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Your Child's Road to Reading by Richard Flowers AA,BS,MS,CT

By Richard Flowers

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"The more that you read, the more things you will know. The more that you learn, the more places you'll go." Dr. Seuss

As a first grade teacher, I am often asked by parents about the best way to teach their child to read. I have been teaching for nearly 20 years and I have developed a toolbox of techniques that effectively teaches reading skills to children. I believe the best time to start teaching children to learn is before birth. Humans naturally have musical and rhythmical endowment. Even those who say they cannot hold a tune or sing off-key, have a musical and rhythmical intelligence. We live in a universe where rhythm and beat are intrinsically embedded in our lives. The day has 24 hours, the year 365 days, seasons will occur according to where we live. As an infant we listen to our own heartbeat as well as our mother's. We are born into the world we experience the rhythm of own on breath and the sounds of music around us start out by having a conversation with you baby and playing various forms of music. Once your child is born, expose him or her to a plethora of language, conversation, music, rhythm and love. This nourishment of sound will help develop the speech and language centers of the brain. I have found that my highest performing students had parents that used these techniques of immersion into the richness of sound, rhythm and language. Read to your child daily, even from the first day of birth. After a couple of years of reading aloud and pointing to the words your child shall begin to understand print. Pointing to the words as you read teaches your child how to track the words and understand how print is set up from top to bottom and left to right.

Children will begin to have their favorite books that they want you to read to them. Use this excitement and read these books repeatedly until your child knows the book by heart. This is the teachable moment! Once your child reaches this point it is time for them to start reading aloud. I recommend that you read one sentence at a time, while pointing to each word. Then have your child read it with you in unison. The next step is to have your child read the sentence aloud by themselves. Once you have done this with sentences, you can move on to paragraphs and eventually pages. You will see amazing growth with your child's reading once they begin to understand the concept.

Another valuable method that I have found is useful in teaching reading decoding skills is with the use of the Dolch Word List. The Dolch List is a set of researched words used extensively in everyday reading, writing, and conversation. There are 220 words that are the most frequently used in the English language. Use this list to drill and practice with your child until they master them. You will find these word used comprehensively in all children's books.

"To learn to read is to light a fire; every syllable that is spelled out is a spark." Victor Hugo

Another tool that I find helpful is Dolch phrases. The advantage of using the Dolch phrases is that it puts the words into context. This allows your child to use context clues to help decipher the meaning of the words. The phrases use the words as normally delivered in everyday practice. Drill and practice the phrases with you child. Point to each word of the phrase and have your child repeat it to you. Do this

repeatedly until your child is able to decode the phrases out loud without assistance. You can mark the ones that they need to master.

Yet one more tool that I have in my bag of tricks is the use of phonograms. Here are the 37 most common phonograms and some of the 500 words they make up. Remember that although this list contains only one-syllable words, these phonograms will help students decode longer words, too. Drill and practice these words with your child. In class we have been singing these while tracking the words to the song Twinkle Little Star. The kids love singing these! I have found that this is a useful tool for teaching reading. I use music regularly to teach every subject. The research proves children that use music to learn and have a background in music outperform their peers in all subjects. I tell my parents that using music to learn is like putting a hemi in your brain! I am finding that many of the kids that could not sound out advanced or complicated words in these phonogram families now decoding complicated words successfully in everyday reading in class!

I also recommend that parents read with their children for 20 minutes everyday. Choose a fun book that is appropriate for their reading level. One rule of thumb (pardon the pun!) is the five finger reading method. The Five Finger Rule Open to a page and try to read. Count the words you miss.

0 – 1 finger...easy

2 – 3 fingers...just right

4 – 5 fingers...hard

Happy reading!

Therefore try to choose a book where you know all but 2–3 of the words, otherwise it could be too difficult.

I usually recommend the parent read the book aloud several times while pointing to the words. Once your child is has become familiar with the book he or she can begin to read it aloud to you. Read and track the words to a sentence, then have your child read aloud the sentence to you. You can eventually

move on to paragraphs and pages until your child is able to read their book aloud to you independently. This is the wonderful aha moment that makes teaching children such a pleasure and joy.

So, here are four techniques that you can use in your child's road to reading. By using Dolch Words, Dolch Phases, phonograms and reading books aloud with your children, they will be on their way to mastering reading before your eyes!

"Reading is to the mind what exercise is to the body." Joseph Addison

Richard K. Flowers, AA, BS, MS, CT: is an award winning first grade teacher, author, consultant, artist and musician from Grants Pass, Oregon. Richard is a respected, gifted, recognized educator that has spent years of research on creative solutions using multiple intelligences and multisensory techniques for learning. Richard's holistic approach to learning centers on the way we learn.

Richard's avocation is helping others. He is happy to answer all questions and correspondence. He enjoys working and communicating with parents and all interested in growth and education.

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Eating Edible Flowers

By Amanda Baker

After a family member's recent stay in the hospital, you find yourself with a whole houseful of flowers. You've heard of using flowers to decorate dishes or for use in recipes. However, before you go plucking the petals off the flowers in those arrangements, there are a few things that you need to know.

Flowers that are said to be edible are only edible if they are either grown organically or treated with organic pesticides like those used on fruits or vegetables. Flowers that are from florists, nurseries or garden centers are grown for decoration only. They're usually chemically treated either by fertilizers or pesticides. They aren't safe to be eaten unless you know for certain that they've been maintained organically. Do not eat flowers growing on the side of the road! The chemicals used to maintain roadside conditions are deadly and the emissions from cars contaminate the flowers growing there. Your safest method is to grow the flowers yourself, so that you know with a complete certainty what's gone into growing the flowers.

Although a flower may be edible, it may not be palatable to some people's tastes. What might taste good to you may not taste even slightly appealing to someone close to you. Also keep individual allergies in mind before testing out a recipe. A little consideration goes a long, long way and could save you a trip to the hospital.

Before cooking with or eating edible flowers, remember to only eat the petals. The pistils and stamens of a flower should not be consumed. Until you've tested the effects of a single flower, it's best not to ingest large quantities of any blossom, no matter how safe it may seem at the time.

Some of the most common flowers said to be edible are apple blossoms, carnations, chrysanthemums, dandelions, geraniums, marigolds, honeysuckle, pansies, tulips – even lillies and roses! There are so many more edible flowers out there, and recipes are available all over the internet. There are also cookbooks devoted solely to using these beautiful blooms.

So, the next time you've got some freshly cut flowers serving as a centerpiece for your company, you might want to reach up and have a little snack – as long as no one is watching!

Amanda Baker writes for All Things Pondered:

<http://allthingspondered.com>



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