

WSRA Position Statement

Grouping Practices for Reading

Research on ability grouping and/or tracking identifies two (2) primary areas of concern: inequality of instructional opportunity and differentiation of social status. Research suggests that ability grouping and/or tracking may have a negative impact on a majority of students' achievement, motivation, interest, and self-concept. The Wisconsin State Reading Association urges a re-examination of current grouping practices for reading:

Be it therefore resolved that the Wisconsin State Reading Association asserts the following:

- Students should be offered opportunities to participate in alternative grouping formats appropriate to their developmental levels and individual needs. No student should remain in a single ability group or track
- The use of educational practices that rigidly track young children into single ability groups during early childhood programs, kindergarten, and the primary grades should be avoided.
- The use of educational practices that rigidly track elementary and middle school students into single ability groups for reading instruction should be avoided.
- Whenever possible, special needs students assigned to pullout programs should also participate in a variety of classroom reading activities.
- Any assessment used to identify children for ability-based reading programs should be compatible with guidelines as defined by the WSRA position statement on assessment.
- Students placed in ability-based reading programs should be continually assessed to insure appropriate instruction and to maximize the individual's acquisition of a greater level of skills she/he will be placed in different groups to maximize her/his greatest potential.
- While heterogeneous whole class instruction is a viable alternative to ability grouping and/or tracking, it should be balanced with other formats.
- Grouping formats for reading instruction should be characterized by flexibility in which membership, size, and purpose vary. The exclusive use of a single grouping format should be avoided.
- District attempts to move away from rigid adherence to ability grouping and/or tracking in reading should be preceded and supported by continuous staff development in classroom organization techniques.
- District attempts to move away from rigid adherence to ability grouping and/or tracking should be characterized by respect for the teacher as a professional decision maker.

This is a position statement of the Wisconsin State Reading Association ©Copyright 2006

Written inquiries may be sent to: Wisconsin State Reading Association, N7902 E. Friesland Road, Randolph, WI 53956-9407