

Developing a Reading Culture in Asian Schools

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Significance of Developing Children into Readers

- Strong literacy skills are fundamental for survival in this global digital age
- Individuals are inundated with vast amounts of information daily and advanced literacy skills are needed to select, make sense of the information and function effectively in the global economy
- The task of preparing individuals for this fast paced global world lies with schools (Moats 1999)
- For schools to succeed in this endeavor, time needs to be invested into developing children into avid, proficient and life long readers

Developing Avid Readers

To develop children into avid lifelong readers, reading curricular in schools need to focus not only on teaching children how to read but also focus on the “**WILL**” to read (Layne 2009)

However.

“....the multitude of data presented...(shows that) we have more readers who can read and don't than we do readers who can't read at all.. Yet the focus on the nation is almost exclusively on reading skills.”

Steven Layne 2009

Justifying Curricular focus – Illiterates

- Focus of reading curriculum in schools all over the world is equipping students with fundamental reading skills
- WHY?
- There is no skill more basic to success in school than reading ability (Taylor et al 1992)
- Reading achievement has been correlated with language proficiency and academic achievement

Justifying Curricular focus on Aliterates

- BUT
- The educational investment focus remains solely on illiterates and teaching them how to read but not on aliterates (Mikulecky 1979) in developing in them the “will” and a love for reading
- WHY?
- Layne, S (2009) Developing a love for reading is assumed to be automatic but in reality it is not .

Strategies for inspiring children to become lifelong readers

1. Whole School Approach

Not possible to achieve the goal of inspiring children to love reading unless there is whole school approach and the senior management fully supports it because curricular adjustments are necessary

2. Full support from Teachers

The reading habit cannot be taught. It has to be caught. Therefore, to succeed teachers need to be passionate and knowledgeable about books and reading

3. Celebrate Books

Authors and books need to be celebrated constantly

4. Explicit promotion of books and reading at school level

- (i) Book talks,
- (ii) Story telling sessions,
- (iii) Story listening(audio, video booths)
- (iv) Incentives for good readers
- (v) Invitation of authors to give talks
- (vi) Reading lounges

5. Positive book experiences

Children need to be motivated to read. To allure children into reading positive experiences surrounding books are necessary . Teachers can create these positive reading experiences through

- Interactive read aloud
- Literature circles
- Hot seating

6. Interest Inventories

- Find out interest of kids in books through interest inventories

Fairy tales

Folk tales

Mystery

Puzzle stories

7. Reading Goals

Get students to set realistic reading goals and help them achieve these goals

8. Material Selection and Access

Prior to the onset of the project, the school needs to assemble a vast collection of books for the identified level/levels based on interests and proficiency level of the students

9. Educating parents, teachers, stakeholders and students

There is still very little understanding among parents, teachers , students and stakeholders about the importance of reading.

For students to develop advance literacy skills there is no escaping the simple fact that one learns to read by reading and reading a lot. (Grabe, 2009)

Selected References

- Grabe, W. 2009. Reading in a Second Language. Cambridge University Press
- Layne, S. 2009. Igniting A Passion For Reading. Stenhouse Publishers
- Mikulecky, L. 1979 A Changing View of Literacy. Reporting on Reading 5 (3) pp1-5.
- Moats, L. C. (1999). *Teaching reading is rocket science: What expert teachers of reading should know and be able to do*. American Federation of Teachers. Washington, DC.

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- Thank You.