

sound quality and deserving of public support. Schools subscribing to the standards are meeting their broader social responsibility by promoting the pursuit of excellence in a major component of education. □

1. *Standards of Excellence in Business Education* is available from the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, DC 20402 (Stock No. 065-000-00236-1, \$4.75).

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Reading

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How Should Reading Be Taught in Kindergarten?

The issue of reading instruction's place in kindergarten classrooms sparks immediate and often emotional response from supervisors, administrators, teachers, and parents. Those who are against reading in kindergarten argue that most five-year-olds are not ready for it and that the primary responsibility of kindergartens is to develop social, physical, conceptual, and language abilities. The advocates point out that many children are ready, especially those who have attended preschool programs that teach some traditional kindergarten skills.

A common compromise is to begin instruction with children who are ready and not push the others. This seemingly simple solution is difficult if not impossible to carry out in practice. First, the decision as to which kindergarten children are prepared is a complex one. Many children who can indeed begin reading are unable to complete the traditional workbook and skill sheet assignments that are part and parcel of most beginning programs. They often have six-year-old brains but five-year-old attention spans. Second, once parents realize that their child is not in a reading group, they exert tremendous pressure on teachers to begin instruction

prematurely. Third, carrying out reading instruction with children who are ready leaves teachers little time and energy for planning and conducting crucial readiness activities for the other students.

A more appropriate question than, "Should reading be taught in kindergarten?" is, "How should reading be taught in kindergarten?" A whole body of research under the umbrella term, emergent literacy, shows that children who come from homes in which reading and writing are promoted and valued begin reading before they come to school. In addition to being read to, these children have "pretend reading" experiences with favorite books in which they figure out how reading works, learn to track print, and grasp some important words. They also have picked up many words such as "McDonald's" and "Pepsi" from the logo print in their environment. The other distinguishing characteristic of children who come to school ready to read is that they usually have experimented with writing by copying words and inventing spellings. The research appears clear that young children whose home experiences immerse them in reading and writing become successful school readers (Teale and Sulzby 1986).

Reading should be taught in kinder-

garten in a way that closely mirrors the natural reading and writing experiences fortunate children have before entering school. In classrooms in which shared reading of big books, language experience, writing with invented spellings, and word banks are a large part of daily instruction, the decision of which children are ready and which are not does not have to be made. Children who come to school lacking readiness develop it by being immersed in reading and writing. Those who come to class ready or actually reading continue their growth as they learn large numbers of words and letter-sound associations through shared reading and writing experiences. For an excellent discussion of kindergarten activities that follow this approach and further readings on this topic, see Mason and Au (1986). □

References

- Mason, J. M., and K. H. Au. "Reading in Kindergarten." In *Reading Instruction for Today*. Glenview, Ill.: Scott Foresman, 1986.
- Teale, W., and E. Sulzby, eds. *Emergent Literacy: Writing and Reading*. Norwood, N.J.: Ablex, 1986.

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Curriculum Capsules

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