DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 397 959 PS 024 329

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TITLE A Review of the Research and Literature on Emergent Literacy.
PUB DATE Mar 96
NOTE 29p.
PUB TYPE Viewpoints (Opinion/Position Papers, Essays, etc.) (120)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Age Differences; Beginning Reading; Early Childhood Education; *Emergent Literacy; Kindergarten; *Literacy; Literacy Education; Literature Reviews; Parent Role; *Prereading Experience; *Pretend Play; School Entrance Age; School Readiness; Teaching Methods; *Young Children
IDENTIFIERS Educator Role; Maternal Scaffolding

ABSTRACT

In view of the importance of literacy learning, this paper defines emergent literacy and explores how researchers and teachers define it in the 1990s. The paper also attempts to answer the following questions: (1) What is the best way to teach literacy to young children? (2) Is there a correct way to teach it? (3) What does the research say regarding academic versus social learning? (4) Has kindergarten become too academic? (5) How does the research address age appropriateness versus developmental appropriateness? and (6) How can emergent literacy be assessed? The paper provides a brief description of the history of the emergent literacy concept, describes the three stages of emergent literacy development, and discusses major issues, controversies, programs and contributors in relation to Piaget and Vygotsky's educational theories, with an emphasis on the significance of make-believe play to literacy development. The paper also discusses controversies surrounding the significance of academic-oriented kindergarten, appropriate kindergarten entry age, maturational readiness, developmentally appropriate practices, and assessment practices. The paper concludes with recommendations on curriculum and teacher education, and a discussion of the roles of parents, teachers, and school administrators in children's literacy development. Contains 22 references. (MOK)

A Review of the Research and Literature

on

Emergent Literacy

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EDEL 625

Dr Lass

March 26, 1996

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Introduction

> The early childhood literacy program must adopt as its foundation functional, meaningful activities that involve reading and writing in a wide variety of ways. A priority for the early childhood curriculum should be ensuring that all children become capable and willing participants in the literate society of the classroom, home, and community. Even before children can read and write conventionally, the curriculum can foster these knowledges and attitudes. Overall skill in reading and writing grows from this kind of start (Emerging Literacy, 1989).

Emergent literacy theory asserts that literacy concepts are being developed at virtually all ages. Knowledge of communication forms are being learned as an individual listens and speaks, and makes transactions with print.

A reader and writer go through three stages of development: emergent literacy, early literacy, and independent literacy. To reach the independent stage, one must first pass through emergent and early literacy. The focus of this research review is emergent literacy. The emergent reader (Roskos et. al. 1994):

-knows what a book is.

-holds the book correctly.

-recognizes front and back covers of the book.

-turns pages from front to back.

-"reads" a story from pictures.

-"reads" a favorite book from memory.

-sequences a story.

-recites rhymes and sings songs.

-makes predictions about story content based on illustrations and title.

-knows the spoken word can be written down in print.

-can name some letters.

The emergent writer:

-uses scribbles and drawings to communicate ideas.

-gestures or role-plays while drawing or writing as another means of communication.

-experiments with left-to-right and right-to-left writing.

-is developing a growing awareness of what is a "word."

-imitates making signs and lists like the "grownups."

-pretends to read his or her own scribbling or letters.

-often draws illustrations and adds the "text."

Learning more about emergent literacy is important because preschool and kindergarten teachers need to know how to teach literacy to young children. Parents may also be interested in how to help their children acquire literacy at a relatively young age. Researchers have learned that literacy takes place at all ages (Sippola 1994). Children learn at different rates and in different environments.

This paper intends to define emergent literacy and how researchers and teachers define it in the 90's. The topics that will be addressed are: What is the best way to teach literacy to young children? Is there a correct way to teach it? What does the research say regarding academic learning vs. social learning? Has kindergarten become too academic? How does the research address age appropriateness vs. developmental appropriateness? How can emergent literacy be assessed?

Definitions

Reading-

Reading is defined as "the process of getting the message from visual language symbols, not as merely making the right noises in response to them" (Johnson 1971).

Reading Readiness-

Reading Readiness first appeared in about 1925 and with it the concept that there is an educational job of preparation to be done before a child enters into the formal school reading program (Johnson 1971). Two basic weaknesses occur in this early research. First the

investigators have not offered sound suggestions for prescriptive programs to ready the child for learning. Second, researchers have assumed that school is the thing for which a child must be ready and that the standardized tests of reading achievement are a true measure of the child's success in reading. However the research now indicates that standardized tests do not accurately reflect the child's progress.

The concept of reading readiness evolved from the developmental theories of G. Stanley Hall and Arnold Gesell (Sippola 1994). In essence, young children were thought to be not "ready" to read due to a lack of maturity. The solution was to postpone reading instruction until the child was mentally six and a half years of age. These teachers were termed maturationists.

Pikulski (1988) points out that too many writers have implied that reading readiness is a discrete point of time in a child's educational career rather than the evolution of "a complex array of attitudes and abilities." Reading readiness has often been limited as a concept because it failed to functionally acknowledge the relationship to language arts and communication skills.

Emergent Literacy-

Emergent suggests something that is dynamic and becoming, not a specific point or period in time, and literacy stresses the interrelatedness of the language arts (Pikulski 1988). The International Encyclopedia of Education (1994) defines emergent literacy as "referring to the reading and writing behavior that children exhibit before they learn to read and write conventionally." It also states that written language development is not added onto oral language

development, social development, or motor development at a point fairly late in childhood (age 7), but instead it starts early.

Current researchers have extended the age range of the children studied to fourteen months of age or younger. Literacy is not regarded as simply a cognitive skill to be learned, but as a complex sociopsycholinguistic activity. Literacy learning is investigated in homes and community settings. Studies are now seeking to understand literacy learning from the child's point of view, to understand what is going on in the child's head and in the child's world (Emerging Literacy 1989).

Developmental Appropriate Instruction-

The National Association for the Education of Young Children (1986, 5) defines "developmental appropriateness" as a concept related to both "predictable sequences of growth and change that occur in (most) children during the first 9 years of life" and to the "individual pattern and timing of growth, as well as individual personality, learning style, and family background."

Documentation-

Documentation in educational assessment is defined as a process that is supported by methods or instruments, but should not be defined by them (Emerging Literacy 1989, 108). Unlike a testing program, which is geared to evaluating children against prescribed expectations, the first purpose of documentation is one of inquiry, of looking more closely at the thought, language and skill children bring to their initial attempts to read. Documentation builds on data

collected at intervals over the years and across literacy contexts. The records of documentation are meant to be "public in the sense that they should be open to interpretation by other teachers, administrators, and parents (Emerging Literacy 1989).

History

In the 19th-century, an influential physician named Amariah Brigham and many of his peers believed that "cultivating intellectual faculties of children before the age of six or seven" would harm body and soul:

> "Early mental excitement will serve only to bring forth beautiful but premature flowers, which are destined soon to wither away, without producing fruit" (cited in McGill- Franzen, 1992).

According to these doctors, more than an hour of school for children under 8 years old would induce the "morbid condition of precocity," which could lead to "imbecility or premature old age" (McGill-Franzen 1992).

Arnold Gesell, an influential physician of the next century, related human development to "neural ripening" (McGill-Franzen 1992). As a developmentalist, Gesell believed that children's development is biologically fixed and that the timetable could not be influenced by instruction. Teachers were advised not to tamper with the unfolding maturation of the child.

In the 1930's, Carleton Washburne identified the mental age of 6 1/2 years as the optimal time to begin to teach reading. Over the years, this theory has persisted even though no credible evidence supports it (McGill-Franzen 1992).

Prior to the mid-1970's, when research on children's literacy knowledge and skills began, young children were not thought to know much about reading and writing ("Emergent Literacy" 1994). For example, much of what constituted formal instruction in kindergarten appeared to underestimate the ability and skill actually possessed by young children. People spoke of "reading readiness" rather than of "emergent literacy." The readiness view assumed that children needed to acquire many non-literacy skills and behaviors before they could learn to read and write. Oral language development was referred to as a primary language process, while written language development was referred to as a secondary language process. It was commonly thought that each area developed separately.

Piaget's studies centered on intellectual development of the child. In the preoperational thought period, children of preschool age increasingly use language to help organize their world and adjust to it. Several important points of Piaget's work on reading readiness are:

1. The child must reach his own understandings; they cannot be handed to him ready-made.

2. Mere acquisition of concrete experiences will not yield understandings; the elements of the experiences must be identified and processed.

3. In spite of the child's apparently innate capacity for acquiring the understandings, he may need considerable help in learning to process his experiences.

4. This processing will require that the child handle a variety of types of stimuli in an integrated rather than an isolated fashion.

5. Because of his restricted experiences and thinking abilities, there are limits beyond which a child cannot go at a particular stage of development (Johnson 1971).

Some of the research from past decades has contributed to an emergent literacy perspective. "For example, studies of early readers (Clark, 1976; Durkin, 1966), research documenting the importance of storybook reading in early childhood literacy development (Fodor, 1966;Irwin, 1960; Templin, 1957), and pioneer work by individuals like Legrun (1932) and Clay (1967) all support an emergent literacy perspective" (as cited in Emerging Literacy 1989, 2).

Research on emergent literacy really mushroomed during the 1970's and 1980's. The noted New Zealand educator, Marie Clay, was trained as a developmental psychologist in the Piagetian tradition, who believed that teachers revise their instruction, not their expectations for learning, when children are not progressing. Clay said that she was unprepared for the dramatic way that "appropriate instruction" in reading accelerated development (McGill-Franzen 1992).

Major Issues, Controversies, Programs, and Contributors

Is there a correct order to teach reading in? According to a longitudinal study by Morris (1993), in which 53 kindergarten students were tested on the relationship between their concept of word in text and phoneme awareness in learning to read, there is. Morris stated that beginning consonant knowledge is achieved before concept of word in text ; concept of word in text is achieved before the ability to segment words into phonemes; and segmentation precedes word recognition ability (BC CW PS WR). There were two instructional conditions in this study. In two of the classes language-experience reading activities were part of the daily routine. By May 84% of the children demonstrated a concept of word in text and 71% could segment words into phonemes. In the oral language/experiential play kindergarten, where there was little direct teaching of print-related concepts during the year, only 50% of the children demonstrated a

concept of word in text by May and only 18% showed phoneme-segmentation skill at the year's end (Morris 1993).

> "Although instruction accelerated learning in the language-experience group, it is significant that both groups followed a similar developmental pattern in word knowledge growth. The Guttman analyses showed 90% adherence to the BC CW PS WR pattern in one group and 91% adherence in the other" (Morris 1993).

One of the current controversies concerns the role that instruction plays in early literacy development. The role of academic learning against social learning is one of top priority.

> "While it appears that young children can learn much about literacy without the benefit of the highly formal reading and writing instruction so commonly found in kindergarten and first grade, it also appears that young children's literacy learning benefits greatly from adult tutoring that is responsive to child interests, and sensitive to a child's current level of understanding" ("Emergent literacy" 1994).

Such "adult tutoring" might also be called "scaffolding." In scaffolding, the adult takes control of elements of the task beyond the learner's capability, allowing the child to focus on those elements within her range of competence (Peters 1993). Scaffolding extends the child's knowledge to a higher level (Vukelich 1993).

Scaffolding is one of the ideas of the Russian developmental psychologist Lev Vygotsky. In his sociocultural theory he states that social experience shapes the ways of thinking and interpreting the world available to individuals (Berk 1994). A basic premise of Vygotsky's theory is that all uniquely human, higher forms of mental activity are jointly constructed and transferred to children through dialogues with other people. Vygotsky's concept of the "zone of proximal development" refers to a range of tasks that the child cannot yet handle alone but can accomplish

with the help of adults and more skilled peers. "As children engage in cooperative dialogues with more mature partners, they internalize the language of these interactions and use it to organize their independent efforts in the same way" (Berk 1994). Therefore, Vygotsky advocated teacher or parent interaction with children to promote literacy through the child's own development.

Vygotsky's theory also states the importance of make-believe play. Play creates a "zone of proximal development" in the child. From studies we have learned that the enrichment of the play environment with literacy materials does foster children's engagement in literacy behaviors (Vukelich 1993). These studies suggest that:

1. The enrichment of the play environment with carefully selected literacy materials results in a significant increase in the amount of literacy activity children engage in during play.

2. Children's reading and writing behaviors become more purposeful in literacy-enriched play settings.

3. Literacy-enriched play settings encourage children to engage in the functions of literacy common to the situation by making the context explicit.

4. Literacy activities in literacy-enriched play become more connected.

5. Children engage in more reading and writing activities with each other in literacy-enriched environments.

6. Adult involvement with children while they play in literacy-enriched environments encourages children's engagement in literacy-related behaviors (Vukelich 1993).

The literature on children's play reveals that its contributions to child development and social learning are numerous.

Friedrich Froebel also advocated play as the basis of kindergarten curriculum. When kindergartens first became a part of public schools, they were viewed as distinct from the rest of the elementary curriculum.

> "Kindergarten education was seen as resulting from children's play and manipulative activities rather than from lessons and recitations. Music, art, and nature study were legitimate kindergarten subjects of study for young children, while teaching of the three R's was postponed" (Spodek 1988).

Current research, however, has indicated a trend toward a more structured, academic kindergarten. In Virginia, kindergarten teachers describe kindergarten as "what first grade used to be" and cite state mandates and pressures from first grade teachers and parents as reasons why kindergarten has become more academic (Freeman 1990).

Research has also found that many kindergarten educators (classroom teachers and administrators) do not believe that academic kindergartens best serve the needs of young children (Freeman 1990). NAEYC has specifically described various practices associated with the academic kindergarten as developmentally inappropriate. Some of these are teacher-directed instructional strategies, reliance on paper-and-pencil tasks, use of workbooks, children working alone on assigned seat-work, and a curriculum divided into separate subjects (NAEYC 1986).

In New Zealand, educators use stories, pictures, labels, and charts on the wall, but they do not use worksheets, drills, flashcards, or workbooks. Although Americans may call this "whole language," New Zealand educators do not use this term.

Reading and writing are taught from the day the child enters school. Teachers emphasize communicating and deriving meaning from texts (Goldenberg 1991). The focus on meaning does not mean that skills are ignored. Teachers consistently stress accurate and efficient word recognition, correct usage of punctuation marks, and letters with their corresponding sounds. New Zealand seems to have found a balance between academic and social learning.

This leads to the controversy regarding age appropriateness versus developmental appropriateness. Internationally, the age for which children in different countries begin formal reading instruction differs. The decisions for why different countries have decided to start school-or reading instruction-at different ages were often made long ago. The chronological age of school readiness around the world are:

Age 5- New Zealand

India

Nigeria

United Kingdom

Israel (Hebrew children often learn to read religious texts at age 3-4.)

Age 6- Holland

France

Germany

Italy

Japan

Mexico

USA

China (Chinese children learn characters at 6, but do not learn to read or write until age 9 or 10.)

Age 7- Turkey

Age 7-8 Scandinavia (Pollington 1995)

In 1898 John Dewey stated that 8 was the best age for learning to read. In the United States today, the age for beginning school is based on the 1931 study of Morphett and Washburne, which determined that 6.5 years was the right age for beginning reading (Pollington 1995). "As late as 1988, David Elkind, early childhood educator and author of several books on the 'hurried child' and 'miseducation' of children, cited Washburne's 1930s work as testimony to the wisdom of teaching children to read at 7 or 8 years old, rather than at younger ages" (McGill-Franzen 1992).

The school entry age is influenced by several factors; including cultural and social views, linguistic issues, and historical influences. There is little or no evidence to suggest that one age or another is preferable for starting reading instruction. In fact, early literacy theorists do not

associate the onset of literacy learning with an age or stage, but they believe that knowledge of communication functions are being learned through life experiences (Sippola 1994).

Maturational readiness acknowledges the existence of children's individual timetables. It suggests that all children will not be ready for school at the same time because they do not develop at the same pace ("School Readiness" 1994). Many maturationists advocate keeping children out of schools until they are developmentally ready. Arnold Gesell was among those who wanted to provide children with "the gift of time" and it was endorsed by school districts and parents in the United States throughout the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s ("School Readiness" 1994).

Maturational readiness is not determined by chronological age, but is often assessed through the use of tests, which have been somewhat controversial. Many of those who are skeptical of testing claim that: young children do not possess the ability to sit still and concentrate for long periods of time; a measure taken at any given point reflects only that point in time and does not take into account the spurts and stops that characterize normal child development; few valid and reliable screening instruments have been devised.

In practice, developmental appropriateness has been interpreted to mean that reading and writing are "academic skills" that do not belong in child-centered early childhood programs and that there is no role for adult modeling or teaching in so-called "active" learning environments (McGill-Franzen 1992). As the early childhood researcher Susan Robinson (McGill-Franzen 1992) found, preschool teachers are reluctant to display print, read extended stories, or allow children to write because they are not sure that the "academics" are appropriate for 3-, 4-, and

5-year-olds. In fact, Piaget and Gesell may have agreed with this theory because they believed that children's development is biologically fixed and cannot be influenced by instruction.

Private early childhood programs can and do provide instruction in written English. But many publicly funded early childhood programs for poor children cannot display the letters of the alphabet or even sing the alphabet song because it is considered developmentally inappropriate. These children are then screened in preschool and in kindergarten for developmental benchmarks such as being able to retell stories and print some letters of the alphabet (McGill-Franzen 1992). When they are unable to perform, it is attributed to their delayed developmental experiences rather than to their lack of opportunities to explore written language.

Emergent Literacy notes the wide range of development among young children entering school. Proponents of emergent literacy agree that instruction must change to meet the individual needs of the students rather than change the age requirements or hold back students because they are not developmentally ready. Assessment in early childhood can best be viewed through "direct documentation." Fadool (1993) states that "it is helpful to combine teachers' knowledge of individual children with information they learn from other sources such as parents, tests, and classroom interactions." Informal assessment through the use of observations and anecdotal records have become more widely used in classroom evaluation. As teachers grow in expertise in evaluation they will identify patterns of children's behaviors.

What should be assessed? Strickland and Morrow (1989) indicate that children need to: learn the functions of reading and writing, develop a sense of story structure and how to comprehend story, make attempts at reading and writing in their own way prior to the emergence

of conventional reading and writing. Assessment settings should be varied in type and context, used continuously during the school year, and focus on a variety of behaviors. Several different assessment strategies include observing behavior, keeping anecdotal or continuous records about children, collecting daily performance samples that provide tangible evidence of progress, interviewing children and discussing literacy activities, filling out checklists, and taping activities that can demonstrate growth (Strickland et. al., 1989).

Assessment practices today are designed to match instruction and evaluate children according to what they have been learning. Standardized tests evaluate children against prescribed expectations. There are also numerous problems associated with testing which were described earlier in this paper. Direct documentation gathered through anecdotal information and observation in the classroom provides clearer evidence about what children can do (Fadool 1993).

Assessing children's prereading experiences is important in an effective reading program. Assessment should focus on the experiential and conceptual areas associated with success in beginning reading, such as language, concepts of print, language of reading instruction, and phonological awareness (Heilman et. al., 1990). Clay identified four cueing systems for readers: visual attention to print (graphophonic), directional rules about position and movement, talking like a book (semantic or meaning), and hearing sounds in words (syntactic) (Heilman et. al., 1990). Clay (ELIC 1990) suggests that early readers rely heavily on meaning (semantic) and language (syntactic) cues to predict what the text will say. Observing children as they read orally can be recorded by using running records.

Synthesis and Analysis of the Research

The focus of research in the area of literacy was on reading readiness until the early 1980's. Then the focus shifted to emergent literacy. Most of the research on emergent literacy came from New Zealand where Marie Clay revolutionized this field. Her work documents cueing systems for early readers, assessing practices for teachers including running records and observation, and Reading Recovery, an early intervention tutoring program (Goldenberg 1991).

There is unanimous agreement in current literature that story reading to children is a worthwhile activity and meaningful experience (Peters 1993). Much of the research consists of correlational studies of the relationship between children being read to and subsequent ability to read early, or to succeed in school. Studies by Wells (1986) and Teale (1978) show the benefits of story reading to language and reading development in school (as cited in Peters 1993).

According to Morris (1993), the relationship existing between word awareness in text and early phonetic spelling has been under-researched. In his research, Morris discovered that phoneme awareness gives a child an advantage in learning to read and that it precedes word recognition. He notes that one way to foster children's word and phoneme awareness is to encourage them to write their own texts. Any attempt by a young child to sound-out the written spelling of a word is an exercise in conscious phoneme segmentation. Several studies have been done by Chall, Stanovich, Ehri and Wilce, Walsh, and Price and Gillingham (cited in Heilman et. al. 1990) noting that beginning readers need to develop automatic decoding skills, which are facilitated by phonemic awareness. The feature of phonemic awareness that promotes children's beginning reading development is the ability to blend sounds in words. "The concept of emergent

literacy suggests that phonemic awareness further develops as children interact more with print and develop automatic decoding skills (Heilman et. al. 1990).

Many researchers endorse age as a guideline for school readiness. Studies by Amariah Brigham, Morphett and Washburne, John Dewey, and David Elkind claim that chronological age is the only equitable and clear entry criterion, and in fact chrono- logical age is used as an entry standard in most countries outside the United States ("School Readiness" 1994). One disagreement between them, however, is the actual age. Brigham said age 6 or 7 would be too young to learn; Morphett and Washburne chose age 6 1/2 as the best age to teach reading; Elkind believed age 7 or 8 was optimal (McGill-Franzen 1992); Dewey thought that age 8 was best for learning to read (Pollington 1995).

A study by Peck, McCaig, and Sapp (as cited in Freeman 1990) says that "younger children in the group generally have a slightly more difficult time academically in kindergarten and even throughout the elementary years." Yet, research by Shepard and Smith (1986) suggests that the effects of being the youngest disappear by the end of third grade. The effect of youngness is not due to absolute age, but to the relative position of a child within his or her cohort group.

The developmentally appropriate advocates include Vygotsky, Piaget, Clay, Gesell, and Teale and Sulzby. Their research indicates that children are individuals that learn at different paces. As a maturationist, Gesell believed in keeping children out of school until they were developmentally ready. Vygotsky, Piaget, Clay, Teale and Sulzby agree that the schools must be ready for the children. This view of children suggests that they must be in environments where

learning is nourished and negates exempting children from schools because they are not "ready" ("School Readiness" 1994).

There is a trend toward a more academic kindergarten. In a Colorado school district, Smith and Shepard (Freeman 1990) found that the district mandated an academic kindergarten with a prescribed number of minutes spent daily on math and reading readiness. Florida's kindergarten curriculum has 200 content area objectives to be met during the school year. Many kinder-garten educators do not believe that academics are in the best interests of the child. NAEYC has made a list of practices that are developmentally inappropriate which include many of the instructional strategies used in the academic kindergartens (Freeman 1990). Friedrich Froebel and Lev Vygotsky both advocated play in the kindergarten classroom as a teaching tool.

Articles about literacy assessment are easy to find. The author of this paper found literature by Strickland and Morrow (1989), Fadool (1993), Emerging Literacy edited by Strickland and Morrow (1989), Heilman (et. al. 1990), and ELIC (1990). All of the literature supported the theory that direct documentation by the teacher through informal methods like observation and anecdotal records is the best way to assess children's reading and writing. The older method of standardized testing is not as accurate as direct documentation.

Conclusions

As a result of the research and review of emergent literacy, the author of this paper has to conclude that there is a proper way to teach children literacy. Morris (1993) claims that there is a correct order to teaching literacy. Teachers need to realize that beginning consonant sounds are

recognized first, then children begin to understand the concept of word in text--which is the awareness of the match between the spoken word and the written word in the reading of text. Once the beginning reader learns to focus on word units within a line of print, he or she will be in a better position to analyze the letters and sounds within words, or phoneme segment ability. The last ability is word recognition, which refers to the child's ownership of a fairly large sight vocabulary (50+ words), or the ability to decipher unknown pattern words through a sound-it-out or an analogy strategy (Morris 1993).

Other important ways to teach literacy include storybook reading, response to texts, writing development, and dramatic play including literacy-rich environments (Emerging Literacy 1989).

Although researchers choose both sides of the argument between academic and social learning, the author of this paper concludes that many instructional practices approved of in many academic kindergartens are not developmentally appropriate; including paper-and-pencil tasks, use of workbooks, children working alone on assigned seatwork, and a curriculum divided into separate subjects (NAEYC 1986). In New Zealand, the entire morning for 5- to 8-year olds is devoted to language arts-- speaking, listening, writing, and reading (Goldenberg 1991). Reading and writing are taught from the day the child enters school. Teachers emphasize communicating and deriving meaning from texts. Children read, listen to books, and write in order to communicate or to make sense of someone else's communication. There are no drills or exercises that do not involve meaningful print (Goldenberg 1991). Emergent literacy is meant to be taught in this way.

Chronological age is used as an school entry guideline in the United States and elsewhere. The author of this paper concludes that the entry age should remain the same and teachers should plan curriculums that allow children to experiment with reading and writing and share what they know with others. In emergent literacy teaching, teachers need to structure the learning experiences to accommodate a wide range of abilities and interests (Strickland et. al. 1988). Teachers can intervene when necessary to help children make connections (scaffolding) and move from the known to the unknown.

Assessment in the classroom has changed over the last 2. years. Portfolios, direct documentation, anecdotal records, and observation are replacing the standardized tests of old. Assessment enhances teachers' competence as evaluators of student progress, since they are playing an active role in evaluation (Strickland et. al. 1989).

Recommendations

"First, potential kindergarten teachers in preservice training must become aware of the historical antecedents of contemporary kindergarten practices in order to understand how the past affects, both positively and negatively, what we do in classrooms" (Sippola 1994). New teachers also need model teachers of emergent literacy in order to provide an example, and to validate knowledge acquired in preservices.

Teachers should take back their curriculum and resist conforming to practices that they believe are not in the best interests of the child. Young children should not be forced into meeting the demands of a developmentally inappropriate curriculum. A preliminary study by Burts (1989,

as cited in Freeman 1990) found that kindergarten children in a develop- mentally inappropriate classroom exibited more stress behaviors than children in a developmentally appropriate one. The curriculum should address all areas of a child's development and the teacher should attempt to meet the range of needs of the children in a class. "Play, creativity, curiosity, self-esteem, and interest must be returned to kindergarten classrooms" (Freeman 1990).

Teachers need to gain knowledge regarding the various kinds of tests and how they are used. Teachers should not use standardized tests as criteria for school entry or decisions about retention. Multiple sources of information--such as parents' knowledge of the child, observation, and performance samples throughout the year--should be considered when making a decision of such importance.

Professors of early childhood education will need to carefully explain how a developmentally appropriate curriculum can be established and why it is necessary.

School administrators need to be aware of contemporary practices in kindergarten education so that they can provide the leadership, evaluative abilities, and reinforcement to encourage teachers to use the best practices available (Sippola 1994).

Parents can be a positive support for teachers if they are aware of the issues. Teachers can inform parents of their program goals, of their commitment to children, and of their concerns about literacy. Teachers can invite parents to volunteer in the classroom and help make decisions regarding the placement of their children (Freeman 1990).

Emerging literacy starts at home. Parents, teachers, and administrators must work together to ensure that all children become literate in today's society.

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