

READING AND PRE-FIRST GRADE

A Joint Statement of Concerns About Present Practices in Pre-First Grade Reading Instruction and Recommendations for Improvement

Pre-First Graders need:

Opportunities to express orally, graphically, and dramatically their feelings and responses to experiences;

and

Opportunities to interpret the language of others whether it is written, spoken, or nonverbal.

Teachers of Pre-First Graders need:

Preparation which emphasizes developmentally appropriate language experiences for all pre-first graders, including those ready to read or already reading;

and

The combined efforts of professional organizations, colleges, and universities to help them successfully meet the concerns outlined in this document.

Concerns:

1. A growing number of children are enrolled in prekindergarten and kindergarten classes in which highly structured pre-reading and reading programs are being used.
2. Decisions related to schooling, including the teaching of reading, are increasingly being made on economic and political bases instead of on our knowledge of young children and of how they best learn.
3. In a time of diminishing financial resources, schools often try to make "a good showing" on measures of achievement that may or may not be appropriate for the children involved. Such measures all too often dictate the content and goals of the programs.
4. In attempting to respond to pressures for high scores on widely-used measures of achievement, teachers of young children sometimes feel compelled to use materials,

methods, and activities designed for older children. In so doing, the teachers may impede the development of intellectual functions such as curiosity, critical thinking, and creative expression, and, at the same time, promote negative attitudes toward reading.

5. A need exists to provide alternative ways to teach and evaluate progress in pre-reading and reading skills.
6. Teachers of pre-first graders who are carrying out highly individualized programs without depending upon commercial readers and workbooks need help in articulating for themselves and the public *what* they are doing and *why*.

Recommendations:

1. Provide opportunities for reading experiences as an integrated part of the broader communication process that includes listening, speaking, and writing. A language experience approach is an example of such integration.
2. Provide for a broad range of activities both in scope and in content. Include direct experiences that offer opportunities to communicate in different settings with different persons.
3. Foster children's affective and cognitive development by providing materials, experiences, and opportunities to communicate what they know and how they feel.
4. Continually appraise how various aspects of each child's total development affect his/her reading development.
5. Use evaluative procedures that are developmentally appropriate for the children being assessed and that reflect the goals and objectives of the instructional program.
6. Ensure feelings of success for

all children in order to help them see themselves as persons who can enjoy exploring language and learning to read.

7. Plan flexibly in order to accommodate a variety of learning styles and ways of thinking.
8. Respect the language the child brings to school, and use it as a base for language activities.
9. Plan activities that will cause children to become active participants in the learning process rather than passive recipients of knowledge.
10. Provide opportunities for children to experiment with language and simply to have fun with it.
11. Require that preservice and in-service teachers of young children be prepared in the teaching of reading in a way that emphasizes reading as an integral part of the language arts as well as of total curriculum.
12. Encourage developmentally appropriate language learning opportunities in the home.

The Committee

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● Barbara Day—Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development

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