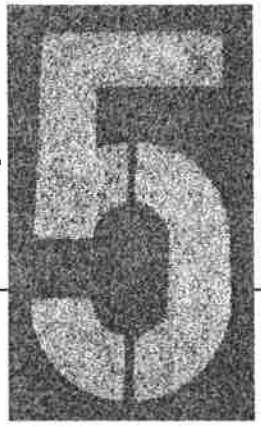

The 5 Components of Reading Workshop:

Preservice teacher learning from literacy practitioners

BY SHARRY SACKOR

During the fall semester of each school term for the past four years, I have taught an Early Childhood reading course at Albany State University. This is a graduate reading course, which was realigned in the fall of 2008 as a reading endorsement course. Initially there were several options for completing the major assignment for the course, one of which was to conduct a reading workshop. The first year an individual student presented one for her fellow classmates. The second year the students asked if they could present the workshop as a group project. I thought that was a good idea and provided them with an audience: pre-service teachers who were enrolled in my content area reading course and my children's literature course.

Since that time, I have made the group presentation of the workshop a requirement. Each year the presentations get better and better. The students have elected to present "The Five Components of Reading" workshop because it is emphasized in their reading endorsement course, which is relatively new to our campus. The National Reading Panel (2000) concludes that the five components (phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, comprehension, and fluency) are essential elements for teaching students to learn to read. This article describes how my students used the panel's conclusions and recommendations from Armbruster, Kehr, & Osborn (2003) to design and present the 2008 workshop –"The Five Components of Reading."

Ten female students were enrolled in the fall 2008 class and eagerly accepted the task of presenting the workshop. One student had ten years of teaching experience and the others had less than five. Two each selected one of the five components and planned the workshop, gathered their materials, and prepared a booklet as a handout. My tasks were to provide the audience and have the room equipped with the appropriate technology – a laptop computer and a projector. The workshop was scheduled for November 21, 2008, at 4:00 p. m. The audience was made up of students in my children's literature course who agreed to extend our fifty minute class to an hour and a half for extra credit. They also agreed to write a reflection of the workshop.

Research Background

In our courses students often get the theory but few opportunities to practice what they learn. Like Jacobson (1998) I believe that theory or subject matter is important; but so is pedagogical knowledge. Literacy practitioners in the classrooms can be effective teachers and models of reading content knowledge and pedagogy. This was demonstrated in this student-led workshop.

I was pleased to observe that the workshop presenters implemented many of the strategies they learn about in their literacy courses. A read-aloud was used or suggested in the booklet for each component. Research indicates that reading aloud to children has numerous benefits. Roe, Smith, & Burns (2009) suggest that it is the foundation of emergent literacy development. Reading aloud also increases comprehension (Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998), it is central to engaging children in the joys and rewards of reading (Darigan, Tunnell, & Jacobs, 2002), and as stated by Vacca & Vacca (2008) reading aloud is considered by many experts to be the single most important activity in developing student literacy ability regardless of age.

Writing was incorporated in their presentations as well. Writing can build comprehension before, during, and after reading (Roe, Smith, & Burns, 2009). According to Kane (2007) writing is an excellent way to build higher-level thinking skills.

Technology use was infused during the workshop. In a position statement, the International Reading Association indicated that "literacy educators have a responsibility to effectively integrate the Internet and other forms of information and communication tech-

nologies (ITC) into the literacy curriculum in order to prepare students for the literacy future they deserve" (International Reading Association, 2001, par 1).

According to Gunning (2008), the reader plays a very active role in constructing and understanding text and the way this is done by using strategies. Dowhower (1999) also encourages the teaching of strategies because she believes that they allow readers to become autonomous and in control of the comprehension process. The presenters used strategies before, during, and after reading to actively involve their audience.

The workshop was introduced by one of the students. She identified the components and indicated that the presenters of each component would introduce themselves and provide information about where they teach and the grade level. All were K- 5 educators. The workshop presenters were well equipped with the knowledge of the subject matter and the pedagogy for teaching literacy in today's classroom. Following are highlights of the workshop by components.

Phonemic Awareness

The first component, phonemic awareness, was presented by two young educators from a small county. During their Power Point presentation, phonemic awareness was defined as the understanding that words are made up of sounds which can be assembled in different ways to make different words. The presenters pointed out that teachers can build phonemic awareness through the use of nursery rhymes, riddles, songs, poems, and read-aloud books that manipulate sounds. They ended their presentation with a read-aloud and encouraged student participation. The read-aloud, *Annabel*, was written by Joy Cowley (1993). Initially, the students were reluctant to respond; however, before the story ended everyone was involved.

Phonics

The presenters of the phonics component worked at the elementary magnet school in our county. One taught third grade and the other was a paraprofessional who worked with kindergarten students. They began their presentation by defining phonics as an instructional method for teaching children to read English. To demonstrate how phonics is taught, the presenters shared an interesting worksheet on word families. The worksheet was found at the www.KidZone.ws website. The instructions directed the students to match the picture and the word. The presenters guided the students through the worksheet involving the "–an" family. They named the first picture, which was a man and asked a volunteer to identify the matching word; then the class spelled the word. This process was followed as the worksheet was completed. They concluded their presentation with a story—*Mr. Fantastic* (Lee & Kirby, 1961). As the story was being read, the students were asked to identify all the words that made the sound of "F." The audience was quite obliged to honor that request.

Vocabulary

The presenters of this component taught at two different elementary schools in our county. Their Power Point presentation began with the definition of vocabulary. They indicated that it involves the words we use to communicate effectively. They shared some quick facts posited by Hart and Risley (1995) that suggest kindergarten students' vocabulary size is a predictor of comprehension in middle school. These presenters identified and defined the four types of vocabulary: listening, speaking, reading and writing. They also suggested that vocabulary can be taught directly, indirectly, through repetition, rich context, and through active learning games (NRP, 2000). They concluded their presentation with two games ("Versatile" and "Rally Table").

Comprehension

One of these two presenters taught in our county and had ten years of experience. The other taught in a rural area and was a first year teacher. They began their Power Point with several points about reading comprehension, one of which indicates that it is the process of constructing meaning from a text. They indicated that this component is extremely important and that successful learners of comprehension should be able to apply strategies before, during, and after reading. Time constraints precluded their discussion of the various strategies; however, they directed the students to their section of the handout, which listed several strategies for the three phases of reading. Some of the strategies were KWL, Anticipation Guides, sticky notes, graphic organizers and others. They planned to conclude with a read-aloud of *Granddaddy's Gift* by Margaree King Mitchell (2006) and a discussion web that was obtained from www.readwritethink.org. The presenter gave a brief synopsis of the story that involved a grandfather sharing his struggle for the right to vote. She equated his success to the 2008 election.

Fluency

The two presenters of the fluency component were special education teachers. One taught in a small county south of the university and the other taught in our county. They began with an anticipation guide

and allowed volunteers to share their responses. One of the presenters read aloud to demonstrate how a student who struggles with fluency reads. She indicated that fluency could be developed through repeated reading--a method developed to produce automaticity (Samuels, 1997). She also provided guidelines for creating, using and scoring repeated reading passages in their portion of the booklet. A fluency passage was also provided. The last presenter concluded with several questions regarding fluency and comprehension. She ended the presentation with this quote by Wolf & Katzir-Cohen (2001) "The unsettling conclusion is that reading fluency involves every process and sub-skill involved in reading" (p. 220). The students responded to the quote in writing. A couple of volunteers shared their interpretations.

Student Reflections

The students indicated that they appreciated the workshop. Some stated that they were not expecting very much, but were pleasantly surprised. Highlights from their reflections are presented below.

"I think that the best thing about the workshop was that the presenters did not just talk about their information; they actively engaged our class in their presentations. It made the time a lot more interesting because we got to participate instead of just sitting there listening." —Pam

"I was very intrigued by the various techniques used by the various individuals, such as the various books they used in their classrooms and etc. It is always helpful to have a teacher's point of view, especially from those who are now in the school system because it gives a more adequate measure of the challenges I may soon face." —Shakeria

"I really didn't know what to expect from this workshop before attending, but I am glad I had the opportunity to attend. I walked away with valuable information and resources." —Keanna

Conclusion and Professor's Reflection

The way the presenters engaged the audience in the activities was impressive. Throughout the semester, the importance of reading aloud was stressed; therefore, I was pleased that several of the presenters shared read-alouds with the audience. Further, it was evident that the students were receptive to the information and the methods of presentation. Many of them interacted with the presenters with the same enthusiasm as young readers and writers would. The students and I appreciated the well-prepared booklets filled with lesson plans, strategies, websites, and activities that were provided by the presenters.

I think that those teachers who are aware of and practicing the current trends in literacy are the best models for preservice teachers. They can articulate the effectiveness of active involvement, strategic instruction, the role of technology, and reading aloud to students because they are experiencing this first hand.

Some of the presenters expressed that they valued the experience of sharing this workshop with teacher education candidates and certainly think that it should remain as one of the requirements for the reading endorsement course. Upon reflection, I am sorry that I did not ask them for written reflections. I think that is the one piece that is missing from this successful and satisfying experience of teacher practitioners sharing "The Five Components of Reading" with preservice teachers.

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