



#### OUR MISSION

Literacy New York supports community efforts to enable adults to gain the literacy skills needed to reach their full potential as individuals, parents, workers, and citizens.

## Trainer News • March, 2005

### Save the Date!

### Literacy New York Summer Institute scheduled June 6 – 10, 2005

The Summer Institute will be held once again this year at the White Eagle conference center in Hamilton New York. Highlights for trainers include the Training of Trainers Workshop, Training of Trainers for Experienced Facilitators, and a Bridges to Practice Workshop for trainers who want to provide an in-service for tutors on Learning Disabilities. Participants leave with a design they can facilitate for their affiliate's tutors. Workshops for trainers will be held Monday and Tuesday, June 6 & 7. Workshop descriptions and registration information will be sent to affiliate directors within the next several weeks.

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### Tutor Trainer Competencies

Think you have the 'right stuff' to become a tutor trainer? What follows is a suggested list of qualifications to consider for those potential trainers who want to attend the LNY TOT workshops. We've included some suggestions for trainer recruitment and retention as well.

#### Thorough knowledge of subject matter

The Training of Trainers workshop does not give the content of the tutor training. This workshop supposes that participants are former tutors or currently working in affiliates, and will have already attended tutor training and have access to tutor training materials. We focus on how to use the methods of participatory education critical to Adult Education, not the content of the tutor training. Potential trainers need access to the Basic Literacy, ESOL or Combined Training Guides.

#### Experience Tutoring

Trainers need to relate to the subject matter and ideally share stories about their own tutoring or experience with adult students. Tutoring experience is preferable – or if a staff person, having academic qualifications with experience working with adult students.

#### Good Communication Skills

Trainers need to be good listeners and questioners with a positive outlook. They need to be non-judgmental, open minded, affirming and able to trainer effectively and comfortable using participatory methods.

## **Flexibility**

Trainers need to be willing to work within the constraints and parameters of the affiliate, with basic knowledge and understanding of affiliate organizational structure, mission, policies, procedures and adult literacy issues.

## **Sense of Humor**

Trainers must find the humor in sometimes trying situations and be able to bring humor into the training room.

## **Curious and Eager to Learn**

Trainers should be willing to attend a Training of Trainers Workshop, as well as ongoing professional development and or in-service workshops. Examples include technology, willing to try on-line learning, email communication and joining list serves.

## **Confidence**

This defines the 'it' we recognize when we say that a trainer has 'it' - content knowledge-base coupled with a big dash of humility.

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## **Ideas**

### **Trainer Recruitment**

Schedule an informational meeting for tutors interested in hearing about becoming trainers. Describe the affiliate criteria and process to become a trainer – including how they will be trained and supported.

Current trainers are a great resource to identify potential new trainers. Also as part of a tutor training, indicate there is opportunity for interested tutors to become trainers 'down the road.' Consider using an experienced tutor to 'assist' in a tutor training workshop.

Some businesses enable employees to participate in volunteer activities during work hours. Do some homework in your community and approach local businesses that are 'volunteer friendly'.

### **Trainer Retention**

Support is vital, whether your affiliate does or does not pay trainers. For those volunteering their time and expertise, recognition and appreciation are extremely important.

Don't underestimate the importance of paying trainers, and building that expense into your affiliate budget. If someone wishes to volunteer their time, they can always donate their stipend back to the affiliate.

Meet before and after each training to discuss what went well, and what could be improved for the next time. Consider a lunch with a dish to pass. Make this a group that people will remember and want to remain a member!

Consider trainer recognition at your annual meeting or in your affiliate newsletter or website. Be creative in your recognition efforts.

Provide (or refer to) in-service workshops to help trainers stay current in the field.

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## **Trainers Speak Out!**

### **Literacy New York Trainer List Serve**

The trainer list serve is up and running and the conversation has started. Don't miss out. If you are signed on to the list, you should be getting messages to your in box from [Literacy NY Trainers]. Recent topics have been on tutor training orientations and teachers as tutors. Do you have a question or comment about tutor training? Post it to the list. Let's keep this an active, vibrant resource for Literacy New York trainers and affiliates.

If you aren't signed on to this list serve, simply send an email to Mary Bartlett – [blmallow@dreamscape.com](mailto:blmallow@dreamscape.com) with LiteracyNYTrainers in the subject line. We'll sign you up!!

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## **Reading Research**

In October, 2004 Literacy New York published a Reading Research Issue of our Literacy Practitioner newsletter. This issue highlighted four elements for reading instruction offered to adult basic education students. The elements are defined by the Reading Research Working Group sponsored by the National Institute for Literacy and the National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy.

The four elements are alphabeticity, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension. The article below by Victoria Purcell-Gates provides information on alphabeticity and comprehension and gives some implications for instruction using skills-driven and comprehension-driven models. This article is a bit lengthy, but gives a good background for those who want to deepen their understanding of adult reading instruction theory.

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### **There's Reading...and Then There's Reading Process Models and Instruction by Victoria Purcell-Gates**

*From Focus on Basics, May 1997*

What does it mean when adults come to us for help with reading? What is it that they want help doing? What do they mean by 'reading'? What do we, as teachers of adults, think they mean? And what do we mean when we say we teach 'reading'?

These are not meant to be metaphysical questions. They are questions that are immediately relevant to our daily instruction and to our ongoing decisions about the needs of learners. As Harste (1984) put it, our assumptions do matter. If we are to guide and direct our students, we need to know where we are going, which paths are the most likely to get us there, and which paths are most likely to be dead ends. This means that, as teachers of reading, we must be cognizant of our underlying beliefs or theories of literacy development: how one begins to learn to read and how one develops from that point into an increasingly effective reader with a broadening range of texts. As teachers of adults, we must know -- in the sense of holding beliefs that are grounded in experience and information -- how this literacy development is affected by the knowledge, experiences, and cognitive stage of adults.

In this article, I will discuss some current, broad theories of the reading process and their implications for adult literacy instruction. I am defining 'theory' as an explanation of a phenomenon like the reading process; a 'model' thus serves as a metaphor for that phenomenon, or in this case, reading process (Ruddell, Ruddell, & Singer, 1994). So while some of the theories I will explore have accompanying models, not all of them do -- and may never, because of the difficulty of capturing in a two-dimensional model the dynamism and socially-contextualized nature of the reading process described by the theories.

The pie of reading process theories can be cut several ways. I am going to categorize these approaches as they reflect different emphases on pieces of the process rather than attempt to draw totally competing theories like 'top-down' versus 'bottom-up.' Most reading theorists, such as Marilyn Adams, P. David Pearson, and Michael Pressley, have abandoned such all or nothing approaches and embrace some form of interactive theory of the reading process, while prioritizing different parts of it. First I will describe some theories that emphasize the role of letter and word recognition, then discuss theories that stress the role of comprehension over letter and word recognition, and finally, explore newer theories that highlight the role of social and cultural context in the process of reading. As you read these descriptions, you will probably recognize yourself in more than one camp. This is perfectly reasonable, given that all theories are attempts to characterize the same process.

### **Letter and Word Recognition is Key**

"You can't read unless you look at the print and recognize the letters and then recognize the words." Who can argue with this?

Several prominent theories detail the letter and word recognition parts of the reading process, with slightly different foci. Gough's (1972) model took an information processing lens and tried to describe the flow of information during the reading process. According to Gough's model, the reading process is linear, with letters being recognized first feature-by-feature by a visual system and then transferred to a sound (phonemic) system for recognition and held until the next letter is processed in the same way. When words are recognized (processed) they are held in working memory until they are processed for underlying meaning and finally understood as sentences and ultimately texts. In summary, Gough's description of the reading process is letter-by-letter and word-by-word in an additive fashion.

LaBerge and Samuels' model (1974) of the reading process brought us the concept of 'automaticity' in word recognition. Like Gough, word recognition is primary and needed for the later work of comprehension. Comprehension is made possible, according to LaBerge and Samuels, when readers no longer have to expend all of their cognitive attention on the recognition of letters and words. This is because it is not possible to consciously attend to, and thus process information from, more than one event or stimulus at a time. A familiar example of this is the ability of an experienced driver to navigate

a route by car while engaging in a spirited conversation with a passenger. The driver must cease talking when an unexpected event occurs in the surrounding traffic that requires the transfer of attention. What makes driving in familiar circumstances while engaging in conversation possible is the automaticity of the driving processes. When a process becomes so familiar and 'expert,' usually through repetition and practice, it becomes 'automatic' and does not require selective, or conscious, attention. This frees selective attention for other processes that do require it.

Decoding takes selective attention when it is unfamiliar or not fully mastered. And comprehension also requires attention. So, it is necessary to practice decoding skills to the point of mastery before the process of comprehension -- the real goal of reading -- is possible. The faster one becomes an automatic decoder -- recognizes words without having to break them down and 'figure them out' -- the sooner one can attend to comprehending text.

## **Phonemic Awareness**

Phonemic awareness is the final theory I will discuss that focuses on the primacy of letter and word recognition. This theory was recently eloquently explicated by Adams (1990), who, within a theory of the need for the attainment of automaticity, synthesizes a broad array of research to highlight the importance of letter-to-sound decoding in what we call 'reading.' Adam's review of research is formulated to respond to theorists -- such as Frank Smith (1978) and Kenneth Goodman (1994) -- who claim that skilled readers do not decode every single letter from right to left during actual reading. Rather, these theorists claim that readers process words as wholes and may even skip words, parts of words, or whole sections of text without losing meaning. Adams, however, claims that skilled readers do process words letter-by-letter, and that these letters must be translated into sound units to be pronounced and thus understood. Developing readers must learn to do this to progress beyond the limits that are imposed by relying solely on visual recognition and memory of the thousands of words (Juel, 1991) one would need to recognize at sight for competent reading. However, perceiving language at the phoneme level (the smallest, isolatable unit of sound) -- hearing the individual sounds in cat (/k/ /ae/ /t/), for example -- is not easy and, for some readers, impossible without skilled intervention. Adams' model includes mental processors for the visual recognition of letters, context, and meaning as well as for the phonological processing I have briefly described. That makes her model similar to the interactive models discussed below. I put her in this letter-word recognition category because of the emphasis by her and those who cite her on the crucial role of accurate and automatic phonological processing.

## **Comprehension is Primary**

"Reading is comprehending from print. Decoding is not reading. Only comprehension is reading." Who can argue with that?

Standing opposed to those theorists discussed in the preceding section are those who do not want to view decoding as preceding comprehension either in on-line processing of print or in emphasis or sequence in reading instruction. These theorists see the process turned around, so to speak. Readers, they say, bring all of their experiences and background knowledge to the reading task. They expect meaning from print and they coordinate various language cue systems (pragmatic, syntactic, semantic, and graphophonic) to get at that meaning. Kenneth Goodman's model (1994) of the reading process probably typifies this theoretical stance best for most professionals. He originally referred to his model as a psycholinguistic one to reflect its language-processing essence; he now terms it a 'Transactional Socio-Psycholinguistic Model of Reading,' capturing the recent theories of

trans-action and the influence on language use of social settings and pragmatics: rules for language use that differ according to different social contexts.

According to this model -- and, as above, I am simplifying it without, I hope, changing its essence -- readers begin the act of reading by recognizing that they are reading and sampling and selecting from the visual array (letters and words) based on their predictions of what they expect to find. These predictions result from informed inferences about the meaning as it is supported and conveyed by the syntax and the graphophonics (letter/sound units). As readers read in this fashion, they confirm or disconfirm their predictions by using their knowledge of the different language cue systems to detect when meaning breaks down. When a breakdown in meaning occurs, and is detected, readers go back and correct, again employing the different language cue systems as they are appropriate. Goodman calls these actions by the reader 'cognitive strategies.'

Reading, within this theory, is not linear but cyclical. Visual, perceptual, syntactic, and semantic cycles are constantly in play, each dependent on and enabling the others. In addition, reading, according to this theory, is goal oriented, with the goal being meaning. Using inference and prediction, the reader can continue to move toward meaning without completing the optical, perceptual, and syntactic cycles. Thus, as opposed to the theories described in the preceding section, comprehension is not dependent on linear, accurate, automatic decoding and letter-word recognition.

While all the reading theories discussed in this article include comprehension as an important aspect of reading, Goodman's theory -- and, by implication, all others categorized with it -- makes it the center of the process, beginning, during, and after. He specifies comprehension as a transaction between reader and text. Within a transactional theory of the reading process (Rosenblatt, 1994), the meaning does not reside solely in the text. Nor does it reside only in the reader. Rather, when reader and text interact -- i.e., when a reader reads a text -- the meaning that the reader constructs from the text is a third entity, not exactly what the author created nor what the reader could have created without a text. Therefore, each reading -- whether by the same reader or by a different one -- involves a different transaction and, thus, a somewhat different meaning.

Under this theory, beginning readers learn to read much the way they learned to talk: by being immersed in many purposeful and functional instances of language (print) use, they will feel compelled to join in, taking from the input the necessary cues to make sense and grow increasingly competent and conventional as readers and writers. As they participate in actual reading and writing, they will deduce and generalize from the linguistic input the underlying rules and patterns of the language in use.

## **Balanced Theories**

"Learners need both to focus on meaning with real, authentic texts and to work on skills." Sounds reasonable, even the best of both worlds, for increasing numbers of reading teachers.

'Balanced reading instruction' is a relatively new term and the concept probably rests on a theory of reading that is close to Rumelhart's (1994) Interactive Model of Reading, although with a sociocultural aspect that is absent in Rumelhart's model. Rumelhart acknowledges the reciprocal influence of different levels of knowledge held by a reader -- from letter feature -- knowledge of the features of letters to semantic knowledge -- and models these levels of knowledge as operating in interaction with each other. In other words, readers read by focusing on comprehension and on letter features roughly at the same time, granting that the reading event begins with graphic input. Rumelhart differs from Goodman (1994) in that he sees the reader as processing all of the different letters and words

but acknowledges that meaning and syntactic context influence perception and recognition of letters and words.

A sociocultural view of literacy questions the view that literacy is a generic process that is the same for everyone in all instances (Santa Barbara Discourse Group, 1994). Rather, this theory holds that literacy -- and thus reading and writing -- looks different and is practiced differently by different social groups, such as students, churchgoers, business people, clerks, and so on. Concerned much more with social setting, structures, and influences on literacy practice, socioculturalists do not espouse any internal model of the reading process. As I understand this perspective, though, if such a model were to be conceived, it would reflect these sociocultural influences on the different levels of processing modeled by Rumelhart and Goodman.

## **Implications for Instruction**

### **Skills-Driven Models**

Teachers who operate under beliefs about reading process and development similar to those discussed in the section 'Letter and Word Recognition is Key' will want to focus heavily on the skills and abilities needed to accurately and automatically recognize letters and words. They will see these skills as not only crucial but primary, in that they must be mastered before comprehension can take place. Therefore, students will be taught how to discriminate and recognize individual letters first (visual) and then to discriminate and assign individual letter, or letter combinations, to individual sounds. While there are many approaches to teaching decoding via sounding out, all such instruction that reflects the letter-word primacy of reading emphasizes decoding to automatic levels first and then increased focus on comprehension. While comprehension difficulties, in and of themselves, are possible, students who 'cannot read' or 'cannot read well enough' are viewed as potential decoding problems first until this is ruled out through diagnostic tests or diagnostic teaching.

Drill and practice in decoding skills, as well as phonemic awareness training, are recommended and practiced by proponents of this view. There is no concern about teaching 'isolated skills' since, within this reading theory, to isolate pieces of the decoding process is to make them easier to grasp and practice. In addition, though, the authors of these theories suggest that their theories implicate the following instructional activities as well: repeated readings of text to increase accurate and automatic word recognition; providing texts that are easier to read if the student's problem is decoding; and the reading of interesting and emotionally satisfying texts as long as one is able to accurately decode the words.

### **Comprehension-Driven Models**

Teachers who hold beliefs about reading similar to the Transactional Sociopsycholinguistic model of reading engage in radically different instructional decisions and activities. Because meaning, or comprehension, is the driving force of the reading process, and because this process involves cyclical cognitive strategy use and synergistic relations between the language cuing systems, learners must always be dealing with whole texts which are read for authentic purposes. Breaking the process down into isolated pieces for purposes of practice is counterproductive because the reader does not have all of the cue systems to use nor can the reader engage in full cyclical strategy use in pursuit of meaning. Thus, isolated skill teaching should never be done. Rather, teachers help their students get control of different parts of the process while they are reading -- and writing -- whole texts.

Teachers who operate within this theoretical paradigm will have their students reading texts that they want to read, for self-chosen purposes. They will teach their students that, when they read, they should make sense of the texts at all times. These teachers will deemphasize accurate reading, often actively discouraging it in favor of 'translating' the text to the degree that it makes personal sense to the individual reader. While students in classes that focus on the primacy of letter-word recognition may often be asked to read aloud so that the teacher can check for accurate word reading, students in Goodman-like classes may never be asked to read aloud for accuracy checks because teachers do not want to over focus the students on accuracy at the expense of comprehension. If students do read aloud, it will be to share favorite parts or for the teacher to gain insight into the ways in which a student is coordinating appropriate strategies in pursuit of meaning.

Since comprehension, from this theoretical stance, is a personal transaction between reader and text, teachers will eschew the traditional comprehension questions for activities like response journals, book shares, or book discussions, all of which involve individual responses to text that are not judged correct or incorrect. Teachers would never want their students to read simplified or altered texts that are created for the sole purpose of teaching someone to read because the act of simplifying would corrupt the natural language of the text and thus prevent the reader from employing innate language knowledge and strategies.

Beginning readers must engage with whole texts, under this theory, so teachers often employ highly predictable or memorized texts for these readers. Patterned language, such as jingles, songs, and poetry, allows beginning readers to employ their predicting, sampling, and selecting strategies and to successfully engage in confirming and disconfirming, with correction. Language experience texts, obtained by writing down texts the learners dictate, are also often used. Since these dictated texts involve the readers' meaning-making processes as well as language, they are highly predictable and thus appropriate for this level of reader.

#### Integrated Models

Teachers who espouse a balanced view of reading instruction (McIntyre & Pressley, 1996) appear all along the reading process continuum, from the 'skills' end to the 'holistic.' They all view comprehension as the only purpose for reading and stress meaning-making in their instructional activities. The more skills-oriented will not hesitate to teach isolated skills as well as involving their students in reading and writing of authentic and compelling texts. The more holistic-oriented view skills teaching as best done in the context of authentic and compelling reading and writing.

Sometimes referred to as 'whole-part-whole' instruction (Purcell-Gates, 1995, 1996), this teaching first involves students in purposeful (to the student) reading and writing, then pulls out some skills -- ranging from decoding to text structure and comprehension -- for focused work. The worked-upon skills are then 'plugged' into the literacy activity for consolidation and practice in the actual process of reading and writing.

Acknowledging the role of social context in language use, these teachers strive to teach, in a direct and straight-forward manner, the different conventions and 'ways of doing' associated with reading and writing texts in different genres and for different purposes and audiences, such as science writing and reading, newspaper writing and reading, document writing and reading, science fiction writing and reading, etcetera.

#### In Conclusion

In conclusion, as teachers it is critical that we identify our assumptions and beliefs -- and many of them may be quite implicit -- about what it is we are trying to help our students do: what process we

assume is the process these students are trying to master. With our own process models made explicit, we can better choose materials, activities, instructional procedures, and assessments that serve to foster this mastery.

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