

Reading Strategies

Beverly, Li-Chuan Hsiao, Nan-Shi Elementary School

Preface

In May, 2013, I had a chance to attend a two-week training program in Chicago and Indiana along with other ten English teachers and five principals from New Taipei City.

I appreciate the opportunity to be part of the New Taipei City English Teachers Delegation. First, I would like to thank New Taipei City to give me this chance to have this wonderful experience in joining this training program. Second, I would like to thank Taipei



Economic and Cultural Office in Chicago for helping arrange this training program. Third, I would like to show my appreciation to Jay County School Corporation Dr. Timothy Long from Jay County School Corporation

for arranging this two-week training program and visits to schools in Shaumburg, Chicago, Jay county and Northwestern of Shelby County school districts. Finally, I would like to thank the warm welcome from all the school principals, school staff, teachers, and students. Teachers are so willing to share their teaching experiences; students are happy to share what they have learned. I really did have a wonderful time and a great experience.

In the first week, we visited John Murphy School (K-8), Grover Cleveland Elementary School (K-8), Campanelli School, Hoover Math and Science Academy, Addams Junior High School in Schaumburg and Chicago District. The second week, we visited Northwestern of Shelby County, Triton Central Elementary School and Triton Central Junior High School.

During these two weeks, we not only took the training courses, Quantum Learning, SIOP (Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol), and Literary but also observed the educators from the following schools, John Murphy School, Cleveland Elementary, Campanelli School, Adam Junior High School, Triton Central Elementary School, Triton Central Junior High School and Ball State University Experimental Elementary School.

I participated in classroom observation in elementary schools and junior high schools as well. Learning from educators from other country is like opening a new chapter for me. I would like to share my experience and observation with everyone. I will put emphasis on "Reading Strategies."

Reading Strategies

"In primary grades children are learning to read and in upper grades they are reading to learn." During the classroom observation, I noticed that Balanced Literacy Model is widely used by teachers (K-12) in their teaching. Balanced Literacy Model includes two parts: reading and writing. I will focus mainly on reading. Components of reading strategies in Balanced Literacy include the following: Shared reading, Guided reading, Independent reading, Read aloud. Teachers use a lot of teaching strategies and tips to facilitate the reading proficiency.

Shared reading means the students read from a shared text. All eye on the same text. Often this is a big book, chart, poster or a book on screen using a website or documents camera. During Shared Reading, the teacher works with the whole class. Students and the



teacher read aloud and share their thoughts about the text. In this fourth grade class, Ms. James gathered the students around. First she explained the course and language objectives to the students. Both objectives were clearly defined, displayed, and reviewed with the students. Then the students knew what they are going to learn today. Ms. James also wrote down the questions and tasks on a poster and showed it to students. Later, she let the students read independently. After a while, she gathered the students again and asked one of them to read a paragraph to the class. She asked the students to point out the important and difficult words, then, Ms. James explained the confusing words. She asked students to state out the main idea of this article, list details to support the main idea, summarize each paragraph, and also identify clues from the text to find out what the character is like. Every student needs to participate in the discussion. Ms. James will also use graphic organizer and sentence starters to help students to organize their thoughts and ideas.



Guided reading is a bridge between Shared Reading and Independent Reading. The goal of Guided reading is to teach students to independently use reading strategies. The teachers divide students into small groups based on students' needs, interests, experiences, and achievements. During Guided Reading, teachers give students opportunities to read and learn. Teachers ask questions to find the main idea based on the given text. While the students read the paragraph, the teacher will have time to correct their pronunciations and demonstrate proficient reading behaviors and strategies, like solving reading problems, taking notes, and using context to figure out the unknown word. While the teacher is in guided reading group, other students also have tasks to do in their own "stations" or "centers." Usually, teachers arrange different Literacy Center activities on a rotation basis. Students rotating among different centers were required to fill up the worksheets after finishing their tasks. Besides worksheets, there will be hands-on manipulatives and electronic equipment to assist students. In Shultz's 1st and 2nd grade class, Shultz was with the guided reading group. Other students were in their center work. Some students used a CD player to help them listen to themselves, and some students are working on the reading organizer. This frees the teachers for individual instruction and guided



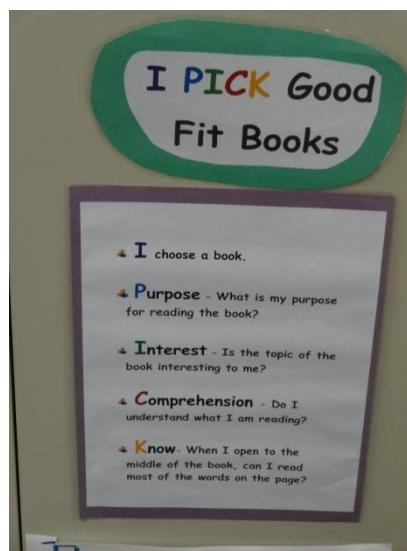
reading. According to the teachers, it will take quite some time to train the students to move from one station to another station. Lower grades might need more time. Once the students know what to do in the stations, the teacher will have time to do the Guided reading in small group.



Independent Reading is more than just reading books. It is extremely important that the material must be at an appropriate level. So the students can comfortably practice by themselves. Teachers have many things to prepare in advance. First, the teacher needs to provide a wide variety of reading materials and familiar books for the students to use within the classroom. Second, the teacher needs to build a friendly environment for reading. In Ms. Kelly's kindergarten class, she arranged the students to do the Daily 5 activities in the stations: read to self, read to friend, listen to reading, work on writing and word work. Ms. Kelly

clearly stated the steps to the students and wrote them down on posters and put them on the wall. She repeatedly addressed those Daily 5 notes and tasks to the students. Thus, while she was in an activity group, other students had things to do and guidelines to follow.

Besides Daily 5 activities, she has an "I PICK" book rule for the students to find a right book to read. "I" stands for I choose a book. "P" means purpose-what is



my purpose to choose the book? The second "I" means interest – Is the topic of the book interesting to me? "C" means comprehension – Do I understand what I am reading? "K" means know – When I open the book to its midsection, can I read most of the words on the

page? It's amazing to see kids move quietly from one station to another and efficiently work on their worksheets and writing work. While I interviewed the teachers, they all agreed that it took a lot of effort training the students.

Read Aloud is a time during the day that enables children to hear the stories and texts they might not be able to read on their own or they might not have ever chosen to read (Routman). The teacher reads aloud books and materials that are at students' listening level but may be above their reading level. Through Read Aloud time, teacher develops students' listening comprehension, vocabulary, and above all, demonstrates fluent reading to students. Teacher asks students to say out loud what they are thinking about when reading, solving



problems, or simply responding to questions posed by teacher or other students. In Mrs. Huffman and Mrs. Marcum's class, they started a day by reading a story. First, they gather the students to do their daily activities in the morning like greetings to others, recording dates of the day, saying the

“Class Pledge”. Then, she began the day by reading a story to the students. Students just sat on the carpet and listened quietly without a copy of the story or material to look at. She periodically stopped to ask students questions about the story and students had to express their thoughts about the questions on a basis of the story. Later on, Mrs. Huffman said “Based on their answers and thoughts to the questions, she can tell whether the students understand the story or not.” The assessment is taking place during the interaction between teachers and students. She also told me that finding an interesting thing to do in the beginning of the class is a wonderful start. Therefore, it's a good idea to begin a day with a book, a riddle, a video, a

picture, or a poster. There are some teaching tips she provided to the students: Phone a friend, turn and talk about your thoughts and reactions to the person next to you. It's an important procedure that students help students to find the answer, teacher plays as a supporter or observer to assist the students to find out the truth. Every morning, when the students get to class, they will automatically pick up a book and choose a comfortable place to read. This is called "The Quiet Reading Time." No one is talking or disturbing others. I believe that it takes a lot of effort to build up the students' reading habit. Mrs. Marcum told me, we sure did spend a month to build up the classroom rules and ask the students to follow. Once the students know what to do next, they make progress in learning.

Classroom Decoration Enhance Reading Ability

I noticed that teachers wrote lots of reading strategy posters and posed them on the wall. Those reading strategy posters help students achieve automaticity for words and develop vocabulary. Both are necessary for fluency and proficient comprehension. The teacher uses instruction in word recognition to introduce, teach, and provide students with the opportunity to practice and apply their knowledge of phonemic awareness, letter-sound relationship, phonics, spelling patterns and words/word parts (Illinois School Board of Education). Some teachers will have their daily activities, this includes asking students to copy down the words from the posters to the worksheets. They will also discuss the meaning of the strategy with your partner,

Reflection

According to the class schedule, most schools spend 100-120 minutes in learning language arts. The Illinois State Board of Education has the Illinois Learning Standards for English language arts. Every school has to follow the standards. Based on the standards, students will have three state tests taken in a year. All the teachers are working so hard and

doing their best to make their students meet those standards. During the classroom observation, I was surprised to see that students are provided with lots of materials, worksheets and well organized activities. Teachers prepare their lesson plans in advance. After talking to a few teachers, I realized that there is a specific time during the week for the teachers to gather around and discuss their lesson plans and exchange ideas with others.

I noticed that many teachers use colors to operate their classes especially in the lower grades. Teacher will tell the students to move from green table to orange table and then to the blue table, while the students work on their center activities. Grouping students at a similar level is a good way to help them to learn. The teacher has to make sure they are practicing at the same pace in their station activity. Students build up fluency and improve their skills.

The types of learning styles for students will affect their learning: visual, auditory, tactile and kinesthetic learners. Every individual student learns differently. As a teacher, it is important to provide students with a wide variety of supplementary learning materials and meaningful activities for the children to learn. Teachers periodically read to the students or have students read to each other. Teachers enhance students' learning by showing pictures, films, written directions, and also by giving students hands-on work to do.

I am thankful for joining this wonderful trip and having the opportunity to observe many teaching techniques from all the teachers.

References

Sosin, C. (2013, July). Balanced Literacy in Schaumburg School Dist. 54. Powerpoint presented at the New Taipei City English Teacher Training Program in Rauch Center, Schaumburg, Chicago, America.