

Reading About Myself Series: A Case Study

by

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ABSTRACT

Let us listen to what parent A has to say: My son is in year 4 but he can't even read. Parent B says: I am very worried because my son is well behind his other classmates. He cannot read. Parent C says: My child is slow. She has reading difficulties. The above statements are often expressed by parents or guardians. Let us now listen as to how young children express about themselves. This is my toy. This is my mother. That is my shirt. They express in short sentences but all the three sentences convey the same messages that is, possession. Taking into consideration the two factors above, my students and I decided to try on a simple reading approach to poor readers. After 14 weeks we found that poor readers became more confident and started to progress well in their classrooms. In this paper I would like to share our reading approach to poor readers.

The Research Scenario

I once taught a course entitled: Pendidikan Pemulihan. For each semester I had 30 students enrolled in my course. I assigned my students to carry out this reading project.

During our first meeting I briefed my students on the reading project. My students had to visit one of the three primary schools nearest our university. They each had to find a slow child in Year Three in one of the primary schools. With the help of the class teacher they located children who had reading difficulties. The simple rules that they had to abide to were: be kind to their research sample, make home visits, meet the child's parents and their families, and find out about the child's background and interests. All these steps had to be fulfilled before they could embark on the reading activity.

Getting the poor readers was quite an easy task as there were many children in the remedial classrooms. After establishing their rapport with the children and their families, my students began with their reading project. Since these children were in the afternoon session, the weekly meetings were done during school breaks i.e. 3.30 pm.

At first my students tested on the children's reading level. Then they began asking the children about themselves. e.g. What is your name? How old are you? Where do you live? What is your father's name? What is your mother's name? Do you have a

brother? What is your brother's name? Do you have a sister? What is your sister's name? etc. The children responded to the simple questions and my students wrote down the answers i.e. one answer on piece of paper. My students would staple all the answers and the first book about 'Myself' were created.

They had to read their first book for about a week before the next book was created. Subsequent books that followed were entitled: My father, My Mother, My Hobby, My Bicycle, My Brother, My Sister, My Best Friend, My School, My Favourite TV/Radio Program, My Family, My favourite food, and many others. The children were encouraged to draw or paste their own and family photographs, pictures, etc. Once that was done the children began reading books about themselves, their family and their environment.

At first they were frightened, shy, stammered and read very slowly. Their voices were hardly heard as the sounds were coming from their stomachs. When they realized that they were reading their own sentences and about themselves, their families and things around them, they became more secured and confident. When they finished reading their third book their voices were becoming more shrill and there were signs of happiness on their faces.

Our Observations

All our research samples enjoyed their reading activities. On their reading activities days, these children would wait anxiously for my students long before the appointed time. They made progress and their reading became better and better. My students interviewed the class teachers and the parents. The teachers were surprised that their 'gone cases' could read and all of them were showing positive signs in their other lessons. Their parents were very thankful that there were kind people around to help their children to read. Some of these parents even wanted their other children to be included in this reading project.

Our Comments

Poor readers can read if we take pains in helping them. Why waste money on buying expensive local and imported books when our children cannot read. These poor readers need to be motivated. The best motivation is reading about oneself. The words are familiar and they cannot go wrong because everything is related to them. Once they know how to read, they would go on reading. The writer feels that reading is like drugs. We can get addicted to reading. Once children can read without fear or tears, they would read more and more. They would read on anything that comes across their path. But before all these miracles can happen, always begin with the simplest steps first. Start with something simple that no bookshops would sell. Start with words that are familiar to the children. Start building up their confidence. It will surely be a slow start but with patience and perseverance these slow children will be shooting for the stars in the near future.

Reference

Students reading projects (case studies).

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