



# Reading Counts



## Using Positive Reinforcement in the Elementary Classroom

Laura Perry  
Team Leader - Head Start/Preschool Programs

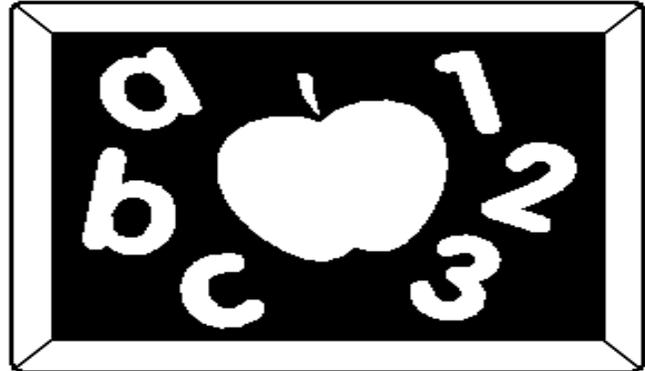
In order for students to learn, they need to have a good learning environment. Teachers and tutors can create good learning environments for their students by having good classroom management and by creating spaces where students are motivated to learn.

### What are Successful Positive Reinforcement Techniques?

To encourage **classroom management**, three strategies have proven effective.

- Positive Behavioral Support (Warger, 1999). PBS is a system in which teachers teach and reward specific new desired behaviors, and appreciate genuinely the desired behavior.
- Reinforcement Schedules. Students are told how to get rewards (i.e. when they have 10 stars).
- Contingency Plans. The student needs to meet a goal to get a reward. This strategy is successful because the student(s) invests effort into obtaining a goal. Students are responsible for consequences and rewards.

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## Reading with Preschool Children

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A child learns many important concepts while being read to. When we sit down with a child to read, it is important for them to understand how to hold the book and which direction to turn the pages. While reading to the child, we can also move our finger under the words as we read to allow the students to see that we move from left to right and up to down the page as we read. Both of these are things that students frequently learn from being read to, however, some students will need instruction.

While reading a story you should pay particular attention to the illustrations. From the pictures, you can have the child predict what they think is going to happen on that page. Another way to read the book would be to allow the child to "read" the pictures and not the words. This is something that many children enjoy and it allows them to use their imagination. Reading the illustrations is one of the first steps of literacy, thus making it as important as understanding what is written on the pages in this early stage of literacy.

Remember when reading to a young child to make it fun and exciting. Some children will not get the individualized reading time at home, so they treasure this time at school. Have the child sit next to you or on your lap (if appropriate) to make it a more enjoyable experience. Above all, make the experience fun for the child.

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## Positive Reinforcement

To encourage **student motivation**, alternate techniques can be effective.

- Use of Student-Selected Motivators. When teachers show that they value student interaction, and when students take active roles in the development of curriculum, they will be motivated.
- Use of Target Rewards. Target rewards are rewards that are contingent upon the unique students in a class. Rewards include "Skip a Spelling Test," and "Special Chair Time" (Rose, 1999).
- Token Economies. In token economies, students get a token (bingo chip, ticket, etc) which is traded in for a reward after a gaining a certain number of tokens. Token economies are inexpensive and time-efficient.

### Precautions when Using Positive Reinforcement

Marzano, Pickering, & Pollack (2001) offer suggestions for effective praise and reinforcement:

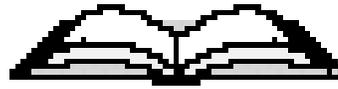
Praise and rewards:

- are contingent upon some behavior or work output.
- should be spontaneous.
- should be varied. There are only so many stickers a student can collect!
- should reference past accomplishments.
- should highlight **effort** (i.e. not necessarily ability).

Ineffective praise or rewards would be rewards that are random, global (non-specific), bland, participation-dependent, and based on competition.

References:

- Marzano, R. J., Pickering, D. J., & Pollack, J. E. (2001). Classroom instruction that works: Research-based strategies for increasing student achievement. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.
- Rose, M. (1999). Surefire incentives for your students. *Instructor*, 109 (4), 26-27.
- Warger, C. (1999). Positive behavior support and functional assessment. Reston, VA: (ERIC Documents Reproductions Service ED434437).



## Tutoring for Reading Comprehension

Katie Harado  
Team Leader - Mt. Morris Central

Reading comprehension is important because through improvement in comprehension students will:

1. Become familiar with well known literary works
2. Use a variety of strategies to analyze works
3. Use context and word structure clues to increase understanding.
4. Demonstrate the ability to understand an extensive and accurate vocabulary.
5. Gain effective word choice

There are many ways to help students with their comprehension. First, it is important to give students choices on what they want to read. While you can pick the level of difficulty, offer students several choices, so they can choose something that interests them. Their attention and comprehension will improve immensely if they are interested in what they are reading.

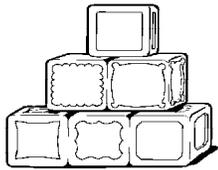
When reading a new story, it is important to access background knowledge. Any combination of the following are great ways to set background knowledge.

1. Based on the pictures, make predictions about the story.
2. Use maps to learn about the location and setting of the story.
3. Have students simulate or act out part of the story.
4. Have students identify with a particular character's feelings.
5. Have students draw a picture related to the book.

The purpose of reading is to connect ideas on a page to what you already know. If you don't know anything about a subject, then it is almost impossible to retain information. For example, if you like sports, then reading the sports page will be easy for you. You have a framework in your mind for reading, understanding, and storing information.

The type of questions asked is important to help your students with their comprehension. Instead of asking questions that just have to do with the facts of the story, ask them questions that will push your students to think on a higher level and analyze the text. Some examples of good questions:

1. What would you like to know more about in the book?
2. Why do you think the author chose that ending?
3. Which character do you relate to and why?
4. What do you think the story will be about?
5. How can you retell the story from a different point of view?



## Using Math Manipulatives

Kim Dunham  
Team Leader - Geneseo Central

Not every child can understand and learn mathematics in a traditional manner. A traditional approach to mathematics involves the teacher giving the student a problem and the student using abstract thought to solve that problem. Many students need a concrete example of the problem before they can begin to solve it. For example the child who cannot look at  $2+2=4$  and understand how the answer was obtained might understand, "if you have two apples and someone gives you two more then you have four apples". The easiest way to provide students with concrete examples of the mathematical concepts they are being taught is through the use of manipulatives. Susan Jones defines manipulatives as materials that are physically handled by students in order to help them see actual examples of mathematical principles at work.

## Activity Suggestions

**Graphing (K-1)** – Square blocks of equal sizes are distributed to each student. Then the teacher decides what the class is going to graph: eye color, age, or favorite color. Each student attaches a post-it note to the block with his/her name on it and then places the block under their specific eye color, age, or favorite color. The students can then look at the towers of blocks to draw conclusions about their graphs.

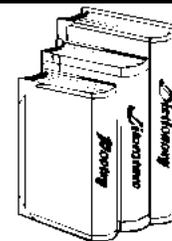
**Fractions (3-5)** – Students are given egg cartons filled with 12 plastic eggs. The students look at the egg carton as a whole and each egg as being a fraction of that whole. The students should be allowed to take out a number of eggs and then determine the fraction of the whole remaining and the fraction of the whole they took out. This can be expanded to teach the reduction of fractions as the students become more fluent with the mathematical concepts.

**Area (1-3)** – students use square blocks of equal size to understand how area is expressed in square units. The students can explore the concept of area blocks by making various shapes with the blocks and then counting the number of blocks it took them to create the shape, this is the area of their shape in square units.

Source:

Jones, Susan. *The role of manipulatives in introducing and developing mathematical concepts in elementary and middle grades*. [Online]  
[http://www.resourceroom.net/myarticles/Jones\\_mathmanip.htm](http://www.resourceroom.net/myarticles/Jones_mathmanip.htm)

## Activities and Ideas



## Tutoring Literacy with Poetry

Jamie Mullaney  
Team Leader - Livonia Central

Poetry is a wonderful way to introduce children to the beauty of language. Like a book, a poem can tell a story and paint a picture in the mind. Poets play with words, sounds, meanings—even the way words appear on the page. All of these elements come together to form a poem. Who can resist the joy of a poet such as Shel Silverstein who captures the child in each one of us?

The main purpose of reading poems to children is to create enthusiasm for reading. Part of teaching reading is motivating the children to practice. But always turning practice into a skills drill can defeat the purpose. Reading poetry is one way to do this without overwhelming the children. Poetry can be less intimidating for a new learner and it can help flush out any fears or frustrations that a child may have with reading. Poetry validates different forms of language, which allows for conversation about language, and it can allow children to reflect on their own experiences and identities. The realm of poetry reading can help children in variety of areas but most of all, towards the love of reading!

### How to get started with poetry reading

**Begin** by preparing a pocket folder for each child labeled "Poetry" and by preparing copies of two poems. On the **first day**, begin this activity by reading a poem to the students. Then distribute a copy of the poem to the children and reread it to them as they follow along. Then read the poem together chorally. Poetry lends itself to choral reading because of its rhythm. Follow the same procedure with the second poem. On the **second day**, reread the poems chorally. Use the poems to do some word study activities. You might have the students search for rhyming words, or synonyms of words you give them. On the **third day**, introduce another new poem by reading it to them, distributing the poem, reading it again, and then have the students read it chorally. Then read the "old" poems.

By the third day the children usually will have become fluent reading the "old" poems. If the poem contains conversational parts, assign an individual child to read a character's part.

Continue to follow this procedure in introducing new poems to your children. As poems become "old" poems, use them to work on word skills. These can be done orally, or as pencil and paper activities. Read "old" poems as mini-Reader Theater scripts. This should be done after the child is very familiar with the poem.

**Group choral reading:** children are assigned to different character/narrator parts or to a particular stanza of the poem. The group of children presents the poem. If you have too many poems to read to them all at once, have the children take turns picking an old favorite to read. This can go on as long as you need.

## Book Review

Jillian Haller  
Team Leader - Dansville Central

**-All of these books and many others can be found in Student Employment Service (Blake A 104).**

### ***The Doorbell Rang* By Pat Hutchins, Scholastic, 1987.**

This picture book is about two children who are dividing up twelve cookies. As they think about how they are going to divide the cookies, more children arrive and the dividing process continues. This book could be used to explain the math concepts of division, one to one correspondences, as well as the social concepts of sharing, fairness and generosity. Young children will enjoy the repetition and predictability of this book, while older children will enjoy thinking about the dividing process and the surprise ending.

### ***Out of the Dust* By Karen Hesse, Scholastic, 1999.**

This Newbery medal winning novel is set in Oklahoma during the depression and is about a young girl name Billie Jo. As Billie Jo's family is struggling to make ends meet, a horrible accident injures Billie Jo and results in the death of her mother. She must now find the courage and strength to pull through this tragedy and heal herself both physically and mentally. Though this book deals with difficult issues such as death, it gives a different perspective on growing up and over-coming obstacles and tragedy. The short free-verse poems that make up this book will appeal to older elementary and middle school grades.

### ***Amazing Grace* By Mary Hoffman, Scholastic, 1993.**

Grace is a young child who loves to hear, read, and act out stories. When it is time for her class to perform "Peter Pan," Grace wants the lead role, but many of her classmates do not think she is fit for the part. When it comes time for auditions, Grace shows them that you can't judge a person and her abilities only by what they look like. This engaging story will appeal to both younger and older children and encourage imagination, determination and appreciation for stories, as well as touch on overcoming stereotypical gender roles and race biases. The illustrations captivate the reader to pretend and imagine with Grace and to become in touch with her and her family's feelings.

### ***Alternative to Worksheets: Motivational Reading and Writing Activities Across the Curriculum- Grades K-4, By Karen Bauer and Rosa Drew, Creative Teaching Press, 1992.***

This book has a wealth of ideas and reproducibles for hands on, creative teaching and learning. The activities range from creating books, to making concept quilts. As the title suggests, this book does not only focus on Language Arts, but integrates all subject areas. The ideas in this book are adaptable for your classroom or can be individualized for the children you are working with in a tutoring setting.

## SMART

By: S. Silverstein, *Where the Sidewalk Ends*

My dad gave me a one-dollar bill  
Cause I'm his smartest son,  
And I swapped it for two shiny quarters  
Cause two is more than one!  
And then I took the quarters



And I traded them to Lou,  
For three dimes - I guess he didn't know  
That three is more than two!

Just then, along came old blind Bates  
And just because he can't see  
He gave me four nickels for my three dimes,  
And four is more than three!

And I took the nickels to Hiram Coombs  
Down at the seed-store,  
And the fool gave me five pennies for them,  
And five is more than four!



And then I went and showed my dad,  
And he got red in the cheeks  
And closed his eyes and shook his head--  
Too proud of me to speak!

**Thank you to all of our participating schools  
and teachers!**

**Welcome Perry Central and Dansville Middle  
School!**

If you have any ideas or suggestions for the program, please do not hesitate to contact us. We want to provide the best program possible for our participating schools!

Teachers: Please visit our web site for updated schedules, on-line request forms, on-line evaluations, and other information <http://ses.geneseo.edu/schools.php>

**Contact Information:** Questions or concerns about the America Reads or America Counts Programs? Please contact Andrea DiGiorgio at 245-5734 or [digiorgi@geneseo.edu](mailto:digiorgi@geneseo.edu). General information can be found at our web site at <http://ses.geneseo.edu>

**Help wanted:** Tutors are needed for the spring of 2003. Interested students should contact Andrea DiGiorgio at the above number or e-mail address.

