**Louisiana Reading Association**

**Position Paper**

**EFFECTIVE INSTRUCTION IN PRE-KINDERGARTEN**

**Adopted April 20, 2018**

Young learners are active meaning-makers. Parents, teachers, and other adults are critical to the development of emergent literacy skills. These adults can engage a child’s interests, create challenging but achievable goals, and support the child’s efforts to make meaning by participating in varied experiences and rich conversations.

Children entering the pre-kindergarten classroom are diverse, having many and different experiences, skills, and interests. Therefore, no one teaching method or approach is likely to be the most effective for all students in all settings. The most effective programs emphasize exposure to print, concept development, and content knowledge. Excellent pre-kindergarten instruction builds on what students already know and can do, and it provides the knowledge, skills, and dispositions for lifelong learning.

**Strategies for Building Literacy Skills in Pre-Kindergarten**

* *Shared Reading Experience –* As the teacher shares stories with students, children begin to pay attention to print. They build vocabulary and comprehension. They talk about the pictures, discuss events, and request multiple readings. In addition to fictional texts, providing children with a rich array of informational books will help them learn and understand about self, other people, and the world. Books and other print materials should abound in a pre-kindergarten classroom.
* *Discovery Areas –*Pre-kindergartners need the opportunity to make choices and to practice what they have learned about literacy. Creating discovery areas will allow children to explore and refine their understandings. Play is a crucial feature in early literacy development because it helps children interpret their experiences and to assume the roles and activities of more accomplished peers and adults.
* *Drawing and Writing on Paper –* Pre-kindergarten students need many opportunities to express themselves on paper, without feeling too constrained for standard spelling and proper handwriting. Teachers can organize experiences that both demonstrate the writing process and get children actively involved in it. In the beginning of pre-kindergarten, writing is likely to take the form of drawing and the use of symbols or random letters. With encouragement and appropriate instruction, students will begin to label their pictures, use beginning sounds and some sight words, and see writing as a meaning-making activity in which communication is paramount.
* *Rich Content Instruction –* For students to become skilled readers and writers, they will need to develop a rich language and conceptual knowledge base and good verbal reasoning abilities. Effective literacy programs in pre-kindergarten provide children with opportunities for sustained and in-depth learning, including play; diverse listening and speaking experiences; different levels of guidance to meet the needs of individual learners; varied activities that support content learning and social-emotional development; and the time, materials, and resources to build concepts and reasoning skills.

**Policies and Programs**

In addition to effective instruction within the pre-kindergarten classroom, state, district, and school policies and programs must support the teachers’ efforts. Policymakers should:

* Provide comprehensive and consistent systems of learning for soon-to-be and practicing pre-kindergarten teachers. Ongoing professional development is essential for teachers to stay current in research, teaching strategies, and learning outcomes.
* Provide sufficient resources to ensure that class sizes are small, with a ratio of one adult for every 8 to 10 children, with a maximum group size of 20. Small class size increases the likelihood that teachers can accommodate the diverse needs and interests of all learners.
* Ensure that sufficient resources are available so that all pre-kindergarten classrooms have a wide range of books, computer software, and multimedia material at various levels of difficulty. The resources should also reflect varied interests and diverse cultures.
* Provide resources for individualized instruction for those students who do not meet expected progress. Resources include, but are not limited to, targeted instructional materials, focused time, tutoring by qualified tutors, or other individualized intervention strategies.

**Position of the Louisiana Reading Association**

Pre-kindergarten classrooms filled with print, language and literacy play, storybook reading, and writing allow young learners to experience the joy and power associated with reading and writing. Decision-makers at the state, district, and school levels can support students and teachers with appropriate policies and professional development.

What we do in the early years will make a difference in the reading patterns, interests, and lifelong desire to learn of Louisiana students. The Louisiana Reading Association understands the importance of the pre-kindergarten year in children’s overall development and literacy learning, and it supports the strategies outlined in this position paper.

**Resource**

International Literacy Association. (2018). *What effective pre-k literacy instruction looks like* [Literacy leadership brief]. Newark, DE: Author.

For more information, visit the International Literacy Association’s Literacy Leadership Brief at <https://www.literacyworldwide.org/get-resources/position-statements>.