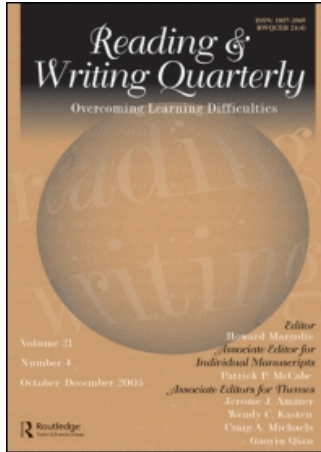


This article was downloaded by:[University of California]  
On: 7 November 2007  
Access Details: [subscription number 769789051]  
Publisher: Taylor & Francis  
Informa Ltd Registered in England and Wales Registered Number: 1072954  
Registered office: Mortimer House, 37-41 Mortimer Street, London W1T 3JH, UK



## Reading & Writing Quarterly Overcoming Learning Difficulties

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:  
<http://www.informaworld.com/smpp/title~content=t713775334>

### CODA: KEEPING READING AND WRITING PROBLEMS IN BROAD PERSPECTIVE

Linda Taylor; Howard S. Adelman

Online Publication Date: 01 October 1999

To cite this Article: Taylor, Linda and Adelman, Howard S. (1999) 'CODA: KEEPING READING AND WRITING PROBLEMS IN BROAD PERSPECTIVE', *Reading & Writing Quarterly*, 15:4, 351 - 353

To link to this article: DOI: 10.1080/105735699278143

URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/105735699278143>

PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR ARTICLE

Full terms and conditions of use: <http://www.informaworld.com/terms-and-conditions-of-access.pdf>

This article maybe used for research, teaching and private study purposes. Any substantial or systematic reproduction, re-distribution, re-selling, loan or sub-licensing, systematic supply or distribution in any form to anyone is expressly forbidden.

The publisher does not give any warranty express or implied or make any representation that the contents will be complete or accurate or up to date. The accuracy of any instructions, formulae and drug doses should be independently verified with primary sources. The publisher shall not be liable for any loss, actions, claims, proceedings, demand or costs or damages whatsoever or howsoever caused arising directly or indirectly in connection with or arising out of the use of this material.

## KEEPING READING AND WRITING PROBLEMS IN BROAD PERSPECTIVE

*Linda Taylor and Howard S. Adelman,  
University of California, Los Angeles, California, USA*

Some people believe that the reason they are good readers is because they were taught by a phonics approach. Others believe they are good readers because they were taught with a language experience or a combination approach. Indeed, most good readers seem to advocate for whatever method they think worked for them.

Our reading of the research literature, however, indicates that almost every method has *not* worked for a significant number of people. For a *few*, their reading problems stem from unaccommodated disabilities, vulnerabilities, and individual developmental differences. For many, the problems stem from socioeconomic inequities that affect readiness to learn at school and the quality of schools and schooling.

If our society truly means to provide the opportunity for all students to succeed at school, fundamental changes are needed so that teachers can personalize instruction and schools can address barriers to learning. Policy makers can call for higher standards, greater accountability, improved curricula and instruction, increased discipline, reduced school violence, and on and on. None of it means much if the reforms enacted do not ultimately result in substantive changes in the classroom and throughout a school site.

Current moves to devolve and decentralize control may or may not result in the necessary transformation of schools and schooling. Such changes do provide opportunities to reorient from "district-centric" planning and resource allocation. For too long there has been a terrible disconnect between central office policy and operations and how programs and services evolve in classrooms and schools. The time is opportune for schools and classrooms to truly become the center and guiding force for all planning. That is, planning should begin with a clear image of what the classroom and school must do to teach all students effectively. Then, the focus can move to planning how a family of schools (e.g., a high school and its feeders) and the surrounding community can complement each other's efforts and achieve economies of scale. With all this clearly in perspective,

Address correspondence to Howard Adelman, Psychology, UCLA, Post Office Box 95163, Los Angeles, CA 90095-1563, USA.

central staff and state and national policy can be reoriented to the role of developing the best ways to support local efforts *as defined locally*.

At the same time, it is essential not to create a new mythology suggesting that every classroom and school site is unique. There are fundamentals that permeate all efforts to improve schools and schooling and that should continue to guide policy, practice, and research. For example:

- The curriculum in every classroom must include a major emphasis on acquisition of basic knowledge and skills. However, such basics must be understood to involve more than the three Rs and cognitive development. There are many important areas of human development and functioning, and each contains “basics” that individuals may need help in acquiring. Moreover, any individual may require special accommodation in any of these areas.
- Every classroom must address student motivation as an antecedent, process, and outcome concern.
- Remedial procedures must be *added* to instructional programs for certain individuals, but only after appropriate nonremedial procedures for facilitating learning have been tried. Moreover, such procedures must be designed to build on strengths and must not supplant a continuing emphasis on promoting healthy development.
- Beyond the classroom, schools must have policy, leadership, and mechanisms for developing school-wide programs to address barriers to learning. Some of the work will need to be in partnership with other schools, some will require weaving school and community resources together. The aim is to evolve a comprehensive, multifaceted, and integrated continuum of programs and services, ranging from primary prevention through early intervention to treatment of serious problems. Our work suggests that at a school, this will require evolving programs to (a) enhance the ability of the classroom to enable learning, (b) provide support for the many transitions experienced by students and their families, (c) increase home involvement, (d) respond to and prevent crises, (e) offer special assistance to students and their families, and (f) expand community involvement (including volunteers).
- Leaders for education reform at all levels are confronted with the need to foster effective scale-up of promising reforms. This encompasses a major research thrust to develop efficacious demonstrations and effective models for replicating new approaches to schooling.

- Relatedly, policy makers at all levels must revisit existing policy using the lens of addressing barriers to learning with the intent of both realigning existing policy to foster cohesive practices and enacting new policies to fill critical gaps.

Clearly, there is ample direction for improving how schools address barriers to learning. The time to do so is now. Unfortunately, too many school professionals and researchers are caught up in the day-by-day pressures of their current roles and functions. Everyone is so busy “doing” that there is no time to introduce better ways. One is reminded of Winnie-the-Pooh, who was always going down the stairs, bump, bump, bump, on his head behind Christopher Robin. He thinks it is the only way to go down stairs. Still, he reasons, there might be a better way if only he could stop bumping long enough to figure it out.