



## OPTIONS CENTER EDUCATION TOPIC



### Reading at School & at Home by Madelyn Stoner

#### Reading at School

Most classrooms have reading groups centering on a reading text and workbooks, with children grouped according to ability level. Sometimes all members of a group may read copies of the same book, with supplementary teacher-prepared materials. Some programs integrate reading with other subjects. For example, if the topic of study were “magnets,” children would read about them, experiment with them, learn to spell words related to them, and write stories about them. Sometimes classrooms have individualized, independent reading programs in which the child contracts with the teacher to read a particular book and complete certain activities such as looking up unfamiliar words in a dictionary or drawing pictures of events in sequence.

Most classrooms use one or a combination of four basic approaches.

#### Sight Words

The sight word approach teaches children to remember single words through repeated exposure and practice. Students usually memorize simple, common words that are repeated throughout a story. For example:

**See Jack run.**

**See Jack run fast.**

Before reading a story, students learn the new words presented to them which they then practice in the context of the story. As they learn this vocabulary, the teacher gradually introduces additional new words so that students build a “sight vocabulary.”

#### Phonics

In phonics, the child learns individual letter sounds and how to blend them to form words. Where the sight approach is visually oriented, the phonics approach is auditorily oriented. Children learn beginning and ending consonant sounds, short and long vowel sounds, and rules for putting these sounds together. They start by blending such words as “cat,” “top,” and “mud.”

#### Linguistics

Linguistics is similar to phonics in the use of letter sounds. In this approach, however, letters are grouped together to form “word families” such as --end, --ar, and --ing. The student learns to look at the word family and form new words by changing the first letter. For example: **bend, send, lend**. With this method, the ability to identify rhyming words is important.

### **Psycholinguistics**

The psycholinguistics approach uses the child’s own language, sentence patterns, and picture cues in order to predict the sequence of events. Children learn to read songs and stories with which they are already familiar, such as “Happy Birthday to You” or dictation in their own words. This approach focuses on relevancy for the child. Thus the student brought up on a farm would not initially read stories about cities. In addition, reading mistakes are not corrected unless they change the meaning.

### **Talk with the Teacher**

Parents often find it helpful to talk with their child’s teacher to find out the approach or combination of approaches the teacher uses. In this way, they can support what is taught at school.

### **Reading at Home**



Reading begins at home. Parents can encourage their children’s natural curiosity about books and their desire to learn to read. They can help their children develop readiness to read and can support what is being taught at school. In order to begin reading, children must develop the necessary language skills. They need a degree of independence and maturity. And they must be motivated to learn to read. Children develop this reading readiness at different rates just as they learn to talk and walk at different ages.

### **Language**

Reading is first and foremost a form of communication. When learning to talk, children develop the concept that words communicate thoughts, emotions, and needs. When learning to read, they develop the concept that words can be communicated visually as well as orally. In order that the printed words will have meaning for them, children must have a solid foundation in language. Mastering spoken language is a key step toward mastering written language. The more experiences children have, the more they are talked to and listened to, the more stimulation they receive--the more they will be ready to read. Parents can help their children develop the needed foundation in language by talking with them and listening to them.

- Talk with your children while doing things together: folding laundry, driving the car, cooking.
- Ask your child to sequence the events of the day at dinner or at bedtime.
- Discuss what you've seen on TV or read together. Ask questions: Who was your favorite character? Why? What would you have done? What do you think will happen next?
- Repeat favorite nursery rhymes and stories. If your child has memorized them, listen while the child tells them to you.
- Encourage questions and try to answer them.



## **Independence and Maturity**

Readiness to read requires a certain amount of independence and maturity because it implies the ability to explore on one's own. Children need help and guidance to achieve independence. And successful reading requires that children determine words by themselves rather than rely on an adult. Readiness to read also requires a willingness on the child's part to take risks, since mistakes are an unavoidable part of the learning process. The child must be willing to make a mistake and continue. Thus learning to read is hard work and children need all the emotional support they can get.

- Correct sparingly. Be careful not to produce anxiety that will threaten the child's willingness to take risks.
- Let your children know it's all right to move at their own pace, that they won't be compared to each other.
- Give your children responsibilities at home. This will help prepare them to take responsibility for their reading.

## **Motivation**

Learning to read is much like learning any other skill. It requires a combination of instruction, experimentation, and practice. But the first step must be motivation. The child must want to learn to read. Parents can encourage their children to read by demonstrating that they think reading is important. Parents can help their children discover the benefits of reading: new ideas... relaxation... adventure ... fun.

- Buy as many children's books as you can afford
- Give books as gifts
- Visit the library regularly
- Allow your children to choose their own books. Don't rush them.
- Show your children that you enjoy reading. Make sure they see you reading newspapers, magazines, and books.
- Set up a special place for reading.
- Encourage older children to read to younger children.

- Surround your child with words; point out street signs; label objects in the house such as table, desk, and stove.
- Play word games like Scrabble, Anagrams, and Ad Lib.
- Watch educational TV programs together. Some stress reading development (Sesame Street).
- Read to your child, especially at bedtime. Reread favorite stories.
- Ask your child to read to you.
- Stress the things your children do well in reading rather than any mistakes they make. Remember: Success breeds success.



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**Options Center for Health and Education, Inc.**  
 4316 N. Prospect Road • Peoria Heights, IL 61616  
 (309) 685-7721 • email: [options@mtco.com](mailto:options@mtco.com) •  
[www.options-center.com](http://www.options-center.com)