Remediating Reading: A Curriculum Design

James O. Grant

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.gvsu.edu/coe_articles

Recommended Citation
https://scholarworks.gvsu.edu/coe_articles/3
In a recent issue of ACLD Newsbriefs, the parent of a learning disabled student bemoaned the fact that not only has her daughter carried every conceivable label but also her educational programming has lacked any consistency. As I read this (all too often) true story, the phrase “consistency in programming” continued to stick in my mind.

As consultant to several large school districts, I am continually disturbed by the fact that as learning disabled and other mildly handicapped students progress through their school systems, no consistent plan of instruction is followed. For example, a learning disabled student who has a deficit in decoding and spelling is instructed with one system in a lower elementary classroom. When this student reaches fourth grade, he moves on to the upper elementary classroom, but unfortunately the new teacher has no knowledge of the system(s) that had been used to instruct this child, and, therefore, he is likely to be subjected to another system(s). As he progresses through the grades with a number of professionals attempting to meet his needs, there is often no consistency in
programming. The one hand does not know what the other hand has been doing.

The purpose of this article is to propose a seven-step curriculum design that would help insure a consistent, flexible, remedial program for LD students.

Figure 1 illustrates this curriculum design and the deficit areas that are remediated in each step of the curriculum. This curriculum design has as its theoretical framework the reading stage schema proposed by Chall (1983). Chall’s theory is an interactionist one in that the proposed stages alternate between emphasizing a comprehension bent and a decoding bent. In order for a child to learn reading, the child must understand the function of reading and be able to crack the code in order to comprehend the language. Thus Chall’s six-stage schema begins with the child’s comprehending the stories that are listened to in the pre-school years. In addition, the child is able to tell stories and use the language. Therefore, the

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Deficit Area Remediated</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Language Remediation (Carpenter, 1984)</td>
<td>Receptive and Expressive Language, and Decoding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alphabetic-Phonetic (Grant &amp; Grant, 1984)</td>
<td>Decoding, Word Identification, Vocabulary, and Spelling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Auditory Analysis Skills Program (Rosner, 1975)</td>
<td>Auditory Analysis and Discrimination, and Visualization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glass Analysis for Decoding Only (Glass, 1973)</td>
<td>Decoding, Word Identification, Vocabulary, and Blending</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neurological Impress Method (Heckleman, 1969)</td>
<td>Fluency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategies for Comprehension</td>
<td>Listening and Passage Comprehension</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study Skills (Alley &amp; Deshler, 1979)</td>
<td>Organizational Skills, Test Taking, and Time Management Skills</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
curriculum begins with a program designed to remediate deficits in oral language. As Johnson and Myklebust (1967) have stated, receptive and expressive language tend to develop before reading and writing, and as Chall’s Stage 0 suggests, the child is primarily using oral language (both receptive and expressive) to gain comprehension.

The second, third, and fourth components of this curriculum emphasize decoding and roughly correspond to Chall’s Stage 1. In Stage 1 of Chall’s theory, the students must learn the sound symbol relationships of the language, and while meaning is not emphasized in this stage, it is not ignored either.

The fifth part of the curriculum is designed to make the decoding skills learned in Stage 1 more automatic. Stage 2 in Chall’s model emphasizes fluency and the beginnings of comprehension. To aid the development of fluency, Chall suggests the use of good children’s literature and stories with which the students are familiar.

The sixth component of the curriculum concentrates on the explicit teaching of strategies for comprehension. In Chall’s reading development schema, literal and inferential comprehension are attained in Stages 3 and 4. In Stage 4 of the Chall schema, the student is developing the ability to see other points of view and abstract thinking skills.

Finally, the seventh piece of the proposed curriculum, study skills, hopefully will teach the learning disabled student how to learn. These skills would be comparable to the skills that are developing in Chall’s Stages 4 and 5. As Chall (1983) discusses, some students never reach Stage 5 which involves the application of prior general and specific knowledge to new information from written material.

**Step One: Oral Language Remediation**

Teachers of the learning disabled must be familiar with a set of principles and methods to remediate oral language deficits because, as already discussed, receptive and expressive language develop before reading and writing. If a deficit is found in these areas, teachers should begin remediation. The curriculum design follows the principles in the program outlined by Carpenter (1984) and his colleagues. This program is
hierarchial in nature; it begins by using the person’s incidental language, progresses to teaching expressions, and advances through the teaching of complex sentences, including the use of participles, gerunds, and complex sentences. This program approximates the content described by Chall in Stage 0. The purpose of this remedial program is to teach oral language skills that are deficient in many learning disabled students, but could also be used to teach decoding skills analytically to learning disabled students who experience difficulty with a synthetic approach to learning sound-symbol relationships. When this program is used for remediating decoding skills, the teacher is teaching the skills that correspond to Chall’s Stage 1.

Steps Two, Three, and Four: Alphabetic-Phonetic, Auditory Analysis, and Glass Analysis

These three approaches are usually taught together. The skills being taught are decoding skills as indicated by Chall’s reading Stage 1. Many learning disabled students are deficient in these skills. As indicated by Liberman and Shankweiler (1979), learning disabled students who have failed to learn to decode need to be taught how to segment phonemes along with the sound-symbol relationships in the language. There are several teaching approaches that can be used to accomplish this goal of remediating decoding, word identification, vocabulary, and spelling. In the proposed curriculum an adaptation of the Orton-Gillingham (1975) approach is suggested. Teachers are trained with an alphabetic-phonetic approach (Grant & Grant 1984), Rosner’s Auditory Analysis Skills Program (1975), and a word family approach, Glass Analysis for Decoding Only (1973). The auditory analysis program teaches the learning disabled student how to segment phonemes and the word family approach aides the student in blending. These methods are taught in a structured and fast paced manner. Teachers in training are continually reminded to tell the students why they are learning these skills. Vocabulary building is stressed as the students become more proficient at decoding, and spelling is also a part of the instructional routine. Each of these three programs is individualized to remediate the student’s specific deficits in decoding.
Steps Five and Six: Neurological Impress and Strategies for Comprehension

Following and/or simultaneously with the previously described techniques, depending on the particular student, teachers (1) implement the Neurological Impress Method (Heckleman 1969) to increase fluency and (2) teach the students strategies for comprehending. According to Chall (1983), the skills being taught correspond to her Stages 2 and 3. The rationale for using the Neurological Impress Method at this point in the curriculum design is that the automaticity of the decoding skills learned in previous sections of the curriculum does not readily develop with many learning disabled students. These repeated readings are not always appropriate as the students need to practice and struggle somewhat with their newly acquired decoding skills.

As fluency increases, so should comprehension of reading material. Many learning disabled students do not automatically remember or comprehend what they have read and need to be taught explicit strategies for remedying this deficit. These strategies include skills for determining the main idea of a paragraph and a story, multiple word meanings, understanding inferences, and explaining cause and effect relationships. Teachers must model the strategies, explain the rationale behind the strategy, and walk through the application of the strategy with the student before assigning independent practice.

Step Seven: Study Skills

Strategies for learning how to learn like those proposed by Alley and Deshler (1979), including test-taking skills, problem-solving skills, study skills, time management, and organizational skills, are introduced to and practiced by the learning disabled students in this component of the curriculum. The skills taught in this section approximate Stages 4 and 5 in Chall’s schema. Even though the LD student may have the skills to decode and comprehend some reading material, application and use of written material to learn on one’s own may be deficient. Teachers at this stage must provide much modeling and guided practice so that the students can apply their reading skills to further their own learning.
Summary

All of the components of this curriculum design should be individualized based on the learning disabled student's assessment. By following this seven-step curriculum design, we can help to insure a consistency in programming for the learning disabled student. It should be noted that this curriculum design was not something pulled from thin air. Chall's reading stage schema is a well thought out theory of normal reading development based on well documented research. The curriculum design was conceived using the Chall model as the theoretical framework. By working from a point of reference or framework, school districts and teachers can maintain a consistent reading program for their learning disabled students.

References


