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An Info-letter For Parents And Teachers

From The Editor's Desk

Dear readers,

Hope ALL of you had a good vacation and are recharged.

In the last issue we talked about the importance of reading and the process of reading in the preschool years. In this issue we are going to talk about the various methods by which we teach children how to read. I can only reiterate the importance of reading; but since the process is started in preschool years, it is equally important to pay attention to the method by which reading is taught to the preschooler.

I do not propose to lay out the steps of teaching reading to preschoolers through this newsletter (that requires a book by itself and tons of classroom experience), but aim only to introduce the basic methods of teaching to read. It is left to the reader to further research the issue in-depth and choose or discard the method/s.

If children learn to read properly, they can comprehend, write, and spell properly.

And we all know how important **that** is for primary school years.

To the parents, some parts of this issue may seem to be irrelevant, but I think it may be useful for you also to know and understand how your child learns to read at school.

Gayatri Kiran



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Methods of Reading



The Montessori method uses the term Phonetics to describe it's way of teaching reading. Phonetics works best when the child has a fairly good grasp over spoken language. However, when language is taught through the Montessori method, it is necessary to remember that several other processes are used parallel to phonetics. So borrowing ONLY phonetics in its singularity from Montessori may lead to more harm than good.

—Sujata Kumar,
Montessorian

Whenever we introduce a language, Indian or foreign, the basic steps remain the same.

Listening----Speaking-----Reading -- Writing

Take a minute to review this and you realise that this works for English, French, Kannada, Hindi, etc etc etc without an exception. There is never an instance, except when there are physical difficulties, that this sequence is upset. Even in those cases, there will be some manner of receiving and expressing language, which happens before reading and writing.

In this section a few of the prominent methods of teaching reading to preschoolers are outlined. Whatever method the teacher or the parent uses, the important factors to their success is the use of ***Patience, Consistency and Creativity.***

I. Phonics Method

Phonics (used sometimes interchangeably with Phonetics) is probably the most widely used way of teaching reading to preschool children. This method focuses on teaching the child the correspondence between letters and the sounds that they make. Once the letters and the sounds are learnt, the child is taught to blend 2, 3, 4 letters/ sounds together to form words. Phonics reading is an important part of helping children learn to read and is an excellent foundation for children learning to read and spell.

The phonics system had been used successfully in the USA and Europe for many years to teach children how to read. It supplies the student with tools to expand their vocabulary. Children begin learning to read using phonics usually around the age of 5 or 6. Teaching English reading using phonics requires students to learn the connections between letter patterns and the sounds they represent. Phonics instruction requires the teacher to provide students with a core body of information about phonics rules, or patterns.

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II. Look and Say/ Whole Language approach

Many experienced teachers believe firmly in this method of teaching to read. With the 'look and say' method children learn to recognize whole words or sentences rather than individual sounds. Your student will look at a word which you sound, and in turn will repeat the sound (the word). Flashcards with individual words written on them are used for this method often accompanied with a related picture. This method is also sometimes called "picture reading" or "sight reading method". Here the child starts reading by first recognising the pattern formed by commonly used words, and the exposure to these starts much before reading is formally taught to the child. This method may lead to a heavy dependency on rote memorization and make reading a less meaningful exercise.

Whole language instruction was based on the principle that children could learn to read given (a) proper motivation, (b) access to good literature, (c) many reading opportunities, (d) focus on meaning, and (e) instruction to help students use meaning clues to determine the pronunciation of unknown words. For some advocates of whole language, phonics was opposite to helping new readers to get the meaning; they asserted that cutting words into small chunks and reassembling them had no connection to the ideas the author wanted to convey.

III. Language Experience Approach

The language experience approach is an approach to reading instruction based on activities and stories developed from personal experiences of the learner. The stories about personal experiences are written down by a teacher and read together until the learner associates the written form of the word with the spoken. There are several benefits to this method

- ◆ It brings together writing, reading, art, and language.
- ◆ It extends the learners' creativity in storytelling through writing.
- ◆ It helps learners understand that what they think and say can be written.
- ◆ It is learner-centered and demonstrates that the learners' thoughts and language are valued.
- ◆ It provides reading material that is predictable and readable because it uses the learners' natural language.

The children say a sentence about a picture or an event and the teacher writes it down and reads it loud. In this manner several sentences are "collected" and form the reading materials for the child. Many teachers use this as the first experience to reading as it is made up of material straight from the child's context and experience itself and thus helps the child gain confidence with the entire process of reading.

Many experienced teachers arrive at their own combinations for a successful reading program. Some practice the learning experience with the very young, then move on to phonetics for introduction of the sound-symbol correspondence and wrap it up with the look see method for non-phonetic/ unusual words and blends.

Letters To The Editor

We plan to grow and thrive from our reader responses. Please feel free to write in to us, by mail or post.

We will try to publish as many responses as we can.

Your responses are awaited at
mahiti@samyuktacdc.com



Editor's choice- For teaching Hindi

as a second language refer article "Teaching and Learning Hindi as a 'Second' Language: Exploring a new Terrain

Chandrika Mathur *Rishi Valley School,
Chittoor District, India, Journal of
Krishnamurti Schools, May 2001, vol 5 .
www.journal.kfonline.org*

Resource Corner

For selecting books for children

- ◆ Dr. Seuss Series (www.seussville.com)
- ◆ Ladybird Phonics Readers series (www.ladybird.co.uk)

For teaching methods for teachers-

- ◆ www.teachingtreasures.com.au
- ◆ www.phonics.com
- ◆ www.preschooleducation.com

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