles and used various strategies to meet the instructional needs of students learning English as a second language (ESL), those having learning disabilities (LD), and those having gifted and talented abilities as well as those having average first-grade learning abilities.

We began by considering the vocabulary needs. Recognizing that ESL and LD students may not understand many words in the story, we provided visuals and hands-on experiences so that students could form concrete connections between the target words and the physical objects. We did not control or limit the vocabulary to be learned, but we did set minimum expectations. To do this, we considered the quality and usefulness of the vocabulary rather than having students memorize several sets of words that were at first-grade readability level or were phonetically related.

Next, without decreasing important content, we increased the interactive activities that were directly related to the theme of the lesson. For example, in both plans, students work in small groups to make soup (not jello) and to develop specific skills. We intentionally grouped special needs students with average and above-average ability students so that special needs students were more fully integrated into classroom activities. Next, to sustain enjoyment and interest in the story, we reduced the number of comprehension questions that students would be asked. We audio-taped the story so that individual children could play it over and over if and when they desired. We encouraged children to look at other literature, to write their own recipes, and to perform the story, rather than to complete workbook pages and ditto sheets. We incorporated a variety of authentic ways to assess the performance of students.

Finally, to reaffirm our knowledge of the four holistic principles, we coded our lesson plans. These codes are as follows: B-1 (integrated reading, writing, speaking, and listening), B-2 (literature-based), B-3 (community-styled), and B-4 (unit-organized).

# Lesson Plan #1

By Hannah Andrus and Alisha Bissell

## **Objectives:** Students will:

- create a sequenced story map.
- identify the objects that go in the soup.
- retell the story sequentially
- add three new words to their word banks.

## **Materials Needed:**

- Real or plastic items (or pictures) of potatoes, carrots, bread, chicken
- Velcro board
- Velcro strips
- Sentence strips or poster board cut in strips
- Stone
- Book containing the story *The Soup Stone*
- Crock-pot
- Paper bowls and plastic spoons
- White construction paper
- Head phones (optional)
- Can of soup
- Bowl
- Cane, scarf, and baseball cap
- Water pitcher
- Measuring spoons
- Transparencies and overhead projector

## **Preparation:**

Prepare a Velcro board using poster board and Velcro strips. Have pieces of poster-board available for writing and illustrating new words.

## **Anticipatory Set:**

Write the word “stone” on the board. Showing a stone, ask the students to brainstorm how a stone can be used. Record each suggestion as students make them.

Then say, “Today’s story has a new use for a stone. See if you can find out what is, and tell me whether or not a stone can really be used as it is used within the story.”

## **Instructional Input and Modeling:**

1) Have students look at the first pictures and predict what is happening in the story. Explain that the purposes for reading are to learn new words and to retell the story. (B-1)

2) Pair proficient readers with LD and ESL students. Have the pairs read pages 1-4 to each other. Direct children to list any words that they do not know or cannot say as they read. If the LD and ESL students are not comfortable, they may listen to the story on headphones while following along in the book. (B-1, 3) (While the students read, listen, and list unknown words, circulate about the room and list the students’ unknown words on an overhead transparency.)

3) Ask the students what the story is about so far. Then pour a can of soup into a bowl. Write “soup” on the Velcro board. Have everyone say the word. (B-1)

4) Have the paired students finish reading the story. Then, as a whole group, discuss the story and the unknown words that you now display using an overhead projector. (B-1, 3)

5) After deciding which words are important, have students develop vocabulary cards for their word bank by writing each word on one side and drawing a picture on the other side. (B-1,2)

6) Have students create a circular story map to guide their retelling of the story as the teacher reads the significant text event by event. (B-1, 2)

### **Guided Practice:**

7) Have volunteers select available props to act out the story (e. g., cane for man; scarf for woman; ponytail for girl; baseball cap for boy; pot, spoon, water, stone, potatoes, carrots, bread loaf, and a chicken) in sequence. (B-2, 3)

8) Then using their story maps, have the volunteers retell the story. (B-1, 3)

9) After oral retelling, prepare students for writing the story in their own words. Begin by asking a volunteer to write the words "Stone Soup" on a large sheet of newsprint. Discuss again whether stones can be used to make soup in real life. Then pose the question "Why do you think the man put a stone in the soup pot?"(B-1)

10) Call on students to retell the story sentence by sentence using their story maps. Write these sentences on the newsprint. (B-1, 3)

11) Then make soup. Have students measure the ingredients. After it is done, serve everyone and enjoy the soup. (B-2, 3, 4)

### **Closure**

12) Have students tell why the man called the soup "stone soup" and match the vocabulary words with the pictures on the Velcro board. (B-1)

## **Lesson Plan #2**

By Emily Bronzie and Abby LeMieux

### **Objectives:**

Students will

- demonstrate oral and written knowledge of vocabulary words and their definitions
- measure ingredients and cooperatively work together to make soup
- work in teams (cooperation)
- practice and develop reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills

### **Materials:**

- Crock-pot
- Ingredients to make soup (i.e., vegetables, salt and spices, chicken, water, etc.)
- Measuring cups and spoons
- Cook books (see *Possible Sources*)
- Popular magazines having recipes
- Poetry books containing poems about soup (see *Possible Sources*)
- Story books about soup (see *Possible Sources*)
- Stones
- *Martha Stewart Living* VCR-tape
- VCR and television
- Three to four learning centers (depending on available space)
- Head phones
- Audio cassette tape of *Soup Stone*
- Story books with *Soup Stone* stories

- Story books and different story versions of original folk tale *Stone Soup*
- Dictionaries or Pictionary
- Word wall with picture symbols of food ingredients (particularly soup ingredients)
- Paper (for recipe writings)
- Big Book containing the *Stone Soup* story.

### **Possible Sources:**

#### ***Cook Books:***

Coyle, Rena. *My First Cookbook*. Illus. Workman paper, 1985.

Supraner, Robyn. *Quick and Easy Cookbook*. Illus. by Renzo Barto. Troll, 1981.

#### ***Story Books:***

DiSalvo-Ryan, DyAnn. *Uncle Willie and the Soup Kitchen*. Illus. by author. Morrow, 1991.

Ehlert, Lois. *Eating the Alphabet: Fruits and Vegetables from A to Z*. Illus. by author. Harcourt, 1989.

Shelby, Anne. *Potluck*. Illus. by Irene Trivas. Orchard, 1991.

Temple, Frances. *Tiger Soup: An Anansi Story from Jamaica*. Illus. by author. Orchard, 1994.

#### ***Folklore:***

Stewig, John Warren. *Stone Soup*. Illus. by Margot Tomes. Holiday House, 1991.

#### ***Poetry Books:***

Goldstein, Bobbye S., ed. *What is on the Menu?* Illus. by Chris L. Demarest. Viking, 1992.

### **Anticipatory Set:**

On a table in the classroom, display various objects and ingredients that will be used to make soup (i.e., carrots, chicken, potatoes, a pot, measuring cups, water, spices, etc.).

1) Discuss each object and its use. (B-1, 3)

2) Develop a vocabulary list of the various objects upon the table by writing its name and drawing a picture of the word. (B-4)

### **Instructional Input:**

3) Introduce cook books with recipes for soup and poems about cooking. Encourage students to look at and read the different books and popular magazines during free times. (B-2,3)

4) Show several stones. As the students handle them, ask if stones are used to make soup, and ask if people eat stones. (Reinforce the fact that stones are inedible and that real soup is not made with stones.) (B-1,3,4)

5) To help students understand how soup is made, have them watch a short clip of *Martha Stewart Living* as she prepares soup. (B-1,3,4)

### **Guided Monitored Practice #1:** Math (B-4)

Direct the class in making soup in a crock-pot. Form small, cross-ability groups to measure different ingredients and add the ingredients to the pot. Work with ESL students measuring and naming each ingredient. (B-3,4)

### **Guided Monitored Practice #2:** Integrated Language Arts (B-1,2,3)

1) Introduce the story *Soup Stone* by first asking the question "Should we put stones in our soup? Why might someone want to make stone soup?" Conduct a class discussion regarding the students' predictions. Tell students "We will be reading a story today about a man who makes stone soup." (B-3)

2) Direct the students attention to the learning centers in the room. All students will participating in two of the centers. Give directions for participating in the centers. Be sure to indicate the purpose of each learning-center.(listening, writing, pre-reading, vocabulary) and explain how the students will proceed from one center to another.

**Learning Centers for Session 1:**

- **Listening Area with Tapes:** (*Students with general and gifted learning abilities*)

Students with general learning abilities will use head-phones to listen to the story as they follow it in print. Gifted students will have the option of reading other higher level versions of the story or writing their own version of the story. (B-1)

- **Writing Area:** (*Students learning English as a second language*)

ESL students will practice writing vocabulary words by making a list of ingredients for their own recipe. A parent or an instructional aide will assist them as they refer to a word wall containing possible items and their pictures. (B-1)

- **Pre-reading / Prediction / Discussion Area:** (*Students with learning disabilities*)

A teacher or aide will direct a pre-reading prediction activity and will help these students to read and discuss the story. Then he or she will guide the students as they write and illustrate the new words to be learned.

**Learning Centers for Session 2:**

- **Listening Area with Tapes:** (*Children with learning disabilities*)

Students will listen to the story using head-phones and follow along in books. (B-1)

- **Writing Area:** (*Students with general and gifted learning abilities*)

Students will create a recipe of their own using vocabulary words. Pictionary will also be available to refer to spellings of other words. (B-1)

Gifted students will have the option of writing their own version of *Soup Stone*.

- **Review Area:** (*ESL Students*)

A teacher or an aide will help these students to practice the pronunciation and meanings of the vocabulary words. (B-1)

**Check for Understanding:**

The teacher or aide will walk around the room monitoring and making sure that the students are on task during both the soup-making activity and integrated language arts activities.

**Closure:**

As a whole class, review the sequence of the story. Using a Big Book version of *Stone Soup*, read the story, and ask the students to tell whether the sequence of events is the same or different as those in *The Soup Stone*. (B-2,3)

**Independent Practice:**

Have children get into groups and act out the story *Soup Stone*. (B-1,3)

**Evaluation:**

The teacher will check each child's vocabulary and sequence of story event assignments and will also observe students working together to be sure that they successfully work in pairs and groups. The teacher will watch to see that the students measure ingredients successfully.

**Possible Extensions:**

- Play "Hot Potato"
- Look at and read poetry books and story books



## Discussion

Our lesson plans integrated both subject content and social relationships. Social skills will develop as students engage in small- and whole-group activities throughout the lesson. Students are engaged in reading, writing, speaking, listening, and learning as they work together. To learn English, ESL students complete basic speaking, listening, and writing activities that emphasize repetition of vocabulary words used in the story. Students with learning disabilities are given special assistance, simple directions, more time, and a variety of other learning strategies that actively promote success. Gifted and talented students are given more activity options. For example, they have opportunity to read a more advanced version of *Stone Soup* and to write their own versions of the story.

Throughout both lesson plans students have opportunities to listen to, read, and respond to literature. Focus is not placed on use of text books and completion of discrete workbook exercises. Rather, students develop skills through reading real cook books, poetry books, and different versions of *Stone Soup*. Literature experiences are applied through discussion, writing, and dramatizing scenes from the story.

Throughout the lesson and story, students and teachers interact and communicate in a variety of ways. For instance, all students have opportunities to work in pairs and small groups as well as alone. ESL and LD students receive help from peers as well as adults. At other times, the class comes together as a whole to predict future events, to discuss parts of the story, to perform the story using props, and to draw circular story maps.

In both plans, students are participating in a general, early primary theme of sharing, helping others, and working together. This theme is emphasized within *Soup Stone* and throughout the lesson. Social skills are practiced while making soup, in cooperating with one another in group centers, in turning the story into a play, and in presenting the play. Math and art are also integrated into both plans as children are given opportunities to

measure soup ingredients and to draw pictures of the vocabulary words. Using a hands-on approach such as the one used in either plan encourages student ownership of learning.

## Implications for the Classroom

Basal lesson plans may be modified to meet special needs of children as well as the needs of students at grade level because the needs of average students can also be missed within basal lessons. For example, in this basal lesson, we discovered that:

1. Skills are taught out of context.
2. Pronunciation of vocabulary words is taught, but not the meaning of the word.
3. Children's delight in the story is suppressed by an over abundance of questions.
4. Children are expected to produce knowledge for which they had not been appropriately prepared. For example, in the reinforcing vocabulary section of the basal lesson, students are to pronounce words they have not been prepared to say.

Therefore, we suggest that teachers should consider the four underlying principles of integrated language arts and a more holistic approach as they modify or plan lessons for the inclusive classroom.

We also suggest that experienced teachers consider the shorter lesson format design that Hennings (1997) provides in her instructor's resource manual. This design includes six components. **First, in the read-aloud component**, after setting a purpose for listening for the students, the teacher reads the story to the class. Background music or sounds may accompany this reading. **Second, in the brainstorming component**, students are asked to respond to the purpose while the teacher records their comments on chart paper or transparency. As difficult words are given, a student acting as a Dictionary Sleuth checks the spelling or meaning. **Third, in the shared writing component**, students are guided to compose a short poem or paragraph that focuses on the phonics or grammar skills that the teacher has selected. Capital letters and punctuation are added as students suggest them. **Fourth, in the shared revision**

**component**, students are guided to edit and revise their final product by adding, changing, and deleting to produce a meaningful piece. **Fifth, in the choral speaking component**, a student volunteer leads the class in reading the piece that they have created. **Sixth, in the collaborative learning component**, the teacher asks the students to form three- or four-person teams to identify the language learnings that they have just experienced. Each team then prints their learnings on chart paper and posts them to share with the class. Once all groups have shared, the whole class synthesizes what has been learned. Finally, in pairs, students read the initial story to each other.

### Conclusions

In reflecting upon this experience, we became aware that it is acceptable for teachers to have different beliefs about instructional planning and to use different teaching strategies. We also came to the realization that all teachers have similar aspirations for their students and themselves and that all of us must continue to work toward the common goal of meeting the needs of all students. It is our responsibility as teachers to provide effective, stimulating, and appropriate lessons to heighten our assigned students' educational growth. At the same time, we realize that this may not be an easy task.

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