

What Parents Need to Know About Early Readers

Del Siegle - Editor

The best inheritance that parents can give their children is a few minutes of their time each day.

– Ancient Chinese Proverb

Practitioners' Guide - A9403

Implications for the Classroom and Home

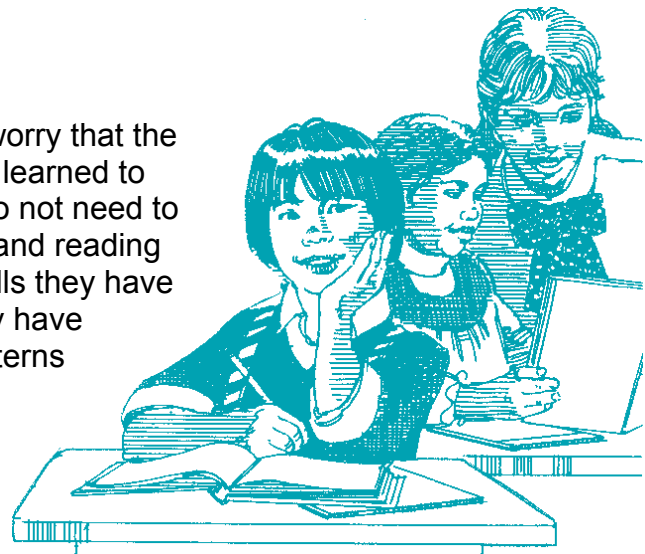
Precocious reading ability is a form of gifted intellectual performance that may appear alone or together with other talents. Because of their advanced skill, precocious readers require instructional differentiation when they enter school. Advanced reading instruction is the most common form of instructional modification made for children who enter school reading. Early readers may profit from gifted programs that focus on student interests or advanced literary exposure. Early reading skills alone may not be relevant criteria for other types of programs for the gifted.

Early Entrance

Parents often wonder whether precocious readers should start school early. Full-time placement in an advanced grade requires careful consideration of the match between a child's strengths and limitations and the demands of a particular program. Although advanced grade placement is one option, it may not be the most appropriate. When instructional provisions are made which encourage a child's advanced reading ability, a good preschool program can be especially helpful in developing an early reader's independence and social skills.

Reading Instruction

Parents and school personnel should not worry that the method by which precocious readers have learned to read will be harmful. Precocious readers do not need to relearn what they have already mastered, and reading instruction should take into account the skills they have learned. However, precocious readers may have areas of relative weakness in their skill patterns that merit attention. Instruction for these weaknesses should not overshadow opportunities for them to utilize their early reading strength.

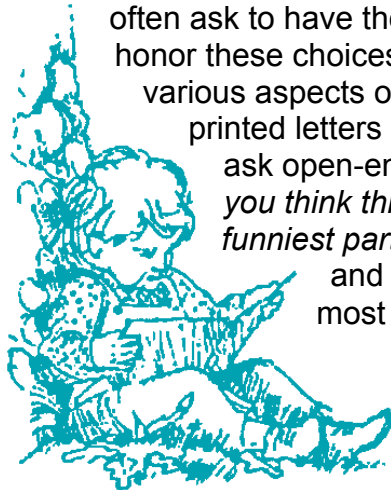


Teachers can begin with a general assessment of the child's reading ability. Based on the initial assessment, the child should be provided with appropriately challenging and diverse reading opportunities. These reading opportunities should enhance strength areas and, at the same time, develop areas of relative weakness. The material used should be based on the student's emerging interests and should include a wide genre of literature including fiction, nonfiction, and poetry. Students should be encouraged to select a large portion of their reading material.

Since reading and writing do not necessarily develop concurrently, parents and teachers should not be concerned if precocious readers are not also early writers.

Helping at Home

Reading aloud with children in the preschool years is strongly associated with children's later academic success. At a very early age, children know what they want to read and often ask to have the same books read repeatedly. Parents and adults should honor these choices. With multiple readings, children's attention shifts among various aspects of stories such as illustrations, comprehension, and the printed letters and words. Adults can talk with children about the story and ask open-ended questions such as, "*What would you have done?*" "*Do you think this story could have ended in another way?*" "*What was the funniest part of the book?*" Interactions that build on the child's interests and keep the child engaged in the story session are likely to be most productive.



With encouragement, modeling, and appropriate instructional modification, precocious readers should continue to enjoy literature and remain good readers.

Research Facts

- Exceptionally high verbal intelligence is neither necessary nor sufficient to make a child become a precocious reader, although highly intelligent children are more likely to begin reading early.
- Some very bright children don't learn to read early, even if they have had some encouragement.
- Precocious readers almost always remain at least average in their reading ability, and most stay well above average as they progress through school.
- Reading and writing abilities do not necessarily develop concurrently. Early readers may not be early writers.
- Children who have been exposed to and become skilled at rhyming are likely to be better beginning readers.
- For later reading development, the most important aspect of language acquisition is a wide-ranging knowledge of the world and the ability to express that knowledge through language.

References

Jackson, N. E., & Roller, C. M. (1993). *Reading with young children* (Report No. 9302). Storrs, CT: The National Research Center on the Gifted and Talented, University of Connecticut.

What is the NRC/GT?

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The National Research Center on the Gifted and Talented
2131 Hillside Road, Unit 3007

Storrs, CT 06269-3007

Tel: (860) 486-4826 Fax: (860) 486-2900

Web: <http://www.gifted.uconn.edu/nrcgt>