

**When you schedule uninterrupted reading time for students, be sure the teacher also reads.**

# Effecting the affect in the reading curriculum

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One of the major goals of the elementary school curriculum is to provide children with the tools needed to read, for reading is basic for optimum participation in our society. In order to achieve this goal, the reading program should not only help children learn the word recognition and comprehension skills needed to be an independent reader, but should also develop positive attitudes towards reading and life-long reading habits. The balance and interplay between the areas of skill instruction and the affective dimensions of reading characterize a reading program more than any other feature. An overemphasis on one area would limit the potential of a student to acquire the skills needed for reading or handicap him/her from full use and satisfaction from reading in life.

With the current back-to-the-basics and competency testing movements, there is a grave danger that the major emphasis of many reading programs will be to focus instruction primarily on the mechanical skills to the near exclusion of important aspects in the affective dimension. While skills are needed for reading and are certainly significant, skill instruction should never be an end in itself. As Strickler and Eller stated, "What have they gained if children leave school knowing how to read, but don't know why to read, what to read, when to read—or worse—don't care to read at all?"

Regardless of any movement, no matter how strong it is, reading instruction cannot be directed only to the teaching of reading skills. The reading program must concern itself with fostering positive attitudes toward reading, for the attitudes an individual has toward reading significantly influence the reading habits which are developed and carried through life.

The following are suggestions for the teacher who wishes to build student interest in reading.

1. Get to know every child in the class. Determine the interests of each child and be sure to provide reading

materials as well as sources to materials<sup>2</sup> which are in consonance with those interests. Encourage students to pursue the interests they have and develop new interests.

2. Provide a variety and wealth of reading materials, such as newspapers, magazines and current literature as well as the all-time favorites. If the school does not have a library which has reading materials which will interest your students, borrow them from the local library.
3. Familiarize yourself with the wide variety of children's literature and annotated bibliographies<sup>3</sup> currently on the market. Use children's literature to supplement other subject areas, such as math, science or social studies.
4. Provide time for Uninterrupted Sustained Silent Reading (USSR). Children need time to read for themselves in an environment devoid of distractions. During this scheduled period, it is important that the teacher also reads. USSR will not work well if the teacher is grading papers while the children are reading. Besides, it is important for the teacher to model good reading habits.
5. Provide time for purposeful oral reading. Encourage children to select a short story, passage or poem which they really enjoy and practice it thoroughly for effective oral presentation to the class.
6. Provide time for sharing books read. Nobody can "sell" another child on reading a book better than the child who has just read and enjoyed that book. During such sharing periods, the teacher should also give "book talks" to the students. This will expose them to unfamiliar books and will also let the children know that you really enjoy reading yourself.
7. Read to children regularly. Schedule a time each day when children are read to. Children should be exposed to the multitude of creative ways language is used in poetry, narrative and occasionally expository writings.
8. Teach skills only when they are needed. Assemble a group of students who lack a particular skill and instruct them in the application of that skill. Allow the rest of the class to do something else more worthwhile and relevant (like read books). Disassemble the group when the purpose for its creation is accomplished.
9. Engage children in experiences which build and expand their experiential and language backgrounds. Hands-on science lessons and field trips are excellent. For each such experience, provide opportunities for the children to discuss the activity and to use the vocabulary associated with that experience.
10. Don't immediately correct children if they make miscues when they read aloud. Allow children the opportunity to self-correct. Because language is redundant and much information is carried in the context, children can often determine the appropriate pronunciation of a word themselves if given the opportunity.
11. Discourage children from immediately correcting each other when miscues are made during oral reading. Allowing children to jump in and yell out the correct word does not help the youngster who is doing the reading. It only enhances the ego of the

child doing the correcting, and this is usually done at the expense of the child who needs support, not degradation. When children each prepare self-selected material to read orally and present their selection in a true audience situation, this unhealthy practice is further eliminated.

12. Teach children to be flexible in using strategies to unlock unknown words. Teaching children to rely primarily on phonics as a tool to unlock unknown words will hinder a child. They need to learn to use grammatical patterns (syntactic cues) as well as the meaning of the passage (semantic cues) to be versatile in word recognition.
13. Build positive school-home relationships. Send notes home to parents stating the accomplishments the child is making in reading. Such a procedure can greatly improve children's self concepts as well as develop positive attitudes of the parents toward the school.
14. Allow children to select their own reading materials. Children informally learn that reading is enjoyable and can enrich their lives when they choose books on topics interesting and relevant to them.
15. Create an environment in which children are willing to take the risk of being wrong. Risk-taking is essential for learning.

The teacher is the most important ingredient of a good reading program. It is the teacher who makes most, if not all of the instructional decisions, and creates the climate that pervades in the class. The teacher has major responsibility for developing in children the skills of reading as well as positive attitudes towards reading.

In order to determine whether you are providing a balanced reading program which emphasizes the affective domain as well as the skills necessary for reading, record your answers to the following questions. Then compute your score according to the guidelines following the questions.

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|-----|----|--|
| Yes | No | 1. Do you know the interest areas of each child in your classroom?   |
| Yes | No | 2. Do you regularly read children's books so that you are familiar with books currently on the market?                       |
| Yes | No | 3. Do you have a minimum of three books per child in the classroom library which are diversified in interests and levels?    |
| Yes | No | 4. Do you change the books in the classroom library on a regular basis?  |
| Yes | No | 5. Do you regularly schedule time for Uninterrupted Sustained Silent Reading?  |
| Yes | No | 6. Do you read with the children during the sustained silent reading period?   |
| Yes | No | 7. Do you regularly schedule a time for children to read orally something they prepared and practiced for oral presentation? |
| Yes | No | 8. Do you regularly schedule time for sharing books read?  |
| Yes | No | 9. Do you read to children both prose and poetry?  |
| Yes | No | 10. Do you teach reading skills based on student need rather than convenience?   |

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|-----|----|---|
| Yes | No | 11. Do you engage children in experiences which build and expand the experiential and language backgrounds of children?   |
| Yes | No | 12. Do you refrain from immediately correcting your students when they miscue?  |
| Yes | No | 13. Do you discourage children from jumping in and calling out the word when a child is having difficulty with that word? |
| Yes | No | 14. Do you encourage children to write and make books for the classroom library?  |
| Yes | No | 15. Do you teach children to be flexible when using strategies to unlock unknown words?                                   |
| Yes | No | 16. Do you regularly communicate positive information to parents when their child is making good progress in reading?     |
| Yes | No | 17. Is your classroom environment such that children are willing to take the risks needed for learning?                   |

Directions for Scoring: For each **Yes** response give yourself one (1) point. Find your total score on the following chart to see how well your reading program is providing experiences which build positive attitudes towards reading.

Score	Interpretation
0-4	Program should be rebuilt.
5-8	Program needs major overhaul.
9-11	Program needs tune-up.
12-14	Program needs minor adjustment.
15-17	Program is in good condition.

The questions posed are not offered on mandates which must be met. Changes do not occur readily when they are mandated by another. Rather, changes are made most easily as the result of honest self-evaluation. The questions are offered as food-for-thought and as stimulus for action for those classroom teachers who want to evaluate the affective dimensions of their reading program.

#### Footnotes

1. Darryl Strickler and William Eller, "Reading: Attitudes and Interests," in **Reading: Foundations and Instructional Strategies**, eds. Pose Lamb and Richard Arnold (Belmont, California: Wadsworth, 1976), p. 449.
  2. Peter Cardozo and Ted Menten, **Whole Kids Catalog** (Des Plaines, Illinois: Bantam, 1975).
  3. Patricia Cianciolo, ed., **Adventuring with Books** (Urbana, Illinois: National Council of Teachers of English, 1977).
- Nancy Larrick, **Teacher's Guide to Children's Books** (Columbus, Ohio: Charles E. Merrill, 1963).
- Virginia Reid, ed., **Reading Ladders for Human Relations**, 5th ed., (Washington D.C.: American Council on Education, 1972).
- George D. Spache, **Sources of Good Books for Poor Readers** (Newark, Delaware: International Reading Association, 1969).
- Marian E. White, ed., **High Interest-Easy Reading for Junior and Senior High School Students** (New York, New York: Citation Press, 1972).