

Waves of Words: Creating the Conditions for Reading, Writing, and Communication

Karen Erickson, Ph.D.
Center for Literacy & Disability Studies
<http://www.med.unc.edu/ahs/clds>

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Means of Communication and Interaction

Learning, particularly literacy learning is an interactive, social process that requires communication. While sophisticated, intentional communication supports successful literacy learning, it is not a necessary condition of success. Instead, we must insure that learners have some means at their disposal to attempt to communicate and interact, and we must be vigilant in our efforts to support their attempts.

Motivation

Motivation to learn is dependent on at least two factors: the success a learner anticipates from engaging in a task, and the value that learner places on the rewards associated with successfully completing the task (Feather, 1982). As a first step, learners must have the self-confidence to believe that investing the effort in the task will yield success. (p. 43, *Waves of Words*)

Teacher Expectations

Teachers' expectations affect the way they behave, and the way they behave affects how students respond (Good & Brophy, 2000). When we view students as capable of learning, we are more likely to behave in ways that support learning: engaging students interactively, presenting them with active learning opportunities and searching widely for additional supports when learning does not proceed as we wish. (p. 89, *Waves of Words*)

Support Across Environments

A study of children without disabilities from low-income families in the United States suggests that consistently high-quality literacy instruction in school can compensate for a home that provides low levels of support for literacy learning (Snow, 1991). In fact, two years of instruction in a highly supportive classroom allowed all of the children from low-support homes to achieve literacy learning success.

However, the reverse appears to be less powerful. Supportive homes were important, but they were not universally able to overcome the negative effects of a low-support school environment. Nevertheless, high levels of support from both home and school led to the greatest levels of achievement. Not surprisingly, support from one or the other was better than none at all. (p. 61, *Waves of Words*)

Reflection and Problem Solving

Good teaching is a reflective process. Successful teachers lead uneasy lives, continually questioning the impact of their choices and actions on student learning outcomes. In fact, research reports that successful teachers are not as satisfied with their teaching practices and student learning as less successful teachers (Glickman, 1993)... Good teaching is a problem-solving process. (p. 77, *Waves of Words*)

Self-Expression

As Michael Williams wrote in the forward to *Beneath the Surface: Creative Expressions of Augmented Communicators*, one of the greatest challenges faced by people with severe communication impairment “is trying to convince other people we are not merely breathing blobs of flesh, but truly human beings who are capable of creative thought.” (p. xi, Williams, 2000). (p. 145, *Waves of Words*).

Comprehensive Instruction

Meeting the literacy learning needs of students who struggle can be quite complex. There is no single approach that will work for every learner, and most individual learners require a systematic combination of approaches to address their particular needs (Cunningham & Allington, 1999). Rather than focus on identifying the single method that is best suited for a learner, one must focus on which combination of approaches is best suited for that learner. (p. 19, *Waves of Words*)

References:

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