

The Reading Corner 3rd Issue

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Welcome to *The Reading Corner*. In previous issues we have been discussing what to do if your child has difficulty reading and how to form a team with your child's teacher and school. We have also discussed what the term dyslexia means (difficulty with reading), the skills your child should know in first grade and what you need to know to advocate for your child as a parent, or caretaker. Before we continue to discuss how a child becomes a reader it will be useful to understand commonly used terms. Your child's teacher may use these terms when discussing the progress your daughter or son has made, or difficulties they may be experiencing. Understanding the terms the school uses is important to help you be a parent who can be actively involved in your child's education.

What are some of the terms I should know when discussing my child's reading progress?

Below is a list of terms, which will help you begin to understand what is being taught in the schools, allowing you to determine if your child is gaining the skills they need. Let's begin.

- ✓ **communication:** Communication is the transfer of information, ideas and feelings. Someone must transfer the information and someone must receive and comprehend the information to qualify as communication. This transfer can be accomplished in many forms such as through speech, writing, or drawing.
- ✓ **comprehend:** To comprehend is the taking into the mind meaning, messages and understanding what is meant by the content of the information. To comprehend is to understand the message the sender wants us to know. We are all senders and receivers of messages. When we read we are the receiver and the author is the sender.
- ✓ **literacy:** Literacy includes all the activities necessary to possess the skills of reading and writing. Literacy involves speaking and listening and understanding language and the messages sent and received.

- ✓ **language:** Language is a systemized method of communicating. We understand that specific words have one, or, more meaning.
- ✓ **expressive language:** Expressive language is the production of the language we speak or write.
- ✓ **receptive language:** Receptive language is the term used to refer to our ability to receive the words the language has produced and understand the intended meaning.
- ✓ **phonemes:** Phonemes are the smallest parts of a language that can be combined to form a word. Let's look at the word cat. Cat has three phonemes in contrast to the word print which has five phonemes.
- ✓ **phonological awareness:** Phonological awareness is the understanding that language is made up of separate sounds, or phonemes, and when we put sounds together we form the words used to communicate in a language.
- ✓ **phonemic awareness:** Phonemic awareness is the ability to discriminate or identify individual sounds in words when spoken or read.
- ✓ **phonics:** Phonics is the relationship between the sounds we hear and the knowledge that they correspond to a letter or a group of letters.
- ✓ **syllable:** A syllable is a part of a word that contains a vowel. A syllable must have at least one vowel. For example; un-der-stand, in-vent, or, e-vent.

Children should have fun exploring the world of reading and be excited when they begin to read words and understand sentences. Children are taking a big step into a world they could only experience with the help an adult reading a story book. Reading helps children make connections in life and understand and have fun with what is not real. We learn to read signs at an early age by memorizing the shape of the letters. Most parents chuckle when they retell the story to me about when their three year old reminded them that they just driven by Burger King. Young children read through whole word recognition and determine what the sign says by remembering the high B and K and the low tail on the g. No doubt, their motivation is their memory of the fun they had when they had their first burger and found the toy they had been promised by the King.

Throughout a child's life reading should retain the same excitement and mystery that was promised when the King tempted our children with the toy in the bag. It is unfortunate that there are children who experience a loss of the joy in reading and learning, as they enter school. As natural as it is for children to learn their language we need to remember that reading, for most children, is not automatic and must be taught. We begin teaching reading at home by introducing the alphabet and sounds. We point out and label pictures, sing songs, say nursery rhymes and read poems all in an attempt encourage our children to begin reading. It is natural for children to develop one to one correspondence. We encourage this skill by teaching one apple to one person, counting and pointing to three ice cream cones with three scoops of ice cream and demonstrate that one letter makes it very own, individual sound. This correspondence development is natural and necessary

to become a strong reader and writer. Some children have difficulty with this skill which can cause immediate difficulty with their early reading acquisition.

When your child enters Kindergarten, or first grade, the teacher will begin their reading education by engaging in talking and listening activities. These activities are important to both reading and writing, even at the silent stage, as they are auditory activities. We listen to ourselves constantly, consciously, and unconsciously. When talking with most adults and children alike, I will receive a response to my questions, about listening to themselves read, as “I hear the words in my head and see pictures as I read.” This indicates to me a reader who has a well developed language system, or, is well on their way to developing a system to support literacy, reading and writing.

As the teacher establishes listening and speaking skills, or receptive and expressive language, they will begin to introduce the handling of books, talk about the various types of books, or genres, and consistently ask questions about the purpose of reading and about the author’s reason for writing. Children are curious about books and excited to be independent and understand what books say. Many children come into kindergarten knowing the alphabet but the teacher ensure the children not only recognize the alphabet and also know the phonemes, or sound-letter relationships. Knowing these relationships is learning about the phonics of the language the child speaks. This is the time in school when the sounds of cat begin to make sense when we separate the sounds we hear to spell, and put the sounds back together to read. The teacher is instructing phonological awareness to the children to enable them to build and read words, to communicate what they know, think and feel.

Once the phonemes are mastered by the children the teacher will begin to introduce what a syllable is and how the placement of the consonant letters, in relationship to the vowels, will tell them what the vowel says, or what sound it makes. Sounds make syllables, and alone or in groups, make up the words. There are six syllable types in the English language to be mastered. Once these syllable types are mastered we pronounce the syllables in their given order and say the word. The children will also be taught that some of the words we learn do not follow the rules of the syllables and are called sight words or irregular words, such as have, said, you, and are.

At school you should see teachers:

- using a system to teach the sounds and their relationships to letters.
- reading to children every day and having the children identify the sounds they hear. A child’s sound acquisition is often taken for granted.
- ask children to tell their own stories and identify the sounds they are using to form the words they are saying.
- talk to the children every day about why they read and the importance of understanding what they read.
- teach the meaning of new words every day.

- post lists of sight words that don't follow the rules of the syllables, for reading and spelling
- play games with words and sounds, real and nonsense.
- begin teaching the simple closed syllable; what it looks like and how to read, spell and sound out closed syllables.
- watching to recognize when some students are not keeping up with the instruction and send extra practice home, let parents know what is being taught to empower parents to help.
- recognize when extra practice is not advancing a child's ability to sound out words to read and spell and programming changes should take place.
- acknowledge that the earlier a child can be identified with difficulties and receive intense help the better chance there is to help the child avoid long term frustration.

There are maturational and developmental differences in children at each grade level but you should never assume that these are the causes of a child's delay in reading and spelling. Many children do not receive the intense instruction they need at a young age to eliminate language problems. While a child is receiving their new programs and intense therapy the parent should work closely with the teacher. The parent and teacher need to support each other, making sure the child can demonstrate and master emergent skills every week. The child may be taking smaller steps than their classmates but should always be making progress. Neither parents nor teachers should take a let's wait and see approach in the area of reading, speech or language. Language is the building block of your child's education and will be their key to their success.

If you do not see consistent progress after your school has made changes consider contacting a private learning specialist for a second opinion. The more information you have the more empowered you are to help your child. Government research has determined that at least 20% of children need highly individualized programs in order for them to be successful and meet their full potential. Some need one-on-one instruction. The learning specialist will work with you, your child and your school to develop a specialized program where you will see progress watch your child gain self esteem becoming successful and independent.

If you have additional questions about the content of this month's *The Reading Corner* please contact me at leareducationalcenter@juno.com or call me at the Lear Educational Center at 610-252-0965. We will make every attempt to answer all questions submitted. Look for more information about reading and related subjects in the next issue of *The Reading Corner* or visit on line for information and links about reading issues at <http://leareducationalcenter.com>. Thank you so much for your interest in your child's reading development. Reading is the primary means to learning and education. Let's all help to see all children reach their full potential while supporting learning and education through the advancement in reading.

