



READING INSTRUCTION IN KINDERGARTEN:

LITTLE TO GAIN AND MUCH TO LOSE

IN THE UNITED STATES THERE IS A WIDESPREAD BELIEF THAT TEACHING CHILDREN TO READ EARLY — IN KINDERGARTEN OR EVEN PREKINDERGARTEN — WILL HELP THEM BE BETTER READERS IN THE LONG-RUN. UNFORTUNATELY, THERE IS NO SCIENTIFIC EVIDENCE THAT THIS IS SO. HOW THEN DID THIS IDEA TAKE HOLD SO STRONGLY?

- ▶ Many children are not developmentally ready to read in kindergarten, yet the Common Core State Standards require them to do just that. This is leading to inappropriate classroom practices.
- ▶ No research documents long-term gains from learning to read in kindergarten.
- ▶ Research shows greater gains from play-based programs than from preschools and kindergartens with a more academic focus.
- ▶ Children learn through playful, hands-on experiences with materials, the natural world, and engaging, caring adults.
- ▶ Active, play-based experiences in language-rich environments help children develop their ideas about symbols, oral language and the

printed word — all vital components of reading.

- ▶ We are setting unrealistic reading goals and frequently using inappropriate methods to accomplish them.
- ▶ In play-based kindergartens and preschools, teachers intentionally design language and literacy experiences which help prepare children to become fluent readers.
- ▶ The adoption of the Common Core State Standards falsely implies that having children achieve these standards will overcome the impact of poverty on development and learning, and will create equal educational opportunity for all children.

READING INSTRUCTION IN KINDERGARTEN: LITTLE TO GAIN AND MUCH TO LOSE CALL TO ACTION

WE CALL FOR THE FOLLOWING ACTIONS AND URGE PARENTS, EDUCATORS, HEALTH PROFESSIONALS, AND OTHERS TO WORK WITH US TO BRING ABOUT THE RECOMMENDED CHANGES IN POLICY AND PRACTICE:

1. Withdraw kindergarten standards from the Common Core so that they can be rethought along developmental lines.
2. Invest in high quality, long-term research to identify which approaches in preschool and kindergarten best help children become fluent readers by fourth grade and beyond, paying particular attention to children living in poverty.
3. Convene a task force of early childhood educators to recommend developmentally appropriate, culturally responsive guidelines for supporting young children's optimal learning from birth to age 8.
4. End the use of high-stakes testing with children up to third grade and the use of test scores for teacher evaluation and the closing of schools. Promote the use of assessments that are based on observations of children, their development and learning.
5. Ensure a high level of professionalism for all early childhood educators. Strive to reduce the income achievement gap by placing experienced teachers in low-income communities. Invest in high-quality teacher preparation and ongoing professional development.



Full report available for downloading at
www.allianceforchildhood.org and www.DEYproject.org

