

## DEVELOPMENTAL READING PROGRAM INNOVATIONS AND PRACTICES

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The Reading and Study Skills Program at University College, University of Cincinnati has served students and faculty for twenty years. During this time, the program has gone through a number of changes due to funding, student needs, and administrative priorities. For the last five years, the program has offered a number of innovative courses and services for students in University College, as well as for students from other colleges and students not yet in college. This paper provides a descriptive overview of the Reading and Study Program's innovations and practices. The innovations include these areas:

1. Placement Testing and Advising
2. Instruction Practices
  - A. Paired Reading-Psychology Courses
  - B. Pre-Technical Program Developmental Courses
  - C. College of Education Developmental Courses
  - D. Computer Instruction
3. Future Innovations
  - A. Clinic-Entering Freshmen

### Summer Placement Testing and Advisory Procedures

All incoming University College freshmen take reading, writing, and math tests to determine their placement in developmental courses. The DRP (Degrees of Reading Power) Test - Form PA2 - is given during the ten-week summer period to determine if students should be placed in Effective Reading fall courses.

The DRP Test, developed by the New York State Education Department, Touchstone Applied Science Associates, and College Board assesses a student's ability to comprehend prose at increased levels of difficulty. The DRP Test is a modified cloze test where seven words are deleted from each 325-word prose passage in the test. The student has to select the correct word for each deletion from five possible alternatives.

The Reading and Study Program uses a 64 unit score (71 raw score) to screen students because 64 is equivalent to reading material at the 12th grade level according to the College Board Readability Report (1981). Four units, (example - 64 to 68) indicate approximately a one grade change. The student's reading level and readability level of reading material can be equated using the unit score designation. In forty-five minutes, a student must correctly answer 71 out of 98 questions to be evaluated as having adequate reading skills for college work.

A positive feature of the DRP Test is that it tests reading holistically, measuring the skills of comprehension, vocabulary, and rate of reading. Also, the test results can be easily explained, testing time is short, administration is easy to large groups, and sequential test item difficulty is easier to explain to students than in tests with skills divided into different test sections. This test is one of three given during the Summer Placement and Advising Program. Students must also take a twenty minute writing test followed by a forty minute math test. In the afternoon session the students meet individually with a faculty advisor to determine their fall courses and major program requirements.

#### Paired Reading and Psychology Courses

The innovative practice of pairing a reading class with a content class has been done at the University of Cincinnati for the past five years. The pairing concept involves the content oriented class Introduction to Psychology and the "how to" Effective Reading and Study Skills course. These courses together form a 5 credit hour class where the communication and study strategies taught in Effective Reading are biased towards Psychology. The impetus for pairing came from the psychology instructor who felt that most of the students in his classes receiving D's and F's could benefit by having a reading and study course paired with the psychology class. Additionally, the psychology instructor did not feel that he could spend that much class time teaching notetaking, test taking, and other reading and study strategies.

There are several factors that make this an innovative paired offering. First, the reading instructor attends all the psychology lectures. This enables him to assist students more directly. For example, he was able to model the Cornell Notetaking System by using the actual notes from the Psychology

class. It also enables him to assist students with such things as anticipating test questions and reviewing for the Psychology quizzes. Second, a number of specific materials have been developed and tried out over the past several years of this course including study guides covering the material in the psychology textbook. Also, many of the activities that have been used with students have been put into the Instructor's Manual - Study for Success. Activities such as concept trees, time lines, schedules, and anticipatory test questions were all implemented and refined in the Reading class.

Besides the innovations described above, reading test data and retention data for the program were collected (refer to Fifth American Reading Forum Yearbook, 1984, p. 89). The data gives the clear indication that the paired course really does make a difference both in terms of Psychology test scores and retention from freshman to sophomore years.

Additionally, during the 1984-85 year, the Human Psychology classes were paired with reading courses as follows: Human Motivation was paired with two reading sections in the fall and Human Development was paired with one reading section in the winter. These are the first two courses in the three-part Human Psychology series which also includes Human Relations. The three Psychology courses are a requirement for approximately half of the University College population. For example, the Pre-Nursing students in University College must take all three of the Human Series to transfer to the College of Nursing and Health.

Differences in the three Human series and Psychology I and II paired are these:

- 1) The three Human Psychology classes do not carry the same course number for the content and reading courses. Students in the Human series voluntarily enroll for the paired reading courses. During Fall Quarter, 1984, twenty students took the paired reading course with Human Motivation (ten students in each section). In the Winter Quarter Human Development course, sixteen students were enrolled in one section. The additional number of students (from ten to sixteen in one session) indicates students' sense of need for the paired reading course.
- 2) The psychology instructor's evaluation method was the same in the three classes, making the paired courses' objectives easier. Also, grades increased for the paired Human Development students who had also taken

paired Human Motivation. Clearly, use of the reading and study skills in both classes had been one factor in helping students to maintain and increase their ability to learn content materials.

### Pre-Technical Program

The Pre-Technical Training Program is a cooperative effort between the University College - University of Cincinnati, the Private Industry Council (PIC) of Cincinnati and Hamilton County, and the Employment and Training Division of the City of Cincinnati. The program provides academic preparatory education opportunities for Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) eligible adults and out of school youth who are unable to meet the requirements for admission into a two-year technical associate degree program because of their need for improvement in communication skills.

During the program's duration of two or three quarters, students' curriculum consists of courses in developmental math, reading, English, and other preparatory courses in Career Planning, Consumer Economics, Practical Logic, and Introduction to Computers.

The program then, is designed for non-traditional aged students who are returning to school. The students go through a transition year where they pick up the necessary skills and prerequisites to enter into either a technical or academic program. The focus of the Pre-Technical reading and study class is on developing these skills that will carry over into content area classes. For example, the skills of managing time and breaking large tasks into small manageable ones receives a great deal of emphasis. The students benefit from developing a weekly schedule and prioritizing tasks. Additionally, most of these students have always tackled a textbook chapter by reading the entire thing rather than breaking it into manageable segments as is shown in the SQ3R (Survey, Question, Read, Recite, and Review) Method. Besides these skills areas, a great deal of time is spent on reading a variety of materials and discussing them in class. The students benefit from these exchanges by gaining self-confidence when contributing their ideas in a class discussion situation. Finally, vocabulary development has received a great deal of course emphasis since these students need to be able to handle the demands of various content materials. Specifically, vocabulary work in this area centers on context clues and prefixes.

### College of Education Course

Another special offering has been a course designed for education majors who have not passed the reading portion of the Pre-Professional Skills Test. The reading staff has designed

a course for these students which concentrates on vocabulary and comprehension development. In particular, the staff works with these students on reading passages and answering main idea and inferential questions. The majority of students have the greatest difficulty in answering inferential questions. In the area of vocabulary, most of the emphasis is placed on context clues. The students need to quickly identify and define words that they encounter in test passages. The materials used in this course consist of comprehension modules developed in the program on main idea and inference. Additionally, these students take a computer assisted instruction course on main idea. Other materials used in this class consist of passages taken from a variety of content areas.

### Computer Instruction

The instructional aid that can be obtained from computer usage was recognized two years ago in the Reading Program. Specifically, its individual tutoring ability was felt to best reinforce instruction. The Vocabulary Skills Laboratory course was then written and programmed on the computers in the Computer Assisted Instructional Laboratory in the University of Cincinnati. This course consists of a series of lessons in phonics, structural analysis, context clues, and study skills. Students can register concurrently for Effective Reading I and Vocabulary Skills Laboratory I in the Fall Quarter, and for Effective Reading II and Vocabulary Skills II in the Winter Quarter. The Effective Reading course is two credits each quarter, and the Vocabulary Skills Laboratory is one credit each quarter. The Vocabulary Skills Laboratory's course content consists of areas that the instructors agree can provide reinforcement for the low reading level student. For example, vocabulary by context clues and structural analysis is reviewed in Effective Reading I because students have used in the past only dictionary skills to learn vocabulary. The Vocabulary Skills Laboratory computer module provides the additional instructional assistance and reinforcement with an individual tutor for each student - the computer.

### Future Directions - Reading Clinic

Beginning in the summer of 1986 it is anticipated that a summer reading program for high school age students will be offered. In the past couple of years, the reading staff has received calls from parents requesting help for their sons or daughters who have reading problems. This summer program is designed to work with 25 high school students on a 1 to 5 ratio of teacher to student. Besides the low student to teacher ratio the class will provide a range of activities and materials for each student including computer assisted instruction, specific skill development, high interest reading materials, study skills,

library orientation, and reading/writing activities. In addition the program will test each student to determine specific areas of strengths and weaknesses. In this manner, the clinic will be able to more closely tailor instruction to student needs. The long range goal for this program will be to help these high school students gain the self-confidence and skills necessary for entering college.

### Summary

The Reading and Study Program at the University of Cincinnati has developed a number of innovative courses over the past several years in order to provide services to various audiences. For example, the paired reading courses have been aimed at students who need specific help with their psychology classes while the developmental reading course for education majors helped students to pass the Pre-Professional Skills Test and to gain self-confidence in their communication skills. Additionally, the University has served non-traditional aged students in the Pre-Technical Program who need assistance in how to read and study for college level courses. These innovations have been bolstered by the development of computer assisted instruction software in the areas of vocabulary and comprehension. Finally, the reading staff is looking to the future with the development of a Summer Reading Clinic for high school students.