

When Mrs. Wishy Washy is Wrung Out: Challenging the Young Talented Reader 2008 NAGC Presentation

Elizabeth A. Fogarty, Ph.D.

fogartye@ecu.edu

www.gifted.uconn.edu/semr

(SEM-R Info and Strategy Bookmarks)

<http://www.ecu.edu/cs-educ/ci/AIGpresentations.cfm>

(Handouts and Book List for YTR)

Definition of Young, Talented Readers

Young, talented readers are those in grades 3 or lower who exhibit the following characteristics: read at a level two grades or more above their current grade, have advanced vocabulary, enjoy reading (usually), read to satisfy curiosity, read earlier than their age-level peers and often do so with little formal teaching. Snow, Burns, and Griffin (1998) found that most students leave kindergarten able to read some sight words and leave first grade with a site word vocabulary of 300-500 words. Talented readers far exceed these numbers, at times reading chapter books at the end of kindergarten. It is important to note, however, that not all young, talented readers are later identified as gifted. In some early readers, skills growth slows after an initial burst and their reading needs become more similar to their grade-level peers after the third grade. Also, only about half of gifted children read early (Jackson & Roller, 1993).

Strategies for Working with Young, Talented Readers in the Primary Classroom

When young, talented readers have been spotted by teachers or through the use of assessments, there are several options for serving them. The following is a Continuum of Services based on escalating levels of student need for differentiation (for more information refer to Fogarty & Reis, 2007).

1. Differentiation in the Regular Classroom – student receives advanced reading instruction individually or in a small grouping within the regular classroom
2. Cross-Grade Grouping – student grouped with other talented readers from the same grade for instruction
3. Content Area Acceleration in Reading – student advances to the next grade level for reading instruction
4. Acceleration to a Higher Grade Level – student advances to the next grade level for all instruction

At each of these levels, however, the following aspects must also be present:

- Support and challenge
- Advanced strategy use
- Personalization of interest (Reis & Fogarty, 2006)

Using the SEM-R with Young, Talented Readers

The SEM-R, or Schoolwide Enrichment Model Reading framework, was developed in order to provide talented readers with challenging reading experiences after researchers concluded that there was little being done to challenge them in the regular classroom (Reis, Gubbins, Briggs, Schreiber, Richards, Jacobs, et al., 2004). The SEM-R consists of 3 phases which resemble the format of the SEM (Renzulli & Reis, 1997) in that the initial phase attempts to expose kids to new information, the second phase is a training phase, and the third phase provides enrichment.

Phase 1: Book Hooks (10-15 minutes each lesson)

In this phase, teachers conduct short 10-15 minute book hook sessions, during which they model reading strategies and behaviors through think-alouds. The main goal of these sessions is to expose students to new and challenging book choices. Due to the variation in reading abilities in the typical classroom, teachers are encouraged to hook books at a range of levels.

Phase 2: Supported Independent Reading (SIR) (30-45 minutes each lesson)

In this phase, students read adequately challenging self-selected reading materials for extended periods of time. Teachers conduct conferences with individual readers whereby they assess students' fluency, comprehension, and ability to use strategies effectively. Since each student has differing needs and is reading a different book, the conferences are differentiated and teachers are able to focus on the needs of each individual student. During this time, students' self-regulation as the class attempts to read for longer periods each day.

Phase 3: Enrichment through Interest and Choice (15 minutes each lesson, or 50 minutes once a week)

Phase 3 most closely resembles standard gifted programming that it encourages students to become creative producers and offers challenge through choice. In this phase, students are offered choices for how they use their time and typical options provided by teachers include the following: continue reading, read with a buddy, listen to a book on CD, participate in a literature circle, participate in a readers' theater, and work on a research study or in-depth project of your choosing.

Strategies for Developing Home Literacy Programs

In addition to the suggestions offered for school-based instruction, family literacy programs have also been shown to be effective for meeting the needs of young, talented readers (Barrett, Fogarty, & Anderson, in review). In a recent study, it was determined that sending books home nightly with students to read with their families produced significantly more reading growth in students than in their age peers who were not involved in the nightly reading program. The program, initiated by a kindergarten teacher, was different than other similar family literacy programs in that it was differentiated; books were assigned to students based on their reading levels and parents were asked to judge whether the book was too hard or too easy for their child. Growth was seen across ability levels; the differentiated home literacy program worked equally well for talented and struggling readers.

Resources

- Barrett, E., Fogarty, E. A., & Anderson, P. (in review). The Effects of FRED (Families Reading Every Day) on kindergarten students' reading achievement.
- Fogarty, E. A., & Reis, S. M. (2007). When "Mrs. Wishy Washy" is wrung out: Challenging young, talented readers.
- Jackson, N. E., & Roller, C. M. (1993). *Reading with young children* (Research monograph 9302). Storrs, CT: The National Research Center on the Gifted and Talented, University of Connecticut.
- Reis, S. M., & Fogarty, E. A. (2006). Savoring reading schoolwide. *Educational Leadership*, 64(2), 32-36.
- Reis, S. M., Gubbins, E. J., Briggs, C., Schreiber, F. R., Richards, S., Jacobs, J., et al. (2004). Reading instruction for talented readers: Case studies documenting few opportunities for continuous progress. *Gifted Child Quarterly*, 48, 309-338.
- Renzulli, J. S., & Reis, S. M. (1997). *The schoolwide enrichment model : A how-to guide for educational excellence* (2nd ed.). Mansfield Center, CT: Creative Learning Press.
- Snow, C. E., Burns, M. S., & Griffin, P. (Eds.). (1998). *Preventing reading difficulties in young children*. Washington, DC: National Academy Press.