

# Summary of *Becoming a Nation of Readers*.

The following are summary statements about reading reproduced from *Becoming a Nation of Readers: The Report of the Commission on Reading*. "Emerging literacy" refers to reading activities that typically begin in the home, preschool environment through approximately second or third grade. "Extending literacy" refers mainly to activities beginning in the third grade.

## **What is reading?**

**Skilled reading is constructive.** Becoming a skilled reader requires learning to reason about written material using knowledge from everyday life and from disciplined fields of study.

**Skilled reading is fluent.** Becoming a skilled reader depends upon mastering basic processes to the point where they are automatic, so that attention is freed for the analysis of meaning.

**Skilled reading is strategic.** Becoming a skilled reader requires learning to control one's reading in relation to one's purpose, the nature of the material, and whether one is comprehending.

**Skilled reading is motivated.** Becoming a skilled reader requires learning to sustain attention and learning that written material can be interesting and informative.

**Skilled reading is a lifelong pursuit.** Becoming a skilled reader is a matter of continuous practice, development, and refinement.

**Emerging Literacy....the first steps in learning to read.**

**Parents play roles of inestimable importance in laying the**

**foundation for learning to read.** Parents should informally teach preschool children about reading and writing by reading aloud to them, discussing stories and events, encouraging them to learn letters and words and teaching them about the world around them. These practices help prepare children for success in reading.

**Parents have an obligation to support their children's continued growth as readers.** In addition to laying a foundation, parents need to facilitate the growth of their children's reading by taking them to libraries, encouraging reading as a free time activity, and supporting homework.

**Kindergarten programs should emphasize oral language and writing as well as the beginning steps in reading.** Reading builds on oral language facility, concepts about the functions of printed language and a desire to communicate through writing, as well as specific knowledge about letters and words.

**Phonics instruction improves children's ability to identify words.** Useful phonics strategies include teaching children the sounds of letters in isolation and in words, and teaching them to blend the sounds of letters together to produce approximate pronunciations of words. Another strategy that may be useful is encouraging children to identify words by thinking of other words with similar spellings. Phonics instruction should go hand in hand with opportunities to identify words in meaningful sentences and stories. Phonics should be taught early and kept simple.

**Reading primers should be interesting, comprehensible and instructive.** To be most instructive, primers must contain many words that can be identified using phonics that has already been taught. There is a natural relationship between word identification and comprehension. Primer selections should be written to exploit this relationship. After the earliest selections, primers should tell complete, interesting stories.

**Both oral and silent reading are important for the beginner.**

Children should read selections silently before they are asked to read them orally. Getting the most from oral reading requires the teacher to distribute turns for reading equally, skillfully handle mistakes, and keep the emphasis on meaning.

**Reading lessons should stress understanding and**

**appreciating the content of the selection.** Discussions before reading and discussions and questioning after reading should motivate children's higher level thinking, with an emphasis on making connections with their prior knowledge of the topic. In addition to asking questions, teachers should directly instruct children in skills and strategies that help them become better readers.

**Extending Literacy.... As proficiency develops reading should be thought of not so much as a separate subject in school but as integral to learning literature, social studies, and science.**

**Readability formulas are useful only as a rough check on the difficulty and appropriateness of books.** It is also important to gauge clarity, organization, interest, literary quality, and subject matter accuracy.

**School textbooks should be rich with important concepts and information.** Books for all grades need to contain adequate explanations taking into account the skill level, knowledge, and reasoning power of the reader.

**Teachers need to teach comprehensive strategies directly.**

Teachers should devote more time to teaching strategies for understanding not only stories but also social studies and science texts.

**Workbook and skill sheet tasks take too much of the time allotted for reading.** These should be pared to the minimum that will actually contribute to growth in reading.

**Students should do more extended writing.** Writing is most beneficial when students have a reason to communicate to a genuine audience.

**Priority should be given to independent reading.** Two hours a week of independent reading should be expected by the time children are in the third or fourth grade. To do this, children need ready access to books and guidance in choosing appropriate and interesting books. Reading should emphasize works that represent the core of our cultural heritage.

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