

Why Reading is Important

Educators see reading as the foundation of success in school learning and the key to achievement of potential after graduation. Teachers at each grade level and in every subject area – from preschool through high school – are providing students with the instruction needed to develop comprehensive reading ability. By calling attention to the importance of reading, we hope to send the message to students, parents, and other members of the community that the ability and willingness to read is the key to lifelong learning.

In addition to stressing the importance of reading as a “tool” subject, school administrators and teachers also call attention to the fact that learning to read is a difficult process. It involves concentrated effort, extensive practice, and ongoing expansion of essential skills. It requires a broad foundation of language that includes an adequate vocabulary and a well-developed “ear” for word order and sentence structure. It calls for the ability to distinguish differences in both sound and shape of words. The child, in the

process of learning to read the printed word, must develop the concept that it is “talk written down.” The symbol system used for the “talk written down” involves twenty-six letters of the alphabet which, alone or in combination, represent forty-four sounds. Because English is not a completely phonetic language, the learner must learn to recognize each word by its root, prefix, and suffix – as well as by the way it is used in a sentence.

Teachers begin this instruction in reading on the day the child enters school. They build on the foundation that each child brings from his or her

Teachers build on the foundation of the child’s background experience.

own background experience. The cornerstone of this foundation is the child’s language. Parents give their children a sound

beginning when they work to develop each child’s vocabulary and sentence length to their potential. Reading to young children, telling events in sequence, and playing rhyming games all help prepare the beginning reader for

the task ahead. During school, language is developed, enriched, and expanded. Stories are told and read. Often the children's own stories are told, written, read and shared. The alphabet and number symbols are learned, along with what each symbol represents. Primary grades bring an expansion of these early skills with a greater part of the day devoted to learning how to get information from the printed word. Emphasis goes beyond the pronunciation of the words to embrace comprehension of the ideas that are expressed on the page.



As the student moves from one grade to another and from one subject area to a class in a different subject, he or she embraces a different vocabulary and is taught the specific reading skills associated with the course concepts. Math teachers engage students in learning to read numbers, symbols of operation, and problems presented in the vocabulary of mathematics. Social studies teacher teach students how to read textbooks, resource material, maps, charts, graphs, and tables essential to understanding the content.

English teachers teach students how to read the literature of another culture or another time in order to gather ideas and thinking expressed by the author. Each science class involves student in learning to read mathematical and

scientific formulas, equations, symbols, and pertinent vocabulary words. Vocational teachers teach student to read blueprints and complex directions and

symbols; music teachers teach students to read the symbols that translate into performance; and driver education teachers teach the reading needed for safe vehicle operation.

Each teacher in school is a member of the cadre of educators involved in developing reading skills. In a sequential process, reading skills are taught and retaught in an effort to ensure that every child masters the reading process. Teachers and administrators are firmly committed to the idea that the student who leaves school with reading skills in place has just begun his or her lifelong learning.

“Reading is to the mind what exercise is to the body.”

~Joseph Addison