

1-1-1985

A Program to Help Prepare pre-Schoolers for Reading

Rona F. Flippo
University of Wisconsin-Parkside

Helen Branch
Atlanta Public Schools, Georgia

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/reading_horizons



Part of the Education Commons

Recommended Citation

Flippo, R. F., & Branch, H. (1985). A Program to Help Prepare pre-Schoolers for Reading. *Reading Horizons: A Journal of Literacy and Language Arts*, 25 (2). Retrieved from https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/reading_horizons/vol25/iss2/9

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Special Education and Literacy Studies at ScholarWorks at WMU. It has been accepted for inclusion in Reading Horizons: A Journal of Literacy and Language Arts by an authorized editor of ScholarWorks at WMU. For more information, please contact wmu-scholarworks@wmich.edu.

A PROGRAM TO HELP PREPARE PRE-SCHOOLERS FOR READING

Rona F. Flippo
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-PARKSIDE

Helen Branch
ATLANTA PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Parents of young children are very often concerned with their child's pre-reading and beginning reading development. They want to know what they can do to help their child have a good start in this critically important skill. All too frequently parents do not have the information available to them to help their children. This article describes a local project designed to provide parents with ideas and information that should contribute to their children's maximum opportunity for success when formal school instruction begins. Although each parent-child relationship should be treated individually, there are some pre-reading experiences which are applicable to most family situations.

Relevant Research and Literature

The research and literature in the fields of reading and early childhood education have provided evidence that parent education and involvement do have a positive effect on young children's success in school and reading related skills. Maclaren (1966) found that providing parents with information about the process of learning to read significantly influenced the reading achievement of their first grade students. Perez (1972) was interested in learning whether or not parents who were given appropriate instruction and materials could significantly improve oral language concepts and visual motor skills. She found significant differences between children of parents given instruction on pre-reading activities versus those not receiving instruction.

Reading should have a place of high priority in the homes of young children. The research has indicated this conclusively. Rankin (1967) identified four behaviors that are related to the development of children's interest in reading. Mothers had children read aloud, asked children to tell parents what stories they had read, mothers read to themselves at home, and parents read magazines at home. Durkin (1961) studied children who read before grade one. In assessing the literary background of these children, she found: (a) children were read to regularly at home, and (b) parents had a high regard for reading. Parents also took time to answer the children's questions. McWilliams and Cunningham (1976) further emphasize: "The importance of parent involvement in the reading process has been supported again and again by research as well as personal experiences of reading teachers. It is essential that parents be involved and support their children's

learning experience if the children are to reach their fullest potential as students and readers."

In an article summarizing a University of Connecticut project designed to acquaint parents with children's literature and techniques to help involve children more intimately with reading, the authors report: "Research has shown that family life exerts a lasting influence on children and that parental example is extremely influential... Parents should be encouraged to do things with their children which will cultivate exposure to books and a variety of reading experiences... Parents, the population that has the most influence on children, have generally been neglected" (Baker, Durdeck, Rowell and Schmitt, 1975).

Finally, Criscuolo (1982) reviewed the literature on parental involvement. He cites several studies all indicating that parent knowledge about the reading process and parents as beginning teachers do make a positive difference.

The project described in this article is based on the recognition of the importance of educating parents so that they will be able to help their youngsters in early reading development. The program conceives of reading as a developmental activity that begins long before a child enters school. The need has been established: Educators should be involved not only with the public schools but with parents of babies and pre-school children. The later success of these children in school can be enhanced by the positive experiences at home if those experiences are designed to develop preschoolers to a point of readiness for formal school instruction.

Parent Education Project

The Research Committee of the Phi Delta Kappa Chapter in Atlanta organized the parent education project. A packet of materials was developed to be used in program presentations. It included a booklet (Flippo, 1982) and a set of free and inexpensive materials obtained from International Reading Association (IRA). Also included were an outline of suggested procedures for the presenters, back issues of "News for Parents" published by IRA, and highlights of research findings related to parent education and reading success. Members of the chapter and education students from local universities/colleges were recruited to present programs at day care centers and PTA meetings. They usually worked in pairs to plan and present the programs.

The program was publicized through contacts of members in the metro Atlanta area and through distribution of a flyer to agencies and organizations that are concerned with pre-school children and their parents in this area. As calls were received, members of the project committee scheduled the presentations and assigned members to conduct the program.

Each program consisted of four parts. The first was a brief talk to parents telling of the importance of their role in helping to develop the experiential background that is necessary for preparing a child to read. The talk also included some of the high-

lighted material from the packet of articles and brochures.

Then each parent was given a copy of "How to Help Grow a Reader." The presenters considered the contents of this booklet and emphasized the main points of the parents' role in children's reading. The presenters also explained that the materials were free and encouraged parents to use them and obtain others that are available (a list of free IRA materials was distributed).

The third segment of the program was devoted to questions from the parents and responses from the presenters. The questions generally reflected a new awareness of the fact that a parent can make a contribution to the child's being ready to learn to read. Parents were grateful to know that certain experiences—rather than direct instruction like that given at school—were an important part of their contribution to the reading process.

The last segment of the program was devoted to completion of an evaluation form. The respondents unanimously agreed that the program had been helpful in providing ideas about "How to Help Grow a Reader." They also commented extensively about the practical ideas and suggested activities. One parent identified the most significant fact of the project: "Someone is here who cares how my child learns."

REFERENCES

- Baker, I., Durdeck, F., Rowell, E.H., & Schmitt, M. Children's literature at home base. Reading Teacher, 1975, 28, pp.770.
- Criscuolo, N.P. Parent involvement in the reading program. Phi Delta Kappan, 1982, 63, #5, pp. 345-346.
- Durkin, D. Children who read before grade one. Reading Teacher, 1961, 14, pp. 163-166.
- Flippo, R.F. How to Help Grow a Reader. Metro Atlanta/Ga. State Univ. Chapter of Phi Delta Kappa, 1982.
- MacLaren, F. The effects of a parent information program upon reading achievement in the first grade. Dissertation Abstracts 1966, 26, #7, 3703-A.
- McWilliams, D.R. & Cunningham, P.M. Project PEP. Reading Teacher, 1976, 29, pp. 653-655.
- Perez, J. Effects of a summer parent worksop upon the performance of preschool children in three areas of school readiness. Dissertations Abstracts, 1972, 33, #6, 2620-A.
- Rankin, P. The relationship between parent behavior and achievement of inner-city elementary school children. Dissertation Abstracts, 1967, 27, #7, 2013-A.