

Asking Questions with Eric Haughton

by

Carl Binder

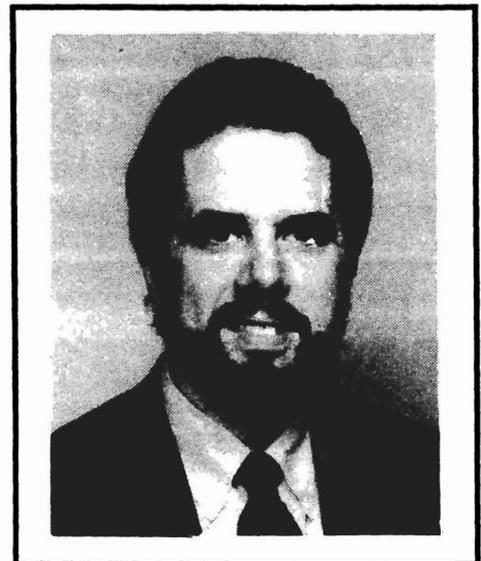
Working with Eric Haughton had a major impact on my commitment to and understanding of Precision Teaching. The concept of "fluency" to which he introduced me and many others, along with the use of fluency aims, represented a quantum leap from the more traditional thinking of "behavior modification" that many of us brought to early applications of the Standard Celeration Chart. In practice, he taught us about the implications of fluency for development of retention, endurance or attention span, and application of tool skills and skill elements. In my view, these concepts form the most fundamental principles of Precision Teaching practice and curriculum design, along with use of celeration as a direct measure of learning.

Conducting fluency research with Eric in the classroom of Elizabeth Haughton and other Precision Teachers in Hastings County, Ontario, added new dimensions to my conceptual framework. Having studied with B. F. Skinner and learned about the nuts and bolts of behavior analysis from Bea Barrett, I now learned from Eric and Elizabeth about combining science with day-to-day work in the classroom with children.

Eric taught me never to use the chart unless I have a real question in need of an answer. The question might be as simple as "Is the student learning?" Or "How fast is the student learning?" Or "What helps the student learn most?" In that case, daily charting and frequent decision-making, involving the children whenever possible, serve a real purpose in day-to-day classroom practice. But when teachers chart just for the sake of charting, as a process without a question or need to know, the chart loses its value. In fact, charting without a real desire to answer questions and make decisions actually

devalues the entire process. It's sad to see how many so-called Precision Teachers simply "go through the motions" rather than looking, with their students, for better and faster learning -- using the chart to answer questions, make decisions, and keep the learning process exciting and new.

Eric brought an almost child-like curiosity to his work -- one of the many reasons he seemed so easily able to engage children (and most adults). He really wanted to KNOW. Eric lacked the buttoned-down look and attitude of stereotyped scientists -- one reason he often came into conflict with academics and bureaucrats. But his curiosity, his genuine desire to answer questions using the standard chart, made him among the most important and contributing scientist-practitioners in the field of education. Thanks to Eric Haughton for planting so many of the seed questions that have grown in 25 years of Precision Teaching.



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