Right from the Start: A Kindergarten Program that Helps Prevent Reading Failure

Mary E. Shea D., Canisius College

Ardith D. Cole

Abstract
This article describes a study conducted with kindergarten classrooms in a suburban elementary school with a relatively diverse population. The researchers were the building literacy specialist and a college instructor teaching a Foundations of Reading course for pre-service teachers on-site at the school. The traditional curriculum in these kindergarten classrooms was infused with developmentally appropriate reading and writing experiences that had a significant impact on children’s literacy achievement as well as teachers’ beliefs on what constitutes appropriate kindergarten literacy activities, instruction, and classroom resources.

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1. Myth: Kindergarten literacy instruction is teaching reading or pushing down the first-grade curriculum. Fact: Kindergarten literacy instruction is responsively teaching young children the many facets that support their literacy development in many areas. In a recent opinion editorial, a mother and columnist asserted she did not want her son to learn to read in kindergarten. One of the most pervasive misconceptions held by non-educators is that the words literacy and reading refer to the same thing. When K–5 educators use the word literacy they are referring to an umbrella term that includes Research evidence suggests that reading failure is preventable for all but a very small percentage of children. John J. Pikulski, past member of the International Reading Association Board of Directors and currently at the University of Delaware, writes that such evidence is particularly important in light of the fact that efforts to correct reading problems after third grade have proved largely unsuccessful. A program for kindergarten through third grade, Success For All focuses on regular class instruction with supplementary support. All students, regardless of grade, are regrouped by reading level into classes of 15 to 20 students for 90 minutes each day. Pikulski concludes from the reports on these effective prevention programs that Read chapter Preventing Reading Difficulties: A devastatingly large number of people in America cannot read as well as they need for success in life. With... Preventing Reading Difficulties. Most children who rely on schooling to learn to read and who receive good reading instruction do, in fact, become successful, lifelong readers. However, there are some children for whom good instruction is necessary—but not enough. Failure to understand or use the alphabetic principle, that is, the idea that written spellings systematically represent the sounds of spoken words in reading and writing. Failure to acquire and use comprehension skills and strategies to get meaning from text. Lack of fluency.