

REACTION PAPER

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Commentary on APPLICATIONS OF TEACHER EFFECTIVENESS: RESEARCH FINDINGS By Timothy R. Blair and June Thomas Young

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Blair and Young have addressed an issue in which all teacher educators are keenly interested, i.e. teacher effectiveness training. In short, Blair and Young have devised an in-service program for teachers that combines two major elements: (a) effective teaching plan consisting of a six step format for direct instruction adapted from Rosenshine (1983) and (b) a metapedagogical awareness component on the part of participants by having them keep a "teaching diary" over a two month period following the two day in-service. Blair and Young found that the teachers who participated in keeping the teaching diary and in follow-up discussions of their perceptions were more "susceptible to change" than those teachers who went through the in-service without the follow-up benefit of their own meta-cognitive/affective feedback.

The authors suggest that these findings occur because such meta-pedagogical feedback helps teachers become aware of their choices, allows them to feel in control of their teaching, and assumes that teachers are competent. Blair and Young believe learning and change occur more readily under such positive, supportive conditions.

The only difficulty I find with this approach is that it was developed to teach teachers how to teach for mastery of sub-skills - an approach which some reading educators believe establishes opposite conditions for children. That is, skills mastery teaching tends not to allow children many real choices, it does not encourage children to feel in control of their learning and it assumes learners know nothing or very little.

It seems to me that effective learning models are effective learning models whether they are applied to teacher learning or student learning. If such a meta-pedagogical approach to teacher in-service creates conditions for lasting change, and I have every reason to believe it does, I would prefer to see such an approach applied to content that promotes the same positive, supportive curricula for children; that is, teaching in such a way that children become aware of their choices, feel in control of their learning and are assumed to be competent.

The question becomes: If we have effective technique for creating change how then do we create change for the better? Perhaps an even more crucial issue is how to finally arrive at some real consensus among reading educators in light of what is now known about language learning and literacy.