

Consider the policy recommendations on reading practices

Name

Date

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Instructions

Read the 7 *Recommended policies essential for achieving developmentally appropriate literacy experiences* below developed by the International Reading Association and the National Association for the Education of Young Children in the joint position statement: [Learning to Read and Write: Developmentally Appropriate Practices for Young Children](#).

1. *A comprehensive, consistent system of early childhood professional preparation and ongoing professional development (see Darling-Hammond 1997; Kagan & Cohen 1997).*

Such a professional preparation system is badly needed in every state to ensure that staff in early childhood programs and teachers in primary schools obtain specialized, college-level education that informs them about developmental patterns in early literacy learning and about research-based ways of teaching reading and writing during the early childhood years. Ongoing professional development is essential for teachers to stay current in an ever-expanding research base and to continually improve their teaching skills and the learning outcomes for children.

2. *Sufficient resources to ensure adequate ratios of qualified teachers to children and small groups for individualizing instruction.*

For four- and five-year-olds, adult-child ratios should be no more than 1 adult for 8 to 10 children, with a maximum group size of 20 (Howes, Phillips, & Whitebook 1992; Cost, Quality, and Child Outcomes Study Team 1995). Optimum class size in the early grades is 15 to 18 with one teacher (Nye et al. 1992; Nye, Boyd-Zaharias, & Fulton 1994). Young children benefit most from being taught in small groups or as individuals. There will always be a wide range of individual differences among children. Small class size increases the likelihood that teachers will be able to accommodate children's diverse abilities and interests, strengths and needs.

3. *Sufficient resources to ensure classrooms, schools, and public libraries that include a wide range of high-quality children's books, computer software, and multimedia resources at various levels of difficulty and reflecting various cultural and family backgrounds.*

Studies have found that a minimum of five books per child is necessary to provide even the most basic print-rich environment (Morrow & Weinstein 1986; Neuman & Roskos 1997). Computers and developmentally appropriate software should also be available to provide alternative, engaging, enriching literacy experiences (NAEYC 1996b).

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4. *Policies that promote children's continuous learning progress.*

When individual children do not make expected progress in literacy development, resources should be available to provide more individualized instruction, focused time, tutoring by trained and qualified tutors, or other individualized intervention strategies. These instructional strategies are used to accelerate children's learning instead of either grade retention or social promotion, neither of which has been proven effective in improving children's achievement (Shepard & Smith 1988).

5. *Appropriate assessment strategies that promote children's learning and development.*

Teachers need to regularly and systematically use multiple indicators—observation of children's oral language, evaluation of children's work, and performance at authentic reading and writing tasks—to assess and monitor children's progress in reading and writing development, plan and adapt instruction, and communicate with parents (Shepard, Kagan, & Wurtz 1998). Group-administered, multiple-choice standardized achievement tests in reading and writing skills should not be used before third grade or preferably even before fourth grade. The younger the child, the more difficult it is to obtain valid and reliable indices of his or her development and learning using one-time test administrations. Standardized testing has a legitimate function, but on its own it tends to lead to standardized teaching—one approach fits all—the opposite of the kind of individualized diagnosis and teaching that is needed to help young children continue to progress in reading and writing.

6. *Access to regular, ongoing health care for every child.*

Every young child needs to have a regular health care provider as well as screening for early diagnosis and treatment of vision and hearing problems. Chronic untreated middle-ear infections in the earliest years of life may delay language development, which in turn may delay reading development (Vernon-Feagans, Emanuel, & Blood 1992). Similarly, vision problems should never be allowed to go uncorrected, causing a child difficulty with reading and writing.

7. *Increased public investment to ensure access to high-quality preschool and child care programs for all children who need them.*

The National Academy of Sciences (Snow, Burns, & Griffin 1998) and decades of longitudinal research (see, for example, Barnett 1995) demonstrate the benefits of preschool education for literacy learning. Unfortunately, there is no system to ensure accessible, affordable, high-quality early childhood education programs for all families who choose to use them (Kagan & Cohen 1997). As a result, preschool attendance varies considerably by family income; for example, 80% of four-year-olds whose families earn more than \$50,000 per year attend preschool compared to approximately 50% of four-year-olds attending preschool from families earning less than \$20,000 (NCES 1996). In addition, due primarily to inadequate funding, the quality of preschool and child care programs varies considerably, with studies finding that the majority of programs provide only mediocre quality and that only about 15% rate as good quality (Layzer, Goodson, & Moss 1993; Galinsky et al. 1994; Cost, Quality, & Child Outcomes Study Team 1995).

Source: International Reading Association, & National Association for the Education of Young Children. (1998). *Learning to read and write: Developmentally appropriate practices for young children*. Retrieved from <http://www.naeyc.org/files/naeyc/file/positions/PSREAD98.PDF>

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Activity 6.7a

Consider the 7 policy recommendations above. Identify at least 2 recommendations that you think are important in ensuring that you will be able to learn about and implement dialogic reading in a practice setting.

Hints