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EDMS 420

Textbook Analysis

Title

History-Social Science

Subject and grade level

History and Social Science focusing on California - First Grade

Publisher

Houghton-Mifflin

Publication date

2007 (this is the only date I could find, not sure maybe a typo)

Adoption status of the text

In use

Student development: (physically, cognitively, socially /emotionally)

I believe the single most important factor leading to a student's success with this text is having English as a primary language. Even these students who hold an enormous advantage still must be very strong readers and writers in order to be successful with this text, especially if the text is utilized by the teacher in a traditional format where students read and answer questions at the end of each unit.

A child's reading abilities depend on many factors; one of the most significant elements is exposure. A student must acquire several skills before they become proficient readers. Emergent literacy begins at birth and continues until the child is about six or proficient reading. During this time children are developing the ability to create sounds, recognize print, letters, and then words. Much of a child's reading ability hinges on the amount of exposure that the child has to language; both verbally and visually. While some children are reading in the first grade, many others are not. A child who has had stories read to him or her consistently since birth or whose caretaker exposes the

child to print media is far more likely to be successful with this text. Since much of a child's reading ability is determined before first grade, a teacher who uses this text must be aware of her student's reading ability and adjust accordingly. I believe that this text would be most inclusive and powerful if used as a guide for discussion and activities compared to the read and answer format.

Additionally this text book demands that the student be socially and emotionally developed enough to be able to sit and listen or read the text in order to gain all the knowledge and information available; given the egocentric and energetic nature of children particularly in this age range, I envision this creating many challenges for students. Sitting and listening or reading is not what the vast majority of six to eight year olds do best. However the text does offer several activities that would be more interactive and physical than simply reading and responding. However these physical and interactive activities also require a certain level of development.

Physically the student must be able to write, draw, and use scissors to cut out specific shapes; all of these activities require a high level of fine motor skills. Long before first grade children have developed the pincer grasp, usually by age two. The child can handle a variety of objects, including buttons, blocks, door knobs and other small objects. Most children develop the ability to manipulate crayons and pens around the age of four (3-5). Normally children can trace or copy the basic shapes, write most of the alphabet and numbers up to ten by their sixth birthday. While the letters, numbers and shapes are recognizable they are unorganized, often backwards and usually only uppercase and large. Around the age of seven many children are creating letters which are uniform in size and lowercase letters begin to appear. It is not until the child is about nine that the letters and numbers are no longer transposed. Since first graders are between the ages six and eight the writing ability will vary greatly. Therefore the success of students with the writing, drawing and other fine motor skill activities which this text requires will also vary greatly.

For a successful experience with this text the first grader must be socially developed enough to handle group work. Here again it is likely that experience with group activities and with group dynamics will have a high effect on the child's ability to function as a group member. Since this text often has the students working in small groups or pairs the students must be able to express their opinions and make compromises with other children. According to Vygotsky and Piaget children seek intellectual equilibrium, such that when they are placed with their peers and must accomplish a task the students are constantly accommodating and adjusting their own thoughts and beliefs to maintain a functional group. Through this adjustment process children learn about social maneuvering and develop social intelligence.

As with reading, the success of the student with this text will depend on many outside forces. Included but not limited to biology, personality, parental involvement, prior experience in life and school, the teacher and the self image of the child.

Analysis of how text content and expectations compare to what you know about child development

According to Piaget's theory of development a first grade student should be somewhere between the preoperational, the intuitive child, and the concrete operations, the practical child, stages of development. Piaget's theory suggest that around the age of seven a child transitions from one stage to another and since a first grader can be as young as six years old and perhaps as old as nine the students could be at different stages of development. An intuitive child uses symbols and words in their thinking; while a practical child has developed logical operation for seriation, classification and conservation and their thinking is related to reality. I found that this text addresses this issue in a couple ways. First the text contains a picture glossary and within the text the majority of vocabulary words have a visual representation of the word along side the written definition which provides access for the students who still require the picture or symbol to understand the new word. Secondly the entire book is colorful and full of visual representation of what the unit lesson is addressing in writing, again allowing to students at different levels access to the unit's topic. Additionally the activities at the end of each section range from writing out series of sentences, to drawing, to acting out the knowledge gained in the unit. By providing several different assessment techniques the students at different stages of development are able to show that they have understood the lesson.

Examples of diversity portrayed in the text: cultural, linguistic, economic, learning differences

Visually this text portrays cultural diversity in each section. The images of people depicted are from a large variety of cultures and nations. Likewise the text describes a large variety of jobs that produce different levels of incomes and economic status. Although there are several different jobs portrayed the economic outcome is not the focus of the lesson involving employment. Since the text is designed for a young audience explaining economic status through employment and income would likely prove difficult. However the text does address economic status by describing and depicting different living quarters, i.e. apartments, condos, and variety of houses. Similarly the text has units illuminating the different types of places people live: cities, towns, farms.

For the most part I think that this text fails to portray linguistic diversity. The entire text is in English, and although the vocabulary words introduced in this text are extensive, it is an English only text. Even in the end of the text where there is a small twelve page section highlighting folklore from around the world all the stories are in English only; no other languages are present. This small section does address some multicultural learning but how vast and meaningful the unit is made is largely up to the teacher.

Ways in which the text addresses the diversity of learners and learning styles

The text addresses different learning styles by allowing a variety of activities for assessment and practice. By having some activities which are drawing, writing, acting and by posing question in a variety of structures, some short answer other multiple choice and some fill-in the blank, children given access to many ways of practicing and learning the material. The diversity of activities also allows students to show that they have learned the subject in the unit. The picture glossary and the pictures accompanying all the vocabulary words also allow some flexibility in learning style or stage of development.

Theoretical perspectives of the text authors and examples which support your analysis: What are the relationships among children in the classroom? What is the role of the teacher? How do parents and community influence a child's learning?

Vygotsky's influence can also be seen throughout the text. Vygotsky theories highlight the vital role of adult interaction in a children's development. His theories lead to terms such as scaffolding and guided participation; both require adult assistance in learning and development. Both scaffolding and guided participation also have the intent of the child gaining ability to become independent in the task. Within this text the curriculum clearly builds on itself and on the child's developmental growth; constant with the constructionist theory of education. Vygotsky's influence can also be seen inside this text by the number of student lead activities. Reciprocal teaching is accredited as one of the most powerful theories of Vygotsky's legacy. Reciprocal teaching occurs when students and teacher take turns leading discussions; as time goes on students begin to assume more of the leader role and the teacher becomes more of a facilitator than an instructor.

Both Vygotsky and Piaget stress the critical role of peer relationships in a child's cognitive development. Activities throughout this text are or could be turned into lesson plans which give children the opportunity to work in small groups or pairs. When students are given placed a position that requires them to work with a peer they are frequently met with opposing opinions; through these conflicts students learn to accommodate and find an intellectual equilibrium.

Although it is not evident in the texts' subject matter, a parents or caregivers influence is one of the most important factors in a child's schooling. By the time a child enters into first grade he or she is expected to have a large pool of knowledge and experience to draw upon. A child in the first grade is likely to recognize / read the words which surround their community. A child whose caregiver constantly exposes them to Starbucks will recognize or read the word long before they have developed the ability to read. Likewise if a child is continuously exposed to Budweiser the child will be able to 'read' Budweiser.

Reasons that children may enjoy/not enjoy the text

As with any textbook I am sure that some children will not like its contents simple because it is a school book; however I think that many students would enjoy the variety of activities, the colorful images, the focus on their state, the wide range of topics and the logical progression of material.

The text may present challenges to some students depending on the individual learning style or cognitive development but these issues could be solved with the right teacher. I believe that the biggest complaint a Californian students may have is the single language. The diverse Californian student population would likely be more open to the text if a variety of languages presented. Since the text was clearly designed for a Californian student I believe that language diversity would have been appropriate and the text would have been more effective and accessible.

Reasons that you might enjoy/not enjoy teaching the text

As a teacher I would enjoy the colorful lesson units, the picture glossary and the diverse human images. I find the lesson themes and vocabulary words important, interesting and pertinent for a first grade student. I enjoyed the variety of activities suggested at the end of the unit as all children are unique individuals and require different assessment and practice techniques. As a Californian I like that the book focuses on my state's people, places and history; however the book lacked some simple but imperative details which would magnifying the students learning and intellectual growth. I would prefer to teach with text that has an emphasis on bilingualism as being bilingual is becoming increasingly important and valuable. If we are trying to prepare our youth for success then exposure to multiple languages in school is essential. I think that I could make the text work by adapting to my individual students needs but it would also not be my first choice.