

ELIZABETH BARRETT ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

BEGINNING READING AND WRITING

Children enter grade one with an eagerness and anticipation that is seldom found at any other grade level. The highlight of the child's grade one year is that he/she is going to learn to read. Your child will find Grade One to be challenging. While continuing to adjust to school life, he/she will be developing the essential skills necessary to gain understanding of the world around him---the printed word, numbers in use, and an individual's importance. He/she will also be expected to show growth as an individual and as a group member by listening attentively, assuming responsibility, working and playing well with others as well as working independently and by completing assignments within school time.

Our language arts program comprises several facets: listening, speaking, reading, writing, viewing. These are not isolated entities to be taught separately but are interdependent functions taught simultaneously.

Parents usually have two major concerns when their children start school:

- 1)When will my child start reading and writing?
- 2)What can I do to help?

We hope this handout will provide you with answers to these questions as well as provide some background information on the beginning reading/writing process.

Reading

Reading is an active process that involves continuous interaction between the reader and the text with the purpose of getting meaning. In order to attach meaning to the sounds and letters that confront the beginning reader we start with the whole context first and then work with smaller bits of language. Children need to hear language over and over again. We build this through learning songs and poems. You may say the children have only memorized these poems but it is the beginning step of reading. The next step after this auditory training, sees the children now recognizing the printed patterns that they already know orally. Once children understand the whole meaning they can proceed to learn about the smaller units...the sentences, words and letters. The smaller pieces of language are best learned after they have been met in a meaningful context.

There are 3 reading strategies at use every time you read. They are called the semantic, syntactic and phonetic cueing systems. These strategies are separate but are used together to extract meaning from print. An explanation of these cues can be found in the following box.

Cueing Systems

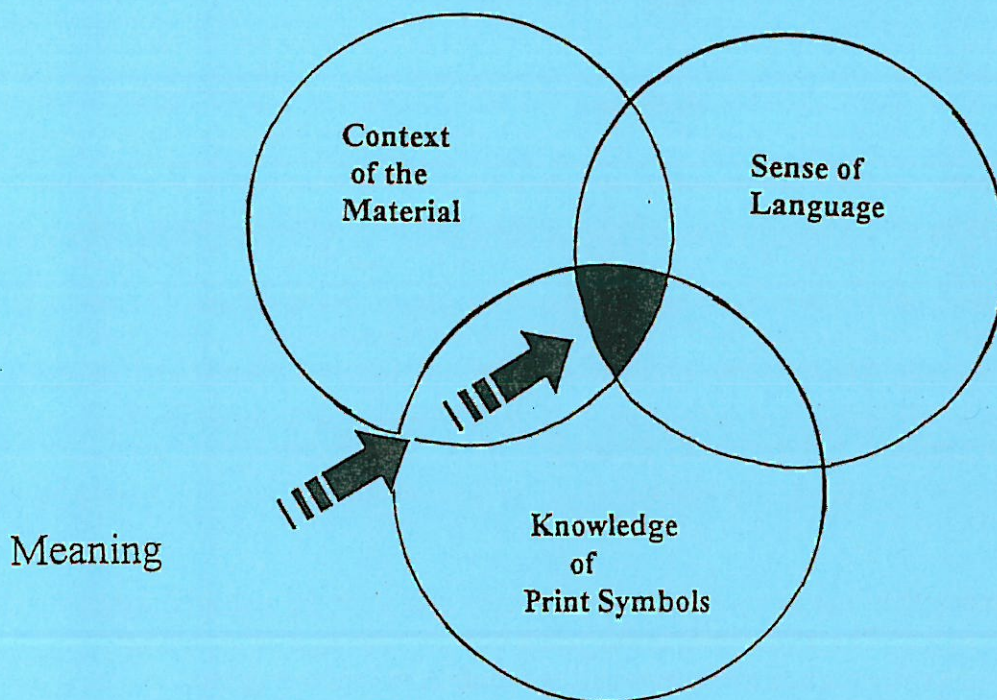
Semantic: When we use our background knowledge to understand a text that we are reading, we are using semantics or context. Being able to recognize a word does not necessarily mean you understand that word. Background knowledge and prior experiences make comprehension possible.

Syntactic: A knowledge of syntax means an understanding of the patterns in the English language. (How words are ordered to make sentences). This knowledge enables the reader to predict and confirm while reading.

Phonetic: Phonics is the sound-symbol system -how letters and sounds go together. In English there is no one to one correspondence between the spoken and written language (many ways to make one sound) Phonics is very effective when used in combination with the other reading strategies.

Meaning occurs when all three cueing systems work together.

STRATEGIES FOR READING



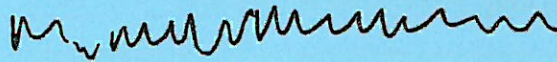
Writing

Learning to write, like learning to read, begins with **meaning**. Learning to read and write is a developmental process. Full acceptance of each child's level is paramount. It is important to realize that just as your children all began walking at different ages not just when they turned one--so too they will not all start reading and writing on the same day just because they are in first grade.

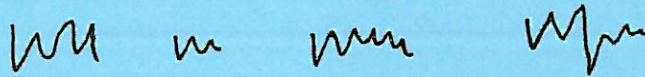
Most children feel writing is an activity they can do. They feel they can write (scribble or random letters) even though they can not yet read. However, children are usually able to read what they have written.

Children pass through several levels on their journey to become proficient writers.

1. Scribble: at this level children babble in print. Their scribbles tell a story and holds meaning for them. It may look like this:



2. Interrupted scribble: at this level the scribbles soon show signs of starting and stopping with word breaks just as real writers do.



3. Random assortment of letters: The child starts making marks that look like letters and may be their favourite letter (for example the letters found in their name)

W B T O H R

4. Beginning to use initial consonants: The next level involves developing one-letter spelling to represent whole words. The initial consonants are the first to appear as they are often the easiest to hear.

I S A W

(I saw a waterfall)

5. Use of more sounds: Children gradually add more sounds,.

We r go to the pk

(We are going to the park)

6. Use of initial, final consonants and some vowels: This level is what we call the developing writer. Final sounds and middle sounds are now present. Children understand that words are composed of several sounds and that these sounds correspond to specific letters, and that when spelling the words the letters have to be in the same order as the sounds are heard

I got sum nu skats

(I got some new skates)

7. Increased use of conventions, sentence structure and correct spelling: The children's work is beginning to show recognizable spelling of words commonly found in reading and in the classroom environment. The child begins to classify or categorize information and ideas, using strategies such as: mind mapping, webbing and clustering. The child can relate what he/she knows to new information and ideas to draw conclusions. They are also able to revise initial writing drafts by adding to or expanding their own ideas and information.

Beginning in grade one, children receive direct teaching of writing skills through the writing program. While the emphasis is still on communicating meaning (getting their ideas down in print) we continue to build upon their knowledge of the conventions and structures of our written language as they write with support and instructional feedback from adults and their classmates. Activities in a grade one classroom include teacher modelling of writing, class and group experience stories, journal writing, log book letters, poems, writing in other curricular areas and Writer's workshop.

How to help your child in writing:

- ▶ Encourage your child to write for a variety of purposes. Find ways for your child to use writing for a real purpose: letters to friends and relatives, pen pals, sending for free materials, messages, cards, shopping lists, stories and poems as gifts for family members etc.
- ▶ Discuss your child's writing with them to assist them with expanding their ideas through questions and comments such as "I see a dog." could be expanded to read "I see a big black dog splashing in the water."
- ▶ Help them learn all the alphabet letters. Some children know the name of the letter, the sound of the letter and can reproduce the sound the letter makes but cannot remember that the letter looks like. If children ask is this right? Just reply What do you think? Or it sounds like that.
- ▶ Make sure that children always write from left to right direction
- ▶ Ensure that letters are printed correctly with one finger spacing between words and two finger spaces between sentences
- ▶ Use correct initial and final consonant sounds

Spelling

Our spelling program strives to help children:

- ▶ Develop a respect for standard spelling and a desire to achieve it when they write.
- ▶ Learn a basic list of 25 high frequency "responsibility" words.
- ▶ Realize that spelling is a process that involves using a variety of clues to predict and confirm the spelling of a word.
- ▶ Learn many word families (at, ig, ut), and spelling patterns (ing, er, s, ed).
- ▶ Become curious about the structure and meanings of words.

In order to achieve this we:

- ▶ Involve children in ongoing spelling lessons, including spelling lists and weekly tests.
- ▶ Teach spelling as part of the whole curriculum, capitalizing on opportunities to have the children write and spell in situations other than the spelling lesson, in math, science, social studies and so on.
- ▶ Have the children write frequently, since they predict and refine spelling by using skills they acquire when they write labels, letters, posters, stories, reports, signs etc.
- ▶ Encourage the children to use temporary (invented) spelling for words they may not have learned to spell conventionally (this way they think about how the word might be spelled, based on their knowledge of other words, while still getting their ideas down intact, knowing they can correct the spelling at a later time).
- ▶ Adjust our expectations of correctness to fit the child's level of development.
- ▶ Respond to children's writing in ways that help them discover more about spelling (for instance we make word study a game but teach spelling skills and strategies at the same time).
- ▶ Help young writers develop a positive attitude toward spelling.

How You Can Help Your Child At Home

Your understanding and support now are just as critical as they were when your child learned to walk, talk and read. Here's what you can do to help at home:

- ▶ Play word games with your child: Scrabble, crossword puzzles, Spill 'n Spell, word lotto etc. When children need to think about the details of words their spelling skills and knowledge of words are extended.
- ▶ Find ways for your child to use writing for a real purpose: letters to friends and relatives, pen pals, sending for free materials, messages, cards, shopping lists, stories and poems as gifts for family members etc. By writing for a real purpose, children discover the importance and relevance of correct spelling.
- ▶ Draw your child's attention to a variety of print forms: greeting cards, advertisements, magazines, newspapers, TV guides, comics etc. Children discover many new words this way.
- ▶ Talk frequently with your child about what he or she is interested in or doing, where he or she is going, etc. Children learn new words by hearing others use them. It's hard to spell a word whose meaning you don't know.

- ▶ Be supportive of your child's spelling attempts, encouraging best guesses. Point out when words are spelled like other familiar words or when they have beginnings or endings tacked on. You can ask older children to circle words they think they've misspelled. Don't expect children to initially spell all words correctly, instead help your child focus on those words and spelling patterns he/she has learned in class.
- ▶ Your child's spelling will develop over time. Be patient and supportive, as you always have been, and your child will become a better speller—one who not only gets the words right on a spelling test but who is able to spell more consistently and accurately for all kinds of writing tasks.

Grade one is a very important and influential year for your child and everything possible will be done to make it an enjoyable and rewarding year for him/her.

Unity ...author unknown

I dreamed I stood in a studio
 And watched two sculptors there
 The clay they used was a young child's mind
 And they fashioned it with care.
 One was a teacher--the tools he used
 Were books, music and art.
 The other, a parent, worked with a guiding hand,
 And a gentle loving heart.
 Day after day, the teacher worked with touch
 That was deft and sure,
 While the parent standing by his side
 Polished and smoothed it o'er.
 And when at last their task was done,
 They were proud of what they had wrought,
 For the things they had moulded into the child
 Could neither be sold or bought.
 And each agreed they would have failed
 If each had worked alone,
 For behind the parent stood the school
 And behind the teacher, the home.

Grade one is an exciting year for your child. Learning to read and write is a developmental process and will be one of your child's greatest accomplishments. Only through a partnership between school and home can your child become a truly effective reader and writer. Teachers and parents need to support children in their belief that they are readers and writers. We should praise their efforts and their willingness to experiment with language as they become more and more proficient readers and writers. Relax and enjoy your child's learning just as you enjoyed watching him or her take their first steps. Show them your faith, assurance and pride in their new found knowledge. We hope the enclosed information and suggestions will help you get started and make the time you are spending with your child most beneficial. Please remember that the time spent reading with your child should be enjoyable. Thank you for your continued support.



STAGES OF CHILDREN'S READING DEVELOPMENT

Emergent

"Making a Start"

- Inexperienced reader
- Learning Concepts About Print:

1:1 print match
directionality
what is a word
what is a letter
punctuation

- Learning Basic Reading Strategies
- Learning Basic Reading Cues:

Meaning
Structure
Visual

- Learn to Recognize a Few Basic Words
- Learn About Books:
they tell stories
give information
pictures help
stories are constant

Early

"Becoming a Reader"

- Building experience as a reader
- Have mastered basic concepts about print

- Learning More Complex Strategies
monitoring
self correction
searching

- Establishing the habit of reading for meaning

- Using text to

Sample
Predict
Confirm

- Using visual/phonics to confirm

- Reading more complex stories but still needs support from rhyme, rhythm & repetition

Adapted from Reading in the Junior Classes, and The California Learning Record

Fluent

"Going it Alone"

- Experienced reader
- Mastered basic reading cues

- Integrating cues

Meaning
Structure
Visual

- Reducing to minimum attention to the details of print

- Variety of genres

fiction
nonfiction
poetry
graphs and charts

- Maintaining meaning with more complex sentence structures and stories

- More deeply involved

plot
character analysis
story structure

