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FREELAND MIDDLE SCHOOL

Reading Center Motivates Middle School Students

by Norine Smith

The Freeland Middle Schools' reading center which is used as a core for the developmental and laboratory reading programs for grades five through eight, has enlarged its services and materials output during the nine years of existence. The center, with the reading consultant, serves the staff of the regularly scheduled reading classes as well as the individual student and small groups of students who have the opportunity to work in a laboratory atmosphere. It serves all the grades five through eight in both ways. Hence, at Freeland, the program of the reading center and laboratory instruction has been blended for more lasting results.

The center also offers a reading testing service both grade and individual. Consequently, the whole staff can be aware of each individual student's needs. The center contains all the reading texts and materials available so that the classroom reading teachers can readily select appropriate level materials for the students. The classroom teacher also helps suggest and select new current materials. Many upper content area reading teachers are really using the centers services for the good of their students.

The reading program in the fifth and sixth grades is based on both co-basal reading texts and multi books and materials. The many reading texts, books and materials stress different skills, needs, and interests. A modified individual reading program is planned for each student. Nearly all the materials are placed in the reading center for teachers to choose and share as their needs for the students arise. This makes it possible for our students to

have many reading experiences in a year's time. Our basic philosophy is that reading is improved by reading.

The reading program in the seventh and eighth grades has been doubled due to the recognized value and need of the regularly scheduled reading classes. This year three teachers, along with the consultant, work with the students in small group situations during two different sessions each day. Each seventh and eighth grade student now has specialized reading every other day each week for a semester. The middle school is experiencing a considerable increase in enrollment so this was the year to take a step forward.

The reading program is based on the premise that each student is deserving of continuous reading instruction at the appropriate level of reading. The major goals are as follows: To see that each student is placed in the right level reading book in all reading situations including the content areas of reading if possible, to teach for good student experiences so that each student will have a feeling of success in the regular classroom. It is recognized that a good self image becomes much more necessary during the middle school years. Individualized reading instruction has been much emphasized because of the peer group influence which is most intense at this time.

The center consultant and the fifteen classroom reading teachers all believe that reading is thinking so the primary comprehension skills taught involve reasoning, interpretation, value judging and critical reading. The students are provided with the opportunity to review, master, or power learn

the sequential and specific reading skills that incorporate the process of reading. Specialized word attack skills are emphasized along with teaching special subject matter vocabularies. Provisions are made for teaching the reading study skills which are necessary for reading in the content area subjects. Efficient reading which involves rate and comprehension is given practice. Many kinds of specific skill programs aid the student individually in our school program.

The center has instruments and other materials to motivate and focus it on learning. Instruments which have helped to improve both the reading skills and confidence of students are the tape recorder, used for oral interpretation to help build confidence in the regular classroom, the tachistoflashers, used for memory and vocabu-

lary word and phrase meaning, the language master, for clear pronunciation, word, phrase, and sentence recognition, the opaque projector, for use in giving oral article reviews, the typewriters, used for zeroing in on words and phrases, many games for individual and group use and rate instruments for the older students.

Because the reading center is used for the total developmental reading program which includes the specialized lab sessions, all the students seem to have a very healthy and enthusiastic attitude towards reading for both improvement, special needs and enjoyment. This has been made possible because of the cooperation and dedication of all the classroom reading teachers.

(Norine Smith is Reading Director at the Freeland Community Schools, Freeland, MI)