

Making It Easy to Learn



Module Focus

Building on a child's strengths to set up situations in which the child is in control and will experience success while enjoying challenges within reach

Contributions of the Child

- Prior knowledge (interests, background, and life experiences that contribute to meaning)
- Personal knowledge and skill with oral language structures
- Personal knowledge of the printed code (about books and print concepts and about visual and phonological information such as known words and letter-sound relationships)

Contributions of the Teacher

- Activating and building prior knowledge (e.g., book introductions)
- Selecting books that support a child's current language structures
- Preparing children for hearing and using unusual vocabulary, language, and text structures in books
- Prompting children to use their known words and word parts to solve new unknown words when reading and writing to promote generative learning
- Prompting children to generate strategic activities for problem solving on their own

Key Points for Teachers

The teacher sets up fail-safe situations in which each child can initiate successful activity—working out some possibilities, discovering things for himself, extending his problem-solving skills, and enjoying the challenge that is within reach. Only when the task is within their control can children take on new learning with success and enthusiasm.

Effective teachers provide a delicate balance of ease and challenge so that the learner will continue to learn, experience success, and enjoy the process. Teachers accept and acknowledge a child's attempts and approximations that are 'almost right.'

Being in control is important at every point in a child's learning. Teachers who know what a child controls can call for the child to initiate and carry out actions on his own—building independent learning from the very beginning.

Resources

Related Effective Practices Video Modules

Assessing Through Close Observation — *finding out what children already know*

Selecting Texts That Are Just Right — *selecting and introducing texts to allow children to use what they know in order to be successful*

Teaching for Transfer: Strategic Activity — *using what the child knows to solve problems by searching for solutions*

Askew, B. J., & Fountas, I. C. (1998). Building an early reading process: Active from the start! *The Reading Teacher*, 52(2), 126–134.

Kelly, P. R., & Neal, J. C. (2009). Keeping it easy to learn at higher levels of text reading. *The Journal of Reading Recovery*, 8(2), 27–36.

Lyons, C. A. (2003). *Teaching struggling readers: How to use brain-based research to maximize learning*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Zull, J. E. (2002). *The art of changing the brain: Enriching the practice of teaching by exploring the biology of learning*. Sterling, VA: Stylus. (see Chapter 4)

Early Literacy Intervention: Expanding Expertise and Impact

a Reading Recovery initiative in partnership with the USDE



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