

Title: “Effective Schools/Accomplished Teachers”

Full Citation: Taylor, B. M., Pearson, P. D., Clark, K. F., & Walpole, S. (1999, October). “Effective Schools/Accomplished Teachers.” *The Reading Teacher*, 53 (2), 156–159.

Subject(s): Phonics and Decoding, Independent Reading

Grade Level: 1–2, 3

Synopsis: A group of researchers at CIERA (the Center for the Improvement of Early Reading Achievement) identified and studied effective schools and accomplished teachers across the nation to see how they taught reading in Grades 1–3. Starting with 70 teachers in 14 schools, they identified 4 schools that were the most effective (students were “unexpectedly high-achieving”), 6 schools that were moderately effective, and 4 schools that were least effective. Here are their main findings:

1. The most effective schools spend much more time in small-group instruction than the other schools. These schools encouraged a collaborative approach to reading instruction, and regular teachers had help from resource teachers, Title I teachers, and special education teachers. The small groups were usually based on ability, but group membership was fluid, as all these successful schools believed in regular, frequent assessment and early intervention.
2. “Children in most and moderately effective schools spent more time in independent reading (28 and 27 minutes per day) than children in least effective schools (19 minutes per day).”
3. All the schools taught explicit phonics in isolation. However, in the most effective schools teachers coached students in how to apply word identification skills when reading words in connected text. “Instead of the teacher or another child calling out a word when a child was stuck, the teacher used prompts such as,
 - Why don’t you sound it out and think of what would make sense?
 - Does that make sense? (*pick for quick*)
 - Do you see a chunk you know? (*ell in fell*)
4. Teachers in the most effective schools used more higher-level questions when engaged in comprehension instruction. However, not much comprehension instruction was going on in any of the observed classes.
5. Teachers in the most effective schools communicated more with parents than the other teachers. They were more likely to call home monthly, send notes or newsletters home weekly, and send traveling folders home weekly.

Quote(s): “While more research is needed, the results from this study suggest that conversations about systematic phonics instruction and opportunity to practice need to be broadened to include on-the-spot coaching as children are actually reading.” . . . “We think the role that scaffolded word identification during reading of stories played in these effective schools is an important finding.” (p. 158)

