

## **Teacher Education Institute (TEI)**

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### **Synopsis 4 Learning to Write and Read**

Learning to write and read is not only a matter of acquiring basic skills, however important and worthwhile these are in themselves. Learning to write and read (in that order) forms an integral part of the child's development. Although children learn the mechanics of reading slightly later, it should be emphasised that the methods introduce children to the preparatory stage of learning to read around the age of six and does so in a way that directly relates to their inner experience.

**Dangers of Premature Development** - When children enter Class 1 (age 6) their interaction with the outside world is mainly through their limbs and senses; it is not through their intellect. Teachers who use our approach appreciate that it is far easier to take this interaction as their starting point. In many cases the opposite happens and children are forced into "decoding" when they are not ready for it. This can easily result in an unhappy experience and the forming of learning barriers. It is not necessarily the children who learn to de-code early in their lives who become the competent and avid readers of later life; and premature development of this highly abstract and intellectual skill may well interfere with children's natural development.

**Natural Development** - The teacher who uses the following approach believes that the "natural" course of events is for children to first learn to write, then to read their own writing, and only finally to begin to read the printed word. Therefore, children are given every opportunity to write first, and from this come the desire to read one's own writing. The preparatory stage for learning to read and write starts from the day the child begins school. Children have a natural feeling for form, and initially content should relate to this so that the groundwork is laid for learning to write. This occurs within the specialised subject area of "Form Drawing".

**Learning to Read; the Preparatory Stage** - The path of learning to read is similar to any other learning experience for children. It starts in the imaginative, pictorial realm; it finds expression in a concrete way, and only then is it taken into the intellect as an abstract concept. Therefore, the starting point is children's inner experience and it would be quite wrong to frustrate or damage the six year olds imaginative faculties in any way; thus no demands are made to abstract or theorise. Yet this is exactly what will happen if children are forced or coerced into the theoretical task of decoding at the age of six or earlier. From our viewpoint it is essential that the intellectual development involved in children learning to read gradually emerges out of their inner experience. In essence, that it emerges out of the pictorial representation and image making that all six year olds possess. The task of the teacher is, therefore, to provide the structure for this to happen.

**The Consonants** - Teachers will begin the process by introducing each consonant; this is done artistically and imaginatively and needs great care in preparation. As each child draws both pictures and letters they are creating their first reading book. Each page will have a drawing, with a relevant letter on the facing page. It is not necessary to take the consonants in alphabetical order and it is probably best to take, initially, the letters that can be easily formed from the appropriate illustration. The learning of the vowels is of a different nature expressing the responses of the child's inner being to the outside world.

The vast majority of children will make the adjustment to decoding with little difficulty at rising seven (some even later). Certainly no child before this age should be regarded as in need of remedial assistance. Once children have made the initial adjustment to the world of symbols they should be placed in an individualized reading scheme: in doing this the teacher will be able to provide books which relate to each child's ability, temperament (extremely important), interests and needs. If all this happens in the right way children will grow up with a love of reading and books. This, in the final outcome, is much more important than technical achievement at an early age.

**Proof (Finland)** - In Finland children do not start school until they are seven and understandably they are poor readers at that age. A considerable number of children learn to read music before they learn to read words. At fifteen Finnish students are the best readers in the world and they also excel at mathematics and science.

**Syllabus** - Introduction, Dangers of Premature Development, Curved and Straight Lines, Forms in Relation to Physical Activity, Involvement of the Imagination, The Forms and Letters of the Alphabet, Learning to Read - The Preparatory Stage, The Consonants, Summary of the Sequence, The First Reading Book, Working from the Whole to the Parts, The Vowels, Conclusion, The Example of Finland.