

Reading as a Goal in Kindergarten at POPCS

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When Prince of Peace Catholic School first opened its doors in 2003 to Kindergarten to 2nd grade students, we reviewed the South Carolina state curriculum standards for academic goals. In 2005, however, we noticed on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS), a national norm-referenced test used by Diocese of Charleston Catholic Schools, that our first grade students consistently had trouble with a brief reading and short answer section of the Reading Comprehension Subtest.

When our K5 and First Grade faculty reviewed curricular goals and preparation for first grade reading, we found something startling. We discovered *a disparity* between South Carolina reading standards in Kindergarten and those of the rest of the nation. The issue is very basic, but can have (as we saw) dramatic consequences.

According to South Carolina standards, students are expected to know, understand, and respond to a written text when that text is “READ ALOUD” to the students by another (like the teacher, teacher aide, or parent). In a state like California, however, (to offer one example), students are expected to know, understand, and respond to a written text “READ BY THE STUDENTS.” If students in South Carolina do indeed begin to read, the curriculum standard suggests it be “FOR PLEASURE.” That is, reading is not an official goal of the Kindergarten Reading Standard in South Carolina. Reading is accomplished using “nonprint formats” (like pictures) and is more accurately described as LISTENING and VISUAL goals. (*See the next page to read from the published curriculum standards for both states readily available online*).

While we use the same “nonprint formats,” read-aloud, and teacher modeling to move our K5 children ahead with emergent reading skills, we decided in light of national standards that we couldn’t stop with just those skills as children entered first grade.

As a result, our K5 teachers in 2006 began to adjust their instruction so that students could read a few basic sentences (i.e. without picture prompts) and answer a few questions for comprehension by May of their Kindergarten year.

As Principal, I believe that this one adjustment, combined with the latest K4 to 3rd grade summer training with Open Court Reading specialists in the use of the reading program resulted in an outstanding 20-point increase in national percentile rankings for first grade students on the Reading Comprehension portion of the ITBS between 2005 and 2009.

POPCS Reading Comprehension First Grade Class National Percentile: 5 Years of Testing	
<u>Year</u>	<u>NPR</u>
2005	65%
2009	86%**

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***Note: High student achievement is a combination of factors including student aptitude, effort, and openness to learning, parent support, and quality teaching (in this case) in both preschool and in Kindergarten. Continuous evaluation of student achievement for the purpose of improvement is one important indicator of a quality educational program.*

California Reading Standards for Kindergarten

KINDERGARTEN Reading

2.0 Reading Comprehension

Students identify the basic facts and ideas in what they have read, heard, or viewed. They use comprehension strategies (e.g., generating and responding to questions, comparing new information to what is already known). The selections in *Recommended Literature, Kindergarten Through Grade Twelve* (California Department of Education, 2002) illustrate the quality and complexity of the materials to be read by students.

Structural Features of Informational Materials

2.1 Locate the title, table of contents, name of author, and name of illustrator.

Comprehension and Analysis of Grade-Level-Appropriate Text

2.2 Use pictures and context to make predictions about story content.

2.3 Connect to life experiences the information and events in texts.

2.4 Retell familiar stories.

2.5 Ask and answer questions about essential elements of a text.

3.0 Literary Response and Analysis

Source: <http://www.cde.ca.gov/be/st/ss/documents/elacontentstnds.pdf>

South Carolina Reading Standards for Kindergarten

KINDERGARTEN

READING

Understanding and Using Literary Texts

i.e. by listening to read-aloud

Standard K-1 The student will begin to read and comprehend a variety of literary texts in print and nonprint formats.

Students in kindergarten will begin to read four major types of literary texts: **fiction**, **literary nonfiction**, **poetry**, and **drama**. In the category of **fiction**, they read the following specific types of texts: picture books and fantasy. In the category of **literary nonfiction**, autobiographical and biographical sketches are read aloud to students. In the category of **poetry**, they read nursery and counting rhymes, songs, narrative poems, lyrical poems, humorous poems, and free verse.

Indicators

K-1.1 Summarize the main idea and details from literary texts read aloud.

K-1.2 Use pictures and words to make predictions regarding a story read aloud.

K-1.3 Understand that a narrator tells the story.

K-1.4 Find examples of sound devices (including onomatopoeia and alliteration) in texts read aloud.

K-1.5 Generate a retelling that identifies the characters and the setting in a story and relates the important events in sequential order.

K-1.6 Discuss how the author's choice of words affects the meaning of the text (for example, *yell* rather than *said*).

K-1.7 Use relevant details in summarizing stories read aloud.

K-1.8 Create responses to literary texts through a variety of methods (for example, writing, creative dramatics, and the visual and performing arts).

K-1.9 Recall the characteristics of fantasy.

K-1.10 Explain the cause of an event described in stories read aloud.

K-1.11 Read independently for pleasure.

Source: <http://www.ed.sc.gov/agency/Standards-and-Learning/Academic-Standards/old/cso/standards/ela/documents/ELASStandards2008.pdf>